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New Paths to Understanding History: Transforming Undergraduate History Curriculum in Kerala

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Abstract

Kerala has long been recognised for its innovative educational achievements, particularly its commitment to equity, universal access, and academic creativity. Within this context, history education plays a crucial role in fostering civic engagement, ethical awareness, and critical thinking. However, conventional undergraduate history curricula in Kerala have often remained constrained by fact-centred, linear pedagogies, offering limited scope for interdisciplinarity, skill integration, and methodological innovation. Recent reforms in undergraduate degree programmes, inspired by the broader objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, provide an opportunity to rethink history education in response to contemporary academic and societal demands. This study examines how curricular restructuring in Kerala's undergraduate history programmes integrates interdisciplinarity, outcome-based learning, digital tools, and skill development to transform historical instruction. Using comparative curriculum analysis, the study draws on primary sources such as syllabi and academic handbooks, alongside stakeholder perspectives, to assess shifts in content, pedagogy, and learning outcomes. It highlights innovative curricular elements—including transdisciplinary courses, value-added modules, and skill-oriented components—that expand the scope and relevance of historical inquiry. The findings demonstrate a paradigm shift from rote memorisation towards research-oriented, inclusive, and globally aligned history education. The study also underscores the importance of sustained faculty development, infrastructural support, and policy coherence to realise the transformative potential of undergraduate history education in Kerala.

Keywords: Undergraduate Programme, History Education, Interdisciplinary Learning, NEP 2020, FYUGP 2024, Curriculum Development

1. Introduction

With the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP), Kerala, a state renowned for its innovative and equitable educational practices, is leading the way in putting the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 into practice. The study of history, which has long been seen to be crucial for developing critical citizenship, cultural awareness, and ethical reasoning, needs an immediate pedagogical revival in light of this changing environment. Conventional undergraduate history programs have had difficulty introducing students to the complexity of

the contemporary world because they are frequently constrained by chronological rigidity and content-heavy methods.

A revolutionary vision is presented by the FYUGP framework, which combines outcome-based learning, digital integration, skill development, and disciplinary depth with interdisciplinary breadth. This research investigates how the FYUGP model incorporates adaptability, civic significance, and future preparation into the curriculum, therefore redefining history teaching in Kerala. It examines the philosophical and institutional modifications that set FYUGP apart from earlier models such as CBCSS and evaluates how these differences enable students and teachers to view history as a dynamic, analytical, and socially grounded subject. By placing the history education inside the larger goals of NEP 2020, this study provides a current assessment of whether—and how—this new paradigm may generate graduates who are not just historically aware but also actively involved and professionally qualified.

1.1 Context and Rationale

Introduced under the context of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the Four-Year Undergraduate Program (FYUGP) signifies a paradigm change in higher education by substituting flexible, multidisciplinary, outcome-driven learning frameworks for inflexible, content-heavy curricular approaches. FYUGP intends to democratize education by providing various entry and exit points, including vocational and research tracks, and designing curriculum on real-world competences including critical thinking, digital literacy, ethical reasoning, and employability. The course promotes a liberal, internationally relevant undergraduate experience while attempting to break down the departmental divisions that have traditionally dominated Indian education.

History education plays an important role in the greater educational reform effort. Undergraduate history courses, which have traditionally been taught using a historically linear, politically focused narrative, have frequently promoted factual retention over critical engagement. In the face of rising social complexity, digital revolution, and altering global paradigms, history must be redefined as a dynamic instrument for comprehending power, identity, culture, and continuity. Interdisciplinary histories, which include caste, gender, ecology, technology, and ethics, are now required for informed citizenship and holistic education. FYUGP provides a timely and critical venue for such transformations.

1.2 Research Problem

The Choice-Based Credit Semester System (CBCSS) currently only represents a small pedagogical range after decades of curriculum reform. It is devoid of the adaptability, integration, and skill-orientedness that modern learners want. A gap between history curricula and changing academic, civic, and professional demands is highlighted by empirical data from curriculum evaluations and student input. This study highlights the pressing need to determine if the FYUGP framework effectively tackles these constraints and whether it can transform history instruction in Kerala's educational system into a more dynamic, multidisciplinary, and future-ready field.

1.3 Objectives

- To comparison CBCSS and FYUGP structures in undergraduate history education.
- To evaluate the curricular transformation in terms of content, pedagogy, learning outcomes, and employability.
- To identify challenges and propose recommendations for effective implementation.

