

Pros and Cons of Semester System Program under the faculty of education TU

Om Bahhadur Rayamajhi

om.rayamajhi@sac.tu.edu.np

Sanothimi Campus, Bhaktapur

Abstract

This article deals with the pros and cons of the Semester System Program under the Faculty of Education, Tribhuvan University, Nepal. This study has sought to understand and analyze students' perception towards semester system taking a case of the Faculty of Education related campuses with regard to (a) academic resources, (b) physical resources, (c) governance and image, and (d) overall perception of students and teachers. It followed descriptive research design using questionnaire survey instrument, sematic-chart and check lists. Only one constituent campus was selected in Kathmandu through purposive under non-probability sampling procedure for this study.

From this study, it was found that the semester system is better than annual system in terms use of better teaching equipment, efficiency of teachers and students' performance and results. But in semester system, students' participation in teaching learning activities has increased, they have improved skills in using electronic tools and presenting skills. Even teachers' knowledge in using software improved. Although most of the classes under semester system were better equipped, they still lack required equipment and even skilled teachers. Similarly, the campuses running semester system were found facing shortage of budget for the sustainability of the programme. As it was taking months to publish results, it needs correction so that the students get their exam results in time.

Moreover, the academic calendar was not followed duly. Likewise, those students who did not meet 80 per cent attendance were also allowed to fill up exam forms and this tendency culminated in poor results and lack of disciplined not only among students but the whole system. Unless these shortcomings are corrected, the semester cannot be effective as was expected during its introduction in 2016.

Keyword: *Semester based program, Pros and cons, faculty of education, Tribhuvan University,*

Background

Education is the most important factor for the all-round development of a nation. |All the countries have now given first priority to education because educational status is an important indicator of development. In Nepal's educational history, Rana Prime Minister Junga Bahadur Rana formally started modern education in 1852. Likewise, higher education began with the establishment of Tri Chandra College in 1918. Similarly, the establishment of Tribhuvan University (TU) in 1959 prepared a solid foundation for higher education within the country. T.U. remained as the only single university for a long time having several constituent campuses across the country. The constituent campuses mushroomed after the formulation of

the National Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971. The new education plan brought all the affiliated and government campuses directly under T.U. as its constituent campuses.

Over the years, TU applied different academic systems. Initially, it introduced annual system and after the introduction of NESP, it adopted semester system. Again, it abandoned the semester system and applied annual system from 2012.

However, again TU reversed its programme to semester since 2012. A number of factors, for example, contemporary government system, political movements and international practices contributed to the change of the academic system. The semester program system which had lost its popularity once was started as an experiment in master degree program in science under the department of education since 2011/12. Now it has been applied in all faculties in Master programme and in the technical and new programme of Bachelor levels.

This write-up dwells on the pros and cons of the two programs—annual and semester—by making comparisons, mostly focusing on the levels of student achievements under the two programmes.

Again, efforts are made to find out the actual situation of academic and physical performance of students based on data collected from the two TU constituent campuses. Descriptive research format is applied to identify the situation while surveying two of the 60 constituent campuses through probability random sampling method. Interviews and observation and quantitative technique were applied in the analysis of the facts FGD. Thus, the study was quantitative-com qualitative in nature. The constituent campuses that have introduced the both annual and semester system program were selected for data collection. The study population consisted of students, teachers, experts, program heads and administrative heads of those campuses.

The constituent campus selected for the survey was Sanothimi Campus, Sanothimi, Bhaktapur. The sample size for this study consisted of one fifth (20 per cent) students, 10 teachers, five department heads and one administrative heads.

Literature Review

Earlier, in several studies, several scholars have pointed out the pros and cons of the semester system.

Sherpa D. and Barialy K. in a study said the semester system is not practiced well and teachers were dissatisfied with the semester system because of poor administrative preparedness and professional incompetence.

