

## Perception of the Students of Sarhad University Regarding the Impact of Different Systems of Examination upon Their Academic Performance

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### ABSTRACT

*Educational process consists of imparting knowledge from one entity to another in formal and informal settings. Effectiveness of the method and nature of imparting and level of reception of the knowledge is assessed through examination system. Examination is meant to evaluate and determine modification in terms of change in behaviour, expression, level of knowledge and mode of logical reasoning. Examination can simply be defined as a scale for measuring the knowledge, skills, intelligence and aptitude of the learner. Annual, Term and Semester systems of examination have been in practice in different university of the country. This study is focused upon evaluation of the viewpoint of the students regarding introduction and implementation different systems of examination. Data from male and female student (N=268), 145 male and 123 female were obtained through a properly developed scale. The scale was loaded with eleven different items related to the problem. The scale was administered to the on-roll students of Sarhad University session 2013-2014 and data were thus collected accordingly. The data revealed that majority of the students are of the opinion that in semester system of examination, students can get good grades, high percentage of marks but simultaneously they have expressed deep concern about the possibility of malpractice in terms of awarding unjustified marks to the non-deserving ones. Term system of examination is recommended for the institute of higher learning.*

**Keywords:** Examination, sports, participation, students, benefits

### INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, in most of universities of Pakistan, three parallel exams system e.g. Semester system, Annual system, and Term system have simultaneously been functioning. Each one of these system has got its own advantages and drawback. Whichever method of examination is followed, basic objective of the conduct of examination has always been to test and measure the academic ability, skill and performance of the students. Examination is the process to test the knowledge of a student through written or oral questions based on the prescribed syllabus provided for the test within a specified period of time (Collins & O'Brien, 2011. According to Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (Richards, & Schmidt, 2010-207), "Any procedure for measuring ability, knowledge, or performance is called examination". Examination is a tool to assess the student's caliber in any area (Page and

Thomas 1978). In the process of education, examination has got pivotal position in paving the way of the student towards a successful practical life. The value, worth and effectiveness of the whole process of education is entirely subject to the effectiveness and promptness of the examination system which is followed by the institutions.

Examination is generally used as an instrument or a medium to check and gauge the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the learners who have gone through a certain process comprised of some specific course outline required to be covered with in a stipulated time period. Examination poses challenge to both teacher and students. *“An ideal examination system evaluates both the teaching and learning process as well”* (Duncan, 2012 and Gay, 1985). *Examinations not only serve the purpose of certification of educational attainments and determine a student’s standing on the scale of achievements and educational standards, but also helps foster accountability for institutions and their standing* (Government of the Punjab: 1992).

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of this study was to investigate and determine the viewpoint of the students representing different academic disciplines regarding the impact of different systems of examination upon the academic performance of the students. In addition to that, the study was also aimed at to know about the perceived and associated advantages and dis-advantages of adaptation of various systems of examination.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Population for the Study**

An aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications is called population (Polit and Hungler (1995:35). The population for this study consists of all the male and female student of Sarhad University presently studying in different semesters of various faculties including Engineering (Electrical, Mechanical and Civil), Life Sciences, Social Sciences and Management Sciences during session 2013-2014.

### **Sample**

Sample is a smaller but true representative group of the total population. A convenience sampling method was adopted for the selection of sample for the study. The sample for this study consists of 268 respondents, 145 male and 123 female representing different academic disciplines.

### **Tool for the Data Collection**

A properly developed scale containing 11 different items encircling various aspects of the problem was used for the collection of data (Annexure A). In the scale, respondents were offered three different options with reference to the system of examination and some study related questions were asked for the purpose of collection of data.

### **Administration of the Scale**

The data were collected during working hours of the university. Purpose and significance of the study was explained before the respondents and they were asked to mark the appropriate option offered in front of each item. With the co-operation of the Deans of the concerned faculties and teaching staff of the university, the scale was personally distributed among the students at the beginning of their respective 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th semester. They were asked to fill it and return the filled-in scale before the end of their concerned semesters.

Accordingly, before the completion of the semesters, the filled-in scale was taken back from them. In this way the scale was administered among the respondents and data collected.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Semester System of Examination**

General opinion about the effectiveness or otherwise of the semester system of examination has been diverse. Some educationists favor it while other do not agree to its usefulness. The semester means “one half of the academic year, normally 16-18 weeks.” In a semester, teaching and evaluation work of the first half of course of the academic year is covered and the remaining is covered in the second semester. “*In a semester system of examination, one-year course is divided into two semesters and two-year course is divided into four semesters*” (Ballantyne, 2003).

