



E- ISSN: 2980-4760
P- ISSN: 2980-4752

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8341139

Students' Perception on CBCS Curriculum of Zoology at Undergraduate Level: An Opinion Survey of Students Under the Colleges of Vidyasagar University

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 **International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research and Innovation** is an international peer-reviewed academic journal that highly values the importance of developing knowledge in the field of multidisciplinary educational and innovative research. The journal's scope is broad, with the goals of disseminating information and providing a place for discussion, theoretical inquiry, practical applications, research discoveries, and experimentations in the field of education.

Recommended Citation

Mal, S. & Mondal, A. (2023). Students' Perception on CBCS Curriculum of Zoology at Undergraduate Level: An Opinion Survey of Students Under the Colleges of Vidyasagar University. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research and Innovation*. 1(3), 161-175. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8341139>

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STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON CBCS CURRICULUM OF ZOOLOGY AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL: AN OPINION SURVEY OF STUDENTS UNDER THE COLLEGES OF VIDYASAGAR UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) is a modern curriculum system of higher education in India which was first introduced by the Academic and Administrative Reforms committee of University Grant Commission (UGC) in 2008 headed by Prof. A. Gnanam. It is a system that promises to bring in holistic development of an individual by providing flexible and multi-disciplinary learning experience. The CBCS provides a cafeteria type approach in which the students can take courses of their choice, learn at their own pace, undergo additional courses and acquire more than the required credits, and adopt an interdisciplinary approach to learning. The courses shall be evaluated on the grading system, which is considered to be better than the conventional marks system. To make the present curriculum uniform, international standard and more developed UGC implement the Choice Based Credit System at higher education level. There are different Universities in the country that have adopted this system through modifying up to 30% of core papers' syllabus under the proposed UGC curriculum. The major objectives of the study were to explore the nature of the present CBCS curriculum of Zoology and measure the perception level of the students on the present CBCS curriculum of Zoology of Vidyasagar University. The major Findings of the study were suggested that the Vidyasagar University followed the UGC recommended curriculum pattern for framing the CBCS curriculum of Zoology and it has also been found that there was no significant difference in the male and female students' perception about CBCS curriculum of zoology at undergraduate level in Vidyasagar University.

Received: May 2023
Revised: June 2023
Accepted: July 2023
Available: August 2023

Keywords: Multi-disciplinary, Credits, Interdisciplinary, Grading system, Perception

