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## **A Comparative Study of the Quality of Education in Annual and Semester System in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

The present study is a comparative analysis of MA English results under annual and semester systems. This study aims at looking into the quality assurance in both the systems. The focus of the study is to find out the system that produces the best results in terms of quality assurance expected from the students of MA English. The results of the present study are consistent with the study of Tayaaba, et al., (2010) that there is a significant difference in quality of learners' results between the two systems. It proves that semester system is comparatively better than the annual system with a few technical drawbacks of its own. The study concludes that the semester system is more appropriate for higher education like MA English as it makes the students fit to meet the requirements of the market in practical life. The study is limited to MA English results, but it could be generalized to other subjects as well. The study suggests further research into this area in terms of all other relevant technicalities. The study contributes to the knowledge of students about the two systems. It may also contribute in facilitating the universities in their decision making regarding the academic system which they intend to adopt in their concerned universities.

### **Introduction**

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Countries in the Subcontinent including Pakistan and India were under colonial rule. During their rule of the subcontinent, the British introduced the Annual system for education. In this kind of system a student is taught a subject for the whole year. Then his achievement is judged by a comprehensive examination upon which the assessment of the whole subject is based. The same model of education was followed in nearly all subjects. On the other hand, Semester system is really an American system of education (Jayanthi 2007).

The semester system breaks up the year into two or three academic parts<sup>1</sup>, which increases the number of teaching days. It reduces the size of the classes, make sure proper attention is given to all the students. It provides for internal assessment and conducts exams every six months along with practical assignments during the whole year (Jyoti Kamal 2002).

### **Research Aims**

The purpose of the present study is to look for quality assurance in annual and semester system. The study has the following objectives.

- The perceptions of the students about annual and semester system.
- The perceptions of the teachers about annual and semester system.
- What system does provide quality assurance in MA English?
- How quality assurance is achieved in annual and semester system?

In the light of the above objectives the study has the following hypothesis

M.A. English results under the semester system provide better quality education than annual system.

### **Literature Review**

Jayanthi has discussed the announcement of the Indian Prime Minister to introduce semester system in some universities of India. The Indian PM announced to change the old annual system to modern semester system of education of 30 universities in 18 states of India. The author is of the view that one of the reasons might be the failure of the universities to achieve or maintain quality assurance in education. Regarding this new semester system, the faculty members are of the view that it will control absenteeism and students will focus more on their studies, as semester system is more intensive in nature. But they thought that in the semester system, the marking is internal, and so it may be subjective. Furthermore, the credit system never reveals the actual marks obtained by the students, and when something new is learnt in the new semester, the previously learnt material washes out.

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<sup>1</sup> The education system that has three parts in a year is sometimes called trimester instead of semester system. But the terms are sometimes used interchangeably (Radha Prathi 2005). **Please remove this footnote and integrate this as part of the running text.**

Dr. Vijay Khole, Vice-chancellor, University of Bombay favored semester system at the post-graduate level, because the industry and market expect the students with practical assignments and training, which are mostly available only in a semester system. But for undergraduate level he thinks, they should have a different set up. Dr. Meenakshi Rishi says that the semester system affords more flexibility to the students (Jayanthi 2007)

Tayaaba, et al., (2010) suggest a significant difference in quality assurance in the results under the semester system. Their study proves that both the systems have merits and demerits of their own, but do not clearly favour any one system more than other. Commenting on the objections of the Bangalore University College Teachers' Association raised against the semester system, Chitra Ramani says that the association urged the Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University to bring back the replaced annual system. The association objected that under semester system the administration has become chaotic. In this system, the university does not have clear guidelines about teachers and subjects, so many qualified teachers have no load of work.

Radha Prathi discusses the announcement of the schools under the State of Karnataka that the trimester system has been replaced again by the semester system. The author notes the consultations of the teachers and head of institutions that annual system permit even the mediocre students to grapple with the difficult concepts of the subjects throughout the year and he is examined at the end of the year. The students are tested throughout the year, which show them their weaknesses but they are graded at the end and so they have enough time to learn the subjects (Radha Prathi 2005).

