



RELEVANCE OF THE SEMESTER SYSTEM OF EVALUATION IN INDIAN CONTEXT

Kishor Kumar Roy

Assistant Professor, Dum Dum Motijheel College, West Bengal, India

**Corresponding Author: Kishor Kumar Roy*

Abstract

Educational system all over the world has never been consistent over the year. Through advancement and exposure to new concepts, educationists investigate possibilities to teach texts in various feasible manners. 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. Semester system can be said to be the product of these investigations. 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. The central universities in India have been long following this from quite sometime. We find that most nations of the world today are constantly switching onto the semester system. The semester system has been introduced on the undergraduate curriculum in affiliated colleges in the university with effect from 2009 admission onwards. The academic world in Assam reacted slightly stunningly with the introduction of semester system. Teachers, students and guardians who were used to the practice and idea of the annual system were slightly hesitant in its implementation. However, it can be said to be the continuation of the past days spent in schools. In the schools, the students and teachers are used to work and study almost the whole year with two or three major breaks as vacations in the bi-yearly or tri-yearly examinations. The introduction of this semester system can be evaluated as part of the consistency of the school years. Some of the aspects to be considered in the adoption of semester system are that the government's concern with privatization of education system. The biggest of the challenges with these private institutions is that there is no guarantee of the quality of teaching and more so teachers teaching in these institutions. The other problem with private institutions is that they extract exorbitant amount of money for very short periods of coaching. We have tried privatization of education earlier also without too much success or to put it in a simple way there was a lack of change in the education system even then. So, all said and done, there has to be some serious thinking on the matter of providing quality education in a decent manner and at a decent rate.

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Introduction

Introduction of semester system can be said to be the product of these investigations. A "semester" (from the Latin meaning "six-monthly") has come to mean either of two academic terms, generally excluding

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the summer or January terms. The word "semester" is sometimes used as a synonym for a "term", as in a "summer semester". 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. Sometimes, it might be trimester or quarter semester. A "trimester" (from the Latin meaning "three-monthly") divides the academic year into three periods, separated by breaks. In some jurisdictions, "trimester" is used in its original meaning to indicate a quarter system (since three months is exactly a quarter of a year), or a variation of it.

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 sometime. 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. We find that China is almost replacing USA in this area too apart from fighting hand in hand in occupying the global markets. In fact, trying to occupy the highest position in the world of education is actually occupying the largest share of intellectual position in the global education ladder. In People's Republic of China, all schools including elementary, middle and high schools, colleges and universities have two semesters. To remain in the same fight of the one world and win, the rules should be the same. Following the footsteps of China, and other important nations, India without losing anymore time wants to fall in the same system. And it is doing so. As part of the nation, Assam too has introduced the semester-system in the colleges along with other states of the nation.

History of Semester System in Evaluation

Some of the aspects to be considered in the adoption of semester system are that the government's concern with privatization of education system. Privatization of education means that education has been passed on to the private sector and that also means that private sector has a greater say in setting their own fees which can be exorbitantly high although the quality of education provided might not even be half as good. While at one level, privatization of education seems to be a good option given the way the government has abjectly failed to maintain decent standards of education and to add to the poor infrastructure provided by the govt. But, privatization is not really a solution to the problem that continues to plague India even 64 years after independence that is poor educational standards in the country. The biggest of the challenges with these private institutions is that there is no guarantee of the quality of teaching and more so teachers teaching in these institutions. The other problem with private institutions is that they extract exorbitant amount of money for very short periods of coaching. We have tried privatization of education earlier also without too much success or to put it in a simple way there was a lack of change in the education system even then. So, all said and done, there has to be some serious thinking on the matter of providing quality education in a decent manner and at a decent rate.

The semester system has been introduced on the undergraduate curriculum in affiliated colleges in the university with effect from 2009 admission onwards. The academic world in Assam reacted slightly stunningly with the introduction of semester system. Teachers, students and guardians who were used to the practice and idea of the annual system were slightly hesitant in its implementation. However, it can be said to be the continuation of the past days spent in schools. In the schools, the students and teachers are used to work and study almost the whole year with two or three major breaks as vacations in the bi-yearly or tri-yearly examinations. The introduction of this semester system can be evaluated as part of the consistency of the school years.

Importance and objective of the semester system in Evaluation: Some of the objectives of the semester system are many

- To broaden the outlook of the students and instill in them a sense of confidence and responsibility.

- The student gets more chances to remain well versed.
- Unit tests act as model tests for the final examination.
- A detailed account of the student's progress graph can be produced in semester system.
- To acquaint the students with different forms, styles and thoughts in other parts of the country and beyond.
- The semester system allows greater interaction with teachers and the students will be more focussed on preparing throughout the year.
- It is also part of the current trend in education system in other parts of the country and beyond.

