

Semester System: Prospects and Avenues

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Abstract

Since the last decade higher education system of India underwent drastic reform measures, with the objective to cope with the gross enrollment ratio, or GER, to bring it at par with the global average. For it a holistic educational reform approach in the form of semester system has been introduced under the 11th plan, and is being continued further.

The objective behind introducing semester system has been to explore a comprehensive vision, a consolidated approach to bring in the multidimensional and holistic transformation of students to obtain better goals. Semester system ever since its inception in all Undergraduate and post-graduate classes has drawn a great controversy. On one hand it has lessen the academic burden of the students, made them more versatile and attentive through continuous comprehensive evaluation and its twelve modes that provide greater exposure to students, provided practical knowledge through project work, on the other lack of in depth studies, securing higher percentage with knowledge superficial, increasing absenteeism, declining academic interest and decreasing admissions have been among the alarming concerns. Challenges are many, the present paper traces out the new avenues and scope for widening the canvass of higher education through semester system.

Keywords: *Comprehensive Vision, Transformation, Holistic Approach*

Objective: The objective of the study is to assess and evaluate the impact of semester system on students and teachers. It also aims to justify the pattern in the modern context.

Research Methodology: The methodology used is purely analytical. It is based on secondary sources, books, journals, reviews and web sources. It is a qualitative analysis.

Introduction: The government has set a goal of increasing the enrollment ratio among Indians of college age (gross enrollment ratio, or GER) to 30 percent by 2020, from a current rate of just under 20 percent. In doing so, the government hopes to bring the nation's GER broadly into line

with the projected 2020 global average. It also recognizes that quality standards need to be improved in tandem with access if the GER goals are to have a measurable impact on the broader Indian economy.

The GER goals were laid out in the government's 11th five-year plan (2007-2012) at the beginning of which India's GER was significantly lower., the 12th (and current) five-year plan (2012-2017) goes on to discuss the need to continue improving access to higher education, while also stressing the importance of doing it in conjunction with improvements in quality and social equity

Semester system has brought in revolutionary change in the higher education system and also in the pattern of education .Prior to 2008 it was confined up to professional courses only. Since 2008 Government of MP regulated it for all the UG as well as PG courses as per the rule of UGC.

A semester system is an academic term. It is division of an academic year, the time during which a college holds classes. It also might be applicable in the schools and universities. Usually, a semester system divides the year in two parts or terms. Sometimes, it might be trimester or quarter semester. Literally, semester means six-month period. In India this six-month system is generally followed. In schools we find the year divided in between two (often three) major examinations in and around the vacations. The central universities in India have been long following this from quite some time. At present, the under graduate colleges in Assam too have been familiarized with the semester system. We find that most nations of the world today are constantly switching onto the semester system. It is estimated that the famous global economies of the world are the USA, China and India. In the world of competitions, one of the areas of the big fights is education.

On the wide canvass of world the measures taken towards betterment has been a continuous practice, though its ways varied. As globalization has minimized the distances and has drawn the whole world closer, more exposure to the ways of the world has become possible. Today growth does not confine itself only up to the growth of the individual nation rather it involves the serious effort to scale the individual nations on the world's parameters. These efforts are multidimensional. It also involves reforms made in the field of higher education. Competing with

the global GER, India has fixed its target to increase considerably its GER. Introduction of 'Semester System' in non professional courses at Undergraduate and post graduate classes is one prominent measure in this respect.

Initially the pattern was executed and regulated without making changes in the course design. In the first year, there was no change in the number of subjects studied as compared to the annual examination pattern. This created extra burden on students who were made to study nine subjects in six months which they used to study in the whole year. Later the syllabus was redesigned which ended up in decreasing the number of subjects with a decrease in the duration.

The Probable Advantages:

It would provide an opportunity to students for continuous learning and assessment/feedback and a better paced understanding of the subject. There will more focused class interaction because of continuous engagement between students and teachers. This will provide regular study habits among students. The main advantage is that the performance would not be judged at the end of one year rather conducting examinations twice a year will help in regularly evaluating the student progress.

However, despite having a high objective, the system proved fiasco on many fields. A strong aversion for studies is observed. Continuous evaluation instead of evaluating the real worth of a student, has rather become as a tool to provide marks with the objective to score high and provide better results for the institutes and colleges.

