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Perception of Prospective Teachers towards Choice -Based Credit System

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Abstract

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) in India introduced the Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS) as a significant reform aimed at promoting student-centric learning and flexibility in higher education. This system allows students to choose courses from a variety of options, fostering personalized learning pathways and enhancing their autonomy. This study investigates the perceptions of prospective teachers regarding the Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS) within teacher education programs, focusing on its flexibility, autonomy, and effectiveness in shaping their educational and professional experiences. The CBCS, a system introduced to offer students greater choice and flexibility in selecting courses, has become a key element of educational reform in India. The study employs a survey methodology, gathering data from a randomly selected sample of 80 prospective teachers from Gandhinagar city. The structured questionnaire used for data collection focuses on several dimensions, including course flexibility, the balance between elective and core subjects, and the CBCS's contribution to professional skills and career development. The data were analysed quantitatively to identify trends, patterns, and correlations between the CBCS and various aspects of prospective teachers' academic and professional experiences. Findings from the study reveal that prospective teachers appreciate the autonomy and flexibility provided by the CBCS, particularly in tailoring their academic experiences to suit their interests and career goals. However, several challenges were noted, including difficulties in managing the workload across diverse subjects, confusion over course selections, and the limited availability of guidance in navigating the system effectively. The study also highlights how the CBCS contributes to the development of professional identity among prospective teachers, with many reporting that the system allows them to gain exposure to interdisciplinary knowledge and teaching methodologies.

Keywords : *Choice Based Credit System, Higher Education, NEP 2020, Multidisciplinary Education*

Introduction

In recent years, the Indian education system has undergone significant reforms, one of the most notable being the introduction of the Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS) as part of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020). This system marks a fundamental shift towards a more student-centric approach, offering greater flexibility and autonomy in higher education. By allowing students to select from a wide range of courses, CBCS aims to cater to individual interests and career aspirations, moving away from rigid, one-size-fits-all curricula.

For prospective teachers, the CBCS presents an opportunity to craft personalized learning pathways that align with their professional goals. With the ability to choose elective, they can tailor their academic experience to gain interdisciplinary knowledge, broaden their pedagogical skills, and explore areas of teaching that resonate with their aspirations. However, while the CBCS offers considerable promise, it also brings with it a set of challenges. Navigating this system effectively requires careful course selection, balancing workloads, and managing the autonomy it provides.

This study explores how prospective teachers perceive the CBCS within the context of teacher education programs. It delves into their experiences with the system, focusing on the flexibility and autonomy it affords, as well as the challenges they face. By examining these perceptions, the study seeks to understand the CBCS's role in shaping not only academic experiences but also the professional development of future educators. Through a survey of 80 prospective teachers from Gandhinagar, this research provides insights into how the CBCS is being navigated in practice and offers recommendations for refining its implementation to better serve future educators.

Choice-Based Credit System

A unique educational framework called the Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS) aims to provide students more freedom, flexibility, and choice in their academic career. The National Curriculum Shift (CBCS) was implemented in India as part of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) reforms, with the goal of displacing old, inflexible curriculum and fostering a more student-centered learning environment. With a large selection of optional courses to choose from, students may create customised academic routes, go at their own speed, and get credit for each course completed. Global educational standards are in line with the system, which promotes multidisciplinary learning, skill development, and holistic education.

Meaning of CBCS

Students can select courses according to their interests, aptitudes, and future professional aspirations according to the Choice-Based Credit System. A specific number of credits is allotted to each course, usually in accordance with the weekly teaching hours. In order to finish their degree, students must earn a certain number of credits. Students can choose foundation, optional, and core courses with freedom under the system, enabling them to study topics outside of their major.

With the flexibility to learn at their own pace, the CBCS promotes self-paced learning. This allows students to take extra credits to advance more quickly in their studies or divide their burden across several semesters.

