



Choice-Based Credit System in India: A Critical Evaluation

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Abstract

Education System in India today went through a lot of changes before it emerged in its present form. Present education system in India is also guided by different objectives and goals as compared to earlier time. Present system of education in India, however is based around the policies of yesteryears. The present paper aims to highlight the Pros and Cons of Choice-Based Credit System. The study concentrates whether the new system of assessment is understood very well by teacher? What are the problems faced by students and teachers to implement this system? Is there any modification or improvisation required on the system being adopted? The present study was conducted to answer these. This study would be helpful to the educational planners, teacher training institutes, and other stakeholders to understand the system and adopt new ways of implementing evaluation if need arises and also would give an overview about the system to the other universities who are in the verge of adopting the Choice Based Credit System.

Keywords: Choice-Based Credit System, UGC, Education System

Introduction:

The Indian government recently made Choice-based Credit System (CBCS) mandatory for all 400 public universities at the undergraduate and postgraduate level beginning in the academic year 2015-2016. This is a good news as every student should have the right to choose subjects of interest. The lack of an interdisciplinary approach is one reason why we are losing many of our brightest students to universities abroad. This year, the Institute for International Education estimates that India is the No 2 country of origin for foreign students in the US, with over 1.2 lakh students studying there, contributing an estimated \$3.3 billion. The CBCS will encourage

students to learn in an interdisciplinary manner, in which teachers from varied disciplines design a curriculum, instruct the class and grade teams. Students can opt for courses of their choice, learn at their own pace, take additional courses and get more than the required credits. Recently, a wave of new generation private universities like Ashoka, Shivnadar and FLAME have adopted the interdisciplinary approach to higher education with success. By ensuring that all 400 public universities in India adopt international standards, the government is encouraging standards' parity in higher education. Introducing CBCS is critical for India to develop employable university graduates, a major challenge facing the country. There is a



serious gap in demand and supply of work skills and qualifications to address long-term unemployment.

Difficulties encountered with the traditional Higher Education System :

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 a student 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 stretch 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.

Choice-Based Credit System:

Currently an important concern which is strongly mentioned in recent times by the UGC, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), is the need to develop a Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS) in tune with global trends and the adoption of a proper grading system for measuring performance of the learner. In order to provide with some degree of flexibility to learners, we need to provide for course duration in terms of credit hours and also a minimum as well as a maximum permissible span of time in which a course can be completed by a learner. Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS) imminently fits into the emerging socioeconomic 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 thought and resources into introducing CBCS. Aided by modern communication and information technology, CBCS has a high probability to be operational efficiently and



effectively elevating learners, institutions and higher education system in the country to newer heights".

Under CBCS, students will be able to pursue three types of courses - *Foundation, Elective and Core*. Students must pursue Core subjects every semester and are free to pick Electives from a pool of subjects unrelated to their disciplines. This means if you are a computer science student, you can still opt for history as an elective. A study of varied subjects widens students' horizon and exposure. Further, the grading system followed under the CBCS will reduce our obsession with marks in examinations that has led to a mechanical approach to education. Education should teach us to have clarity of thought and not merely rewrite information. Keeping in mind those individual universities might not have the necessary faculty for elective subjects, the government has created a framework for credit transfer between institutes. Thus students can transfer credits from one university to another as credits will be recognised by every university. To strengthen this system, credit transfers can either be lateral or vertical, that is, at the same or higher level, respectively. The current framework suggests allotting 50% of the total credits to core subjects, 25% to applied core subjects, 20% to interdisciplinary subjects and 5% for foundation courses. With this interdisciplinary approach, students can choose to develop different skills on communication, writing and debating through their electives and emerge as more employable individuals. Choice based credit system (CBCS), or a '*Cafeteria*' like system is the solution for this type of transformation from the traditional teacher oriented education to a student-centered education. Taking

responsibility for their own education in this way, students can benefit the most from all the available resources. Academic commissions and committees such as UGC and NAAC recommended CBCS for higher education.

Review of Literature:

Much research literature is not available on the CBCS system in India. The University of Mysore have developed many facets of the system and uploaded on their website. We have considered the information from their website and used it as the basis for evaluating the student perceptions in the primary study. Other studies conducted by the research scholars and experts were reviewed. Stanley Jeyasingh (2005) indicated that there exists a strong resistance to change from every quarter of the academic world. 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. Thorat Sukh Deo (2009) opened that the CBCS will facilitate part completion of an academic program in the institution of enrolment and part-completion in a specialized institution. Chaudhary Chetna (2012) reported that 'Credit' is the weightage given to a course, usually in relation to the instructional hours assigned to it. In Higher Education the option must be introduced for the students in undergraduate and post graduate courses to choose additional subjects not related to their core courses. CBCS has the ability to accommodate diverse choices that students may like to have. It is also



recommended to establish centers of excellence in all universities and provisions for core-credits and elective or optional credits for different levels of academic programmes. Das Amutha Joseph (2012) ascertained that 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 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. This paper makes an attempt to identify the unique features of choice-based credit system and the effect of helping students to decide. A review of CBCS implementation in Tamilnadu state revealed that few colleges have the resources to offer a wide range of innovative courses. A professor of a government college in Chennai says we offer some skill-based courses under the CBCS System, but there is no inter-disciplinary option. All students in a department must opt for the same 'elective'. We cannot afford to offer any real choice - we don't have the faculty or infrastructure." The situation is even worse in rural colleges, said Vice-Chancellors at the meeting. The government had suggested a college cluster System, whereby students could take advantage of the choice provided at a neighboring college. However, Mr. Ganesan admitted that this plan was

mired in revenue-sharing wrangles. "If a government college student wants to take a course at a self-financing college, who will pay? And how much will be paid? This needs to be discussed and sorted out," he said. Government colleges said the effort to accommodate outside students and offer a more flexible timetable in a cluster college System would be more trouble than it was worth. After thorough review of the earlier studies relating to the CBCS the following presented pros and cons are observed.

