



INTRODUCTION OF CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM: A NEW PARADIGM SHIFT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

India is one of the youngest nations in the world with more than 62% of its population in the working age group (15-59 years), and more than 54% of its total population below 25 years of age. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has initiated several steps to include innovation and improvement in course- curricula, introduction of paradigm shift in learning and teaching pedagogy, examination and education system. With a view to allow the flexibility in education system, so that students depending upon their interests and aims can choose interdisciplinary, intra-disciplinary and skill-based courses, choice based credit system (CBCS), is adopted. The choice based credit system not only offers opportunities and avenues to learn core subjects but also explore additional avenues of learning beyond the core subjects for holistic development. The UGC has prepared mainline and specialised model syllabi for undergraduate programmes and made it available to the universities to facilitate the implementation of CBCS. 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.



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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 behaviours 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 (Hasan 2015).

Introduction

The aim of Education is the all-round development of the students. Development of their cognitive abilities is important simultaneously with affective and psychomotor development. All educational institutions are emphasizing the all-round development. Five Year plan of India proposed various measures for academic reforms in higher education. The National Knowledge Commission in its report to the nation in 2008-2009 on higher education and Yashpal Committee Report in 2009 recommended overhauling of higher education through academic and administrative reforms. The purpose of such reform was to establish the higher education of India on international level equivalent to developed nations. University Grant Commission (11th plan, March 2009) and Association of Indian Universities (AIU) stressed on the Choice Based Credit System. The present generation is in the state of dilemma. There's need to provide such an opportunities so that learner may have better choice. UGC has recommended for CBCS to all of the central universities in 2015-2016. The opportunities can't be utilized until the learners and the teachers are not well known. Therefore it is necessary to know each and every aspect of CBCS. CBCS provides a better facility to the learners like freedom, flexibility, advanced learning opportunities, fulfilment of student's academic needs and aspirations, intra and inter institutional transferability, a quality education etc. It is a cafeteria approached system, where standardizations of educational programs are maintained. It has some complex system, just as a tree of different branches and different fruits, according to the needs, the receiver can obtain that. But the significant role is

that of administrator, so that everything should be clear and in the reach of every person (Chaubey 2015).

Paradigm Shift in Higher Education

The traditional Higher Education system has a non-uniform performance assessment system putting all the pressure on the student at the end of the year. With the semester system associated with CBCS, not only will the curriculum be uniformly distributed, but one can also cover 10 subjects instead of five in a year as the student will spend more time with the faculty. There is a strong resistance to change from every quarter of the academic world. Students are compelled to take two years of language course of their mother tongue. They are not encouraged to take courses according to their abilities and pace and there is no freedom for the first year student to take an advanced course or a third year student to take an introductory course. Students are compelled to be inside the classroom for the entire five hours a day schedule leaving no scope for independent study. Why not students earn a few credits from one college and transfer the credits to some other college? Why not a student who is working on a part-time basis earns a few credits and stretches his studies to four or five years according to his convenience? Why is there a kind of compulsion to complete a degree program in three years? Why is there no provision to change the college after earning a few credits? CBCS has the facility to transfer the credits from one institution to another provided there are provisions in the rules of the autonomous colleges and the universities to accept transfer of credits. Higher Education has undergone quite a lot of transformation over the years. After the Kothari Commission report in 1966, discussions on college autonomy started and a few colleges became autonomous since 1978 and a few of them have completed 25 years of such a freedom. Academic freedom, under autonomy, helped many colleges to innovate new curricula, design relevant courses, frame new syllabi and introduce new evaluation methods. But the required flexibility for the students to have a greater choice of courses appropriate to their interests, needs and long-term goals is not available even in autonomous colleges; rather a rigid and compartmentalized system is perpetuated.

Concept of Choice Based Credit System

The 11th Five Year plan of India proposed various measures for academic reforms in higher education. The National Knowledge Commission in its report to the nation in 2008-2009 on higher education and Yashpal Committee Report in 2009 recommended revamping of higher education through academic and administrative reforms. Keeping in view the challenges of the changed times and make the higher education in Indian Universities compatible with the

universities in developed nations, the UGC (11th plan, March 2009) and later on the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) stressed on the following recommendations:

(1) Semester System (2) Choice Based Credit System (3) Curriculum Development (4) Examination Reforms (5) Administrative Reforms.

