

# Effectiveness of Semester System at Undergraduate Level

Dr. Polee Saikia\*  
Deepanita Saharia\*\*

## Abstract

*Higher education in India is undergoing rapid changes. In order to bring higher education in India in conformity with the quality and standard of education followed in the rest of the world the University Grant Commission has brought various reformative changes by introducing semester system at the undergraduate level. In Assam also this system was already introduced and has been following at the undergraduate level from the 2012-2013 academic sessions. In this context this study has been made to study the effectiveness of this system in comparison to the 1+1+1 degree course. Descriptive survey method has been used in this study and the result has been shown by using simple percentage.*

**Key Words :** *Semester System, Undergraduate Level of Education, Academic Performance.*

## Introduction:

**Semester system** is basically an American system. Most institutions of higher education in Western Europe and North America follow a semester-based system which is characterized by greater autonomy of teachers and the institution. The semester-system goes far beyond being a 'time-frame'. It enlarges curricular space and encourages and supports accelerated learning opportunities for all concerned. Further, it has the ability to accommodate diverse choices that dynamic

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\*Assistant Professor (SG), Department of Education, Gauhati University, Guwahati.

\*\*Assistant Professor, Department of Education, D.K College, Mirza.

and motivated students may like to have. So, aiming at bringing higher education of India in conformity with the best academic practices and standards being followed globally, the UGC has moved towards the semester system. Thus, on the basis of the recommendations of the expert committee headed by Prof. A. Gnanam, The University Grants Commission (UGC) has written to all universities about academic reforms in higher education of our country under the XI plan. The recommended reforms include – semester system, choice based credit system (CBCS), curriculum development, admission procedures and examination reforms. It is expected that the semester system will make students more focused and control absenteeism. This system is also said to be very efficient and organized and it helps students to learn and understand the syllabus in segments, rather than cramming and desperately trying to memorize the entire course for one final exam. So it is expected that a move to the semester system might bring the desired reforms in the field of Education at the undergraduate level. In this way, one of the major reformations that have taken place in Indian education system is the introduction of semester system at the undergraduate level, though this system has already existed in the professional and technical courses in India and also introduced in the post-graduate courses of different universities.

However, the introduction of the semester system at the undergraduate level has raised debate and discussion among the academicians of the country considering the present conditions of the Indian Universities and their affiliated colleges. There are several inherent problems associated with Indian Universities and their affiliated colleges such as lack of proper infrastructure, higher number of students, lack of adequate number of teacher, etc. Hence, it is uncertain whether this reformative step would bring desired results in the higher education scenario in India or not. But in spite of such problems and shortcomings related to both human and material resources, the semester system has been introduced in our colleges from 2011-2012 academic sessions. In this context, the present paper is an attempt to study the effectiveness of the semester system on academic performance of the students at the undergraduate level and also to find out the opinion of the TDC students regarding the semester system.

**Objectives of the Study:**

1. To find out whether the semester system has improved the quality of performance of the students of TDC 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester.
2. To find out the opinion of TDC 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students regarding the semester system.

**Delimitation of the Study:**

The present study has been delimited to academic performance of the present TDC 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students (2012) in their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester examinations from the faculty of Arts regarding the effectiveness of the semester system. Hence only the students having major in Assamese, English, Political Science, Economics, Education and History have been taken as sample in the study. For this purpose their results of TDC 1<sup>st</sup> semester and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester have been compared with the 1<sup>st</sup> year results of the students of 2010's three year degree course of the same subjects.

**Importance of the Study:**

Higher education in India is undergoing a rapid change with quick space. Aiming at bringing higher education in India in conformity with the best academic practices and standards being followed globally, the UGC has brought academic reforms under the XI plan and introduced the semester system at the undergraduate level. To remain competitive with other developing countries necessary reforms were urgently needed in Indian education. But it is also equally important to ensure required provisions such as proper infrastructure, number of students, number of teachers, etc. before bringing a reform like semester system. But in Assam more than 70 percent colleges are facing problems like poor infrastructure, shortage of teachers, higher number of students and many more. In this condition an unavoidable question arises - whether the introduction of semester system would be an effective step in such a situation of our colleges, would it bring desired changes in the field of higher education in India or it would only be a mere change in the pattern of education system. In this context, the present study has been carried out to study the effectiveness of the semester system in comparison

to the effectiveness of the 1+1+1+ degree course.