2. Literature Review

Political centralism, factual retention, and chronological storytelling have long constituted the dominant pedagogical foundations of history instruction in India (Thapar, 2003; Krishna Kumar, 2004). While this approach has ensured narrative continuity and content coverage, it has also contributed to a constrained disciplinary framework that limits analytical reasoning, critical engagement, and interpretive competence among students (Rao, 2023). Studies on social studies and history pedagogy further indicate that excessive emphasis on factual recall often marginalizes higher-order cognitive skills, such as synthesis, evaluation, and contextual reasoning (Pratheesh, 2023; Pratheesh, 2024).

Global educational reforms have increasingly reimagined history education through interdisciplinary lenses, integrating perspectives on caste (Dirks, 2001), gender (Chakravarti, 2018), environment (Gadgil & Guha, 1995), and digitality (Presner, 2015). This shift resonates with contemporary scholarship on curriculum transformation, which stresses the need to connect disciplinary knowledge with social realities, ethical reasoning, and learner agency (Wineburg, 2001; Ludlow, 2019; van Eeden, 2020). In the Indian context, emerging research on civic competence and value-oriented education similarly underscores the importance of moving beyond content transmission towards reflective and socially responsive learning (Padath, 2025; Pratheesh & Reema, 2024).

Despite Kerala's reputation for progressive educational policies, recent evaluative reports (KSHEC, 2023; RUSA-SPD, 2025) suggest that the CBCSS model has reached a point of stagnation. Its continued reliance on outdated assessment practices, limited interdisciplinarity, and weak skill orientation has restricted curricular innovation. Empirical studies on undergraduate and secondary education in Kerala and comparable contexts indicate that such rigid curricular structures often fail to cultivate transferable skills, emotional competencies, and critical autonomy among learners (Pratheesh, 2024; Pratheesh & Francis, 2024). This context strengthens the argument for a new paradigm grounded in adaptability, competencies, and critical thinking, as envisaged under restructured undergraduate degree programmes aligned with NEP 2020.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, with its emphasis on holistic, learner-centred education, provides the conceptual foundation for this curricular transition. It advocates flexible programme structures, multiple entry–exit options, credit banking, and systematic CO–PO–PSO mapping to align learning outcomes with national academic and employability goals (UGC, 2022; Rao & Banerjee, 2023). Research on outcome-based education highlights that clearly articulated learning outcomes enhance curricular transparency, coherence, and pedagogical effectiveness (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Harden, 2007; Rao, 2023). In narrative terms, Pratheesh (2025a) and Antony and Pratheesh (2025a) observe that such outcome

alignment is particularly significant in undergraduate programmes aiming to balance disciplinary depth with professional readiness.

Within history education, the introduction of interdisciplinary and skill-oriented components—such as courses on “History of Medicine,” “Film and History,” GIS applications, museology, and oral history—offers contextual and practice-based learning opportunities. These initiatives align with broader research on skill enhancement and learning ecosystems, which emphasizes the role of institutional resources, including libraries and digital platforms, in supporting research-oriented and inquiry-driven pedagogy (Michael & Pratheesh, 2025; Pratheesh, 2024). Outcome-Based Education (OBE) further reframes history teaching from content delivery to competency development, encouraging student autonomy, cognitive calibration, and reflective engagement through the use of Bloom’s taxonomy in syllabus design (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Comparative experiences from liberal education models in Canada, the United Kingdom, and South Africa demonstrate how history curricula can be productively integrated with international studies, public policy, and digital humanities to enhance civic engagement and analytical reasoning (Wineburg, 2001; Ludlow, 2019; van Eeden, 2020). In this sense, the restructured undergraduate degree programme in Kerala follows a similar trajectory, repositioning history not merely as a humanities subject but as a critical resource for civic literacy, ethical reflection, and democratic participation. Scholarship on emotional intelligence and social learning further supports the view that such integrative curricula contribute to conflict resolution skills, collaborative learning, and socially responsible citizenship (Pratheesh, 2025; Pratheesh, 2025).

While national-level assessments generally express optimism regarding NEP-driven reforms (NITI Aayog, 2021; NCERT, 2020), discipline-specific evidence on how these reforms affect history education remains limited. Addressing this gap, the present study examines curriculum restructuring in Kerala’s undergraduate history programmes through syllabus analysis and stakeholder perspectives. By situating these changes within broader debates on curriculum design, skill development, and outcome alignment, the study provides an evidence-based framework for rethinking history education in the post-CBCSS academic landscape.

