

CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM
in
Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University
- A Feedback Study

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PREFACE

“Evaluation is a continuous process, forms an integral part of the total system of education and is intimately related to educational objectives. It exercises a great influence of the pupil’s study habits and teachers’ methods of instruction and thus helps not only to measure educational achievements but also to improve it. The techniques of evaluation are means of collection evidence about the students’ development in desirable directions”.

Kothari Commission

India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world that stands second in terms of the higher education network. The University Grants commission (UGC) takes active part in formulating various guidelines and regulations from time to time to improve the higher education system and also to maintain the quality across the higher educational institutions in India. Recently the recommendations in the academic reforms made by the UGC led to the overall improvement in the higher education system. There must be flexibility and freedom in designing the examination system and evaluation methods according to the curriculum developed in Higher Educational Institutions.

The evaluation process in Indian education system plays an important role in teaching learning process, since there is a lot of diversity in the education system, the universities follow the multiple approaches in conducting the examinations, evaluation and system of grading. So, it is desirable to have an uniform grading system, which will facilitate the student’s mobility across and within the institutions. Therefore, there is a need to introduce the flexibility in education where the structure of the curriculum includes inter disciplinary, intra-disciplinary and skill-based courses. This can be possible when Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) is adopted. This is a semester system where the change in curriculum and change in the examination system take place and the UGC has formulated the uniform guidelines in the system

Dr. BRAOU adopted CBCS from the academic year 2017-18. This is a feedback study to understand the opinions of students on newly introduced Choice Based Credit System in Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University.

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1. INTRODUCTION

India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world that stands second in terms of the higher education network. The entire higher education ecosystem in India comprises around 1000+ universities and 42,000+ colleges imparting exceptional education. All these institutions fall under the purview of the Ministry of Education. University Grants commission (UGC) takes active part in developing National Education Policy. It also takes the responsibility in promoting Higher education in our country. Education plays a significant role in the development of a Nation. However, the present education system unable to impart the required skills in young minds. This is because our education system is very rigid and follow the percentage-based evaluation which obstructs the flexibility in selecting the subjects of their choice and their mobility to different institutions. Therefore, there is a need to introduce the flexibility in education system where the structure of the curriculum includes inter disciplinary, intra-disciplinary and skill-based courses. This can be possible when Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) is adopted.

1.1 Choice Based Credit System:

The Choice Based Credit System (henceforth CBCS) in India is a recent advent in the area of higher education. It tries to bring in the flexibility and aims at providing various options of study to the students. The CBCS made its recent entry into the fields of open education and bringing along with it a set of inquisitiveness among the student and the faculty alike to know about its implications in the open and distance learning (henceforth ODL).

The CBCS system tries to enhance the knowledge, skills and attitudes to face the dynamic and actively changing society as well as trying to encourage students to learn in an interdisciplinary manner. The system also tries to aim for inculcating values within students for generating employability among today's youth. On the recommendations of the 11th five-year plan, the new age of revolutions within education would focus mainly on introducing the CBCS system in higher education and making it mandatory for all higher-level courses.

The CBCS system has been, at times, lauded as ‘the cafeteria system’ in the western countries. Along with the 11th five-year plans and the recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission, the CBCS system was formed to bring in a new era of learning in higher education. Under this system, marks were replaced with grades, and instead of the yearly system that was prevalent, semester system was introduced in its place. Similar such systems are in place in other major institutions across the world, such as the European Credit Transfer System in universities in Europe, the National Qualification Framework in Australia, the Pan Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of Universities’ Credits, Credits Accumulation and Transfer System in UK among others.

The CBCS system aims for student mobility, and at the same time it provides students with the opportunity of learning core subjects along with soft courses of other departments simultaneously. Thus, under this new system of learning, the student pursues three types of courses- compulsory foundation courses, elective courses, and core subjects. The system tries to instil in students to use their creativity and build up their understanding based on theories, concepts, and a perspective based on two or more disciplines. The CBCS system aims for self-learning in its process, to provide students with more exposure to new areas of learning.

With a view to providing students’ mobility, the CBCS system also allows for the students of having the option of transferring their credits from one institution to the other. In the global age of new concepts of learning, the CBCS system tries to use ICT in its learning procedures to a great extent which further helps in developing the students’ personality, expand its understanding on certain topics, with an aim for creativity and in the long run an overall development of the personality to prepare them to face life’s challenges and in the process build up a strong career. The system tries to bring in a greater degree of student’s participation by aiming for group work, research as well as community work.

