

Practices of Semester System Master's Program at Mahendra Ratna Campus Tahachal

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<p>Article info: Received: February 11, 2024 Revised: March 10, 2024 Accepted: March 26, 2024</p>	<p>Abstract: The purpose of the study is to analyze the practices of semester system master's program at MRC, Tahachal. Semester system effectiveness and success depend upon its implementation practices. The qualitative case study research design is used in this study. Teachers, students, the assistant campus chief, department heads, and non-teaching personnel involved in this program were the research participants. The research site was MRC, Tahachal. The tools used for gathering information for the study were interviews, general observations, and document analysis. I have used a qualitative methodology to examine and interpret the data, which includes editing, summarizing, organizing, classifying, and drawing conclusions. The study concludes that the current implementation practice of semester system has been partially implemented. Most students don't continually engage in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Regarding the semester system program, neither the teachers nor the students are happy. The roles and responsibilities of the department and campus administration have not been carried out to the anticipated level of expectation. The efficacy of the internal assessment system has been lacking. The dean's office and its duties are not perceived as being more beneficial to the semester system's implementation. Since the main stakeholders have not actively engaged in the semester system program's activities, they ought to routinely and cooperatively participate in developing the campus's teaching and learning environment. Stakeholders generally agree that the semester system is beneficial when applied in its intended spirit.</p>
<p>Keywords: <i>Semester system, implementation, stakeholders, assignments, collaboration.</i></p>	

Introduction

The advancement of the country depends on higher education. It is currently recognized as a capital investment that is necessary for the social and economic advancement of the country. Excellent university education has a significant impact on the nation's socioeconomic and cultural advancement. One of the most crucial elements in the development of the entire nation is higher education and it produces a nation's human resources, which will look after the remaining resources in the nation. The overall progress of a nation depends upon its system of higher education.

Tribhuvan University (TU) has decided to implement a semester system at its Central Campus in Kirtipur, starting with the 2014–2015 academic year. Undoubtedly, there has been some discussion about this TU decision. The semester system was not instituted at TU recently; in 2036 BS, a massive student strike forced its removal. There is no reason for the creation, removal, or restoration of the annual system (Khaniya, 2014). TU has made the decision to establish the semester system for all master's degree programs in three parts, with a one-year lag

between each phase. The first phase would start with TU central departments, the second would be Kathmandu Valley, and the third would include the entire nation. In the early years of the twenty-first century, the semester system was introduced as part of the new National Education System Plan (NESP-2028-32). TU, the faculty of education has extended its semester schedule to cover all campuses for master's degrees under this framework (FOE, Dean's office, 2018).

Since the word "semester" has Latin roots meaning "six months," it can also refer to an educational system where courses are divided into two equal halves for the purpose of teaching and learning. The educational system is not the same everywhere. Both new ideas and new discoveries are occurring. Researchers in education investigate the possibilities of student-centered learning strategies. There are two divisions within the educational system. A semester system is used in the first, and an annual system is used in the second. The separation of academic years into two periods is called the semester system. Every pupil is evaluated at the end of six months. It is superior to the annual method and more unusual (Munnawars & Awan, 2019). Worldwide, there is inconsistency in the educational systems, as novel ideas and technological developments are produced. Education experts investigate the potential of using student-centered teaching methods. The world's educational systems include the quadmester, trimester, semester, and annual systems (poudel, 2018).

The phrase "semester system" in academia comes from the Latin word "sementris," which signifies a six-month period. Literally, it refers to one of the two divisions of an academic year or a half of a year (Dahal, 2018). The semester system is a kind of education where the academic year is split into two semesters, each lasting roughly six months. The word "semester" literally refers to a period of six months (Neog, 2020).

The semester system is a widely recognized educational concept that is now in use in higher education. This approach's primary advantage lies in providing students with opportunities for continuous learning, evaluation, and in-depth subject understanding, in addition to improved teacher-student communication. Nepal's semester system is a significant departure from the nation's higher education system in an effort to improve students' meaningful learning (TU, 2013). TU instituted a semester system to better align with global standards for education. Significant curricular practice adjustments, however, were not adequately planned for beforehand. The semester system represents a reform approach to address shortcomings in the yearly system. How it may be done effectively, systematically, and productively, however, is the crucial question (Acharya, Rai, Acarya, Panthi, & Dahal. 2023).

