Effectiveness of Letter Grading System in Secondary Level in the Context of Nepal

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Abstract

Education is one of the structural backbone among all structures 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. This research explores the effectiveness of the letter grading system at the secondary level of education in Nepal. The traditional percentage system has been used for decades but the government of Nepal transitioned to a letter grading system to enhance educational standards. This study investigates the view of students, teachers and educational administrators regarding the letter grading system, its impact on student motivation and academic performance.

A qualitative research design was employed, qualitative data. The study gathered survey data from 60 populations using structured questionnaires and conducted in-depth interviews with 15 participants. Thematic analysis of interview data helped clarify the survey findings. The main objective of this paper is to carefully explore effectiveness of the grading system at the secondary level of education in Nepal and comprehensively evaluate the contemporary grading system and conventional examination systems practiced in Nepal.

The main findings reveal the effectiveness of the letter grading system and its implementation in the secondary level, counseling, and tailored support to bridge academic gaps and enhance inclusivity and it also indicates that while the letter grading system has improved clarity in evaluation and motivation among students. The research concludes that letter grading system not only fosters equity in evaluation but also enriches the learning experience by valuing diversity as a source of strength, ensuring every child feels acknowledged and empowered. The stress of the students has been reduced by taking the Secondary Education Examination (SEE), which provides students with an opportunity to pursue higher education.

Key Words : Grading, Educational, Motivation, System, Provide

Introduction

The grading system is a worldwide practice system for labeling the quality of students' academic performance. It converts the score of a student into the continuum of grades, which is essential for rating and judging students' performance in different areas of achievement as well their global achievement. Multiple types of grading systems are practiced to rate the quality of students' performance. They can be broadly classified into absolute and relative grading systems. The relative grading system rates the students' performance in comparison to the specified group of students. These present the score in terms of norms such as grade, percentile and standard score norm. In contrast, the absolute grading system rates the performance of students in terms of predetermined standards of excellence based on their achievement in different areas of the course. A relative grading system is applied in a standardized test in which we are assured about the uniformity of the process of test development, its administration and scoring and interpretation of test scores.

However, all these processes are assured by the estimation of reliability and validity of the test, which is determined by empirical evidence in pretesting. These processes are not applied in academic tests employed in schools and colleges because of the threat to secrecy of the test. It is assumed that pretesting will break the secrecy of the test paper. However, the secrecy of test papers can be maintained by preparing a large "item bank" of pretested items. The traditional grading used in school and colleges for judging the quality of students' performance is absolute grading system in which the quality of performance of students judged against predetermined quality of standard such as distinction, first division, second division, third division, fail etc. or a, b, c, d and f and so on. These grading systems can be further classified into numerical and letter grading systems. In numerical grading system, the band of scores of students are termed as ranks of quality such as above 75% is termed as distinction and in letter grading system the band of scores are translated into letters such as a, b, c, d and f or e (excellent), g (good), s (satisfactory) and u (unsatisfactory). There are different levels of GPA in the different countries and levels .Mainly there are five points of the grading system (a, b, c, d and e) which will be translated into points by the following equivalents.

After long criticism and preparation, the SLC examination was changed into SEE from 2015/2016 A.D. Developed countries and some of the developing countries had adopted grading systems earlier. There are letters, 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 fails. He or she is unable to continue studying. On the other hand, if a student achieves 32 marks, he or she is able to continue studying and getting a 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. 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). Further points out that the aggregate letter 'A' means 80 to 90 marks which cannot express all subjects 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 the students better. This system reduces the stress of the students regarding examinations. He further remarks that there is no official provision for letter F (fail). The government of Nepal, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has made decision a proposed Letter Grading System for the year 2022 onward.

Objective

The objective of this study is to find out the effectiveness of the letter grading system in secondary level.