The CBCS system tries to adopt a proper grading system for assessing the students for measuring their performance. The courses under the system are arranged in a manner that relates to defined duration for each of the course. In the grading system developed under CBCS, there is no scope for giving definite marks, unlike earlier. Hence it can reduce the obsession with marks for each of the papers. This system aims solely at student-centred learning rather than a teacher-oriented education.

However, in spite of providing for certain benefits under the CBCS system, it also has its disadvantages related to absence of establishing a proper set up for ICT enabled learning,

non-availability of required resources for many colleges and universities to provide for a wide array of subjects to its students. In the process, rather than choosing for certain electives, the student has to opt for the courses provided by the institutions depending on the availability of various other factors. To provide the option of selecting one or the other courses also becomes a costly affair for the educational institutions because to maintain the true features prescribed under the CBCS system, the availability of resources pertaining to ICT enabled learning, teachers with various expertise related to different areas are some of the pre-requisites for aiming to implement the CBCS system in the true sense.

Thus, the new system is ridden with its own set of challenges as students as well as faculty try to cope up with the semester system which is so different from the yearly system that existed earlier. The CBCS is an excellent example for the universities to be able to come up with the required amount to be spent in the various universities and departments. The departments as well as the heads of the branches are hereby required to be able to be comfortable with the entire structure under the semester system.

1.1.1 Choice Based Credit System in Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University

The University is following the Choice based credit system from the academic year 2017 - 2018. The CBCS provides an opportunity for the students to choose their courses from the prescribed courses consists of Core courses, elective courses and skill-based courses. The evaluation process in CBCS follows the grading system. This grading system is very much useful for the students to move across the institutions within India. Since CBCS is interdisciplinary approach, it not only gives the students to choose their subjects, but also provides an opportunity to learn at their own pace to acquire knowledge and skills for better growth.

Advantages of Choice Based Credit System

- Shift in focus from the teacher-centric to student-centric education.
- Student may undertake as many credits as they can cope with (without repeating all courses in a given semester if they fail in one/more courses).
- CBCS allows students to choose inter-disciplinary, intra-disciplinary courses, skill oriented papers (even from other disciplines according to their learning needs, interests and aptitude) and more flexibility for students).

- CBCS makes education broad-based and at par with global standards. One can take credits by combining unique combinations. For example, Physics with Economics, Microbiology with Chemistry or Environment Science etc.
- CBCS offers flexibility for students to study at different times and at different institutions to complete one course (ease mobility of students). Credits earned at one institution can be transferred.

Disadvantages

- Difficult to estimate the exact marks
- Workload of teachers may fluctuate
- Demand good infrastructure for dissemination of education

1.1.2 Outline of Choice Based Credit System:

1. **Core Course:** A course, which should compulsorily be studied by a candidate as a core requirement is termed as a Core course.
2. **Elective Course:** Generally, a course which can be chosen from a pool of courses and which may be very specific or specialized or advanced or supportive to the discipline/subject of study or which provides an extended scope or which enables an exposure to some other discipline/subject/domain or nurtures the candidate's proficiency/skill is called an Elective Course.
3. **Discipline Specific Elective (DSE) Course:** Elective courses may be offered by the main discipline/subject of study is referred to as Discipline Specific Elective. The University/Institute may also offer discipline related Elective courses of interdisciplinary nature(to be offered by main discipline/subject of study).
4. **Dissertation/Project:** An elective course designed to acquire special/advanced knowledge, such as supplement study/support study to a project work, and a candidate studies such a course on his own with an advisory support by a teacher/faculty member is called dissertation/project.
5. **Generic Elective (GE) Course:** An elective course chosen generally from an unrelated

discipline/subject, with an intention to seek exposure is called a Generic Elective. P.S.: A core course offered in a discipline/subject may be treated as an elective by other discipline/subject and vice versa and such electives may also be referred to as Generic Elective.