In the semester system, the traditional lecture methods were shifted into a student-centered approach and students are encouraged for self-learning using digital resources. Accordingly, the students' participation has been increased and knowledge generation process has shifted into the participatory approach. A smooth administrative system in favor of students creates a student-friendly educational atmosphere and a zone of peace, resulting in superior outcomes for any college. The evaluation system was completely influenced by the teachers' 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. (*Faculties' Perception on Semester System at TU Affiliated Colleges*, p.10)

Dahal K. B. explains that the educational system per se, how good it may be and how far it might have been hailed across the higher educational institutions can face typical challenges when it unfolds in a particular academic context. Ergo, it is imperative that the introduction of new education systems such as the semester system should be rolled out properly in the existing culture of teaching and learning, both formal and the substantially grounded informal ones, so that neither the faculties hampering the regular class can be beneficial for the students. Accelerating their reading and writing skills in English will not only be helpful for them to raise their capacity to critical reading, comprehend well and write lucidly, but it will contribute positively to their professional life. (*Experience of Teaching Anthropology: Interrogating the Semester System at Tribhuvan University*, p.25)

Sharma N.P. in his study, concludes that the “semester system is perceived to be most effective way of effectual learning”. He also does believe that the semester system, if applied in its true spirit, can prove itself superior to the annual system, the fact strongly reinforced by the worldwide trend for the system. (A meta-analysis of researches on implementing the semester system: the way ahead? P.113)

Ghimire R.C. finds out that the semester system of examination provides the good grading criteria. Students can obtain better marks in the examination under semester system. Academic goal is focused in the semester system. Students are busier in the semester system. Students are tested through different techniques in the semester system. Students have better presentation skills in the semester system. Students are continuously evaluated in the semester system. Semester system allows continuous engagement between students and teachers. Semester system provides continuous feedback to the students. Semester system has more chances of favoritism and biases of teachers while evaluating the students. Annual system has more chance of duplication of test paper. Evaluation process is comparatively easy to handle in the annual system. Evaluation process is comparatively costly in the semester system. Above findings suggest that semester system is much more preferable for better academic performances. (*Opportunities and Challenges of Assessment Strategies implemented in Mathematics Education*. P.134)

Dahal R. K. said the study found that the students who were from semester system at bachelor level have good perception than the students who were from annual system on the overall academic resources of Nepal Commerce Campus. On the other hand, the students from the annual system perceived better on course organization and planning, physical resources, and governance and image than the students from the semester system. In the permanent address of the respondent's category, the students came from outside the Kathmandu Valley were more satisfied at MBS semester system than the students from the Kathmandu Valley. The result revealed that most of the students perceived semester system is an innovative approached to teaching-learning process, a new educational culture, which allows greater interaction between teachers and students. (*Students' Perception towards Master of Business Studies (MBS) Semester* P.193)

Results and discussions

a) Teacher efficiency

Teacher efficiency is defined as self-perceived belief of one's capabilities to bring about desired outcomes, even among the students who are unmotivated and/or have discipline problems. Teacher efficiency is related to many things such as teacher behaviour, effort enthusiasm, innovation, planning perseverance, willingness to work with difficult students and their commitment to the desired outcomes.

For the production of skillful manpower, the university has started semester system under faculty of education since 2012. In this context, the teachers' efforts and professional ethics play important role for the effective implementation of semester system.

However, it seemed the teacher's efficiency and their interest have been prioritized for the implementation of the semester system. The skills, knowledge and the capacity of the teachers were not considered as important assets to implement the semester system. Obviously, the semester system will not be successful without equipping the teachers to apply the skills of modern electronic media and the contemporary teaching materials in the classrooms. The concerned authorities have, as evidenced during this study, not paid attention while selecting teachers and assigning the responsibilities of the classroom. As a result, the teaching process has not been found effective. On the basis of answer given by the respondents, the performance of the teachers who have been involved in the semester system has been found medium.

Clarifies that only 21 per cent teacher possess abilities to motivate their students, use contemporary materials and catch the sentiments of the semester system. In the same way, 61 per cent teachers can sometimes make their students active and use contemporary materials whereas 17 per cent teachers used one-way method like lecture and do not pay attention to the activities of the students.

