



Issues and Challenges of Choice Based Credit System: Insights from University of Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

In a bid to revamp higher education and bring all the Universities and Colleges under a single Umbrella of grading, learning and standards in 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 follow this program from 2015 onwards. The main intent behind the CBCS is to have the flexibility of choosing a course by students, as observed in many European and American Universities. The University of Kashmir has already introduced this scheme in its PG courses from the academic session 2014. The CBCS is a flexible approach to learning in which students have a freedom to choose inter-disciplinary, intra-disciplinary and skill-oriented courses making education broad-based and on par with global standards. The system is based on semester pattern and entails awarding grades rather than marks. However, during the implementation of this system in higher education institutions, there are many challenges which require attention and discussion in order to put it on the right track. Therefore the objective of the present paper is to find out issues and challenges of Choice Based Credit System.

Keywords: Choice based credit system (CBCS), education, university of Kashmir, students, teacher, mobility

Every major higher education institutions across the globe have implemented a system of credit which includes European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in Europe's universities, and the 'National Qualifications Framework' in Australia. Also there is the Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University Credits and in UK, the Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS) is in place. Even the systems operating in the US, Japan, etc., are based on a credit system (Barchard & Hakstian, 2004). The Choice Based Credit System means there are options available to students (undergraduate, post graduate degrees, diploma and certificate

courses) to select from the prescribed courses like core, elective, soft skill or minor courses (Basu, 2010).

Why India Opt for Choice Based Credit System

Given the limitations of the traditional method of being highly teacher centric, focussing on rote memory, distancing students from using their cognitive abilities; CBCS follows interdisciplinary approach and integration of concepts, theories, techniques, and perspectives from two or more disciplines to advance fundamental understanding to solve problems (Kelkar, 2014). India too has adopted the CBCS on recommendations of both the 11th five-year plan and the National Knowledge Commission to ensure quality in higher education (UGC: 2008), prior to CBCS the higher education curriculum in India was unable to impart the necessary skills that would make the students employable adequately, the system was lacking interdisciplinary approach and very little scope for value based courses to be taught (Wanchoo, 2015). While the CBCS is aimed at ushering in a multi-disciplinary approach to undergraduate and post graduate curriculum, providing students a strong diversity of opportunities for their mobility by allowing them to take credits earned in one institution to another institution to which they transfer (Hanchinalkar, 2008). The CBCS provides an opening for the students to decide courses from the given multiple courses being evaluated by way of unconventional means of grading system which will enhance student's performance in examinations. As per UGC the students under this approach can take courses of their choice, learn at their own pace, can take additional courses and acquire more than the required credit. This system will facilitate student mobility across educational institutions within the nation and outside. Thus, CBCS helps to establish uniformity and parity within and across institutions; between Indian higher educational institutions and international institutions, which follow a similar pattern. The higher educational agency and commissions like UGC university grants commission, The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) developed Choice Based System just to bring Higher Education at par with Global Trends like Liberalization and Globalization and adopted proper grading system for measuring performance of the learner.

Genesis of Choice Based credit System in Kashmir University

To improve the standard of higher education as par with the other universities of India, Kashmir University in its latest move has introduced credit based choice system (CBCS) which enables a student to obtain a degree by accumulating required number of credits prescribed for that degree. The genesis of this system is traced to 'Cafeteria system', in vogue in the West. This will facilitate student mobility the grading system is considered "better" and "desirable". It is evident that main motive behind Choice Based Credit System is to ensure frequent curricula revisions, introduction of course credit system, enhancing reliance on internal assessment, encouraging research, and reforming governance of institutions. The University of Kashmir

has taken the great initiative of introducing a new academic credit system in its PG courses from the academic session 2014 and the affiliated Colleges in J&K have started this system from the session 2016.

Features of Choice Based Credit System

This is a uniform CBCS for all central and state and other recognised universities.

There are three main courses: Core, Elective and Foundation.

There are also non-credit courses available which will be assessed as ‘Satisfactory’ or ‘unsatisfactory’. This is not included in the computation of SGPA/CGPA.

All the three main courses will be evaluated and accessed to provide for an effective and balanced result.

