



A STUDY OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY COURSES AT THE UG LEVEL

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70096/tssr.250302014>

Abstract

Under the guidelines of NEP 2020, West Bengal has introduced a Curriculum and Credit Framework (CCF) starting this academic session. This framework encourages students to study various subjects, aiming to equip them with broader knowledge and skills for a rapidly changing world. Multidisciplinary Courses are a vital part of the new curriculum and syllabus framework designed for the undergraduate level. This paper presents a study conducted among 1st-semester students at Udaynarayanpur Madhabilata Mahavidyalaya who have opted for Multidisciplinary Courses (MDC). The study's investigator developed a 3-point rating scale to collect data on different aspects of MDC using Google Forms, covering dimensions like Difficulty Level, Institutional Infrastructure, Importance, Student Motivation, and Career Opportunities. A total of 267 responses were received through Google Forms. A standardized norm was established for the rating scale, and a specific scoring procedure was employed. Quantitative methods were used to analyse the collected data. The study findings indicate that Multidisciplinary Courses appear to pose complexity and difficulty for undergraduate students, although they offer a significant advantage by introducing students to a variety of disciplines, potentially benefiting their future job prospects. The institution's infrastructure is found to be unsatisfactory, particularly concerning adequate teaching staff, conducive learning environments, and supportive administrative attitudes. The guidelines for examinations are currently unclear to students. However, students expressed satisfaction with the college's library books and laboratory facilities. Despite their hopes for a brighter future through MDC, students exhibit less motivation regarding the course structure and in-depth study. The investigator of the study has suggested several recommendations for the effective implementation of MDC.

Keywords: *Multidisciplinary Courses, Pros and Cons, Undergraduate Graduate Level, West Bengal*

Introduction

The New Education Policy, 2020 is a big change in Indian education. It covers both school and higher education. It wants to reorganize school years into 5+3+3+4 stages for different ages. Kids from 3 to 6 years get safe, good early education. Ages 6 to 8 start foundational studies. Ages 8 to 11 focus on fun learning and activities. Ages 11 to 14 dive into subjects like science and social studies. Ages 14 to 18 get flexible study choices. The big shift is introducing a four-year bachelor's degree and stopping M. Phil. programmes. The goal is to change the education system by 2040. Four-year degrees start in 2020-21, and M. Phil. won't take new students. This policy aims for good education for everyone. It wants learners to know about human rights, sustainable development, and global well-being. It focuses on learners' overall growth, technology use, vocational training, and teacher improvement. It wants better, practical tests, not just memorizing. Teachers should assess regularly, not just at the end. It suggests using diverse tests like projects, presentations, and reducing importance of big examination. Technology can help for fair assessments. Overall, it's about making a better, broader way to evaluate students.

NEP -2020 aims to change how India teaches by focusing on whole-picture learning, mixing various subjects, and promoting multidisciplinary education to help students explore diverse fields (Soni,2023). In 2030, India plans to establish multidisciplinary universities in each district, transforming education. Emphasizing diverse subjects like sciences, arts, and sports, this approach offers students more choices, flexibility, and career options. It fosters critical thinking, leadership, and social awareness, aiming to drive holistic development and sustainability (Bai, 2022). At Amity University, they effectively implement flexibility through a credit system that lets students choose, cater to various career needs, create courses aligned with industry demands across different fields, and enhance education by adding extra courses, life skills, and a strong mentorship Programme (Shukla et al., 2022). Karnati (2021) found that institutions should invest more time, energy, and

money in multidisciplinary education, benefitting both teachers and students in the short and long term. NEP-2020's primary goal is to focus on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary education. It highlights holistic learning, ensuring children have fair access to curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular subjects and activities (Mantry, 2023). Following the NEP 2020 guidelines, West Bengal has initiated a Curriculum and Credit Framework (CCF) this academic session. This framework aims to broaden students' knowledge and skills for an ever-changing world by encouraging the study of diverse subjects. Multidisciplinary Courses (MDC) constitute a crucial element in the new curriculum designed for undergraduate students.

Multidisciplinary Courses: A conceptual Framework

India's new education plan, NEP 2020, is a big step in updating how students learn. It focuses on holistic growth by exploring lots of knowledge areas. NEP- 2020 has ways to make this happen. Firstly, it wants different schools and places of learning to team up and share knowledge. Secondly, it wants to blend traditional Indian knowledge with modern lessons. Lastly, it wants courses that cover many fields, like math, science, arts, technology, and humanities. Multidisciplinary education means learning from different areas and ideas. It helps students see the bigger picture and connect different things they learn. NEP-2020 wants this to become a usual way of learning for all students in India. This type of learning lets students pick from many topics, like a Political Science student who also wants to learn economics or a math student who wants to study coding. This way of learning doesn't just give students more choices. It helps them see things from different sides and form their own ideas. NEP- 2020 aims to make this kind of learning normal for everyone in India. It can help create a new group of smart and creative thinkers.