Literature Review

Realistic evaluation develops and then empirically tests the hypotheses about what outcomes are produced by what mechanisms in what contexts. The realistic approach tends to be more research-oriented, focusing on the underlying intervention theory and its behavioral assumptions at work, and the conditions supporting the intervention. The focus is on the most promising context mechanism outcome configurations (CMOCs), which show how interventions are meant to work in which populations and under what conditions. These can be viewed as mini-theories of change or links in an overall theory of change of an intervention. Each CMOC is, in effect, the subject of an evaluation and is tested against the available evidence.

According to Craig, (2012) there was a deviation in grading whether it should be the norm referenced or criterion-referenced, which clearly states the criteria for student learning. However, high schools traditionally use norm referenced grades to satisfy the requirement to rate students for university applications.

Guskey, (2017) stated that grading is one of an evaluator's greatest problems and most significant professional obligations. Despite the significance of this activity, teachers accept no official training in grading techniques and the efficiency of several grading approaches. Similarly, due to the shortsightedness and awareness about successful grading techniques, teachers prefer to choose designs that have more experience than students on the spirit and rationality of the LGS. As most teachers perform what was done to them. It is stated that implementing a letter grading system in the assessment will increase teachers' responsibility. The teacher must get training to be used in the classroom to achieve better results. Thus, by utilizing LGS with empathy, attitudes, teachers' experiences, and student performance may be enhanced and monitored.

The transition to a Letter Grading System (LGS) in Nepal was meant to modernize the educational evaluation environment. However as Adhikari, Ghimire, Neupane and Dhakal, (2018). point out, there is still a gap between policy and practice. While the research environment is specific to Surkhet, it mirrors larger national issues in implementing grading changes. There is an urgent need to improve stakeholders' knowledge of LGS, particularly in light of evaluation theories such as Realistic Evaluation.

Methodology

Qualitative research allows insight into people's behaviours, attitudes, motivations, aspirations, culture, experiences, lifestyles and even knowledge. Phenomenological research seeks to understand and describe the universal essence of a phenomenon. Here the study tries to explore how teachers feel and comprehend the LGS. It was designed phenomenologically and analysed using narrative descriptive approaches. Purposive sampling strategies are used in conjunction with developing a semi-structured in-depth interview protocol tool. As Creswell states in qualitative research, the researcher actively picks or determines the settings or participants, which aids the researcher in completely comprehending the research problem. Research participants were chosen from secondary school teachers only who were routinely engaged in teaching-learning activities and involved in the school assessment system of Nepal. An in-depth interview was taken face-to-face with the participants by recording audios, note taking and memos built up, if feasible, for data transcription and authentication.

Boyd says 2 to 10 participants often achieve research saturation. Similarly, Creswell suggests a phenomenological study that includes "extensive interview Qualitative research allows insight into people behaviours, attitudes, motivations, aspirations, culture, experiences,

lifestyles and even knowledge. Phenomenological research seeks to understand and describe the universal essence of a phenomenon. Here the study tries to explore how teachers feel and comprehend the LGS. It was designed phenomenologically and analysed using narrative or descriptive approaches. Purposive sampling strategies are used in conjunction with developing a semi-structured in-depth interview protocol tool. As Creswell states, in qualitative research, the researcher actively picks or determines the settings or participants, which aids the researcher in completely comprehending the research problem. Research participants were chosen from secondary school teachers only who were routinely engaged in teaching learning activities and involved in the school assessment system of Nepal. An in-depth interview was taken face-to-face with the participants by recording audios, note-taking, and memos built up, if feasible, for data transcription and authentication. Boyd says 2 to 10 participants often achieve research saturation.