3. Methodology

The methodology used for this study is theoretically based on the goals of assessing the transformational potential of the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) in rethinking history teaching in Kerala. This study used a qualitative, comparative, and document-analytical methodology, drawing on a literature survey that emphasized the paradigm change from content-heavy to multidisciplinary, outcome-oriented, and skill-integrated education (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Rao & Banerjee, 2023). The study is designed to critically evaluate curricular designs, teaching-learning methodologies, and stakeholder experiences in the CBCSS and FYUGP models. It thus addresses the research question of determining the efficacy of FYUGP in overcoming the pedagogical and structural constraints of traditional history instruction.

3.2 Research Design

This study necessitates a qualitative, interpretive approach using the comparative curriculum analysis approach. It synthesizes empirical and policy-based data to examine how history education has been restructured under FYUGP and contrasts it with the pre-existing CBCSS model.

3.3 The Framework

The study analysed key documents such as the FYUGP syllabus in History, the Handbook for Master Trainers, RUSA-SPD research directives, and sample teaching plans from participating colleges. Secondary data included peer-reviewed studies on curriculum reform, national policy documents, and reports from education councils and journals. The data was analysed using thematic coding and CO-PO-PSO mapping comparisons to evaluate alignment between course content and learning outcomes. Tools and techniques used included comparative matrix design, document analysis protocol, and qualitative interview framework. Ethical considerations were maintained, as the research primarily involved document analysis and institutional data in the public domain, and anonymity and institutional confidentiality were strictly maintained in optional interviews or case-based content. No formal ethics clearance was required, but anonymity and institutional confidentiality were strictly maintained in optional interviews or case-based content.

4. History Pedagogy in Transition

Kerala's UG history curriculum has changed throughout time, moving away from rigid, discipline-bound training and toward a more adaptable, multidisciplinary, and outcome-driven approach. The goal of curriculum change under the 2009 Choice-Based Credit and Semester System (CBCSS) was to add flexibility. Nonetheless, the majority of history instruction remained conventional, with a focus on political events, chronological narratives, and Eurocentric viewpoints with little attention to critical analysis or local context (KSHEC, 2023; Handbook for Master Trainers, 2023). In addition to lacking clear learning objectives, CBCSS did not match its curriculum to analytical or employable abilities. Seldom were methods like intertextual analysis, digital archives, and oral history used. The Kerala Examination Reform Commission (2022) found that the CBCSS's history curriculum provided no opportunity for alternate assessment methods or research-based learning, which resulted in low student engagement and dwindling relevance. According to the Kerala Examination Reform Commission (2022), there was limited room for research-based learning or alternate evaluation methods in history classes taught under the CBCSS, which resulted in low student interest and declining employability.

The NEP 2020-aligned Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP), on the other hand, represents a significant shift in pedagogy and curriculum design. With the use of CO-PO mapping and Bloom's taxonomy, the approach combines the concepts of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) with precisely specified Course Outcomes (COs), Program Outcomes (POs), and Program-Specific Outcomes (PSOs) (UGC, 2022; University of Kerala, 2024). FYUGP history courses incorporate thematic and practical topics in addition to political chronology. This epistemological change is shown in papers such as Gender in Indian

History, History of Medicine, and Film and History. GIS, museology, and archive studies are examples of Value-Added Courses (VACs) and Skill Enhancement Courses (SECs) that combine academic research with experiential learning (Handbook for Master Trainers, 2023). Students can also pursue transdisciplinary learning across platforms and institutions thanks to the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC). In order to reconcile local educational objectives with international standards, history pedagogy increasingly integrates with digital technologies, environmental studies, and media (Draft FYUGP Regulations, 2024). Importantly, FYUGP encourages faculty autonomy (up to 20% syllabus adaptation) and ongoing internal evaluation techniques including presentations, peer review, and reflective assignments. These modifications bring back the civic role of history by fostering critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and debate based on facts. All things considered, FYUGP reinforces the history's pedagogical relevance in the liberal education framework of the twenty-first century by transforming it from static material delivery into dynamic, interdisciplinary, and skill-enriched learning in Kerala.