Basic structure of Choice Based Credit System

- ❖ **Semesters:** The assessment is done semester wise. A student progresses on the basis of the courses taken rather than time like three years for science, arts, commerce or four years for engineering etc. Each semester will have 15–18 weeks of academic work which is equal to 90 teaching days. There is flexibility in creating the curriculum and assigning credits based on the course content and hours of teaching.
- ❖ **Credit system:** Each course is assigned a certain credit. When the student passes that course, he earns the credits which are based on that course. If a student passes a single course in a semester, he does not have to repeat that course later. The students can earn credits according to his pace.
- ❖ **Credit transfer:** If for some reasons, he cannot cope with the study load or if he falls sick, he has the freedom to study fewer courses and earn fewer credits and he can compensate this in the next semester
- ❖ **Comprehensive continuous assessment:** There is a continuous evaluation of the student not only by the teachers but also by the student himself

Grading

UGC 10-point grading system

Outstanding	10	O
Excellent	9	A+
Very Good	8	A
Good	7	B+

Above Average	6	B
Average	5	C
Pass	4	P
Fail	0	F
Absent	0	Ab

How is the credit counted?

One credit per semester is equal to one hour of teaching, which includes both lecture (L) or tutorial (T) or two hours of practical work/field work (P) per week. A study course can have only L component or only T or P component or combination of any two or all the three components. The total credits earned by a student for each semester is L+T+P.

Credit Based System and Student Mobility

Unlike conventional method of education, CBCS is more diverse and embedded with liberty of choice in selecting the courses and with equal ease brings higher mobility and fascination in students towards education. The basic idea is to look into the needs of the students so as to keep up-to-date with development of higher education in India and abroad. CBCS aims to redefine the curriculum keeping pace with the liberalisation and globalisation in education. CBCS allows students an easy mode of mobility to various educational institutions spread across the world along with the facility of transfer of credits earned by students. One of the hallmark of this system is that both teaching as well as learning is 'credit based' and not 'time based' which ensures student mobility in a flexible way. The most positive aspect of CBCS is that it is student centric and recognises the importance of individual learning, wherever and whenever it is achieved. It accentuates to develop fair and transparent internal assessment. Another defining idea behind this new system is that it treats students as individuals who have independent academic needs and interests. All said and done, the matter of fact is that if this new system is properly implemented, it has the potential to bring laurels to the entire nation.

Critical Evaluation of CBCS

While the CBCS has innumerable advantages over traditional methods of education, it will not be life less to say that this new model seems too early in inception given the scenario of Kashmir in general and Kashmir university in particular. In its very beginning the system surfaced many loopholes instead of merits such as absence of trail version, lack of preparation in terms of infrastructure, poor awareness among faculty as well as students, mismatch between the prescribed guidelines and existing practice etc. Apart from these loopholes the problems at the grass root level are mentioned below. Majority of the students don't have information about "WHAT OF CBCS" as majority of students can hardly understand the

basic nature of 'CBCS', differentiate the open electives and core papers and lack knowledge about UGC guidelines regarding CBCS. Another area of weakness in the existing CBCS is that faculty of the departments is perhaps passive in mobilizing the students owing to know workshops and awareness camps by the university. This system results in unnecessary juggling of students from one department to another thereby taxing heavily on their physical and mental resources which results in more academic stress in them. Since the University keeps limited number of open electives available for students to opt, the CBCS seems more to be a first come first serve system. It seems more easy to gauge the failures of this system by the fact that students who once opt their electives in one department never retain their electives next time in the same department. Above all the height of failure of this system is that the class work for open electives falls on weekends which always get wasted because of routine shut downs and strikes on those days.

Suggestions

- ❖ At the time of admissions, the prospects should have detailed chapter related to CBCS.
- ❖ Dissemination of information about CBCs through workshops, seminars and free distribution of pamphlets.
- ❖ Compulsory training programmes for faculty regarding CBCS.
- ❖ Open electives should be in the form of co-curricular curricular and craft based courses than mere theoretical.
- ❖ Open elective should open in real sense in terms of courses.
- ❖ There should be additional faculty for teaching open electives in order to reduce extra burden in existing faculty.
- ❖ University should conduct annual survey regarding CBCS in order to get feedback from all stake holders.

CONCLUSION

The basic objective of choice based is to broaden academic excellence in all aspects, right from the micro level like core curriculum upto the macro level learning-teaching process to examination and evaluation systems but paradoxically the CBCS seems to limit the role of education from encouraging the development of well-rounded individuals to training for marketable skilled workforce. Thus, instead of solving the core problem areas in the Indian higher education system, the CBCS is set to increase the already existing problems in the higher education. In conclusion it can be said that success never comes overnight but needs

constant efforts, determination, inspiration and consistency. Since the CBCS is in its infancy stage but nothing is lost yet. By collaborating with all stake holders and taking into cognizance social, political, economic and geographical factors in this academic journey we can make it through the line

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