



Choice Based Credit System: Implications & its Challenges

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Abstract:

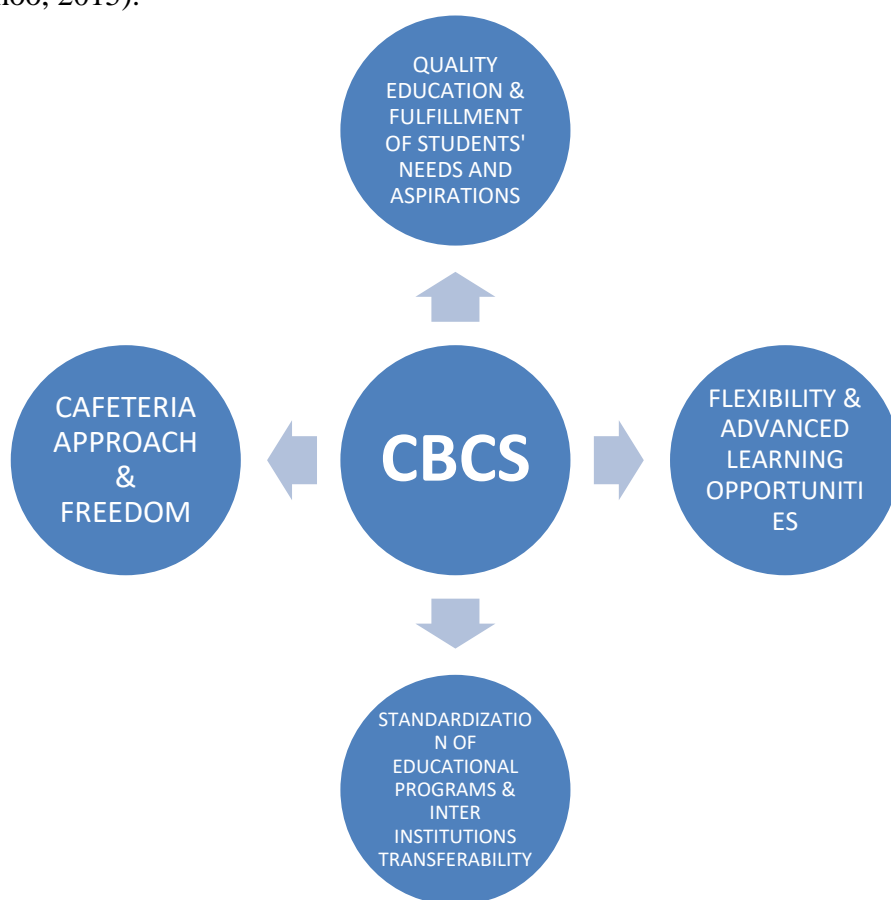
The aim of Education is the all-around development of the students. The development of their cognitive abilities is important simultaneously with affective and psychomotor development. All educational institutions are emphasizing all-around development. Five Year Plan of India proposed various measures for academic reforms in higher education. Indian higher education institutions need an infusion of new models to keep the curriculum responsive to the changing environment which includes technology adoption, changing industry requirements, changing aspiration of students, and changing expectations of society. CBCS aims to redefine the curriculum for keeping pace with the liberalization and globalization in education. Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS) has several unique features as advanced learning opportunities, ability to match students' scholastic and non-scholastic needs and aspirations, inter-institution transferability of students, partial completion of an academic program in the institution of enrolment, and partial completion in a specialized institution, improvement in academic quality and excellence, flexibility for the students to complete the program over an extended period of time, standardization and comparability of educational programs across the globe, etc. The CBCS may fit appropriately into the emerging socio-economic milieu and also respond effectively to the educational and occupational aspirations of future generations. CBCS provides a better facility to the learners like freedom, flexibility, advanced learning opportunities, fulfillment of student's academic needs and aspirations, intra and inter-institutional transferability, a quality education, etc. However, during the implementation of this system in higher education institutions, many challenges need to be addressed to put it on the right track. Therefore, the objective of the present paper is to examine the prospects and challenges of Choice Based Credit System.