An annual structure is giving way to a semester-based one in the modern educational system due to globalization. Higher quality education is provided by universities that employ the semester system as opposed to those that use the old annual system. The semester system offers more modern, market-based curricula. The semester system's increasing ubiquity and the global trend in higher education were taken into account when TU made the decision to use it in 2014 (Sapkota, 2019).

The previous yearly method necessitated a summative assessment of the students, leading to an overwhelming amount of failures. Only approximately 26.6% of students graduated, according to UGC data (Gaulee, 2018). Because of the yearly school system, there was little opportunity for teachers and students to interact. Learning views were not given as much consideration as memorization and deposition. It is said that consistent attendance is required for the semester system, although many students fail to meet this requirement since the majority are either employed as service members or in other occupations. It is quite challenging for these students to attend class on a daily basis (Baral, Chhetri, & Subedi, 2019).

A well-designed curriculum, course coverage within allotted time, regularity of classes, timely and constructive feedback from teachers, accessibility of teachers to students outside of

class, availability of information resources for students, including computer facilities and the e-library, the highest level of secrecy and confidentiality in examinations, transparency in evaluation and grade, and timely announcement of semester results are all necessary for the effective and successful implementation of the semester system (Dahal, 2018). The semester system has been used in many countries, including Bangladesh, Australia, Britain, China, India, and the United States. The semester system is linked to the processes of establishing regularity, creativity, and engagement between educators and learners; remedial instruction when needed; close progress monitoring; internal assessment for evaluation; project work; making presentations; focusing on particular subjects; group work; etc. (Khaniya, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the current practices of semester system master's program at Mahendra Ratna Campus, Tahachal.

Review of Literature

The semester system is now a democratic, power-developing, more liberal, open, and locally empowered social environment rather than the strongly established, centralized, yearly routine structure. And therefore, the faculty of education must place a high priority on the development of academic standards as well as contemporary technical innovations and methods for instruction, learning, and research in a certain academic field (Faculty of education, 2018). According to the report, 75% of students are dissatisfied with the course not being finished in the allocated time, and 89% are dissatisfied with the frequency of classes. While 68% of students were satisfied with the active participation of their teachers in the classroom, 66% of students were dissatisfied with the regularity and promptness of the professors. Less than ten hours of library use per semester are rare among students, according to the survey. Thus, the study's conclusions encouraged all parties to take action in order to guarantee that the semester system is effective and improves students' academic achievement (Pokharel, Jaishi, & Subedi, 2018).

This approach includes multiple internal assessments, the results of which are added to the final exam results. After the end of the teaching term, final exams are held six months later. Exams are administered using this manner every six months instead of once a year. A semester-based approach that is more effective, deliberate, precise, and beneficial to the teaching-learning process has taken the place of TU's previous annual method. Each period's duration is determined by credit hours, and each student's performance is graded using the Grading System (Poudel, 2021). A "semester system" is the full academic program that is finished in six months. Project-based learning forms the foundation of all academic activities in a semester system. Teachers do not enjoy with the semester system because of poor administrative planning and incompetent professionals who lack professionalism. Within the semester system, traditional lecture techniques have been replaced with a student-centered approach, and digital resources are promoted for independent study (Sherpa & Baraily, 2022).

Since the semester system allows for year-round student activity, higher education institutions typically prefer it to the yearly system. The semester system just does not function with the setup of Indian universities, even if it is not flawed (Jain, 2017). The American university-introduced semester system has not worked well in India. The strategy works in America because the appraisal process is entirely internal. When it comes to implementation in Indian institutions, the workload for students, instructors, and colleges increases dramatically. The semester system is used in almost every nation in the world today because it is more effective at promoting teaching and learning. Similar to other systems, the organization of the semesters in this one is determined by a specific philosophy. To function in its genuine way, one needs to comprehend its ideology.

Its functioning is based on the following concepts: self-assessment, monitoring, relevant evaluation and grading criteria, flexibility, freedom, and continuous assessment (Shoukat, Waheed, & Nawaz, 2021).

For TU, the semester system's origins is nothing new. Under this system, some of its programs were operating. A few years ago, the TU administration decided to keep all of its master's programs on the semester schedule. It was believed that involving students in the learning process through a flexible curriculum, learners-centered pedagogy, ongoing evaluation, and a required research experience would improve the quality of education (Gautam, 2018). However, the real implementation practices have not matched with it. The main objective of the semester system is to enhance students' knowledge, skill and capacity continuously, extensively and in-depth (TU, 2013). However, students' competencies and employability have not been developing. Thus, students have not satisfied from this semester system program. This semester system has not supported for all students needs and interests.