The semester system increases accountability, it streamlines the progress of the classes and improve the academics. It makes possible to achieve the 180 days target of teaching. In semester system, the people have to work hard; there is internal assessment and a comprehensive exam at the end of the term (Jyoti Kamal 2002).

Teachers of various departments of the Punjab University (Pakistan) objected to the results of those students who have studied under the semester system, particularly at undergraduate level. The students are given 80 to 90 per cent marks which are not realistic in terms of the overall abilities of the students. These students, when taking admission at higher levels, are in an advantageous position because of having good grades. This decreases the possibility for other students (who have passed their exams under the annual system) to take admission. Punjab University multiplied the marks of the students who had studied under semester system with 0.85, but there are 900 students who have studied under semester system as against 800 students who have studied under annual system. The students, who get good marks under the semester system, become overconfident. This does not help their performance in the annual system at the higher level.

## **Methodology**

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The present study is a comparative study of the results of M.A. English under annual and semester system. The quality assurance measurement is not an easy task in term of Methodology. It needs a detail observational and experimental study, which is beyond the scope of this paper. But the study has focused on the perception of learners along with the observation and experience of the teachers who have experience of teaching under both the systems.

### **Research Design**

The study has been designed for the said purpose. The study has ignored actual classroom performance and the performance of M.A. English in practical life. Instead the study has focused on the views of the learners and the teachers. The study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches to probe into the matter of quality assurance under both the systems.

### **Qualitative Approach**

In qualitative approach the study took into consideration the views of the experts in this field. Two eminent professors from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan were interviewed who considered the issue of quality education under both annual and semester system in light of their own experience. Their views were supported with the views of other experts in the fields as well.

### **Quantitative Approach**

In quantitative approach the perceptions of the students were found out. Their views were analyzed and the results were deduced. Their views regarding quality assurance in MA English under annual and semester system were analyzed along with other data obtained.

Twenty students from four different universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were given a questionnaire which was regarding their perceptions about quality education under annual and semester system. Ten students had passed their MA English under annual and ten under semester system.

### **Data Collection**

The data was needed from both students and experts in the field. The students who had practical experience of the systems were needed and the experts who had taught under both the systems were also required. For this reason the following sample from the following population was selected.

### **Population**

The population for the present study was the group of all those students who has passed their MA under annual or semester system. But the quality assurance in their respective systems was to be confirmed by the experts in the field, in order to remove the biases of the students in the

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favor of the system in which they had passed their MA. Their quality assurance was even measured from some of the questions regarding their present service on the basis on their MA English. For this reason the following sample was selected.

### **Sample of the Participants**

The study took a sample of twenty participants who had passed their MA English. The participants were selected in equal ratio, i.e., ten participants had passed their MA under annual system and ten participants had passed under semester system. The participants were selected randomly from four universities who belonged to different localities. The participants were selected keeping in view their availability and our access to them.

### **Data Collecting Tools**

The data was collected from the participants through the tool of a questionnaire. The questionnaire had 10 questions regarding the perception of the participants about the two systems under which they had passed their MA English. The participants were asked both close ended and open ended question about the system of their choice, in order to remove biases in favor of their favorite system. In addition to this questionnaire, two eminent professors of English were interviewed who had experience of teaching under both annual and semester system. The two tools of questionnaire and interview were separately analyzed and the results of both kinds of data strongly supported each other.

### **Results of the interview**

The interview taken from two eminent professors is summarized below. These professors had more than twenty years of experience of teaching English to under-graduate and post-graduate levels. Their names are kept confidential as per their direction.

The first professor was of the view that both annual and semester systems have their own merits and drawbacks. According to him the annual system is better to be used in public sector institutions where they are supposed to teach even the weak students. The students have a lot of time, and so they can come up with the whole contents of the subjects. This kind of system is more knowledge transfer based, as it is not as interactive as a semester system is. The teacher in annual system is supposed to transfer the knowledge with a long span of time over the whole year. The students are not in any hurry to complete some of the unnecessary assignments, and so they can focus on the contents of their own interest in the light of the examination and learning point of view. The courses are repeated for so many times, which helps the students to get grip over the subject. The examination in annual system is mostly objective in nature, as there are external checkers. The marks obtained by the students really reflect their worth in the subjects.