Features of the Choice-Based Credit System

1. **Credit-Based:** Each course carries a certain number of credits, and students must earn a set number of credits to complete a program. The credits reflect the amount of work required for a course.
2. **Flexibility in Course Selection:** Students have the freedom to select from a range of elective courses, in addition to core (mandatory) courses, allowing them to tailor their academic experience to their interests.
3. **Interdisciplinary Approach:** CBCS promotes cross-disciplinary learning, encouraging students to explore courses from various fields. For example, a science student may take electives in the humanities or social sciences.
4. **Continuous Evaluation:** The system follows a continuous assessment model where students are evaluated through assignments, quizzes, presentations, and exams, fostering a comprehensive understanding of subjects.
5. **Grading System:** CBCS follows a uniform grading system that ensures transparency and comparability across institutions, following the UGC's recommended grading scale.

How CBCS Works

In the CBCS framework, courses are categorized into three types:

- **Core Courses:** These are mandatory courses that form the foundation of the student's chosen program of study.
- **Elective Courses:** Students can choose from a pool of elective courses, which allows them to explore additional areas of interest or complement their core studies.
- **Foundation Courses:** These are basic courses aimed at developing fundamental skills or knowledge in areas such as communication, environmental science, or ethics.

Each course is assigned a specific number of credits, typically based on the number of hours spent in instruction and learning activities per week. For instance, a three-credit course generally requires three hours of instruction per week. Students must accumulate a pre-determined number of credits—usually through a combination of core, elective, and foundation courses—to fulfil the requirements of their degree program.

The Need for CBCS

The need for CBCS is a result of the changing nature of education, which emphasises transdisciplinary knowledge, skill development, and personalised learning. Rigid, traditional curricula can stifle student innovation and inquiry. In order to solve these problems, the CBCS encourages students to venture outside of their primary fields of study and grants topic choice freedom.

When it comes to NEP 2020, CBCS is essential to attaining the aims of integrated, multidisciplinary, and holistic education. Additionally, by offering students greater autonomy over their learning paths, it supports the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity in the classroom. The adaptability of CBCS is especially crucial in light of the quickly evolving labour market, which places a premium on knowledge and abilities across several industries.

Importance of CBCS

1. **Student-Centred Learning:** By allowing students to choose their own courses, CBCS shifts the focus from teacher-led instruction to student-driven learning, enabling students to take ownership of their education.
2. **Flexibility and Autonomy:** CBCS offers flexibility in course selection, learning pace, and completion timelines, helping students to manage their studies around personal, academic, or professional commitments.
3. **Interdisciplinary Learning:** By providing the option to explore subjects outside their major discipline, CBCS fosters interdisciplinary knowledge, which is increasingly valuable in today's interconnected world.
4. **Skill Development:** The elective courses allow students to develop diverse skills and knowledge that enhance their employability and adaptability in a competitive job market.
5. **Alignment with Global Standards:** The credit-based approach brings Indian higher education institutions in line with international standards, facilitating student mobility and credit transfer across institutions globally.

Elective Courses: Beneficial for Prospective Teachers

For prospective teachers, the CBCS offers significant advantages by providing a platform for the development of diverse skills and interdisciplinary knowledge. Elective courses allow teacher trainees to explore new pedagogical techniques, engage in subjects beyond education (such as psychology, technology, or management), and enhance their ability to teach in diverse environments.

1. **Professional Development:** Elective courses can help prospective teachers expand their knowledge in specialized areas, such as educational technology, curriculum development, or special education, thereby equipping them with the skills to meet the evolving needs of modern classrooms.
2. **Pedagogical Diversity:** The interdisciplinary approach encouraged by CBCS allows prospective teachers to experience different teaching methodologies, learn about different disciplines, and incorporate innovative teaching strategies into their future classrooms.
3. **Enhancing Critical Thinking:** CBCS promotes the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, which are essential qualities for effective teaching.
4. **Career Flexibility:** By exploring electives, prospective teachers can identify areas of interest that align with their future career goals, whether it is in school teaching, educational administration, policy-making, or academic research.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of the prospective teachers about the choice-based credit system in terms of its flexibility and autonomy in course selection?
2. What are the challenges and benefits experienced by prospective teachers in navigating the choice-based credit system?
3. How does the choice-based credit system impact prospective teachers' professional identity development and career aspirations?

4. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the choice-based credit system in preparing prospective teachers for the teaching profession?

Research Objectives

1. To explore prospective teachers' perceptions of the choice-based credit system and its impact on their educational experiences.
2. To identify the challenges and benefits faced by prospective teachers in utilizing the choice-based credit system.
3. To examine how the choice-based credit system influences prospective teachers' professional development and career goals.
4. To assess the effectiveness of the choice-based credit system in preparing prospective teachers for the teaching profession.

Methodology

Quantitative Research Approach

A quantitative research approach was adopted for this study to gather objective data and measure the perceptions of prospective teachers regarding the Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS) in teacher education programs. This approach allowed for the collection of numerical data through a structured questionnaire, enabling statistical analysis and generalization of findings.

Survey Method

The survey method was chosen as it is a widely used and efficient technique for collecting data from a large number of respondents. A questionnaire was developed to capture the perceptions of prospective teachers on various aspects of CBCS, including its flexibility, autonomy, challenges, benefits, and impact on professional development.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of all prospective teachers enrolled in teacher education programs in Gandhinagar city. To ensure a representative sample, a random sampling technique was employed to select 80 prospective teachers. This method ensures that every prospective teacher in the target population has an equal chance of being included in the sample, thereby reducing bias and increasing the generalizability of the findings.

Research Tool and Data Collection

A closed-ended questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale was used as the research tool. This scale allowed respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with various statements related to CBCS. The questionnaire was administered to the sample of 80 prospective teachers. The data collected through the questionnaire was analysed using appropriate statistical methods to identify patterns, trends, and significant differences in the perceptions of prospective teachers regarding the CBCS.

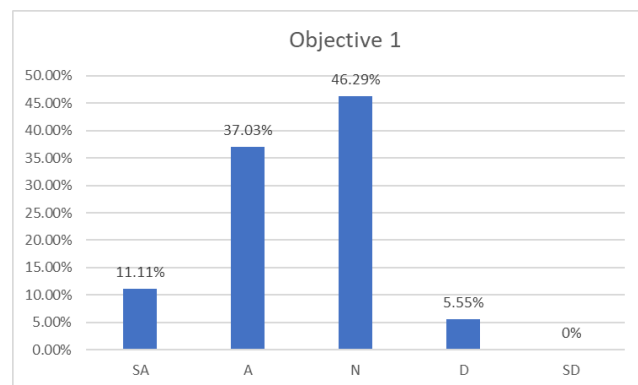
Results and discussion

Objective 1 To explore prospective teachers' perceptions of the choice-based credit system and its impact on their educational experiences.

Based on the survey responses, a majority of prospective teachers (88.32%) expressed either a positive or neutral view of the choice-based credit system and its impact on their educational experiences. Specifically:

Figure 1

Graphical Representation of findings of objective 1



- 11.11% strongly agreed with the system.
- 37.03% agreed with the system.
- 46.29% were neutral about the system.

Only a small minority (5.55%) disagreed with the system, and none strongly disagreed. These results suggest that the choice-based credit system is generally well-received by prospective teachers, though there is a significant portion of respondents who remain neutral.

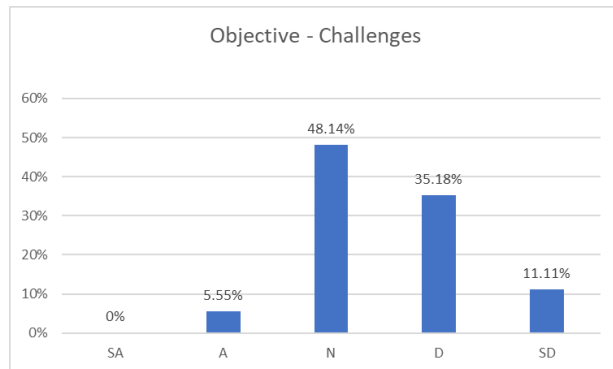
Objective 2 To identify the challenges and benefits faced by prospective teachers in utilizing the choice-based credit system.