If we compare this data with annual system, the semester system, however, looks far effective in the delivery and in the use of materials. Teachers in annual system hardly apply modern electronic media in the classrooms. They apply only the one-way lecture system.

Thus, various facilities and training needed for the teachers for their professional development.

b) Teaching resources and materials

Formal interview and conversation with students, teachers, programme heads and administrative heads, focal group discussion and intensive observation were used as tools for data collection during the study. According to information received from the respondents, it was found out that most of the teachers use projector in their class in semester system. Similarly, the students were found of getting hand out in the form of both hard and soft copies. Likewise, in semester system, the concept if lab and field visit was used according to the need. In the same way, the management of resources and materials in semester system was found better than in the annual system.

Teaching materials have significant role for making the teaching-learning activities effective. Generally, four types of teaching materials are used in teaching-- audio, visual, audio-visual and contemporary. In some topics, videos, films and documentaries are also used. In

comparison to annual system, semester system has encouraged the teachers to use more modern materials as was found during the focal group discussion with the teachers and the students.

Contemporary materials

As local educational materials play an important role for effective management of educational system, the contemporary materials also have more significance in the modern time. While some contents are presented through multimedia and they were found very effective and they have made the job of the teacher easy. Use of such materials in annual system was very low whereas use of these materials has been made compulsory in semester system.

The semester system has permitted to handle the classes to only those teachers who are qualified for handling that equipment. It has been found that hundred per cent teachers use the equipment in the classroom whereas the responses of the students in FGD show that only 17 per cent teachers are qualified to use such equipment effectively in the classroom.

Similarly, science requires its LAB. Without lab, the teaching learning process will not be complete. The annual system did have well managed science LAB and the students used to submit experiment file coping from others but without experimenting in the LAB whereas in the semester system, a provision has it that that 40 per cent classes should be co-conducted and the same percentages have been evaluated through practical examination. So, the provision has made use of LAB compulsory. Similarly, the students highlight in FGD that the condition of LAB itself has been improved but it is not enough. During the FGD, most of the teachers demanded laptop from the university because the university has not given them a laptop and they are using their own. According to experts and program head, only 30 per cent facilities were available in the LAB in the annual system whereas the facilities have reached 60 to 70 per cent in the semester system. In conclusion, it has been found that the availability, use and management of contemporary materials are not satisfactory.

d) Students' regularity

Student regularity is basic and important aspect of teaching learning process. Different universities have their own provision regarding student's regularity. According to the Faculty of Education, Tribhuvan University, the student should have at least 80 per cent attendance in the classes. It has been managed that the students who have attendance less than 80 per cent cannot fill up forms for examination. The examination controller office accepts the filled-up forms for the examination only when the students submit record of minimum 80 per cent attendance verified by the campus administration otherwise the forms are rejected. This provision shows that the university has tried a lot to ensure the regularity of the students.

However, in annual system, the attendance is always poor. According to the record of the Department of Health and Population under the annual system, Sanothimi Campus, it has been found that only one third students of the first year have met the requirement of 70 per cent compulsory attendance where only 15 per cent students have met such criteria in the second year. However, it has been found the attendance rate of the students satisfactory. According to the record of administration, Sanothimi campus, where the semester system was implemented in 2016, more than 76 per cent students have met the criteria of 80 per cent minimum attendances.

Table Number-1
Students' drop-out and regularity Rate on the Semester system

S. N.	Admit year	1 st semester	2 nd semester	4 th semester	Number of students with required attendance (80 %)	
					1 st semester	Percentage
1.	2016 AD	209	161	141	132	82%
2.	2017	192	147	124	112	76%
3.	2018	154	110	96	78	71%
4.	2019	164	112	83	69	61.5%
5.	2020	164	119	110	71	69.5%

Above table number-1 shows that the students drop-out rate is very high (above 25%). The main causes for the high dropout rate are: Many students tend to fly overseas as migrant workers, and others seek jobs within the country while a few develop frustration towards their study.