Importance of CBCS in higher education

In India, Higher education is imparted largely through Universities and Colleges. Majority of universities and colleges, particularly central universities, have adapted semester system to make higher education more compatible. However, present Indian education system producing graduates who are lacking in knowledge, skills, values, confidence and academic efficiency as a whole. The current pathetic conditions of Indian higher education system calls the necessary reformation and transformation of higher education system by introducing and devising innovations, and also by developing learner centre approach as well as globally claimed evaluation system.

Most of the Indian Universities and Colleges have been following marks or percentage based evaluation system, which is acting as a barrier for students' mobility and not letting them to move from institutions to another one to pursue the desired subjects or courses. This calls that there should be a flexible system of education so that students could pursue different nature of professional and non- professional courses according to their choice and desired. That why, after a prolonged debate among the educationists and experts of concerned fields, University Grant Commission (UGC) has made it mandatory to be implemented choice based credit system(CBCS) in all the undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) courses under the XI plan of Higher Education. (Kelkar, A.S & Ravishankar, L. 2014) revealed in their study that many universities/autonomous institutions have already implemented the same; Mumbai University made it compulsory in 2011. By 2013, the entire UG and PG programmes became credit-based. The main objectives of introducing such programmes by UGC are: Need for reforms in higher education; enhanced learning opportunities; ability to match learners' scholastic needs and aspirations; interuniversity transferability of learners; improvement in quality of education and excellence; greater flexibility to complete the course; standardization and comparability of educational programmes across the country.

Key Features of Choice Based Credit System

A : Semester System and Choice Based Credit System

The Indian Higher Education Institutions have been moving from the conventional annual system to semester system. Currently many of the institutions have already introduced the choice based credit system. The semester system accelerates the teaching-learning process

and enables vertical and horizontal mobility in learning. The credit based semester system provides flexibility in designing curriculum and assigning credits based on the course content and hours of teaching. 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. It is desirable that the HEIs move to CBCS and implement the grading system.

B: Types of Courses:

Courses in a programme may be of three kinds: Core, Elective and Foundation.

1. Core Course: - There may be a Core Course in every semester. This is the course which is to be compulsorily studied by a student as a core requirement to complete the requirement of a programme in a said discipline of study.

2. Elective Course:-

Elective course is a course which can be chosen from a pool of papers. It may be:

- Supportive to the discipline of study
- Providing an expanded scope
- Enabling an exposure to some other discipline/domain
- Nurturing student’s proficiency/skill.

An elective may be “Generic Elective” focusing on those courses which add generic Proficiency to the students. An elective may be “Discipline centric “or may be chosen from an unrelated discipline. It may be called an “Open Elective.”

3. Foundation Course:-

The Foundation Courses may be of two kinds: Compulsory Foundation and Elective foundation. “Compulsory Foundation” courses are the courses based upon the content that leads to Knowledge enhancement. They are mandatory for all disciplines.

Elective Foundation courses are value-based and are aimed at man-making education.

C: Examination and Assessment

The HEIs are currently following various methods for examination and assessment suitable for the courses and programmes as approved by their respective statutory bodies. In assessing the performance of the students in examinations, the usual approach is to award marks based on the examinations conducted at various stages (sessional, mid-term, end-semester etc.,) in a semester. Some of the HEIs convert these marks to letter grades based on absolute or relative grading system and award the grades. There is a marked variation across the colleges and

universities in the number of grades, grade points, letter grades used, which creates difficulties in comparing students across the institutions. The UGC recommends the following system to be implemented in awarding the grades and CGPA under the credit based semester system.

Letter Grades and Grade points

- i. Two methods -relative grading or absolute grading– have been in vogue for awarding grades in a course. The relative grading is based on the distribution (usually normal distribution) of marks obtained by all the students of the course and the grades are awarded based on a cut-off marks or percentile. Under the absolute grading, the marks are converted to grades based on pre-determined class intervals. To implement the following grading system, the colleges and universities can use any one of the above methods.
- ii. The UGC recommends a 10-point grading system with the following letter grades as given below:

Grades and Grade points

Letter Grade	Grade point
O (Outstanding)	10
A+ (Excellent)	9
A (Very good)	8
B+ (Good)	7
B (Above Average)	6
C (Average)	5
P (Pass)	4
F (Fail)	0
AB (Absent)	0

