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Implementation of choice-based credit system: A study of challenges and opportunities

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Abstract

The majority of higher education institutions in India use an evaluation system that is based on marks or percentages, which limits students' freedom to study the subjects and courses they choose to take and their ability to transfer to other institutions. It is necessary to give students the freedom to select between multidisciplinary, intradisciplinary, and skill-based courses based on their goals and areas of interest. This is only feasible with a worldwide recognised choice-based credit system. The old teacher-centred educational model is giving way to a student-centered one in our contemporary system. This essay explains the numerous facets of the CBCS system in accordance with UGC guidelines, including course categories, grading methods, and application at the undergraduate level.

Keywords: CBCS, higher education, grading system, SWOC analysis

Introduction

Choice based Credit system is an educational approach in which the student choose subjects from the prescribe course. Students can choose from a list of required courses that includes core, optional, minor, and skill-based courses under the CBCS (Choice Based Credit System). Because it is thought to be more effective than the conventional marks system, the courses are frequently evaluated using the grading method. According to the grading method, which is seen to be superior to the traditional marks system, the courses can be rated. The Choice Based Credit System was implemented in the VISTAS beginning with the academic year 2015–2016 in accordance with UGC norms. Making education more student-centred than teacher-centric is the primary goal of CBCS. The University Grants Commission has started a number of initiatives to improve the nation's higher education system's equity, effectiveness, and quality. A grading system, examination procedures, teaching-learning processes, and curriculum innovation and development were among the significant steps implemented for improving academic standards and quality in higher education.

The Choice Based Credit System, (CBCS) system, is designed to operate on an even-odd semester schedule that culminates in an academic year. The CBCS maps student performance using a grading and evaluation method as opposed to percentage-based grading. It is based on a credit system linked to the course materials that are made available to students. In addition to creating avenues for educational possibilities, the also makes learning objectives and goals visible. A higher education credit system assesses a number of factors, including:

1. Student performance.
2. Learning outcomes.
3. Entrepreneurship skills contact hours.
4. Innovation, creativity and capability.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) developed the CBCS system, which improves and encourages the academic liberalisation of current traditional higher education models.

Key Features Of The CBCS System

- If a student shifts to a different field of study, credits can be transferred. CBCS is a step towards moving from numerical marking to grading.
- Grading reduces the negative meaning of "fail."
- Because it makes it easier for students to transfer between universities nationally as well as globally, the credit-based grading system is thought to be idea.
- Employers may evaluate a student's performance through legal means.

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Goals of CBCS system

1. To give students more freedom in selecting their courses.
2. Provide them a broad education.
3. To give them a multidisciplinary curriculum.
4. To help them develop skills relevant to the workplace.
5. To close the gap between professional and social experiences in order to demonstrate holistic education.

The Meaning of Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) In Brief

- **Choice Based:** Choice of multiple courses
- **Grading:** Marks secured is in letter grade format
- **Semester:** Learner-teacher engagement quotient can be measured / identified semester-wise
- **Credit:** Class hours per week carries additional importance in credit system
- **Assessment:** In the form of class room attendance, Mid Term Tests etc; is continuous and wide-ranging.

Credits are calculated keeping in mind the following components

- Lecture (L)
- Tutorial (T)
- Practical (P)

All of the evaluation components—listed above—or any combination of the two—may be included in the course. Despite being tried and proven, the CBCS system occasionally has trouble estimating marks accurately. Educators face additional difficulties in keeping up with numerous courses. Because every student follows a different schedule and course of study, this method exacerbates confusion among the student body. However, the CBCS method is adaptable and focused on the needs of the student; this strategy meets the needs of the student/learner community today.

Methodology

The paper was based on secondary data, research papers, journals, internet sources and different books.

Objectives: The aim of this paper is to:

1. To Study the various Courses of CBCS method.
2. To Study the utility of CBCS system in higher education.
3. To see the implementation of CBCS at Under Graduate level.
4. To study the strength, weakness, opportunities and challenge of CBCS System.

CBCS- a flexible system in Higher Education

CBCS offers flexibility for students to study at different times and at different institutions to complete one course. Credits earned at one institution can be transferred. Makes education at par with global standards. UGC (2009, 2012 and 2014) the lack of flexibility in higher education.

Various types of Courses under CBCS methods

Students can choose from three types of courses in the CBCS system: Core, Elective, and Foundation. The CBCS provides choices for students to select from the prescribed courses.

