The Academic Bank of Credits: A New Pathway to Higher Education

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Abstract

Background: The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) stands as an innovative tool, revolutionizing accessibility and success in higher education worldwide.

Objectives: Serving as a global online repository, it securely houses students' academic credit records.

Methods: Through this platform, institutions can efficiently validate course particulars, ensuring a streamlined process for storing, monitoring, and assessing student credits.

Statistical Analysis: The ABC offers multifaceted benefits to students, enabling flexible study paths, incentivizing the pursuit of extra courses and activities, and eliminating the necessity for individual class applications.

Findings: Thus, the ABC initiative emerges as a valuable asset, empowering students in their pursuit of higher education. This policy stands as a holistic framework intended to revolutionize the Indian education system.

Applications: It notably embraces the concept of the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) to foster flexibility and credit mobility within higher education.

Improvements: The new policy represents a monumental effort to revolutionize both the school and higher education systems, shaped through an extensive and collaborative consultation process.

Keywords: Academic Bank of Credits, New Educational Policy, Higher Education, Database

1. Introduction

Under the guidance of our esteemed Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi ji, the National Education Policy (NEP) was sanctioned in July 2020. This policy stands as a holistic framework intended to revolutionize the Indian education system. It notably embraces the concept of the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) to foster flexibility and credit mobility within higher education. The term "Academic Bank of Credits" indeed forms a beautiful and apt acronym, ABC. The new policy represents a monumental effort to revolutionize both the school and higher education systems, shaped through an extensive and collaborative consultation process. This comprehensive national education policy aims to usher in transformative reforms across the educational landscape. The Academic Bank of Credits stands as a central pillar within this

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The policy framework, intricately linked to both the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. As the authoritative body for higher education in India, the UGC assumes a pivotal role in driving the conception and execution of the Academic Bank of Credits system. Its efforts are focused on ensuring alignment with the overarching objectives outlined in the NEP 2020, thus facilitating the seamless integration of this innovative credit system into the broader educational landscape.

The National Education Policy (NEP) is a comprehensive blueprint encompassing every facet of academia, from school to higher education, professional training, and beyond. It's more than a mere structural renovation; it strives to align the educational system with the aspirational goals of 21st-century learning and global citizenship while preserving the rich traditions and values of our country. This policy is an indispensable and enriching composition catering to various stakeholders—academic leaders, teachers, students, faculties, communities, researchers, industries, and policy formulators.

The evolving educational landscape, particularly since 2020, has experienced a profound shift catalyzed by disruptive technological advancements and the COVID pandemic. Teaching and learning have become more collaborative, multidirectional, and technology-infused. Students no longer merely consume knowledge; they actively participate in its creation. This paradigm shift has birthed a self-paced, interest-driven learning ecosystem, leveraging tools like video conferencing, virtual classrooms, simulators, and personalized data.

Within this transformative era, the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) stands as a beacon of academic flexibility and a student-centric approach. This novel concept, managed by educational bodies like the Ministry of Education or the University Grants Commission (UGC), parallels commercial banks, with students as account holders depositing their earned credits. ABC enables seamless credit recognition, transfer, and accumulation, promoting flexibility in teaching and learning.

This initiative supports lifelong learning by removing rigid curricular boundaries and facilitating multiple entry and exit points. It empowers learners to pursue varied combinations of courses, leading to degrees, diplomas, or certificates aligned with their interests and life goals. By aligning with the NEP's vision, ABC aims to create a more flexible education system that caters to learners' academic interests and career aspirations.

Moreover, ABC facilitates credit accumulation and transfer, providing students access to diverse educational opportunities while saving time and expenses. It eliminates barriers that previously hindered students from completing their education within stipulated timeframes, promoting academic flexibility and encouraging a more inclusive education system.

This system, uniform across institutions, allows for innovative curriculum structures and opens new vistas for lifelong learning. In essence, the Academic Bank of Credits embodies the NEP's vision of a flexible, student-centric education system, enriching the learning journey for every stakeholder involved in the realm of education.