**Methodology:**

Survey method has been used to see the effectiveness of the semester system on the performance of the TDC 1<sup>st</sup> semester and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students.

**Sample:**

A total of 165 students of TDC 3<sup>rd</sup> semester major course from the faculty of Arts (30 students each from Assamese, English, Political Science, Economics and Education and 15 students from History) of a Guahati based College, Assam have been selected as sample for the present study.

**Tools :**

The investigators have used the following tools for collecting the required data:

- a) For measuring the academic performance, the marks of TDC 1<sup>st</sup> semester and TDC 2<sup>nd</sup> semester having major in the said subjects were collected from the office records of the concerned Departments of the College.
- b) For comparing the academic performance, the marks of TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year students having major in the subjects who have passed out in 2012 under three year degree course were also collected from the same source mentioned above.
- c) A self-structured questionnaire for the students of TDC 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students.

**Result and Discussion:**

Academic performance depends on the variables such as curriculum, methods of teaching, teachers' effectiveness, infrastructure facility, evaluation system etc. In the present study, these variables have been taken as selected parameters in order to discuss the effectiveness of semester system at the undergraduate level. Here, in relation to the **First Objective** of the study, i.e. to find out whether the semester system has improved the quality of performance of students of TDC 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, we have collected the total results of both

TDC 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester examination of the present 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students along with the total result of TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year examination 2010 and this has been shown in Table-1. Moreover the results of TDC 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students and TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year students of 2010 whose percentage is above 60 covering the departments of Assamese, English, Political Science, Economics, Education and History have also been collected. Table-2 shows the percentage of students securing 60% or above in 1<sup>st</sup> semester, 2<sup>nd</sup> semester and TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year, 2010 examination in the above mentioned subjects respectively.

**Table - 1**

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Ass.</b>	<b>Eng.</b>	<b>Eco.</b>	<b>Pol. Sc.</b>	<b>Edn.</b>	<b>History</b>
Percentage of total students passed in both 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sem.	83%	62.5%	78.84%	86.44%	97.5%	77.77%
Percentage of total students passed in TDC 1 <sup>st</sup> year exam, 2010	66.66%	50%	64.63%	55%	93%	50%

From Table-1 it has been observed that-

- ❖ 83% students have passed the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester examination having major in Assamese. While this percentage was only 66.66% in the TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year examination 2010 in the same subject.
- ❖ In English 62.5% students passed in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester examination and in TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year examination the pass percentage is 50% only.
- ❖ In Economics 78.84% students passed in TDC 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester and 64.63% students passed in TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year examination.
- ❖ In Political Science 86.44% and 55% students have passed in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester and 1<sup>st</sup> year examination, 2010 respectively.
- ❖ In education the pass percentage does not show much difference with 97.5% passed under semester system and 93% passed in the 1<sup>st</sup> year examination.
- ❖ Again in History, the difference is quite distinct. Under semester system, the pass percentage is 77.77% while only 50% students passed

in the TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year examination, 2010.

It has been seen from the result that in all the subjects included in the study, the percentage of passed students is higher under semester system than the percentage of passed students under the one year degree course. Hence, we have found that the semester system has become successful in bringing improvement in the academic performance of the students.

**Table - 2**

<b>Departments</b>	<b>Percentage of 1<sup>st</sup> class holders in 1<sup>st</sup> semester</b>	<b>Percentage of 1<sup>st</sup> class holders in 2<sup>nd</sup> semester</b>	<b>Percentage of 1<sup>st</sup> class holders in TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year 2010, examination</b>
Assamese	18.46%	10.76%	0%
English	9.38%	8.13%	0%
Economics	13.79%	24.14%	0%
Pol.Science	38.47%	50.85%	1.44%
Education	67.5%	57.5%	16.66%
History	22.22	22.22	5%

From Table-2 it has been found that-

- ❖ In the subject of Assamese 18.46% and 10.76% students secured first class in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester respectively. While not a single student secured 1<sup>st</sup> class in the TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year examination of 2010 in the same subject.
- ❖ In English, the percentage of 1<sup>st</sup> class holders is 9.38 in 1<sup>st</sup> semester and 8.13 in 2<sup>nd</sup> semester but in TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year examination, the percentage is zero.
- ❖ In Political Science, 38.47% secured first class in 1<sup>st</sup> semester, 50.85% secured first class in 2<sup>nd</sup> semester and only 1.44% secured first class in TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year examination in 2010.
- ❖ In Economics, the percentage of 1<sup>st</sup> class holders is 13.79 and 24.14 in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester respectively, while in TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year examination, not a single student could secure 1<sup>st</sup> class.