Pros of the Choice-Based Credit System:

After thorough analysis of various studies relating to the CBCS system the following discussed are the points which supports the new system.

- ***Respects 'Student Autonomy'***
Represents a shift in focus from teaching based to learning education since the workload is based on the investment of time in learning.
- ***Records student's workload realistically.*** This system calculates not only the time spend by the students in lectures or seminars but also the time they need for individual learning and the preparation of examinations etc.
- ***Helps self-learning.*** Students may undertake as many credits as they can cope with, without repeating all the courses (papers) in a given semester if they are unsuccessful in one or more courses (papers).
- ***More Flexibility.*** This system offers more flexibility to the students by allowing them to choose inter-disciplinary (known as Extra-Departmental papers)



courses along with major courses, which makes education more broad-based. It is also helpful to the learners to choose courses and papers as per their choice and interest.

- ***Facilitates students' mobility:*** Providing opportunity to transfer the credits earned at one institution to another. Provide more transparency and compatibility between different educational structures. It promotes mobility of learners from one institution to another one.
- ***Global Standards:*** Choice based credit system would take education system as par the global standard. Globally acclaimed education system can be maintained through it, as it has the provision of offering different courses at the same time.
- ***Different Times :*** It also helps to the learners to pursue their courses at different times.
- ***To realize the potentials :*** It helps learners to realize their potentials through the flexibility in offering courses. It has broadened the base of education system.
- ***Reduction of Stress and Anxiety :*** Stress and anxiety of learners can be reduced through Choice based credit system. Work efficiency can be enhanced.
- ***Professional Skills:*** Development of Professional skills can be possible under Choice based credit system.
- ***Maximum Use of ICT:*** It puts emphasis on seminar presentation, assignment, discussion, project etc. based teaching. This system stresses on exercising maximum use

of ICT in class room teaching.

- ***Internal Assessment:*** Choice based credit system gives importance to the internal assessment too.
- ***Slow learners can get advantage:*** Slow learners can get advantage from it, as it has the flexibility in choosing credits at one time. Equality among the learners can be ensured through it, as it has the grading system.
- ***Favorable Learning Environment*** It is also helpful in building favorable learning environment, as everyone is supposed to take part in learning process as per their ability and competency. Learners could pace their learning or course as per their habit and ability.
- ***Teacher Centre To Learner Centre :*** Cooperation and healthy work temperament can be ensured and developed among the learners. Habits of work commitment of learners can be strengthened. It can be seen as a major shift from the teacher centre to learner centre education.

Cons of Choice-Based Credit System

In spite having the above discussed advantages, following could be some of the disadvantages of Choice-Based Credit System.

- Maintaining compatibility among main subject's papers and soft papers would be challenging one. Offering more than one program of different nature simultaneously would be challenging one.
- Extra burden would be experience by the institution as CBCS has the flexibility in taking or choosing



credits.

- It would be tough to measure or calculate the exact marks. Work load of teachers would be increased a lot.
- Regular teaching would be affected.
- Mobility or transferring of students from one institution to another one would be problematic.
- Mastery over concerned subject would be hampered.
- Problems of indiscipline would be happened as full liberty or choices of students are given maximum importance.
- Different nature and standard of institution will forced problem in maintain the equality in terms of mobility of students as everyone would desire to move from substandard institution or university to standard one.
- It may pose problems in maintaining the cumulative record of every student.
- Seriousness of students will go away from the examination as much weightage is given to continuous or internal assessment and evaluation.
- Most of the time will have to be consumed for setting papers for different type of examinations. It will call to increase the infrastructure to house or accommodate the students.
- Equalization of performance through it may discourage the gifted and talented students.
- Research work and would be maximum, as internal evaluation

has 40 % weightage.

Suggestions/Opinions:

Following points could be considered as the suggestions/opinions regarding the implementation of CBCS in India .

- 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.
- All the P.G colleges of India should also be brought under the CBCS, as they also catering the responsibility of Higher Education on a large scale.
- Provision of both percentage and grading system should be maintained. Its adaptation should be optional or choice based rather than mandatory.
- 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:

CBCS is a new stride by UGC in the higher education in India. This paves way for reformary changes in the Indian Education System. In this direction UGC has collected feedback from various experts towards formulation of New Education Policy, whereby it made CBCS to be compulsorily implemented throughout the country. The Higher Education is more complex in India with varied courses and streams hence maintaining harmony is essential. It is assumed that implementation of CBCS would bring Uniform Evaluation System. Student Autonomy, Self Learning, all round development of student are the major features of CBCS. Extra burden on the Institution, different nature and standards of the institution etc., would pose problem in maintaining it. Therefore, it would be advisable to have open discussion, Seminars, Workshops on better and successful implementation of CBCS. Hope CBCS would bring a constructive change in the Indian Education System.

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