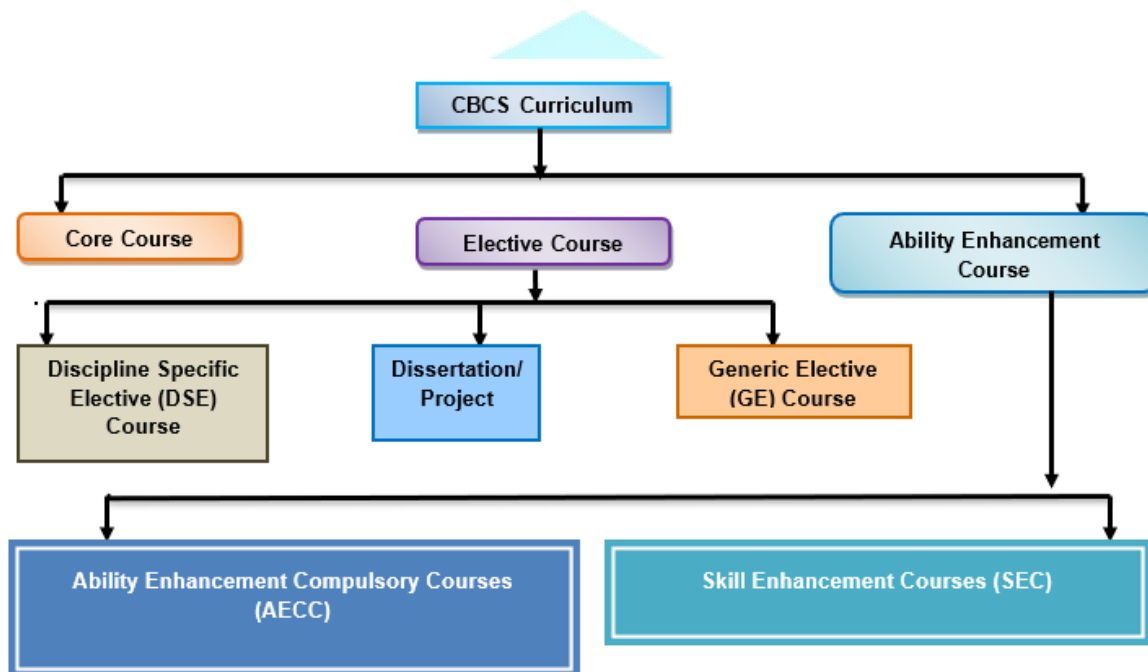
INTRODUCTION

Education has been a crucial element in the development of infrastructure ever since India gained independence. Over the years, the education system has undergone significant changes to keep up with the nation's needs. However, it has become increasingly complex and teacher-centric, with a lack of value-based and skill-based knowledge. As a result, a rigid system has been established that cannot accommodate the flexibility of education in other parts of the world. To reform the traditional rigid education system into a flexible learner centric education system with international standard the Academic and Administrative Reforms committee of University Grant Commission (UGC) headed by Prof. A. Gnanam first introduced the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) in 2008. Later In 2014, the University Grant Commission (UGC) implemented the Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS) to address these issues. The CBCS aims to unify all disciplines and enable students to learn at their own pace. This system has been successful in improving the intellectual, skill-based, value-based, and social



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development of students. The CBCS has been in operation since 2015 and has been a significant step towards a more comprehensive education system. With the CBCS, students can choose from a variety of subjects and learn at their own pace. This system allows students to explore different areas of interest and develop their skills accordingly. Additionally, the CBCS promotes a student-centered approach to learning, enabling students to take ownership of their education. In conclusion, the introduction of the CBCS has been a positive development in the Indian education system. The system has proved to be effective in improving the quality of education and promoting a more comprehensive approach to learning. With the CBCS, students can acquire the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the modern world.



1. Core Course: Candidates should study the Core Course for a strong foundation. But exploring interdisciplinary courses and different institutions can lead to a well-rounded education. Choose courses based on your abilities and interests.

2. Elective Course: Elective Course is specific or specialized course which is associated with the discipline and helps to extend the scope of gathering knowledge of a candidate.

2.1 Discipline Specific Elective (DSE) Course: Discipline Specific Elective Course may be on specific discipline or may be interdisciplinary in nature.

2.2 Dissertation/Project: Through dissertation or project work a candidate can apply the gained knowledge in the field and also can gain in hand experience.

2.3 Generic Elective (GE) Course: Generic Elective Course is chosen from an unrelated discipline to seek out the exposure of a candidate.

3. Ability Enhancement Courses (AEC): The Ability Enhancement (AE) Course aims to provide skill, competency and knowledge to the candidate which in turn helps a candidate to enhance the ability that a candidate already possesses.

3.1 Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses (AECC): It includes Environmental Science, English Communication/MIL Communication which builds up the language knowledge as well as general knowledge about nature.

3.2 Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC): Skill Enhancement Course enhances the value based skill and knowledge of a candidate



Introducing Research Component in Under-Graduate Courses Project work/Dissertation is a type of course which provides knowledge enhances analyzing skill and also multiplies the theoretical knowledge that a candidate gains at the time of study.

In order to ensure that higher education maintains a certain level of quality, it is crucial to adopt a professional approach and provide students with a variety of transferable skills. The University Grants Commission of India has implemented the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) for various academic programs including graduate, postgraduate, diploma, and certificate courses. This system allows students to select courses of their choice from the list of prescribed subjects, thus encouraging flexible and interdisciplinary learning experiences. Despite the advantages of the CBCS, it has received criticism from educationists, policy makers, teachers, and students across the country. The main criticism is that the system is impractical in the current Indian education scenario. However, the UGC stands by its decision to introduce the CBCS as it provides the necessary flexibility in designing the curriculum and assigning credits based on the course contents and teaching hours. The CBCS approach is similar to that of a cafeteria, providing students with the freedom to choose courses of their choice, learn at their own pace, and adopt an interdisciplinary approach to learning. The grading system used in CBCS is considered to be better than the traditional marks system. The courses are evaluated based on a uniform grading system, which will benefit students in moving across institutions within India and across countries. Furthermore, potential employers will be able to assess the performance of candidates more accurately. Overall, the CBCS is an innovative approach that aims to provide students with a more flexible and interdisciplinary learning experience. While there are criticisms, the UGC remains committed to the implementation of this system in the hope of improving the quality of higher education in India.

