

Grading System at Secondary Education Examination in Nepal

Damber Bahadur Pal

Associate Professor

Durgalaxmi Multiple Campus, Attariya, Kailali

Far Western University

PhD Scholar

Email: palmsdo21@gmail.com

Abstract

Education is one of the pivotal infrastructures among all infrastructures for the development of the nation. Skilled human resource is the key factor for national development which is possible for an effective and relevant education system in the country. The main objective of this paper is to carefully explore, explicitly overview and comprehensively evaluate the contemporary grading system and conventional examination systems practiced in Nepal. The SLC examination system was the barrier for most of the students prior to introducing the letter grading system (2015/016) in Nepal. The stress of the students has been reduced by taking the Secondary Education Examination (SEE), which provided students with an opportunity to pursue higher education. Secondary level education has been evaluated by school leaving certificate (SLC) result before 2015 A.D. in percentage system. Nepalese students should have to go to Calcutta, Banaras, Haridwar and some other places of India for their SLC examination before 1990 B.S. The SLC Board started conducting examinations in Nepal in 1990 B.S. This examination had been called "Iron Gate" (MOES, 2003). The grading system is an integral part of the educational system that helps to enhance the capacity and relevance of the required knowledge, skills, and experiences to students.

Keywords: Iron gate, letter grading system, SEE, strengths, weakness, evaluation, Nepal

Introduction

A grading system in education is the process of employing standardized measurements of different levels of achievement in the particular course. The grading system at the school level has been designed in order to sort learners by ability and to promote students from the lower level to the higher level so as to ensure the availability of experts in all spheres for sustainable development. Therefore, the grading system has become one of the most popular tools for assessing students' performance that is mainly used in developed countries and practicing in developing countries. The traditional method of assessing the academic year of the semester or a specific period of School as well as University was the score (percentage) system. However, some of the countries have adapted letter grading systems and some others have a number system at the school level

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to ensure the performance of the students (Guskey, 2017). Various types of descriptive measures of students' performance are converted into grades that provide students results and achievement. This is followed by reflections on the possible purposes of grading and insights from the research that has examined the impact of grading on teaching and learning. The specific questions of this paper are: Does grading provide students with feedback that can enhance learning? How can grading motivate faltering students? To what extent does grading provide authentic data and information about student learning? This paper endeavors to answer the above questions by offering possible adjustments to our general approach to grading in school level education that instructors might consider.

Grades generally imply a set of symbols or numbers which are used to designate different levels of performance. Guskey (2010) has pointed out some purposes of grading:

- To communicate with the parents about their children's performance.
- To motivate the students self-evaluation.
- To guide the students to select for further academic programs.
- To improve the effectiveness of learners.
- To operate the appropriate responsibility of the students.

SLC exam in Nepal lasted for 82 years i. e, from 1934 to 2015, which seemed to have many challenges and obstacles to come into practice. During the course of 1980, a system was put into practice that was of little beneficial to the students for getting into and passing exams as students were only supposed to take a low-scoring subject for the next year. After 1980, the provision of compartment system was adopted in SLC, in which a maximum of two subjects with fifty percent low marks (at least 16 marks in any two subjects) in SLC could appear in compartment after one month of SLC result. There was the provision of sixty percent questions asked from class 10 and forty percent questions from class nine. Later, this provision was rejected in 2007; only ten class courses remain for SLC up to 2015 A.D.

Table 1: Marking system in SLC before 2015/2016 A.D.

Distinction	80% above	Excellent
First Division	60-79 %	Very good
Second Division	45-59%	Good
Third Division	32-44%	Average
Fail	Less than 32%	Weak /Fail

Source: <http://www.slcreresult.com>

The table above describes that the SLC marking system was in percentage before 2015/2016 A.D. in Nepal. More than 80% marks were considered as excellent students, 60 to 79 % marks regarded as very good students, 45 to 59 marks regarded as good students, 32 to 44% marks regarded as average, and less than 32% marks are known as failed/weak student.

