

A Study of Students' Perceptions Regarding the Effectiveness of Semester and Annual Examination System at Institute of Education and Research

Ayesha Batool, Saghir Ahmad, Abid Hussain Ch.

Abstract—The art of the examination is probably the most difficult one in the whole range of educational practices. Semester system is the system of examination, which is set with an institute by its own teachers. Annual system is the system of examination, which is constructed and administrated by some agency outside the institute, it enables the teacher to estimate the effectiveness of the instruction, and students to estimate the progress made by them. On the other hand, semester system of examinations requires following the curriculum strictly and methods of teaching are to be employed by the choice of teachers. The main purpose of the study was to investigate university students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of semester system and annual system. The study was quantitative in nature. The sample consisted of 200 students. A five point Likert type scale was used to collect the data. The statistical measures like frequencies, mean, standard deviation, and One Way ANOVA test were applied to analyze the data. The major findings of the study indicated that in semester system students do not spend much time in political activities and develop their study habits. It also revealed that annual system of examination does not satisfy the educational aspirations of the students.

Keywords—Effectiveness, semester system, annual system.

I. INTRODUCTION

EXAMINATION is viewed as the system to check knowledge and capability of learners, with reference to an agreed standard. The essential task of the teacher is to facilitate students' learning. To select the best way to determine how much learning has occurred. The learners can manage the activities in an academic environment easily. The learners can alter the route of learning journey that requires knowledge used in testing. Moreover, it leads to assessment because it can suggest precisely up to which level a student may be successful in the academic system [1].

The examination system is important to maintain the standards, select standards to motivate learning, guide teaching to furnish instruction and appraise teachers, teaching methods, books, and curricular content [2].

Examinations are designed to test knowledge and understanding of the course. It requires recalling and applying

information and theories. The students ought to be tested through examination as far as studies are concerned because testing is part and parcel of the regular course of study. Different countries conduct different exams for students in which they show their talent [3]. Examinations are the root of all educational system, so it may be urged that it should be economical in its use of resources for students [4]. The examination dictates the curriculum, and confines to the classroom [5]. Examinations are not particular with the domain of education; they are in every sphere of life even while getting a job one has to undergo an interview or written test or both [6].

An examination is in fact assessment system of the student's progress. Since evaluation is a continuous process, it must not depend on one or two annual tests. Therefore, usually a number of tests are given to the students; they are expected to write reports; their work in all such activities is examined and assessed by their teachers. All this procedure is concerned with the annual system or semester system. Semester system is a system where nearly 15 to 16 weeks of knowledge sharing or teaching is done two times in a year once at the fall of semester and second in spring. Whereas in annual examination system some external and totally neutral institutions make papers and conduct exams.

In a newspaper [7], an article was published about the effectiveness of semester system. It depicts that semester system is more successful in generating a serious attitude in students about regular working and increasing reading habits. Semester system has an objective and that is to improve the standard of education. The teachers are devoting more time and energy in their teaching. But semester system examination has weaknesses. The teacher may not have a generally acceptable scale of values. It cannot be established that the semester system surely takes towards a broad or more than real assessment of the work of the students. Teachers have different opinions about same students on the basis of their classroom behavior and exam results in semester system. It is also possible that a teacher's perception may vary from other colleagues about one student. Thus, every teacher's perceptions align with the academic judgment of students. They evaluate the students on their perceptions and personal thoughts in this examination system but it is not possible in annual system [8].

In Pakistan, annual system of examination is in operation from middle level to postgraduate level. The existing system of examination needs improvements, because students do not

B. Ayesha, is PhD Scholar, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan (e-mail: ayeshabatoolrana@gmail.com).

A. Saghir is PhD Scholar, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan (Corresponding author, phone: +923067071099; e-mail: Saghir.edu786@gmail.com).

C. H. Abid, is Professor, Chairman with the Secondary Education Department at Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan (e-mail: chabidhussainier@yahoo.com).

study the whole year. Therefore, they do not show good results in their annual examination which ultimately results in wastage of human resources, money and unemployment at a large scale. At higher level there are different techniques of conducting exams. Some universities award the degree on passing number of the prescribed paper or papers on the thesis on the approved topic or by presenting a thesis only, which requires much originality, very high standards, and original piece of research work [5].

In the discussion of semester and annual system, [9] said that an examination is an evaluation, which is a continuous process of the student's progress and it cannot be based on just one test given after two years. Therefore, usually a number of tests are prepared for the students who are expected to write reports on their work in all such activities. All this procedure is concerned with the semester system.