6. **Ability Enhancement Courses (AEC):** The Ability Enhancement (AE) Courses may be of two kinds: Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses (AECC) and Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC). “AECC” courses are the courses based upon the content that leads to Knowledge enhancement; **i. Environmental Science and ii. English/MIL Communication.** These are mandatory for all disciplines. SEC courses are value-based and/or skill-based and are aimed at providing hands-on-training, competencies, skills, etc.
7. **Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses (AECC):** Environmental Science, English Communication/MIL Communication.
8. **Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC):** These courses may be chosen from a pool of courses designed to provide value-based and/or skill-based knowledge

1.1.3 Structure of CBCS at Undergraduate programme:

Undergraduate programme in CBCS consists of 6 semesters. Like any other university in

India, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open university also has 3-year degree programme spread over

to 6 semesters.

Structure of First Semester in First Year

Sl.No	Course title	Course type	credits
1.	Gender sensitisation	AEEC	2
2.	Science and technology	GE	2
3.	MIL (English/Telugu/Hindi/Urdu	LSC	3
4.	Optional-I	DSC-1A	5
5.	Optional-II	DSC-2A	5
6.	Optional-III	DSC-3A	5
	7 courses		25

Structure of Second Semester in First Year

Sl.No	Course title	Course type	credits
1.	Environmental Studies	AEEC	2
2.	Human society and development	GE	2
3.	MIL (English/Telugu/Hindi/Urdu	LSC	3
4.	Optional-I	DSC-1A	5

5.	Optional-II	DSC-2A	5
6.	Optional-III	DSC-3A	5
	7 courses		25

Structure of Third Semester in Second Year

Sl.No	Course title	Course type	credits
1.	Information Technology	SEC 1 COMMON	2
2.	Personality development and soft skills	SEC 2 COMMON	2
3.	English	LSC	3
4.	MIL(English/Telugu/Hindi/Urdu	LSC	3
5.	Optional-I	DSC-1A	5
6.	Optional-II	DSC-2A	5
	Optional-III	DSC-3A	5
	7 courses		25

Structure of Fourth Semester in Second Year

Sl.No	Course title	Course type	credits
1.	Skill Enhancement Course – 3 (Subject Specific)	SEC-3	2
2.	Skill Enhancement Course– 4(Subject Specific)	SEC-4	2
3.	English	LSC	3
4.	MIL(English/Telugu/Hindi/Urdu)	LSC	3
5.	Optional- 1	DSC-1 D	5
6.	Optional- 2	DSC-2	5
7.	Optional-3	DSC-3	5
	7 courses		25

Structure of Fifth Semester in Third Year

Sl.No	Course title	Course type	credits
1.	Optional -1	DSC-1 E	5
2.	Optional -2	DSC – 2 E	5
3.	Optional -3	DSC – 3 E	5
4.	Optional- 1 A/B/C	DSC-1 F	5
5.	Optional- 2 A/B/C	DSC-2 F	5
6.	Optional-3 A/B/C	DSC-3 F	5
	6 courses		30

Structure of Sixth Semester in Third Year

Sl.No	Course title	Course type	credits
1.	Optional -1	DSC-1 G	5
2.	Optional -2	DSC – 2 G	5
3.	Optional -3	DSC – 3 G	5

4.	Optional- 1 A/B/C	DSC-1 H	5
5.	Optional- 2 A/B/C	DSC-2 H	5
6.	Optional-3 A/B/C	DSC-3 H	5
	6 courses		30

1. DSC – Discipline Specific Core Course
2. DSE – Discipline Specific Elective Course
3. LSC – Language Specific Course
4. AECC – Ability Enhancement Compulsory Course
5. SEC – Skill Enhancement Course
6. GE – Generic Elective

1.1.4 Broad Features of CBCS Structure

There are total number of 40 courses of which 30 courses are compulsory with weightage of 75% and 10 courses are optional which carry weightage of 25%

Total credits are 160 where 118 are compulsory (74%) and 42 optional (26%). They are spread over as follows

- 1) DSECC: 18 compulsories
- 2) DSEC: 6 choices based
- 3) LSC: 8 compulsories
- 4) AECC: 2 compulsories
- 5) SEC: 4 (2 Compulsory and 2 choices based in the subject)
- 6) GE: 2 Compulsory

1.1.5 Semester workload

First 4 semesters will have 25 credits and 5th and 6th semesters have 30 credits.