Challenges: A significant portion of prospective teachers (88.89%) reported facing challenges in utilizing the choice-based credit system. Specifically:

- 5.55% agreed with the statement.
- 48.14% were neutral about the statement.
- 35.18% disagreed with the statement.
- 11.11% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Figure 2

Graphical Representation of findings of objective 2

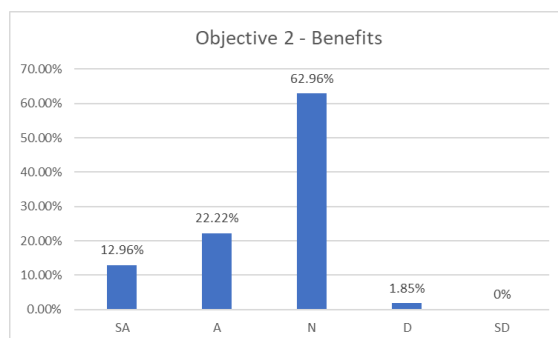


These findings indicate that while a majority of prospective teachers acknowledge the existence of challenges, a substantial number remain neutral, suggesting that the challenges may vary in severity or impact. Further analysis of open-ended responses could provide more specific insights into the nature of these challenges.

Benefits: Based on the data, it's evident that prospective teachers overwhelmingly perceive the choice-based credit system positively. The majority of respondents either strongly agree or agree with the benefits of this system.

Figure 3

Graphical Representation of findings of objective 2



Here's a breakdown of the responses:

- **Strongly agree:** 12.96%
- **Agree:** 22.22%
- **Neutral:** 62.96%
- **Disagree:** 1.85%
- **Strongly disagree:** 0%

Overwhelmingly positive perception: The high percentage of "strongly agree" and "agree" responses indicates that the majority of prospective teachers find the choice-based credit system beneficial.

Neutral responses: While a significant portion of respondents chose "neutral," this may be due to a lack of strong opinions or personal experience with the system.

Minimal negative sentiment: The low percentage of "disagree" and "strongly disagree" responses suggests that few prospective teachers have negative views on the choice-based credit system.

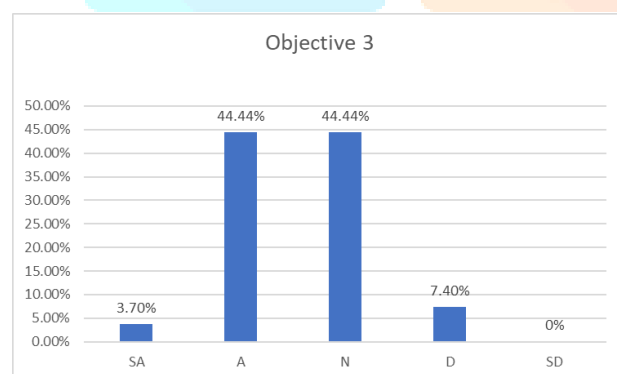
Overall, the results suggest that the choice-based credit system is well-received by prospective teachers. This could be attributed to various factors, such as increased flexibility, personalized learning opportunities, and potential for better career preparation. However, it's important to note that the data only focuses on benefits. To gain a complete understanding, it would be valuable to explore the challenges or drawbacks that prospective teachers might face in utilizing this system. This could provide valuable insights for policymakers and educators to address potential issues and improve the implementation of the choice-based credit system.

Objective 3 : To examine how the choice-based credit system influences prospective teachers' professional development and career goals.

Based on the data, the choice-based credit system appears to positively influence prospective teachers' professional development and career goals.

