



## Perceptions of Students and Teachers Regarding Semester System of Examination in Higher Education in Pakistan

Tariq Mehmood<sup>1</sup>, Abdullah<sup>2</sup>, Amir Zaman<sup>3</sup>, Sajjad Ali<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,3</sup>Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan,

<sup>2</sup>PhD Scholar, Northern University Nowshera, Pakistan

<sup>3</sup>Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan

<sup>4</sup>M.Phil Scholar, Bacha Khan University, Charsadda

*Received: September 1, 2014*

*Accepted: November 13, 2014*

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze perceptions of students and teachers regarding Semester System of Examination at Higher Education Level in Pakistan. A sample of 300 students and 50 teachers of 10 different departments of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan were selected from seven campuses through convenient sampling techniques. Self-administrated questionnaires were used as a tool for data collection. Data were analyzed by using SPSS software applying mean score. Results of the research study confirmed that semester system is effective method of effectual learning. However, some of the students disagreed due to excessive drawbacks. Majority in the faculty were in favour of semester system in higher education due to its multi- dimensional perspectives.

**KEY WORDS:** Conventional system, Semester system, Higher education, Perception

### INTRODUCTION

Subcontinent witnessed and launched the native system of examination with the establishment of mother universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857. The induction of this system of examination opened an unending chain of criticism. During the period from 1857 to 1990, untiring effects were made to streamline and reform the examination system but all went futile. Numerous commissions and committees under the supervision of prominent educationist joined heads to locate and repair the weak areas and to in rich the acceptability of the examination. The quality of examination is still defective and vulnerable Aggarwal, (2003) [1].

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary of English examination means to test by questioning. This questioning may be verbal or non-verbal but its sole purpose is to test and judge the ability of students' abilities and capabilities for their future academic endeavors i.e. admission in higher classes and also for jobs. Generally, the examination simply means to judge the academic achievement of the students. It is normally based on laid down course for a specific time period. Collins and O' Brien, (2011)[2]. Hill (1982)[3] stated that examination is normally a research based activity and research is a systematic process for finding solution to a problem. It is an important and significant aspect of the teaching and learning activity and the students' whole life depends upon it. This is normally conducted and administered by educational institutes as summative evaluation, which includes not only students' performance but also teachers' performance and the curriculum etc as a whole.

Examination is an instrument which normally judges students' overall academic performance including their expertise, mastery, learning and abilities they have achieved during a specified and allocated time. It is like a goal, inducement, cause and catalyst. It guides both the teachers and students towards achievement of common goal. An excellent testing means the fixation and measurement of both teaching and learning Duncen, (2012)[4], Gay, (1985) [5].

Thomas and Page (1978) [6] stated that examination and testing are the instruments to measure students' mental capacity and excellence. Examination, in this sense, is a comprehensive term. It is also a decisive factor for both the teachers and learners. Examination, not only measures the performance and excellence of the students, but it also determines the reputation and quality of the institutes Government of the Punjab, (1992) [7].

Pakistan has evolved the colonial education system, which was initiated by the British. It was founded on accumulative and mechanical learning annually. The decision parameters were established on the summative examination conducted at the end of academic year. Annual examination furnishes the students with ample time of one year to absorb and understand the taught ideas. It is focused on objective and subjective portions but is mainly bending towards subjective assessment. The British have partly abandoned it 50 years ago.

Annual examination system has a bulk of loopholes. It develops boredom and laziness in students. It gives birth to indiscipline in students and degrades the value of teachers. Annual exam stops behavioural grooming of students. It encourages malpractices that disfigure this system.

Annual system of examination is based on evaluation at the end of each academic year. It assesses factual and not conceptual and creative capacities of the students. It is teacher oriented instead of students oriented. It is entirely based on rote and mechanical learning and provides unbelievable marks/grades to students. It lacks accuracy and testability of examination papers, which do not prove the validity and reliability of curriculum and methodologies. It lacks skilled paper setters and papers markers which makes it dubious Mirza, (1999) [8].

Oxford Concise Dictionary defines semester system as “a half-year term in a University”. It has a logical and systematic division of syllabi extended to six months. The process of examination system to semester system was adopted on test based policy in 1968 by the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad. Slowly and gradually it filtered into all the well-known universities in the era of 1971 – 1976 with superb feedback and results. Semester system has strong putting because it focuses on multilateral development i.e. teachers, students and curriculum. It checks and develops academic and non-academic faculties of student. Semester system works on the Holy Trika i.e. faculty → syllabi → students. It has graphical and formative process of evaluation that ensures genuine scanning of students, teachers and their process of sharing and re-sharing of thoughts, concepts and ideas.

Keeping in view all the demerits of annual system, it was replaced by semester system keeping the productivity and value of semester system Patil, (1984) [9].

Semester system is the latest and futuristic system, which is based on the division of curriculum on equal importance in each semester. It is based on semester which is usually timed from 16 to 18 weeks. It omits the annual studied course. It distributes one and two years courses into two and four semester Ballantyne, (2003) [10].