SLC exam was regarded as one of the most important but most difficult exams in Nepal. Since it was an indicator to measure the success and failure of people in their life, success in the exam and success in life were interchangeable. It is an evident that a person who passed the SLC had a great respect in society and easily got jobs in the past. Therefore, students and teachers would study hard to gain success and respect in society. SLC exam had a good charm from 1934 to 2014 A.D. Furthermore, SLC passed students could easily get success in upper classes even on the university examination. However, there was much unhealthy competition among the schools, especially in private schools of cities.

Pros and Cons of SLC examination

SLC examination had gone through a lot of criticism. Government-funded schools had a low rate of SLC results. In remote and rural areas school's condition was pitiable. Many schools had gone nil in SLC. But the result of private school had better. 21 to 29 % SLC result seemed in government school where 70 to 79 % result in private school during 2010 to 2014. After every SLC result is published, school that receives exceptionally high scores are lured by big private schools are virtually bought to work as marketing material for them. (website wiki global) Bhattarai (2014) identifies for categories of negative consequences.

- Long lasting chronic consequences.
- Short and long term psychological consequences.
- Career related consequences.
- Extreme negative consequences.

As various criticism labeled against the SLC examination, government introduced grading system in 2015/2016. The name of SLC was changed SEE (Secondary Education Examination). The structure of Secondary level (Lower Secondary (6-8), Secondary Level (9-10) and higher secondary (11-12) also changed 8 to 12 class. The hardest national level SLC exam ended; not only examination quality of education also lost with SLC. Strengths of SLC

- Students and teachers were laborious.
- It maintained discipline in schools.
- Schools and teacher rewarded for the good result.
- Success students were honored.
- It had maintained quality.

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- Success student's family felt proud.
- Excellent students would get opportunity for further studies etc.

Weaknesses of SLC:

- Unhealthy competition among the schools.
- SLC phobia in the students.
- Dropout rate was high due to the iron-gate.
- Repetition of examinee in SLC.
- Inferiority among the unsuccessful student's in SLC.
- Only a few students could get opportunity for higher study.
- Marketing of private schools. etc.

Pros and Cons of SEE

Table 2: marking system in SEE after 2015/2016

Interval in percentage	Grade	Description	Grade Point
90 to 100	A+	Outstanding	3.6-4.0
80 to below 90	A	Excellent	3.2-3.6
70 to below 80	B+	Very good	2.8-3.2
60 to below 70	B	Good	2.4-2.8
50 to below 60	C+	Satisfactory	2.0-2.4
40 to below 50	C	Acceptable	1.6-2.0
30 to below 40	D+	Partially acceptable	1.2-1.6
20 to below 30	D	Insufficient	0.8-1.2
0 to below 20	E	Very weak	0-0.8

Source :<http://www.seeresult.com>

After long criticism and preparation, SLC examination was changed into SEE from 2015/2016 A.D. Developed countries and some of the developing countries had adopted grading system earlier. There are letter, GPA, percentage and mixed system as per the countries. Singh (2016) states students capabilities couldn't be interpreted with score. If any student gets 31 marks, he or she is fail. He or she is unable to continue study. On the other hand, if a student achieves 32 marks, he or she is able to continue study and getting job. This 1 mark is considered as a quality and the good luck of a person. One mark low means no knowledge and skill. Therefore, despite the various complexities, the grading system has become essential in Nepal.

Singh (2016) argues that the current grading system considers the error of measurement which means that if the error of measurement is assumed to be of 5 points, then a score of 85 can be somewhere between 80 (85-5) and 90 (85+5). Singh (2016) further points out that the aggregate letter A means 80 to 90 marks which can not express the all subject equally. There may B+ or A+ in the particular subject. Wagle (2016) remarks in his interview that the present evaluation system of secondary education examination reflects the capability of

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the students better. This system reduces the stress of the students regarding to examinations. He further remarks that there is no any official provision for letter F (fail).

Strengths of grading system:

- Students are free from stress of iron-gate.
- More number of students is getting opportunity for higher study.
- It reduced the unhealthy competition among the schools.
- Cut off the penalty of school for nil result.
- Punishment to the teacher for poor performance is eradicated.
- It checked the overflow of students in good school.
- Teachers have not pressure for the result.