The study at hand seeks to explore the shift from traditional teaching methodologies, which center on the teacher as the core figure in the learning process, towards a contemporary approach that prioritizes the learner. The research aims to delve deeper into the advantages that arise from offering students both interdisciplinary and intra-disciplinary courses, while also advocating for more flexibility and mobility in the education system. In addition, the study highlights the importance of introducing soft skill courses that equip students with the ability to manage stress and anxiety, enhance their work efficiency, and promote equal opportunities for all. By implementing these courses, students can acquire vital skills that not only enable them to excel academically but also prepare them for success in their future endeavors. Overall, this research provides valuable insights into the modernization of education systems, emphasizing the significance of empowering learners and promoting a more inclusive learning environment. By prioritizing the needs and interests of students and incorporating soft skill courses into the curriculum, education systems can create a more supportive and effective learning experience for all.

Research Questions:

1. What are the major features of the CBCS Curriculum of Zoology of Vidyasagar University?
2. What are the positive and negative sides of the CBCS Curriculum of Zoology of Vidyasagar University?
3. What is the nature of perception of UG level students on the CBCS Curriculum of Zoology of Vidyasagar University?

Hypothesis of the study:-

H₀ – There is no significant difference between male and female students, perception in CBCS curriculum of Zoology in Vidyasagar University



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REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Sanghi (2010) describes the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) as a flexible, fair system that allows students to progress through their academic program based on courses taken rather than time spent. CBCS provides students with the opportunity to learn at their own pace, specialize in a topic, and seek internships in that area. It also enables students to choose their preferred sequence of study, topics, institutions, and programs, while promoting interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary courses tailored to their needs and interests. CBCS also allows for collaboration between universities and industry experts, and encourages professionals to opt for part-time postgraduate programs to enhance their knowledge. Sanghi strongly believes that CBCS can enhance the vibrancy and dynamism of higher education.

Chaudhary (2012) defines "credit" as the weightage given to a course, usually based on the instruction hours assigned to it. In higher education, students should have the option to choose additional subjects not related to their core courses. Therefore, Chaudhary advocates CBCS, which can accommodate diverse choices of the students. Chaudhary also recommends establishing centers of excellence in all universities and providing core credits and elective or optional credits.

Barla (2013) analyzed secondary data from published sources to construct a five-point scale with ten parameters. The goal was to find out the opinion of 500 Hyderabad students about CBCS. Results showed that students like CBCS due to its flexibility, division of courses, I.T. applications, and overall design. Female students preferred CBCS more than males. Based on the results, Barla suggested finer detailing of CBCS.

Kelkar & Ravichankariv (2014) surveyed 40 teachers from colleges affiliated with Mumbai University, including those from arts, science, and commerce. They used a questionnaire to investigate the teachers' opinions, the problems they faced, and their suggestions for improving the implementation of CBCS. The survey focused on four parameters: whether the objectives of CBCS have been met, problems in implementing CBCS, the conduct of the credit system, and the methodology involved in adapting to CBCS. The results showed that 62.5% of the teachers felt that CBCS emphasizes evaluation only.

Zafar, Manjurekar, kumar & Khanv (2014) conducted a study to analyze the impact of a Fully Flexible Credit System (FFCS) on the academic performance and learning experience of students at Vellore Institute of Technology University (VIT) in Vellore, India. The study utilized a questionnaire on a five-point scale. The results showed that 87% of students preferred FFCS over non-FFCS, but students were dissatisfied with the research opportunities provided by FFCS.

Aneja (2015) suggests that implementing CBCS in India's higher education institutions would improve the quality and quantity of education. To achieve this, Aneja proposes uniform curriculum, sufficient funding, faculty attitude change, trained human resources, and systematic examination reforms.

Chaubey (2015) CBCS is considered the "mother of learner-centric educational reforms" because it promotes learner autonomy, mobility, cross-cultural learning, transparency and compatibility between institutions, and upgrades educational and occupational aspirations of upcoming generations. However, CBCS in India has practical limitations such as a shortage of teachers and infrastructure, increased workload for students and teachers, promotes partial knowledge, lacks clarity, and has no system for better evaluation. Chaubey believes that with the aid of modern ICT, CBCS has a high probability of operating efficiently and effectively, elevating students, institutions, and higher education. Chaubey concludes by reasserting the need to explore the concept of CBCS to utilize opportunities in the best way possible.



