A Narrative Report

of

Proceeding of the National Seminar

on

Letter Grading System:

Implication and its Impacts in Higher Education

22nd February 2016 (2072-Falgun14 B.S.)

Organized by:

**Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID),
Tribhuvan University**

Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations

CDC= Curriculum Development Centre

DOE= Department of Education

FOE= Faculty of Education

GPA= Grade Point Average

HSEB= Higher Secondary Education Board

KU= Kathmandu University

LGS= Letter Grading System

MOE= Ministry of Education

MC= Master of Ceremony

NUTA= Nepal University Teacher's Association

OCE= Office of the Controller of Examinations

VC= Vice-Chancellor

TSLC= Technical School Leaving Certificate

TU= Tribhuvan University

UGC= University Grants Commission

Executive Summary

Introduction of letter grading system with single subject certification would be a big departure from the existing practice in several ways such as single percentage marks replaced with grade point average, composite pass to single subject certification, grade descriptors, etc. These changes are not yet clear. The confusions expressed by different stakeholders through national media and are several issues and confusions in the introduction of letter grading and its implications to the users of SLC certificates including students, higher secondary schools , training institutions, teacher training institutions, universities particularly faculty of education, and research centers. Therefore, it is necessary to take proactive step to discuss on possible confusion and discuss to overcome them and develop guidelines in time.

Realizing the strong need for intellectual discourse on letter grading system to overcome the unclarity and way out measures for the effective implication of letter grading system in different sectors, CERID, TU, in collaboration with DOE/MOE and UGC-Nepal convened a national seminar on **Letter Grading System: Implication and Impacts in Higher Education** in Nepal.

The seminar, which was held in 22nd February, 2016 at Danish Hall P.K. Campus Bag Bazar, Kathmandu, brought together educationists, experts, professionals, policy makers and decision makers to discuss and come up with concrete measures of solution on various aspects of letter grading system.

It was a remarkable seminar both in terms of papers presented on various issues of letter grading system and the diversity of participants. There were 60 participants from various institutions i.e. governmental organizations, universities, higher secondary education board and professional organization at large. There were three presentations on the topics related to the letter grading concept, international practices and implications in higher education. The papers and following discussions helped participants assess their existing practices and gain better understanding of letter grading for the effective implication process. Prof. Dr. Tirtha Raj Khaniya, Vice-Chancellor of Tribhuvan University, had inaugurated the seminar and Prof. Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, Executive Director of CERID, had the chaired the sessions. Representatives of various departments of MOE, KU, TU, academics, experts and researchers actively participated in the seminar.

The seminar was organized to fulfill the specific objectives of sharing evidence based knowledge on letter grading evaluation system right from SLC level evaluation to higher education and deliberate on issues related to letter grading evaluation system for conducive implementation environment.

It sought to identify major opportunities and challenges in the implementation of letter grading evaluation system in Nepal and suggest potential research options and priorities on letter grading evaluation system. The seminar also aimed to explore possible method of letter grading implication in Nepal.

The seminar was divided into three parts (i) opening and inauguration (ii) paper presentation and discussion and (iii) closing.

The technical presentation followed by extensive discussion covered many important aspects on letter grading evaluation system. The important issues on letter grading system discussed were:

- Conceptual clarity of letter grading evaluation system
- International practices of letter grading system
- Issues and challenges of letter grading implication in higher education.

Introduction

Background

Curriculum Development Center (CDC) and Office of Controller of Examination (OCE) have introduced letter grading system for the School Leaving Certificate examination in 96 of vocational schools from last year and it has been planned to introduce this system for all the schools in the country this academic year. CDC has published 'implementation guidelines on letter grading system at the school education' in 2072.