Keywords: Choice-based, Credit, Semester, Grade, Course, Skill enhancement, Ability enhancement

1. Introduction

The higher education system of India is the third-largest in the world. As of AISHE-2019, India has 993 universities, with a break up of 46 central universities, 371 state universities, 124 deemed universities, 16 open universities, 304 private universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 127 Institutes of National Importance which include IIMs, AIIMS, IITs, IIST and NITs among others. Other institutions include 39,931 colleges as Government Degree Colleges and Private Degree Colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions (Statistics - MHRD). However, the present Indian education system is producing graduates who are deficient in knowledge, skills, values, confidence, and academic efficiency as a whole. The reason, obviously, is ill-planned expansion, dearth of competent staff, lack of adequate facilities for the library, laboratories, research, experimental facilities, appalling teacher-taught ratio, rigidly compartmentalized curriculum. The current pathetic conditions of the Indian higher education system demand reformation and transformation by introducing and devising innovations, and also by developing a learner-centric approach as well as a globally accepted evaluation system (Russell 2017). National Knowledge Commission (in its report to the PM on 29/11/2006) has called for reform of existing universities to ensure frequent curricula revisions, the introduction of the credit system, enhancing reliance on internal assessment, encouraging research, and reforming the governance of institutions. According to Mr. Pitroda, "... it is important for us to acknowledge that there's a quiet

crisis in education in India which runs deep. And the time has come to deal with this crisis in a systematic, forthright manner. There is today a requirement for a transition to a credit system where degrees are granted on the idea of completing a requisite number of credits from different courses, which provides learners with choices...." In a bid to revamp higher education and bring all the Universities and Colleges under one umbrella of grading, learning, and standards within the country, the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 2014 came up with a scheme called Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) with the directive that all Universities and other higher education institutions must adopt this program from 2015 onwards. The main objectives of introducing such programs by UGC are: Need for reforms in higher education; advanced learning opportunities; ability to match students' scholastic and non-scholastic needs and aspirations; inter-institution transferability of students; partial completion of an academic program in the institution of enrolment and partial completion in a specialized institution, improvement in academic quality and excellence; greater flexibility to successfully complete the course; standardization and comparability of educational programs across the globe. According to UGC guidelines, within the new system, there is a shift focused from teacher-centered education to learner-centered education. Emphasis is on learning and not on teaching, with the learner being at the center stage of all academic transactions. The CBCS is aimed at ushering in a multi-disciplinary approach to undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum, providing students a diversity of opportunities for their mobility by allowing them to take credits earned in one institution to a different institution to which they chose to shift (Hanchinalkar, 2008). Prior to CBCS, the higher education curriculum in India was unable to impart the necessary skills that would make the students employable adequately due to a lack of interdisciplinary approach and very little scope for value-based courses to be taught (Wanchoo, 2015).**



2. Basic Features of CBCS

- Semesters:** Every year is split into two semesters and therefore the assessment of students is conducted semester-wise. The learners have the opportunities to select courses from a pool of courses every semester. The results are declared at the end of every semester. Each semester has 15–18 weeks of academic training and assessment which is equal to 90 teaching days.

3. Credit System

The credit system is a redefining of the curriculum into smaller measurable entities or modules whereby these modules can be combined in different ways to qualify for a certificate, diploma, or degree. Each course is assigned a certain credit. The students can earn credits consistent with their pace by taking any amount of time.

