



A Comprehensive Overview of the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) in Higher Education

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Abstract:

Over the past few decades, higher education has undergone significant academic and administrative reforms. A key change has been the shift from the conventional annual system to a semester system, and subsequently, to a Choice Based Credit System (CBCS), as recommended by the Gnanam Committee. The University Grants Commission mandated the adoption of CBCS in all universities and higher education institutions starting from 2015. This reform aims to align Indian higher education with global standards and meet the demands of the 21st-century knowledge landscape. However, empirical studies have highlighted issues such as a skill gap, particularly in communication skills, rendering many graduates unemployable. Additionally, outdated syllabi, limited course flexibility, lack of student mobility, and inadequate evaluation systems have been concerns. CBCS was introduced to address these issues, focusing on learner-centric methods, interdisciplinary approaches, skill-based courses, and flexibility. This paper examines the challenges and issues faced in the practical implementation of CBCS.

Keywords: learner-centric approach, interdisciplinary approach, Choice Based Credit System."

Aim & Objectives

The main goals of this paper are:

1. To analyse the benefits of CBCS.
2. To emphasize the importance of the CBCS system for higher education in India.

Methodology & Materials

This research article was prepared using both descriptive and analytical methods. Primary data was gathered firsthand, while secondary data came from reputable books, journals, newspapers, and online sources.

Review of Literature on Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) in India:

Several studies have explored the implementation and impact of CBCS in Indian higher education. Kelkar and Ravi Sankar (2014) conducted a survey to gather teachers' opinions and suggestions for better implementation of CBCS. Using a questionnaire-based approach, they found that 62.5% of teachers believed that CBCS emphasizes only evaluation. Zafar, Manjurekar, Kumar, and Khan (2014) analyzed the influence of CBCS on students at Vellore Institute of Technology University, finding that 87% of students preferred the flexible credit system. Aneja (2015) argued that CBCS can be a panacea for India's education system, which faces challenges in terms of quality and quantity. However, the author noted that systematic reforms in the examination system are necessary for successful implementation. Kaur and Sarma (2016) found that CBCS is effective in promoting students' overall progression, providing multidisciplinary learning experiences, and enhancing employability. However, they also highlighted the need for increased infrastructure and faculty. Sumitha, Krishnamurthy, and Winfred (2016) assessed the perception of postgraduate management students towards CBCS, finding that it promotes critical thinking, creativity, and innovation. Kapur (2017) critically analyzed the objectives behind the introduction of CBCS, emphasizing the need for debate and discussion with stakeholders. Analysis of these studies reveals that CBCS is still an under-researched area in Indian education. Most quantitative studies have been conducted at the micro level, focusing on students' and teachers' perceptions. Qualitative studies have primarily explored the pros and cons of CBCS, leaving critical issues that require in-depth study. The present paper aims to address this gap.

Introduction:

Education plays a crucial role in nation-building, and there are now many institutions in India that have adopted the semester system to align with global educational standards. However, many students still graduate without real confidence or real-world skills. To ensure quality education, higher-education institutions must strike a balance between imparting knowledge and promoting skill development, while offering flexible paths that allow students to explore diverse fields.

As technology evolves rapidly, students increasingly need to become industry-ready by studying interdisciplinary subjects. For instance, an engineering student could benefit from a finance- management course—an opportunity provided through CBCS.

A Brief Analysis of CBCS:

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced CBCS to promote equity, efficiency, and academic excellence in India's National Higher Education System. CBCS is a student-centric model allowing learners to choose subjects at either basic or advanced levels instead of relying solely on traditional marking systems.

This approach gives flexibility in shaping the curriculum, assigning credits based on course intensity and teaching hours, and emphasizes classroom interaction, group discussions, assignments, and internal assessments—thereby fostering a beneficial learning environment.

Types of CBCS Courses:

CBCS typically includes three types of courses:

Core Courses – Compulsory subjects required to fulfill the credit requirement.

1. Elective Courses – These cover broader content, often beyond the core curriculum, and allow students to pursue their personal interests.
2. Foundation Courses (also known as ‘Ability Enhancement Courses’) – Value-based subjects for enhancing knowledge and long-term career prospects.

