

INTERNATIONAL CURRICULUM LAUNCHED BY C.B.S.E.-WORTHWHILE OR EYEWASH

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Abstract

Education has gained a whole new dimension in the changing times when parents are better-informed and want to be at the helm of the affairs. A decade old debate on CBSE vs. ICSE vs. IB has just widened a little with one more board called CBSE-i gaining prominence. Deciding a good school in itself is a harrowing and mind boggling experience, this new confusion of the right education board only adds to the already existing problem. Objective of this paper is to acquaint all the educationists out there with both well and lesser known facts about all these boards and help them analyse the strengths and challenges of CBSE-international curriculum.

Keywords: CBSE, ICSE, IB, CBSE-international curriculum.

CBSE stands for Central Board of Secondary Education. It is one of the most popular school boards in India. CBSE is recognized by Indian Government, all Indian Colleges and Universities. CBSE envisions a robust, vibrant and holistic school education that will engender excellence in every sphere of human endeavour. The board is committed to provide quality education to promote intellectual, social and cultural vivacity amongst its learner, work towards evolving a learning process and an environment which would prepare the learners as future citizens to become global leaders and provide stress free learning environment that will produce competent, confident and enterprising citizens who will promote harmony and peace.

Need for C.B.S.E-International Curriculum: The CBSE has the mandate of initiating CBSE-i as per its Manual of Rules and Regulations. So, in order to cater to the diverse needs of its students and to provide a globally sensitive curriculum that would help Indian learners either to pursue their higher studies in countries abroad or interact meaningfully with global markets for ensuring active participation in the development process, Shri Kapil Sibal, Union Minister for Human Resource Development launched the CBSE-i curriculum at the Indian High School, Dubai. Initially in the academic year 2010-2011, it was being subscribed by about 25 schools (like Indian High School, Dubai; Global Indian International School, Singapore; Shantiniketan Indian School, Doha-Qatar and so on) in middle-east and South-Asia (UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Singapore, Malaysia and Japan) as a pilot project for classes I and IX. The Board then reviewed and extended it to other schools abroad in the second phase and to select Indian schools in the next phase.

Objectives

- To acquaint the educationists with the salient features of CBSE-i Curriculum.
- To study the curricular differences between different school boards in India: CBSE, ICSE and IB.
- To critically analyse the strengths, shortcomings and challenges in front of the international curriculum launched by CBSE.

Foundation of CBSE-i: CBSE-i delivers education on the pattern of the Geneva-based International Baccalaureate (IB) - understood to help students get into top international universities faster but it is a less expensive and quality oriented course and it an alternative to some of the international courses. Association of Indian Universities (AIU) has already given recognition to CBSE-i. It has been designed keeping in view foundations of NCF (2005). The Parents and Students corner to facilitate two-way communication between the students and parents is also a special feature of CBSE-i.

Key features of CBSE i: Enquiry and skill based curriculum: team work, independent enquiry, self-evaluation, problem solving, time management, effective communication and critical/creative thinking. It focuses upon Catering to individual learning styles, Learner and learning centric, Enabling constructivist approaches: hands-on, collaborative, project-based, tasked-based, Focus on experiential learning, Focus on analysis and discovery approach, Focus on real world experiences

CBSE i curriculum: Five learning areas which intersect in a trans- interdisciplinary approach are includes Languages, Social studies, Math and Technology, Science, Physical education, Performing arts and Visual arts, Core:

Perspectives-skills, SEWA and Research

Languages: The students will study two languages up to class V: English, Hindi or mother tongue or any other foreign language, three languages from VI-VIII and two languages at IX and X. The language curriculum aims to develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills through innovative practices like storytelling and role play, reading aloud (with proper stress and intonation). Anjali Chhabra, education officer at the CBSE in New Delhi told India Real Time that foreign language options could include French, Russian, Spanish, German and Portuguese. World literature will also have greater space in this curriculum. Students would be expected to read authors from all around the world in English and in translation ranging from Anita Desai to Franz Kafka to Leo Tolstoy.

Social Studies: Social Studies are referred to as Environmental Education for I and II: combination of Physical Environment, Geographical Environment, Cultural Environment and Social Environment. In classes III to V students study a combination of Geography and Social and Political Structure while in classes VI to X, it crystallizes into various disciplines of learning such as History focusing largely on world history along with local / native history, Social and Political Structures, Geography and Economics. Social Studies curriculum aims to promote human understanding, dignity and foster effective citizenship and concepts of International Peace by interactive methods like discussions, critical reviews of historical and social events. It also equips the learner with appropriate knowledge of global orders, variances in geographical, developmental patterns, growth processes which impact native living practices, professions, economy and cultural thought processes. Ms. Chhabra, in an interview, with India Real Time, revealed that subjects will be taught with a more global perspective. "Instead of simply studying the history of India, students will get a chance to explore the city or state in which they live," she said.

