

THE PENSIVE POLICY PRACTICES OF CREDIT AND SEMESTER SYSTEM IN INDIAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Sameer Babu M¹ & Subhash PD²

¹*Assistant Professor of Education, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India*

²*Associate Professor, NCERT, New Delhi, India*

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ABSTRACT

The Indian higher education system kept the conventional way of learning for a long time, and it has changed and turned into a semester system that consists of 15-18 weeks of academic work equivalent to 90 actual days of teaching which is now practiced in the institutions of higher education in India. The acceleration of the teaching-learning process, along with horizontal and vertical learning, has been enabled by the semester system by and large which has led to active engagements in the colleges and universities. Though students can obtain better academic scores and goals in the semester system while covering more syllabus and reducing syllabus loads and produces economic advantage for the universities, the relation between students and teachers increases. Similarly, meaningful learner engagements are increased. This paper critically examines the credit and semester system being practiced in Indian universities and other institution of higher learning and research.

KEYWORDS: *Credit and Semester System (CSS), Choice Based Credits, Outcome-Based Education, Evaluation and Higher Education*

INTRODUCTION

Streamlining Semester System

Semester system drastically changed the traditional structure and state of affairs of the institutions of higher education in India to a great extent. As the semester system introduced, the Credit System describes the educational programs through academic components while attaching credits along with the workload of students, contact hours, and learning outcomes (CSS Regulations, 2014; Bhutia & Subba, 2015; Qureshi, 2016; CSS PG Regulations, 2017). With the new regulation of the University Grants Commission (UGC), the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) has been implemented and it enables and provides flexibility in assigning credit based on the content of the courses and teaching hours, along with designing the curriculum. Moreover, it allows the learners to take the course of their choices, taking additional courses as extra credits, learning in own pace subject to the availability of the course and time, acquiring more credits than needed, and the adoption of different types of approaches in the learning (UGC).

Moreover, the best practice for curriculum development is Choice Based Credit and Semester System (CBCSS), as the approaching of it eases the difficulties of the universities; however, the conversion of mark to grades enabled difficulty to a great extent (Hasan & Parvez, 2015).

Furthermore, the curriculum concentrates on the overall development within the areas of context, goals, processes, contents, output, and resources of the program, however, the carefully planned activities are carried by the institutions for the learners and offering it to the class which will meet the global standards in learning (Egan, 2003; Mednick, 2006; Paudel, 2019). Besides, the Learning Management System (LMS) has been implemented and displayed its powerful advantage in higher education. As a result, most of the universities in Australia, Canada, United States of America, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom use it for academic activities; however, with the help of LMS and higher education policies, the technological advancement has found its way to the top of education and promised on the change as it demands in the coming era which gave a strong base for learning using blended modalities (Aldiab et al., 2019).

The Relevance of the Credit and Semester System (CSS)

Credit and Semester System aims at the development and flexibility of curriculum, critical approach to the pattern of examination, continuous evaluation for assessment in all the educational programs, and ensuring a relaxed learning environment for academic development in the Universities, providing national patterns to transfer credits on the transferring of students to other institutions. The UGC Regulation of the implementation of CSS carried out from the 2002-03. The UGC is committed to bring equity, efficiency, and excellence in the Higher Education System of the country, providing innovation and improvements in curriculum, teaching-learning progress, and examination and evaluation systems. In this line, the traditional marking system provided difficulty, and the conversion of the grading system enabled a uniformity and thereby UGC proposed to achieve quality and excellence. In the semester system, an academic year consists of one odd and one even semesters- generally, January to June and June to January, respectively in India. Generally, marks and percentage act as a barrier for the students prohibiting their mobility towards desired activities, rather it makes the students relate closely towards the institutions, though their choice and desires must be considered. It does not mean that Credit and Semester System drastically changed the system of evaluation, still. Later on, the UGC made mandatory implementation on CBCS in all institutions of higher education. As a result, the opportunity to pursue courses (under a programme) as their choice and the freedom to acquire core subject knowledge has made an impact on the educational system (CSS Regulations, 2014; Hasan & Parvez, 2015; CSS PG Regulations, 2017). Some of the basic concerns in the Admission to programs, basic principles of curriculum and course design, conventional academic calendar, course teaching and student assessment patterns, grading of students and examination and evaluations, course improvement, academic collaboration, principles of stakeholder involvement, grievance recording and redressal are the significant components and concerns of CSS are listed out below.