According to the Admission Regulations for the semester-wise Three-Year B.A./B.Sc. (Multidisciplinary, under CCF, 2022) Courses offered by the University of Calcutta, the prescribed course structure is as follows:

Disciplines of Multidisciplinary courses for B.A./B.Sc.:

- (i) **Humanities Discipline:** History, English, Bengali, Ancient Indian & World History, Islamic History and Culture, Hindi, Urdu, Russian, Political Science, Sanskrit, Pali, Philosophy, Sociology, Education, Arabic, Persian, Journalism & Mass Communication, French, Music, Linguistics, Physical Education, Human Rights, Women Studies.
- (ii) **Science Discipline:** Physics, Zoology, Chemistry, Botany, Molecular Biology, Microbiology, Geology, Geography, Physiology, Defence Studies, Computer Science, Electronics, Bio-Chemistry, Physical Education, Environmental Science, Economics, Statistics, Mathematics, Anthropology, Psychology, Film Studies.
- (iii) **Home Science Discipline:** Food & Nutrition, Household Art, Human Development, Social Science, Home Science Extension Education, , Library and Information Studies.

Outline of Curriculum and Credit Framework (CCF): Category of subjects:

A) Core Course (CC): Courses, to be compulsorily studied by a student as the requirement of Core subjects. In order to make different Multidisciplinary subject combinations, the subjects of all the discipline have been taken together to create 8 smaller Multidisciplinary pools. The student shall select 2 subjects as core subjects taking not more than one subject from each pool.

B) Minor: A subject to be studied by the student with lesser number of courses than the two core subjects.

C) Ability Enhancement Course (AEC): AEC courses are the courses based on the knowledge of languages. There shall be two AEC Courses: a) Compulsory English b) MIL/ Alternative English. MIL includes: Bengali, Hindi & Urdu.

D) Skill Enhancement Course (SEC): These courses are designed to provide skill-based knowledge and are aimed at providing competencies, skills etc. SEC courses are based upon skill enhancement. The students shall study 3 SECs 2 from each of 2 core subjects in 1st and 2nd semester respectively and in 3rd semester 1 SEC from the Minor subject.

E) Practical/ Tutorial: All courses other than AEC & CVAC will have one Practical/ Tutorial. Wherever there is a practical, there will be no Tutorial and vice-versa. P/TU components in SECs will be as mentioned in the syllabus of the respective subject.

F) Common Value Added Course (CVAC): These courses are based on Knowledge of Human & Social Values. There shall be 4 CVAC courses of 2 credits each. In the 1st semester there shall be 1 compulsory CVAC in ENVIS & one compulsory CVAC in Constitutional Values. In the 2nd semester there shall be 1 compulsory CVAC in ENVIS & the students shall select the other CVAC from a pool of courses.

G) Summer Internship: All the students are required to do one 3 credits Summer Internship at the end of the 2nd or 4th or 6th semester. Students completing Internship at the end of the 2nd semester will be allowed to take exit from the course and will be awarded Certificate of 45 (42+3) credits. Students completing Internship at the end of the 4th semester will be allowed to take exit from the course and will be awarded Diploma of 88 (85+3) credits. Students completing Internship at the end of the 6th semester and after successful completion of all the 6 semesters will be awarded B.A./ B.Sc. Degree of 128 (125+3) credits.

H) Inter Disciplinary Course (IDC): There shall be 3 IDCs of 3 credits each, to be studied in the first 3 semesters. The students shall select IDCs from the subjects other than the concerned core subjects & minor, not more than one from the each of the Multidisciplinary pool (clause no. 12). [Source: <https://www.caluniv.ac.in/ccf-ug/ccf-ug.html>]

Objective: The objective was to examine the perceptions of undergraduate students regarding MDC.

Methodology: A Descriptive Survey method was employed, with 267 self-selected undergraduate students participating in the study via Google Forms. The samples are the first semester students of Udaynarayanpur Madhabilata Mahavidyalaya chosen MDC for UG level. The study's investigator developed a 3-point rating scale to gather data on various aspects of MDC, covering five dimensions: Difficulty Level, Institutional Infrastructure, Importance, Student Motivation, and Career Opportunities. The tool consisted of ten items with ratings categorized as Yes, Undecided, and No. Weightage was assigned from 0 to 2 for positive items and 2 to 0 for negative ones. The set norm categorized perceptions as follows: 8-12 for average, above 12 for positive, and below 8 for negative perceptions. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted.

Data Analysis

The gathered data has been illustrated in the subsequent tables and analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Table -1(Samples by Gender)

	Number of Sample	Percentage (%)
Male Student	89	33.33
Female Student	178	66.67
Total	267	100

Table -1 indicates that there are more female participants compared to male students.

