

# Quality of agricultural education: Can we opt for a new system? — II

Dr. Md. Mahfuzul Haque

system: (d) A teacher enjoys more freedom in his course offering and examination taking. Normally, there are two examinations (one mid-term and one final) in each subject/paper, however, these may go up to five depending on the teacher concerned. Only a small portion of the marks is allotted to written examination which may be either objective type or essay type or a combination of both. Marks are allotted for every assignment e.g., review paper, individual or group project report, etc. Hence, for a regular student failure in the examination is a rare possibility. (e) All schedules of activities in offering a subject paper including examinations are planned by the teacher and announced at the beginning of the semester. As the semester is over and the final examination is taken, the result is submitted to the Dean of Graduate School with in a specific time limit. A fee of about Taka 100.00 is charged from the concerned teacher for each day's delay sending the grade (mark). (f) Results can be obtained within a maximum limit of a fortnight. The grades obtained by a student in a semester are needed for his enrollment in the next semester. (g) Both teachers and students need to be highly responsive in discharging their respective duties. Also both enjoys some freedom in specific areas e.g. a student has a choice to decide the number of courses he wishes to pursue in a semester. This is change in his study programme.

tem—the semester system be introduced with judicious planning with logistic support. We need to do so because we are living in a fast changing world in the field of education, knowledge and items are being doubled in every 10 years. The semester system can possibly keep us in the right track of this continued educational development. **SALIENT FEATURES OF THE SEMESTER SYSTEM** Presented below are some salient features of the semester system which I experienced in the Philippines education system. (a) The academic year is divided into two full semesters and a short—the summer. The period of First, Second and Summer semesters are June–October, November–March, and April–May, respectively. In general a graduate (MS/Ph. D) student can take 12 units of course work and an undergraduate student (BS level) 21 units in a full semester. The units of course work that can be taken by those categories of students are 6 and 9, respectively. (b) A subject/paper normally consists of 3 units of course work which means in a full semester the course is handled by three hours lecture per week. (c) Besides lecture, the teaching techniques used are: preparation of term paper, review, reaction paper, laboratory and field work all these are mainly done by the students. These make the study programme more interesting and a sense of craving for knowledge develops among the students. This is not possible in the present

in the Philippines. This happened during the overthrow of the Marcos regime in early 1986. The brutal assassination of the great late opposition leader, Benigno Aquino, even did not lead to bloody student movement in that country. The final consequence, however, was that the entire nation challenged this heinous political killing at a later date. All we knew is that the people's power was the winner proving once more that the power of ballot is more than that of the bullet. But neither the opposition nor the party then in power (KBL) maintained any organized student front to work for political goals. There was hardly any report that universities in Pakistan remained closed due to tense situation which could possibly generate by students movement to overthrow the eleven years' authoritarian rule of Gen. Ziaul Haque in Pakistan. Still democracy has come finally and the entire nation has peacefully brought it.

The conclusion is that the student community must not be the major custodian of our national thoughts and philosophy. Rather, they could demonstrate a true patriotism by preparing themselves in the best way to bear the responsibility to build a really a 'Sonar Bangla' that we cherish. We noted some good moves in recent days. The party in power abolished its student front. The Sangsad passed a bill prohibiting possession of illegal fire arms which are indis-