Introduction of letter grading system with single subject certification would be a big departure from the existing practice in several ways such as single percentage marks replaced with grade point average, composite pass to single subject certification, grade descriptors, etc. How higher education institutions and other users of SLC certificates would be adapting these changes is not yet clear. The confusions expressed by different stakeholders through national media and are discussed at the implementation and general concern levels. There are several issues and confusions in the introduction of letter grading and its implications to the users of SLC certificates including students, higher secondary schools, training institutions, teacher training institutions, universities particularly faculty of education, and research centers. There are conceptual un-clarities in one hand and no deliberation on how changes could impact the user of SLC certificates in this guideline. Therefore, it is necessary to take proactive step to discuss on possible confusion and discuss to overcome them and develop guidelines in time. The major purpose of assessment is to communicate achievement level of the learners to different stakeholders. This communication would be effective when reporting is understood in the same way and needed information is drawn from the reporting in meaningful manner. The confusions expressed by different stakeholders at the implementation and general concern levels. Several confusions are existing in the introduction of letter grading and its implications to the users of SLC certificates including students, parents, teachers, teacher trainers, educational institutions and governmental organizations. Regarding the conceptual un-clarities on how changes could impact the user of SLC certificates in the guideline. It is necessary to take proactive step to discuss on possible confusion and discuss the way out the measures to overcome them effectively.

In this context, one day national seminar on **Letter Grading System: Implication and impacts in Higher Education** was organized at Danish Hall Padma Kanya Campus Bag bazaar, Kathmandu, February 22nd, 2016.The seminar aimed to bring LGS experts, professionals and policy makers on one platform to discuss the issues, options and challenges of LGS implication in higher education in Nepal.

Objective of the Seminar

The specific objectives of the seminar were:

to discuss on the issues, confusions and unclarity of LGS guideline 2072

to identify ways and means of overcoming the issues.

Inaugural Session

Introductory Remarks

Chair: Prof. K. C. Sharma, Ph.D. Executive Director, CERID, TU

Chief Guest: Prof. T.R. Khaniya, Ph.D., Vice-Chancellor, TU

Welcome Remarks: Prof. K.P. Pokhrel, Ph.D., CERID, TU

Keynote Speech: Prof. H.R. Bajracharya, Ph.D., UGC-Nepal

Massage: Prof. B.D. Kafle, Ph.D., FoE, TU

Inaugural Speech: Prof. T.R. Khaniya, Ph.D.,

Closing Remarks: Prof. M.P. Sharma, Ph.D., Ex-Vice-Chancellor, TU

MC: Prof. K.P. Pokhrel, Ph.D.

Rapporteurs: Dr. Binod Luitel and Dr. Devi Prasad Poudel

Summary of the Session

The inauguration was attended by a total 60 participants including experts, representatives of various departments of Ministry of Education, TU, KU, professionals, academics, and supporting staff. The seminar was inaugurated by Prof. Tirtha Raj Khaniya, the Vice-Chancellor of Tribhuvan University. In his inaugural speech, Prof. Khaniya focused on good orientation on letter grading system for overall evaluation system reformation in higher education. He said that the level of performance of the students' needs to be reflected in our evaluation system objectively. He

viewed that until and unless we improve our examination system and teaching-learning environment, simply letter grading cannot contribute to the quality education.

Prof. H.R. Bajracharya highlighted the need and importance of such event to clarify the issues appeared in the implication of letter grading evaluation system in Nepalese context. He argued that the letter grading evaluation system is good approach for learning diagnosis and for certification of examination. He stressed to take initiation in time to overcome the issues clearly.

Prof. B.D. Kafle stressed to put forward the clear policy framework to make letter grading system applicable in higher education. He also raised some critical issues in humanistic approach of evaluation in which objectivity is questionable. He remarked that the high level of skill is demanded among the university teachers for this new kind of evaluation practice. He advised that the grades be well defined by adopting well established performance indicators. He further said that TU should review how the semester system is going as continuous system.

Prof. K.P. Pokhrel welcomed to chief guest, guests and participants on the behalf of seminar organizing committee as well as CERID, TU. He appealed to all for making seminar more fruitful and successful to way out the applicable measures on the appeared issues of letter grading evaluation system.

Technical Session

Presentations

In this technical session, three papers were presented and followed discussions in each paper.

Prof. Dr. Ganesh Bahadur Singh presented the conceptual orientation perspectives on letter grading evaluation system. Initiating the technical session, Prof. Singh provided an overview of concept, principles and method of letter grading evaluation. He elaborated on the existing SLC examination system, result pattern and trends.

