

Perception of Students and Teachers towards Semester System: A Study in Some Selected Degree Colleges of Nagaon town of Nagaon District of Assam

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Abstract

The present study was conducted on 133 undergraduate students and 44 teachers selected at random from four selected degree colleges affiliated to Gauhati University from Nagaon town of Nagaon district of Assam to find out their perception towards semester system. Self structured questionnaire revealing perception towards five dimensions of semester system- curriculum, syllabus coverage and regularity of classes, teachers and methods of teaching, evaluation and feedback, and availability of resources was administered. The collected data were analyzed through using frequency, percentage, mean and sd. The research result revealed that the perception of students towards internal assessment and overall evaluation is not quite satisfactory. Most of the respondents even don't understand the evaluation in CGPA. The study further revealed lack of required resources particularly information resources in degree colleges to make semester system effective and successful. In this way, the findings of the present study yielded the necessity of developing strategies by all the stakeholders to arrange for minimum resources and facilities which have a direct bearing on students' achievement.

Keywords: Perception, Semester system, Curriculum, Teaching methods, Evaluation and feedback.

1. Introduction

Semester system is not only an examination system rather an education system whose primary concern is learning instead of teaching and whose approach is learner centered instead teacher centered. The main motto of semester system is to put emphasis on continuous, comprehensive and in-depth learning aiming at capacity building of the students by developing required *Knowledge, Skills and Attitude* to become an efficient and effective citizen in diversified.

Though seldom disagreement found among educationists regarding the benefits of semester system over the annual system, materializing the scheme effectively in an environment of poor physical and information resources like India is a challenging job. The effective and successful implementation of semester system depends upon a number of conditions as stated by Jadoon, Jabeen & Zeba (2012). These are: Well designed curriculum, Course coverage within stipulated time, Regularity of classes, Timely and constructive feedback to students by the teachers; Accessibility of teachers to students outside the class; Availability of information resources to students such as state-of-the-art library and computer facilities; Highest level of secrecy and confidentiality in examination; Transparency in evaluation and grade; Timely declaration of semester results etc. Ali (2001) cited Kotler and Keller, (2006) elaborated that for the effectiveness of system, satisfaction is necessary. Students' satisfaction is highly imperative because if they are fully satisfied with the facilities provided by the universities, their ultimate achievement will automatically be excellent. Douglas, Douglas and Barry (2006) stated that universities should provide such facilities to their students' that satisfy them completely. Aslam, H. D., Younis, A., Sheik, A. A. Maher, M., & Abbasi, Z. A. (2012) in their study revealed that semester system is perceived to be most effective way of effectual learning. They revealed that many factors can efficiently enhance student's satisfaction but teachers' efforts and behaviour are the main factors which are directly related to the students' satisfaction. Aslam, H. D., Younis, A., Sheik, A. A. Maher, M., & Abbasi, Z. A. (2012) cited Demaris & Kritsonis (2008) stated that students who perceive themselves compatible to the environment of the institute acquire more skills and get involved by putting efforts and participation in class confidently.

Many universities in India have embraced the semester system at undergraduate level responding to the UGC's call towards universities to make necessary steps to introduce semester system at undergraduate level vide its

Circular No. D.O.No. F.1-2/ 2008 (XI Plan) dated March 2009. Gauhati University, Assam has also introduced semester system at undergraduate level in 2011. Therefore, it becomes important to know how much the system became effective which can be perceived by the perception of students and teacher towards different dimensions of semester system as Ali cited Kotler and Keller, elaborated that for the effectiveness of system, satisfaction is necessary. As such the present study is entitled as- "*Perception of Students and Teachers towards Semester System: A Study in Some Selected Degree Colleges of Nagaon town of Nagaon District of Assam*".

2. Objectives

The purpose of the present study is to understand and analyse the Students' and Teachers' Perception towards Semester System with regard to (a) Curriculum, (b) Syllabus Coverage and Regularity of Classes, (c) Teachers and Methods of teaching, (d) Evaluation and Feedback, and (e) Availability of Resources (Physical, Human and Information).