5. The FYUGP Model: Structure and Philosophy

To envision the transformative curricular architecture that seeks to overcome the limitations of rigid, discipline-bound models in Indian higher education, the FYUGP combines curricular flexibility, interdisciplinary exposure, digital integration, and outcome-based learning, with the goal of preparing graduates who are intellectually grounded and professionally competent. Modules that are both organized and flexible are important to FYUGP's curriculum design. The first four semesters comprise Foundation Courses, classified as:

- Value-Added Courses (VAC) that concentrate on ethics, gender, environmental sustainability, and Indian knowledge systems;
- Ability Enhancement Courses (AEC) in communication, language, and data skills;
- Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC) provide practical skills including digital literacy, research writing, and entrepreneurship.
- Multidisciplinary Courses (MDC) provide exposure to unrelated subjects, such as history students studying economics or environmental science.

Beyond the foundational phase, the third and fourth years (5th through 8th semesters) are dedicated to Discipline-Specific Core (DSC) and Discipline-Specific Elective (DSE) courses. These allow students to concentrate in their subject while taking electives that correspond to their thematic interests. In history, for example, DSEs might encompass gender history, economic history, or regional studies. This format emphasizes both depth and breadth, developing historical literacy as well as comparative and contextual understanding. The emphasis on capstone projects and research in the fourth year (Honours/Research track) is one of FYUGP's unique features. Through the creation of research questions, interaction with sources, and scholarly or applied results, these programs aim to connect academic knowledge with field-based inquiry. It makes the undergraduate degree a place for autonomous critical engagement and early research training.

FYUGP is philosophically based on the ideals of learner autonomy, creativity, and civic participation. It fosters interdisciplinary thinking by encouraging students to move between

fields and apply integrated knowledge to social problems. The Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) and the utilization of online and hybrid platforms promote digital learning and academic mobility. FYUGP reimagines undergraduate education as a flexible, ever-changing continuum that provides students with lifetime learning skills, historical perspective, and ethical judgment.

6. Curriculum Transformation in History

The new curriculum incorporates Outcome-Based Education (OBE), which shifts historical learning from passive material absorption to active intellectual engagement. Each course is now matched to three levels of learning outcomes:

- Course Outcomes (COs): What the student is expected to achieve at the end of a particular course.
- Programme Specific Outcomes (PSOs): Disciplinary competencies like critical historiography, archival methods, or cultural literacy.
- Programme Outcomes (POs): Broader graduate attributes including ethical reasoning, civic consciousness, analytical skills, and lifelong learning.

This result paradigm is consistent with Bloom's updated taxonomy, enabling a transition from fundamental information acquisition to higher-level abilities such as critical thinking, synthesis, and argumentation. History courses are now directly linked to ethical reasoning, interpretive debate, and historiographical approaches, which teach students how to assess sources, detect bias, and develop well-supported narratives.

6.1 Components of the New Curriculum

In CBCSS mode, the history curriculum is divided into four courses: core, elective, open, and complimentary. The core course is for history optional students, the elective is an internal choice, the open course is open to all, particularly students from other subjects, and the complimentary course is offered as an alleged subject for a course, such as history for economics main students. Whereas, FYUGP's curriculum architecture incorporates core, elective, skill-based, and interdisciplinary components, resulting in history instruction that is comprehensive, applicable, and adaptable.

Discipline-Specific Core (DSC) courses include foundational papers such as:

- Understanding History – introduces philosophy and methods of historical inquiry.
- Historiography – examines schools of thought and interpretation.
- Modern India – explores colonialism, nationalism, and modern state formation.

Discipline-Specific Electives (DSE) allow thematic deep-dives and regional specialization:

- Caste and Gender in Indian History,
- History of Kerala,
- Revolutions in the Modern World (French, Russian, Chinese),
- Economic and Environmental History.

Multidisciplinary Courses (MDC) expose students to border-crossing themes:

- History of Medicine – explores health and society through a historical lens.

- Film and History – examines historical representation in visual culture.

Value-Added Courses (VAC) and Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC) bridge disciplinary knowledge with practical application:

- Cybersecurity and Ethics,
- Gender Rights and Legal Frameworks,
- GIS in History,
- Museology and Heritage Interpretation.