The following were the two major objectives of the study:

1. To find out the conceptions of teachers and students regarding the effectiveness of the Semester System of Examination.
2. To make useful suggestions for the improvement of Semester System at University level.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

The population of the study included 7000 students and 300 teachers of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. The sample of 300 students and 50 teachers was taken conveniently from 10 different departments i.e. Botany, Chemistry, Computer Science, Management Sciences, English, Islamic Studies, Mathematics, Physics, Education and Zoology. 30 students each were taken from each department, similarly 05 teachers were taken from each department as the convenient sample of the study.

**Table 1. Analysis of Students' Responses**

**N = 300**

Title – 1 Items	Total. Res.	Title – 2					Title - 3 Mean Score
		SA	A	UD	DA	SD	
Semester System provides thorough understanding of concepts.	300	106	92	15	81	6	3.70
In Semester System Students are tested through different evaluating techniques.	300	108	90	15	75	12	3.69
Semester System develops better presentation skills.	300	100	98	6	70	26	3.58
Semester System is more conducive for learning.	300	170	68	2	60	26	4.24
Semester System is more costly as compare to annual system.	300	153	69	12	21	41	3.86
Semester System keeps students over burden.	300	98	92	21	33	46	3.44
Semester System provides better learning & evaluation.	300	111	91	9	36	53	3.57
In Semester System faculty resort to favoritism and biased.	300	130	93	1	54	22	3.85
Students obtain comparatively higher grades in Semester System than Annual System.	300	111	109	6	7	67	3.63
Students cannot find enough time for co-curricular activities in Semester System.	300	119	101	16	12	52	3.74

### A. Table No. 1 shows that

1. According to the vast majority of the respondents that semester system provides thorough understanding of concepts. It means that semester system is much more knowledge-oriented than that of annual system. Mean score is 3.70.
2. Most of the respondents i.e. 66% were of the view that in semester system different techniques are used for testing and judging the students' performance. It means that semester system is proficient i.e. covering all the aspects of students performance.

3. Approximately 66% of respondents agreed that semester system does enhance presentation skills in students. It means that semester system is entirely based upon research based presentation therefore students are motivated for presentation.
4. Nearly 69% of the respondents were in favour conducive environment for learning in the semester system. It means that the commuting and discussion between the teachers and students are at a high level. That's why the helpful environment for learning is found in semester system.
5. The majority of students (74%) strongly agreed that semester system is much expensive than annual system.
6. According to 63% respondents semester system increase the workload / burden for students. It means that semester system has variety of activities that's why it is burdensome.
7. A majority of (67%) students was of the view that semester system provides better learning and evaluation. It means that teachers are fully prepared during their teaching. That's why they also go for exact evaluation of students' academic achievement.
8. More than two third (76%) of the respondents strongly agreed that faculty members are involved in favoritism, nepotism and biased attitude. It means that the teachers don't have lofty character.
9. Majority of the students (63%) do support the statement that students obtained comparatively higher grades in semester system than annual system. It means that the contents are selected from equally distributed syllabuses.
10. Overwhelming majority of the respondents are (73%) supported the statement that semester system cannot provide enough time for co-curricular activities. It means that the tight schedules of semester system should be relaxed up to some extent.

**Table 2. Analysis of Faculty Members' Responses**

**N = 50**

Items	Total. Res.	Title – 2					Title - 3
		SA	A	UD	DA	SD	
Semester System provides thorough understanding of concepts.	50	20	11	9	6	4	3.74
In Semester System Students are tested through different techniques.	50	17	14	5	4	10	3.48
Semester System provides better presentation skills.	50	30	5	5	5	5	4.00
Semester System is more conducive for learning.	50	25	7	6	5	6	3.74
Semester System is more costly as compare to annual system.	50	35	3	4	5	3	4.24
Semester System keeps students over burden.	50	32	5	3	6	4	4.1
Semester System provides better learning & evaluation.	50	30	6	4	4	6	4.00
In Semester System faculty resort to favoritism and biased.	50	16	12	10	6	6	3.52
Students obtain comparatively higher grades in Semester System than Annual System.	50	34	3	5	3	5	4.16
Students cannot find enough time for co-curricular activities in Semester System.	50	36	4	2	4	4	4.28

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

**Results given in Table – 2**

1. Majority of the teachers (62%) are on the view that semester system provides thorough understanding of concepts. It means that semester system is totally research and activity based, that's why students get thorough understanding and in-depth knowledge of concepts.
2. According to the majority of the teachers (62%) it is true that in semester system students are tested / evaluated through different evaluating techniques, that is, quizzes, seminars and presentations are also considered the part of evaluation.
3. More than two – third faculty members (70%) consider that semester system develops better presentation skills in the students. It means that semester system is thoroughly based upon the presentations on the part of the students.
4. 64% faculty members have agreed that semester system is more conducive and congenial for learning. It means that the teacher and evaluator are the same, therefore, the learning atmosphere is maintained by both i.e. teachers and students.
5. According to the views of 76% faculty members, semester system is more costly as compared to annual system. It means that students have to pay for different activities inside the class and for other related activities. Furthermore, the fee per semester is also very high and out of the reach of a common student.