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample

The present study is delimited to four (04) degree colleges of Nagaon town of Nagaon district of Assam, all of which are affiliated to Gauhati University. So far the student population is concerned, the study was confined to the 4430 students of first two batches of three year degree course i.e. 1st semester (1st year) and 3rd semester (2nd year) in all the streams, as the 3rd year batch belongs to annual system because semester system at undergraduate level was introduced by Gauhati University in 2011. Again, the study included all the 222 teachers working in the four colleges as its teacher population.

Considering the feasibility of the study 3 % of students and 20 % of teachers was selected at random from each of the colleges separately through applying proportionate allocation to guarantee a more representative distribution of samples throughout the colleges. Thus, the final sample for the study consisted of 133 undergraduate students and 44 teachers.

3.2 Data Gathering Tools and Treatment of Data

The required data to meet the objectives were collected through administering questionnaires prepared by the investigators based on established procedures in literature. The same questionnaire was used for both the target groups with slight modification here and there. The main questionnaire is sub divided in to 5 sub-sections according to the objectives under consideration. Section-A focused on Curriculum and contained four questions revealing respondents' views and perception towards curriculum outline and its distribution, provision of co-curricular activities etc. and 5 point Likert response mode of Strongly Satisfied, Satisfied, Uncertain, Dissatisfied and Strongly Dissatisfied was employed. Section- B contained two questions focusing respondents' satisfaction level on syllabus coverage and regularity of classes and the same 5 point Likert response mode was used. In this section the respondents were also asked to point the reason if their response is "Dissatisfied" or "Strongly Dissatisfied". Section-C includes seven items which concentrated on respondents' view regarding quality, regularity, punctuality and above all accessibility of teachers (inside & outside the class) as well as teaching methods employed by them, use of ICT and audio-visual aids, and here also the same 5 point Likert mode of response was followed. It is here to be mentioned that section-C was excluded from the questionnaire for teacher population as it is related to issues of teachers' quality and teaching methods employed by them. Section-D contained eight items which addressed the issue of evaluation and feedback in semester system and response mode of "Yes", "No" and "No Comment" was used. Section-E included eleven items focusing respondents' perception on availability of resources—Physical, Human and Information and response mode were "Adequate", "Inadequate" and "Not Sure". In this way, the questionnaire for students includes five sections and questionnaire for teachers includes four sections.

The questionnaire has the scale ranging from 5 to 1. For section-A, B & C where five point response mode was employed, score 5 represents strongly satisfied, 4 for satisfied, 3 showing uncertain/no comment response, 2 for dissatisfied and 1 showing strongly dissatisfied response. Similarly for section-D and E where three point response modes were employed, score 5 represents Yes/Adequate response, 3 showing neutral response and 1 represents No/Inadequate response.

As the study follows descriptive method and the data collected were mainly of quantitative type, the descriptive statistics like 'Frequency', 'Percentage', 'Mean' and 'sd' were employed.

4. Results and Discussion

The results were presented and discussed in the order of objectives of the study.

4.1 Curriculum

A well designed curriculum and state of the Art curriculum is the pre-requisite of effective semester system. The courses must be coordinated with clear objectives and emphasis should be given to the all round development of the personality of the students incorporating sufficient co-curricular activities. Professor Sukhadeo Throat, the former Chairperson of UGC, in his letter of 31 January 2008 (Bhattacharya, K.G., 2011) urged that each individual university must ensure that the curricula development exercise including revision in course contents and curricula is taken up every three years.

The result depicted in table-1 showed that the overall perception of both students and teachers towards curriculum is good. 9 % of the students are strongly satisfied, 60.2% are satisfied, 7.5 % are uncertain, 15.8 % are dissatisfied and another 7.5 % are strongly dissatisfied with the item "*Satisfaction with the relevance of curriculum with present needs*". So far the teachers are concerned for the same item, it is found that majority of the responses are in positive direction with 2.3 %, 72.7 %, 4.5 %, 15.9 % & 4.5 % respectively for strongly satisfied, satisfied, uncertain, dissatisfied and strongly dissatisfied.

Regarding the perception of respondents towards co-curricular activities in the curriculum, it is found that majority of the students are satisfied, whereas the percentage of teachers with satisfaction is comparatively less where no teachers recorded their response as strongly satisfied. Only 25 % teachers are satisfied with provision of co-curricular activities in semester curriculum.