Mr. Ramesh Neupane (on behalf of Dr. Bal Chandra Luitel, KU)'s paper provided the international scenario on letter grading practices. The paper provided several examples of letter grading evaluation system being practiced in different countries at the global level. The paper also pictured out the country comparative grader defined performance indicators.

Prof. Sawyam Prakash JBR's paper focused on the present issues, challenges and problems of letter grading evaluation in higher education. The paper shed light on the evaluation system, implementation status, and the institutional role on letter grading evaluation system. He talked about the key issues and challenges for letter grading implication in higher education.

Grading System – Conceptual Orientation

Prof. Ganesh B Singh, Ph. D.

Context

One of the major purposes of assessment is to communicate achievement level of the student to different stakeholders. This communication would be effective when reporting is understood in the same way and needed information is drawn from the reporting in meaningful manner. Grading system is expected to fulfill these purposes.

Technical Issues in Reporting

Reporting of marks obtained in a test has been in practice in Nepalese education system from school to the university. Ideally a mark or score is expected to remain same for the student while assessing on the same content domain even if same test is taken for number of times. If so the score is said to be 'true score'. But this rarely happens. Some ranges of differences are expected from one test to the next even when students are tested on the same content domain several times. This happens due to error in the measurement. Therefore, it is assumed that the obtained score termed as the raw score (X) obtained by an individual is made up of a true component (T) and a random error (R). $X = T + E$. True score is hypothetical and it can only be estimated in a range or bank. (Kline, 2005).

A raw score is what examiner provides a score after checking student's answer copy. It is just a 'RAW', unprocessed like ingredients in a factory which has to be molded in other refined products. If full mark is 100 then the possibility of range of raw score is 0 to 100, i.e. 101 point scale. The question is – is 0 score mean the student does not know anything! Or 100 mean the student is prefect and does not need to know anything more! The answer to both of these questions is no. It only means that in the test which was given to the student, the student was not able to give a correct answer to any of the questions or was fortunate to given correct answer to all the questions. This might change if different test paper is used for the same content or different examiner check the same answer sheet. It is always true that in all types of psychological measurement such as achievement test, intelligent test or personality test there is some degree of error in the measurement and score cannot be fixed. (Linn and Groulund, 2003).

Another difficulty in 101 point scale is difficulty in making rationale interpretation in the difference among the scores. For example if a student scores 50 marks and another 51 in mathematics, it is difficult to indicate in what ways students scoring 51 is better than student with 50 marks. It is essential to be aware of fallacy of 101 point score which has been in use in education system in Nepal. It is not possible to measure achievement of students as the scale measuring weight or height of students.

There has been use of cut-off score of 32 percent pass mark in theory and 40 percent in practical in SLC and other examinations. The question is why a student scoring 31 is labeled all the way incapable and student with just 1 mark more all the way able. There is also no rational that 32 percent predicts better future performance and below it accurately says that student cannot excel. Cut-off score is just arbitrary and there is no sound rational in its use (NCERT, 2000). Cut-off score is conceptually incorrect practice.

In most of the examinations in Nepalese education system pass rate, average score in subjects and highest scorer, etc. vary from year to year and from subject to subject. For example in 2059 pass rate in SLC was 32.05 percent and in 2060 it went up to 46.18 percent. It jumped to 68.47 percent in 2065 and plunged down to 47.43 percent in 2072. If SLC scores are reliable it will mean that nature of SLC candidates change from year to year – suddenly an able group emerges and next year comes a frail group. It does not happen in nature – changes occur in a gradual manner, not in random manner as SLC results. Year-wise difference is due to test or testing mechanism. In one year there is easy test and high pass percentage and in next year difficult test

and low pass percentage. It is human error and not a natural phenomenon. Due to error and mistakes, SLC is not comparable from one year to another.

There is also comparability problem among subjects. Suppose highest score in Mathematics is 100 and in English language 85. If raw score is used, it will assume difference of 15 marks and conclude that performance of the student is better in Mathematics compared to English language. Whereas the truth is that performance of student in both is equal – to the top. Raw score cannot compare subject-wise performance. This problem aggravates more when marks in different subjects are summed and a composite score is used. It is probable that marks obtained in one subject might influence more to the composite score than other subject. For example if marks in English language vary from 30 to 60 while marks in Mathematics vary from 5 to 95, the result for the candidate will be that Mathematics will receive three time the weightage of English (APEID, 1978). In effect, it will be an evaluation of the student's performance in Mathematics rather than in English language.