- Credit and Semester System allows the students to have integrated programs.
- Credits defined the weights in the whole programs as numbers that of a taught course with one contact hour/week/semester or the weightage of a non-taught course with two contact hour/week/semester
- There will be a minimum of 100 working days and 30 hrs. in a five-day week
- Universities and institutions need to conduct diverse academic programs without conflicting the rules and regulations of universities and UGC
- Ensures a uniform pattern in the designing, of course, and its later implementation as a whole

- CSS confirms that the students and teachers understand the principles of the framing of curriculum, preparation of certificates, and the transfer of credit
- Seminars and project works assigned of credits and percentage of marks converted into grade points and credit points and the performance of the student in a semester considered as semester grade point average (SGPA)
- The performance in all the semester considered as cumulative grade point average (CGPA) to be taken as final grade indicator
- Students undergo a project, and the continuous evaluation is done through internal assessment and related mechanisms
- The academic committee of CSS consists of the vice-chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, members of the syndicate representing university teachers, or significant persons based in the nature of the universities, three deans of the university, two heads of the university departments other than deans, three university teachers other than deans and heads of departments
- The choice of the courses the students have undertaken has the Core course as the main that related to the subject of the program, elective courses that closely or distantly related to the subject of the program, add-on, and additional acquisition courses that are logically related.
- Audit courses do not carry any credits, and negotiated courses are elective courses on the request of students, Non-taught courses are core or electives not concentrating on teaching such as laboratory, seminars, projects, media production, case studies, internship, and fieldwork
- It suggests the development of functional autonomy of statutory schools/ Centres/ Institutes
- The grading assessed with the performance of the students as a continuous assessment through SGPA and CGPA
- The implication of academic flexibility on course designing, curriculum development, the conduct of examinations, course teaching, and planning and organization of research activities, administration, and financial powers to benefit the growth and development of academics of the universities
- With an academic calendar the course and its curriculum designed along with the revision of syllabus

Credit and Semester System- Through Policy Perspective

The pre-independence regulations and policies focus on the development of education in India. Wood's Education dispatch, 1854, enables the education policy and establishment of Universities. The Indian Education Commission 1882-83, The Indian Universities Commission 1902, Indian Universities Act 1904, Calcutta University Commission or Sadler Commission 1917-19, Hartog Committee 1928-29, The Sargent Commission 1944, focus on the development of Universities and colleges along with the development of quality teaching (RSEC, 1953). The sergeant report 1944 expresses that of the unsatisfactory requirements of the National System of Education and is strongly recommended re-organizing the system of universities along with the proposal of a three-year degree course for quality education (Sargent Report, 1946).

The post-Indian Policies and committees such as Committee on Secondary Education 1948, University Education Commission 1948-49, Secondary Education Commission 1952-53, Committee on Model Act for Universities 1961 express the universities to be the level of international and quality teaching and learning of higher education. The Education Commission 1964-66, also known as Kothari Commission, introduced national patterns for education (Prasad, 2004). The quality of education for national development with the rising of social, economic and the professional status of teachers and the quality and scope of teacher education and materials (RUEC, 1949; REC, 1966; KCR, 1966; Mathur et al., 1994; Prasad, 2004).

The National Education Policy 1986 enables and expresses the recommendations of various committees of higher education and propounded the priority on research, the transformation of teaching methods using modern technology, redesigning curriculum, academic programs and courses, and syllabus to fit present situations along with National Apex Body (NAB) and quality education (NPE, 1986). Program of Action on NPE 1986 focuses on the construction of accreditation and assessment council for maintaining the quality of higher education and review the management of patterns of universities (CEPP, 1985; NEP, 1986; PANPE, 1986; TNEM, 1990; Siddiqui, 2002)

The Padmakumar Commission 1970, Samuel Mathai Commission 1980, High-Level Committees 1982, focuses on the development of universities in Kerala (RHCEE, 1984). The Commission for University of Kerala 1984 follows the Kerala University Act of 1974 for healthy practice, live contacts with National Research Funding Agencies, autonomy to the department, the board of study for one discipline for better ordination and control along with syndicate proposals (Viswanathan, 2007). The Commission for University of Calicut 1984 established a movement by introducing semester system to the curriculum along with internal assessments, and the significant recommendations were like the university of Kerala report (RHCEE, 1984; TEL, 1985; Sushama, 1995; Sivaswaroop, 2004; Viswanathan, 2007).