About the semester system the same professor said that the semester system is more interactive in nature. The teacher is supposed to teach the subject with the participation of the students. This

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system is more practical in nature. The students do not have the burden of studies for the whole year, although they are supposed to do assignments throughout the year. The contents of the subject are divided into parts and so the students can easily learn the contents. The courses are designed in a way to enable the students to meet the needs of the market after their studies. But there are no hard and fast contents to be presented, and so the teacher can use his own intuition and experience to decide the best materials for the students. The students are supposed to compete with each other, which make them ambition in studies and so they take interest in different assignments. The nature of each assignment specifies its own way to get good grades. The students can repeat the subjects of their own interest, and they can improve their grades as well. The students have good working relations with teachers, which help them to learn more and getting good grades.

The second professor was of the view that the annual system might be appropriate for lower level, but it does not work well at higher level like MA English. If one keeps in view the needs of the students after their studies, the market demands people with practical experience and training of some kind. This kind of need fulfillment is not possible in the annual system. The teacher in the annual system cannot give attention to all the students and so their respective potential are neither explored nor utilized. While in the semester system the size of the class are controlled through assigning different practical tasks which are helpful in practical life later. The students who study through semester systems are more confident, they are offered good services and so are more successful than those who study through annual systems.

Annual system is more prone to rote learning type of education, while the semester system gives emphasis to creative and technical type of learning. But the semester system has some drawbacks. One of the drawbacks is the internal checking during the examination, and assignments marking. The students are aware of the source of grades and may approach the teacher for good grades. On the other hands the annual system has external checking which makes sure objective marking for students. But the checkers in annual system even may misuse this anonymity and may not be proved careful in his duties, which might be realized in the form of negligence as far as marking in annual system is concerned. The annual system is better in the sense that here the competence of the students in the subject as a whole improves by studying it for a long time. If the teachers are qualified and the students give full concentration to their studies, then annual system too can be very useful for MA English. The attendance in annual system is not that much strict as it is in semester system. The students attend the class regularly, as there are attendance marks and so the students are involved in the process of learning more than they could have learnt in annual system. If one has to choose a system out of the two, then semester system is no doubt the best for higher studies like MA English. The higher education commission in Pakistan too favors semester system for higher studies.

### **Questionnaire Results**

The questionnaire distributed among the participants contained questions regarding their perception, favor and experience about annual and semester system. The results of the questionnaire are given below.

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When the students were asked which system is the best for getting good grades/marks, they all were of the view that semester system is better for getting good grades. But when they were asked that which system they consider good for learning, 7 participants reported annual system, while 13 participants reported semester system.

The percentage about learnability in the annual system was 35% while it was considered 65% in semester system.

When the participants were asked that under which system MA English should be conducted, 5 participants favored annual system, while the rest 15 favored semester system. The percentage in favor of annual system was 25% against the 75% in favor of semester system.

When the students were asked that which system provides more quality education than the other, 7 participants students were of the view that annual system provides quality education, while 13 favored semester system. The percentage for quality assurance under the annual system was 35% against the 65% under the semester system.

When the participants were asked that whether they were satisfied with the system under which they had passed their MA English, 8 participants out of those who had passed their MA under annual system said “yes”, on the other hand, all those who had passed their MA under semester system were satisfied with the system they had passed their exams in. Two of the participants who had passed their MA under annual system were not satisfied with annual system. So the percentage in favor of annual system was 40% against the 60% in favor of semester system.

The percentage responses of the participants about annual and semester system are given in the following table.