Semester system also enables the teacher to estimate the effectiveness of the instruction. It enables the students to estimate the progress made by them. But on the other side, annual system of examination is totally different from semester system. Teachers adopt the formal teaching methods in classrooms and they just try to complete the syllabus. There is no intention of creativity in classrooms during teaching. And in semester system, teachers are robbed of their freedom to select the kind of education, which they consider best, and suits pupil's needs. Moreover annual examination cannot take special circumstances into account in making their assessment while a teacher who knows his pupils are able to judge whether or not particular examination performance is a representative of the real abilities of the learner [10].

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. Find out the perceptions of students about semester and annual system.
2. Find out the effectiveness of semester system and annual system.
3. Find out the difference in effectiveness of semester system and annual system on different demographic variables.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study explored students perceptions regarding effectiveness of semester and annual system at the Institute of Education and Research, Punjab University, Lahore. Quantitative approach was used. The study was a descriptive survey. A random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. A sample of 200 students (100 male, 100 female) was selected for the study using random sampling technique.

IV. INSTRUMENT OF THE STUDY

The questionnaire related to the "Effectiveness of the Semester and Annual Examination System" was used as instrument to collect the data. The questionnaire consisted of two parts; first part was about demographic variables and

second part was about Effectiveness of Semester and Annual Examination System. A self-developed questionnaire was used for data collection. A five point Likert type scale was used to measure degree of agreement of the respondents.

V. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

To measure the perceptions of students regarding effectiveness of annual system and semester system in higher education, data were collected from students by the researchers. Statistical techniques were used for analysis. From descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and from inferential statistics One Way ANOVA was applied to get the results. The detail of data analysis is given below.

TABLE I
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SEMESTER AND ANNUAL EXAMINATION SYSTEM

| Sr. | Statements | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|-----|--|----------|-----------|
| 1 | There are less examination problems in Semester System. | 2.76 | 1.411 |
| 2 | Immediate feedback in semester system is helpful for rapid changes for improvement. | 2.67 | 1.460 |
| 3 | Teachers take interest in checking assignments appropriately. | 3.03 | 1.245 |
| 4 | Exam results are always delayed in Annual System. | 2.89 | 1.195 |
| 5 | Semester system satisfies the education aspirations of the students. | 2.82 | 1.335 |
| 6 | Rate of succeeding students is higher in semester system. | 2.71 | 1.343 |
| 7 | Semester system makes the students able to finish their assignment in time. | 2.84 | 1.416 |
| 8 | Students' performance is better judged in semester system. | 2.88 | 1.402 |
| 9 | There is more chance of favoritism in semester system. | 3.02 | 1.356 |
| 10 | Semester system forces students to have reading from many sources of knowledge. | 2.89 | 1.490 |
| 11 | There is less command on content in annual system. | 3.08 | 1.208 |
| 12 | Semester system leads to nepotism. | 2.89 | 1.141 |
| 13 | There are better opportunities of deep understanding of the subject in annual system. | 2.83 | 1.336 |
| 14 | In semester system there are more opportunities for students to consult teachers. | 2.81 | 1.367 |
| 15 | In semester system evaluation is fair as compared to annual system. | 3.01 | 1.367 |
| 16 | In semester system students do not spend much time in political activities. | 2.83 | 1.248 |
| 17 | There is no impact of student teacher relations on results in annual system. | 2.84 | 1.260 |
| 18 | Implementation of semester system in true spirit will be more successful. | 2.86 | 1.340 |
| 19 | As semester system keeps students busy all year, they do not like it. | 2.94 | 1.258 |
| 20 | It is very difficult and impossible to guess about the paper in Annual System. | 2.96 | 1.197 |
| 21 | Majority of students take interest in useless activities in the annual system. | 2.99 | 1.279 |
| 22 | There are better opportunities in semester system to broaden students' perspectives. | 2.95 | 1.317 |
| 23 | The students spend more busy educational life in semester system. | 2.74 | 1.407 |
| 24 | In annual system, usually teachers' think that their responsibilities are over after taking their classes. | 2.84 | 1.256 |
| 25 | Annual System does not fully prepare students to cope with human responsibilities after completion of education. | 2.90 | 1.297 |
| 26 | The average rate of failure in annual system is higher than the semester system. | 2.92 | 1.473 |
| 27 | In semester system students develop regular study habits. | 2.77 | 1.376 |
| 28 | Teacher just covers the course in the few early months, which causes poor performance of the student. | 3.15 | 1.346 |

Table I shows that students ($M= 2.76$, $SD= 1.411$) think that there are less examination problems in semester system and they agree ($M= 2.67$, $SD= 1.460$) that immediate feedback in semester system is helpful for rapid changes for improvement. Majority of the students ($M= 3.03$, $SD= 1.245$) agree that teachers take more interest in checking assignments appropriately in semester system rather than annual system and they think ($M= 2.89$, $SD= 1.195$) that exam results are always delayed in the annual system. A very few students ($M= 2.82$, $SD= 1.335$) agree that semester system satisfies the education aspirations of the students and they agree ($M= 2.71$, $SD= 1.343$) that rate of succeeding students is higher in semester system than that of the annual system.