Core Course

A course, which should compulsorily be studied by a candidate as a core requirement is termed as a Core course. Students need to select a core course in order to fulfil the credit requirement.

Elective Course

Generally a course which can be chosen from a pool of courses and which may be very specific or specialized or advanced or to the discipline or subject of study or which provides an extended scope or which enables an exposure to some other discipline/subject/domain or nurtures the candidate's proficiency is called an Elective Course.

- **Discipline Specific Elective (DSE) Course:** Elective courses may be offered by the main discipline/subject of study is referred to as Discipline Specific Elective. The University/Institute may also offer discipline related Elective courses of interdisciplinary nature (to be offered by main discipline/subject of study).
- **Dissertation / Project:** An elective course designed to acquire special/advanced knowledge, such as supplement study/support study to a project work, and a candidate studies such a course on his own with an advisory support by a teacher/faculty member is called dissertation/project.
- **Generic Elective (GE) Course:** An elective course chosen generally from an unrelated discipline/subject, with an intention to seek exposure is called a Generic Elective. A core course offered in a discipline/subject may be treated as an elective by other discipline/subject and vice versa and such electives may also be referred to as Generic Elective.

Ability Enhancement Courses (AEC): The Ability Enhancement (AE) Courses may be of two kinds: Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses (AECC) and Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC).

- **Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses (AECC):** AECC courses based upon the content that leads to Knowledge enhancement; i. Environmental Science, ii. English /MIL Communication. These are mandatory for all disciplines.
- **Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC):** SEC courses are value-based and/or skill-based and are aimed at providing hands-on-training, competencies, skills, etc.

Importance of CBCS System In Higher Education

1. CBCS is based on student centric approach

CBCS provides for the choice of subjects based upon their own learning needs, interest, ability that are of benefit to students. This System empowers learners to take accountability for their self learning by allowing them to choose courses, set learning goals and manage their academic journey independently.

2. Students can opt for courses from different disciplines:

Fostering a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach. This system allows the integration of concepts, theories, methods and perspectives from two or more disciplines. It removed the boundaries of different discipline.

3. A key component of CBCS is continuous and comprehensive evaluation:

Under this method, students continually evaluate themselves in addition to their teachers. Many methods are used for evaluation,

including as written exams, multiple-choice questions (MCQs), projects, presentations, seminars, field trips, group discussions, etc. Ongoing assessment offers input on the process of instruction and learning.

4. **CBCS is a flexible programme:** This system offers flexibility for students to study at different times and at different institutions to complete one course and also flexible for the learners to select courses as per their need and interest.
5. **CBCS encourages students to take:** Accountability for their own learning by giving them opportunity to select courses from different discipline. This self-directed learning approach can promote a stronger feeling of autonomy and responsibility.
6. **CBCS providing opportunity to transfer credits earned at one institution to another:** It promotes learners' mobility between institutions. In case of any problem learners can transfer their earned credit to the next semester.
7. **By allowing students to select courses that align with their interest and ability:** CBCS enhance the development of specific knowledge and competences. By this approach students are preparing more effectively for the job market.
8. **Choice Based Credit:** System provides a holistic approach to education for the academic excellence of learners in higher education. This approach will foster creativity, research skills, leadership ability, values and ethics in learners.
9. The CBCS framework fosters skills like critical thinking, innovative thinking, time management and self-directed learning that are invaluable to life long learning.

Implementation of CBCS at the Undergraduate Level

1. Central or state universities may adopt the CBCS, provided that everyone involved commit to adhering to the UGC's established common minimum curriculum.
2. Universities may create their own core and elective course syllabi, deviating from the UGC prescribed syllabi by no more than 20%.
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4. Universities may create their own core and elective course syllabi, deviating from the UGC prescribed syllabi by no more than 20%.
5. The number of seats available for each elective exam may be determined by the University or Institute based on the infrastructure and facilities available.
6. Completing 14 core papers in a discipline, two Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses, two Skill Enhancement Courses, and four papers each from a list of Discipline Specific Elective and Generic Elective papers, respectively, will result in an undergraduate degree with honours in that discipline.
7. If a student completes four core papers in each of their chosen three disciplines, two ability enhancement mandatory courses, at least four skill enhancement courses, and two papers from a list of discipline-specific elective papers based on their chosen three disciplines, they may be awarded an undergraduate programme degree in science disciplines. If a student completes four core papers in each of the two

disciplines of choice, two core papers in English and MIL, two Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses, four Skill Enhancement Courses, two papers from a list of Discipline Specific Elective papers based on the two disciplines of choice, and two papers from the list of Generic Electives papers, they may be awarded an Undergraduate programme degree in Humanities, Social Sciences, or Commerce.