Questions related to annual and semester system

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Annual system</b>	<b>Semester system</b>
1) Which system is better for getting good grades?	0%	100%
2) Which system is better for learning?	35%	65%
3) Under which system MA English should be conducted?	25%	75%
4) Which system provides quality education in MA English?	35%	65%
5) Are you satisfied with the system under which you passed your MA English?	40%	60%

Table 1 showing the responses of the participants in percentage about annual and semester system

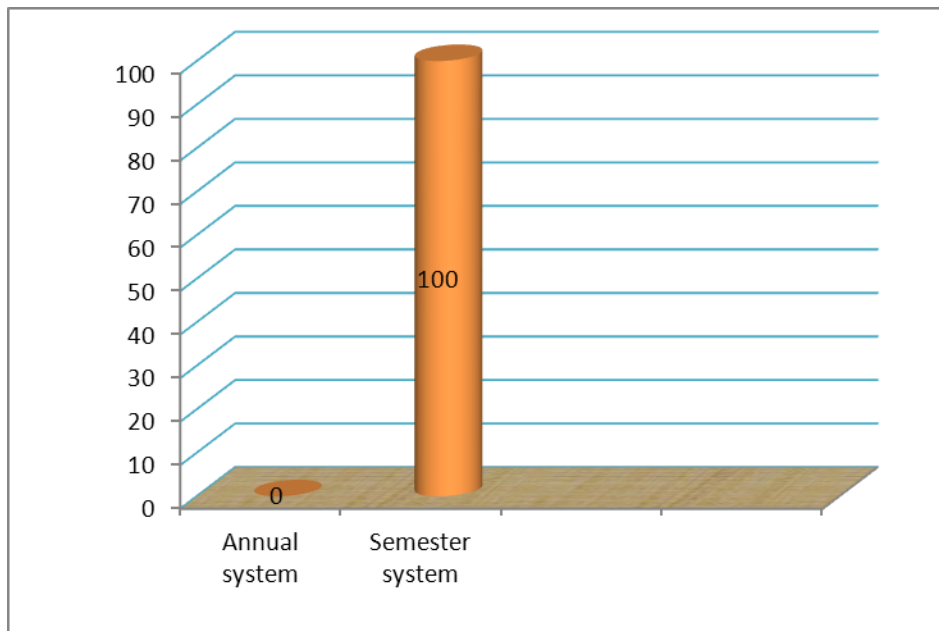
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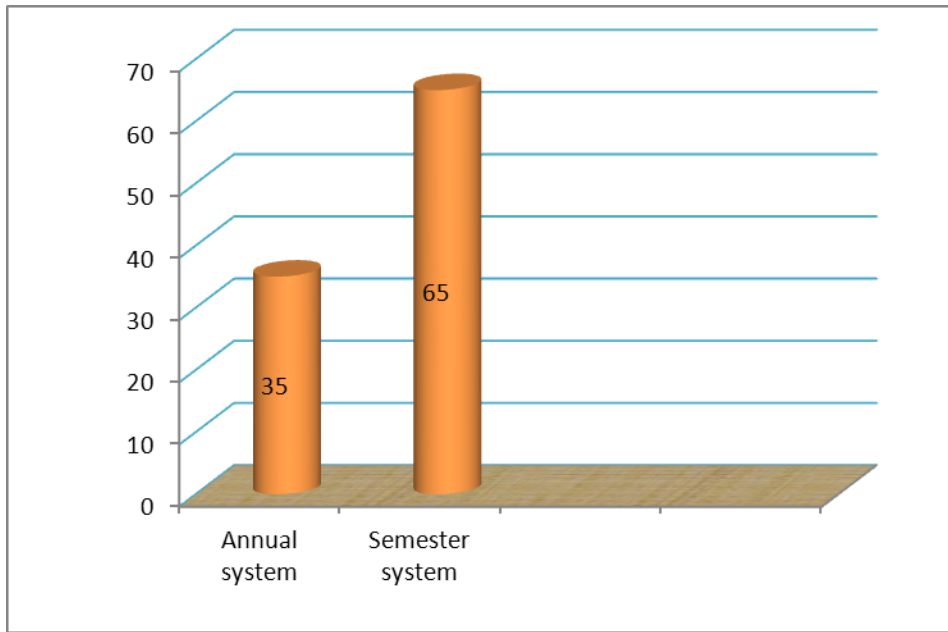
The responses of the participants regarding annual and semester system are shown by the following bar charts.