The perception of students regarding the item "*Provision of project work, field study, tutorial, seminars in the curriculum*" is not quite bad where 21.8 % and 56.4 % students recorded their response as strongly satisfied and satisfied respectively. In case of teacher respondents these values are 9.1 % and 45.5 % respectively.

On exploring the perception regarding curriculum distribution throughout the semesters, table-1 revealed that 18.8 %, 54.9 %, 9.8 %, 12 % and 3.71 % student respondents expressed their views as strongly satisfied, satisfied, uncertain, dissatisfied and strongly dissatisfied respectively. It is remarkable that 29.5 % teachers are not satisfied with the curriculum distribution in semester system. Thus, in the pertinent it can be said that the aspects of co-curricular activities and distribution of course contents in each semester need a fresh thought and attention.

4.2 Syllabus Coverage and Regularity of Classes

Syllabus coverage and regularity of classes are closely associated with each other. Ideally speaking, in semester system course duration is provided in terms of credit hours. There will be no question of non-coverage of course contents if classes are held regularly in perfect consonance with the academic calendar. In fact, there is no concept of missing classes in semester system. If for some unavoidable reason, a student missed a class, he/she has to back-up himself with consultation with teacher. The teachers are also to be open for that.

The perusal of the table-2 depicts that majority of the respondents both students and teachers respond positively to the item "*Coverage of course contents within stipulated time*". 10.5 % of the student respondents are strongly satisfied, 59.4 % are satisfied with the syllabus coverage within stipulated time period, whereas 1.5 % are uncertain, 23.3 % are dissatisfied and 5.3 % students are strongly dissatisfied with syllabus coverage within stipulated time. In case of teachers, 6.8 %, 68.2 %, 11.4 %, 6.8 % & 6.8 % responses are of strongly satisfied, satisfied, uncertain, dissatisfied and strongly dissatisfied respectively.

Regarding the regularity of classes, again majority of responses for both teachers and students are found in positive direction. About 34.6 % and 59.4 % students are strongly satisfied and satisfied respectively with regularity of classes. These values are 11.4 % and 72.7 % (respectively) for teacher respondents.

On exploring the reasons for Non-coverage of syllabus within stipulated period and irregularity of classes from those respondents who are dissatisfied and strongly dissatisfied with the above two items, most of the teachers expressed that the teacher-student ratio is very high (1:250 to 300) and there is no clerical staff in departmental level. They are to keep themselves busy in internal assessment activities like-- organizing examinations, setting question papers, evaluation of scripts & assignments, organizing seminars, tutorials, and so on. Even more, doing

clerical activities such as keeping records of students' enrollment, attendance, evaluation etc. sometimes hampers regularity of classes which influence course coverage within stipulated time period.

4.3 Teachers and Methods of Teaching

The success of semester system depends upon the competent and motivated teachers, their professional ethics, their punctuality and regularity, teaching methods they employ, their ability to use teaching aids and so on. Table-3 revealed that the overall perception of students is satisfactory so far the teachers, their domain knowledge, punctuality, regularity, accessibility, teaching methods etc. are concerned. 30.8 % of the students are strongly satisfied and 54.1 % are satisfied with the domain knowledge of the teachers, whereas 5.3% and 9.8% students gave their response as no comment and dissatisfied respectively with the same item. No students recorded their response as strongly dissatisfied so far the domain knowledge of the teachers is concerned.

So far the regularity and punctuality of the teachers are concerned, it is found that 48.9 % students are strongly satisfied and another 42.2 % are satisfied. 2.3 % students keeps neutral in this regard whereas 4.5 % and 1.5 % students showed their views as dissatisfied and strongly dissatisfied respectively.

Accessibility of teachers for students both inside and outside the class room is very important in semester system. The perusal of the table-3 showed that 18 % students are strongly satisfied and 54.1% are satisfied with accessibility of teachers. A large portion i.e. 23.3 % respondents keep themselves away from giving any comment, whereas 3 % are dissatisfied and 1.5 % are strongly dissatisfied so far teachers' accessibility is concerned.