Likewise, attendance of the students in semester system is not satisfactory. During a study, it was found that 82 per cent students were regular in the first semester and 85.5 per cent students, omitting the dropouts, were found to be regular in second semester. In total, 75 per cent students were found to have met the average requirement (seventy percent and above) attendance. Thus, the semester system increased the attendance rate of the students in the initial phase. However, in recent years, the attendance rate has dropped significantly.

e) Exam result

After the implementation of the semester system under FOE in 2073/74 BS, many results have been published. In Sanothimi Campus Sanothimi have been implemented semester system. In this campus, exam results of semester system were found better result than the annual system exams. Cumulative Grade Point Assessment (CGPA) system has been applied in the grading process of semester programme.

This study found that the pass per cent of the student in the first semester at 62 percent whereas it increased to 71 per-cent in the second semester. Both semester results show that no student passed in below 'C' CGPA. In aggregate, 16 per-cent students passed in the 'A-', 20 per-cent in the 'B+' 23 per-cent 'B' and 12 per-cent in the 'C'. Comparatively, the results of semester were better than the annual system.

Teaching strategies and Methodologies

Different teaching methods can be used for different subjects. While selecting the teaching methods, teachers' qualification, and the physical aspects etc. should be taken into consideration. Teachers generally should use the student-centered methods like discussion, problem solving, project works, educational tour etc. in some cases, lecture, demonstration and question answer methods can be used in other circumstances. Besides these methods in higher classes, buzz session, brain storming jigsaw, individual study, thing pair share, read and summarized, question concept learning and analysis can be implemented.

During the process of the study, it was concluded in the FGD that no student-centered methods were used in those campuses where the annual system was in practice. Similarly, in the semester system, it was found that students-centered methods were used, however, the researcher could not calculate the exact percentages. In the semester system, various methods were used according to the contexts. Almost 30 per cent classes were found managed with modern electronic media where the teachers used lecture and question answer methods. The students were also found satisfied with the teaching methods that their teachers were using in the classrooms. The students were found involved in the activities which helped the students develop their subjective knowledge.

Regarding the teaching strategies, various facts were revealed through formal interview and FGD. According to the respondents, lecture method was used in most of the cases in annual system whereas question-answer method and discussion methods were used in some cases. However, the students-centered method in annual system like problem solving, discussion, question-answer, self-study, presentation by the students themselves were rare. Similarly, it was found out that the teachers in semester system compulsorily made their students to present at least one class through power point presentation. In this situation, teaching strategies and technologies are better in the semester system than in annual system. It was found out that the use of those strategies in semester system had developed subjective knowledge of the students and developed the confidence in the performance skills. Similarly, according to the responses given by the teachers, the students and program head during the FGD, the teachers in semester system had been very active. The teachers are laborious and present their class through multiple media and they are found happy to give extra time if necessary. Thus, it can be concluded that teachers in semester system in comparison to annual system have been trying more for quality education.

Practical activity and student's participation

Practical activities in any technical subject must be standardized for making the teaching learning process effective. It has been managed that all the subjects should have practical examination under FPE. It was found out through the interview with the teachers, students and FGD that practical examination in the semester system has been made compulsory in comparison to annual system. The facts show that the practical examination has been improved in semester system though there is a lack of equipment and other lab facilities in some cases. In annual system, the students used to be irregular even in the very technical subject science education. Similarly, the students in annual system reported that they used to copy their practical report from their friends and submit to their teachers. In semester system, lab experiment has been found improved and field visit has been made compulsory. Likewise, the research attitude of the students for the course content through internet was found better in the semester system. In conclusion, it can be said that the practical classes were managed properly to uplift the subjective knowledge of the students in comparison to annual system.

