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# Semester System Practices in Public Sector Universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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**Abstract-** The study explored undergraduate student's perceptions of the semester system practices in Public sector Universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study was descriptive and a survey method was used to collect data. For this purpose data was collected through a structured questionnaire, covering five aspects of the semester system i.e. curriculum, syllabus coverage, class regularity, teacher and teaching methods, and evaluation process, and one open-ended question about the drawbacks of the system. The questionnaire was validated and its reliability was found 0.87 through Cronbach alpha. The students identified non-regularity in the classes, teacher's favoritism in marking, lack of preparation of lecture, incomplete course, over the workload of students for assignments and presentation as drawbacks of the semester system.

**Keywords:** semester system, curriculum, course coverage, teachers and teaching methods, course coverage, evaluation process, university

## I. INTRODUCTION

Universities play a vital role in the successful commitment to the transition of skills to their young people which eventually contribute to more sustainable economic development. Higher education is the cornerstone of every society; it plays a vital role in creativity and the growth of human resources and the survival of the information economy (Dill & Vught, 2010). The level of higher learning influences the quality of a country's human power (Marsh, 2009).

In 2001 Pakistan's government ordered all of Pakistan's higher education institutions to move from (British-type) to (American type) semester systems. The term in a school or university, particularly North America, usually lasting from 15 to 18 weeks is known as the semester (Mahmood, 2001). Many universities in the public and private sector have a semester system. Time to time assessments of semesters allows students to develop tests and other documentation and decreases the stress of learning. In semester system students and teachers both busy all time. Students are active learners. They do assign mental and project work. Chandio, Sindher, and Gulrez, (2013) stated that in semester system teachers have a heavy workload and as they are busy in teaching, continuously assess students' performance, and keeping a record of students grading, development of research papers, handling of the new admissions process, and many other administrative duties. In the semester system, the academic section is of 16 weeks and two weeks are for mid and final term exams. In semester system students learn through activities, According to Abro (2014), a semester system provides students with the ability to polish them on a wide scale by invitation, lectures, group debate and mid-term exams at frequent intervals. Similarly, surprise assessments and semester method quizzes allow students to obtain full grades for their final exams, so they ready students for them before the exam. Batool, Ahmad, and Ch, (2018) believe that the semester system does not let the students indulge in political activities due to their continuous involvement in academic activities. In semester system practices clarity of content and its presentation, communication among students, the involvement of students in regular class activities and creativity, and focus on performance are the important aspects for students' satisfaction (Long et al. 2014).

Continuous and regular involvement of students in assignments preparation, its presentations, quiz, test and formative assessment of student reduce the burden of students for the exam as compared to the annual system and they always keep busy in their studies (Aslam, Younis, Sheik, Maher &Abbasi, 2012).

According to Subedi, (2019)regular classes, conducive academic environment, continuous assessment system, timely, positive and constructive feedback and less political interruption in the examination, are good practices of this system. Semester system is considered as the most effective way of effectual learning (Munnawar&Awan, 2019; Sardar, Maqsood, Jawad, Akhta, &Latif, 2019), it is the responsibility of the authorities and specially teacher to contribute to the implementation and success of the semester system (Sharma, 2016). Efficient and effective execution of the semester system relies on different requirements. This includes well-structured curricula, course coverage within defined time, the regularity of courses, prompt and positive input to teachers' pupils; open teachers for pupils outside the classroom; provision of material services for students such as state of the art libraries and computing equipment; the highest degree of privacy and secrecy in exams; Evaluation clarity and grade; appropriate semester results declaration etc (Wolff, &Tinney, 2006;Jadoon, Jabeen, &Zeba, 2008).