Interestingly, the perception of students with regard to use of ICT and audio-visual aids in teaching is not at all satisfactory as revealed in table-3. It is found that only 12 % and 27.1 % students are strongly satisfied and satisfied respectively with regard to use of ICT and teaching aids. 3.8% students give no comment whereas 30.8 % and 26.3 % students are dissatisfied and strongly dissatisfied respectively in this regard.

4.4 Evaluation and Feedback

Semester system involves continuous and comprehensive evaluation which includes examination of academic and non-academic achievement in all dimensions of personality of students. The evaluation system must be understandable by all the stakeholders—students, teachers and parents. On exploring the students' and teachers' perception towards evaluation system in semester system, the result of mean depicts that approximately 32.9 % students agreed with the statement '*You understand and satisfied with the CGPA system*' whereas 48.8 % students disagreed. However, 18.3% students' are found to be neutral in this regard. So far the perception of teacher respondents' are concerned for the same statement, it is found that majority of the respondents including 47.7 % are agreed and 38.6 % respondents are disagreed with the statement '*You understand and satisfied with the CGPA system*'. Another 13.6 % teacher remained neutral in this regard.

Transparency and confidentiality in evaluation, timely declaration results etc. all are prerequisites of semester system. The result shown in table-4 revealed that 54.9 % students and 50 % teacher respondents believe that assessment and evaluation in semester system is transparent. Surprisingly, 22 % students and 36.4 % teachers are disagreed with the statement '*Internal Assessment and overall Evaluation is transparent*'. Moreover, 23.2 % students and 13.6 % teachers remain neutral in this regard. Again, 61 % students and 43.2 % teachers agreed with the statement '*Results are declared in time*'. A large portion of respondents i.e. 31.7 % students and 47.7 % teachers are disagreed with the same statement. However, 7.3 % students and 9.1 % teachers are neutral in this regard.

The main motto of semester system is to provide regular and constructive feedback of performance to the students so that they make correction without losing time. These conditions of evaluation and feedback in semester system has inherent problem in undergraduate colleges especially in those departments where student enrolment is high. The result shown in table-4 depicts that 81.5 % students respond that teachers show scripts of examination and assignments regularly whereas 14.6 % students disagreed with the statement '*Teachers show scripts of examination, and assignments regularly*' however 4.9 % students remain neutral in this regard. So far the teachers' response for the same statement is concerned; it is found that majority of the respondents including 95.5 % teachers agreed with the statement '*You show scripts of examination, and assignments regularly*'. However, 4.5 % teachers disagreed with the same statement. No teacher remains neutral in this regard.

On exploring the fact whether students get constructive feedback on their performance, a vast disparity is observed in the mean scores between students and teachers responses. 61 % students agreed that they get constructive feedback on their performances whereas this value is 95.5 % so far the teachers are concerned. Approximately 13.4 % students think that they don't get constructive feedback on their performances whereas only 4.5 % teachers respond that they couldn't provide constructive feedback to the students regularly because of large enrolment. However, 4.9 % students and no teachers remain neutral in this regard.

Contrary to the idea of reducing examination burden and removing exam-orientation in semester system, a majority of the respondents i.e. 73.2 % students and 56.8 % teacher respondents believe that semester system made the students more examination oriented. Moreover, 52.4 % students think that frequent examinations in semester system create anxiety among students. However, 63.6 % teacher disagreed with the statement '*Due to the frequent examinations it creates anxiety among the students*'. 24.4 % students and 4.5 % teachers remain neutral in this regard.

4.5 Availability of Resources (Physical, Human and Information)

Finally, availability of resources- Physical, Human and Information, in an adequate manner is very important for effective materialization of the scheme of semester system. So far the availability of physical resources like classrooms, desk benches, facilities for co-curricular activities etc. are concerned; table-5 depicts that majority of students responds as adequate. But, majority of teacher respondents believe that only desk benches are adequate whereas number of classrooms and facilities for co-curricular activities and play ground etc. are inadequate.

On exploring the satisfaction regarding availability of human resources, it is found that majority of the students think that number of teachers, administrative and clerical staff is adequate whereas the majority of responses of teachers towards the above mentioned phenomenon is in negative direction.