Strength, weakness challenges and opportunities of the semester system

Strength: - All the selected sample population of teachers, the students, program coordinators and administrative heads were found in favor of semester system. On the basis of the information collected from the respondents, the following are the strengths of the semester system:

- It has reduced the students' irregularity because of the provision of minimum eighty percent compulsory attendance.
- Assignment in semester system has made the students disciplined.
- It has increased the students' subjective knowledge and skills in-depth.
- In semester system, teachers regularly provide continuous feedback to the students.
- Teachers always use contemporary materials which have made teaching learning activities more effective.
- It has provided real experience to both the teachers and the students.

Weakness: - On the basis of the responses of the sampled respondents and the conclusion of FGD, it can be concluded that though semester system had many advantages over the annual system, there were some weaknesses which can be presented in the following ways:

- It has been implemented without developing appropriate infrastructures.
- The classroom was not managed as effectively as they expected.
- Though labs have been found improved, they have not been managed properly.
- Most of the teachers were not familiar with the new subjects of semester system so that they are not able to complete the course.
- The examination system of the semester system is also vague, exempted students are in periphery about the provision of their examination.
- It is also challenging regarding contemporary materials and lab.

Challenges: - The conclusion of FGD and interview with the population shows that though semester system is better than the annual system, there are so many challenges to run it smoothly in long term. Those challenges can be presented in the following ways:

- There is no clarity about teachers' motivational factors and other incentives in semester system.
- In annual system, examination is taken once a year. In such situation too, it is difficult to publish results in time. So, it might be challenging to publish result in time taking examination every six months.

Opportunities: - one of the major objectives of whole educational practice is to produce qualified human manpower. The annual system under FOE was highly criticized blaming that it could not produce qualified manpower. So, everyone pointed the need for its improvement. As a result, semester system was implemented from 2073 BS. So, the products of semester system during the FGD pointed out that the production met international standards and they could be sold in the national and international market easily. From this, it can be concluded that if semester system is implemented properly, the university will be able to produce skillful teachers in the future.

Teaching learning and satisfaction level

To make the programs of semester system continuous and permanent, all the teachers, students and other staff should be satisfied. Though the students were found positive towards the semester system, they were not found very satisfied with investment of money and time during the FGD.

Similarly, it can be analysed on the basis of conclusion made by the administrative and program heads through formal interview that they had made efforts to maintain for class room discipline. Similarly, they pointed that the admission rate of the students was decreasing, so it might be challenging in the future because of the poor number of the students. Likewise, the university was awarded Rs. 26 billion once in the fiscal year 2080, it may not give financial support in the future. So, they should continuously get support to run semester system and make it sustainable.

Findings and conclusion

Findings: - Teachers' efficiency and efforts have the most important role in teaching learning process. The teachers' efficiency was found better in the semester system in comparison to the annual system. Similarly, the teachers in semester system were found giving more time and efforts, using various methodologies and multimedia and they were classified accordingly. Likewise, 21 per cent teachers were found having better efficiency, 64 per cent teachers were found having normal efficiency and 15 per cent poor efficiency in semester system.

In the annual system, it was found out that the teachers used only daily-used teaching materials whereas the teachers in semester system were found using multimedia and other innovative teaching tools. Similarly, the teacher-centered teaching method lecture was in use only in annual system whereas various student-centered methods like discussions, brainstorming, question-answer, self-study and problem solving were in use in the semester system. Regarding students' regularity, only about 22 per cent students were found regular in annual system whereas in semester system 75 per cent students were regular.

The students drop-out rate is very high (25% above). And students' attendance in the semester system was not satisfactory. It has been found in the semester system that 82 percent are regular in the first semester whereas 85.5 percent student have been found to be regular in second semester. In total, 75 per cent students have been found met the average requirement (seventy percent and above) attendance. In this situation, semester system has increased the attendance rate of the students.

The subjective strengths of the semester system include 80 per cent compulsory attendance, disciplined students with adequate subjective knowledge and regular presence of teachers in the class. The major weakness of the semester system was that it was implemented without making proper preparation in advance. Similarly, the teachers were not found completing their assigned course. Likewise, most of the teachers were found not being familiar with the needed contents so they were found compelling the students to prepare the course. In the same way, it was found that labs have not had enough materials and the management of required materials in classes was difficult.