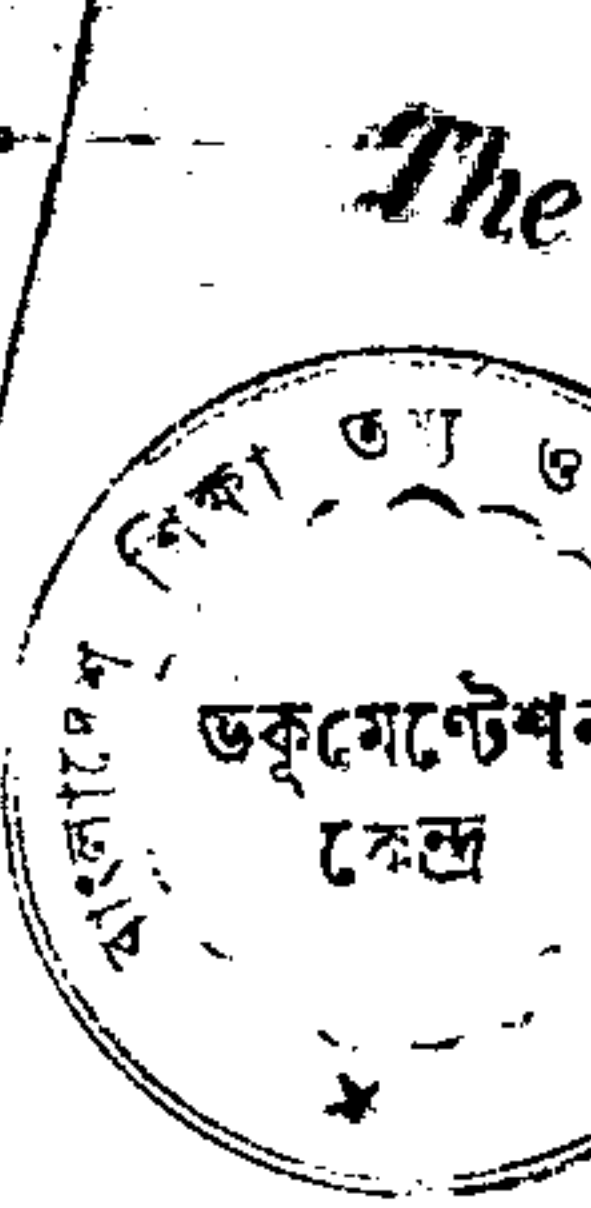
in a year and this continued for the last eight years. The situation in other universities including BAU is almost similar. Can a developing country afford to such loss of valuable time from the lives of our pupils in thousands. Who should be blamed for this? The main reason for this unhealthy situation is the involvement of our students in active politics. Some people, however, argue that politics is a part of our democratic and social life. Thus, students can't remain aloof from political thoughts and actions of the country. My humble submission to them is that students of many countries played active roles in many of their national crises, but they got back to their study as the crises were over. The issue (doing politics) is not that its merits can outweigh the demerits. It is impossible for an institution to produce quality graduates with simultaneous involvement of its students force actively engaged in politics. For, whatever measures are taken, politicians' students would remain absent from their classes to organize rallies and violent demonstrations that often times lead to bloody confrontations between rival groups with the consequence of unscheduled closure of the institutes. The killings in Chittagong and Rajshahi Universities in recent days are glaring examples. We must do something about it.

Maintenance of ideal environment should be based primarily on educational quality needs and our knowledge on what others are doing around us. The latter point is—we are one of the many nations in the world to live in a political order. One can hardly see closure of educational institutions in SAARC countries e.g., in India and Pakistan where the number of institutions are much higher than ours. I saw only one month closure of the DU had only four months effective working days on an average

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There is no substitute for an ideal environment to fulfil the goals of our university. We should objectively ask what kind of graduate we wish to develop for the welfare of the nation? The answer clearly is a socialized citizen who has acquired the needed knowledge and skills to his best and certainly not an ill educated graduate politician who finally becomes a liability to the society. About 60% of the scheduled classes in Dhaka University could not be held in a year (1985-86) due to strikes and frequent closures of the University. In another estimate, DU had only four months effective working days on an average

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Among the relative merits of the semester system over the annual system, the following can be mentioned: (a) Relatively more exposure can be accommodated in the same academic duration. (b) Helps develop the student to be self reliant in his study work since the system follows a principle, 'learning by doing'. (c) Develops communication skills and language proficiency better. (d) Students can identify field problems better. (e) Unproductive extracurricular activities are greatly checked. This makes the school environment excellent. (f) Loss of academic year or session jam is impossible. Thus, students are able to be employed at a younger age. (g) A better development in the students is possible in their cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. (h) Better teacher-student relationship exists. (i) Provides unique opportunity for the in-service students to earn degrees although the time needed may be longer. (j) Loss of academic semester due to unforeseen but genuine causes (e.g., failure to fulfill examination requirements for illness) are greatly checked. In such a case, a student gets a grade "INCOMPLETE" and he fulfills the needed requirements at a later date. (k) Better recognition of diplomas/certificates by foreign universities, especially of advanced countries.

ments in Dhaka University where the new system was introduced could not proceed long. The three-day workshop sponsored by the University Grants Commission and attended by many top academicians of all universities in July 1986, could not come up with action plan to introduce the system. The participants instead highlighted the problems faced by those who already had introduced it. It seems that the decision (whether or not to introduce the system) was left on individual university. However, I feel that the system could be introduced at BAU and other agricultural institutes if the following four conditions are met in order of importance.

First and foremost, a clear commitment by the teachers, students and other concerned to upgrade the educational standard of agricultural education. Second, an awareness and understanding of the system including one's own responsibility and the willingness to work harder than we do today. Third, an effort to introduce it planned by competent educational specialist. Should the situation call for, assistance of some foreign educational advisers may be sought. Fourth, an effort to extend the needed resources especially the physical ones. Could my professional colleagues and those in the Ministry of Education and Agriculture come forward to introduce the system before we further lag behind to adjust in a fast changing world evidenced by constant release of scientific discoveries and educational innovations?

## CAN THE SEMESTER SYSTEM BE ADOPTED?

The answer to this seems quite perplexing simply because some of the Depart-

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