

Academic Curriculum Reform of Indian Higher Education: Choice Based Credit System (CBCS)

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Abstract

The aim of the education is the all round development of the student including cognitive abilities. The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) & Yashpal Committee Report in 2009 recommended overhauling of higher education through academic and administrative reforms. UGC (11th plan, March 2009) and Association of Indian Universities stressed on CBCS. UGC has recently decided to ask all universities to move to choice based credit system. Therefore, it is necessary to know each & every aspect of CBCS. CBCS is internationally acknowledged system; it offers opportunity and avenues to learn core subjects and also additional learning beyond the core subjects for holistic development. CBCS provides better facility to the learners like freedom, flexibility, advanced learning opportunities, fulfillment of students' academic need and aspirations, intra and inter institutional transferability & quality education but India is still facing lot of challenges in its implementation which includes lack of proper and good infrastructure for a universal spread of education, lack of proper training & educational programmes. CBCS requires more attention for its proper implementation and effectiveness.

Keywords

Choice Based Credit System (CBCS), University Grant Commission (UGC), holistic development, learning opportunities, challenges.

I. Introduction

Education is a light that shows the mankind the right direction to surge. The purpose of education is not just making a student literate but adds rationale thinking. It is an engine for the growth and progress of any society. It not only imparts knowledge, skill and inculcates values, but is also responsible for building human capital which breeds, drives and sets technological innovation and economic growth and survival. The institutions, relationships and norms that emerge from higher education are instrumental in influencing the quality of society's interactions, which underpin economic, political and social development.

Higher education has many purposes:

1. Acquisition of concrete knowledge and skills.
2. Developing the ability to reason systematically about critical questions and issues.
3. To place facts in a broader context.
4. To consider the moral implications of actions and choices.
5. To communicate knowledge and questions effectively.
6. To nurture habits that promotes lifelong learning behaviors outside the formal settings.
7. Developing the skills of analysis synthesis and argumentation.

In a changing context, the needs of the students have to be met through the curriculum and curriculum transactions. The educationists and academicians need to take stock of the present scenario and introspect to transform the universities to meet the present day challenges. There are number of drivers of change in higher education today, including technology, globalization, changing demographics, Economy, Changing employer needs, increased demand for accountability, changing students expectations and so on. The impact of any one of these drivers is significant and in total is transformative.

Realizing that the present system offers a very rigid pattern, which is inadequate to satisfy the interests and aspirations of the students. It is necessary for the university to satisfy move with the times and offer programmes to cater to the diverse needs of the students according to their learning ability and pace of learning.

Optimization of resources uses to achieve the best realization and nurture of talents among the large student community prompted the university to initiate curricular reform.

II. Objectives

- To promote academic excellence in the area of student choice
- To provide adequate flexibility in the choice of subjects to the students
- To develop curriculum with student focus
- To make the system more self-reliant by introducing at least partially the internal assessment process.

Choice Based Credit System (CBCS)

University Grants Commission has come up with the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) programme for comprehensive continuous assessment in which the students have a choice to choose from the prescribed courses, which are referred as core, elective or minor or soft skill courses and they can learn at their own pace and the entire assessment is graded-based on a credit system. Under the design of "Choice Based Credit System (CBCS)" the curriculum has been molded into three-tier structure.

Hard Core Papers – These are papers that the parent department decides as compulsory for the learners aspiring for a degree in that discipline.

Soft Core Papers – These are papers allied to the learners. They are inter-disciplinary and application oriented. Learners are given options to choose from the list of soft core papers provided by both parent as well as other departments.

Optional Papers – These are papers the learners opt to choose according to their own preference from the main discipline as well as from other departments.

Courses like Value Education, Women Studies, and Personality Development are incorporated in the curriculum for the holistic development of all the learners.

All the major higher education institutions across the world are implementing a system of credits. For instance, we have the

European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in Europe's universities, the 'National Qualifications Framework' in Australia. There is the Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University Credits. In the UK, we have the Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS). Even the systems operating in the US, Japan, etc. are based on credit system.

Choice Based Credit System was proved to be effective for student's overall progression. Firstly, the learners are contented that they are able to receive a multi-disciplinary learning experience as seen from their feedback reports. The same is also true for the faculty members since they get varied experience of addressing learners from various disciplines. This multi faceted learning experience of the choice Based Credit System which has led to the holistic learning of the learners has facilitated the scope for employment. There are many learners who become first generation entrepreneur after successful completion of their Degree Programme. The extra credit papers provided under CBCS have also helped the learners who pursue higher education. They have experienced the edge over their fellow learners in their performance. The choice based credit system provides a 'cafeteria' type approach in which the students can take courses of their choice, learn at their own pace, undergo additional courses and acquire more than the required credits, and adopt an interdisciplinary approach to learning.