2) The examination study load of the students shall be halved since they would be required to prepare half of the content as they are currently required to prepare for the final examination. As a result it would enable a more in-depth study and understanding of their concerned subjects

Unfortunately, the irregular examination schedules due to delays, have lessen student's interest in attending the classes. It results in either a too long and stretched out schedule or a too short a schedule. As a result a superficial dipping into the subject has been adopted as the regular practice by the students.

3) Interdisciplinary would play an important role in the way subjects are being conceptualized and knowledge integrated across diverse disciplines. Semester system would facilitate the

possibility of undergraduate students imbibing relevant knowledge and skills that are not contained within the disciplinary boundaries of their primary subject areas. A semester system allows greater freedom and scope for designing and delivering a variety of courses that the students can pick flexibly to enhance the quality of their learning

Interdisciplinary approach has facilitated the process and has paved the way towards CBCS (Choice Based Credit System) that provides a wide range of the subjects for students with the liberty to choose the subjects with greater liberty and flexibility. Some of the Universities have adopted the system already and others are trolling behind.

4) According to Myron Tribus (1994), there are innumerable proposals/suggestions for reforms and changes in educational system and there are infinite number of good ideas and research results. The target is not just to pick one of them but rather it is to have comprehensive attitude and approach within which to bring to action many good works known to us.

5). Students from other countries who come on short term 'Study Abroad' programs to Delhi University are awarded credits by their universities for studying but the same is not given by our university. Therefore, introducing a semester system will allow greater exposure to those of the students who get the opportunity to study elsewhere. If the similar policy is adopted by our Universities, it would definitely promote higher education on the global map. Students would get the benefit of variety of courses here and abroad and thus enrich their knowledge.

For this mingling of theoretical and practical knowledge in the designed courses is required.

- 1) More job oriented courses must be designed to motivate the students.
- 2) The traditional courses must be taught with a practical field approach to keep the students' interest intact.
- 3) Facilities such as training during the courses taught might be helpful as well

Challenges: Despite being an edu-friendly system, semester system has to face many challenges.

- 1) The irregular spans of each semester due to delay in examination schedule. Some semesters are too short to do justice with the syllabus. Under such circumstances a superficial knowledge can be provided. Students dip into the subject and acquire a superficial knowledge. In long term it adversely affects their knowledge base.

- 2) Admission process is too complex. In an age where paper less policy is being followed in all walks of life, admission process remains as an exception. Registration, form verification, scrutiny, all make the students and parents to visit the college many times during the whole process. The colleges where on line admissions take place the process is quite exhaustive.
- 3) The growing inclination towards coaching classes makes students present less in the class rooms.
- 4) Exposure to technological devices has also adversely affected student's interest in the class.
- 5) There can be seen a distinctive decline in the admission graph of the students in colleges. A bulk of students is either getting dispersed in upcoming educational institutes emerging in multitude, or exploring the unconventional courses for admission. A steep decline in the graph for conventional courses is evident.
- 6) Higher percentage o marks with no in depth knowledge is the worst outcome emerging strongly.
- 7) More new teaching techniques must be introduced to make learning easy, time bound and interesting.
- 8) Semester system provides more number of chances to students to pass an examination. Students thus are rest assured that they would certainly clear the exam even if it incurs extra time. A continuous decline in attendance and aversion for studies thus is one of the alarming consequences of the system.

Conclusion:

Academic reforms in India are being introduced with a goal of increasing quality standards in tandem with initiatives designed to broaden access. Current reform initiatives are focused at the state level, where over 90 percent of the nation's approximately 30 million higher-education students are enrolled

Semester system is the outcome of one of the educational reforms brought in to impart education and knowledge with a holistic approach. It to a great extent has been successful to meet its objective which is evident through- increase in the self-confidence of the students, developing skills, achieving practical knowledge, increase in the efficiency and decrease in the work load.

However, for the non professional courses it has not fully proved its significance. In depth studies are being obsolete. Rather superficial knowledge and good score in the CCE'S and Project work are good enough to make one pass an exam. The provision of ATKT and the more number of chances to pass the exam have lessen the fear for studies. It has now become difficult to fail an exam. A clear aversion for studies is evident. The objective with which it was implemented, could not be obtained fully. If only the system is revised and made more useful for the students its necessity is justified. Practical problems faced by the students need more concrete solutions.

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