Hasan & Parvez (2015) extensively discuss the advantages and disadvantages of CBCS. They find that the percentage-based evaluation system is a barrier to students' mobility, making the higher education system rigid. They strongly believe that CBCS has made education learner-centered, promotes an interdisciplinary and intra-disciplinary approach, boosts the development of professional skills, encourages multifaceted development of personality, mandates uniformity in evaluation, and encourages a system of teaching and learning. However, they also realize that CBCS implementation suffers from certain issues such as an increase in workload on teachers, lack of infrastructure, maintenance of student records, compatibility of main papers, lack of content mastery among students, and subjectivity in evaluation. .

Kaur & Sharma (2016) found that the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) is effective in overall student progression, providing a multidisciplinary learning experience and varied experiences for faculty members dealing with students from various disciplines. However, implementing a proper CBCS syllabus and credit system can be challenging, and there may be resistance from training staff and students. CBCS also requires increased infrastructure, faculty, and can overburden teachers.

Nehru (2016) compares the education systems of India and Vietnam to CBCS and advocates for its implementation in education and teacher education for student's professional growth.

Naidu & Sreedevi (2016) argue that India's failure to adopt an interdisciplinary approach has resulted in the loss of highly talented students to other nations. The CBCS addresses this issue by allowing students to learn across disciplines, with teachers from various fields designing and grading the curriculum. Students have the flexibility to choose their preferred courses, learn at their own pace, take additional courses, and earn more than the required credits. CBCS is indispensable in producing employable university graduates.

Sumitha, Krishnamurthy & Winfred (2016) created a questionnaire consisting of 30 items to evaluate the perception of 150 postgraduate management students at St. Aloysius College, Mangalore, India toward CBCS. The responses were collected on a five-point scale. From the data analysis, they discovered that students view CBCS through six significant factors or parameters: Student autonomy, student-centeredness, Clarity in evaluation, clear syllabi, college resources, and all-round development. They also suggest that CBCS is critical for higher education since it effectively eliminates rote learning by introducing critical thinking and analysis, which leads to creativity and innovation in the education system.

Shahid Majeed Bhat (2017), aims to improve academic quality through the curriculum, teaching, and evaluation systems. The choice-based credit system is a good way to grade students' overall performance.

Suman Kumari Katoch (2017), noted that providing undergraduate students with a flexible, academically rich learning system that includes opportunities to practice skills in-depth can help them become more creative, insightful, and effective in any career they choose.

Dr. Dinesh Chahal, Mirza Muneeb Manna (2017), suggested that universities should offer a wider range of subject choices and allow for inter-university migration across all Indian states.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Respondents

The researcher selected the U.G level students from the colleges of Vidyasagar University. The students were male and female students of Undergraduate level. In this study rural and urban colleges were taken into study. The researcher adopted survey method for data collection of 100 students of undergraduate level under Vidyasagar University.

Research Instrument

The research was being done by Random sampling technique.

Selection of Tools -

- A. Questionnaire – a close-ended structured questionnaire which includes 20 items was designed to collect data from male and female students of different colleges under Vidyasagar University.
- B. Scale – A '3' point scale was developed to measure the items. The three points scale will be divided in – “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Disagree”

Variables –

These were the variables that had been selected by the researcher.

Major variable – Perception of Students.

Categorical Variable –

Gender – Male and Female.

Data Analysis

In this case, the researcher performed quantitative analysis using standard statistical software and tested hypotheses with the "t" test. For conducting the research the data had been collected from graduate students under Vidyasagar University. For collecting the data a questionnaire had been constructed and data had been collected from individual students of UG at the random colleges of Vidyasagar University. As the raw data has been collected, it is then tabulated in M.S excel software and further this same software is used for further calculation and statistical procedure.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To analyze this research question no 1 of the objective no. 1 researchers had proposed to mention some special features positives and negatives sites of CBCS curriculum of Zoology of Vidyasagar University.

Researchers presented a table showing the distribution of Credits, Continuous Assessment (CA) marks, and End Semester Examination (ESE) marks for each course. They also noted that one credit equals one hour of teaching (lecture or tutorial) or two hours of practical work/fieldwork per week.