Full-time enrollment, knowledgeable teachers, creative and useful curricula, scientific teaching methods, a well-stocked library, a classroom setting, and a timely academic calendar are all necessary for a semester system to be successful (Baral, Chhetri, & Subedi, 2019). In order to better connect higher education with social change and expectations, there are shifts from teaching to learning, knowing to doing, written exams to diverse evaluation, degrees to disciplinary identity and professional advancement, and classroom modifications to creating a larger education culture (Tripathi, Sharma & Subedi, 2019).

Finding out how satisfied students are with college semester systems is the goal of this study. A large number of aspects, including the function of instructors, course types, learning medium, management system, college environment, and group work characteristics, are evaluated in the study. These factors have a significant impact on students' satisfaction levels (Sardar, Maqsood, Jawad, Akhtar, & Latif, 2019). The semester system works better than the annual system. While the two systems' objectives and contents are comparable, there are distinctions in the way the activities and evaluation procedure are perceived. The semester system is not conducive to professional development and teacher motivation (Bista, 2016). TU's use of the semester system may constitute a paradigm shift, adopted it in response to the simultaneous presence of both joy and misery.

Continuous, extensive, and profound improvement of students' knowledge, ability, and skills is the main objective of the semester system. The Office of the Dean administers entrance exams to determine students' basic preparedness for master's programs. Entrance requirements for students are merit-based and adhere precisely to the academic calendar. Based on an inclusive basis, 20% of all eligible students are enrolled. If they have less than 80% attendance, they are not allowed to sit for the final exams of the semester. In the event that a student has a major sickness, they will still be able to take the semester exam if they have 70% attendance. Under this circumstance, students are required to present an official medical certificate (TU, 2013). The study's conclusions indicate that there were a number of problems with the semester system's execution in colleges that both students and instructors had to deal with. These included an excessive number of long courses, out-of-date or irrelevant curricula, an ineffective assessment system, inadequate teacher preparation for the new semester system, and inadequate supervision of the recently established program in the colleges (Khan, Ahmad, & Imran, 2024).

Theories of Implementation Practices of Semester System

The theoretical review is the framework that supports the theory of a study's and it provides the research direction. I used the Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) model and Total Quality Management (TQM) theory for evaluation of program implementation practices,

which are useful in understanding and improving the mindsets of stakeholders because these examine factors such as programs, people, goods, and organizations.

Stufflebeam created this concept in the late 1960s to help educational programs-particularly those focused on enhancing the teaching and learning process become more effective and accountable. This methodology is useful for determining how well-respected an educational facility is. Context refers to the aims, objectives, background, and history of the educational institutions, while inputs mention to the materials, time, and human and physical resources required for efficient operation. The implementation of various teaching and learning procedures is referred to as the process. The focus of the product is on the effectiveness of teaching and learning for both the individual and society (Aziz, Mahmood, & Rehman, 2018). Four different types of decisions will be generated with the aid of the CIPP evaluation model: planning decisions that impact goal and objective selection; decisions that guarantee the designs of strategies and procedures are optimal for achieving the goals; decisions that are implemented to bring about improvements by selecting designs, methods, and strategies; and repeated decisions to maintain continuity, modify, or terminate program activities. The goal of Total Quality Management (TQM) theory is to focus on achieving both corporate and customer objectives by integrating all organizational activities (Hoque, Hossain, & Zaman, 2017).

Methodology of the Study

The main objective of this study is to analyze the current practices of semester system master's program at MRC, Tahachal. According to Ary (2010), study design is the researcher's strategy for finding out more about a particular group or phenomenon in its context. The study employed qualitative research and case study design to perform an empirical study of the issue by participation of key stakeholders (students, teachers and campus administration) in master's program at MRC, Tahachal. The field of my study was MRC, Tahachal, because it runs semester system master's program and this campus has practiced long period and gain more experiences of single education programs.

Small sample sizes and in-depth investigations are possible in qualitative research. Considering this reality, the participants of the study were those people who were involved in the semester system master's program at MRC, Tahachal. Among the participants, I have selected two teachers, two department heads, one program concerned assistant campus chief, one non-teaching staff, and two students from third and fourth semester concerning every department (total 16 students) by employed purposive sampling technique (Mainali, 2023). The study falls under multiple realities, data were collected through open ended interviewed from primary sources of the key stakeholders of MRC, Tahachal, and observation during the data collection procedure. The method of analyzing qualitative data is linear rather than step-by-step, and it involves simultaneous data collection and processing. The major topics of the study were identified through thematic analysis of the data, which was then used to prepare a final case study. The researcher himself was collected data through the using interview, observation and document analysis.