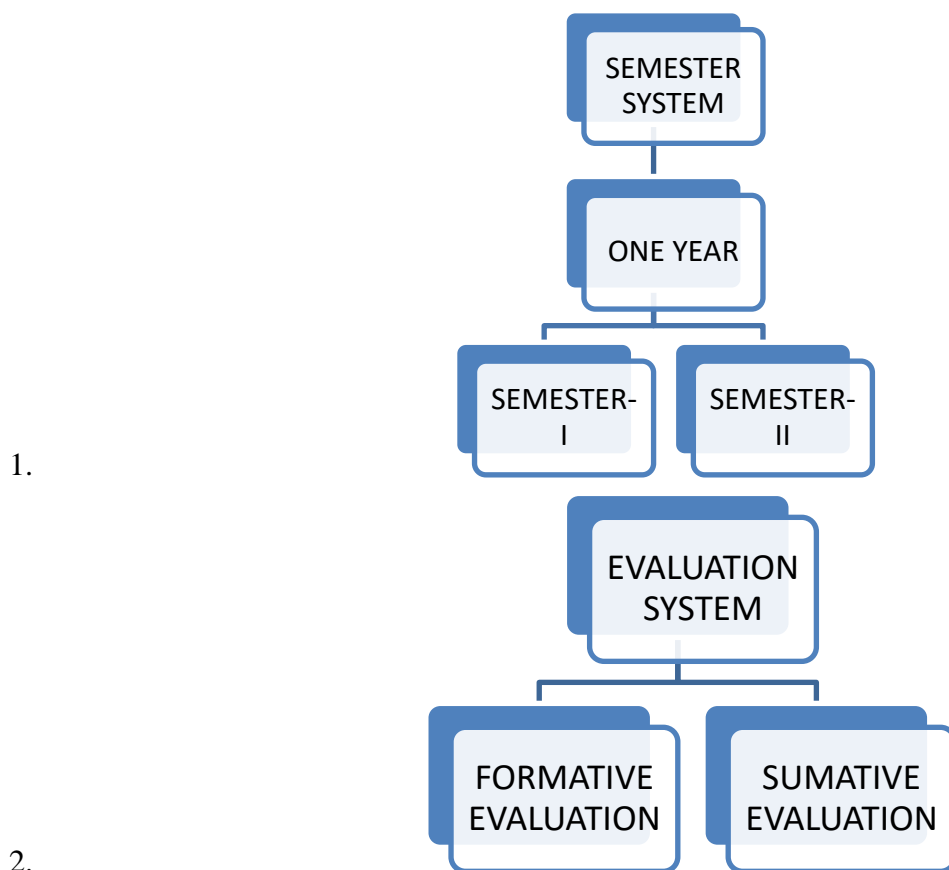
- 1. Evaluation system:** In many of the educational institutions formative as well as summative evaluation system is followed. In Dr. HSGVV 40% wattage is given to formative while 60% to summative. This 40% is divided into two midterm exams of 20 marks. The end-term exam consists of 60 marks.
- 2. Course:** Usually mentioned as 'papers' may be a component of a program. All courses need not carry the same weightage. The learning objectives and learning outcomes of each course should be defined clearly. A course may be designed to comprise lectures, tutorials, laboratory work, fieldwork, activities, project work, vocational training, viva-voce, seminars, term tests, assignments, presentations, self-learning activities, or a combination of some of these.
- 3. Choice of courses:** There are provisions to select the courses consistent with learners' own interest, aptitude, ability, and objectives. There are three types of courses as directed by the UGC.
- 4. Core Course:** There could also be a Core Course every semester. This is the course that is to be compulsorily studied by a student as a core requirement to accomplish the requirement of a program in a said discipline of study.
- 5. 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.
- 6. Audit Course:** A student has an option of auditing some courses, grades obtained in such a course are not counted towards the calculation of grade point average. However, a Pass grade is essential for earning credits for an audit course.
- 7. Project Work:** Project work/ Dissertation work is a special course involving the application of knowledge in solving/analyzing/ exploring a real-life situation/difficult problem.
- 8. Elective Course:** Elective course may be a course that may be chosen from a pool of papers. An elective course could also be supportive to the discipline of study, providing an expanded scope, enabling exposure to another discipline/domain, nurturing student's proficiency/skill. An elective could also be a "Generic Elective" that specializes in those courses which add generic proficiency to the students. An elective could also be "Discipline centric" or could also be chosen from an unrelated discipline. It can be called an "Open Elective."
- 9. Ability Enhancement Courses (AEC):** The Ability Enhancement (AE) Courses could also be of two kinds: Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses (AECC) and Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC). "AECC" courses are the courses that are based upon the content that results in Knowledge enhancement. Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses are mandatory for all disciplines. Skill Enhancement Courses are value-based or skill-based and are aimed towards providing hands-on training, competencies, skills, etc.
- 10. Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA):** It's a measure of the cumulative performance of a student over all the semesters. The CGPA is the ratio of total credit points scored by a student in various courses in all semesters and the sum of the total credits of all courses in all the semesters. It is expressed up to two decimal places.
- 11. Semester Grade Point Average (SGPA):** It's a measure of the performance of tasks accomplished in a semester. It is the ratio of total credit points scored by a student in various courses registered in a semester and the total course credits taken during that semester. It is also expressed up to two decimal places.
- 12. Credit:** Credit is a unit to measure the course work. It determines the number of hours of instructions required per week. One credit is equivalent to one hour of lecture [L] or tutorial [T]; of