Weaknesses of grading system:

- Students and teachers both are inactive.
- Quality is decreased.
- Unnecessary crowd is in the classes.
- Unskilled unemployed number is increasing.
- Responsibilities of teachers and schools is decreased.
- No more difference between brilliant and weak students.
- Work efficiency is not found in the degree holder.

Gutsy (2017) describes that grading and reporting are not essential to the instruction process and teachers do not need grades to teach whereas students can learn many things without grades. He emphasizes that regular checking on the students' learning progress is an essential aspect of successful teaching. Internal assignments, discussion, presentation, self motivation, increase students insight and competency which play vital role in quality improvement. Likewise, Miller (2013) has advocated that standard based system provides detailed feedback with reference to specific objectives. He cites that James Moffett and Betty Jane Wagner argue that students and teachers should be partners in learning and concentration should be on keeping the ownership of the work and goal setting with the students. He mentions that the teacher must notice each student's strengths and weaknesses and act upon them as per the students.

The government of Nepal, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has made decision a proposed Letter Grading System for the year 2022 onward as follows-

Table No 3: Purposed Letter Grading for 1 to 12

S.N	Percentage	Grading Score	Letter Value	Description
1	90 Above	4.0	A+	Outstanding
2	80 to 90	3.6	A	Excellent
3	70 to 80	3.2	B+	Very Good
4	60 to 70	2.8	B	Good

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S.N	Percentage	Grading Score	Letter Value	Description
5	50 to 60	2.4	C+	Satisfactory
6	40 to 50	2.0	C	Acceptable
7	35 to 40	1.6	D	Basic
8	Less than 35	-	NG	Non Graded

Source: Letter Grading Guidelines 2021

Nepal Government, Education, Science and Technology Ministry Curriculum Development Center has currently made decision for Grade one to twelve classes about grading system. 2022 onward all government schools and private schools must follow the grading letter system in all classes or levels in school. There was D⁺ D and E Letter at the bottom which means no fail. D and E achieved students could have chance for improving the letter. If they could not improve letter can change, they could even change to join upper classes for certain subject area. But this new changed letter grading system has no any change to upgrade the students those who have got less than 35 percentage (NG) Less than 1.6 Grade score means fail students. Biddyanath (2021) states that the standard is necessary for any level to maintain quality in education. All pass and regular upgrade system doesn't refer for quality to compare of the country education system. It makes impossible to the teachers and other concerned authority. To follow the minimum parameter some how rules and barriers are necessary.

Conclusion

To sum up, Nepal Educational Board has changed the School level evaluation system in 2015/2016 A.D., however, it was started in 1934 A.D. in Nepal. After introducing the letter system many students feel free from stress. They get more opportunities for class 11 and 12. The number of students increased in +2 levels. After SEE this letter system was applied in class 11 and 12. Apart from that, universities in Nepal including Tribhuvan University, Far Western University, Kathmandu University, Pokhara University has adopted grading system in undergraduate and graduate level. Even elementary school level uses letter grading system equally in both private and government schools. However, the letter grading system reduces the stress of students and attention towards study seems to have decreased. By using evaluation tools such as rubrics and blind scoring in grading can reduce the variability and bias in grading students work. Furthermore, reminding that grades are likely reduce inaccurate reflection of the student learning can reduce the assumption that instructors make about students.

However, the grading system requires the appropriate GPA for further study and university wise barriers for the selection of the subject in higher level. If the students do not get proper GPA, they will miss the opportunity for further study which may affect the performance of the students in the course due to a mismatch of interest. Along with letter grading system, setting up a question

paper, conducting the examination, checking answer sheets, coding and decoding, and secrecy of examination are the major areas for the value of examination. Training and guidelines are important for the entire procedure. As quoted by Aryal (2016) prominent educator Koirala has argued that students should be given a chance to improve their grade points in any number of subjects as per their wish instead of allowing supplementary exam for just two subjects as that of developed countries where students are given an opportunity to upgrade their points. Moreover, this will help in students preparing for the source they want to study.

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