

A Qualitative Study on the Semester System at the Undergraduate Level and Students' Attitude Toward Examinations in the Context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has proposed several significant reforms in India's higher education system, including a flexible curriculum, multidisciplinary education, continuous assessment, and student-centred learning. Under these reforms, emphasis has also been placed on the effective implementation of the semester system.

The present study aims to understand the impact of the current implementation of the semester system at the undergraduate level on students' seriousness toward examinations. A qualitative research methodology was used in this study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students.

The findings revealed that some students perceive examinations merely as a formal process and appear for them with limited preparation. At the same time, some students reported that the semester system can help in developing regular study habits. The study concludes that to successfully achieve the objectives of NEP 2020, there is a need for the effective implementation of the semester system along with the enhancement of students' academic motivation.

Keywords:Semester System, National Education Policy 2020, Seriousness Toward Examinations, Higher Education, Student Behaviour.

Introduction:

India's education system has undergone continuous changes and reforms over time. In ancient India, the Gurukul system emphasised knowledge, personality development, and moral values. During the colonial period, education was mainly aimed at preparing individuals for administrative roles. After independence, the Government of India recognised education as a key foundation for national development and introduced various reforms through commissions and policies. After independence, important commissions such as the University Education Commission (1948–49), the Secondary Education Commission (1952–53), and the Kothari

Commission (1964–66) provided several significant recommendations for improving the Indian education system.

In the twenty-first century, with the rise of globalization, the development of information technology, and the increasing importance of a knowledge-based economy, the Government of India felt the need for comprehensive reforms in the education system. With this objective, the National Education Policy 2020 was implemented. The main aim of this policy is to make education more inclusive, flexible, multidisciplinary, and of high quality. It emphasizes the holistic development of learners, skill-based education, critical thinking, creativity, and innovation. In the field of higher education, the policy gives special attention to multidisciplinary learning, promotion of research, use of technology, continuous assessment, and student-centred teaching.

The semester system has also been considered important for reforms in higher education. Under this system, the entire academic year is divided into two or more parts, known as semesters. At the end of each semester, students are evaluated. The objective of this system is to ensure that students study regularly throughout the year, complete the curriculum in a phased manner, and maintain continuity in the learning process. Additionally, the semester system helps students stay consistently engaged with their coursework and provides opportunities to understand different subjects in a structured way. However, at the practical level, it is observed that in many educational institutions, the implementation of the semester system faces several challenges. Often, there is pressure to complete the entire syllabus within a limited time, which may affect the teaching-learning process. Moreover, the system of internal assessment is not always effectively implemented in many institutions. In some places, activities such as attendance, assignments, presentations, and continuous evaluation do not receive the importance they deserve.

From the students' perspective, it is also observed that the level of seriousness toward examinations varies. Some students view the semester system positively and consider it motivating for regular study and better performance. In contrast, some students prepare for examinations within a limited time or treat them merely as a formality. Thus, the impact of the semester system on students' seriousness toward examinations and their study habits becomes an important area of study.

Considering the above circumstances, it becomes necessary to conduct an in-depth study of the current implementation of the semester system at the undergraduate level and students' seriousness toward examinations in the context of the National Education Policy 2020. Such a study would help in understanding the extent to which the semester system is achieving its objectives and how it influences students' study behavior and attitudes toward examinations. It can also provide important suggestions for the effective implementation of education policy and improvement in the teaching-learning process in the future.

Review of Related Literature :

Pathak and Rahman (2013) studied the perceptions of students and teachers toward the semester system in selected degree colleges of Nagaon district, Assam. The study found that the semester system promotes the process of continuous evaluation, which motivates students to study regularly. However, it also revealed that a lack of resources and time management issues may hinder its effective implementation.

Subedi (2019) examined the perceptions of students and teachers toward the semester system at the university level. The findings indicated that the semester system makes the teaching-learning process more active and encourages students to engage in continuous study. Despite this, the study also highlighted the need to strengthen institutional facilities and administrative arrangements for its effective implementation.

Dahal (2018) studied the perceptions of master's level students regarding the semester system. According to the findings, most students accepted the semester system positively. They believed that it helps in developing regular study habits. However, some students also identified the extensive syllabus and limited time as major challenges.

Sherpa and Baraily (2022) investigated teachers' perceptions of the semester system. This study was primarily based on a qualitative approach. The findings suggested that the semester system can make the teaching-learning process more organized, but its successful implementation requires proper planning, adequate resources, and administrative support.

Lalrinsangi and Rosangliana (2024) studied college teachers' perceptions of the semester system. The study revealed that most teachers had a positive outlook toward this system. According to them, the semester system enhances students' active participation and makes the learning process more effective through continuous assessment.

Statement of the Problem :

A Qualitative Study on the Semester System at the Undergraduate Level and Students' Attitude Toward Examinations in the Context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020."

Research Question :

"How is the semester system being implemented at the undergraduate level in the context of the National Education Policy 2020, and what impact does it have on students' seriousness toward examinations and their study habits?"

Objectives of the Study :

1. To study the role of the semester system in the context of the National Education Policy 2020.
2. To study the current implementation of the semester system at the undergraduate level.
3. To study the level of students' seriousness toward examinations.
4. To study the impact of the semester system on students' study habits.
5. To provide suggestions to make the semester system more effective.

Research Method :

In the present study, a qualitative research methodology has been used. The purpose of qualitative research is to understand a problem, phenomenon, or experience in depth. The

objective of this study is to understand the implementation of the semester system at the undergraduate level and students' seriousness toward examinations.