UGC Action Plan 2009 focuses on the academic and administrative reforms of higher education for providing quality and excellence in universities with keeping various academic models and practices (UGC Action Plan, 2009). The action plan propounds a foremost step on the central and state universities, colleges, and other educational institutions of higher education to adopt semester system, Choice-Based Credit System, curriculum development, admission procedures, and examination reforms (UGC Action Plan, 2009).

National Education Policy draft 2019 enables higher education for a more liberal education. Quality of universities and colleges with optimal learning supports for students the draft NEP 2019 initiates to build curriculum and pedagogy as the needs of the students and enhance access and opportunity for life-long learning (the draft NEP, 2019). It is focusing on the creation of a world-class multidisciplinary higher secondary institution with flexible curricular structures that enables creative combinations of disciplines for students; moreover, the assessment system is decided by Higher Education Learning and promised to improve the current Choice-Based Credit System of UGC and move to a criterion-based grading system that assesses achievement based on the goals of learning on each program of the students. Restructuring of curriculum and pedagogy and increase flexibility in the choice of subject and proposed setting up National Educational Technological Forum (the draft NEP, 2019).

Adoption of CSS- Select Institutional Practices

The semester system developed and introduced with the help of The University Grants Commission (UGC), The Distance Education Council (DEC), National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), and National Knowledge

Commission (NKC) and considered that to be socially and economically relevant and productive, globally competitive along with the sustainability of culture and individually satisfying. However, the implementation of elective courses went on the choice of the college, preferably than students (Bindumol, 2015). The significant objectives of CSS to bring reforms and flexibility, enhance opportunities, enable inter-university transferability, improve quality of excellence and education, and make educational programs standardized and comparable along with the essential elements of Semester system, Credit transfer, credit system, comprehensive and continuous evaluation (UGC, 2012; Bindumol, 2015).

The Credit and Semester System in the University of Kerala followed by a framework that enables the core, elective, additional skill acquisition, audit, negotiated, non-taught courses based on credits and course credit of semester system (CSS PG Regulations, 2017). Hridayakumari Committee submitted a report suggesting the issues of CBCS and found the issues regarding the number of students, availability of time, language skills, nature of course and syllabi, internal evaluation, semester exams, and grading systems. In the Amendment of the regulation of PG Programme to semester pattern in the affiliated colleges in the university in 2016 (Viswanathan, 2007; Kerala Gazette, 2016; CSS PG Regulations, 2017).

The Central University of Haryana has implemented the semester system along with the CBCS procedures that provide the students to have the course on their desired subjects and allowing them to select the electives as they demand (CUH Ordinance, 2009). However, they provide self-study courses to improve the in-depth knowledge of their learners for the core subject along with practical training and project works, internship, seminar, and many have been implemented in the university and the semester academic year consists as per the UGC recommendation that explained earlier, a semester 15-week schedule consisting of odd (July-December) and even (January-May) semester, and the one-credit course fifteen hours of instruction per semester and three credit course demands 45 hours; 1 credit resembles 1 hour of instruction per week, while the three credit explains the 3 hours of instruction (CUH Ordinance, 2009).

Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, adopted CSS with revised regulations to ensure the academic flexibility of curriculum development, course designing and teaching, research activity and their planning and organization, conduct of examinations of the institutes they regulate. Follows the letter system of O, A-plus, A only, B plus, B only, C, P, and F, and SGPA and CGPA to calculate enough grade to pass the program. The common academic calendar was followed from July the semester ends in December, and the second from January to July, and the end semester consisted of the publication of the semester exam (CSS Regulations, 2014; CSS Regulations, 2019).

The Indian Institute of Technology Delhi proposes undergraduate and postgraduate programs along with the dual degrees. The curriculum provides broad-based knowledge with departmental courses of core and electives. The academic year runs from July to June the next year, comprised of two semesters. Along with course codes, the university follows a credit system and grade system for those courses that study at the end of the semester. The grading system, A as outstanding, C as average, D as marginal performance, E and F for those scored 20% aggregate marks for those denote incomplete performance in lecture, practical, and particular module, NP as audit pass and NF audit fails, W as withdrawal from a course, X as incomplete work in independent study, Z grade for non-completion, and S for reregistering for the core course. The evaluation and performance are done through CGPA and SGPA (Course of Study, 2017).

