



# CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM: BY WHOM & FOR WHOM?

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## **Abstract:**

Education policy in the state of West Bengal has a checkered history in terms of its character and dimension. At several points of time various Committees and Commissions have been formed to review the then education system and after close scrutiny they have come forward with various suggestions and reforms in the existing system of education in West Bengal. The appointment of state commissions and committees basically aims at maintaining distinctive characteristics of its own educational policy. Obviously such distinctive characteristics have been maintained within the broad peripheral commitment prescribed in centrally adopted educational policies. Realizing the lacunae in the schooling system, which actually retards the growth of generations of budding citizens by depriving them of essential knowledge and skills in an increasingly competitive world, many far-reaching changes have been advocated. West Bengal as a state had occupied a place of pride in the educational sphere in India. The key towards such success was its maintenance of quality in imparting knowledge among its students, By virtue of maintaining quality it had to face severe criticism in respect of its evaluation standard. Antagonism started spreading its wings for bringing parity in evaluation standard with other Boards/ universities outside West Bengal. Consequently West Bengal participated in the rat race and started reducing burden of the students so that they can score well in the examination. It decided to hold Madhyamik and Higher Secondary examinations with the syllabus of terminal year alone. By analogous reasoning some universities also reduced burden by incorporating Semester system. Presently introduction of Semester System has been made mandatory on the part of universities both in Graduation and Post-Graduation programmes. In this present competitive environment there is nothing wrong to be a part in the rat race. But it should never be at the cost of imparting quality education. It should be kept in mind that score is not the ultimate destination of a learner. Ultimate destination is to acquire knowledge that will help reconstructing experiences in a lifelong process. To put much emphasis on score and to achieve higher and higher score through lessening of burden of the learners is nothing but digging one's own grave.

**Key Words:** Education, Semester, Learner, University, Burden.

**Introduction:**

Education policy in the state of West Bengal has a checkered history in terms of its character and dimension. After the 42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment(1976) of Indian Constitution education has become a subject of concurrent list and thereby in respect of education if any provision of a law made by the Legislature of a State becomes repugnant to any provision of a law made by Parliament which Parliament is competent to enact, or to any provision of an existing law with respect to one of the matters enumerated in the Concurrent List, then, the law made by Parliament, whether passed before or after the law made by the Legislature of such State, or, as the case may be, the existing law, shall prevail and the law made by the Legislature of the State shall, to the extent of the repugnancy, be void. There is an exception to this in cases "where a law made by the Legislature of a State with respect to one of the matters enumerated in the Concurrent List contains any provision repugnant to the provisions of an earlier law made by Parliament or an existing law with respect to that matter, then, the law so made by the Legislature of such State shall, if it has been reserved for the consideration of the President and has received his assent, prevail in that State. Provided that nothing in this clause shall prevent Parliament from enacting at any time any law with respect to the same matter including a law adding to, amending, varying or repealing the law so made by the Legislature of the State. At several points of time various Committees and Commissions have been formed to review the then education system and after close scrutiny they have come forward with various suggestions and reforms in the existing system of education in West Bengal. The appointment of state commissions and committees basically aims at maintaining distinctive characteristics of its own educational policy. Obviously such distinctive characteristics have been maintained within the broad peripheral commitment prescribed in centrally adopted educational policies. Realizing the lacunae in the schooling system, which actually retards the growth of generations of budding citizens by depriving them of essential knowledge and skills in an increasingly competitive world, many far-reaching changes have been advocated. The curriculum has been restructured to make it more relevant. Examination systems have been upgraded in order to achieve some parity with Central Boards. The publication and distribution of textbooks have been streamlined in order to bring about more equity and accountability across Boards and their affiliated schools in the state. Universities play a vital and critical role in the development and evolution of societies. These universities generate new ideas, encourage innovation, educate young minds and create awareness and dynamic citizens in the country. This present paper seeks to analyse how far the prescribed changes and their implementation is congenial to healthy educational system in the state of West Bengal.

**Educational System in India:**

The elementary education in India starts from the early child hood days. The system includes three stages: pre-primary, primary and middle level. The analytical report, given below, gives an insight into the state of elementary education in different states in the country.

The primary schooling system starts at the age of six. The Primary Stage consists of either from Classes I-V or from I-IV depending upon the education system of the state. The five years system i.e. Classes I-V is applicable in 20 States/UTs namely Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Delhi and Karaikal and Yanam regions of Pondicherry. The four year system consists of classes I-IV which is applicable in Assam, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep and Mahe region of Pondicherry.

The middle stage of education consists of classes either from VI-VIII or from VI-VII depending upon the states or union territories. The 18 states which come under the first category are: Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Delhi and Karaikal region of Pondicherry. The second system (VI-VII) is effective in states like Assam, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep and Mahe region of Pondicherry. “Sarva Siksha Abhiyan” or “Education for All Movement” was started by the Government of India to make the universalisation of elementary education in the country. The programme was mandated in the constitution making education free to children of ages 6-14 and a fundamental right. The programme aimed at achieving the goal by 2010. SSA has several plans in its hand. The programme includes opening of new schools in those areas where schooling facilities are not available. It also provides basic infrastructure to the existing schools by providing additional classrooms, toilets, drinking water, maintenance grant and other accessories. It also seeks to provide computer education to the children. The programme emphasizes on girl’s education and children with special needs. For making the universalisation of elementary education in the country an important measure adopted was opening of non-formal education centres for children in the age group 6-14. This system of education was adopted for those children who were not covered under the formal education system. The children in the age group of 6-14 were out of the school either because they were not admitted in the schools or were withdrawing from the schools before the completion of their elementary education. Hence these children now get free education at their door step. Though this programme was started in the late 1978, it has been accelerated in the recent days. These non-formal centres are mainly located in the rural villages of the country.

