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ACADEMIC REFORMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION – A CRITICAL REVIEW ON CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM

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Abstract

Credit system demanded in terms of a shift in approach to teaching. Their quantum of teaching or “workload ‘as defined by the funding body, the UGC, had remained 16 hours a week of teaching within colleges, even before the adoption of the credit system. How does the CBCS change the understanding of a teacher ‘s work or work-load is missing from the prescriptive discourse on reform. Despite offering the least clarity in terms of its rationale and process, CBCS as a scheme has been implemented by diktat, framed in the discourse of preserving quality and maintaining standards by the UGC. The possibilities of it surviving in the higher education system far exceed its intrinsic merit on account of the political imperative for its implementation. Higher Education Bill tabled in the Parliament in 2010, even though withdrawn, had been preceded by the centralised articulation of the Action Plan for Academic Reforms linked with conditions of continuation of state funding for institutions. This research to be discussed on “**Academic Reforms in Higher Education – A Critical Review on Choice Based Credit System**”.

Keywords: Curriculum Framework, Active Plan, Credit System, Internal Articulation, Academic Achievement, Academic Councils, Curriculum Design, Standardization, Curriculum Implications.

Introduction

“A University is a society of teachers and students dedicated to the pursuit of learning”

Dr. D.S.Kotari (1906-1993)

Chairman of Indian Education commission

Padmabhushan and Padmavibhushan Awardee

Higher Education Policy Maker & Philosopher

Education is one of the basic needs for human development. Education is necessary for national development and a prosperous society. The strong educational system results in the economic growth, social transformation and greater performance of the students. The importance of education in India was recognized by the founding fathers of the country and the subsequent governments, and as a result considerable importance has been given to literacy, school enrolment, institutions of higher education, over the decades ever since independence. In this knowledge economy, due to globalization and development of information and communication technologies, knowledge and learning emerged as the primary sources of wealth creation. Development of knowledge is based on the quality of education system available, particularly of higher education, in a country. As higher education is the backbone of any society, it decides the quality of human resources. Higher education is a powerful tool to build knowledge- based society of the 21st century. India has one of the largest systems of higher education in the world offering facility of education and training in almost all aspects of human creativity and intellectual endeavour. Today, higher education institutions are fast emerging as a major contributor that fuels the socio-economic growth of a nation. Hence, in the age of competition, the higher education institutions need to understand students' perceptions of service quality and identify the gap between their expectations and perceptions.

The study illustrates how the contestations over reforms and the accompanying institutional changes, although characteristic of and essential to the academic space, may result from an incongruence between the policy approach, the reform proposals, and assumptions about the decision-making processes within the university. The case of DU highlights how complex institutional dynamics play out and determine the experience and outcomes of the reform process. It also signposts the contextual embeddedness of the change process. The nature of contestations and resistance to reform proposals within the institution make visible the negotiations over the traditional organisational ideals of collegiality, autonomy, and participatory structures of self-governance.

The research questions that guided this exploration were:

- How was the process of institutionalization of reforms managed in the Higher Education? What factors, internal and external, facilitated or inhibited the introduction of these reforms?
- What were the collective perceptions of the graduation and post-graduation academic community about the relevance, need, and politics of the reform initiatives? How did various actors resist or promote these changes? Where did resistance to reforms



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nest in the university and how was it negotiated during the implementation of reforms?

- How and in what terms, can we understand the resistance to, and the outcome of the reform process?

Methodology

This researcher study approach was adopted to study of reforms in Higher Education a review of choice-based credit system an institutional context. An approach enabled the researcher to explore the ongoing processes and outcomes, while simultaneously engaging with the realm of institutional memory and history. It offered the flexibility for in-depth exploratory research. The need for a detailed institutional case study emerged from the context that academic reforms in universities and degree are subject to intense public debate, but also fall within the domain of a significantly under-researched domain. The researcher contested and negotiated space of academic governance and curricular planning in universities. The case studies document three qualitatively distinct approaches to initiating academic reforms. Even though the set of reforms seemed integral to each other in terms of their reference point and scope, yet, in terms of their life cycle in the University, they unfolded and played out in unique ways. The study attempted to capture the dynamics—academic, political and ideological, circumscribing the trajectories of these three reform initiatives in Higher Education.