8. More elective and AE elective papers are available to students than those suggested by the UGC model curriculum. For UG Honours and UG Programme, the total credit score obtained will not exceed 160 credits and 140 credits, respectively.
9. The University may create a structure or policy on its own for extracurricular activities, general interests, hobbies, sports, and courses linked to NCC and NSS

SWOC Analysis

A SWOC analysis of the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) in education can provide a detailed view of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.

Strength of CBCS

1. Learner centric.
2. Focus on continuous evaluation.
3. More elective courses in this system.
4. There is options to select Dissertation or Project
5. Providing opportunity to transfer credit from one University to another.
6. The loss of year or semester due to a lack of attendance in any one subject is avoided.

Weakness of CBCS

1. Give less attention to credits for prerequisite courses.
2. Language study is an essential part of students in higher education.
3. The chance to enrol in classes based on ability and pace is restricted. Neither a first-year student nor a third-year student may enrol in an introductory or advanced course.
4. Because pupils are required to spend the entire five hours a day in the classroom, there is no opportunity for individual study.

Opportunity for CBCS

1. In order to be able to specialize multi-discipline, students may choose papers outside of their core area.
2. In order to complete the course, students may take additional credits beyond the minimum requirement. This will give weightage to encashing further opportunities.
3. Higher education grading's are acceptable internationally so that students can compete international opportunities.
4. Opportunity to transfer credits and possibility of taking various courses in different colleges simultaneously to complete the total credit requirement within minimum period.

Challenges for CBCS

1. Any new system usually faces strong opposition to change from all corners of the academic community.
2. Because individual ranking cannot be determined by simply referring to grade points and letter grades, it is

challenging to accept grade points in a topic in lieu of marks and letter grades instead of actual total marks.

3. The option to take credits outside of the primary subject area could reduce the depth of the main area of study.
4. Because they lack experience forecasting future demand, students can have trouble selecting their courses.

How CBCS System Works?

Under the choice-based credit system, students select courses from a list of compulsory courses. The courses can be completed at the student's own speed and are known as core, elective, major, or minor courses. These courses are evaluated using a credit-based system. Students can select courses from any college or university in any part of the world

1. Semesters

Based on the courses they have taken, student assessments are done at the end of each semester rather than finishing the course in the allotted amount of time by the university, they proceed at their own speed. There are approximately 15 to 18 weeks of academic work throughout the semester, which adds to the 90 teaching days

2. Credit System

There are a set number of credits in each course. Once they pass the course exam, the students are awarded credits. Students are not required to retake a course in the following semester if they pass it the first time around. Furthermore, students are free to finish the course at their own speed.

3. Credit Transfer

If the student drops the course, the credits might be moved forward to the following semester or the one after that. In the event of an illness or accident, they are free to study and receive fewer credits, and they can make up the lost time in next semesters.

5. Comprehensive Continuous Assessment

The students are constantly evaluated for their progress by the teachers as well as by the students themselves.

6. Grading

The University Grant Commission has given a 10-point grading system to assess the student's performance in courses

this programme is to encourage kids to be all-arounders, and each subject has a varied number of credits provided to it. CBCS is based on learner-centric approach and it offers more flexibility to the learners by giving freedom to choose course from various courses. Through this system, the focus has been changed significantly from being on the teacher to being on the learner. The main objective of this system is to improve academic performance across the board, from the curriculum to the teaching and learning process to the testing and evaluation framework. To setting up of a choice-based credit system looks to be a successful technique to evaluate a student's total performance in a universal way using a single grading system, despite the fact that different universities across the nation utilise different methods for examination, evaluation, and grading systems.

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Table 1: UGC has introduced a 10-point CBCS grading system as follows

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

Conclusion

The Choice Based Credit System has always taken the initiative to improve the effectiveness and quality of higher education, and it is very essential to the system. This system increases the sincerity both students and teacher. There are several improvements to India's higher education system, that vary from Annual to Semester The major objective of