Majority of the students ($M= 3.08$, $SD= 1.208$) agree that there is less command on content in annual system. Students ($M= 3.02$, $SD= 1.356$) thought that there is more chance of favoritism in semester system than in annual system and semester system leads to nepotism respectively in the opinions of students ($M= 2.89$, $SD= 1.141$). It also shows that few students ($M= 2.84$, $SD= 1.416$) and ($M= 2.88$, $SD= 1.402$) are in favor of semester system. Because they think that this system enables the students to finish their assignments in time and students' performance is better judged in the semester system than the annual system respectively.

There are some respondents ($M= 2.83$, $SD= 1.336$) thinking that there are better opportunities of deep understanding of the subject in annual system. There are also more opportunities for students ($M= 2.81$, $SD= 1.367$) to consult teachers. The research participants ($M= 3.01$, $SD= 1.367$) consider that in semester system evaluation is fair as compared to annual system. In semester system, students ($M= 2.83$, $SD= 1.248$) do not spend much time in political activities and there is no impact of student teacher relations on results in the annual system according to the respondents ($M= 2.84$, $SD= 1.260$). It also testifies that few students ($M= 2.86$, $SD= 1.340$) agree that implementation of semester system in true spirit will be more successful than the annual system.

Few students ($M= 2.94$, $SD= 1.258$) agree that in annual system they are busy in study almost all the time and some students ($M= 2.96$, $SD= 1.197$) think that they cannot guess or predict the question paper exactly. Because external examiner sets the paper in the annual system and we have no idea about him/her. It is very difficult to guess about the paper in annual examination system. The majority of students ($M= 2.99$, $SD= 1.279$) take interest in useless activities in annual system and there are better opportunities in semester system to broaden students' perspectives ($M= 2.95$, $SD= 1.317$). The students say that they spend more time in educational activities in semester system. According to them in annual system usually teachers' think that their responsibilities are limited to just classrooms.

Table I also highlights that few students ($M= 2.90$, $SD= 1.297$) recognize that annual system does not train the individuals completely for social life. They also think failure rate of students in annual system is higher than the semester system. It also shows that students ($M= 2.77$, $SD= 1.376$) develop regular study habits in semester system. And students ($M= 3.15$, $SD= 1.346$) agree that teacher just covers the course

in the few early months; it causes poor performance of the student.

TABLE II
COMPARISON OF THE STUDENTS' VIEWS REGARDING EFFECTIVENESS OF SEMESTER AND ANNUAL EXAMINATION SYSTEM WITH DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS OF INSTITUTION

| Variable | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| Departments | Between Groups | 20.771 | 4 | 30.193 | 07.598 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 53.877 | 192 | .281 | | |
| | Total | 74.648 | 196 | | | |

Table II shows one way ANOVA test results which was applied to check the effectiveness of semester and annual examination system with different perceptions of different students which were enrolled in different departments of the institution. There was significant difference among students of different departments of institutions. The p value of the different departments of institutions was significant as ($p \leq .05$). Therefore, it is concluded that students have different views about effectiveness of semester and annual system on the basis of their different departments.

TABLE III
COMPARISON OF THE STUDENTS' VIEWS REGARDING EFFECTIVENESS OF SEMESTER AND ANNUAL EXAMINATION SYSTEM WITH AGE DIFFERENCE

| Variable | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------|------|
| Age difference | Between Groups | 3.027 | 4 | .757 | .850 | .495 |
| | Within Groups | 70.951 | 192 | .890 | | |
| | Total | 73.978 | 196 | | | |

Table III shows one way ANOVA test results which was applied to check the effectiveness of semester and annual examination system with different perceptions of the students on the basis of their age. There was no significant difference among students in respect of their ages. The significance value of the age difference was not significant at $p \geq .05$. Therefore, it is concluded that students have no different views about effectiveness of semester and annual system on the basis of their ages.