Findings and Analysis

The reform experiences

The three reforms studied as part of the case study of the Higher Education had unique trajectories and outcomes. The Semester system and the choice-based credit system were introduced into the system, explicitly positioned as an institutional response in compliance with the national policy mandate and guidelines introduced by the UGC. The Four-Year Undergraduate Programme, on the other hand, was conceptualised and projected as an institutional innovation in response to the national mandate. The experience of implementation of the three reforms was distinct from each other.

The proposal for introduction of the semester system at the undergraduate level had been in gestation in the University since the late 60s. Organisation and structural challenges in introducing examination reforms and enabling conditions for centrally managing the curriculum and evaluation processes in the relatively large college system of Higher Education had prevented its uniform implementation within the system. However, when it was finally introduced for implementation, it was positioned by the University leadership as a response to the UGC directive for change, amidst consequences of financial sanctions for non-compliance against colleges and university by the UGC.

Within this context, teachers opposed the introduction of change without due consultation on its feasibility and desirability, given that none of the earlier structural and organisational constraints in the system had been redressed. After a long-drawn conflict between college teachers and the university administration, the institutionalisation of change was completed through legal intervention. Even as the desirability and need for change to semester mode remained contested among the academic community, the Delhi High Court's judgment (Nandini Dutta and others v. Higher Education, 2013) in favour of the University's decision and process of implementation of the semester system enabled the assimilation of reform into the system.

Academic Reforms in Higher Education

The literature on reforms in higher education frequently uses the terms “innovation”, “reforms” and “change” interchangeably. Often reform in the context of higher education is recognised as planned change aimed at improving aspects of the academic environment. According to the distinction in the usage is primarily dependent on who initiates reform, and the scale or degree of prior planning. Like for instance, reforms and formal changes at the national, regional, or institutional level, whose implementation has been thoroughly thought through and planned, get referred to in the literature as an educational innovation. Sometimes large scale national-level changes to, for example, the content, structure or expected outcomes of a national curriculum framework, or to the methods or formats of high-stake assessment, are referred to as educational reforms. What is more critical in the use of these terms, perhaps, is the recognition, as, Saarinen and note, that higher education reforms are conducted explicitly to cause change, where change, as Clark observes, may refer to a variety of phenomenon, from alterations that vary from simple reproduction - more units of the same kind, to radical transformation. The scope of reform thus encompasses all or some levels among the macro/systems level of higher education policy; the meso-level of the institution; or the micro-level in terms of affecting the actions and preferences of the actors and domains within the institution.

Efforts to produce curricula that are more “relevant” and “responsive” have, over the past two decades, witnessed a global policy shift towards the credit and choice framework. The credit-choice discourse of university undergraduate curricula. For the majority of students, the undergraduate programme marks a terminal stage in higher education. A significant issue arises about the relevance of a



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discipline anchored framework, designed to sequentially link to postgraduate studies, for students who do not aspire or cannot progress in the academic stream for postgraduate studies and research. In the context of massification and the changing nature of the market economy, the undergraduate programmes, organised primarily on a disciplinary basis have been found lacking. The underlying assumption appears to be that curricular changes can overcome the existing gaps and facilitate a new culture of thinking and pedagogy that is more responsive to student diversity on campuses. The alternative proposed to the traditional disciplinary frame of organising undergraduate education has been provided by the credit framework (with inbuilt modularity) with the explicit aim of creating a student-centric learning environment with a commitment to strengthening interdisciplinarity.

The experience of other countries indicates that the outcome of the reform (policy) exercises and the restructuring of curricula within the credit exchange discourse has done little more than pressurising liberal arts and science institutions to provide –a professional or vocational face to their existing academic provision. While the reform direction has promoted the move towards modularisation and the adoption of a learning outcomes framework, the shift has not been in absolute terms, with accommodations made in the new frame for older practices. Ensor notes in the context of South Africa that the approach of “apprenticeship ‘into a discipline (that highlights the continued dominance of the disciplinary discourse) has continued to guide the curricular organisation, and has been accommodated neatly into the credit framework. The promises of the credit framework for increased student choices and the possibility of multiple coherent pathways through modularisation are thus found challenging to realise within the given institutional constraints.