7. Comparison: FYUGP vs. CBCSS in History

Kerala's transfer from the Choice-Based Credit and Semester System (CBCSS) to the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) marks a significant shift in the design and delivery of history education. Under the CBCSS paradigm, instruction was mostly content-focused and lecture-driven, with evaluations emphasizing memory over reflection. To improve student involvement and autonomy, FYUGP incorporates active learning approaches that use digital resources, field-based research, and continual internal evaluation. The level of interdisciplinarity has also changed significantly. Students have little opportunities to investigate history in connection to other subjects through CBCSS. Through Value-Added Courses (VAC), Multidisciplinary Courses (MDC), and opportunities for double majors or minor routes, FYUGP integrates interdisciplinarity at several levels, giving history students the chance to study gender studies, environmental science, data literacy, or legal frameworks. There were no explicit frameworks in place at CBCSS to specify or assess graduate qualities in terms of outcome orientation. With its well-defined Course Outcomes (COs), Program Outcomes (POs), and Program-Specific Outcomes (PSOs) mapped using Bloom's taxonomy, FYUGP, on the other hand, is based on Outcome-Based Education (OBE). This guarantees that critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and historiographical approach are developed in history classes. Soft skills were occasionally included in CBCSS's skill development through stand-alone programs. FYUGP equips students with useful skills like GIS, museology, and archival research by integrating Skill Enhancement Courses (SECs) and requiring internships, projects, and capstone study. Lastly, in contrast to the strict, sequential paper structure of CBCSS, FYUGP offers more flexibility through modular advancement, various departure points, and the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) system. When taken as a whole, these characteristics position FYUGP as a dynamic, learner-cantered paradigm that is revolutionizing undergraduate history instruction in Kerala.

6.2 Course Content Dynamics and Skill-Based Contemporary Education in FYUGP

The history course design in the FYUGP syllabus has been redesigned to emphasize interdisciplinarity, skill development, digital integration, and learner autonomy, marking a substantial shift from the previous CBCSS framework. The FYUGP model (2024) includes modular, multi-layered learning that is in line with NEP 2020's learner-centric vision, whereas the CBCSS syllabus (2022) maintained a framework focused on chronological narratives and theme history with little exposure to methodological or applied history. The dynamic course type structure is the foundation of FYUGP's innovation:

- Discipline-Specific Courses (DSC) maintain foundational rigor but are deeply conceptual and critically reflexive. For example, Understanding History, Formation of Human Settlements, and Gender through the Ages embed historiographical, epistemological, and methodological themes from Semester I itself. These reflect a shift from content dissemination to critical engagement and problematization.
- Discipline-Specific Electives (DSE), such as Dalit History, Global Narratives, and History of Famine in British India, allow students to specialize in sub-fields with social relevance, incorporating comparative, caste-gender, and environmental histories absent or underdeveloped in CBCSS.
- Multidisciplinary Courses (MDC) like History of Medicine, Film and History, and Epigraphy and Numismatics open avenues for cross-disciplinary insights, combining history with visual culture, science, and material culture studies—an opportunity not structured in CBCSS.
- The integration of Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC) and Value-Added Courses (VAC) represents perhaps the most transformative element. Courses like Digital History, GIS Applications in History, Museology, and Oral History Practice equip students with digital, spatial, and museographic competencies, aligned with 21st-century employability skills. CBCSS syllabi, by contrast, offered no systematic exposure to such practical tools or contemporary methodologies.
- FYUGP's emphasis on Course Outcomes (COs), Program Outcomes (POs), and Program Specific Outcomes (PSOs) ensures mapped learning goals and measurable achievement, using Bloom's taxonomy. In contrast, the CBCSS framework provided only loosely defined learning objectives without formal OBE alignment.

The FYUGP curriculum essentially represents a pedagogy that is socially grounded, technologically advanced, and intellectually rich. Students are prepared for employment in public history, education, media, policy, and cultural institutions by its framework, which also gives them the analytical, archival, communicative, and digital abilities they need for higher education. Despite its historical foundation, the CBCSS model lacked the framework necessary to support this kind of application-oriented and integrated learning. As a result, FYUGP represents a significant turn toward adaptable, future-ready history teaching.