Data and Interpretation

Its primary goals are to investigate teachers' perceptions of the letter grading system and the implementation issues in Nepal's school evaluation system. The government of Nepal introduced the letter grading system late in 2015, with no prior preparation, dissemination, or diffusion effort in the education sector. As a result, it caused several issues throughout its implementation. However with much effort in its reformation and performance, it gained the attention of popularity among the teachers, students, parents, and stakeholders. As a result, everybody understood its purpose and advantages. The evaluation system encourages talented and weak students to compete favourably in the classroom with total effort and power. At the same time, it advocates for eliminating the stress and embarrassment of both the student and parents. The Letter Grading System is founded on the assumption that information or knowledge is produced and may be continually expanded based on instructors' experiences and understanding of the same phenomena in different situations. As a result, constructivism is the theoretical framework of this study. "Various persons may build meaning in different ways, even with the same occurrence," according to the constructivist. Therefore, participants provide the meaning and idea of LGS in these ways as the foundation of these concerns. The total number of credits is divided by the aggregate score. They contain raw score, grade point, and grade point average intervals. It differs from the standard grading system.

This studies the effectiveness of the letter grading system (LGS) and its issues in the context of Birendranagar Municipality. Its primary goals are to investigate the effectiveness

of the letter grading system and the implementation issues in Nepal's school evaluation system. The government of Nepal introduced the letter grading system late in 2015, with no prior preparation, dissemination, or diffusion effort in the education sector. As a result, it caused several issues throughout its implementation. However, with much effort in its reformation and performance, it gained the attention of popularity among the teachers, students, parents, and stakeholders. Everybody understood its purpose and effectiveness. The evaluation system encourages talented and weak students to compete favorably in the classroom with total effort and power.

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However, the effectiveness of this system hinges on consistent implementation and adequate training for educators. The lack of uniformity in grading criteria can cause disparities in student assessment across schools, undermining the system's goal of fairness and clarity. The concept of students, teachers and other stakeholders can be presented as following way:

The Concept of DEO (DEO, RP, S S)

The concept of the chief of the district education office the chief of the district education office shows written and oral participation in this study. The chief of DEO argued, it is a new practice assessment system, only in the contest of Nepal but globally it is a very popular and effective assessment system. Different countries believe the student's performance and ability cannot count in the number. Number and student's ability and performance are different things used differently. It cannot show the quality of students. Different students and people have different abilities, so we can think and select by grade

which students have good ability in which subject. As with the numerical system the students get numbers differently in different subjects.

Any one of the students gets marks below mark then pass marks in the three subjects but he gets above then pass mark numbers in the other subject his result is fail, if he tried to compare in number. He gets the highest number in the other subject but he fails. So, the letter grading system is relevant in the contest of Nepal and other countries. It can address these types of problems. As the above mentioned example the student gets A+ grade in 3 subjects and E grade in two subjects. He can participate in the grade improvement exam and he can join for higher education of his interest. He can do well in which subject he gets A+ grade so he can go ahead. So he said, it is relevant as a global spread and for all the stakeholders. He also wrote the answer to a questionnaire, making our education evaluation to international level, letter grading system is needed to implement in our education system. It is needed to evaluate a student's achievement with positive eyes also. So, he said it is also necessary for the global competition.

School supervisor and resource person

There are two resource persons and two school supervisors are selected for the study. There are many similarities in their answers about the effectiveness of the letter grading system. They gave oral and written answers. They have quite different views about the relevance of the letter grading system however they agree on the point that it is a global sparse assessment system. In the contest of Nepal there is no high achievement of education. Nepal cannot achieve the national goals of education. Nepal cannot grow and does not apply a technical education system. The demand nowadays is job oriented, technical and competition based education systems. The numerical system and pass fail system cannot address the above mentioned education system so the grading system is relevant for the students, guardians and nation. One of the resource persons said that it is a widely accepted system and for the output, it is relevant for Nepal.

Dec 30, 2014-improved quality in school instruction is the only way for Nepal to overcome its myriad challenges, from menial jobs abroad to youth fighting other people's wars, while productive hillsides are left barren. The challenge of building schools is overcome, but poor schooling still saps the energy of our young, and of the nation as a whole. Quality in school education is the most important national agenda, particularly focusing on government school where 80 percent attend perhaps with an attempt to introduce quality, the

government has just announced its intention to scrap the 80- plus-year-old system of pass-fail in the SLC examination the students will now receive a subject specific 'A' through 'E' letter grade and will not have to pass all eight papers in the SLC.