Student Choice Credit System

The disciplinary discourse...has persisted through the restriction on student choice, the tying of modules through pre- and co-requisites and the emphasis on induction into vertical knowledge sequences. So, while the imperatives for academic reforms are closely tied to the academic mission and objectives of the higher education system, its conceptualisation often steers far from the dynamics circumscribing the working of the system. The design of the reform process thus seems to neglect the implementation phase and its embeddedness in the nature and culture of the institution itself. The mission of the modern university has been tied closely to the developmental agenda of the nation-state and hence the goals or academic imperatives of the university, in turn, become aligned to the national policy mandate. Globalisation and the accompanying political and economic restructuring of the nation-states have also impacted education as one of the public institutions in varied ways. In many countries, the higher education system is currently undergoing fundamental changes in its governance, structure, funding and organisation. The direction of change, as Marginson and contend, is unlike what has been experienced before and demands alternative analytical frameworks to make sense of the effect of globalisation on higher education policy and practices. Higher education in every corner of the globe is being influenced by global economic, cultural, and educational forces, and the institutions themselves (as well as units and constituencies within them) are increasingly global actors, extending their influence across the world. Moreover, the political, economic, and educational contours of countries (and of regions and continents) are being reshaped by regional trading blocs that lead higher education to become more similar across national boundaries and more active in the regional market. With the adoption of neoliberal policy frameworks across nation-states within the context of globalised political economies, there is a simultaneous departure from the traditional conceptualisation of the role of higher education in a state-society and mechanisms of its organisation. The neoliberal framework, for instance, is characterised by a reduction of the state subsidisation of higher education, shifting of costs to –consumers, the demand of accountability for performance and an enhanced emphasis on the role that higher education plays in the economy. Thus, the higher education institutions are not just embedded within a national system but have to reckon with the presence of –the market in higher education. The study of the impact of these forces on higher education institutions has been attempted, in terms of the impact of state policies on universities ‘independence or universities ‘involvement and responsiveness to national markets.

UGC Guidelines on Credit System

The adoption of the credit-system by the University involved a shift towards a modular and choice-based approach to curriculum planning. While the credit- system had been seen to promote interdisciplinary studies and had its proponents within the UGC as early as the late 50s and 60s, it gathered more significant currency in the early 70s in the context of the reform of university examination system. The new wave of expansion in higher education and renewed state support for it since the Eleventh Plan proposal was accompanied by the UGC Action Plan (UGC, 2009) for implementation of the credit system, semester scheme and internal assessment. This was also accompanied by a change in policy stance concerning the institutional adherence to UGC guidelines, creating financial implications for institutions not implementing the academic reforms.

The “credit” discourse was present within the University ‘s internal articulation of academic reform, in the form of proposals for restructuring made by the Academic Renewal Committee (1992), the BA Programme Restructuring (2002), and within the conceptualisation of the FYUP proposal. The policy of credit transfer was deliberated upon in the Academic Council Meeting. The proposal for credit transfer was critiqued as arguments were made for the institution of a credit system in the University as a first step.



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The submission to the Academic Council made by six elected members of the AC noted:

The provision of **credit transfer** requires the existence of a credit system. Save a few courses which make perfunctory mention of the credit system, the Higher Education does not have a credit system in place. Introduction of the credit system would require discussion at the level of every department, as per our best practices by the General Bodies of teachers of each subject and statutorily by the Committees of Courses and then the faculties before the AC can / should decide on the matter. Even if a credit system were to be accepted, courses have to be restructured to make it meaningful. Credit transfer would require a prior course structure which specifies how many papers and which kind of papers can a student pursue outside to qualify for a specific degree...

The UGC mandated nation-wide implementation of the CBCS guideline across universities happened almost parallel to the adoption of a credit system with the FYUP at the Higher Education. With the rollback of the FYUP in 2014, the Higher Education switched back to the semester-based curriculum implemented before the FYUP. In the same academic year, a UGC guideline on the implementation of the CBCS was considered by the Academic Council of DU and adopted without any significant change. The adoption of Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) by the University, is a compelling case in point of how the experience of the previous two reform initiatives within the University resulted in strengthening the gap between the internal thinking around the reform proposal that existed within DU and the external proposal for adoption of the credit system. Unlike the sustained struggle over semester implementation or the FYUP contestation, the University adopted the UGC proposal for CBCS without any significant resistance and the academic community, including the administration, accepted it as a *fait accompli*. CBCS also gets projected in the interim as a narrative about a prescriptive imposition of the curriculum framework and syllabus— visualised as a concrete step towards homogenization and standardisation of academic practices and curriculum across the country.