The teachers are responsible for designing the curriculum and then accordingly assessment and evaluation of student's performance. But unfortunately, some teachers misuse this freedom and not taking classes regularly. There are various academic and administrative goals, and several compromises have to be made to tackle external and internal stresses and to resolve the system's inefficiencies (Shoukat, & Muhammad, 2015).The appraisal framework is very significant in the regulation of the education cycle as it decides the quality of the system and facilitates the management of improvements in curriculum, content and teaching methods (Chongbang& Campus, 2014). For this reason, it requires comprehensive scope and complexity to include the students in assessing their abilities, capacity and knowledge of the teaching and curriculum material. The semester system gives students an opportunity for continued learning and evaluation/feedback and a deeper understanding of the subject. Class contact will be more concentrated due to constant involvement between students and teachers (Marsh, 2009). A semester system allows for greater flexibility and versatility to plan and offer a range of courses which students can select flexibly to increase the quality of their education. The semester system is a formative, continuous and internal evaluation system that promotes the teaching-learning process.

The efficient and functional execution of the semester framework depends on numbers of conditions. Any of them are well-designed curricula, courses coverage within a prescribed time, daily classroom, prompt and positive input from teachers and students, accessibility of teachers to students from outside, access to information tools for students, maximum privacy and confidentiality during tests, the openness of evaluation and grading processes, prompt declaration (Jadoon, Jabeen&Zaba, 2012). Trivedi and Soni, (2013).stated that Semester system is not only an examination system rather an education system with the motto of continuous, comprehensive and in-depth learning aiming at capacity building of the students. Students comment on activities such as grading and appraisal, course performance, instructor conduct and class regularity (Anthony &Walshaw, 2009) However, the majority of students are happy with the method at the same time (Reddan, 2013). These split opinions oblige the student to analyzetheir understanding of the semester structure activities of public sector universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The result of the study may help the manager and policymaker to develop and make certain preparations and decisions that will help facilitate the better interpretation of the semester structure at a university level so that higher education will reach the desired goals. This research would help teachers improve the learning process and implement effective instructional approaches to include these tools which can be useful in achieving educational goals. This research would allow HEC to lay down the guidelines for better semester quality assurance.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The undergraduate students studying under semester system enrolled in session 2018-19 in public sector universities of Hazara division. At the first stage, five departments were selected from natural and social sciences disciplines, from each department 20 students were selected. In this way, total sample wise was 400

students selected through stratified random sampling techniques, out of which 144 were female and 256 were male students.

The study was a descriptive study and survey method was used for data collection. For the collection of data questionnaire consisting of 40 closed and an open-ended question was designed after a thorough review of the literature. The questionnaires designed on five points Likert type scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. There was a total of 40 items covering five important aspects of semester system, curriculum, syllabus coverage, the regularity of classes, teachers and methods of teaching and evaluation process. The questionnaire was validated through expert opinions. The reliability for the whole scale was calculated through Cronbach alpha and it was 0.87. The researchers personally visited the universities several times and collected the data with 100% return rate. The data was analyzed through frequency, percentage, mean score, and t-test through the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS-21

### III. RESULTS

**Table1. The satisfaction of undergraduate students regarding aspects of the semester system**

Aspects of the semester system	Mean	Std. Deviation
Curriculum	4.2	1.18
Syllabus coverage	3.56	1.26
Regularity of classes	3.72	1.27
Methods of teaching	3.79	1.15
Evaluation process	3.24	1.11

Categorization of Mean score:1.0-2.49 = Low satisfaction, 2.5-3.49= Average satisfaction, 3.5-5.00= high satisfaction

Table1. Illustrates that students satisfaction regarding the aspects of curriculum (Mean=4.2, Std.Dev=1.18), Syllabus (Mean=3.56, Std.Dev=1.26), regularity of classes (Mean=3.72,Std.Dev= 1.27) and methods of teaching (Mean=3.79, Std.Dev=1.15) are high level. The statistical value shows that students' satisfaction for the evaluation process is of average level