Which system is better for getting good grades?  
Figure I showing the response of the participants

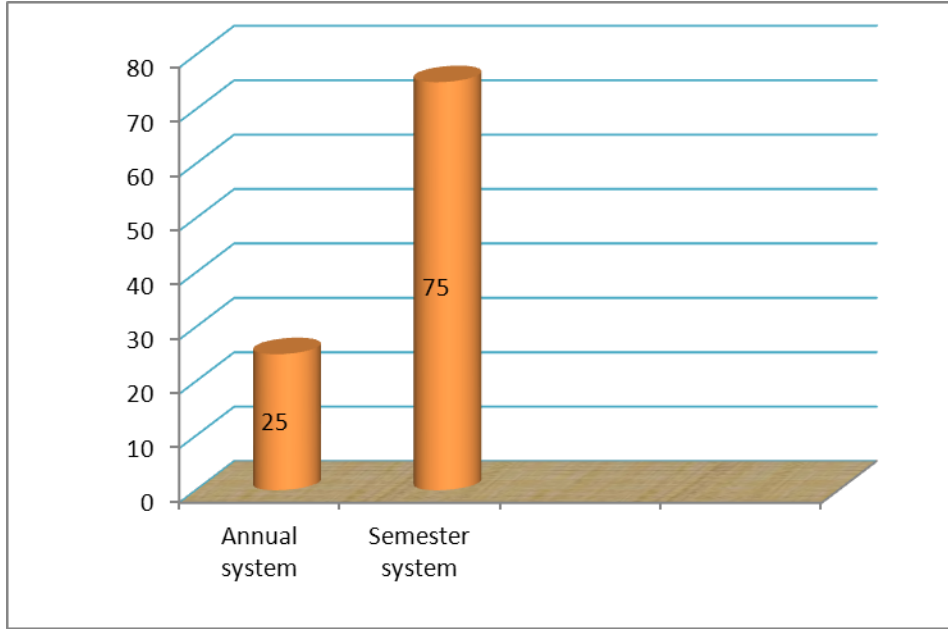
The above chart shows the responses of the students regarding good in both the systems. All the participants were of the view that semester system is better for good mark or grades.





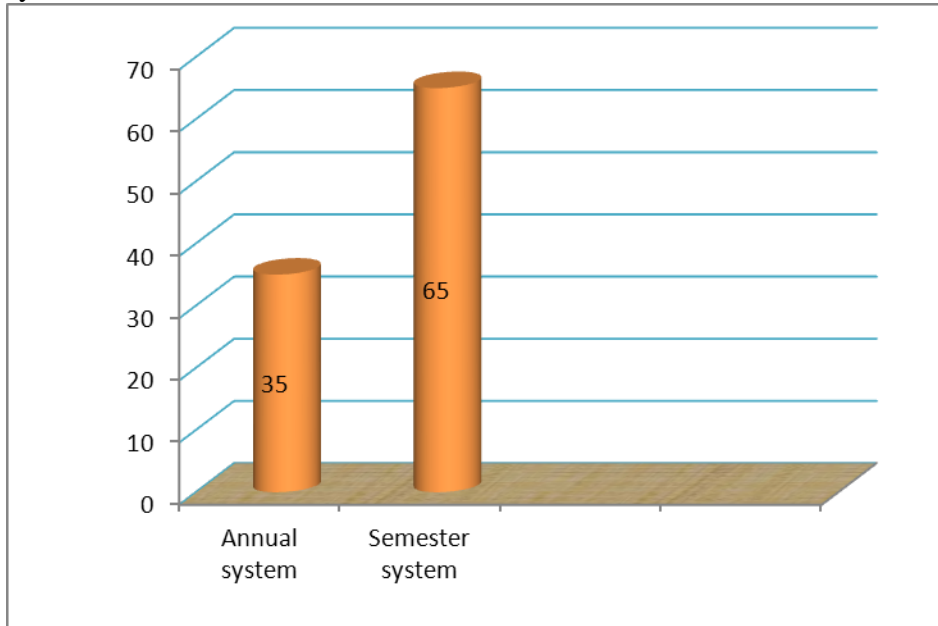
Which system is better for learning?  
 Figure 2 showing the response of the participants

The above chart shows the perceptions of the students regarding the worth of annual and semester system for learnability. Most of the students favored semester system as against annual system for learning.