6. Majority of the teachers (74%) state that semester system keeps students over burden and overwork. It means that students remain busy in their studies throughout the semester and this is the actual essence of semester system.
7. More than two – third of the faculty members (72%) respond that semester system provides better learning and evaluation because the students are under the strict eyes of the teachers and due to sessional marks the students remain disciplined and study oriented and that is the reason that semester system provides better learning and evaluation of the students.
8. According to 56% teachers it is true that semester system breeds favoritism and biased attitude in the teachers.
9. Students obtain comparatively higher grades in semester system than annual system because the semester system is totally study oriented and that is the reason that 74% teachers say ‘yes’ to this item. It means that teachers are also satisfied with the semester system and regarding students’ performance.
10. Semester system does not accommodate time consuming co-curricular activities and that is the perception of 80% teachers also. It means that for co-curricular activities the students will have to think keeping in mind the tight schedule of semester.

## RESULTS

After going through the related literature regarding the study two questionnaires on a five point likert scale were designed to get data to evaluate the students’ and teachers’ understanding and insight about the semester system of evaluation (examination) in higher education at University level. The questionnaires had 10, 10 items respectively. The questionnaires were the data collecting tools for the study and they were administered personally to the target sample. The return of the questionnaires was 100%.

The students’ and teachers’ responses were carefully analyzed, calculated and tabulated in the light of the stated objectives of the study. The statistical tool SPSS 18 version was used in the analysis. The responses were obtained on two and out Likert’s scale: 1. Strongly agree, 2. Agree, 3. Undecided, 4. Disagree, 5. Strongly disagree. The results were tabulated in two different tables: Table – 1 and Table – 2 (Appendixes I and II).

## DISCUSSION

Each response was separately analyzed and the findings were presented in Table – 1 and Table – 2 (Appendixes I and II).

## CONCLUSION

In the Universities of Pakistan both the systems of evaluation are in vogue i.e. semester system as well as annual system. The annual system of examination (evaluation) is gradually being replaced by semester system due to the demerits and weaknesses of the annual system of examination. Semester system is considered better evaluation system than the annual evaluation system but semester system is also not free from demerits and flaws.

In the light of the present study, the responses of teachers and students are analyzed carefully. In the light of the findings of this research study, the students state that semester system breeds and promotes subjectivity in the teachers rather than objectivity. It means that teachers fall prey to personal likeness and dis-likeness. According to students, the teachers award internal (sessional) marks without proper and thorough justification. Both the teachers and students are on the view that semester system is expensive and costly as compared to annual system. Both the faculty members and students have agreed that semester system keeps the students overburden and overwork. Furthermore, the evaluation of students in semester system remains continue throughout the semester. The learning environment in semester system is very conducive and disciplined.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been made under the light of the results, findings and conclusion of this study for the high-ups of universities in Pakistan.

1. The level of teachers’ competency should be enhanced through different workshops for the more better provision of conceptual as well as factual knowledge.
2. The evaluating techniques should be made more reliable and valid for the better measurement of students’ performance.
3. The tools and aids for quality presentation should be provided.
4. In the conducive learning environment of the semester system, the quarries of the students may be eliminated.

5. The universities should adopt innovative techniques to increase their revenue rather than relying upon only the fees of the students so that the cost of semester may be decreased and brought in the reach of the common people.
6. The Relative Grading Methods must be introduced in the semester system so that the biased attitude and favoritism may be curbed.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Aggarwal, J. (2003). *Theories and Principles of Education*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.
- [2] Ballantyne, C. (2003). Online evaluations of teaching: An examination of current practice and considerations for the future. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 2003 (96), 103-112.
- [3] Collins, J. W., & O'Brien, N. P. (2011). *The Greenwood dictionary of education*: Greenwood.
- [4] Duncan, N. (2012). Beyond testing: towards a theory of educational assessment. *Professional Development in Education*, 38 (4), 691-693.
- [5] Government of the Punjab, (1992). Report of Commission for Evaluation of Examination System and Education of Malpractices. Lahore: Education Department. p. 19-21,39- 40.
- [6] Gay, L.R. (1985). *Educational Evaluation and Measurement*. London: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company. p.15
- [7] Mirza, M. (1999) 'Examination system and teaching and practice of teachers at secondary, Higher Secondary and O'Level. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, No. 1, Lahore: Institute of Education and Research Quaid –E-Azam Campus, University of the Punjab.
- [8] Page, G.T and Thomas, J.B. (1978). *International Dictionary of Education*. Kegan Page London: UK. p.26
- [9] Patil, V. (1984). *The semester system: substance and problems*: Stosius Inc/Advent Books Division.