2 credits (2X15=30 hours of study time)	-	4 to 6 units	-	1 to 2 blocks
4 credits (4X15=60 hours of study time)	-	6 to 8 units	-	2 to 3 blocks

5 credits (5X15=75 hours of study time)	-	10 to 12 units	-	3 to 4 blocks
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There is a practical component in science subjects. Therefore, one credit may be allotted for practical work. Then it will be like 4+1=5 credits or 3+1=4 credits.

For all programmes there are 25 credits for first to four semesters but for fifth and sixth semesters the credits are 30, where as in the case of science programmes, four credits for theory and one credit are allotted for practical work.

Courses having 5 credits have 12 academic counselling hours

Courses having 3 credits have 8 academic counselling hours and

Courses having 2 credits have counselling through Audio, Video and Teleconference mode

1.2 Role of Student support services:

Students support services is one of the most important branches in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open university. It provides services to the students through a network of 220 study centres spread over in two states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Students have the freedom to choose his/her study centre keeping in view the choice of their subjects and also the programmes offered by that particular study centre. The head of the study centre (we call it as Coordinator) look after to provide the counselling classes and gives the academic guidance to the learners. It is not mandatory on the part of the students to attend the counselling classes at study centres. But in the case of science subjects' students must attend the laboratory training where the science courses are offering at specified zonal centres. The branch is dedicated to offer services to the students from their entry to exit. There are various services offered by Student services branch (SSB).

Academic Counselling Hours

Course Credits	Academic Counselling Hours
Courses having 5 credits	12
Courses having 3 credits	8
Courses having 2 credits	

1.3 Audio Video Programme Recording centre

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open university has a well-equipped Audio video programme recording centre in the University. Apart from contact cum counselling classes, teaching takes place by using audio and video component. The services are as follows:

Media	Channel	Days	Time of Broadcast Telecast
Radio	All India Radio Hyderabad A	Monday to Saturday	6.25 pm to 6.40 pm
Video	DDYadagiri	Monday to Friday	5.30 am to 6.00 am
	MANA TV	Monday to Saturday	1.00 pm TO 2.00 pm
Teleconference	DD/Yadagriri	Sunday	2.00 pm 3.00 pm
Internet	Braou Youtube	24/7	24/7

1.4 Evaluation system in CBCS

Since the CBCS system involves the credit based, the grading system which is suggested by University Grants Commission (UGC) is as follows.

- The student evaluation system focuses on assessment of learning outcomes.
- The examination pattern is designed by taking note of weightage of credits and system of teaching learning methods of various courses.
- The CBSC courses are credit based,
- The absolute grading system as suggested by U.G.C. is followed.

The Grading Scale

Grading is the core of the CBCS, which reduces the subjective element of evaluation thereby preventing disadvantages to students. Grade is the index performance of the students in a course. Grade is the transformation of scaled marks secured by a student in a particular course. Grade point numerical weightage attached to each grade on a 10-point scale depending on the range of marks awarded in a course.

Letter Grade & Achievement	Grade Point	Range of Marks
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Scale		
O (Out Standing)	10	85.00 to 10.00
A+ (Excellence)	9	75.00 to 84.99
A (Very Good)	8	65.00 to 74.99
B+(Good)	7	55.00 to 64.99
B (Above Average)	6	50.00 to 54.99
C(Average)	5	45.00 to 49.99
P(Pass)	4	40.00 to 44.99
F(Fail)	0	Less than 40.00
Ab (Absent)	0	--

The Numerical marking system with semester end examinations along with assignments.

i. For Arts/Commerce/Social Sciences

1	2	3
Courses credits	Total Marks	Duration Exam
Courses having 5 credits	100	3 hours
Courses having 3 credits	60	2 Hours
Courses having 2 credits	40	1 1/2 hours

ii. For Science and other practical oriented courses

1	2	3	4	5
Courses	Total Marks	End Semester Marks	Practical Exam Marks	Duration of Exam
Courses having 4 credits	100	80	20	3 Hours

Note:

- In case of end Semester exams of the marks allocation will be suitably changed.
- The numbered score of marks for courses with less than 100 total will be converted to 10 points scale in the Grading Scale.

- iii. The SGPA (Semester Grade point Average) and CGPA (Cumulative Grade Point Average) pattern suggested by UGC will be followed to award grades to the students.