How the CBCS Grading System Benefits Students:

CBCS establishes a uniform assessment and examination system across institutions. It follows a semester-based format rather than the traditional annual exam pattern. Grades are assigned at the end of each semester, making the credit-based system more effective than conventional percentage grading.

Benefits of Master Soft CBCS Software for Higher-Education Institutions:

Implementing CBCS can be challenging because students select different subjects. The Master Soft CBCS software, aligned with UGC guidelines, addresses these challenges by:

- Managing curriculum planning and credit mapping
- Generating performance reports and handling examination timetables
- Producing online report cards accessible anytime

Key benefits for faculty and administrators include improved efficiency in managing CBCS implementation and easier academic tracking.

Features of the System:

- **Master Timetable Generation:** Automatically creates daily, weekly, and monthly teaching schedules for faculty, streamlining administration and supporting career development.
- **Hassle-Free Subject Selection:** Students can easily browse and select a wide variety of value-based subjects.
- **Intuitive Navigation:** A user-friendly interface allows smooth selection and management of courses.
- **No Learning Boundaries:** Students can combine unlikely combinations (e.g. Philosophy and Physics) to explore diverse interests.
- **Course Creation & Allocation:** Automatically generates courses and assigns them to appropriate faculty.
- **Effective Teaching Planning:** Enables instructors to plan teaching units, record attendance, and assign homework with a few clicks.

Main Advantages of CBCS:

Students can change subjects every semester, helping them identify their talents and interests.

1. Early subject selection fosters self-reliance and informed decision-making.
2. CBCS allows flexibility to study across institutions and semesters in India—students can transfer more easily.
3. If a student falls ill or cannot cope in a semester, they can take fewer credits and compensate later.
4. CBCS helps position Indian education on par with global standards.

Disadvantages:

1. Estimating exact marks can be difficult.
2. The CBCS framework may impose a heavy workload on teachers.
3. Institutions must have proper infrastructure to implement CBCS effectively.

Challenges in Implementing Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS):

1. Conceptual Confusion: Faculty and students lack clarity on CBCS concepts, leading to confusion and unfamiliarity with the new system, as evident from various micro-level studies.
2. Misunderstanding CBCS Intent: Stakeholders fail to grasp the underlying purpose of CBCS, resulting in a negative attitude towards the system.
3. Inadequate Infrastructure: CBCS requires sufficient physical resources to deliver a learner-centric curriculum, particularly for lab-oriented, practical, and skill-based courses.
4. Insufficient Faculty Training: Successful CBCS implementation demands adequate, well-trained, and competent faculty members, especially for skill-component courses that involve hands-on training.
5. Limited Student Mobility and Credit Transfer: Most higher education institutions face infrastructure and other constraints, hindering student mobility and credit transfer facilities.
6. Course Exit Issues: Higher education institutions lack a well-defined course exit modality, creating challenges for students.

Meta AI response: Here's a rewritten version: Challenges in Implementing Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS) Conceptual Confusion: Faculty and students lack clarity on CBCS concepts, leading to confusion and unfamiliarity with the new system, as evident from various micro-level studies. Misunderstanding CBCS Intent: Stakeholders fail to grasp the underlying purpose of CBCS, resulting in a negative attitude towards the system. Inadequate Infrastructure: CBCS requires sufficient physical resources to deliver a learner-centric curriculum, particularly for lab-oriented, practical, and skill-based courses. Insufficient Faculty Training: Successful CBCS implementation demands adequate, well-trained, and competent faculty members, especially for skill-component courses that involve hands-on training. Limited Student Mobility and Credit Transfer: Most higher education institutions face infrastructure and other constraints, hindering student mobility and credit transfer facilities. Course Exit Issues: Higher education institutions lack a well-defined course exit modality, creating challenges for students.

Conclusion:

It is still early to judge the ultimate success of CBCS in India. The UGC has taken steps to promote efficiency and excellence across the education system. While there is movement toward standardizing curriculum, examination, and grading across universities, significant variation still exists in implementation, teaching, and evaluation methods.

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