two hours of practical work/fieldwork [P] per week. The total credits scored by a student for every semester are calculated by adding L+T+P.

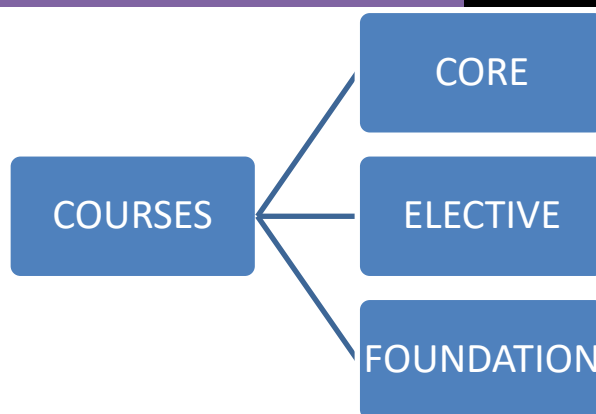
13. Provision of Credit Transfer: Credit Transfer means that credits earned at one institution for one or more courses under a given program are accepted under another program either by the same institution or another institution. This acceptance of earlier acquired credits may be done in one of two ways: (i) Direct Performance Transfer (ii) Course exemption.

14. Allotment of Grading: UGC has introduced a Ten-point grading system in CBCS to allot grading.

4. Some Basic Elements



3. $L:T:P - 2L/ WEEK = 2 CREDIT - 2T$ or $2P/ WEEK = 1 CREDIT$



4.

