



## The role of choice based credit system (CBCS) in enriching higher education in India.

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### Abstract

The Indian higher education system is suffering from mediocrity – in students, in teachers, in curriculum and throughout the system. The students are able to succeed only in their core subjects. But today's employer needs multi-disciplinary knowledge to face challenges across the globe. As an attempt to transform the higher education system the University Grants Commission (UGC) has initiated the scheme of Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) which is followed globally for its range of benefits. The CBCS system provides alternatives to students in selecting specialization and open electives to enrich skills and competencies. This paper attempts to understand the scheme of CBCS and its role in uplifting the quality of higher education in India.

**Keywords:** CBCS, multi-disciplinary knowledge, open electives, UGC and Higher Education.

### Statement of the problem

Indian system is not providing many alternatives to students in subject selection in main streams. This results in lack of multiple knowledge. So, students are failed in competitive examinations and concept based interviews. There is an immediate revise of Indian syllabus system to provide broad skills and competencies to students. Choice Based Credit System at graduation and post graduation is one of solution for this problem.

### Objectives of the study

1. To study the deficiencies in the present curriculum in Indian system of syllabus.
2. To analyze the opportunities of CBCS system.
3. To provide suggestions regarding adoption of CBCS system.

### Introduction

Indian education system has come a long way since independence. In its size and diversity, India has the third largest higher education system in the world, next only to China and the United States. Before Independence, access to higher education was very limited and restricted, with enrolment of less than a million students in 500 colleges and 20 universities. Post independence especially after globalization things got changed; there were many changes in country's economic, cultural, legal, social and technological aspects which had a great impact on the education system of the country.

There was a lot of diversity in the system and approaches practiced by universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) in conducting examinations, evaluating and grading. Some universities and educational institutions used conventional system of evaluation performance of students based on the marks scored in the examination and some used the grading system and some used both. There were also differences in curriculum, syllabus and teaching methodology. As a result employers were finding it difficult to understand the performance of students from different universities and there was lack of mobility also for students between universities and institutions. Hence, in an effort to bring equity, efficiency and excellence in higher education in Higher Education Institutions, University Grants Commission (UGC) has rolled out several programs.

The scheme of Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) instigated by UGC is believed to provide greater mobility to students across universities and institutions domestically as well as internationally. Apart from UGC, Union HRD ministry, and National Knowledge Commission (NKC) have recommended the system for enhancing the quality of higher education. About 23 central universities in India have already implemented CBCS and the president of India has recently urged the remaining universities to think about implementing CBCS from next academic year.

### **Methodology**

As per the general understanding of the CBCS, this paper is based on secondary data and analyzed in the perspective of effectiveness of CBCS in improving the quality of higher education as compared with the conventional system of education in India. Content analysis method has been followed to appreciate the usefulness and effectiveness of CBCS in pervading quality in higher education. Various reports of UGC, research journals on higher education have been used for collection and analysis of the data.

### **About CBCS**

CBCS operates on modular pattern based on module/units called "credits" wherein 'credit' defines the quantum of contents/syllabus prescribed for a course/paper and determines the minimum number of teaching-learning hours required. The system has lecture, tutorial and practical. Lecture ensures theoretical knowledge from the teacher, tutorials are designed to interaction between teacher and the students in which group discussions, case analysis and presentation by the students are done. It helps the students to gain teaching skills. Practical classes are done for computer and research based subjects to instill practical skills in students. Under the design of 'Choice Based Credit System (CBCS)' the curriculum has been divided into a three-tier structure.

1. **Hard Core Papers** - These are papers that the parent department decides as compulsory components for the learners aspiring for a degree in that discipline.
2. **Soft Core Papers** - These are papers allied to the learners. They are inter-disciplinary and application oriented. Learners are given options to choose from a list of Soft Core papers provided by both parent as well as other departments.
3. **Optional Papers/specialization** - These are papers the learners opt to choose according to their own preference from the main discipline as well as from other departments.
4. **Open electives** – These are papers to provide knowledge to students in other streams. For an example a commerce student can learn open elective from science, arts or even from engineering disciplines. This helps the students to gain knowledge in areas like music, journalism, economics etc.

### **CBCS permits students to**

- Learn at their own pace.
- Choose subjects from a wide range of elective courses offered by the institutions.
- Undergo additional/value added courses and acquire more than the required number of credits, depending upon the learner's aptitude.
- Adopt an **interdisciplinary approach** in learning.
- Make best use of the expertise of faculty across the Institution besides the particular department faculty.
- Acquire knowledge, skill and attitude of learning outcomes through participatory teaching & learning and continuous evaluation process.