Need for the Study

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University practiced conventional annual system since its inception. Like many other universities in India, Dr. BRAOU also introduced Choice Based Credit System from the year 2017-2018 as it is mandatory as per the UGC. In Open University the students are heterogeneous in nature and diverse sections of the society. Therefore, there is a need to assess the students understanding and their difficulties in accepting CBCS system.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the main objectives of the study

- To understand the extent to which the student is aware about the CBCS system
- To understand the advantages as well as disadvantages of the system from the point of view of the student.
- To examine the difficulties, if any, for the students within the semester system
- To find out the level of student's satisfaction with the CBCS system
- To get the feedback from the students related to availability of study materials, ongoing counselling classes for the same
- To understand students' opinions related to various changes in the examination pattern under the CBCS system
- To assess the students' feedback in relation to various features of the system
- To understand the difficulties, if any, in relation to the prevalence of the CBCS system under ODL.

3. Review of Literature

The concept of Choice based Credit System or CBCS is a fairly recent one and as such much literature is not available. The study tries to bridge the gaps between the implementation of such a new system and the aspirations, needs of the students. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University is the first open university in India and also first open university

to adopt CBCS system. This is a feedback study focussing on its students in relation to the new semester system and the pattern of examination under CBCS which is the need of the hour. The study can act as a preliminary study wherein the feedback collected from the students under CBCS can lay the groundwork for future studies related to field of distance education.

4. Research Methodology

The present study is a feedback study and it relies on the data gathered through questionnaire method comprising of various topics related to the newly introduced CBCS system. Depending on the requirement of feedback data related to various topics covering the CBCS system, the study comprised of open ended as well as close ended questions. The open-ended questions give us an insight into the students' understanding, opinions about different topics which are the main focus for our study. This would give us a picture of the extent to which the students are comfortable with the new CBCS system under ODL

For the study the data related to the questionnaire were collected from students belonging to different courses like B.A., B. Com and B.Sc. who are enrolled in different study programmes in Dr. BRAOU. Since the study aimed for getting the feedback from the students related to the CBCS system, the questionnaires were given only to the third semester students of our university who had already studied for a year under the new system.

5. Population

The population for the study comprised of the students from three courses that are B.A., B. Com and B.Sc. The study was mainly targeted at those students who had already appeared for their first-year semester examinations and hence can give better feedback related to the CBCS.

The study comprised of students belonging to a mixed set of age groups, and for our convenience we have mainly categorised them under two sets. The first sets are in the range of eighteen years to thirty years and the next set comprised of students who are more than 30 years.

Table 1: Age distribution across the study (in percentage)

Courses	18-30 years	Above 30 years	NA	Total
B.A.	33.33	25	41.67	100
B. Com	58.33	8.33	33.33	100
B. Sc	81.69	9.86	8.45	100
Total	72.63	11.58	15.79	100

While talking about the age distribution across the study, it is also interesting to note that the number of females as compared to the number of males is significantly higher. As opposed to around 33% of males, females comprise a majority of around more than 60%. This difference between the males and females is almost double in relation to the data for the study. This significantly points out towards the trend of a greater degree of awareness, inquisitiveness and the desire to learn among the women. The ODL system is perfectly fitted for such kind of a scenario, with its goal being to 'reach the unreached'. The reasons for discontinuing studies can be many such as marriage at early age, lack of money to continue further in studies, lack of motivation, unaware about the benefits of higher education. The data represented by the study relates to the fact that more than 40% of these students are employed. In such a scenario, ODL always strives for eradicating such barriers and making education accessible for all, even for those who are employed and find it difficult to go to a regular university for completing their studies.

For the purpose of our study, we found that the students of Dr. BRAOU comprised of more than 34% of students belonging to rural areas while 56% of them were from the urban areas. With the main focus on reaching the unreached, ODL institutions and its study centres are set up in remote areas as well as in the cities.

6. AWARENESS ABOUT CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM AMONG STUDENTS

In any higher educational institution, the introduction of a new set of rules, regulations are often met with numerous challenges. The introduction of the CBCS into the already existing yearly system was also of the similar nature. These confusions, or apprehensions related to the semester system increase to a great extent when the targeted students are from an open university. In the absence of the everyday communication between

the teacher and the student in the open and distance, unlike in regular mode of learning; the newly introduced semester system needs to be introduced systematically. Any kind of workshops, training programmes in this regard would always prove to be fruitful. In this regard the study first, tries to look at the level of awareness among students related to the CBCS. **Figure 1** tries to look into the level of awareness about the CBCS in relation to various courses offered by the university, that is, B.A., B. Com, and B.Sc.