Addressing the Issues

Above deliberations raised inappropriateness of 101 point scale, existence of error in the measurement; arbitrariness of cut-off score and difficulty in comparing score from subject to subject and from year to year. With introduction of letter grading, OCE is on the way to address some of these issues and for some more works need to be undertaken. Grading is not just a conversion of raw score to other forms such as distinction, first class, etc. or letters A, B, C, etc. This attempts to change raw score in meaningful and consistent interpretation.

OCE has started letter grading system from this year with about 90 vocational stream schools and intends to expand this practice in SLC next year. SLC mark-sheet using letter grading has these features – grade with interval of raw scores included, grade point, grade point average, and grade descriptors. This initiation is praiseworthy. There are a number of improvement works to be implemented to make it technically sound and ensure standardized communication.

Use of score interval for grades such as 90 to 100 A+, 80 to below 90 A, etc. indicates a departure from 101 point scale and a consideration on error of measurement. If error of measurement is assumed to be of 5 points then a score of 85 can be somewhere between 80 (85-5) and 90 (85+5). If same test is taken again, student with 85 marks in the first test most probably might get a score between 80 to 90 in the second time due to errors. Therefore, it is safer to indicate it as grade A than assign 85 marks. However, there is some kind of arbitrariness here as well – there is no basis for assuming error of 5 point. Accompanied to grades is their descriptor such as A+ means Outstanding, A means Excellent, etc. Grade descriptors are the criteria used to define the grade and give them meaning. (Thorndike and Christ, 2011; Reynolds, Livisnston and Willson, 2011; Wise, Taylor, Felicia, Kristina, Thacker, Schultz , Willison and Dean, 2007).

At present practice of OCE, there is also no evidence if these expected standards in the grade descriptors match with the performance of student. Expected standards in the grade descriptors should match with the performance of student.

Besides comparability issue and composite or single subject certification issue remain intact. When issue of subjects come in the examination arena, it is debated whether students should be certified for the subjects they appear and achieve to their level or student should be compelled to pass all the subjects designated by the curriculum and to the required level. This is the issue of single subject certification versus composite certification.

When fixed interval score is used we cannot ensure if grade A in Mathematics is same as grade A in English language as fixed band of score (80 to below 90) is translated to grade A. Highest scores (90 to 100) in Mathematics might be at A+ and highest scores (80 to below 90) in English language might be at A only. Performance-wise both of highest score (80 to below 90) in English language is same as highest scores (90 to 100) in Mathematics. Therefore, both of high scores in English language and Mathematics should be at grade A+ to be comparable. Same issue

arises while comparing from one year to another. When the test is easy it is easy to be at higher grade in one year compared to the difficult test in the next year. (Kubiszyn and Borich, 2004).

In order to make grades comparable 'relative' or 'judgmental grading' is used. In relative grading system each student's performance is compared to that of a specific reference group and its base is on 'grading on the curve'. Where as in 'judgmental grading' a group of experts decide on the grade boundaries for each subjects each year based on the performance of the sample students. Mark boundaries take care of subject-wise differences so that A for Mathematics can be 80 to below 90, but for English language A can be 75 to below 85 making subject-wise comparison balanced. This boundary can be changed from year to year. Suppose Mathematics test became difficult, then boundary for Mathematics for that year can be set A to 75 to below 85 making year-wise comparison balanced.

Grading is accompanied with its descriptors which gives letters or numbers used for the grading a meaning and standardizes communication. Achievement levels convey the degree of student achievement in a given content area in a range of student achievement and these needs to describe what students at each achievement level know and can do. Each grade levels are further translated into grade point, grade point are averaged transforming to grade point average or cumulative grade point average as applicable. Each of these stages transforms raw score to higher level of analysis and provides it meaning. Differences in grade point average or cumulative grade point average point out varying degree of student's performance by subjects rather than highlighting some difference of raw score only.