Secondary education in India starts from class VIII or IX depending upon the states or union territories. The Secondary Stage consists of Classes IX-X in 19 States/UTs. Viz., Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Delhi and Karaikal region of Pondicherry.

The other stage i.e. classes VIII to X is adopted in 13 States/UTs viz., Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Orissa, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep and Mahe & Yanam regions of Pondicherry. The Higher Secondary / Senior Secondary stage of school (classes XI-XII) which comes under the 10+2 pattern is available in all the States/UTs though in some States/UTs these classes run in Junior colleges or are attached with universities.

The Higher Education sector of India is the third largest in the world in terms of number of students. The higher education refers to the study in colleges, universities and research centres. After the completion of class 12th or intermediate course a student generally goes for higher study. The country has about 380 universities and deemed universities, over 17,500 colleges and hundreds of national and regional research institutes. The institutes for higher learning in India follow specific rules as made by the state or the central government. There are also some statutory and autonomous bodies running in the country to regulate the higher education system in the country. The initial period of the higher education starts from the undergraduate level. After completion of intermediate level (i.e.10+2 or class 12th) in any stream a student is eligible to pursue higher education. The duration of study is either three years or four years or even five years in case of Medical Science or Architecture etc. The Engineering degree is of four years duration and all other degree courses in Arts, Commerce and Basic Sciences are of three years duration. After successful completion of the course a student is awarded a degree by the college or by the university with which the college is affiliated. There are more than 16,000 colleges in India. These colleges are affiliated to different universities of their state. The pattern of examination varies from one university to the other. Some holds annual examination while other conducts semesters. The total marks also differ from one university to the other. Some universities have started the “grading system” for awarding degrees. The syllabus for a particular course is designed by the affiliating university and it is in a state of modification from time to time. The colleges of India follow the reservation policy as mandated by the government. There is provision of reservation of seats in colleges for special categories like Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Castes (OBCs), Physically Challenged, Sports Personalities and other categories as classified by the reservation act.

The medium of instruction at primary level is the regional language of the respective state. Teaching of Hindi and English is compulsory in most of the non-Hindi speaking states. The states like Tamil Nadu, Tripura and Karaikal region of Pondicherry have not accepted Hindi as a compulsory subject to be included in their syllabus.

The final examinations are conducted at the end of classes X and XII in all states and Union Territories. The State Boards or Councils conduct these examinations. The age limit for secondary exams varies from 14 to 16 whereas for higher secondary it varies from 16+ to 18+ years. In some states the first final examination is conducted at the middle school level of education.

## Uniform Educational System:

As per the opinion of the Education Commission of India, popularly known as Kothari Commission (1966), secondary education should aim at preparing students for the university. Hence the necessity of linking secondary education with the university education had been felt and a uniform system of education all over India had been advocated. West Bengal as a state had occupied a place of pride in the educational sphere in India. The key towards such success was its maintenance of quality in imparting knowledge among its students, By virtue of maintaining quality it had to face severe criticism in respect of its evaluation standard. Antagonism started spreading its wings for bringing parity in evaluation standard with other Boards/ universities outside West Bengal. Consequently West Bengal participated in the rat race and started reducing burden of the students so that they can score well in the examination. It decided to hold Madhyamik and Higher Secondary examinations with the syllabus of terminal year alone. By analogous reasoning some universities also reduced burden by incorporating Semester system. Presently introduction of Semester System with Choice Based Credit has been made mandatory on the part of universities both in Graduation and Post-Graduation programmes. Whatever arguments are put forward in favour of Semester System, a sign of lessening students' burden is quite evident. Introduction of MCQ type test in selection of school and college teachers is also symptomatic to the concomitant changes. Already some universities have incorporated Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) and the rest of them are going to introduce the same.

## Conclusion

In this present competitive environment there is nothing wrong to be a part in the rat race. But it should never be at the cost of imparting quality education. It should be kept in mind that score is not the ultimate destination of a learner. Ultimate destination is to acquire knowledge that will help reconstructing experiences in a lifelong process. To put much emphasis on score and to achieve higher and higher score through lessening of burden of the learners in such a piecemeal fashion is nothing but digging one's own grave. It will be students who will suffer nobody else.

If we analyze the entire education system we find a Pyramidal structure with three tiers. At the bottom there lies educational institutions and at the top there is Government. In between these two tiers there are various bodies to take decisions on educational policy making. If we keep a sharp look at the functioning of these three tiers we note that Government determines a clear-cut objective of education. Keeping parity with that stated objective the second tier, that is, various bodies, formulates the courses of actions to be followed by the third tier. It is then obvious that the third tier has nothing to do with the formulation of courses of actions. The members of the third tier are blind followers of those stated courses of actions. They are simply the puppets in the hands of the members of the second tier. Only sincere dedication and devotion to teaching can bring about success provided they are supported by the peripheral commitment to achieve quality education. Obviously the peripheral commitment must come from the top two tiers of the pyramid. Hence on the part of the State Government the appropriate slogan should be



“Target Oriented Ability Based Outcome”(TOABO) and its translation into practice only can bring about fruitful result.

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