Credit system -Curriculum Design and Implications

While both, the semester reform as well as the structure and duration of an undergraduate degree are examples of organisational reforms, CBCS is a substantive curriculum reform and offers a different framework for curriculum development. Higher education curricular and pedagogical practices have remained stable over centuries but transformed significantly in the context of massification in the twentieth century. Modular and credit-based courses, Betts and Smith (1998) note, had their origins in the USA in the late nineteenth century for a similar reason that developed a century later in the UK and other parts of the world. Higher education institutions experienced the pressure to change, as their student base diversified, creating an imperative for replacement of the uniform classical curricula with something more suited to contemporary needs. The academic principles and philosophical underpinnings for such a shift emanated from a growing acceptance of student-centred learning and of John Dewey 's advocacy of "self-realisation" achieved through study fitting the individual 's interest (Theodossin, 1986, p. 5, as cited in Betts and Smith, p.4). While the idea of the credit-based curriculum may have been first explored and adopted in the American context, it is no more an experiment (Sindhi and Shah 2015). All the major higher education systems across the world have over the year implemented a system of credits: European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in Europe 's universities, the "National Qualifications Framework" in Australia, there is a Pan- Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University Credits; and UK has the Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS). South Korea has developed an alternative to full time university-bound academic degree through a system of Academic Credit Banking System (ACBS).

What is the essential shift in a curricular approach that has garnered traction for the credit system? What is the problem which the credit-based curriculum reform seeks to address? How does the curriculum need to change to address this problem? Betts and Smith (1998) argue that the credit-based modular curriculum system has at its heart a revolutionary approach to HE, which challenged the centuries-old model of HE curriculum and pedagogy. University education was largely tutor-centred; this favoured the model of an elite club where only a few could be allowed to join, and a normative pace determined the rationale for success and failure of those who succeeded in taking admission. Heffernan (1973) notes that in the classical and ecclesiastical tradition, which characterised higher education up to the 1850s and 1860s, students were trained in basically the same subjects and sequences. Progress toward a degree was embodied in a relatively rigid, prescribed curriculum.

Students were expected to gain their degrees within a "normal" period of time. Any longer demonstrated that the student had failed to achieve the desired standards. On the other hand, the rarer part-time degrees were lengthy affairs, often six years, doubling the time needed for the full-time degree, demonstrating there was no easy or backdoor route into the graduate club.

The credit system and its underpinning philosophy, therefore, form an attempt to place upon the rigid, traditional the cultures an educational philosophy which stresses flexibility and a revaluation of the "standards". It shifts the evaluation discourse to a "learning" and "learner-centric" discourse; questions the sanctity of "time" as a standard for evaluation, and creates the possibility of altering the system to allow for differential pace in learning and navigating the system. It entails a shift in curriculum thinking: a



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departure from –teacher-driven curriculum towards the principle of –what the student want is what the student gets. notes that the traditional pedagogical systems (anchored on non-credit based principles) are usually organised around –high- stakes tests, whereas, systems based on the credit hour articulate the purpose and hence modality of student assessment differently. Assessment in this frame need not merely be “assessment of learning ‘, but could be seen as “assessment for learning” and “assessment as learning”:

A Study on Credit Culture

The evaluation of student progress is more frequent and broken down into smaller units, such as three or four courses per semester, rather than the work of an entire semester or year. Indeed, the reality in a credit-hour system is that each course for which credit is awarded often has several assessments that are cumulated into a final course grade that determines whether credit should be awarded. Students receive more timely feedback on their progress, enabling them to make corrections and improvements as they move forward. In addition, these multiple and sometimes continuous assessments frequently employ a variety of measures of academic achievement, such as attendance, oral recitation, timed examinations, essays, research papers, and laboratory experiments.

Principles of a Credit Culture

From	To
Exclusion	Inclusion
Teacher	Learner
Process	Outcome
Direction	Guidance
Failure	Achievement
Margins	Mainstream
Professional Control	Individual Choice
Structures	Cultures

Source: Robertson (1994, p. 315) (cited in Trowler 1998, p.8).

The shift in principles guiding curriculum design is accommodated well within a well- defined structure of degrees, examinations, and course-time units expressed in semester credit hour terms. The credit system, therefore, as Heffernan (1973) argues, becomes a logical choice. Once the units of educational accomplishment or outcomes are established, they can be linked to the management and cost of administrative operations, both being expressed in credit hour terms: tuition by credit hours elected, salaries by credit hours taught, facilities by credit hours produced, and programmes of study by credit hours required. The conceptualisation of the need for reform, therefore, has been broadly similar across different contexts. In the UK context, Betts and Smith (1998) note, the initiative for credit framework emanated not from mainstream universities and colleges, but polytechnics, and provide an insight into how the adoption of a modular-credit system indicated a systemic need:

In the European context, education has appeared in the process of European integration through the Bologna Process and establishment of a European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The critical elements of ECTS are:

- 1) Institutions (departments/programs) using ECTS are required to provide information on course contents, level, and workload;
- 2) Provide a transcript of record containing all of the information on credits and grades assigned to the student;
- 3) Create an ECTS learning agreement arranged between the sending and receiving institutions;
- 4) Provide ECTS coordinators at the institution and/or department who are responsible for the administration of ECTS and any transfer negotiations.