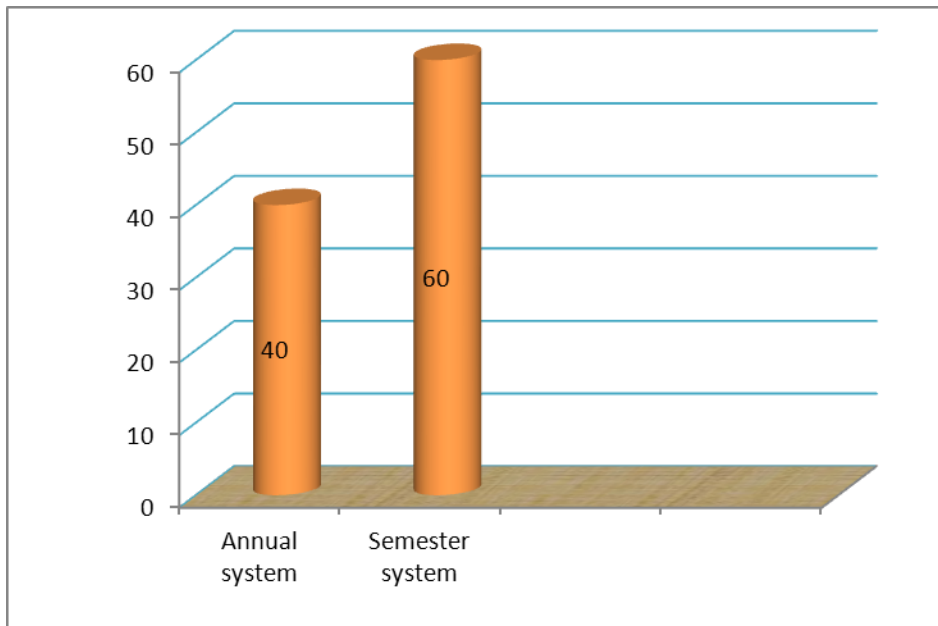
Under which system MA English should be conducted?  
 Figure 3 showing the response of the participants

The above chart shows the perceptions of the students regarding the system under which MA English should be conducted. Most of the participants (75%) were in the favor of semester system.



Which system provides quality assurance in MA English?  
Figure 4 showing the response of the participants

The above chart shows the responses of the students regarding quality assurance under annual and semester system. Out of 20 students 65% were of the view that semester system provides more quality education than annual system.



Are you satisfied with system under which you have passed your MA English?

Figure 5 showing the response of the participants

The above chart shows the satisfaction of the students with the system which they favor. The percentage of semester system again is more than that of annual system. When the participants were asked where do they serve on the basis of their MA English? The participants were found to be serving in the following places.

Out of the ten participants who had studied under the annual system two were serving in government colleges, two of them had started their own business, three were serving in private colleges, two were serving in private firms, two of them were busy in their higher studies and the rest were serving in different private schools. Out of the ten participants who had studied under the semester system, three were serving in government universities, two in private universities, two in Government colleges, one in a private collage and the rest two in private schools.

The participants were asked to write a few qualities of the system that they prefer over the other. The strength of annual system according to the participants were a long time for study, a comprehensive exam at the end, external checking, focused study, extensive reading, realistic marks and no tough time for the students. The strength of the semester system according to the participants were the good grades, future perspectives, practicality of the system, inclusive programs, interactive relation with teachers and fellows, confidence building opportunities, timely fulfillment assignment regards, small scale research activities and the opportunities to present what one has learnt.

The participants were asked to report a few qualities which they did not like in their favorite system. The worst qualities in annual system were found to be little marks, no interactive relations with teachers, a comprehensive heavy exam at the end of the year, out of dated syllabuses, overcrowded classes, no opportunities to repeat courses, a long time wait for another exam if one does not qualify, a strict inflexible formula for marks and no opportunities to express oneself. The worst qualities in the semester system were reported to be strict attendance, timely fulfillment of assignments, complex marking system, competition with other students and over-practicality.