The Concept of Teachers and Guardians

In this study there are about nine guardian and12 teachers. Same questions are asked for the teachers and guardians but the oral question and answer is quite different. According to research question, the concepts of teacher and guardian descriptively analyzed below:

The question was asked to teachers and guardians about the relevance of the letter grading system. They focus on the current situation of the education system and the global spirit of the grading system. They said the letter grading system is essential for all the stakeholders. If the grading system effectively applies in the assessment system it gives a positive effect in the evaluation system and education system. One of the secondary level teachers of a governmental school wrote "It is relevant to compare with the other country". Nepal is a developing country, in our country all the systems are in the practice level so the education system is also in the practice level. The letter grading system is also in the practice level. There are many types of grading system such as rank based, slandered based etc. It is also a practice level which type of grading system is suitable for Nepal.

The other teacher of a private school gives his concept in the following way. It determines the level of capacity of students it is relevant and internationally standard." In his concept the relevance of the letter grading system is to increase national competency level with other countries". Guardians are also satisfied with the letter grading system. Their concept also similar with teacher and other stakeholder one of the guardians said it increase actual educability level and write it helps to go ahead according to their ability and interest and also prevent discrimination among students. Their main focus is to replace the pass-fail system. It is the most relevant aspect of the letter grading system. When the student gets below then pass mark in more than two subjects they cannot go ahead, so his study is stopped. After the implication of the letter grading system the students go ahead with their interest and capacity. There are no pass-fail system, all the students move ahead according to their ability, choice and interest. It is most relevant to the letter grading system. As a whole the teacher of a private (Secondary School) said, the students, teacher and guardians are far from fear of failure. The students do not feel we are failing, all the students pass in the letter grading system.

The English teachers involved in this study. The English teacher also comes close to the above given reason for the effectiveness of the letter grading system. Their concept is that the score system is very old and not an effective system for all the stakeholders of the assessment and education system. It cannot measure the students' ability, choice, interest and other talents. They believe it should have enough discrimination power. It should grade the students along with a clear indication about the academic abilities of them in different areas of achievement. One of the English teachers has a different concept about the letter grading system. He said, the relevance of the letter grading system is not well implemented in all the grades. It is only strongly implemented in the SEE examination. According to him, it is not relevant only in the SEE examination. If it implies from grade 1 it is more relevant then only in SEE examination, but it is beginning to fade. What never the government put the steep in is well Comparable.

What seems to have seen done is simply to convert the numbers to letter grades (over 90= A+, 80-89+A, 70-79+B+, 60-69=B, 40-59=C, 25-39=D, and Less than 25=E). The graduation students are now placed in five categories instead of spread across 1to 100 marks, with 32 for passing. There is no 'f' or failing grade.

The Concept of Students

There are mainly the students of four secondary schools of Surkhet district, two private and two governmental Schools are involved in this study. The questions asked and given to write in group and individually among the selected students. The answer of the question is described in the following way which is given by the selected students. They view it as relevant because it gives the opportunities to move ahead by replacing the failed system.
It also replaces the student's discrimination, they said, by comparing types of numerical mark sheet and grade sheet. There are 32 percent marks in the SEE examination in the numerical system, if any of the students gets 31 marks he/she is a failure student. Only one percent mark stops his/her further step of study, he/she has failed. So the letter grading system replaces this types of problem. One of the students from a governmental school said and wrote that students scoring fewer marks and weak students will be eligible for promotion to grade 11. It is the most effective grading system. The group of students put their concept about the letter grading system. The letter grading system is better than the numerical system. It is also effective for international competition and to improve the education and demand of the

contemporary world etc. They also said that according to the present situation it is not a new thing. Changing the new system and discovering the new system in the education system.