5. Challenges of Choice-Based Credit System

- 1. Resistance from stakeholders:** There is a strong resistance to change from stakeholders specifically in colleges affiliated to CBLU, Stakeholders' consensus in terms of core papers is a major challenge.
- 2. Reduction in emphasis on Language Papers:** The biggest challenge is being observed in Language Papers i.e., Hindi and English. In CBCS, there is a drastic reduction in emphasis on English/Hindi. Both of these languages had been considered essential for students since the beginning of the higher education system in India. Language proficiency is considered essential for the development of higher knowledge and skills acquisition.
- 3. Workload of English and Hindi teachers:** The workload of English and Hindi teachers will also get drastically affected. There is great resentment and apprehension regarding the drastic reduction in the workload of these teachers.
- 4. Diversion from the main course:** There is apprehension that Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses and Skill Enhancement Courses will get little attention from teachers and students and will remain as mere formality. Similar trends are already prevalent in EVS paper.
- 5. Difficulty in finding Experts:** For Ability enhancement and Skill enhancement papers, it will be difficult to find Experts. Making experts available as per needs of the college timetable & students' availability is a big question.
- 6. Lack of adequate infrastructure:** CBCS encourages teaching through projects, Hobbies & Case studies. There is a lack of resources-Human as well as Physical /infrastructure for imparting training in projects & hobbies. A majority of colleges and departments in universities do not have adequate. Infrastructure to facilitate this, including smart boards, projectors, access to computers and Internet, and storage space for projects. It will call to increase the infrastructure to the house or accommodate the students' needs
- 7. Difficulties with Grading System:** Accepting grade points in the subject instead of marks and letter grades instead of exact total marks is difficult since the determination of individual ranking is not possible by merely referring to grade points and letter grades. Moreover, Grading System has its own limitations.
- 8. Lack of Uniformity in implementation of Credit System:** There are disparities in the implementation of credit system at the university/college level which would certainly affect mobility/credit transfer. Mobility or transferring of students from one institution to another one would be problematic. Different natures and standards of institutions will force problems in maintaining the equality in terms of mobility of students as everyone would desire to move from substandard institution or university to standard one.
- 9. Lack of Academic advising:** There is a cafeteria of choices but how do you know which combination works best? Students may face a dilemma in choosing the subjects due to their inexperience in predicting future demand. Most of the faculty members are unable to advise students on the credits to choose from out of available options. Academic advising is a key

component of successful CBCSs and most Indian institutions/ faculty members have little experience in this area.

10. **UGC list of disciplines is incomplete:** UGC list of disciplines and courses is not exhaustive. Some important subjects like Physical Education and Fine Arts are not included in the list of disciplines/ courses to be covered under CBCS.
11. **Maintaining compatibility:** For the institutions, the number of students in a given class is not constant since students can take any subject in any college for a given course. Offering various programmes of different nature simultaneously and maintaining compatibility among main subject's papers and soft papers would be challenging one.
12. **The problem of indiscipline:** Problems of indiscipline may be experienced as full liberty or choices of students are given maximum importance.
13. **Variations in Workload:** Extra burden would be experienced by faculty members of few subjects as CBCS has the flexibility in taking or choosing credits. Mastery over concerned subjects would be hampered.
14. **Chances of subjectivity in Evaluation:** Seriousness of students will get reduced from the examination as much weightage is given to continuous or internal assessment and evaluation. The chance of subjectivity would be maximum, as internal evaluation has 40 % weightage. Suggestions In view of challenges to CBCS implementation, the investigators propose the following.

6. Suggestions

1. As the system is going to be more diversified after implementing CBCS, there is a dire need to provide greater autonomy to colleges to deal with issues regarding course/subject options and conduct of examinations, especially for Non CGPA Courses.
2. The stakeholders should be oriented to the pros and cons of the CBCS.
3. In order to compensate for the deficiency in knowledge of languages, English and Hindi should be kept at par with other core papers in terms of the number of credits.
4. A common pool of experts may be created at the nodal level for imparting training in various skills for the Skill Enhancement Courses.
5. Physical infrastructure of the colleges/institutions needs enrichment so, state of the art, teaching-learning aids should be made available at the institutional level.
6. Problems relating to inter-institutional mobility need to be taken into consideration and suitable measures are devised for the purpose. 7. The scope for manpower requirements in consonance with future job trends needs exploration and constant updating of curricula accordingly. Conclusion The concept of CBCS and Semester system in higher education in India has been the outcome of a response to overcome limitations of the long-existing British introduced system of education which resulted in over production of unemployed youth, indiscipline in the academic environment, low motivation, and a host of other miss-matches. But the existing variability and differences between Central University, State University, and Colleges in terms of efficient teachers, academic environment, infrastructure, etc. would pose a problem in the success. Implementation of it. Therefore, its effective implementation calls for organizational support, both human and physical, shifting the traditional teaching style of Indian Universities, total devotion, and commitment of all the stakeholders.

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