Table 17.1- Shows the difference in the credit and marks distribution of different courses in Credit points, Continuous assessment (CA), End Semester Examination (ESE)

In the table 17.1 Continuous assessment will be denoted as CA and End Semester Examination will be denoted as ESE

Name of Course	Semester (Sem)	Credit Points	CA	ESE
Core Course	Sem-I	12	30	120
	Sem- II	12	30	120
	Sem- III	18	45	180
	Sem- IV	18	45	180
	Sem- V	12	30	120
	Sem- VI	12	30	120
Total	All Sem	84	210	840
Ability Enhancement Compulsory Course	Sem-I	2	20	30
	Sem- II	4	30	70
	Sem- III	-	-	-
	Sem- IV	-	-	-
	Sem- V	-	-	-
	Sem- VI	-	-	-
Total	All sem	6	50	100
Skill Enhancement Course (SEC)	Sem-I	-	-	-
	Sem- II	-	-	-
	Sem- III	2	20	30
	Sem- IV	2	20	30
	Sem- V	-	-	-
	Sem- VI	-	-	-
Total	All sem	4	40	60
Discipline Specific Elective (DSE)	Sem-I	-	-	-
	Sem- II	-	-	-
	Sem- III	-	-	-
	Sem- IV	-	-	-
	Sem- V	12	30	120
	Sem- VI	12	30	120
Total		24	60	240
Generic Elective Course (GE)	Sem-I	6	15	60
	Sem- II	6	15	60
	Sem- III	6	15	60
	Sem- IV	6	15	60
	Sem- V	-	-	-
	Sem- VI	-	-	-
Total	All Sem	24	60	240
Grand Total	-	142	420	1480

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION



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Course wise distribution of credit points in the CBCS curriculum of Zoology under Vidyasagar University

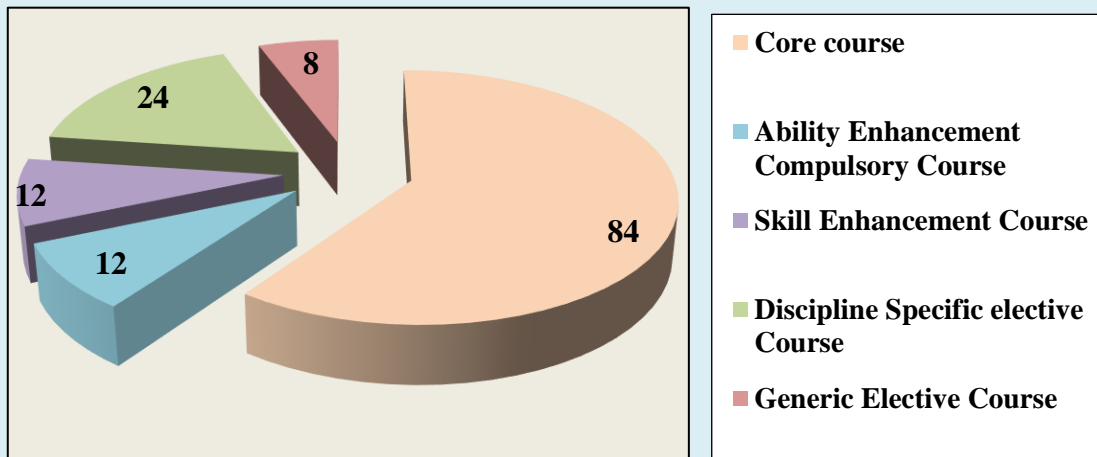


Chart 17.1.A- Shows the difference in the credit point distribution of different courses in CBCS curriculum of zoology at UG level at Vidyasagar University

Course wise Distribution of marks for Semester End Examination Continuous Assessment of CBCS curriculum of Zoology in Vidyasagar University