Table 1: Structural Comparison of CBCSS and FYUGP History Curriculum

Component	CBCSS (pre-FYUGP)	FYUGP (post-NEP 2020)
Duration & Format	3 years, 6 semesters	4 years, 8 semesters with exit options (1/2/3 years)
Course Categories	Core, Elective, Open, Complementary	Foundation, VAC, AEC, SEC, MDC, DSC, DSE
Interdisciplinarity	Minimal (mostly within discipline)	High (via MDCs, minors, transdisciplinary modules)
Skill Orientation	Sparse or add-on workshops	Integrated: GIS, Museology, Digital History, Oral History (SEC/VAC)

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Pedagogy Style	Lecture-heavy, memory-based	Blended learning, interactive, outcome-based
Assessment Approach	End-semester dominate	Continuous internal assessment + final; CO-PO-PSO mapping
Research Exposure	Limited or delayed to PG level	Capstone project in 4th year; early research training
Flexibility and Exit Options	None	Multiple exits with certifications (1 yr), diplomas (2 yrs), degrees (3 yrs), honours (4 yrs)
Outcome Orientation	Vague or inconsistent	Structured via Course Outcomes (COs), Programme Outcomes (POs), PSOs
Digital Integration	Minimal	Core to pedagogy (GIS, Digital Archives, E-content, ABC portal)

(Comparison of structural, pedagogical, and curricular features between the traditional CBCSS model and the reformed FYUGP framework in undergraduate history education)

8. Digital Integration and Employability

The FYUGP history curriculum's explicit use of digital technologies and skill-based modules designed to improve employability in a variety of knowledge industries is among its most revolutionary features. The program acknowledges, in accordance with NEP 2020, that historical study has to go beyond conventional textual analysis and use digital platforms, geographical technologies, and data-driven inquiry. Students are introduced to technologies like Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for mapping historical data, evaluating spatial patterns, and recreating landscapes in courses like Digital History and GIS Applications in History. These abilities are becoming more and more important in the fields of cultural heritage mapping, urban planning, and catastrophe documenting. In a similar vein, courses on AI-assisted research and digital archives equip students to work with automated categorization systems, digitized manuscripts, and archival metadata—a change that brings history teaching into line with the changing needs of the digital humanities.

Additionally, students get instruction in digital storytelling, virtual exhibition design, and oral history documentation, preparing them for careers in public history, heritage interpretation, and educational media. These skills immediately contribute to career paths in government heritage organizations, publishing, journalism, museums, and policy analysis. Through the use of interactive and technologically advanced learning settings, FYUGP allows students to not only learn about history but also apply it to the creation of public material, narrative curation, and decision-making in the real world. A future-focused pedagogy where critical inquiry meets practical application is reflected in this fusion of technology and the humanities, guaranteeing that history graduates are not only knowledgeable but also professionally flexible.

8.1 Assessment Innovations in FYUGP History Curriculum

While the FYUGP framework emphasizes Outcome-Based Education (OBE) through CO-PO-PSO mapping, a deeper analysis of its assessment philosophy reveals a shift from summative, memory-based testing to more formative, process-oriented evaluations. Assessment under FYUGP is designed not merely to certify learning but to scaffold it—by aligning evaluation practices with critical thinking, interpretive reasoning, and practical skill acquisition.

Key innovations include:

- **Formative Assessments:** These include short reflective assignments, source analysis tasks, and digital discussion forums that provide real-time feedback and promote active learning throughout the semester.
- **Rubric-Based Evaluation:** Grading rubrics tied to specific Course Outcomes (COs) ensure transparency, consistency, and objectivity in evaluating essays, presentations, and capstone projects.
- **Peer and Self-Assessment:** Students are encouraged to engage in peer review of classwork and capstone drafts, fostering evaluative judgment and collaborative learning. Self-assessment logs and learning journals also support metacognitive development.
- **Reflective Portfolios:** A growing number of departments encourage reflective e-portfolios where students compile annotated work samples, field notes, research memos, and skill reflections—evidencing both academic and personal growth.
- **Alternative and Authentic Assessments:** Students are evaluated through podcasts, virtual exhibitions, digital storytelling, and oral history interviews—tools that measure creativity, archival handling, and communication skills in non-traditional formats.
- **Continuous Internal Evaluation (CIE):** A structured CIE component—comprising mid-semester tasks, presentations, quizzes, and seminar contributions—ensures that student progress is tracked longitudinally and that feedback loops are embedded.

Together, these practices redefine assessment as a learning-enhancement tool rather than a terminal filter. By integrating historical skills with employability and civic reasoning, FYUGP's assessment design reflects its broader goal of producing critically engaged and professionally competent graduates.