Findings and Discussion

The main objective of this study is to analyze the semester system master's program at MRC, Tahachal. Planning and management are tools for achieving goals, and they are intimately tied to one another. Best practices are groups of procedures and approaches that create organized processes, maximize outcomes, and boost productivity. The current implementation practices of semester system master's program is in the position of neither good nor bad. The main objective of the semester system is to enhance students' knowledge, skill and capacity continuously,

extensively and in-depth (TU, 2013). However, students' competencies and employability have not been developing. Thus, students have not satisfied from this semester system program.

A "semester system" is the full academic program that is finished in six months. Project-based learning forms the foundation of all academic activities in a semester system. Within the semester system, traditional lecture techniques have been replaced with a student-centered approach, and digital resources are promoted for independent study. (Sherpa & Baraily, 2022). However, students and teachers do not enjoy with the semester system. Full-time enrollment, knowledgeable teachers, creative and useful curricula, scientific teaching methods, a well-stocked library, a classroom setting, and a timely academic calendar are all necessary for a semester system to be successful. (Baral, Chhetri, & Subedi, 2019). The semester system is not conducive to professional development and teacher motivation. (Bista, 2016). The semester system used by TU could represent a paradigm change and faculty of education created a semester system in reaction to the coexistence of happiness and sorrow.

Students said that this semester system program has not eased for us, over loaded curriculum, and low pass rate of students in all departments. The internal and external efficiency of this system have not improved. The assignments and midterm examination have been doing like a formality which has not supported to this system's basic assumption. Although, comparatively the semester system is better than annual system for those students who are regular in their classroom teaching learning process. Overall, the key stakeholders have not followed the basic assumptions of semester system. Thus, this program is in the state of reform and change immediately.

The major goal of the semester system is the continuous, extensive, and profound advancement of students' knowledge, competence, and skills. Entrance tests are administered by the Office of the Dean to assess candidates' fundamental master's program readiness. Students must meet entrance requirements that are strictly based on merit and follow the academic schedule. Twenty percent of all eligible students are enrolled, inclusively. They are not permitted to take the semester's final exams if their attendance rate is less than 80% (TU, 2013). Teachers should have access to frequent training sessions, visiting programs, and exposure opportunities. The entire campus has not evolved to be conducive to the teaching and learning process. We have failed to pay attention. Experience with semester-based education has demonstrated that, provided all major stakeholders adhere to the semester system plan and its fundamental principles, the master's program in the semester system at MRC can be administered successfully and quality rigor ensured.

Matrix of Findings and Discussion

Themes	Students	Teachers	Department heads	Campus administration
Implementation practices of semester system	Students have not attended regularly, and there is no different between regular and irregular students, pedagogical strategies have not	The current implementation practice of semester system master's program has not effective, this program is state of dead, further declining position,	Partially implemented, major stakeholders have not actively participated, taking more time for its completion, policy level is not active and farsighted,	All activities have done ritually (sabai kam karma kandi bhae), all teachers and students have not active and devoted for teaching learning,

	differentiate d from annual, 'kam chatau', Nahunu Bhanda 'kano Mama Niko', no more different between annual and semester, not support for diverse backgrounds students, lack of strong operational calendar, the role of campus administrati on and departments have not effective, the situation of compulsion.	difference between assumptions and practices of semester system, and the student's role and functions have not satisfied and effective, we are always ready to take our duties and responsibiliti es.	we are ready for our side to effectively implement the program, the student's role and functions have not satisfied and effective. The role of Dean's office has not been seen more effective for implementati on process of semester system.	the role and functions of teachers, students and departments have not effective, and all we have commonly weaknesses remained in our activities, teachers and students have not fully motivated to their professional developmen t.
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Students said that the semester system master's program is neither good nor bad. Our expectations from the semester-based higher education program have not been fulfilled. Through this approach, a small amount of additional knowledge and abilities have been acquired, but not enough. The distinction between the semester system and the annual system no longer exists. As we enter the third semester of the two years, it is evident how the semester system is being implemented in practice. Essentially, there has been no change in pedagogical techniques from the annual system. This system is not adaptable to pupils from different backgrounds. The circumstances and inputs of the semester system have not matched the various backgrounds of instructors and learners.