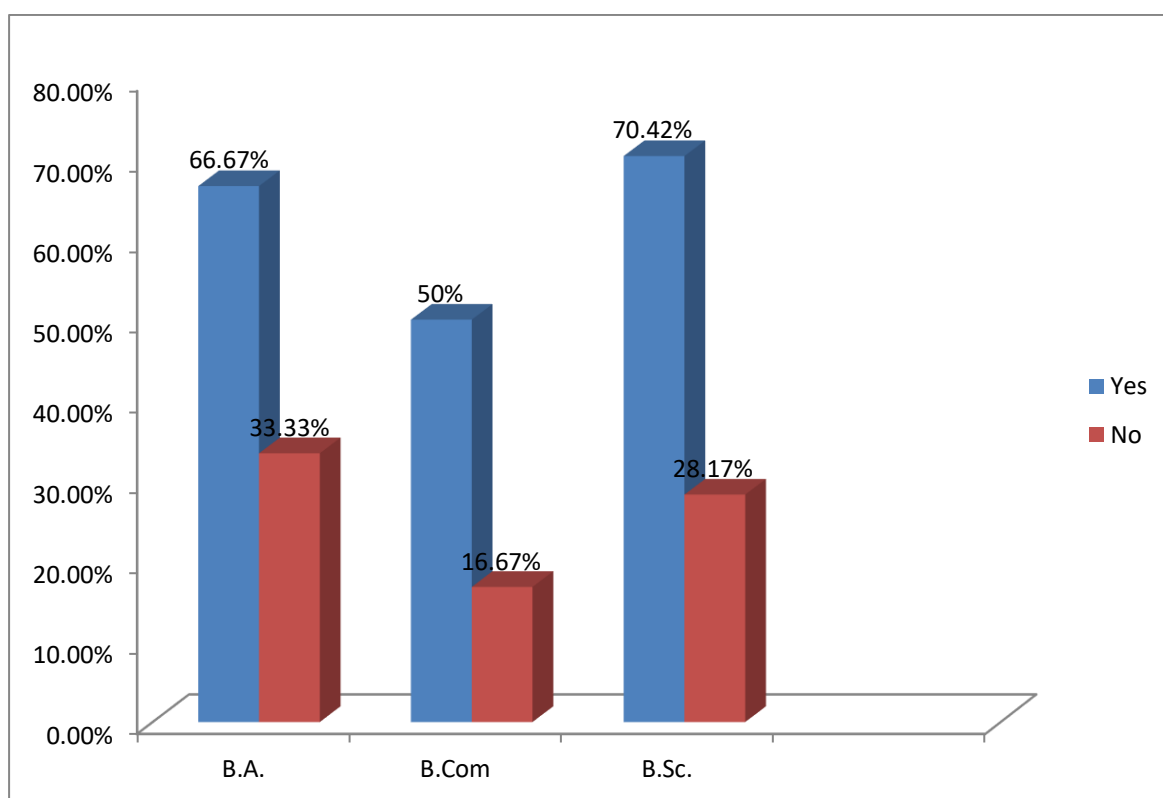


Figure 1: Data related to awareness about CBCS among students

While we look at the above figure, the positive responses related to having knowledge about CBCS is on a higher side as compared to the negative responses. It is the highest among the B.Sc. students with 70.42% of them being aware of CBCS. However, the above figure does not represent around 5.27% of them who did not respond.

While joining any higher educational programme, a student tends to be a little inquisitive of the programmes that he/she is going to undertake during their course of study. Hence, many of them try to gather some information about the newly introduced semester system. During the study, it was found that a record number of 44.21% of them said that they were aware about CBCS and have heard about it before joining their respective courses.

The students opined that the new system was helping them to learn new things, adding a bit of freshness to the old existing syllabus. This would further help them to grow in their respective careers and contribute towards the betterment of society. In contrast, many of them also raised doubts about the semester system turning out to be more expensive and almost equating it with the experience of studying under a regular system; devoid of any benefits as envisioned under ODL.