Essential Features of the Semester System in Evaluation

- In the traditional system, the whole educative process is aimed at fulfilling the requirements of examination and completing course.
- The system provides for introduction of greater flexibility in the curriculum and students have variety of courses open to them. This strengthens their knowledge base and provides flexibility in making future educational and vocational choices.
- The teaching-learning process is constantly monitored by teachers through tests, assignments, classroom discussion and personal interaction with the students.
- The concept of credit hours is more good thing to engage students in learning. We don't allow a candidate to appear in an examination unless he/she completes certain percentage of class attendance.
- The performance of the students is assessed not only in term of achievement scores obtained in test, but also in terms of effort put in as measured by the credit hour.

The Implementation of Semester System in Evaluation

- Carrying out the teaching work more regularly and comprehensively by using interdisciplinary approach mutual corporation and new instructional strategies.
- Making the syllabus more broad-based with main subjects including core and elective subjects.
- Providing greater variety of subject area to suit the intellectual, motivational requirements of the students.
- Reducing unnecessary stress and strain before and during teaching and examination period and making learning purposeful, pleasant and joyful activity.
- Making teaching-learning more broad-based by including class discussion, tutorials, assignments and library work.
- Including a system that can receive continuous feedback for improvement of learning experience so as to make them more effective.

Problems and issues of Semester System in Evaluation

- Students develop the habit of regular study, sense of punctuality and work ethics.
- Semester system requires a flexible and broad based curriculum to allow interdisciplinary approach of teaching and learning. The teachers are not in the habit of taking pain.
- The teaching schedule will have to be adjusted to suit the requirements of flexibility of courses. Teaching not only requires well planned time-table, but also expert teachers capable of organizing such programmes.
- The implementation of continuous internal assessment demands greater involvement of teachers by enhancing their workload. Due to large enrollment figures the teachers are already overburdened with teaching load.

Advantages of Semester System in Evaluation: There are many merits of this semester system. They may be as follows:

- It is good for the student community. As these students are the futures of society.
- It creates awareness of the parallel streams prevalent in various parts of the country.
- It keeps the students in touch with the books the whole year. It can prove beneficial for the students.
- The compulsion of tests in between has made the students presence in the colleges all throughout the year. In present world there are too many distractions available for the youth to go astray. Engagement in tests and examinations in the colleges can keep them busy in more fruitful works, which will be personally beneficial for them too.
- The students will be constantly evaluated and the depth and breadth of their knowledge will improve.
- It allows greater interaction with teachers and the children will be more focused on preparing throughout the year.
- This will give the students to cooperate in the future with the universities, most of who run in the semester system. There shall follow continuity in the imparting of the education and examination system with the introduction of the semester system.
- For some students, it will be better as there will be fewer courses as compared to annual.
- The semester system allows the students no luxury of studying at the last moment and still getting good marks in the final exams. So one has to be on his toes throughout and cannot bunk classes or afford to take your studies lightly. This is certainly a good point of the semester system and it will keep everyone working all through their college life seriously rather than turning to just last minute studies which many students resort to because of the structure of the current evaluation system.
- The other plus point of the semester system is that it means that the student gets tested on very small sections at a time, so when he gives the final exams where the whole curriculum is assessed, one is in a position to write an even better exam than with the current system as this means he is already aware of the problem areas and by the time of the final exams, you will have a chance of improving your percentage in the final assessment.
- When students go to undergraduate colleges after school, they are compelled to revert back to annual system. Introduction of semester system now will no more shock the students about the system.

Disadvantages of Semester System in Evaluation

- Students have to manage the syllabus in short time.
- Sometimes, teachers cannot convey the whole knowledge of the subject due to short time.
- Students do not get time for extra study; as a result they just have basic knowledge of the subject.
- In semesters system, students do not get chance to re-evaluate their papers, so they have to manage and maintain their grades.
- There is less time for research, students do not get enough opportunity to research.
- Time passes very quickly and it does not let students to have complete knowledge about the subject.

Conclusion

These are the few advantages and disadvantages of semester system. In the light of these pros and cons, it is difficult to decide which system is best, annual or semester. But, if we review student's choice, most of them prefer semester system over annual system because in that system, the students get more advantage; since examinations are held within months (what is studied will remain afresh in their brain). The syllabus load also will be less. Different topics need not be combined in the same paper. Students get more chances to improve also. Since examinations come within a few months student unrest also will be less in a semester system. There were many challenges to be faced by the under graduate colleges in preparing the students for the semester system. The semester system is a very proactive system as it engages both the faculty and the students throughout the year in academic activity. While, in the annual

system once the student enters the college, he feels free and thinks about studying only during the exam time. Semester system not only involves students more throughout the year but also reduces examination burden. The semester system is the need of hour and a very effective one.

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