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Grading System in Global Context

Assoc. Prof. Bal Chandra Luitel and Ramesh Neupane
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History of Grading System

- Individual appraisal (Hatmann, 2012)

Note: This is how things went from 98,000 BC to roughly 1800 AD. Then came William Farish.

- Narrative report card in America by late 18th Century
- Compulsory schooling and grading system (Pollio, 2016)

Note: Between 1870 and 1910 the number of public high schools in the United States increased from 500 to 10,000.

- Diversity and number of the students at elementary and high schools increase so high in that time.

Note: student populations became more diverse but elementary teachers continued to use written descriptions and narrative reports to document student learning, high school teachers began using percentages and other similar markings to certify students' accomplishments in different subject areas.

- This was the beginning of the grading and reporting systems that exist today.
  Grading system varies from Number (A, B), (A, B, C), (1, 2, 3, 4 as Beginning, Developing, Proficient, or Distinguished) to (A, B, C, D and F)
- Some use descriptive methods

Note: there is no fixed rule to use grading method.

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Grading as measurement

- Industrial revolution giving rise to the demand of skilled workers
- Mass schooling
- The need to classification and categorization
- Measurement as the key metaphor

Grading as classification

- Ordering and ranking: 10, 9, 8, … A, B, C, D…
- Selecting and filtering: Certain groups go for specific programs…
- Employability: Academic demands versus practical skills (blue collar versus white collar jobs)
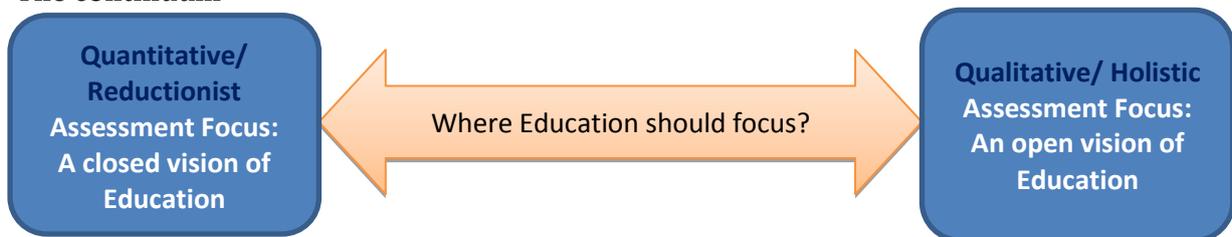
Three modes of grading

Criteria-Referenced	Norm-Referenced	Self-Referenced
Outcomes, objectives or any other criteria are considered whilst assessing This is absolutist approach to grading Follows one-size-fits all	Students are graded on the basis of a norm (highest among grade seven) An emphasis is given to relative grading (if 60 is the highest then it can be considered as A+)	It is based on the learning progression of an individual student over time. Teachers use this approach to monitor the progress of their learners

Research says!

In reference to school education

- Grading system should not be discriminatory
- It should not be unidimensional
- It should not be reductionist
- It should tell the strengths of learners (Miller, 2013)
- Alphabetical Grading: towards transforming the learning process (Hanover, 2011)

The continuum

Quantitative/ Reductionist Assessment Focus: A closed vision of Education	Where Education should focus?	Qualitative/ Holistic Assessment Focus: An open vision of Education

Country wise:

Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the traditional grading scale is from 1 through to 10, where 1 is the lowest and 10 the highest grade. The pass mark for a single subject is 6.

Grading practice in the Netherlands differs from that in the US and the UK in as much as the top grades (10 and 9) are rarely awarded

10	=	0.1
9	=	2.4
8	=	12.5
7	=	34.3
6	=	38.5
5	=	10.7
4	=	1.4
3	=	0.08
2	=	0.01
1	=	0.0

South Africa

Code 7 (A Symbol): 80 - 100%

Code 6 (B Symbol): 70 - 79%

Code 5 (C Symbol): 60 - 69%

Code 4 (D Symbol): 50 - 59%

Code 3 (E Symbol): 40 - 49%

Code 2 (F Symbol): 35 - 39%

Code 1 (FF Symbol): 30 - 34%

Note: originally used a scale from 1 - 4 (a pass being a 3 and a '1st class pass' being above 70%), but this system was considered far too coarse and replaced by a scale from 1 to 7.