In the next section we will try to understand students' feedback related to course materials under the semester system and the changes that have occurred as a result of it.

7. FEEDBACK RELATED TO COURSE MATERIALS

The course materials form the backbone for an institution of higher learning and it is more so in case of ODL. In ODL the course materials often act as mirror of the institutions teaching, forming a crucial part of the curriculum. In case of distance education, the course materials act as bridge between the students and the faculty of the university. The students solely rely on these course materials for their studies, as well as the contact classes that are held weekly in their respective study centres. Due to absence of regular classes under distance learning, the students rely heavily on the study materials provided by the university. In our study we found that a majority of students, that is, around 73% of them have said that they did not receive study materials on time. This further has a great impact on the time taken to prepare well for examinations, and is an essential element to keep the continuity within the students pursuing various courses.

Along with the timely preparation as well as distribution of Self Learning Materials (SLMs) or in other words course materials; the ODL structure relentlessly aims at developing the materials as self-explanatory as possible with lucid explanation of various topics of study. With activities or self-assessment questions included in each of the course materials; the efforts within the ODL system is always to aim for an interactive dialogue with the students. This kind of an initiative tries to overcome and bridge the gap between the teacher and the student in ODL.

Hence it is essential that we really focus upon making the course materials as interactive as possible. In an ODL system, the different learning methodologies like course materials, online lectures, audio-visual materials corresponding to particular topics; all plays an important part in the entire process of building up the student's knowledge related to their

disciplines. These course materials are carefully designed to meet the requirements of the students. Each of these course materials is discussed and designed along with a team of co-ordinators, editors, authors as well as the publishing team.

In many of the ODL institutions in India, the main priority is to give equal importance to the regional languages. In case of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University in Hyderabad, the course materials for most of the courses are in English and at the same time they are also translated into Telugu (the regional language) to cater to the vast number of students who are not fluent in the English language. Hence the works of the translators' increases to a great extent as there is a high chance of the actual meaning of the text getting lost or not properly expressed during the translation process. Equally significant is the work of editors as well as co-ordinators that needs to focus continuously on the overall quality of the materials, both in English as well as in the regional languages.

The students' perceptions or feedback about these course materials would further point us towards the various factors which need to be taken care of while designing these materials for distance learners. Thus, the study tries to throw some light on the feedback gathered from students related to the course materials of the university. The responses have been divided into four categories, mainly 'very easy', 'very difficult', 'above average' and 'average'. The varying responses of the students across the three disciplines, mainly B.A., B. Com and B.Sc. in relation to the course materials of the university has been represented in the below diagram.