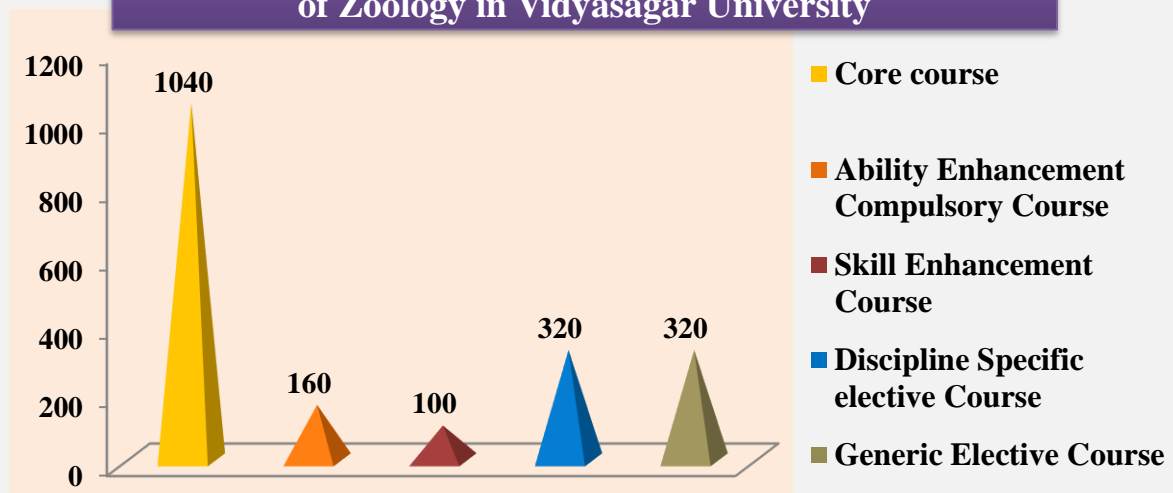


Chart 17.1.B- Shows the difference in the Continuous Assessment marks distribution of different courses in CBCS curriculum of zoology at UG level at Vidyasagar University.



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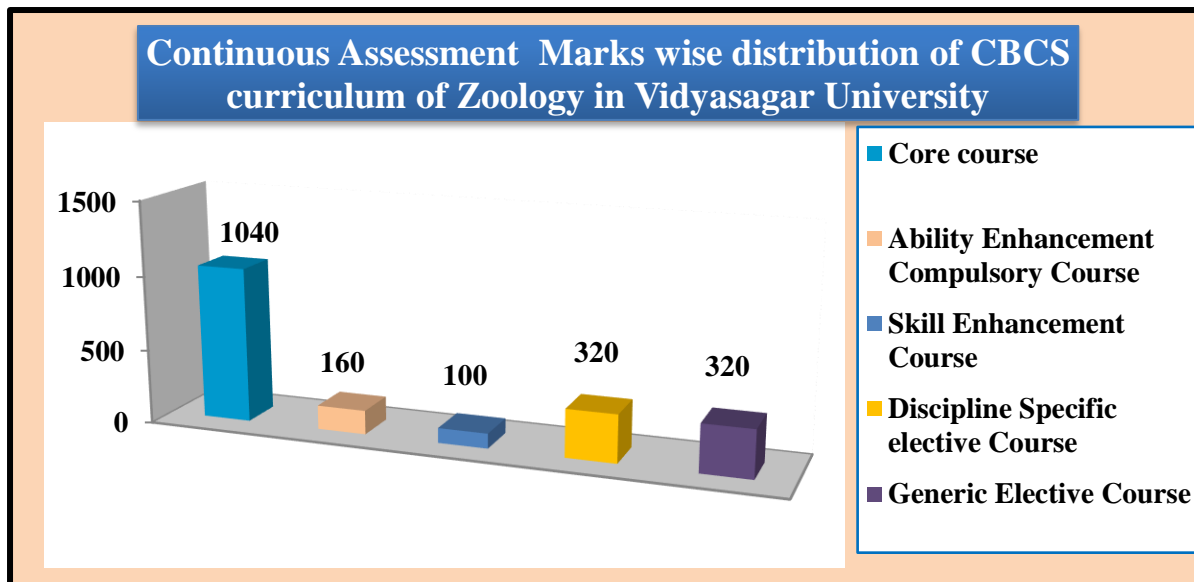


Chart 17.1.C- Shows the difference in the End Semester Examination marks distribution of different courses in CBCS curriculum of zoology at UG level at Vidyasagar University.

Research Question no. 2: What are the positives and negatives of the CBCS Curriculum of Zoology of Vidyasagar University?

Positives sides of CBCS curriculum of Zoology under Vidyasagar University– There are many merits of CBCS curriculum of zoology at the Vidyasagar University. Those are as follows

- There is a proper distribution of courses in the semesters with credit points.
- Not only has the zoology syllabus, this curriculum focuses on the other courses like – AECC, SEC.
- Students are able to learn easily about a topic as they are gaining practical knowledge about that topic in the practical classes.
- The semester based evaluation system also builds the continuum within the students as they are giving exams in every 6 months.
- This curriculum also helps students to gain knowledge about each topic in a detailed manner as they learn specific topics in specific time.
- Multiple small field visits also develops a students' understanding about a work and also it helps to build confidence within a student. Like – the field visit in core course 2, field visit in DSE 1 field visit in SEC 1.
- It promotes consistency in education by evaluating through seminars, assignments, discussions, and projects.