The adoption of a credit system as part of the Bologna Process essentially indicates institution of a process of creating easily readable and comparable degree; academic mobility for students and teachers; and uniformity in the degree type and system (such as undergraduate and graduate) across the EU area. The student-determined curricular choice and flexibility (incoherence). The tradeoff between “rigidity” and “incoherence ‘, particularly at the undergraduate level remain a programmatic and curricular design challenge. At the threshold of the 21st century, as HE systems across the world aim towards mass participation in HE, Betts and Smith argue, we should perhaps re-appraise the situation. Credit accumulation and transfer systems, and the parallel curriculum framework based on modular systems are part of that re-appraisal. If in many ways they liberate the student and teacher, in other ways they may also constrain them. Points out that the credit framework attempts to undermine one central assumption underlying the organisation of academic practices of teaching and learning in higher education system, namely that learning best takes place within one institution, over a fixed and limited period of time, according to rules best determined by academic staff ‘. As evident from the Korean ACBS, and case of polytechnic and vocational education, academic learning is brought to the same level as learning acquired at work or elsewhere rather than being seen as superior. This blurs the



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distinctions between academic, experiential and other forms of learning. Thus, control over the curriculum within the credit-framework is conditioned by consumer choice rather than “producer control ‘also seen as a key aspect of neo-liberal thinking (Trowler 1998).

The Credit-system: Challenges in the Indian Context

The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) had called for the reform of existing universities to ensure frequent curricula revisions, the introduction of the credit system, emphasising internal assessment as critical to learning, encouraging research, and reforming the governance of institutions. The credit system and the emphasis on modularity in curriculum planning have been found useful in the process of revisiting the curriculum and linking each component of the programme with that of the overall programme objective. The modularity in curriculum design, obtained by specifying each curriculum unit in terms of credit weight/ as a quantum of work required to be completed to meet the requirements for the degree successfully, is relatively more facilitative in breaking the entrenchment of disciplinary domains. It is facilitative in re- configuring programmes (completely/partially) and revisiting them, apart from enabling student mobility and agency (through choice) in assembling a degree relevant for them.

The UGC proposal for academic reforms to establish a uniform credit system across universities in the country articulated its rationale in terms of an attempt to mitigate the diversity in evaluation practices across the country and variability in the credentials of degrees and programmes of the different universities. The CBCS framework aims at ensuring —seamless mobility of students across higher education institutions in the country and abroad, with the possibility of credit transfer across universities in the country as well as internationally. The variability in the practices of defining the credit and programme requirements across universities that had already implemented the credit system was seen by the regulators as a challenge for streamlining degree credentials and ascertaining standards. UGC circulated the guidelines for CBCS structure in 2014 and drafted the model curriculum for 109 different academic programmes, drawing upon a select number of external experts. Universities were asked to introduce the CBCS from the academic year 2015-16. The Higher Education was amongst the first ones to adopt it. Within the history of academic reforms at DU, this moment seemed like an aberration as CBCS adoption process was significantly uncontested within the University bodies.

Standardized Credit System

The University Grants Commission Act specifies the main function of the Commission as coordination and maintenance of standards: laying down norms and qualifications to maintain a common standard. This articulation does not imply framing the syllabi as the task of the UGC, which is the prerogative of the academic bodies of the universities. Given the diversity in institutional profile across the country, the UGC has brought out model syllabi earlier as well, which are considered more as exemplars. Norms and regulations are expected to be of a broad generic nature to facilitate academic pluralism and allow for diversity in the institutional landscape. Curriculum framing remains and is a core task of the University ‘s academic community: the structures of Departments/ Schools, Boards of Studies, Standing Committees of the Academic Council, an Academic Council and an Executive Council/ Syndicate exist to oversee the preparation of curriculum. This academic governance system and mechanism for maintaining standards exist within the framework of all University Acts as much as they are a part of the UGC Act.