**Table 2.Gender wise comparative views of undergraduate students regarding semester system practices**

	Gender	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Curriculum	Male	3.79	0.61	398	1.24	0.214
	Female	3.70	0.57			
Syllabus coverage	Male	3.76	0.57	398	.540	.589
	Female	3.29	0.54			
Regularity of classes	Male	3.72	1.01	398	.281	.779
	Female	3.69	0.87			
Methods of teaching	Male	3.80	0.77	398	.355	.723
	Female	3.77	0.71			
Evaluation process	Male	3.66	0.47	398	1.18	.236
	Female	3.58	0.65			

The results are significant if  $p < 0.05$

Table 2 shows that that there is no significant difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) between the perception of male and female students regarding the aspects of curriculum ( $p = 0.214 > 0.05$ ), syllabus coverage ( $p = 0.589 > 0.05$ ), regularity of classes ( $p = 0.779 > 0.05$ ), methods of teaching ( $p = 0.723 > 0.05$ ), and evaluation process ( $p = 0.236 > 0.05$ ). However, the mean score shows that male students are comparatively more satisfied than female students

**Table 3.Discipline wise comparative views of undergraduate students regarding semester system practices**

	Gender	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Curriculum	Social science	3.75	0.59	398	.106	0.915
	Natural science	3.80	0.60			
Syllabus coverage	Social science	3.97	0.54	398	1.40	.136
	Natural science	3.53	0.59			
Regularity of classes	Social science	3.72	0.91	398	.29	.766
	Natural science	3.69	1.05			
Methods of teaching	Social science	3.79	0.71	398	.037	.97
	Natural science	3.79	0.82			
Evaluation process	Social science	3.66	0.67	398	.98	.32
	Natural science	3.59	0.71			

**Table 5. The drawback in the semester system**

S.N	Identified drawback by the respondents	N	f	%
1	Mostly courses remain incomplete.	400	314	78.50%
2	Lack of regularity of classes by teacher.	400	248	62 %
3	Teachers favour some students in marking.	400	236	59 %
4	Teachers do not prepare lectures.	400	224	56 %
5	Co-Curriculum activities are not included in the semester system.	400	221	55 %
6	The checked scripts one not discussed with the students.	400	150	37.50%
7	The heavy workload of assignments and presentation on students	400	110	27.50%
8	Limited knowledge on the part of students	400	105	26.20%

The results are significant if  $p < 0.05$

Table No. 2 shows that there is no significant difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) between the natural and sciences discipline students regarding the aspects of curriculum ( $p = 0.915 > 0.05$ ), syllabus coverage ( $p = 0.136 > 0.05$ ), regularity of classes ( $p = 0.766 > 0.05$ ), methods of teaching ( $p = 0.97 > 0.05$ ), and evaluation process ( $p = 0.32 > 0.05$ ). However, the mean score shows that social sciences students are comparatively more satisfied than female students.

Table No. 5 shows that students identified different drawbacks in the prevailing semester system. 78% of students identified that mostly courses remain incomplete, 62% identified lack of regularity in the classes, 59% students reported favoritism in marking, and 56% reported that teachers are not preparing lectures. The students (55%) reported that there is lack of co-curricular activities in semester system; about 38% responded that checked scripts are not discussed with students, 28 % reported heavy workload of assignments and presentation on students and 26 % identified limited knowledge on the part of students.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed that the students satisfied with the semester system practices regarding curriculum. This result is in line with Bista (2016) and found that teachers have a positive opinion towards the semester system. Teachers use a different set of activities, continuous evaluation is carried out. The semester system is more efficient than annual system similar results were obtained by that BS (Hon's) student program have been optimistic about prevalent semester framework trends in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan public sector universities (Kalita, 2017; Aslam, Younis, Sheik, Maher, and Abbasi, 2012). Dangi, (2016 also found the positive attitude of students towards curriculum of semester system. The study found lack of regularity in the classes as a drawback of semester system and this finding is contradictory with Aslam, Younis, Sheik, Maher, and Abbasi, (2012) who found students positive views on the various facets of class regularity. In the prevalent semester framework activities of universities, students' opinions on curriculum coverage were also favorable.