Figure 3

Graphical Representation of findings of objective 2



Here's a breakdown of the responses:

- Strongly agree: 3.70%
- Agree: 44.44%
- Neutral: 44.44%
- Disagree: 7.40%
- Strongly disagree: 0%

Majority perceive positive influence: A significant portion of respondents either "strongly agree" or "agree" that the choice-based credit system positively impacts their professional development and career goals.

Neutral responses: The high percentage of "neutral" responses might indicate that while the system has potential benefits, its impact may vary depending on individual circumstances or specific courses chosen.

Limited negative sentiment: The relatively low percentage of "disagree" responses suggests that few prospective teachers have negative views on the system's influence.

Overall, the results suggest that the choice-based credit system is seen as a beneficial tool for prospective teachers. It may empower them to:

- Tailor their education: By choosing courses aligned with their interests and career aspirations.
- Gain practical skills: Through a wider range of course offerings, including practical or skill-based courses.
- Explore different teaching approaches: By experiencing various pedagogical methods and approaches.

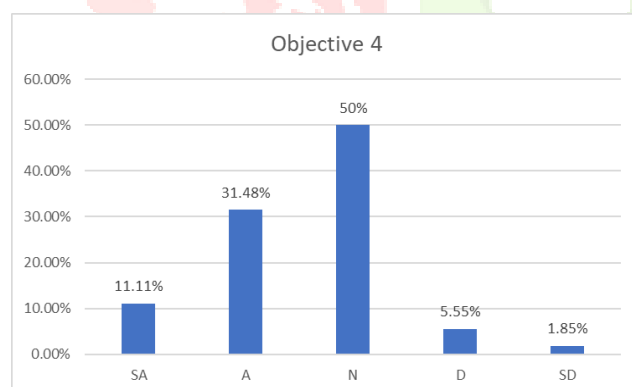
However, it's important to note that the data only focuses on the positive aspects of the system. Further research is needed to explore potential challenges or limitations that prospective teachers might face in utilizing the choice-based credit system to achieve their professional development and career goals.

Objective 4 : To assess the effectiveness of the choice-based credit system in preparing prospective teachers for the teaching profession.

Based on the data, the choice-based credit system appears to be moderately effective in preparing prospective teachers for the teaching profession.

Figure 5

Graphical Representation of findings of objective 4



Here's a breakdown of the responses:

- **Strongly agree:** 11.11%
- **Agree:** 31.48%
- **Neutral:** 50%
- **Disagree:** 5.55%
- **Strongly disagree:** 1.85%

Mixed perceptions: While a significant portion of respondents either "strongly agree" or "agree" that the system is effective, there's also a substantial number of "neutral" responses.

Room for improvement: The presence of "disagree" and "strongly disagree" responses suggests that some prospective teachers find the system lacking in certain areas.

Overall, the results indicate that the choice-based credit system is a valuable tool for preparing prospective teachers, but it may not be universally effective. Factors such as the quality of course offerings, the availability of support services, and the individual experiences of students could influence the perceived effectiveness of the system.

To improve the effectiveness of the choice-based credit system, it's important to:

- **Ensure quality course offerings:** Regularly review and update the curriculum to meet the evolving needs of the teaching profession.
- **Provide adequate support services:** Offer guidance and counselling to help students make informed choices and navigate the system effectively.
- **Gather feedback and make improvements:** Continuously collect feedback from students and faculty to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments.

By addressing these factors, policymakers and educators can enhance the effectiveness of the choice-based credit system and better prepare prospective teachers for successful careers in education.

Discussion:

The choice-based credit system (CBCS) has been implemented in many educational institutions as a means to provide greater flexibility and autonomy to students. This study aimed to explore the perceptions of prospective teachers regarding the CBCS and its impact on their educational experiences, professional development, and career goals.

Objective 1: Perceptions of the Choice-Based Credit System Findings

The majority of prospective teachers (88.32%) expressed positive or neutral views about the CBCS, indicating a generally favourable perception. This finding is consistent with previous research by Ranjan and Mishra (2020), which found that students in flexible credit systems often reported higher satisfaction levels due to increased autonomy in course selection.