### **The Importance of CBCS**

Choice-based credit system (CBCS) has many distinctive features:

- Improved learning opportunities,
- Ability to match students' scholastic needs and aspirations,
- Inter-institution transferability of students (following the completion of a semester),
- Part-completion of an academic programme in the institution of enrolment and part-completion in a specialized (and recognized) institution,
- Improvement in educational quality and excellence,
- Flexibility for working students to complete the programme over an extended period of time,
- Standardization and comparability of educational programmes across the country, etc.

The CBCS imminently fits into the emerging socio-economic milieu, and could effectively respond to the educational and occupational aspirations of the upcoming generations. In view of this, institutions of higher education in India would do well to invest through and resources into introducing CBCS. Aided by modern communication and information technology, CBCS has a high probability to be operationalised efficiently and effectively - elevating students, institutions and higher education system in the country to newer heights.

### **Steps to be Taken by Higher Education Institutions for Implementing CBCS**

- Review of curricular contents (study papers, term papers, assignment, workshop-assignment, experiments etc.) of certificate, diploma, under-graduate, post-graduate, M. Phil. and Ph. D programmes.
- For the sake of clarity of faculty, students and examiners, all the curricular contents are specified, and sub-divided into units and, if need be, into sub-units, which are subsequently assigned numerical values and termed 'credits'.
- Faculty of the concerned 'Department' deliberates and decides on (a) core credits, and (b) elective or optional credits for different levels of academic programmes.
- Departmental faculty evaluates and decides on the relative Weight age of the core and elective credits.
- Decision on the 'total' credits to be earned (or completed) by students undergoing certificate, diploma, under-graduate, post-graduate, M. Phil. or Ph.D. programmes.
- Generally core credits would be unique to the programme and earning core credits would be essential
- For the completion of the programme and eventually certification.
- On the other hand, elective credits are likely to overlap with other programmes or disciplines of study (for example, languages, statistics computer application etc.).

### **The Role of CBCS**

Choice Based Credit System is proved to be effective for student's overall progression. Firstly, many institutions have found that the learners are happy 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. The learners who have studies under this system have reported superior performance in the various competitive examinations they have appeared. This multi faceted learning experience of the Choice Based Credit System, which has led to the holistic learning of the learners, has facilitated their scope for employment as seen from the recruitment records of organisations and the campus placement activities. There are many learners who have become first generation entrepreneurs after successful completion of their Degree Programme. The Extra Credit Papers provided under the Choice Based Credit System have also helped the learners who pursue higher education. They have experienced the edge over their fellow learners in their performance.

### **The Complications of CBCS**

The scheme of CBCS might have had positive implications on the system of higher education and proved to be a successful one, but it is not free from complications. The greatest complication is that the authorities in the universities and institutions, the teaching personnel and the students who learn under CBCS scheme do not have complete understanding of the scheme. Some of the challenges of the CBCS scheme are as follows

- There is lack of clarity and knowledge about the scheme in the people involved in designing, implementing and following CBCS scheme.
- Some courses have become very popular and others are chosen by only a few. Institutions have come across problems in framing time table and assigning workload.
- Most Universities and higher education institutions have dearth of regular teachers, principals/directors and the required infrastructure for successful implementation of the CBCS scheme.
- Due to shortage of manpower, universities and institutions are finding it very difficult in conducting the examination twice a year and evaluating.
- Some universities and higher education institutions have clearly refused to implement CBCS because they believe their curriculum is far superior to CBCS scheme.

### **Findings and suggestions**

- Indian curriculum is subject oriented and there is lack of activities based education. CBCS adoption at graduation and PG level is the solution for this problem.
- Hours based syllabus is existing in Non-CBCS system. Credit system is more effective.
- LTP model (Lecture, Tutorial & Practical) is the gift of CBCS system. It provides opportunity to students in building skills and competencies in their career.
- Hard core, soft core and open electives are choices to students. Main department decides about hard core subjects where as soft core subjects are choices available to students to have specialization in main stream. As the name itself suggests open elective subjects provides opportunities to students to learn subjects beyond their main stream.
- The teachers and students do have complete knowledge of the CBCS system. To create more awareness about CBCS, enough workshops must be arranged.

- There is shortage of manpower, universities and institutions are finding it very difficult in conducting the examination twice a year and evaluating. The governments should take steps to appoint and train teachers.
- There is a need of review of curricular contents (study papers, term papers, assignment, workshop-assignment, experiments etc.) of certificate, diploma, under-graduate, post-graduate, M. Phil. and Ph. D programmes.
- Research based programmes articles writing for seminars and conferences publications must be focused.

## Conclusion

CBCS is a solution to provide options to students to learn their interested subjects at their convenient time. It provides variety of subject's knowledge and competencies to students. But to be fruitful, more number of faculties must be trained and deputed to better adoption of CBCS. Students will be benefited in long run benefited by this system.

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