Japan
Scale   Letter Grade

90-100   Excellent (AA, or T)
80-89   A
70-79   B
60-69   C
0-59   Fail (E or F)

India: CBSE

1. A1 –> for 91 to 100 marks (grade point is 10)
2. A2 –> for 81 to 90 marks (grade point is 9)
3. B1 –> for 71 to 80 marks (grade point is 8)
4. B2 –> for 61 to 70 marks (grade point is 7)
5. C1 –> for 51 to 60 marks (grade point is 6)
6. C2 –> for 41 to 50 marks (grade point is 5)
7. D –> for 33 to 40 marks (grade point is 4)
8. E1 –> for 21 to 32 marks (no grade point)
9. E2 –> for 00 to 20 marks (no grade point)

UK and US

United States	United Kingdom
93-100%: A, Excellent	70% & above: Distinction
85-93%: B, Very good	60-69%: Merit
78-85%: C, Average	50-59%: Pass
70-77%: D, Below average	40-49%: Tolerated Fail
Below 69%: F, Failure	Below 40%: Fail

US alternative assessment system

- Portfolios, narrative evaluations, contract grading, developmental meetings and verbal feedback

Singapore
Percentage Grades
75–100   A1
70-74   A2
65-69   B3
60-64   B4
55-59   C5
50-54   C6
45-49   D7
40-44   E8
<40   F9

South Korea
Points Grades
90–100   A
80–90   B
70–80   C
60–70   D
0–60   E

Nepal

- 90 to 100 per cent were given 'A+',
- 80 to 89 per cent 'A',
- 60-79 per cent 'B',

- 40-59 per cent 'C',
- 25-39 per cent 'D'
- and those scoring below 24 percent marks were given 'E'.

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Implications of Grading System in Higher Education

Prof. Swayam Prakash J.B. Rana

Educational programs in a formal system are developed and implemented to achieve certain curricular objectives. The curricular objectives encompass particular behavioral changes in terms of cognition, skill and way of appreciation, which are generally termed as learning. If the curriculum in as intended change in behavior, learning is the outcome of that particular curriculum. During and after the implementation of a curriculum, a general curiosity arouses about the quality of the learning as the outcome of a curriculum which is related to the concern of the consumers of that particular educational program such as student itself, parents, society, educational institution, state and particularly the job market in terms of higher education. Grading system reports about the performance of students in a particular course of study.

A brief introduction to grading system

Grading system is a worldwide practiced system for labeling the quality of students' academic performance. It converts the score of student into the continuum of grades, which is essential for rating and judging students' performance in different areas of achievement as well their global achievement.

Multiple types of grading systems are practiced to rate the quality of students' performance. They can be broadly classified into absolute and relative grading system. Relative grading system rates the students' performance in comparison to the specified group of students. These present the score in terms of norms such as grade, percentile and standard score norm. In contrary, absolute grading system rates the performance of student in terms of predetermined standard of excellence based on their achievement in different areas of the course.

Generally, relative grading system is applied in a standardized test, in which we are assured about the uniformity of the process of test development, its administration and scoring and interpretation of test scores. However, all these processes are assured by the estimation of reliability and validity of the test, which is determined by empirical evidences in pretesting. These processes are not applied in academic tests employed in schools and colleges because of threat to secrecy of the test. It is assumed that pretesting will break the secrecy of the test paper. However, the secrecy of test papers can be maintained by preparing a large "item bank" of pretested items. The traditional grading used in school and colleges for judging the quality of students' performance is absolute grading system in which the quality of performance of students judged against predetermined quality of standard such as distinction, first division, second division, third division, fail etc or A, B, C, D and F and so on.

These grading systems can be further classified into numerical and letter grading systems. In numerical grading system, the band of scores of students are termed as ranks of quality such as above 75% is termed as distinction and in letter grading system the band of scores are translated into letters such as A, B, C, D and F or E (Excellent), G (Good), S (Satisfactory) and U (Unsatisfactory).