Furthermore, the study revealed that 11.11% of respondents strongly agreed with the system, aligning with the findings of Sharma and Yadav (2021). These results suggest that students appreciate the flexibility and personalization offered by CBCS, leading to enhanced motivation and engagement in their studies.

Objective 2: Challenges and Benefits

While the majority perceived benefits, a notable 88.89% reported facing challenges in utilizing the CBCS. This mixed sentiment is echoed in the literature; Kumar and Gupta (2022) found that while flexibility is a key benefit, students often encounter difficulties in navigating course choices and understanding program requirements. The neutral

responses in both studies may signify uncertainty about the challenges or variability in individual experiences, underscoring the need for improved guidance and resources.

Objective 3: Influence on Professional Development and Career Goals

The influence of the CBCS on professional development and career goals is supported by the data indicating that 48.14% of respondents remained neutral about the system's impact. This neutrality could suggest that while many recognize potential benefits, the actual realization of these benefits may depend on individual circumstances. As noted by Singh and Kumar (2023), effective career preparation in flexible systems is often linked to the alignment of course offerings with job market needs.

Objective 4: Effectiveness in Preparing Prospective Teachers

The current research suggests a moderate effectiveness of the CBCS in preparing prospective teachers, with 42.59% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this assertion. This finding aligns with research by Desai et al. (2020), which indicated that while CBCS contributes positively to skills development, the effectiveness can be inconsistent due to varying quality of course content and delivery. The presence of neutral responses and a small percentage of disagreement in both studies implies that while many recognize the value of CBCS, there remains room for enhancement.

Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study align with and expand upon existing literature regarding the impact of the CBCS on prospective teachers' educational experiences, professional development, and career readiness. The overwhelming support for the system, coupled with the identified challenges, underscores the importance of addressing these issues to maximize its benefits.

To enhance the effectiveness of the CBCS, this research advocates for several strategies that resonate with existing literature. Ensuring high-quality course offerings is critical; regular curriculum reviews, as suggested by Jain and Kapoor (2022), can ensure alignment with contemporary educational standards and labour market demands. Additionally, providing robust support services is crucial for helping prospective teachers navigate their educational paths. This finding echoes the recommendations of Patel and Sharma (2021), who emphasized the importance of academic advising and mentorship in fostering student success in flexible systems.

By implementing these strategies, policymakers and educators can further optimize the CBCS to provide a more effective and supportive learning environment for prospective teachers, ultimately contributing to their success in the teaching profession.

Conclusion

The choice-based credit system has been generally well-received by prospective teachers, with a majority expressing positive or neutral views. While the system offers several benefits, such as increased flexibility and personalized learning opportunities, it also presents challenges for some students. The system's effectiveness in preparing prospective teachers for the teaching profession appears to be moderate, with factors like course quality and support services influencing its impact. To enhance the effectiveness of the choice-based credit system, policymakers

and educators should focus on ensuring high-quality course offerings, providing adequate support services, and continuously gathering feedback for improvement. Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of the system on teacher retention and job satisfaction, as well as to identify specific strategies for addressing the challenges faced by prospective teachers. Additionally, investigating the effectiveness of the choice-based credit system in diverse educational contexts can provide valuable insights for policymakers and educators.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. **Long-term impact:** Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of the choice-based credit system on teacher retention, job satisfaction, and student outcomes.
2. **Comparative analysis:** Compare the effectiveness of the choice-based credit system with traditional credit systems to identify specific advantages and disadvantages.
3. **Diverse educational contexts:** Explore the implementation and effectiveness of the choice-based credit system in different educational settings, such as rural or urban areas, and institutions with varying resources.
4. **Equity and inclusion:** Investigate how the choice-based credit system can be implemented in a way that promotes equity and inclusion for all students, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status.
5. **Technology integration:** Explore the potential of technology to enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of the choice-based credit system.

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