9. Field Feedback

The feedback from students and faculty reveals a significant difference between the CBCSS and FYUGP models. CBCSS students feel they miss out on interdisciplinary opportunities, while FYUGP students report high satisfaction and eagerness for further studies. Faculty members, including 30 history assistant professors, express confidence in FYUGP's innovative and skill-based nature, indicating a positive shift in pedagogical approaches. The FYUGP model is perceived as more conducive to student engagement and satisfaction compared to the traditional CBCSS model. The following analysis will reveal the trend.

Table 2: Interview Snapshots from Faculty and Students (Primary Source: N_330)

Group	Sample Size	Key Themes	Perceptions
CBCSS Students (3rd & 4th Sem)	100	Autonomy, Overload	Many students expressed a sense of loss for not being able to join FYUGP, citing its interdisciplinary nature as a significant advantage.
FYUGP Students (1st & 2nd Sem)	200	Innovation, Satisfaction	Students reported high levels of satisfaction and excitement about exploring further semesters, appreciating the innovative and skill-based approach of FYUGP.
History Assistant Professors	30	Infrastructure Gaps, Confidence	Faculty members showed confidence in the interdisciplinary and skill-based nature of FYUGP, indicating a positive shift in pedagogical approaches.

The study reveals a significant divide between CBCSS and FYUGP models in student experiences. CBCSS students expressed dissatisfaction with the rigidity of the CBCSS curriculum, while FYUGP students reported high satisfaction and excitement. The interdisciplinary nature of FYUGP reflects a desire for more autonomy in educational choices. Faculty confidence in FYUGP is also high, as it aligns better with contemporary educational practices and student needs. The findings suggest that curriculum reform is needed to incorporate more interdisciplinary options and greater student autonomy, which is crucial for fostering engagement and satisfaction in higher education settings. Conversely, the positive feedback from FYUGP students and faculty suggests that the new model effectively addresses challenges faced by traditional educational frameworks. These findings suggest that educational institutions must adapt to the evolving needs of students and faculty, ensuring curricula are flexible, inclusive, and conducive to active learning. This adaptability is essential for promoting student success and preserving the relevance of academic programs in today's educational landscape.

Table 3: Coding Themes Analysis (Primary Source – N=330)

Theme	Description	Examples from Feedback
Autonomy	The degree of freedom students feel in choosing their courses and learning paths.	CBCSS students felt restricted by the prescribed curriculum, while FYUGP students enjoyed more flexibility
Innovation	The introduction of new teaching methods and interdisciplinary approaches in the curriculum.	Faculty noted that FYUGP encourages innovative teaching practices, enhancing student engagement
Overload	The perception of excessive workload or pressure from the curriculum.	CBCSS students reported feeling overwhelmed by the traditional lecture-based format, contrasting with

		FYUGP's balanced approach
Infrastructure Gaps	The availability and adequacy of resources and support systems for students and faculty.	Faculty highlighted gaps in infrastructure that hinder the full implementation of innovative practices in CBCSS

The study reveals that the CBCSS model and FYUGP model have different coding themes. Autonomy is a key theme, highlighting the freedom students feel in choosing their courses and learning paths. CBCSS students feel restricted due to a prescribed curriculum, while FYUGP students enjoy greater flexibility in their course choices. This highlights the potential for increased student engagement and satisfaction. Innovation is another theme, focusing on new teaching methods and interdisciplinary approaches. Overload is a theme, referring to the perception of excessive workload or pressure from the curriculum. CBCSS students feel overwhelmed by the traditional lecture-based format, indicating a need for curriculum reform. Infrastructure gaps are a significant theme, referring to the availability and adequacy of resources and support systems for both students and faculty. Addressing these gaps can lead to improved educational experiences and outcomes, benefiting student learning. Overall, the study highlights the importance of autonomy, innovation, manageable workloads, and adequate infrastructure in shaping positive educational experiences.

While the FYUGP model introduces substantial pedagogical and curricular reforms, its transformative potential must also be evaluated through the lens of inclusion and equity. NEP 2020 emphasizes bridging educational disparities across caste, gender, geography, and socioeconomic status. However, preliminary stakeholder feedback suggests that FYUGP's impact on marginalized and first-generation learners remains uneven. Students from rural colleges and disadvantaged backgrounds often face barriers in accessing digital infrastructure, interdisciplinary options, and skill-based electives—core strengths of the FYUGP framework. Women students, particularly from socially marginalized groups, report constraints in pursuing research-intensive or field-based components due to institutional or familial limitations. To fully realize FYUGP's vision of democratized higher education, it is essential to ensure resource parity, culturally responsive pedagogy, and inclusive curriculum design that explicitly acknowledges structural inequalities. Further research is needed to assess the differentiated outcomes of FYUGP implementation across diverse learner demographics.