Most students shared strong satisfaction on the diverse facets of semester system i.e. syllabus coverage, the regularity of classes, teaching methods and evaluation process. These results were in clear agreement with Aslam, Younis, Sheik, Maher, and Abbasi, (2012), whose observations revealed favorable views on the same activities rather than opinions on the assessment. Dangi, (2016) also found a favorable view of students on the curriculum, syllabus coverage, class regularity, teachers and teaching method, and evaluation process. Mostly courses remain incomplete, Teachers favoritism in marking, Teachers do not prepare lectures, lack of Co-Curricular activities in semester system checked scripts are not discussed with the students, Heavy workload of assignments and presentation on students and Limited knowledge on the part of students were found as some of the drawbacks of semester system.

Malik, Avais, and Khanam (2010) found that the semester system is failed in the development of thorough concepts and depth studies. The findings of Cates and Monk-Tutor (2010) reported that the examination system is not even and faded the uniformity in the examination system. Furthermore, this system of examination is tougher, time-consuming and more expensive. Favoritism in marking (Ghimire, 2017; Munshi, Javed, & Hussain, 2012; Khattak, Ali, Khan, & Khan, 2011) and lack of time for co-curricular activities (Subedi, 2019; Munshi, Javed, & Hussain, 2012; Cates & Monk-Tutor, 2010), non-serious attitudes of students towards the study and heavy workload of teachers ((Munshi, Javed, & Hussain, 2012; Pathak & Rahman, 2013) are the drawbacks of semester system. Karki, (2016) also reported some drawbacks in the good implementation of the assessment system, such as teachers halo effect, not conducting the test timely and teachers reluctant. Similarly, major problems encountered by the teachers while practicing internal assessment in semester system were lack of operational calendar, reluctant in providing teachers incentive; students may not take internal assessment exam seriously like a final exam, and low involvement of administration. Munshi, Javed and Hussain (2012) found that other unfavorable elements of the semester review system were often attacked by students. In contrast with Chandio, Sindher, and Gulrez (2013) the teachers accept to a certain degree on their semester examination system and say that the workload of teaching staff can be reduced to improve consistency in the system for the productivity of the semester system and that university management can take measures to encourage academia's awareness.

There was little time spent teaching and learning in pedagogical problems in the semester framework, including a pause in input from students and the workload created by large numbers of students and the form of evaluation methods used. The findings indicate a response to new pedagogies and the use of alternative measurement approaches in open distance learning to match the semester framework (Matlakala, Mgutshini, Greeff, & Chetty, 2019).

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, the expectations of most BS (Hon's) students is favorable in all 5 aspects concerning predominant semester system activities such as instruction, instruction coverage and semester system regularity. Students were extremely pleased and agreed to 5-semester scheme procedures in colleges in the public sector. Regardless of the genders, departments and half of students, students consent on device activities. In the semester framework, unfinished courses persisted due to the lack of regularity of the lessons viewed by teachers in the majority of (the) students of a (Hon's) curriculum. Since several students thought that the classes were incomplete. Therefore, the material and substantial elements of the course can be centered. For this reason, before beginning the course, first of all, the main subjects and facets of the course can be chosen. Since most students felt that the lessons from the teacher side are not normal. It is therefore recommended that the teachers should obey strictly for the completion of the courses the time table of the entire department. To this end, the director of the department involved will track the attendance of the continuing courses annually. Some teachers were unfavorable to those students in labeling talented people who were robbed of their place. It is advised that the rules of exams for the semester method be strictly applicable and that papers be reviewed through the department by the professors to prevent these grievances. The accepted semester rules can strictly be enforced by management by faculty members to ensure the semester activity can be carried out in a proper spirit and a framework for formational assessment should also be developed to track the success of ongoing activities.



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