Negative sides of CBCS curriculum of Zoology under Vidyasagar University – Though CBCS curriculum of zoology at Vidyasagar University has many merits, there are also some demerits present in the curriculum. Those are as follows –

- Students feel huge pressure to complete the syllabus of the curriculum.
- Due to the continuous evaluation it has become difficult to complete the syllabus in a regular manner for some students.
- Students feel pressure in completing the practical related work within the short span of semester. Due to this depression and anxiety becomes the companion of some students.
- Multiple visiting to the outer field for field work reduce the concentration of students.
- Maintaining compatibility among the main subject's papers and other papers has become a challenge for some students.



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Research Question no. 3: What is the nature of perception of UG level students on the CBCS Curriculum of Zoology of Vidyasagar University?

- To study the students' perception in CBCS curriculum of Zoology at Undergraduate level at Vidyasagar University researcher had used descriptive statistics on the collected data. The result that had been come out was as follows –

Table 17.2 – shows the difference in the male and female students' perception about the CBCS curriculum of zoology at UG level at Vidyasagar University

Mean	36.05357143	Mean	39.44444444
Standard Error	0.847616844	Standard Error	0.835183132
Median	37	Median	39
Mode	41	Mode	40
Standard Deviation	6.342983648	Standard Deviation	5.602578771
Sample Variance	40.23344156	Sample Variance	31.38888889
Kurtosis	-0.283745544	Kurtosis	1.336155692
Skewness	0.073245452	Skewness	0.629516094
Range	28	Range	28
Minimum	25	Minimum	28
Maximum	53	Maximum	56
Sum	2019	Sum	1775
Count	56	Count	45
Confidence Level(95.0%)	1.698662102	Confidence Level(95.0%)	1.68320098

Discussion - From table 17.2, researcher had shown that there was a difference in the Male and Female students' perception about the CBCS curriculum of zoology at UG level at Vidyasagar University. The different values of the table clearly indicated that there were some differences in the opinion of male and female students about the perception about CBCS curriculum of zoology at Vidyasagar University.

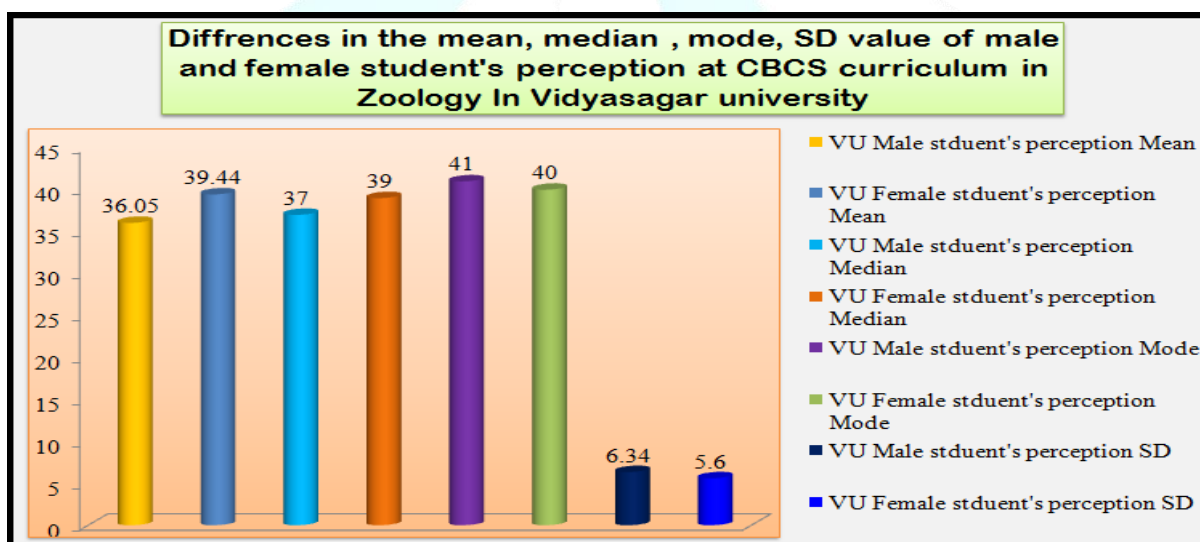


Chart 17.2. A - Showing difference in the mean, median, mode, SD value in the male and female student's perception about CBCS curriculum of Zoology at UG level in Vidyasagar university through bar diagram