Keeping this objective in mind, the researcher considered the qualitative method to be appropriate in order to understand the experiences, thoughts, and perspectives of the participants. In this study, the interview method has been used to collect information.

Research Tool :

In this study, a self-constructed Interview Schedule was used as the research tool for data collection. Questions were prepared in accordance with the objectives of the study, through which participants' experiences and views regarding the semester system were obtained.

The main purpose of these questions was to understand how the semester system affects students' study behaviour and their seriousness toward examinations.

Sample :

The study evaluated a sample of 60 undergraduate students ($N = 60$) drawn from three higher education institutions in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh: Vidyawati Mukand Lal Girls College, M.M.H. College, and S.D. College. The sample was selected through purposive sampling, with an equal allocation of 20 students ($n = 20$) from each institution. The participants were actively enrolled in a semester-based curriculum.

Data Collection :

For this study, the researcher personally contacted the participants and informed them about the purpose of the study. After that, questions were asked through interviews, and their responses were carefully recorded in written form. During the interview, participants were given the opportunity to express their views freely.

The collected data were analysed through qualitative analysis.

Major ideas and themes were identified from the participants' responses. Thereafter, similar types of responses were grouped together and analysed.

Through this process, important findings related to the impact of the semester system and students' seriousness toward examinations were obtained.

Result and analysis :

Objective 1 – To study the role of the semester system in the context of the National Education Policy 2020.

During the interviews, most students reported that the semester system makes education more systematic and motivates them to study regularly. Some students believed that the syllabus is divided into smaller parts under the semester system, which makes studying comparatively easier.

However, a few students also stated that there is pressure to complete the syllabus in a short period of time, which sometimes makes it difficult to develop an in-depth understanding of the subject.

Objective 2 – To study the current implementation of the semester system at the undergraduate level.

According to the information obtained from the interviews, most students reported that activities such as internal assessment, assignments, and presentations are included in the semester system. This keeps students active throughout the semester.

However, some students also mentioned that internal assessment is sometimes conducted in a formal manner only, and its quality is not uniform across all institutions.

Objective 3 – To study the level of students’ seriousness toward examinations.

During the interviews, it was found that students’ seriousness toward examinations varies under the semester system. Some students stated that they prepare for examinations regularly due to the continuous nature of evaluation, which encourages them to remain focused throughout the semester. On the other hand, some students admitted that they prepare only to a limited extent during examinations and consider them merely a formal process. This reflects a variation in students’ attitudes and highlights the need to strengthen academic motivation among learners.

Objective 4 –To study the impact of the semester system on students’ study habits.

Most students reported that the semester system requires them to study throughout the year rather than relying on last-minute preparation. Activities such as assignments, internal assessment, and presentations play an important role in engaging students continuously and help in developing regular and disciplined study habits. This indicates that the semester system positively influences students’ learning behaviour by promoting consistency and active participation in the academic process.

Objective 5 –To provide suggestions to make the semester system more effective.

During the interviews, students provided several important suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the semester system. They emphasised the need to make internal assessment more transparent, fair, and systematic. Students also suggested that more participatory and student-centred activities should be included in the teaching-learning process to enhance their engagement and understanding. In addition, it was recommended that the syllabus should be balanced and properly structured according to the available time, so that students can gain a deeper understanding of the subjects without feeling excessive pressure. These suggestions highlight the need for continuous improvement in both evaluation practices and instructional strategies within the semester system.

Finding :

1. The study concludes that, in the context of the National Education Policy 2020, the semester system can be helpful in promoting regular study and continuous evaluation among students, but strengthening institutional arrangements is necessary for its effective implementation.
2. The study concludes that the semester system is being implemented at the undergraduate level in many institutions, but its effectiveness depends on institutional resources and the transparency of evaluation.
3. The study concludes that the semester system can motivate students for regular study, but an equal level of seriousness toward examinations is not found among all students.

4. The study makes it clear that the semester system can play an important role in making students' study habits more regular and systematic.
5. The study concludes that improvement in the evaluation system and teaching methods is necessary to make the semester system more effective.

Conclusion :

The present study clearly indicates that the semester system can be helpful in making the teaching-learning process in higher education more systematic and continuous. Most students accepted that this system helps in developing the habit of regular study. However, some students also showed a tendency to take examinations as a formal process. This indicates that, along with the effective implementation of the semester system, there is also a need to enhance students' academic motivation.

To successfully achieve the objectives of the National Education Policy 2020, it is necessary that educational institutions implement the semester system effectively and encourage students to engage in continuous study.

Suggestions (Recommendations) :

1. Internal assessment under the semester system should be made more transparent and effective.
2. Student-centred teaching methods should be promoted in educational institutions.
3. The curriculum should be organised in such a way that students get sufficient time to understand the subject in depth.
4. Activities such as assignments, projects, and presentations should be encouraged to motivate students for regular study.
5. Both teachers and students should be made aware of the objectives of the semester system.

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Cite the Article:

Reeta, Dr., Jaiswal, Dr. Saroj Kumar. (2026). A Qualitative Study on the Semester System at the Undergraduate Level and Students' Attitude Toward Examinations in the Context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Shiksha Samvad International Open Access Peer-Reviewed & Refereed Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 4(1) 54-60, ISSN: 2584-0983 (Online), Volume 04, Issue 01, September-2026.

DOI: - <https://doi.org/10.64880/shikshasamvad.v4i1.06>

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