Instructors stated that while the semester system's main goal was to improve higher education by eliminating the shortcomings of the yearly system, the way it is now being implemented is ineffective. The semester program is not well-executed, and there is little learning and promotion. The learning process has not been frequently and actively engaged by the students. Department heads and campus management claim that we expected the semester system would help us raise the caliber of higher education. Every student participates regularly in the teaching and learning process and actively pursues learning objectives. With the help of different kinds of assignments and midterm exams, we may make our higher education more useful. Each of these exercises can help pupils strengthen their competence. Students, instructors, departments, and campus management make up the majority of this semester-based program's components. If these are all in good working order and perform smoothly, the program will be implemented successfully. However, based on these goals, the semester system's current implementation condition has not been carried out efficiently.

According to department heads and campus management, the roles and responsibilities of teachers are ineffective when considering pedagogical techniques. Not all instructors are committed to their work and actively involved in helping pupils learn from their viewpoints. According to campus administration, instructors and students are not always ready to assume accountability and responsibility, which indicates that they are not entirely driven to further their career advancement, which has an impact on how this program is implemented.

Students said that there has been no rise in their level of active participation. In addition, departments and campus management have disregarded the situation, discouraging regular students in the process. The truth is that most of the pupils have not consistently participated in the teaching and learning process in their classrooms. Because of the differences in our socioeconomic backgrounds, we have not engaged in the teaching and learning activities in the classroom very much. According to campus administration, students' roles and functions have not been satisfied or successful, and they have not consistently attended their classes. There are three categories of students: regular, irregular, and infrequent. Students claim that because teachers are responsible for 40% of the internal evaluation, we are unable to discuss and critique their instructional methods. This circumstance suggests that the semester system has not been working well and has just kept things as they are.

Students believe that departments' roles and functions have remained passive and that there is insufficient coordination between the administration of the campus, professors, and students. Administration and departments on college don't seem to care and impose severe requirements on irregular students. The atmosphere on campus has been evolving gradually, much like an annual system. The heads of departments declared that we are prepared to carry out the semester system program in an efficient manner. The majority of department heads do, however, believe that the semester system program is only partially realized. The departments alone lack adequate experience in implementing the semester system. A major part of it has been played by the administration and students on campus.

The semester system master's program practices are related to context, inputs, and process within the framework of the CIPP model. We ought to reconsider the background and workings of the semester system at this point. According to the TQM theory, improvements in leadership, teamwork, cooperation, and accountability among teachers, students, staff, administrators, and members of the Campus Board will lead to an improvement in the quality of education or the efficient implementation of the semester system program.

Conclusion and Implications

The study's outcomes and debate have painted a clear image of how the semester system master's program at MRC has been implemented, as well as how students, instructors, departments, and campus management feel about it. The result has shown that the majority of stakeholders are dissatisfied with how the semester-based master's program is being implemented. In contrast to the annual system, the semester system performs better. For instructors and students alike, this approach has not made things any easier. This semester's system master's program has not been motivating for either teachers or students. Students from varied origins have varying socioeconomic circumstances, and they need to have gained and learned certain skills. They haven't visited frequently enough to study more efficiently as a result. The dean's office, departments, faculty-staff, and campus administration are not very concerned about this situation.

A dynamic curriculum is essential to the semester system's success, and building the right facilities on campus is a must for its effective use. We ought to adopt new perspectives. Although the semester system may be viewed as a step toward higher-quality education, the competence, experience, and genuine commitment of the key stakeholders are even more critical to the system's

success. To achieve the objectives of the semester system, educators and learners alike must be prepared to devote additional time. The practices of semester system master's program is not more effective at MRC, Tahachal. With the goal to effectively apply the semester system, departments and teachers can benefit from this study by expanding their knowledge and abilities in instructional and educational leadership.

The study supports the weak points in the teaching-learning activities of the semester system. All significant stakeholders, including faculty, students, and the relevant authorities, will find value in the results as they work to improve the semester system's current implementation process and make it more suitable and dependable in order to meet market demands. Moreover, the education faculty will learn about the actual conditions on campuses, have a greater comprehension of the difficulties and concerns there, and consider potential solutions. It is the supporting documentation for the semester system's successful teaching and learning. The results will assist the relevant authorities in determining how to enhance the current system and make it more suitable and effective in the current educational environment. The study holds importance for future investigations into contemporary problems and obstacles encountered during the installation of the semester system.

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