The desired qualities of a grading system

The utmost purpose of a grading system is to rate the students' performance is such a way that its quality can be determined. It should rate their performance in an understandable form. The scores of students are termed as "predictors" in technical term. It does not tell about the standard of quality of performance only, it also predicts about future success of a particular student in different areas of learning. Hence, a grading system must encompass following qualities:

- It should have enough discriminating power. It should grade the students along with the clear indication about the academic abilities of them in different areas of achievement.

- It should be interpretable in understandable form. It should be remembered that more the discriminatory power, less the interpretability and vice-versa. There should be a good balance between its discriminating power and interpretability.
- It should have good communication power. Not only the technical person but the common people should be able to understand about the capability of student in different areas of achievement.
- It should be comprehensive as well analytical. It should indicate the abilities of students in different areas of achievement and his/her global capability.
- The grading system should encompass high generalization capacity. It should be capable of being generalized across the geography and across the time.
- The grading system should be reliable. It should use a uniform standard or criteria for rating the performance of student.
- Ultimately, the grading system should be valid. It should clearly indicate the performance of student in a particular area of achievement

Justification for the implementation of grading system at higher level of education

Generally, formal education system can be classified into three distinct levels. These levels are basic, secondary or intermediate and higher level of education. The purpose of basic education is to equip the students by the basic abilities which are essential for his or her normal functioning in the society. Intermediate level is a preparatory level for higher education. It links the basic abilities of an individual in his or her strive to higher education.

Higher education, also known as post-secondary education or third level education is an optional final stage of formal learning that occurs after secondary education. Often delivered at universities, academics, colleges, seminaries and institutes of technology, higher education is also available through certain college-level institutions, including vocational schools, trade schools and other career colleges that award academic degrees or professional certifications. This level is aimed towards the development of sound disciplinary base among the students and also to prepare them for the world of work. It converts them as the human resource essential for the requirement the job market. Hence, there is a great need of a well understandable and uniform, reporting system about the terminal performance of student at higher level, which is essential to rate their achievement in a reliable and valid manner. In this way, the letter grading system can be considered more powerful in comparison to a numerical grading system.

The justifications for employing letter grading system in higher level of education can be indicated as followed:

- It is a thumb rule of statistics that any analysis system should analyze a quality in a continuum, which has enough discrimination power and also capable of being interpreted so that it can clearly communicate the amount of quality. Letter grading systems categorize students in the continuum which have the both of the above qualities. For example when we use A, B, C, D, F system, it is further expanded in A^+, A and A^- ...... and so on, which is more powerful in comparison to the I, II, III division and fail system in terms of discriminating power and in to the percentage system in terms of interpretation capacity.
- It is more understandable for the common people and society. It presents the quality of students' performance in more analytical and understandable manner.
- It has higher degree of communicability for the recruiting organizations such as different offices, business organization, Public Service Commission about the quality of students' performance. It will help them for the selection of candidate who fit their requirement in sufficient manner.
- Different academic and training programs can be facilitated to select the suitable candidates according to the requirement of their courses. Since grading system gives

clear indication about the quality of students' performance at global level and also at the level of different subjects, educational and training institution can select candidates according to their specification based on these information.

- Grading system is also a source of intrinsic motivation for the learners. It can encourage the students for the achievement of higher grades. It is obvious there is larger gap of score in division system than grade system. Therefore, grading system can more encourage the students for achieving better grade.

- If GPA and CGPA system is also included with grading system, it will also ensure the quality of the curricular process along with its product.

- Grading system is being practices globally. Implementation of grading system at higher level will increase the power of generalization of an academic or training program of higher level, which is very much essential for the present era of globalization.

Challenges towards the implementation of grading system

Grading system is not only a reporting system for judging the final performance of an academic program; it also ensures the quality of implementation of that particular program. It also requires a reliable and valid examination system with the standardization in test preparation, its administration and standardization in the scoring and interpretation of the test score. In this light, implementation of grading system in Nepal at higher education level may face following challenges:

- There is a great challenge for ensuring the reliability and validity of examination system in higher level. Even the lack of "specification grid" for the formation of items poses great threat for the validity of tests used in these examinations.