Mathematics and Technology: All students will study Mathematics till class X. For classes I to class VIII the focus is on developing core mathematical skills whereas in class IX X, there will be a choice between Core and a Higher Elective Mathematics. The mathematics curriculum helps to develop strategies that improve their logical thinking and analytical ability including Computational Skills of approximation, estimation, reasoning and logical and spatial intelligences. It is designed to integrate mathematical skills (concepts) with other disciplines of learning like science and

contextualising mathematical concepts to problem solving situations. The Mathematics Lab activities will be an integral and compulsory part of the Mathematics curriculum and will be assessed from classes VI to X. Information and Communications Technology is a compulsory component of the curriculum. The focus of this program is to help students understand and use common software applications to enhance their ability to assess, evaluate and research information.

Science: In classes I and II, Science is covered as Environmental Education- combination of four dimensions: Physical Environment, Geographical Environment, Cultural Environment and Social Environment. From classes III to V Science is treated as General Science whereas in classes VI to X Science is studied as individual disciplines of Physics, Chemistry and Biology. An extension programme called 'Breakthroughs' which will familiarize students with current trends of scientific thinking, developmental processes, current developments such as telecommunications, the genome project, and new age materials like recyclable plastics etc. The main focus of the Science Curriculum is to nurture scientific aptitude and thinking through observation, analysis, reasoning and independent judgement and facilitate Experiential learning by hands-on tools and project orientation. It also aims at developing research orientation to totally de-emphasise rote learning in science.

Physical Education, Performing Arts and Visual Arts:

Physical education curriculum: Physical education will be a compulsory element from class I-X. It will not be formally examined at the end of the year but graded on the basis of students participation and teachers' observation. It contributes to Physical fitness, bringing synergy between body, mind, spirit and promote mastery of coordinated and skillful movement and also helps to foster sportsmanship on and off field and make students understand growth dynamics of the body and mind. Children will be motivated to perform activities like balancing, walking on different pathways, such as straight line, circle, triangle and square. Walking backwards, walking and stopping in a space on command, walking on toes and heels. This will help improve coordination, agility and balance.

Performing art curriculum: Performing art curriculum provides a means for personal expression and articulation of ideas and developing social and communication skills through creative teamwork. It helps to

nurture creative expressions, aesthetics, intuitive thinking, imagination and harmony. Children will learn about various instruments, identify them by their sounds and appreciate the depth of music. It will also help them to improve concentration.

Visual arts program: From classes I-V, all students experience the art of music, dance and theater. From classes VI-X, each student opts for one learning area from performing arts and one from visual arts. This element of curriculum will not be formally examined at the end of the year but graded on the basis of student's participation and teachers' observation. It is aimed at helping the students learn to appreciate art of different cultures as well as native arts.

Children will use their imagination and creativity to draw different things (rainbow) and colour them: help to understand more about colours and categorize the colours into primary and secondary colours.

Core of curriculum: Perspectives: Perspectives: Life Skills, SEWA (Social Empowerment through Work and Action), and Research. All the elements of the Core except Life Skills will be commented upon and are not examinable.

The Life skills Programme: Life skills Programme will be able to help students lead balanced, happy and successful lives. This program focuses on inculcating Creative, Critical Thinking Skills, Interpersonal Skills, Effective Communication Skills, Problem-Solving Skills, Decision Making Skills, Conflict Resolution skills, Cooperation, Leadership Skills among the students.

SEWA (Social Empowerment through Work and Action): From class I - X all students will be part of a program of community service every year with an NGO or development organization of their choice. Students will keep a journal of their association and a log of their hours spent meaningfully in Social Empowerment through SEWA. It is based on the idea of "learning to live together". The main focus of this programme is to develop social consciousness of the learners so that they realise that no person is an island and must live as confident, competent and contributive citizen of a vibrant society. SEWA will encourage children to donate the old toys, storybooks to less privileged children. The SEWA Philosophy is social or community service; includes environmental and international projects inspired by word 'Seva'. The minimum SEWA hours for Class 1-3 are 30 hours.

Research: Research will be initiated from class VI onwards. It will include research or extended writing on a programmed topic chosen by the students, cross curricular in

nature and will provide opportunity to use experiences from Perspectives.

Assessment strategies: Learners registered for CBSE-i will be evaluated on the basis of Continuous and comprehensive evaluation from classes I-X (as recommended for national curriculum). Wherever feasible, "online" evaluation will be followed.

Guidelines for schools following CBSE-i curriculum: The school will

- Follow the curriculum of CBSE-i in classes I and IX initially from the aforesaid academic session.
- Provide special facilities (i.e. classrooms, laboratories, library, use of technology) for classes following the syllabus of CBSE/NCERT and CBSE-I within the existing structure.
- Provide separate classrooms for students enrolled for CBSE-i.
- Have qualified teaching staff with 3 years of teaching experience as per provisions affiliation bye-laws of the CBSE.
- Maintain teacher student ratio of 1:20 for each section and class following CBSE-i curriculum.
- Depute teachers selected for CBSE-i to attend a training programme organized by CBSE as and when required.
- Submit an application in the prescribed enclosed format before commencement of the international course.
- Teachers will follow Continuous Professional Development through teacher training on a consistent and sustainable basis. Training will be given by CBSE.
- The ministry has proposed that the annual course registration fee will be Rs1.5 lakh.