Learning by Earning Credits

The uniform CBCS aims at removing all variations across colleges and universities in the methods applied for award of grades computation of semester grade point average (SGPA) and cumulative grade point average (CGPA), which will result in eventual grading, to be done on the basis of specified formulae. One credit is equivalent to one hour of teaching (lecture or tutorial) or two hours of practical work/field work per week. Each semester will consist of 15-18 weeks of academic work equivalent to 90 actual teaching days.

- Credits offer flexibility of learning at one's own pace.
- Credits can be earned in a shorter or expanded period depending upon the capacity of the learner.
- Provision of transfer of credit is a facility for students to move from one branch to another.
- Possibility of doing majors in more than one subject if provision of earning credit is available in the coursework, and
- In interdisciplinary courses, credits can be earned by taking courses across departments and institutions.



- Grading provides a more realistic assessment of the learner.
- Stigma of "fail" is minimized in grading.
- Grading enables the use of both "absolute" and "relative" grading depending upon the context.
- Relative grading provides possibilities of placing students in comparable categories regardless of their relative achievements in different subjects, and

The grading system is considered "better" and "desirable" because this will facilitate student **mobility across institutions within the country and across other countries**, and also enable potential employers to assess the performance of students.

Challenges and Implementation

The basic motive of institutions of Higher education is to expand academic quality in all aspect right from the curriculum to the learning teaching process to examination and evaluation system but the CBCS seems to narrow the role of education from encouraging the development of well-rounded individual to training for marketable skilled workforce. It is important to emphasize the difference between curricula and syllabi which seems to be ignored in CBCS. There are challenges such as drafting the entire new syllabus, defining the credit system, motivating and training staff for smoother implementation, encouraging students to stay involved throughout the term and improving attendance, and continuous evaluation. The academic boards in the universities will have to play an important role to overcome these challenges and help in preparing the new syllabus in a definite time.

Last Word CBCS seems to increase the need for faculty and workload of teachers, as institutions are supposed to widen their offerings to provide more optional courses but unfortunately, there was no attention paid on reflecting upon the curricular or pedagogic issues involved. Thus, instead of targeting the core problem areas in the Indian education system, the CBCS is set to increase the already existing problems in the higher education. However, considering the diversity the implementation of the choice based credit system seems to be a good system in assessing the overall performance of a student in a universal way of a single grading system. What is needed is that the universities implement the CBCS following some rigorous elaborate steps such as review of curricular contents, subdividing into units and subunits as well as assigning numerical values and termed credits to bring more clarity to the faculty, students and examiners.

III. Conclusion

Thus on the analysis of the present time education system and emphasis is made on the positivity of CBCS. The researcher said that India needs multidimensional and broad based quality education to maintain its leadership in the 21st century. Therefore, India should show the concern over the quality in education as the education in India is not competitive in terms of the quantity and quality with other countries. Therefore there is the need to explore the concept of CBCS. Everyone should be well known with CBCS so that the opportunities can be utilized in the best way. The education system is continuously changing towards student's centric system. This is why there is the need to understand the importance and utility of each and every aspect of the education system. The courses are newly included so as to obtain the desired outcome. This is the reason that's why different new courses have emerged. And the most important thing is that there is freedom to opt any of the courses by any student without any limitation of their stream of study. The CBCS is wholly based on this principle. But there is the need to test its effectiveness. How do students feel about this system? Are they satisfied by this system? Or there is any need to reform. Since CBCS provides opportunity to make some necessary reform keeping, students point of view in mind. This will help to support students as well as teachers.

IV. Suggestions

- Every aspect of CBCS should be explained clearly to the student.
- Betterment system should be included for improve a student.
- CBCS should be based on present and future needs.
- In CBCS, time is very short so, syllabus should be prepared accordingly.
- Infrastructure should be provided to every department.
- Extra time should be given for discussion among teachers and students.
- Introduction of Choice Based Credit System to facilitate the students mobility from one University to another.
- Orientation and Workshops should be organized for teachers to understand the details about grading, semester, credit system, credit transfer etc. by inviting and involving resource persons with appropriate expertise.
- It is essential that in the knowledge age, higher education system should be dynamic and adaptive to the changing times.
- Internal evaluation should be the sum total of overall class participation, written exams, presentations, workshops etc.
- The syllabus and its detailing should be done by concern department.
- The Choice assigned should be realistic and not just for name sake.
- Evaluation reports submitted by all faculty members should be reviewed for transparency.

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