What the CBCS guidelines provided for was a standardised template for credit parity and programme structure of the degrees offered by different universities. A significant difference exists in the approach and implications of providing guidelines for minimum standards and expectations from a degree, as opposed to specifying what to teach to the universities. The UGC Act does not supersede the academic autonomy of the universities, which are corporate entities in themselves, incorporated through Acts of State and Central Legislature. Adoption of CBCS in DU appeared to create a narrative around the imposition of the external body ‘s will on to the University even as its internal governance bodies ratified the CBCS. The CBCS guidelines provided for a deviation of 30 per cent from the stipulated UGC structure and for similar deviation in the course content also for those universities that decided to adopt the curriculum prepared by the UGC. The internal critique to CBCS as articulated by the different segments of the teacher association argued that University ‘s conformity to CBCS guidelines mitigated the pluralism in methodologies that are informing knowledge growth and development in the social sciences, humanities and even the sciences.

What need to be done?

Curriculum planning and review is a complex process, which needs to be informed by the ground reality of the nature of teaching, preparedness, and aspirations of students as well as faculty orientation and strengths. Framing of a syllabus informed primarily by developments and configurations within a select disciplinary domain is in principle against a real-time engaged understanding of university classrooms and cultures. For curriculum review to be an organic process, both the content and processes have to be owned by the academic community. Many within the academic community feel the CBCS implementation as self-contradictory and destructive of academic and pedagogic innovation. While there is no dearth of literature which describes and analyses lack of academic and pedagogic innovation in the Indian, HE system before the credit discourse; what is relevant to this perception is the fact that the structural



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rigidity of the affiliation system remains incompatible with the new philosophy and is inherently detrimental to any academic innovation.

Another dimension of the credit system also continues to pose a challenge: credit transfer and student mobility. Since choice, by definition, precludes uniformity, the credits sought to be transferred from one university to another should not necessarily be based on similar courses offered across institutions but thrive on the difference in academic content and approach available in the other institution. More significantly, mere uniformity of the syllabus cannot deliver qualitatively similar outcomes, and a meaningful credit transfer policy requires universities to work out the equivalence of one another 's credits. This significant aspect of the adoption of the CBCS is yet to become functional in the national context. The Higher Education had, to a limited extent, explored credit sharing within central universities before the adoption of CBCS. The culture of academic collaboration and resource sharing are also weak within institutions themselves, with no structural provision for students to take courses across colleges affiliated to their university. The mismatch, therefore, between the stated goals of the reform and their realisation plays out in terms of the lack of understanding and provision for inter-institutional collaboration for sharing of credits.

Summing up and Concluding Remarks

The implementation of CBCS has, to say the least, brought to the forefront a range of issues around curriculum—both substantive and those related to design, in the context of general undergraduate education in the country. The broad narrative on the ground, against a distinct kind of regimentation feared through a new curriculum framework, emanates from two sets of challenges: infrastructural as well as cultural. In the Indian HE context, the need for infrastructural or organisational restructuring is well recognised and articulated but remains far from realisation. The schemes of autonomous colleges, for instance, barely redresses the perils of the affiliating system in the country. As long as colleges remain affiliated to universities, we continue to stifle academic resources in thousands of colleges in the country. The stifling of the curriculum project jeopardies innovation and rigour in teaching in the Humanities and Liberal Arts and Sciences, particularly in the undergraduate space. Given the maximum student diversity in the undergraduate space, most considerable flexibility and alternate learning trajectories are required within this domain. The CBCS framework contains the potential to facilitate this. Without the organisational reform, however, the effectiveness of merely the curriculum reform remains circumspect. Another question that remains unanswered is the processes by which reform in the architecture of the curriculum can translate to an altered and more engaged pedagogic culture in the universities and colleges. Without an academic culture that values self- and peer-review, organisational learning, reform achievements appear more as rhetorical claims, often untested and unverified.

The adoption of the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) has, in the Indian context, has been focused primarily on the curriculum domain without a rethinking of the structures of affiliation or deliberation on the meaning and implications of the credit framework for curriculum thinking and the culture of teaching and learning. It appears as an imposition of the vocabulary of credits on the existing templates of both the curriculum as well as academic structures for curriculum planning. The credit exchange discourse aims to disaggregate curricula into modules that students can then fit together according to their interests and needs, and in doing that it makes a critical assumption that students at the first-degree level have the competence to do so independently. A lack of comprehensive understanding or realisation of the structural changes at the institutional level and the absence of a scaffolding approach and mechanisms needed to translate choices into coherent cognitive strategies or epistemic maps will continue to form a significant challenge to the process of changing epistemic contours of undergraduate curriculum and teaching.

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