The University of Madras follows the patterns of the regulation of UGC in 2003. The responsibility of the program undergone in the office of CBCS in the university and carries the function of approval of the admission of the students, course registration, coordination of timetable and the preparation of academic calendar, and advertisement of

CBCS programs, and the rest. The academic, admissions, and examinations CBCS programs coordinated by the deans those are assisted with a committee of representing the department. The practice of semester system of odd and even consists of July to November and December to April as per the regulations of the university. A semester extends over 15 weeks, and each has 30 hours of class over a five-day week (UM).

The University of Hyderabad implemented CBCS in continuous assessment to provide academic autonomy to the departments. The system has been approved by the 74th Academic council meeting in 2015, and the decision was taken by the 165th Executive Council meeting in 2015. The credit-based semester system is the requirement of awarding a degree or diploma or certificate in terms of credits completed by the students. The semester system consisted of odd and even considered as one academic year. The letter grade followed A+, A, B+, B, C, D, and F. With foundation and elective course, the calculations of each semester are done by SGPA and the whole to CGPA (UH, 2017).

Jawaharlal Nehru University implemented a semester and credit system, and it spreads over one semester and is assigned to a specific number of credits with contact hours prescribed. The credit number is determined by the board or the select committee on the recommendations of the concerned centre. The academic flexibility, the constitution of the university, provides a student-faculty committee for each centre with five representatives for discussing academic matters, issues on faculty recruitment, condition of service, evaluation of the academic performance of the student. The university follows the semester system with a grading system based on a ten-point scale (NAAC Report, 2017).

Aligarh Muslim University introduced semester system in honours and undergraduate courses, and the adoption of CBCS and credit and grading system in 2015-16 resolved the conducting of postgraduate courses. The innovative processes of the institution in teaching and learning enable the students to have the needed resources in this system. The ordinance of 2018 has displayed the duty, procedures, and the systems to be followed in the university (AMU; AMU Ordinance, 2018).

The study of Pathak & Rahman (2013) displays the perception towards the semester system at Gauhati University, Assam. The study focused on 133 undergraduate students, along with 44 teachers in selected four colleges. Most of the students were not satisfied with the CGPA system and pointed out continuous evaluation in the semester system as a burden. The study revealed that the lack of required resources made the study difficult, and in that case, the students were not satisfied and proposed to arrange minimum resources.

Challenges with Credit and Semester System

There are some difficulties while adopting Credit and Semester System in the institutions. They are highlighted here.

- Credit and Semester System leaves a heavy burden on teachers and students. Teachers get fewer times to concentrate on teaching and preparation takes time if it is not well organized
- The students have less time to focus on the curricula and must turn next even though the syllabus has not sufficiently covered along with the burden of internal assessments and discourages the students
- The lack of time for extra-curricular activity affects the route of personal development and the stability of mental health drains along with interest
- As like the annual system, the semester system also has the hectic mentality of examination and suffers

- The difficulty of tasking the syllabus for each semester and the number of students in the reappearance of examination shows the difficulty of having a semester system. Completion of each semester in the period is almost not possible
- The economically backward students face issues regarding cost of assessments in the programs and the students from a rural area who are average in marks are unable to adjust the system
- Sometimes, the infrastructure of the college and centres does not match the requirement of the system, and the adjustment of faculty that makes it more difficult
- Semester system only effective with a small number of students while it requires discussion of topics, encouraging students on the participation and reduces the role of teachers
- The problem of enough time for classes and activities
- The medium of language makes it difficult, the uneasiness of English, but gradually the bad English gets accepted, and the low-quality materials spread
- More students and less time, the internal and external assessments 30 assignments must be done in 90 days and increase workload (Viswanathan, 2007; Pathak & Rahman, 2013; Bhutia & Subba, 2015; Bindumol, 2015; Singh & Kumar, 2016)

CONCLUSIONS

Any systemic reforms would be successful if the same is implemented with proper planning and piloting. Semester system has a rigorous philosophy based on learner centric modalities in its base. At the same time, it has to be well implemented in the institutions of higher learning and research. Annual planning, semester planning, monthly planning, activity planning, strategy-based planning, human resource mobilization and related planning, and outcome based planning should be initiated, checked, revisited, and coordinated so that the successful implementation of the semester system may be ensured. At present, from various affiliating universities, the practices followed and the results met are not promising and not at all based on the philosophy of semester system. Rigorous, inclusive, and participatory planning will definitely help in meeting the educational as well as the learning outcomes.

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