So far the availability of information resources like library and reading room facility, books and journals in library, ICT and audio-visual aids, computer and internet facility etc. are concerned, table-5 depicts a mixed picture. Majority of students believe that these facilities are adequate except the case of ICT and internet facility. Approximately 42.9 % students are dissatisfied with the availability of ICT and audio-visual aids in classrooms. Again, 61.7 % students respond that internet facility is inadequate.

With regard the teachers' perception regarding availability of information resources, it is found that majority of the teachers believe that these facilities are inadequate except the case of library-reading room and books in library. Remarkably only 13.6 % teachers believe that the facilities for ICT and audio-visual aids are adequate.

5. Conclusion

The forgoing results and discussion depicts a detailed picture of how students' and teachers' feel towards different aspects of semester system. The result revealed that most of the students even do not understand and satisfied with the evaluation in CGPA system. Moreover, majority of students perceive continuous evaluation in semester system as burden as they respond that frequent examination creates anxiety among them. Surprisingly, 22 % students and 36.4 % teachers are disagreed with the transparency of the internal assessment and overall evaluation in semester system. Another area that needs immediate attention as identified from the findings is the availability and use of ICT and audio-visual aids in teaching. Most of the respondents both students and teachers expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the availability of ICT and audio-visual aids facility.

As we know, the effective implementation of any system depends to a large extent upon the satisfaction level of the beneficiaries, the students in this case. If the students are satisfied and develop a positive attitude, then their ultimate achievement will be excellent. Therefore, the policy makers, administrators and teacher need to work in a co-operative effort for developing positive attitude among students through ensuring availability of all the required resources. Few steps can be taken in this direction as-- organizing workshops, seminars and conferences by the authority focusing on different mechanisms of semester system and their benefits for the students' community; reducing the student-teacher ratio to a reasonable size; mobilizing local resources; providing all the required information and resources such as study material, facilities for co-curricular activities, feedback, adequate library and laboratory facility, computer and internet facility etc.. Generating an environment of collaborative efforts of all the stakeholder of higher education- policy makers, government, managers and administrators and above all teacher and students can go a long way in effective and successful implementation of semester system at undergraduate level of education.

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Table-1: Students' and Teachers' Perception towards Curriculum of Semester system.

Items	Students' Response (in %) (N=133)							Teachers' Response (in %) (N=44)						
	SS	S	U	DS	SDS	M	Sd	SS	S	U	DS	SDS	M	sd
Satisfaction with the relevance of curriculum with present needs.	9.0	60.2	7.5	15.8	7.5	3.47	1.10	2.3	72.7	4.5	15.9	4.5	3.52	.95
Satisfaction with the co-curricular activities in the curriculum.	16.5	63.9	11.3	8.3	00	3.89	.78	00	25.0	29.5	36.4	9.1	2.70	.95
Provision of project work, field study, tutorial, seminars in the curriculum.	21.8	56.4	11.3	9.0	1.5	3.88	.91	9.1	45.5	15.9	25.0	4.5	3.30	1.09
Satisfaction with the curriculum distribution for each semester.	18.8	54.9	9.8	12.0	4.5	3.71	1.05	00	54.5	15.9	29.5	00	3.25	.89

Note: SS= Strongly Satisfied; S= Satisfied; U= Uncertain; DS= Dissatisfied; SDS= Strongly Dissatisfied; M= Mean & sd= Standard Deviation.

Table-2: Students' and Teachers' Perception towards Course Coverage and Regularity of classes.

Items	Students' Response (in %) (N=133)							Teachers' Response (in %) (N=44)						
	SS	S	U	DS	SDS	M	sd	SS	S	U	DS	SDS	M	sd
Coverage of course contents within stipulated time.	10.5	59.4	1.5	23.3	5.3	3.47	1.19	6.8	68.2	11.4	6.8	6.8	3.61	.97
Regularity of classes	34.6	59.4	1.5	3.0	1.5	4.2	.76	11.4	72.7	6.8	6.8	2.3	3.84	.81

Note: SS= Strongly Satisfied; S= Satisfied; U= Uncertain; DS= Dissatisfied; SDS= Strongly Dissatisfied; M= Mean & sd= Standard Deviation.

Table-3: Students' Perception towards Teachers and Teaching Methods.