- ❖ In Education, 87.5% students secured 1<sup>st</sup> class in 1<sup>st</sup> semester and 57.5% secured 1<sup>st</sup> class in 2<sup>nd</sup> semester. In TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year, 2010, only 16.66% students got first class in Education.
- ❖ In History, the percentage of 1<sup>st</sup> class holder student is 22.22 in both the semesters and it was only 5% in TDC 1<sup>st</sup> year, 2010 examination. From these data it has been found that all the departments have done remarkable improvement in both the semester examinations in comparison to the one year examination system. So it has become clear that the semester system has surely improved the quality of performance of the students in comparison to the students under the 1+1+1 Degree Course.

**The Second Objective** of this present study is to find out the opinion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students having major in the above mentioned subjects regarding the semester system. In this connection the investigators have prepared a questionnaire including parameters like curriculum, method of teaching, teachers' effectiveness, infrastructure facility and evaluation system. We have distributed the questionnaire to the same students mentioned earlier and have found out whether they are satisfied with those parameters or not. The following table shows the percentage of students with their opinion.

Table - 3

Parameters	Assamese		English		Economics		Pol. Science		Education		History	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Curriculum	12%	88%	20%	80%	27%	73%	36%	64%	33%	67%	39%	61%
Methods of Teaching	60%	40%	50%	50%	69%	31%	73%	27%	76%	24%	78%	22%
Teachers effectiveness	92%	08%	60%	40%	86%	14%	91%	09%	91%	09%	69%	31%
Infrastructure facility	96%	04%	76%	24%	77%	23%	91%	09%	80%	20%	100%	0%
Evaluation system	60%	40%	67%	33%	75%	25%	64%	36%	71%	29%	78%	22%

From Table-3 it has been found that-

- ❖ In Assamese only 12% students are satisfied with their curriculum and 88% students are not. In English, Political Science, Economics, Education and History 20%, 36%, 27%, 33% and 39% students are found satisfied with their curriculum respectively.
- ❖ Regarding methods of teaching, the percentage of students said 'yes' is 60% in Assamese, 50% in English, 73% in Political Science, 69% in Economics, 76% in Education and 78% in History. Hence, the percentage of students satisfied with the methods of teaching is higher in all the subjects than the percentage of students who are not satisfied with the same.
- ❖ In case of teachers' effectiveness maximum students are found satisfied with their teacher's effectiveness. The percentage of students said 'yes' for this parameter is much higher than the percentage of students said 'no' in all the subjects. 92% in Assamese, 60% in English, 91% in Political Science, 86% in Economics, 91% in Education and 69% students in History are found satisfied with teachers' effectiveness.
- ❖ Regarding infrastructure facility also maximum students are found satisfied with it. 96% students in Assamese, 76% students in English, 91% students in Political Science, 77% students in Economics, 80% students in Education and 100% students in History are satisfied the infrastructure facility available in their college.
- ❖ In case of the last parameter we have taken i.e. Evaluation system, the percentage of students who are satisfied with this parameter is higher in all the subjects. In Assamese 60% students said 'Yes' while 40% said 'No'. In English, Political Science, Economics, Education and History 67%, 64%, 75%, 71% and 78% students said 'Yes' respectively.

So, from the above result it has been found that among the five parameters which have taken for the study, the percentage of students satisfied with their curriculum is very less in all the subjects. But in case of teachers' effectiveness and infrastructure facility maximum students are found satisfied with these two



parameters. Regarding methods of teaching and evaluation system mixed response has been found from the students.

**Conclusion:**

From the study and its result and discussion, we have found that the semester system has become effective to a great extent in bringing improvement in academic performance of the students. However, this effectiveness of the semester system regarding the academic performance of the students does not indicate the total absence of various associated problems of the colleges such as modernizing courses of study, improved methods of teaching and evaluation, teacher-student ratio, etc. But we can expect that with the help of proper planning and positive attitude towards reformation, these problems could be removed and the semester system will be totally effective in bringing desired changes at the undergraduate level.

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