- Standardized administration of test all over the country is also an area of great challenge.

- High subjectivity in item preparation and scoring is also a great threat for the implementation of qualitative grading system.

- Assurance of uniformity in the implementation of courses in terms of duration of course implementation may pose a threat to the quality of grading system.

- Availability of human resource for the implementation of grading system may be also another challenge.

- Overall, traditional thinking against change always poses threat to any new idea.

Suggestions for the implementation of a sound grading system at higher educational level

The above mentioned challenges are only the "process specific challenges" which can be overcome by improving the process. Since, shifting towards letter grading system has become an urgency to link our academic programs to the global practice, we have only limited choice. In this situation for the implementation of a sound grading system, following suggestion should be materialized:

- Improve the examination system by the implementation of a clear-cut specification grid ensuring the preparation of well-balanced items in terms of both content area and level of learning (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation)

- Ensure the objectivity both in item preparation and scoring.

- For the incorporation of qualitative items, develop items banks.

- Ensure the standardized administration of test.

- Ensure not only the quality of examination system but also the implementation of a curriculum.

- Use GPA and CGPA system with letter grades for the assurance of generalization across geography and time.

- Use both absolute and relative grading system for the assurance of comparability.

- Train the existing personnel for the implementation of grading system.

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Discussion

Altogether six participants including representatives from MOE, universities and professionals made various queries and suggestions to the presenters, which covered the issues of research feedback, existing practices, hidden drivers and options for ahead. Geha Nath Gautam from CDC said that CDC had developed 9 point garding system which has been clarified after its implication. He added that the 9 point grading has been implemented by CTEVT and made decision to consider C level as the cut point for intery.

Chaitannya Sharma, The Vice-Chairman of HSEB viewed that teachers's professional ethics on accountability is the main aspect to make the evaluation system more reliable and valid. For the quality assurance teacher is the best evaluator so that the autonomy of the teachers can play the significant role to determine the success and failuer of letter grading system.

Dr. Sanjaya Khanal, The Examinations Controller of KU pointed out that KU started letter grading system from 1994. He suggested that our letter grading system need to link with European, American and other countries specific grading system. He stressed that the whole curriculum should be in credit system for letter grading system. He further, opined that we can promote evaluation system through project, assessment, and class based evaluation not only end semester exam.

RameshoworUpadhyaya, the President N UTA focused on policy issues and said it is time to act for a new evaluation practice. He stressed on the well preparation first to introduce it in TU.

Prof. R.C Dhakal, ED, CEDA, TU viewed that quality education could be linked with new evaluation systemi.e. letter grading.

With regards to the letter grading implication, Prof. Lekh Nath Sharma said that in TSLC the both relative grading and absolute grading modelities were proposed. Absolute was the aim but now letter grading system is only conversion, but is needed. It is easy for teachers. He emphasized on regular reform for its reliability. He argued that dillusion and corruption of the system requires to controll. Test preparation has to reflect the levels that are conceived about. He advised that from top to bottom teachers be well prepared, descriptors be accuretely understood by all.

Closing Session

This closing session was chaired by Prof. K.C.Sharma. In his sppech, Prof. Prem Narayan Aryal agrred with views and opinions of participants and said that problems are so much in university. University teachers need an orientation program to exercise the letter grading evaluation system. He viewed that letter grading should be started from grade eight for the effective implementation of letter grading system in Nepal.

In concluding remarks, Prof. Madav Prasad Sharma, Ex-Vice-Chancellor

of TU highlighted that discussions in the session provided an opportunity to discuss important conceptual issues regarding the letter grading implication in higher education in Nepal. He focused the need for a guiding policy and institutional framework for quality education, and encouraged institutional collaboration and dissemination of the qualityhigher education to a wider audience.

The session Chair Prof. Krishna Chandra Sharma,Executive Director of CRID, gave his concluding remarks and thanked all participants , experts,

and paper presenters for their active participation. Providing a summary of the seminar, he said that this academic discussion succed to clarify the confusion or miscommunication among parents students and other stskeholders about letter grading evaluation system.

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