Differences between CBSE and CBSE-i: The entire course will be totally online. The entire curriculum will be taught through e-books, will include more foreign languages and different syllabi for other subjects. Beneficial for students who want to pursue their higher education abroad.

CBSE-i in tune with IB: IB board is very versatile and practical oriented. It follows a different approach where there are no prescribed textbooks and kids are free to explore. The focus of the IB pedagogy is on "how to learn" rather than "what to learn". The educational system of IB has three broad programs:

1. PYP (Primary Years Programme): KG to Class 5.
2. MYP (Middle Years Programme): Class 6 to 10.
3. DP (Diploma Programme)

There are two kinds of IB assessments: External and

Internal: to assess the student's true ability. IB students, compete well in exams which require little rote learning and higher degree to analytical skills like CAT, SAT, GRE. The educational worth of the Diploma Course IB program is unsurpassable; equipping the child with the right skills to cope with stringent University education, revealing to them that learning is not a 'one text book' affair but a compilation of knowledge from different sources and points of view, which is to be interpreted rather than reproduced.

CBSE i curriculum is also very competitive and doesn't promote rote learning. Learning will be encouraged through various hands on activities, role-play, storytelling, observations etc.

CBSE takes the cake over ICSE: Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) is a self-financing educational institution like CBSE. CBSE has an edge over ICSE as CBSE is recognized by Indian Govt. and colleges and is more prevalent. Heavily laden syllabus of ICSE makes it even worse. Competitions and Scholarship exams held at local and national level base their content on CBSE syllabus. ICSE is ahead of CBSE as the former lays more stress on good command over languages, in being more liberal and also gives a good choice of subjects. ICSE is suggested for pursuing career in Management (MBA).

Challenges in front of CBSE-i: The board has high powered Committee constituted by the Chairman who has been involved in conceptualising and designing CBSE-i. This Committee would monitor the essentials required for successful implementation.

Preparation of the textbooks: At the primary level: The board will provide teacher-resource materials and worksheets which would be open ended and suggestive so as to facilitate effective learning in classrooms. For higher classes: the need and role of textbooks will be examined in due course.

Examination bylaws for the international curriculum: Schools affiliating to CBSE-i will be covered by the current examination bylaws of the board. However, the board will provide for necessary changes covering the CBSE-i curricula as and when required.

Training to teachers: The board is planning to provide training programs to teachers shortly covering the philosophy, context, methodology and evaluation issues. The board will also provide teacher support materials for guidance as self-learning modules and in the form of online teacher support groups.

Challenges for Students: In schools offering CBSE-i, the students can opt for CBSE-i. Those students who are admitted to class I and IX in the current academic session from other schools are also eligible to take up the CBSE-i. The students migrating from schools, who have opted for CBSE-i, can take up the national curriculum in the new school. Whereas students studying in class IX in the national curriculum, will not be permitted to switch over to CBSE-i in class X; as such they would be required to complete a course of study of two years for appearing in class X examinations under CBSE-i. As far as the equity of opportunities is concerned, the students under both CBSE and CBSE-i will be given equal weight age for participating in all competitions. CBSE-i will also cater to different kinds of learners and differently abled learners. CBSE-i will follow all provisions of rules and regulations of the board for the students under inclusive learners' category.

Challenges in front of Schools: Schools offering CBSE-i are not required to appoint a separate Principal but are advised to appoint or delegate responsibility to an academic supervisor to work as a CBSE-i Co-ordinator for monitoring effective transaction of the curriculum. Schools are not permitted to appoint part-time teachers to handle the class under the CBSE-i, only qualified and trained full time teachers are required to handle these classes.

Discussion

Critique-CBSE i:

How can an Indian school justify the claim of International Education when the building is the same, the teachers are the same and the students are all the same just as the same mixture as in a CBSE classroom?

It is the "way of teaching" which should be different. All the methods of teaching, which, CBSE-I plans to adopt, hint towards a paradigm shift from rote learning, but the same has been already emphasised by CBSE.

How will this new avatar of CBSE win the faith of parents, when it has yet to get acceptance and equivalence at international level?

So, is it wise to spend such an exorbitant amount of money on CBSE-I? Rather, if you want International Education go to an International school, go for the real deal. Logically, If the child was to pursue education outside India he/she will go to a British/American School (the IB or the IGCSE /the British GCSE: International general certificate of secondary education) and if going back home for further

education will opt for CBSE Indian. Where does this CBSE-i fit in???? Moreover, what is the logical and rational explanation to defend the blame that CBSE-i is just another gimmick to fleece more money from gullible parents?

Conclusion

If you can afford the best then why not offer your child the best. But it is important to ascertain how international the school is, before taking a decision. Intelligence lies not in imitation but in making connections and extrapolations, and enabling the child to see similarities between cultures and gain a healthy respect for humankind with all its differences, an international school is the one for your child. Considering the pedantic and lackluster attitude of the national curriculums, international education offers

a fresh outlook towards the changing needs of a learner. There is no denying that International education prepares your child for a multicultural future, and the same if provided in India, offers the best of both worlds - the traditional and modern.

References

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