Table -2 (List of Items with responses)

SL. NO. & Nature of Items	Items	Responses
1 Negative Item	The course structure and syllabus designed for MDC are quite complex.	Yes=46.7% No=20% Undecided=33.3%
2 Negative Item	The number of papers/courses in the Multidisciplinary Course is quite high, and the total marks are also substantial.	Yes=70% No=13.3% Undecided=16.7%
3 Negative Item	For the Multidisciplinary Course, our college lacks the required number of subject-specific teachers.	Yes=26.7% No=23.3% Undecided=50%
4 Negative Item	According to the syllabus of the Multidisciplinary Course, there are not enough textbooks and reference books available.	Yes=29.96% No=43.82% Undecided=26.22%
5 Positive Item	As a result of the implementation of the Multidisciplinary Course, one has to study many subjects. Consequently, it's possible to acquire knowledge in several areas.	Yes=73.41 No=23.59% Undecided=3%
6 Negative Item	There is difficulty in focusing on one's preferred subject.	Yes=70% No=16.7% Undecided=13.3%
7 Positive Item	We have appropriate classrooms, library books, laboratories, etc., in our college for the Multidisciplinary Course.	Yes=56.7% No=33.3% Undecided=10%
8. Positive Item	The Multidisciplinary Course will be very helpful for the future careers of the students.	Yes=50.94% No=49.06% Undecided=00%
9 Negative Item	The Multidisciplinary Course is not a new concept.	Yes=52.06% No=17.94% Undecided=30%
10 Positive Item	In the Multidisciplinary Course, there's integration among various subjects.	Yes= 16.7% No=70% Undecided=13.3%

The table above indicates that students hold negative perceptions about various aspects of the course, including the course structure and syllabus designed for MDC, the increased number of papers and examination marks, the adequacy of teachers, the difficulty level of the courses, the novelty of the course, and its multidisciplinary nature. Conversely, students responded positively regarding the institute's infrastructure, highlighting the availability of library books, laboratory facilities, and the opportunity to learn various subjects for future prospects. However, students seem to be somewhat confused and less motivated for in-depth study in preparation for the upcoming examinations.

Table-3 (Norm and students perceptions)

Perceptions	Norm	Responses
Positive Perceptions	Score Above 12	16.10% (43 students)
Negative Perceptions	Score Below 8	65.17% (174 students)
Average Perceptions	Score between 8-12	18.73% (50 Students)

Table- 3 shows that only 16% of students have positive perceptions of MDC, while 65% hold negative perceptions. However, nearly 19% of students express confusion about the courses.

Results

The findings revealed that 65% held negative perceptions (scoring below 8), 19% had average perceptions, and only 16% expressed positivity towards MDC. The study suggests that while Multidisciplinary Courses offer exposure to diverse disciplines and potential career benefits, they pose complexity and difficulty for undergraduate students. The institution's infrastructure, particularly concerning adequate teaching staff, conducive learning environments, and supportive administrative attitudes, was found to be unsatisfactory. Students expressed confusion regarding examination guidelines but were satisfied with the college's library books and laboratory facilities. Despite aspirations for a brighter future through MDC, students exhibited less motivation towards the course structure and in-depth study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings from the study illuminated the challenges students encounter in comprehending and adjusting to the new Curriculum and Credit Framework. Despite these difficulties, they hold optimistic expectations for a promising future and enhanced prospects attributed to the multidisciplinary nature of the curriculum. In light of these revelations, it becomes evident that clear and timely guidelines are crucial for ensuring the seamless implementation of the Multidisciplinary Course (MDC). The presence of adequate institutional infrastructure, the availability of full-time teachers, and the creation of conducive learning environments emerge as pivotal factors essential for the successful execution of MDC at the undergraduate level.

Moreover, cultivating and nurturing ongoing interactions among students, teachers, policy makers, and guardians stands as an indispensable cornerstone in ensuring the successful implementation of multidisciplinary courses. One effective approach to facilitate this collaboration could involve organizing frequent workshops and seminars within colleges. These platforms can serve as vital arenas for constructive dialogue, idea exchange, and knowledge-sharing sessions among stakeholders. Such proactive engagement goes beyond addressing immediate challenges; it acts as a conduit for aligning the MDC framework with the continually evolving needs and aspirations of students. These interactions provide an invaluable opportunity to gain insights into the students' perspectives, allowing for adaptations and improvements that resonate with their educational journey. This collaborative approach not only bolsters the implementation process but also nurtures an environment conducive to sustained efficacy in multidisciplinary education. It fosters a culture of openness, where the collective input from various stakeholders leads to a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic requirements within the multidisciplinary learning landscape. Therefore, creating a robust system of frequent workshops, seminars, and interactive platforms emerges as a strategic move toward not just the effective implementation, but the ongoing enhancement and refinement of multidisciplinary education within the academic setting.

Acknowledgment: No

Author's Contribution: *Mudassar Nazar Baidya*: Data Collection, Literature Review, Methodology, Analysis, Drafting, Referencing

Funding: No

Declaration/Consent for Publication: Not Applicable.

Competing Interest: No

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