- iii. A student obtaining Grade F shall be considered failed and will be required to reappear in the examination.
- iv. For non credit courses ‘Satisfactory’ or ‘Unsatisfactory’ shall be indicated instead of the letter grade and this will not be counted for the computation of SGPA/CGPA.
- v. The Universities can decide on the grade or percentage of marks required to pass in a course and also the CGPA required to qualify for a degree taking into consideration the recommendations of the statutory professional councils such as AICTE, MCI, BCI, NCTE etc.,
- vi. The statutory requirement for eligibility to enter as assistant professor in colleges and universities in the disciplines of arts, science, commerce etc., is a minimum average mark of 50% and 55% in relevant postgraduate degree respectively for reserved and general category. Hence, it is recommended that the cut-off marks for grade B shall

not be less than 50% and for grade B+, it should not be less than 55% under the absolute grading system. Similarly cut-off marks shall be fixed for grade B and B+ based on the recommendation of the statutory bodies (AICTE, NCTE etc.,) of the relevant disciplines.

Assessment is an integral part of system of education as it is instrumental in identifying and certifying the academic standards accomplished by a student and projecting them far and wide as an objective and impartial indicator of a student's performance. Thus, it becomes bounden duty of a University to ensure that it is carried out in fair manner. In this regard, UGC recommends the following system of checks and balances which would enable Universities effectively and fairly carry out the process of assessment and examination.

- i. In case of at least 50% of core courses offered in different programmes across the disciplines, the assessment of the theoretical component towards the end of the semester should be undertaken by external examiners from outside the university conducting examination, who may be appointed by the competent authority. In such courses, the question papers will be set as well as assessed by external examiners.
- ii. In case of the assessment of practical component of such core courses, the team of examiners should be constituted on 50 – 50 % basis. I.e. half of the examiners in the team should be invited from outside the university conducting examination.
- iii. In case of the assessment of project reports / thesis / dissertation etc. the work should be undertaken by internal as well as external examiners.

Challenges for CBCS:

- For any new system, usually there will be a strong resistance to change from every quarter of the academic world.
- Accepting grade points in subject instead of marks and letter grade instead of exact total marks is difficult due to the fact that allotment of individual ranking is not possible by merely referring grade points and letter grades.
- Opportunity to take credits outside the core subject area may dilute the depth in core area of studies.
- Students may face dilemma in choosing the subjects due to their inexperience in predicting future demand.
- For the institutions, the number of students in a give class is not constant due to the fact that students can take any subject in any college for a given course.

- The workload of a faculty member may vary during different semesters of a year.
- The college is compelled to provide good infrastructure, best faculty, and large number of elective at low fees to attract more students for a given course.
- It is time consuming and expensive if a student takes different subjects in different colleges during a same period of time.
- Students cannot stay in a hostel of a particular college due to their study in different colleges.
- Students have to pay college fee for different colleges for their subjects taken in such a way that the sum of the fees paid will be always higher than the fee paid to an individual college.

Suggestions for Better Implementation of CBCS in Higher Education

Following points could be considered as the suggestions/opinions regarding the CBCS.

- Undoubtedly, CBCS is students' friendly but things are yet to be needed to justify the efficacy of it. Class room teaching should be given importance.
- Seminars, Conferences and debate should be organised to discuss its merits and demerits in detail.
- Professional training should be given to the teachers to handle it effectively.
- Provision of both Percentage and grading system should be maintained.
- Its adaptation should be optional or choice based rather than mandatory.
- All the P.G college of India should also be brought under the CBCS, as they also catering the responsibility of Higher Education on a large scale.
- Equalization in standard of education system should be maintained so that mobility of students could be checked.
- Selection of papers and choosing credits should be governed by the concerned department/ institution.
- To make it more effective, guidance and counselling services should be arranged for the teachers and students while choosing soft core papers.
- Care should be taken about the gap between Central and state Universities in regard to quality of education as well as the availability of infrastructure at point.

Conclusion

The concept of CBCS and Semester system in higher education in India has been the outcome of the limitations of the long existing 'British introduced' system of education which resulted into over production of unemployed youth, indiscipline in the academic

environment, low motivation and a host of other miss-matches. CBCS and semester system is a departure from the traditional 'exam-centric' education system to a more 'proactive and need based system' that aims at developing students with 'knowledge, skill, attitude and value' so very vital for leading a meaningful life and contributing to nation building. Its effective implementation however calls for organizational support, both human and physical, and total devotion and commitment of all the stakeholders.

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