2. Academic Credit

**Definition for Academic Credit:** Academic credit serves as a standardized unit measuring the workload of coursework, encompassing theoretical studies, practical applications, and training within an educational program.

It establishes the required number of instructional hours per week, providing a quantifiable measure for various components of academic learning. For instance, credits might signify one hour of theoretical instruction, one hour of tutorial guidance, or a two-hour session in a
laboratory setting. This standard methodology allows for consistency in assessing and comparing the workload across diverse educational activities within a curriculum.

<table>
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<th>Table 1. Academic Credit</th>
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<td>Semester of (13 - 15 Weeks)</td>
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<td>1 Credit</td>
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**Credit Bank:** The ABC system functions as a credit bank, allowing students to borrow academic credits to complete their degree requirements.

**Credit Transfer:** ABC allows students to transfer credits earned from one institution to another, providing a seamless and efficient process for transferring academic credit.

**Credit Accumulation:** Students can accumulate credits earned from various institutions and programs, allowing them to build a more comprehensive academic portfolio.

**Credit Validation:** The ABC system validates the credits earned by the students, ensuring that they meet the required academic standards.

**Credit Repository:** ABC serves as a central repository of all the academic credits earned by the students, making it easy for them to access and share their academic records with different institutions.

It seems the Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) won't directly engage with individual students but will exclusively serve partnering higher education institutions, as stipulated by the University Ranks Act. These institutions encompass universities established under central, provincial, or state acts, autonomous colleges, and non-autonomous colleges affiliated with degree-awarding or deemed universities in India.

For an institution to become an ABC member, it must be accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) at a minimum A grade level. Consequently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) intends to limit student credit mobility—accumulation and redemption—to those enrolled in NAAC-accredited institutions, particularly at the A grade level.

ABC won't determine the different credit or coursework requirements for certificates, diplomas, or degrees. These essential requirements for undergraduate, graduate, diploma, or PhD programs will continue to be set by the respective universities or autonomous institutions participating in the ABC scheme. ABC serves as a mechanism for managing and storing credits, but it doesn't dictate academic requirements.

Each student will have the opportunity to open a unique digital academic bank account within ABC, much like opening an account in a commercial bank. This account will be assigned a unique ID and will follow a standard operating procedure specific to the Academic Bank of Credit.

**The Concept of the National Credit Framework (NCrF)**

The National Credit Framework (NCrF) integrates qualification frameworks across higher education, vocational training, skill development, and school education. Thus, any form of higher education that endorses certificates, diplomas, or degrees with the flexibility of multiple
entry and exit pathways should adhere to the National Credit Framework for the seamless creditization and integration of programs.

3. The Concept of the ABC

The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) is established within the framework provided by the National Academic Depository (NAD), serving as its foundational structure for storing students' academic awards and related information. It essentially operates as a digital repository or a central hub where academic achievements and records are securely stored and managed, often referred to as a digital academic bank or a comprehensive repository for academic data.

The NAD platform serves as a system for ABC that allows students to register and create an ABC ID, which can be used to store, transfer, redeem, and receive recognition for academic credits.

Establishing an Academic Bank of Credits account is a fundamental step for students seeking to harness the benefits of this cutting-edge system. Through this account, students gain the ability to monitor their progress, access account specifics, and efficiently oversee their credits using an online platform.

This allows them to plan their academic journey with greater precision and flexibility, making the most of the opportunities available to them. Whether you’re planning to transfer to another institution, pursue a different degree, or simply want to take courses for personal enrichment, having an Academic Bank of Credits account is a major step in achieving your academic and career goals.

To avail of the ABC scheme, the eligibility criteria for the institute are to have the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) with an ‘A’ grade and above.

The essence of the ABC lies in acknowledging that learning extends beyond traditional classrooms and that all forms of learning hold significance and merit recognition. Operating on a credit accumulation and transfer principle, the system allows students to transfer earned credits seamlessly between institutions, fostering mobility and continuity in education.