## **Discussion**

The above results of the interview show that both the teachers favor semester system as it is in favor of the needs of the students. Although semester system is very demanding on the part of the teachers and administration, but it is intended to favor the students and learning. Here the students have more opportunities to learn up to date knowledge related to their subjects. The classroom management, attendance problems, individual attention, good working relation, practical work experience and training are some of the qualities of semester system and so there are more chances of successful future for students under this system.

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The qualities highlighted by the teachers in annual system can also be there in annual system e.g. there is a comprehensive exam at the end of each term, and in some places there is an overall comprehensive exam at the end of the program covering all the subjects taught in the previous semesters. According to both the teachers, the semester system is mostly based on students needs; their participation in all tasks is emphasized, and they are provided with practical work experience which is not available in annual system.

The results of the questionnaire got from the participants also favor semester system more than annual system. The participants who had studied under semester system were on good jobs as compared to those who had learnt under annual system. Semester system was favored by most of the participants for good grades and learning. They considered it to be the need of the market and so the cry of the day. The students in semester system have a lot of choices in the contents of the courses as they could chose subjects of their own choice along with the core courses. The students were not at all worried about their future when studying under semester system. The students were satisfied with the semester system.

The merits of the semester system reported by the students were more than those reported for the annual system. About the quality assurance under both the system, most of the participants were of the view that semester system provides quality assurance than annual system. The students favored semester system more than annual system for conducting MA English in future as well. One of the participants had passed his MA English under annual system, but now he had taken admission under semester system to improve his grades and learning. If we combine the results of both the data obtained from two different sources, we see that semester system is favored more than annual system both by students and teachers.

## **Conclusion**

In the light of the results and discussion, the study concludes that semester system is comparatively better than annual system at higher education level like MA English. The semester system introduces the learners to a research oriented approach to their studies based on the needs of the market. The students and teachers have a creativity based practical relationship in semester system, which is shared with other fellows through a variety of practical tasks. In semester system, instead of comprehensive exam at the end of the year, there is an overall evaluation and assessment through a variety of practical tasks covering all the necessary skills. The annual system is only competence based, while semester system is both competence and performance based. Semester system is participatory, interactive and confidence building. The annual system has an instructional paradigm, while semester system has a learning paradigm. The annual system assesses the memory of the students while semester system tests the level of the understanding of the students. The semester system reduces the quantitative load on the students, and they are enabled to meet the requirements in their practical life. Going through such kinds of training and experiences the students get good position and honor in the society and utilize their capabilities in a better way.

## **Implications**

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The present study is useful for both students and policy makers. The study contains the perceptions of both the teachers and the students. It openly reports the merits and demerits of both the systems in order to make sure quality assurance in higher education. It contributes to the decision making committees to choose a better system for quality assurance in education. It can further be helpful for teachers to know about the needs of the students. The students can also learn some of the technical qualities which were not very clear to them before. The study highlights the need of the day in quality education which may be helpful in determining the needs analysis for future plans. The study supports the idea that why organizations like Higher Education Commission favor semester system for higher studies.

### **Limitation**

The present study is limited to quality assurance in MA English passed under annual and semester system. The study is limited to the perceptions of the students and teachers regarding both the systems. It does not take into account the field study of actually observing the performance of different students who have passed their MA English under annual and semester system. The actual classroom and practical life performance may further highlight or contradict the results of the study. The study is also limited in terms of the data collected. The biggest sample size may further support the study with same results or may highlight some other issues in this regard.

### **Suggestion**

In the light of the results of the study, it is suggested that the same issue may be researched with different research designs in order to further highlight the issue. Both the systems should be described in more detail and so to help the interested people in the field to take decisions in the light of future studies. The future studies have a rich scope for such studies and they should concentrate upon other important elements in both the systems. The future study should take teaching, learning and administrative regards to suggest something in the light of their own results.

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