Introduction of the semester system of examination in the institutes of higher learning has shown some visible advantages of the process of education but simultaneously it has shown some disadvantages. “*Semester system has made the system of examination uneven*” (Cates and Monk-Tutor 2010). Semester system has the distinction that it has always been the student centered rather than teacher centered. Prime focus of the Semester system mostly remains upon the steady, progressive and systematic transfer of knowledge and skill to the students enabling them to affectively meet challenges of the future. In this system, student remains thoroughly committed to the in-depth study having enough time to properly know the different aspects of the topic and to master the different skills. But Malik, Avais, and Khanam (2010) do not agree to this stance as they have concluded that semester system of examination does not provide opportunities for the students to develop thorough concepts and in depth studies. Again Aslam, H. D., Younis, A., Sheik, A. A. Maher, M., & Abbasi, Z. A. (2012) in their study revealed that semester system is perceived to be most effective way of effectual learning. This system offers the students more productive learning environment, but with reference to transparency, it is not immune to favoritism, liking and dis-liking, biased and prejudiced practices on part of the teachers.

### **New Emerging Concepts about Education and Examination**

In Pakistan, annual system of examination has been the traditional system of examination which has the distinction to enable the students to understand and master the different skills and concepts related to the process of learning. Offering a considerable amount of time of two years to the students, they find themselves in a satisfied position to take the examination at the end of two years. Annual system of examination mostly relies on subjective or comprehensive exam. Besides annual system of examination, there are a number of other systems of evaluation of the performance of the students including quarterly and term semester. These are known as the traditional methods of examination and at present, an ongoing discussion among the educationists is in progress in connection with selection of quarter per semester system of examination.

In the process of education, checking, evaluation and examination are considered to be the pre-requisites. In the chain of education, the student passes through the three different phases like preparation, assessment and evaluation. Education is the action or experience having impact upon the attitude, character, mentality, or physical ability of an individual (Omar; Matias, 2010). According to Aggarwal (1997) that system of education is good which ensures effective learning. “*Education is reorganization, reorientation and reconstruction of knowledge, values, attitude, skill and action*” (John Dewey 2009). Darkar (2010) is of the opinion that education is a recognized and measurable learning in literacy and education

which must satisfy the basic learning needs and facilitate the life style and overall experience. Prior to switching over from one system of examination to another system of examination, experts and educationists recommend that students should necessarily be briefed and informed about the both sides of the picture.

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Findings of the data collected through personal interaction with the help of a scale comprising of the item-wise response of the students are presented as follows: -

**Table 1. Item 1: Which system of examination provides high grading to the students?**

S#	System of Examination	Frequency	Percentage
1	Semester System	220	82.08%
2	Annual System	32	11.94%
3	Term System	16	05.97%

The above table shows that vast majority of 82.08% students endorse the statement that semester system of examination gives high grading to the students. In the same context, 11.94% students were in favor of annual system and in view of the remaining 05.97% students term system gives high grading to the students.

**Table 2. Item 2: In which system of examination, students can obtain better marks?**

S#	System of Examination	Frequency	Percentage
1	Semester System	203	75.74%
2	Annual System	35	13.05%
3	Term System	30	11.19%

The above table shows that most of the respondents i.e. 82.08% students opined in favor of the semester system of examination with reference to obtaining high marks. In the same context, 13.05% and 11.19% students claim that students can obtain high marks in Annual System and Term system of examination respectively.

**Table 3. Item 3: Which system of examination prepares the students with better career opportunities?**

S#	System of Examination	Frequency	Percentage
1	Semester System	125	46.64%
2	Annual System	85	31.71%
3	Term System	58	21.64%

In response to the above statement, opinion of the students is divided. The figures of the above table show that 46.64% students have expressed their opinion in favor of semester

system of examination, 31.71% students opined in favor of the annual system of examination and the rest of 21.64% students support the term system in this regard.

**Table 4. Item 4: Which system provides proper understanding of the new concepts?**

S#	System of Examination	Frequency	Percentage
1	Semester System	145	54.10%
2	Annual System	98	36.56%
3	Term System	25	09.32%

The above table shows that more than half of the respondents i.e. 54.10% opined in favor of the semester system and in the same context, 36.56% and 09.32% students claim that Annual System and Term system of examination offer opportunities to the students for better understanding of the new concepts.

**Table 5. Item 5: In which system, students remain constantly busy in academic activities?**

S#	System of Examination	Frequency	Percentage
1	Semester System	238	88.80%
2	Annual System	12	04.47%
3	Term System	18	06.71%

The above table shows that overwhelming majority of the respondents i.e. 88.80% have shown their opinion in favor of the semester system of examination and 04.47% and 06.71% respondents claim that students remain constantly busy in Annual System and Term system of examination respectively.

**Table 6. Item 6: In which system students are tested from various angles?**

S#	System of Examination	Frequency	Percentage
1	Semester System	103	38.43%
2	Annual System	112	41.79%
3	Term System	53	19.77%

Here too, opinion is divided. Figures of the above table show that 38.43% students have opined in favor of semester system of examination, 41.79% and 19.77% students opined in favor of the annual term system of examination respectively.