This flexibility grants students the autonomy to chart their own educational paths, enabling smooth transitions between institutions without forfeiting accumulated credits. Such adaptability proves invaluable for students necessitating transfers due to personal or professional motives or those aspiring to pursue advanced studies elsewhere.

Moreover, the ABC system extends advantages to institutions by widening their potential student base. It facilitates the attraction of students who might not have otherwise considered those institutions. Consequently, this fosters a more competitive educational landscape, prompting institutions to enhance their offerings and services to cater better to the diverse needs of students.

Regulations and Major Functions of the ABC

The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) stands as a platform fostering academic mobility and adaptability. Its core purpose is to empower students to craft individualized learning journeys while affording institutions the ability to appeal to a broader spectrum of students.

By offering students the freedom to curate their unique educational trajectories, the ABC system encourages flexibility in academic pursuits. This flexibility allows learners to tailor their paths based on their interests, aspirations, and circumstances.

Simultaneously, institutions benefit from this system by attracting a diverse array of students, including those seeking specialized pathways or looking for transfer opportunities. The ABC's framework encourages inclusivity, enabling institutions to cater to a wider pool of students with varying academic needs and preferences.
Ultimately, the ABC system plays a pivotal role in shaping a dynamic educational landscape by facilitating student-centered learning and enhancing institutional accessibility and appeal. As the education landscape continues to evolve, the ABC system will become increasingly important in ensuring that students have access to quality education, regardless of their following are the regulations of ABC.

- **Eligibility:** Only universities and colleges accredited by NAAC with a minimum grade of ‘A’ are eligible to register under the ABC scheme.
- **Seat Reservation:** Institutes must reserve up to 20% of the extra seats for students enrolling through the ABC scheme.
- **Integration:** Universities offering online programs are required to integrate their learning management systems (LMS) with the ABC portal.
- **Earned Credit Validity:** Credits earned by students remain valid for up to 7 years, after which they expire.
- **Semester Entry and Exit:** Students can enter during the odd semester and exit upon completion of the even semester.

These regulations and guidelines underscore the framework and operational aspects of the ABC scheme, ensuring accreditation, seat allocation, technological integration, credit validity, and student entry and exit points align with the scheme's objectives and structure.

**Figure 1. Working Principle of Academic Bank Credits**

**Working of the Academic Bank of Credits**

The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) operates with several key functions that facilitate its role in streamlining academic processes and enhancing educational accessibility:

- **Registration of HEIs (Higher Education Institutions):** ABC oversees the registration process for higher education institutions (HEIs) that wish to participate in the ABC scheme. This involves ensuring that the institutions meet the required standards and criteria set forth by the governing bodies.
- **Inclusion of Diverse Courses:** The ABC system accommodates various courses offered by HEIs that are officially recognized by regulatory bodies such as the UGC (University Grants Commission) and the AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education). This includes a wide array of courses, encompassing traditional, open/distance learning, and online programs.
- **Integration of Online Learning Platforms:** The ABC portal incorporates popular online learning platforms such as NPTEL (National Programme on Technology-Enhanced Learning), MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), SWAYAM (Study
Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), and V-Lab courses. This integration expands the range of accessible educational resources available to students.

- **Student Account Management:** ABC manages the lifecycle of student accounts, including account creation, validation, and closure. This involves establishing student accounts within the system, validating their credentials, and closing accounts when necessary, ensuring accuracy and security.

- **Credit Operations:** The system handles crucial credit-related functions, including verification, accumulation, transfer, and redemption for students. It allows students to accumulate earned credits, transfer them seamlessly between institutions, and redeem them when pursuing further studies or educational opportunities.

Overall, the ABC system serves as a comprehensive platform that not only registers institutions but also incorporates diverse courses, integrates online learning resources, manages student accounts efficiently, and facilitates essential credit operations, fostering a more accessible and flexible educational environment for students.

Expanding the ABC Program for HEI’s involves several key steps is as follows.

- **Registration on ABC’s Official Website:** HEI’s interested in participating in the ABC program must register on the official ABC website. This step ensures their inclusion in the ABC framework.