Items	Students' Response (in %) (N=133)						
	SS	S	NC	DS	SDS	M	sd
Domain Knowledge of the teachers.	30.8	54.1	5.3	9.8	00	4.06	.87
Regularity and punctuality of the teachers	48.9	42.2	2.3	4.5	1.5	4.33	.85
Attitude of teachers towards students.	28.6	50.4	10.5	10.5	00	3.97	.90
Accessibility of teachers outside the class.	18.0	54.1	23.3	3.0	1.5	3.84	.81
Methods of classroom teaching	33.1	54.9	6.8	3.8	1.5	4.14	.82
Interactive behaviour of the teachers in the classroom	25.6	57.9	12.0	3.0	1.5	4.03	.78
Use of ICT and Audio visual aids in teaching	12.0	27.1	3.8	30.8	26.3	2.68	1.4 2

Note: SS= Strongly Satisfied; S= Satisfied; NC= No Comment; DS= Dissatisfied; SDS= Strongly Dissatisfied; M= Mean & sd= Standard Deviation.

Table-4: Students' and Teachers' Perception towards Evaluation and Feedback.

Items	Students' Response (in %) (N=133)					Teachers' Response (in %) (N=44)				
	Y	N	NC	M	sd	Y	N	NC	M	Sd
You understand and satisfied with the CGPA system	32.9	48.8	18.3	1.85	.71	47.7	38.6	13.6	3.18	1.87
Grading System reduces subjective biasness in evaluation.	54.9	23.3	22	1.67	.82	75.0	22.7	2.3	4.05	1.70
Internal Assessment and overall Evaluation is transparent	54.9	22	23.2	1.68	.83	50.0	36.4	13.6	3.27	1.86
Results are declared in time.	61.0	31.7	7.3	1.46	.63	43.2	47.7	9.1	2.91	1.93
Teachers show scripts of examination, and assignments regularly.	80.5	14.6	4.9	1.24	.53	95.5	4.5	00	4.82	.84
Get Constructive feedback from teachers.	61	13.4	25.6	1.65	.87	93.2	2.3	4.5	4.82	.72
Students have become more examination oriented.	73.2	15.8	11	1.38	6.8	56.8	36.4	6.8	3.41	1.91
Due to the frequent examinations it creates anxiety among the students	52.4	23.2	24.4	1.72	8.4	31.8	63.6	4.5	2.36	1.87

Note: Y= Yes; N= No; NC=No Comment; M= Mean; sd= Standard Deviation.

Table-5: Students' and Teachers' Perception towards Availability of Resources.

Items	Students Response (in %) (N=133)					Teachers Response (in %) (N=44)				
	A	IA	NS	M	sd	A	IA	NS	M	sd
Availability of classroom for all subjects	68.4	18.0	13.5	4.01	1.57	45.5	47.7	6.8	2.95	1.95
Number of desk bench and other furniture in the classroom	64.7	28.6	6.8	3.72	1.80	61.4	34.1	4.5	3.55	1.90
Facility for other extra-curricular activities & play ground	51.9	37.6	10.5	3.29	1.88	25.0	72.7	2.3	2.05	1.75
Number of teachers	73.7	16.5	9.8	4.14	1.52	13.6	81.8	4.5	1.64	1.42
Number of administrative and clerical staff	78.2	9.0	12.8	4.38	1.26	43.2	34.1	22.7	3.18	1.77
ICT and Audio visual aids in the classroom	26.3	42.9	30.8	2.67	1.64	13.6	84.1	2.3	1.59	1.40
Library and Reading room facility	88.0	10.5	1.5	4.55	1.25	70.5	15.9	13.6	4.09	1.52
Adequate number of books in the library.	78.2	19.5	2.3	4.17	1.60	65.9	29.5	4.5	3.73	1.84
Adequate number of Journal in the library	42.1	26.3	31.6	3.32	1.63	22.7	63.6	13.6	2.18	1.69
Computer facility for students	67.7	24.8	7.5	3.86	1.73	34.1	65.9	00	2.36	1.92
Internet facility	30.1	61.7	8.3	2.37	1.82	38.6	61.4	00	2.55	1.97

Note: A= Adequate; IA= Inadequate; NS=Not Sure; M= Mean; sd= Standard Deviation.

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