10. Challenges and Gaps

Under FYUGP, undergraduate history instruction was gradually restructured; nonetheless, a number of practical issues and structural flaws still exist. The necessity of thorough teacher preparation, especially in the areas of digital tools, GIS applications, interdisciplinary course delivery, and outcome-based evaluation procedures, is among the most pressing issues. Many faculty members find it challenging to adjust to FYUGP's interactive and technologically integrated teaching because they were taught under content-heavy approaches. The unequal allocation of academic resources across schools represents a second significant disparity. While well-funded, centrally located colleges can provide elective flexibility, digital labs, and

Skill Enhancement Courses (SECs), smaller institutions, particularly those in rural areas, struggle with staffing shortages, poor infrastructure, and limited access to online resources or digital archives.

Furthermore, delayed syllabus revisions, unclear assessments, and bureaucratic snags are frequently the consequence of misalignment between state and federal regulatory authorities, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and Boards of Studies (BOS). This discrepancy impacts the academic liberty offered to teachers and jeopardizes the uniform application of FYUGP rules. To close these gaps and guarantee that the flexibility, interdisciplinarity, and skill integration that are the intended benefits of FYUGP are distributed fairly throughout Kerala's higher education system, specific interventions in capacity-building, infrastructural finance, and academic coordination are needed.

11. Recommendations

Many strategic interventions are necessary to guarantee the fair and successful implementation of FYUGP in history education. In the first place, it is imperative that history teachers participate in ongoing capacity-building programs that emphasize digital pedagogy, interdisciplinary course design, outcome-based evaluation, and the use of research tools such as GIS and digital archives. Faculty will be better prepared to fulfil the curriculum's changing academic and technical needs as a result. The second step is to create institutional frameworks that facilitate interdisciplinary minor routes, which let students study history in conjunction with related fields like public policy, media, and environmental studies. Strong academic and administrative support must be provided in tandem with curriculum flexibility. Third, particularly at universities with limited funding, emphasis should be placed on investing in digital infrastructure, which includes virtual learning environments, databases, and e-resources. Multilingual material and open access repositories can help democratize knowledge even further. Last but not least, regular curriculum evaluations based on student input, employment trends, and academic standards should maintain the program's effectiveness. Such evaluations will guarantee ongoing academic rigor, relevance, and responsiveness within a framework for history teaching that is prepared for the future.

12. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Kerala's adoption of the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) represents not only a curricular shift but an epistemological rethinking of undergraduate history education. By embedding interdisciplinary thinking, digital fluency, and outcome-based structures, FYUGP offers a marked departure from the rigid, content-heavy CBCSS framework. However, beyond the technical enhancements, the reform also invites deeper scrutiny within broader educational and ideological currents. At its core, the FYUGP reconfigures history not just as a body of knowledge, but as a mode of inquiry—a move that aligns with global efforts to decolonize historical narratives and resist Eurocentric epistemologies. The inclusion of courses on Dalit history, gender, and regional studies repositions history as a tool for interrogating power, identity, and exclusion. Yet, the uneven implementation of such content across institutions underscores the persistent gap between curricular vision and pedagogical justice.

Simultaneously, FYUGP embodies features of neoliberal educational reform: modularity, portability (via the Academic Bank of Credits), and a growing emphasis on employability and skill certification. While these features democratize access and diversify outcomes, they also risk commodifying education, especially if critical engagement becomes subordinate to market utility. The challenge is thus to balance vocational preparation with the ethical, critical, and civic functions of history as a discipline. Furthermore, the integration of digital tools, peer-based learning, and capstone research reflects a turn toward constructivist pedagogy, which values student agency and reflexivity. However, this shift also exposes infrastructural and training deficits, especially in under-resourced colleges. Unless supported by sustained faculty development and equitable investment, the transformative goals of FYUGP risk reproducing the very inequalities they aim to dismantle. In sum, FYUGP presents a bold reimagining of history education in Kerala, but its success depends on how it negotiates the tensions between innovation and access, between global alignment and local relevance, and between critical pedagogy and credentialist imperatives. Future research must continue to evaluate its longitudinal impact, especially on marginalized learners and the academic identity of history itself in the evolving university landscape.

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