To compare the perception in CBCS curriculum between male and female students at Vidyasagar University, researcher had proposed a hypothesis and through the acceptance or the rejection researcher had shown the objective. The hypothesis that researcher had proposed that –



H0 – There is no significant difference between male and female students, perception in CBCS curriculum of Zoology in Vidyasagar University

To prove the acceptance or the rejection of the Hypothesis (H0) researcher had done two tailed t test of equal sample variances.

Table 17.3 - shows the two tailed t test with two sample assuming equal sample variances where the perceptions of male and female students about CBCS curriculum in Zoology have been compared at Vidyasagar University

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances		
	VU male students perception	VU Female students perception
Mean	36.05357143	39.44444444
Variance	40.23344156	31.38888889
Observations	56	45
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	99	
t Stat	-2.811141249	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.002975804	
t Critical one-tail	1.660391157	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.005951607	
t Critical two-tail	1.9842169	

From the analysis of the **Table 17.3** it had been seen that in case of two sample t- test assuming equal sample variances for the perception in CBCS curriculum of the male and female students of Vidyasagar University, the calculated $t_{(99)}$ value is **-2.811141249** and t Critical two tailed value is **1.9842169**. So from the above table it is clear that Calculated t is less than the critical t value (**Calculated t < t Critical**), so the **hypothesis is accepted**.

As from the calculation it is clear that calculated t value is lesser than the static t value, so it can be said that **there is no significant differences in the male and female student's perception about CBCS curriculum in zoology in Vidyasagar University**.

After doing the quantitative research by the researcher, the findings that had been emerged were as follows- Findings of Question no. 1: The Zoology curriculum at Vidyasagar University follows the CBCS system, with 5 disciplinary courses. The Core course has 84 credit points, the Ability Enhancement Compulsory Course has 6 credit points, the Skill Enhancement Course has 4 credit points, the Discipline Specific Elective Course has 24 credit points, and the Generic Elective course has 24 credit points. The total credit point for the CBCS Zoology curriculum at Vidyasagar University is 142. Continuous Assessment accounts for 420 total marks and the End Semester Examination carries 1480 total marks. The credit weightage for CBCS Zoology Curriculum at Vidyasagar University is 148, which is close to the proposed UGC guideline of 140 for the science curriculum.

Findings of Question no. 2: Vidyasagar University's zoology curriculum adheres to the guidelines set forth by the University Grants Commission, offering students practical hands-on experiences in the field and a thorough understanding of the subject matter. This comprehensive approach not only provides students with the knowledge they need to succeed in their future careers, but also enhances their overall career prospects.



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Findings of Question no. 3: Table 17.2 shows the CBCS curriculum perception of male and female students. The data is normally distributed with a positive skew. The mean values are 36.05 and 39.44, the median values are 37 and 39, and the mode values are 41 and 40.

Findings of the hypothesis (H₀) of Objective no. 3– There is no significant differences in the male and female students' perception about CBCS curriculum in zoology in Vidyasagar University. Hence it can be concluded that the understanding level of CBCS curriculum of zoology of male and female students are the same.

CONCLUSION

I am truly inspired by the University Grants Commission's leadership in introducing the choice-based credit system back in 2014. This innovative approach was designed to transform the higher education landscape in India, and it has certainly achieved that goal. The system empowers students to pursue their desired subjects and interests, creating a more conducive academic atmosphere for learning and personal growth. To ensure the effective implementation of this system, it's crucial that we delve deeper into the perspectives of students. Understanding their attitudes and experiences is vital to ensure that they are reaping the intended benefits and that the system is working as it should be. It's heartening to observe that both male and female students at Vidyasagar University share similar attitudes towards the zoology curriculum. This is a testament to the fair implementation of the CBCS curriculum, which ensures that all students, regardless of gender, are given the opportunity to excel. However, there is always room for improvement. As such, we must continue to strive towards enhancing the implementation of the CBCS curriculum. By doing so, we can create a more collaborative and innovative learning environment that benefits all students. It's imperative that we work together to achieve this goal and ensure that students receive the best possible education.



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