Learning Outcome-based Curriculum Framework - Choice Based Credit System

Why in news?

Delhi University is in the process of revising all of its undergraduate programmes along the lines of UGC's Learning Outcome-based Curriculum Framework (LOCF).

What is the LOCF?

- The LOCF specifies what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do at the end of their programme of study.
- LOCF approach makes the student an active learner and the teacher a good facilitator.
- The idea is to decide the desired outcome within the framework of the current *Choice Based Credit System* (CBCS) for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
- The outcomes will be determined in terms of skills, knowledge, understanding, employability, attributes, attitudes, values, etc.
- The curriculum will have to be designed to obtain these outcomes.
- In this line, in 2018, UGC issued a public notice followed by a direction to all central institutions.
- It directed them to form subject-specific committees for implementing the Learning Outcomes-based Curriculum Framework.

What are the earlier changes?

- The coming change (LOCF) will be the fifth in the last 9 years at the Delhi University (DU).
- In 2010, the undergraduate programme switched from the traditional annual mode to the semester mode.
- In 2013, this was changed to Four Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) which again switched back to semester mode in 2014.
- In the year after that (2015), the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) was introduced.

What are the concerns?

- Teachers at Delhi University (DU) are concerned about the frequent changes in the undergraduate curriculum.
- Each of the “reforms” was announced without warning, and implemented the very next year.
- They were introduced with the objective of improving the quality of education and scaling up DU’s world ranking.
- But the outcome, as critics point out, has been the opposite.
- Each change has disrupted the functioning of the system, and caused confusion and trauma among students.

What are the shortfalls in LOCF change?

- The committees formed to recommend changes in the 2019-20 curriculum (in line with LOCF) have some major limitations.
- The subject-specific committees formed by DU were given only 3 months to submit their reports; not all stakeholders were consulted.
- Also, all departments have been asked to assign this work to their three “best teachers”.
- But no criteria were decided to assess and rank teachers for this purpose.
- Besides, LOCF is to be implemented immediately, and there is inadequate time for preparation.
- Importantly, the CBCS pattern of the undergraduate programme itself is said to be faulty.
- So the committees now are supposed to bring changes in the curriculum within this faulty framework.

What are the main features of the CBCS?

- The marks or percentage based evaluation system obstructs the flexibility for the students to study the subjects/courses of their choice.
- It also restricts their mobility to different institutions.
- UGC wanted to replace this system with the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS).
- Besides the core subjects, CBCS offers opportunities to explore and learn other subjects for holistic development of an individual.
- E.g. the Generic Elective (GE) course has to be compulsorily taken from an unrelated discipline/subject
- Students can also undergo additional courses and acquire more than the required credits and adopt an interdisciplinary approach to learning.

What are the drawbacks in CBCS?

- The three major problems involved in CBCS are:

i. repetition of papers
ii. highly heterogeneous classes
iii. creation of situations in which students don't acquire much knowledge about one particular subject

- In some cases, the same papers are offered as Core (compulsory) papers as well as general elective.
- So students make choices not to add to their knowledge, but mainly to lessen their burden.
- Moreover, students of different disciplines opting for a GE of a particular discipline creates a class of students who are very different from each other.
- In such cases, teachers find it difficult to handle a subject as students differ in their understanding, exposure, knowledge, aptitude, etc.
- E.g. teaching a Commerce Generic to a Mathematics student is different from teaching it to an English literature student
- So the lack of synchronization in interdisciplinary syllabus formulation has made teaching-learning more difficult.
- In all, without a re-look at the CBCS framework, changes in the curriculum through LOCF will end up being another ineffective exercise.

Source: Indian Express

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