

The CBCS advantage

As expectations and demands change, management education stands to gain from a choice-based credit system

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Gaining popularity : Changing times call for changing systems.

The traditional cohort system does not cater to the expectations of all stakeholders of management education. While it tries to bring about parity in output, the rigid system fails on many counts at the input level. With the ever-changing management scenario, arises the need for an innovative education practices.

The choice-based credit system (CBCS) is gaining popularity among the higher education institutions slowly as it allows the students to customise the programme to suit their requirements. They can decide what courses they would like to do, choose the difficulty level of the course from a simple concept-based course to an advanced level course, decide on the sequence of the courses, and even choose the faculty for each of the courses.

The programme under the CBCS system is meant to cater to the requirements of the customers – the students. This calls for a long list of course offering, and also, the same course has to be designed for various credits and various contact hours depending on the students' requirements. Though CBCS's relevance for all higher education courses cannot be over emphasised, its specific role in making the management programme

more effective cannot be undermined.

The main parameters of the CBCS are: course choice, pedagogy, course, timings, focus vs. generic, approach and faculty.

Flexibility

The CBCS provides comfort for slow learners as much as it does for fast learners. Fast learners may pick up more credits in each of the trimester/semester. They may also acquire more credits than the mandatory requirement for the award of degree/diploma. Slow learners, on the contrary, may do courses for less number of credits and accelerate the credit acquisition or extend the programme time. They may choose to finish the programme for more than two years, if required.

The students of a business school come from different disciplines. Every student would like the management education to build on their strengths and fill in the gaps in their knowledge. Obviously, the expectations of each student will be different. For example, a student with an engineering degree requires more courses on soft skill development than courses on quantitative methods, while a student who has acquired the undergraduate degree in arts may

have to go through more number of courses in quantitative techniques area. The traditional system does not provide for this flexibility.

Customised teaching

The members of a business school have varied specialisations. There may be differences in the qualification, exposure to industry, and experience in academics among them. CBCS helps them to take advantage of their abilities according to their competency level. Similarly, the most common issues that faculty of business school face are related to the level of pitching of a course and the choice of pedagogy. Both these issues spring from the fact that the students are from different undergraduate programmes and possess varied levels of exposure to industry.

For example, a student who has prior working experience may require more conceptual classes that helps her to relate her experience with theory, whereas a student fresh from the undergraduate programme requires projects, industry visits and internships to understand the applications. CBCS addresses these issues to some extent. Faculty do not have to customise a course to suit all students in the programme. She may of-

fer the same course with lots of variations in the content, structure and pedagogy.

Matching expectations

Though the student can also be looked at as the customer of the business school programme, it cannot be disputed that the industry is certainly the ultimate beneficiary. Every business school has to work towards meeting the expectations of the industry to ensure employment for its students. Industry, no doubt, considers the undergraduate programme-related knowledge and skills that the student possess, but also has some definite expectations from any employee with a management degree. Since, the CBCS lets a student choose his courses and timing, she gets an opportunity to build on her strengths and fill the knowledge gaps.

Prepare

The implementation of CBCS has to be preceded by facilities enhancement. Since, it allows the discretion of the choice of courses and timing to students, the faculty must be sufficient in number with broad competency levels to ensure sufficient offering of courses in every trimester/semester. The planning for the faculty resources has to be done on an extensive and exhaustive basis well in advance. Physical infrastructure such as classroom availability, lab facilities, -etc., have to be provided for.

Assessment mechanism should be standardised in a way that the choice of faculty is not influenced by the grades. CBCS presupposes that assessment should also be sufficiently fine-tuned to meet the set course objectives and course outcome. Similar courses, because of varying degrees of difficulty levels, may warrant different assessment mechanisms.

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