Exploring the roots of how teachers, students, guardians, and other stakeholders view and comprehend the letter grading system (LGS) and its effectiveness is the main objective of this research study. The end product is a synthesis of all the participants' opinions that shares a profound view of their lived experiences and understanding. The in-depth interview, with recorded transcriptions, has assisted the researcher in detecting respondents' words and thinking patterns setting the scene for subsequent theme emergence. It was achieved by observing trends in how participants' opinions expressed their facial expressions and comprehension of the letter grading system (LGS). Then the implications were organized into groups to facilitate the formulation and interpretation of the themes.

The qualitative survey allowed the researchers to interview all promised teachers, students, guardians, and other stakeholders about the effectiveness of letter grading and how they practiced and understood it. Twelve teachers who could speak about their own experiences with the letter grading system (LGS) and other students, teachers, and other stakeholders said and wrote answers to a given question and its issues were selected for the interview. The descriptions below were intended to assist the participants in experiencing the spirit of their stories. One of the interview probe questions the researchers asked the instructors was what guidance they would offer concerning letter grading. When all the participants' comments were compiled and fully defined, they were provided to represent their voices. Participant 1 is a permanent teacher in a Government school. His engagement included students, the teacher government and intellectual groups. He is now going to designate the first as a letter grading system (LGS). He argued that letter grading assigns students' levels based on their achievement in specific courses. He recognized an evaluation system that assesses a student's accomplishment based on overall performance during the academic year.

This study explained the letter grading system (LGS), which was developed to measure overall learner performance achievement. Teachers, students, and parents have about the same view and attitudes about letter grading. It is because the letter grading system (LGS) has become an effective evaluation system. Therefore, stakeholders are enthused by its characteristics and the benefits and effectiveness. According to him, "Letter grading is a technique that helps ease exam students' nervousness. Therefore, according to their

performance, most students have been allowed to enroll for further study." As an inherent concern of the letter grading system (LGS). It must standardize its ideals and standards to sustain its educational quality. Therefore, this system had intended specific ways and principles in our school assessment approach to maintaining social organization." He proposes the three factors below that analyses the effectiveness of the letter grading system (LSG). The utmost purpose of a grading system is to rate the students' performance in such a way that its quality can be determined. It should rate their performance in an understandable form. The scores of students are termed as "predictors" in technical terms. It does not tell about the standard of quality of performance only, it also predicts about future success of a particular student in different areas of learning. According to this research, grading system must encompass the students, teachers and guardians are far from fear of failure. Letter grading is a technique that helps ease exam students' nervousness. It determines the level of capacity of students it is relevant and internationally standard. The letter grading system offers a clear framework for understanding academic performance. Students, parents, and educators can easily interpret grades, promoting transparency in the evaluation process. The letter grading system encourages students to develop a broader range of skills, including critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving.

The system alleviates the stress associated with marginal differences in numeric scores by grouping performance into broader categories it reduces unhealthy. The grading system grades the students along with the clear indication about the academic abilities of them in different areas of achievement. This system contributes to the improved literacy rate of Nepal. Not only the technical person but the common people should be able to understand the capability of students in different areas of achievement. It should indicate the abilities of students in different areas of achievement and their global capability. It is also effective for international competition and to improve the education system and demand of the contemporary world.

Conclusion

Letter grading system not only fosters equity in evaluation but also enriches the learning experience by valuing diversity as a source of strength, ensuring every child feels acknowledged and empowered. The stress of the students has been reduced by taking the Secondary Education Examination (SEE), which provides students with an opportunity to pursue higher education.

This research study the letter grading system is one of the effective and relevance assessment systems or very effective or relevance measurement of the students' performance. Nepal Educational Board 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 further studies. The number of students increased in +2 levels. However, the letter grading system reduces the stress of students and attention towards study seems to have decreased. 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 to reduce inaccurate reflection of the student learning can reduce the assumption that instructors make about students.

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