**Table 7. Item 7: Which system promotes presentation skills among the students?**

S#	System of Examination	Frequency	Percentage
1	Semester System	231	86.19%
2	Annual System	25	09.32%
3	Term System	16	05.97%

The above table shows that most of the respondents i.e. 86.19% have shown their opinion in favor of the semester system of examination and 09.32% and 05.97% respondents have shown their viewpoint that Annual and Term system of examination promote the presentation skill among the students respectively.

**Table 8. Item 8: In which system students remain under academic pressure?**

S#	System of Examination	Frequency	Percentage
1	Semester System	245	91.41%
2	Annual System	08	02.98%
3	Term System	15	05.59%

The above table shows that vast majority of the respondents i.e. 91.41% have shown their opinion that in Semester system of examination students remain under constant academic pressure whereas 02.98% and 05.59% respondents claim that students remain constantly under academic pressure in Annual and Term system of examination respectively.

**Table 9. Item 9: Which system of examination do you think is the ideal one in our existing environment?**

S#	System of Examination	Frequency	Percentage
1	Semester System	75	27.98%
2	Annual System	90	33.58%
3	Term System	103	38.43%

The above table shows that in response to this item, once again response is divided. In this regard 27.98 % respondents have shown their opinion that Semester system of examination suits to our environment whereas 33.58% and 38.43% students have shown their opinion in favor of Annual and Term system of examination respectively.

**Table 10. Item 10: In your opinion, which system of examination is most exposed to possible malpractices?**

S#	System of Examination	Frequency	Percentage
1	Semester System	243	90.67%
2	Annual System	03	01.11%
3	Term System	22	08.20%

The above table shows that notable majority of the respondents i.e. 90.67% have shown their opinion that Semester system of examination is most exposed to possible malpractices. In addition to that, only 01.11% and 08.20% respondents claim that Annual and Term system of examination are exposed to malpractices.

**Table 11. Item 11: In your opinion, which system of examination is most prone to be tempered easily?**

S#	System of Examination	Frequency	Percentage
1	Semester System	233	86.94%
2	Annual System	07	02.61%
3	Term System	28	10.44%

The above table shows that in view of majority of the respondents i.e. 86.94% Semester system of examination is most exposed to errors. Very limited percentage of the respondents i.e. 02.61% and 10.44% students claim that Annual system and Term system of examination are exposed to the errors.

### CONCLUSIONS

As a result of this study it is concluded that majority of the students agree and endorse the plus points of the semester system of examination. In view of most of the students, semester system of examination, students can get good grades, high percentage of marks and students mostly remain busy in academic activities. In addition to that common agreement also exists among the students that semester system improves the presentation skill of the students and students mostly remain under the academic pressure. But, with reference to the picture of the other side of the coin, students have also expressed their deep concern as majority of the students were deeply annoyed about the possibility of malpractice on part of the teachers in terms of awarding unjustified marks to the non-deserving ones. Majority of the students have shown their dis-satisfaction about the integrity of the semester system of examination as they consider this system as most exposed to adulteration.

Despite a number of positive and favoring points and a few negative ones in respect of the semester system, students do not recommend this system for the institute of higher learning. Simple majority of the students recommend term system of examination to be adopted by the institute of higher learning.

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ANNEXURE “A”

The Scale

Respected Respondent \_\_\_\_\_.

I am working on a topic “*Perception of student of Sarhad University regarding the impact of different systems of examination upon their academic performance*” Data collection is the initial step in completion of my project. A questionnaire consisting of eleven items regarding the aforementioned problem is presented to you. You being the subject for my study can assist me by providing the information asked in this questionnaire. I assure you that the information gathered as a result of this inquiry shall be kept confidential and used solely for the academic purpose.

You are requested to respond to each statement, in terms of suitability to you, by marking one of the three options offered in front of each statement.

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>1st Option</i>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Option</i>	<i>3<sup>rd</sup> Option</i>
1.	Which system of examination provides good grading?	<i>Semester System</i>	<i>Annual System</i>	<i>Term System</i>
2.	In which system of examination, students can obtain better marks?			
3.	Which system of examination prepares the students with better career opportunities?			
4.	Which system provides proper understanding of the new concepts?			
5.	In which system students remain constantly busy in academic activities?			
6.	In which system students are tested from various angles?			
7.	Which system promotes presentation skills among the students?			
8.	In which system students remain under academic pressure?			
9.	Which system of examination do you think is the ideal one in our existing environment?			
10.	In your opinion, which system of examination is most exposed to possible malpractices?			
11.	In your opinion, which system of examination is most prone to be tempered easily?			