Most of the new programmes and activities of the university need to be conducted though the budget collected from students. As a result, the teachers have been given period basis wages, so the qualified teachers appointed for the semester system may not continue serving for a long term.

In the annual programme, use of the latest teaching materials was rare. Similarly, the students of annual programme were not regular in classes. About two thirds of students were found to be irregular under annual system. Likewise, the students were found very poor in using multimedia and software.

The semester system increased the attendance rate of the students in the initial phase. However, in recent years, the attendance rate has dropped significantly.

In the annual system, the examination used to be taken once a year whereas such examinations are taken every six months under semester system. It was also challenging to publish results in time even in annual system. It can be inferred that it will be more challenging in semester system to publish the result of the examination taken in every six months in time. Though there are so many weaknesses and challenges in semester system, it can produce skillful manpower who can get opportunities easily in national and international level.

Conclusion

This study shows that various aspects of semester system are better than the annual system like student's regularity, use of contemporary materials and better use of lab better results and better participation of students in teaching learning process.

Similarly, most of the students and the teachers were found satisfied with semester system. So, these aspects of the semester system need to be continued. However, to run the semester system effectively, the university should continuously support the campuses financially. Most of the teachers in semester system were not found feeling secured. Similarly, the teachers of the semester system need to be trained to use the modern equipment and the contents. Similarly, the proper physical infrastructure is not developed properly in advanced. In conclusion, it can be said that through there are so many weaknesses and challenges in the semester system, it can produce quality manpower needed for the national development.

In the initial phase, the semester system has produced encouraging outcomes, teachers were motivated, students looked more disciplined and the overall output was satisfactory. However, over the years, such enthusiasm seemed to have gradually faded away as the tools purchased in the initial phase stopped functioning, they were not replaced with new ones. This invited problems in making the teaching activities effective. Teachers, mostly those hired as parttime teachers, did not take classes regularly and they were not available whenever needed.

References

- Dhakal, Shankar, (2012), *Teacher Perceptions and practice of Participatory Teaching in ELT*, An unpublished Master's Thesis, Kathmandu University, Dhulikhel.
- Landsher, C. & Knobel, M. (2004) *Hand Book of Teacher Research: From design to Implementation*. USA: McGrew Hill, Open University Press.
- Little, O. Goel & Bell, C (2009) *Practical Guide to evaluating Teacher Efficiency. Learning point Associates*. Retrieved February 9 2020, from http://www.Tqsource.Org/publications/practical_guide.Pdf.
- MOES (2004), *Internal efficiency or coefficient of efficiency*. Analytical descriptions of educational indicators of Nepal 1997-2001 (pp.40-41). Kathmandu: Author.

- Sherpa D. & Baraily K. (2022) *Faculties' Perception on Semester System at TU Affiliated Colleges*, AMC Journal, Volume 3, Number-1
- Dahal, K. B. (2020) *Experience of Teaching Anthropology: Interrogating the Semester System at Tribhuvan University*, VJHSS (2021) Vol. 06 (01) pp. Nepal Central Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal
- Sharma, N.P. (2016) "A meta-analysis of researches on implementing the semester system: the way ahead? Tribhuvan University Journal, Volume. xxx, Number-2, December 2016
- Ghimire R. C. (2017) *Opportunities and Challenges of Assessment Strategies implemented in Mathematics Education. (A Comparative Analysis Between Annual and Semester in Master in education, Nepal. International Journal of Educational Science and Research (IJESR) ISSN (P): 2249-6947; ISSN (E): 2249-8052 Vol. 7, Issue 6, Dec JPRC Pvt Ltd.*
- Dahal, R.K. (2018). *Students' Perception towards Master of Business Studies (MBS) Semester System: A Case Study of Nepal Commerce Campus, Kathmandu.*