- **Regular Publication of Student Credit Data:** HEI’s are required to consistently publish student credit data, demonstrating transparency and accountability in the credit accumulation and transfer process.

- **Inclusion of ABC URL Links on HEIs’ Websites:** HEI’s need to include a link to the ABC portal on their respective websites, providing easy access for students and promoting awareness of the program.

- **Designation of Nodal Officer for ABC Processes:** Each HEI should assign a nodal officer responsible for overseeing and managing the ABC-related processes within the institution, ensuring smooth operations and compliance.

- **Student Awareness and Engagement:** HEI’s play a crucial role in informing and encouraging students to open an account on the ABC portal. This involves creating awareness about the benefits of the program and guiding students through the account opening process.

Regarding the Credit Requirements and Qualification Types for Multidisciplinary Degrees with Multiple Entry/Exit Options.

- **Credit Requirements for Qualifications:** Students must accumulate a specified number of credit hours to attain a degree or certificate. The number of credits varies across different qualification levels, with certificates or diplomas requiring fewer credits compared to bachelor's or master's degrees.

- **Qualification Types:** Programs offer stackable credentials, enabling students to exit at different stages with certificates or diplomas while also giving them the option to return to complete higher levels of education later. This approach grants flexibility and acknowledges achievements at different educational milestones.

Illustratively, imagine a multidisciplinary program offering various tracks such as computer science, business administration, and creative arts. A student pursuing this program might opt to exit after completing a set of core courses and earning a certificate in computer science. Later, they could return to complete additional courses and earn a diploma in business administration. Finally, they might choose to complete the full program, earning a bachelor's degree in creative...
arts. This illustrates how students can tailor their education, accumulate credentials, and enter or exit the program at different stages to align with their career goals and interests.

Figure 2. Qualification Type and Credit Requirements for Four Years Multidisciplinary Degree Programme with Multiple Entry and Exit Options

4. The Impact of ABC on the Educational System

The introduction of the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) has significantly enhanced the educational system, primarily by instilling quality assurance and standardization in higher education. This ensures that courses meet the requisite standards and enjoy recognition across diverse institutions. Consequently, the impact of ABC implementation has been resoundingly positive, manifesting in amplified accessibility, heightened quality, and a culture of continuous learning.

In response, higher education institutions (HEIs) have been prompted to prioritize ongoing enhancements in delivering quality education. Both universities and autonomous or affiliated colleges are compelled to engage in periodic accreditation processes, fostering a commitment to consistent improvement.

The hallmark of ABC lies in providing students with unprecedented flexibility. Through multiple entry and exit points, learners are empowered to navigate their educational journey according to their pace and preferences. This flexibility extends to the extensive array of academic courses available, presenting students with a multitude of choices tailored to their interests and aspirations.

The unique feature of allowing students to withdraw at any juncture while offering the option to claim earned credits in the form of certificates, diplomas, or degrees underscores the adaptability and learner-centric approach embedded within the ABC framework. This ensures that students retain agency over their educational pursuits, facilitating a seamless integration of learning and achievement recognition within the academic ecosystem.

5. Conclusion

The Academic Bank of Credits heralds a transformative shift in the landscape of higher education, presenting a pioneering pathway for students and institutions alike. This innovative
system encapsulates more than a mere repository of academic credits; it embodies a philosophy of adaptability, accessibility, and versatility.

By streamlining credit accumulation, transfer, and utilization, the ABC system empowers students to craft personalized educational trajectories. It affords them the freedom to navigate diverse learning avenues, acknowledging the multitude of their talents and aspirations.

In parallel, ABC elevates educational institutions by fostering diversity and competitiveness. It propels institutions towards innovation, urging them to refine offerings and services to meet the evolving needs of a dynamic student community.

In essence, the Academic Bank of Credits doesn't just redefine the academic journey; it revolutionizes the very essence of education. It paves the way for an inclusive, student-centric paradigm where educational possibilities are boundless, encouraging continuous learning and growth for all. This new frontier signifies a future where education transcends boundaries, opening doors to endless opportunities and shaping a brighter, more accessible educational landscape for generations to come.

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