TABLE IV
COMPARISON OF THE STUDENTS' VIEWS REGARDING EFFECTIVENESS OF SEMESTER AND ANNUAL EXAMINATION SYSTEM WITH SEMESTER DIFFERENCE

| Variable | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Semester difference | Between Groups | 18.624 | 4 | 4.656 | 7.976 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 12.082 | 192 | .584 | | |
| | Total | 30.706 | 196 | | | |

Table IV shows one way ANOVA test results which was applied to check the effectiveness of semester and annual examination system with different perceptions of students of different semesters of the institution. The students of different departments have different opinions about examination system. The p value of the different semesters was significant as $p \leq .05$. Therefore, it is concluded that students have different views about effectiveness of semester and annual system on the basis of their semester difference.

TABLE V
COMPARISON OF THE STUDENTS' VIEWS REGARDING EFFECTIVENESS OF
SEMESTER AND ANNUAL EXAMINATION SYSTEM WITH PREVIOUS GRADES
DIFFERENCE

| Variable | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|------|
| Previous grades | Between Groups | 37.397 | 4 | 9.349 | 18.062 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 99.384 | 192 | .518 | | |
| | Total | 36.781 | 196 | | | |

Table V shows one way ANOVA test results which was applied to check the effectiveness of semester and annual system of examination with different perceptions of previous grades of students. There was significant difference in opinions of the students due to the previous grades of the students. The p value of the previous grades was significant ($p \leq .05$). Therefore it is concluded that students have different views about effectiveness of semester and annual system on the basis of their previous grades.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings of the study, it is concluded that semester system is better. It develops creative power in students, broadens their perspectives, makes the students finish their assignments well in time, keeps the students busy in studies almost all the time. It helps in getting complete mastery of courses, increases the past percentage in examination results and raises the educational standards. However, it has certain limitations as well. It turns the students into flatterers, makes students overworked and does not satisfy the educational aspirations regarding the semester system. The semester system is an appropriate system to measure and reward students' achievements. The semester system has a good effect on pupil-teacher relationship. The students have different views about effectiveness of semester and annual system on the basis of their different departments. It is concluded that students have no different views about effectiveness of semester and annual system on the basis of their ages.

The semester system is successful at the Punjab University Lahore, and somehow it meets the international standards and improved discipline at the Punjab University Lahore. Annual system does not satisfy the educational aspirations of the students. The semester system checks the ability of the students more appropriately. It reveals that the students in semester system do not spend much time in political activities. It also demonstrates that due to the semester system, some students left the institution. Semester system leads to favoritism. Annual system shows poor results than that of the semester system. In annual system, students do not develop regular study habits. Examinations results are always delayed in annual system.

There are some recommendations on the basis of findings and conclusion of the study:

1. Universities should take effective steps to reform the examination system.
2. In annual system, the burden of assignments should be

lessened so that students may prepare themselves properly for the examinations.

3. Semester system should provide a base for making important decisions with regard to promotion of students to higher grades and admission to institutions of higher learning and professional training, award of merit and talent scholarships, improvement of teaching methods and curriculum reforms.
4. Annual system should be recognized on modern lines and its practices and procedures at all levels should be so reformed that it becomes a useful device for upgrading education.
5. All possible and feasible innovations and inventions should be employed to make the examination system sound, up-to-date, flexible and realistic.
6. Teachers should be very keen in professional integrity to overcome their biases in evaluating the students.

REFERENCES

- [1] Khan, M. S. 1995. *Exams evaluation*. New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House.
- [2] Vashish, S. R. 1993. *History of measurement and evaluation*. New Delhi: Anmol Publication Pvt. Ltd.
- [3] Inayat, T., & Nosheen, T. 2008. *Perception of the Punjab University students regarding semester system*. An Unpublished Master thesis in Institute of Education and Research University of the Punjab Lahore.
- [4] Jaffery. 1958. *External examination in the University of London*: Harper and Co.Ltd.
- [5] Shirazi, M. J. H. 2007. *Analysis of examination system at university level in Pakistan*. An unpublished PhD thesis in the University of Arid Agriculture, Rawalpindi.
- [6] Qureshi, H. I. 1975. *Education in Pakistan*. Karachi: M.A-AR-EF Limited P.o Box 23.
- [7] Dawn. 4th December, 2002. *Daily dawn newspaper*. Lahore press Ltd.
- [8] James, A., & Perkins. 1971. *Higher education: From autonomy to system*; International Council for Educational Development. New York.
- [9] James, E. 1996. *Seminar on education and assessment*. New York: Hill Book Company.
- [10] William, B. 1960. *Encyclopedia of Britannica*, Vol. 8, Chicago.