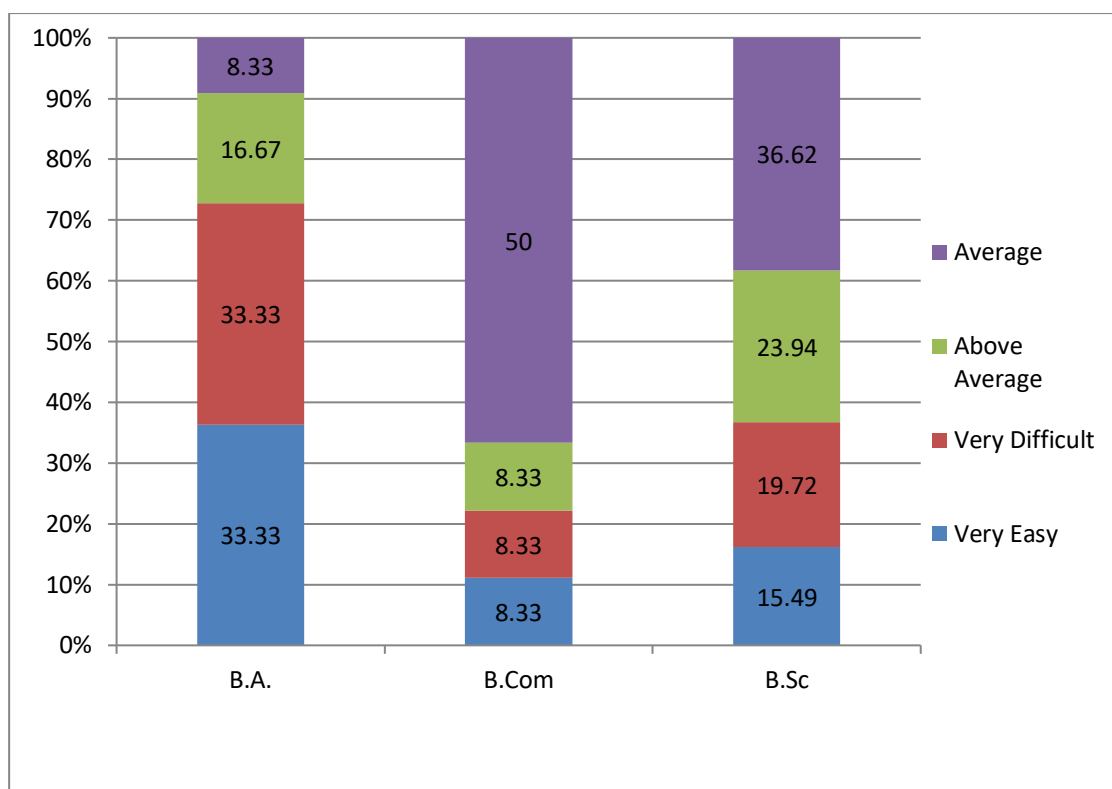


Figure 2: Responses of students towards the level of difficulty in courses under CBCS

In the above figure, each of the four responses have been categorised systematically across various courses. While we see that in B.A. around 33.33% of the students felt that the course materials were easy, with only 8.33% of B. Com students opting for the response of ‘very easy’ in relation to the course materials. However, at the same time an equal percentage of students, that is 33.33% in B.A. and 19.72% in B.Sc. found the study materials ‘very difficult’. While around 50% of the students from B. Com course found the materials as average. We see that there is a growing trend among the students from B.A. as well as B.Sc. who found the course materials as ‘very difficult’. Some of the responses like ‘not receiving the course materials on time’, ‘too much to study under semester system’ are indicative of the issues concerning students of our university.

In the context of course materials under CBCS, it is essential that we try to understand the students’ perspective about the new courses. Around 23% of the students have said that they do not find the course materials to be relevant. This really needs to be addressed as it points out towards some form of disagreement among the student community related to the content or the overall syllabus of the course materials.

Such issues related to the perception of students towards the course materials can be modified to a great extent with the help of workshops, orientation programmes, lectures. This kind of an initiative held across the study centres of our university, would help to reach out to the masses. The motto of our university, ‘education at your doorstep’ would be realised if and when such inhibitions related to course curriculum are addressed and solved.

In the next section we will try to look at the alternate modes of learning which greatly helps in the dissemination as well as creation of new knowledge systems. While we are discussing about the quality of course materials as well as students’ feedback related to it, at the same time it is also essential to focus upon the alternative modes of learning which distinguishes and ODL system from the regular mode of teaching. Thereby it is imperative that we try and understand the feedback from students related to these alternative modes of learning.

8. ALTERNATIVE MODES OF LEARNING

In ODL, the main aim is to make education accessible for all; to reach the unreached. This is mainly emphasised by following the goals for attaining sustainable development in matters of education. While trying to achieve sustainability in matters of education, ODL lays the groundwork for making education more accessible; thereby eradicating any barriers. The context of sustainability within the larger domain of sustainable education is directly linked with the human resource development that can ensure socio-economic, political and cultural development of a nation. By trying to achieve the goals of sustainability within education, there is a constant effort to aim for overall human development and thereby the greater progress of the society.

In an ODL system, apart from the course materials related to various disciplines, it is equally important to lay stress on the alternative modes of learning for achieving the goals of sustainable development in education. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has also demonstrated that by using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and flexible and blended learning approaches, access to quality technical and vocational skill development can be increased through the ODL mode which can further help to overcome the urban-rural and gender divides that exclude learners from training to create a skilled workforce of life-long learners for the growth of informal and formal economies.

This aspect of using ICT for learning has been time and gain emphasised in the ideals of ODL. The ODL system tries to break away from the shackles of traditional learning methods or the usual classroom teaching-learning process. Instead, to further realise the goals of sustainable development in education, ODL system stresses upon using of an alternative mode of learning paradigm, rather than the ones used in regular form of education.

In this regard, ODL incorporates alternative learning mediums such as the lectures transmitted through radio, television or the discussions on numerous topics through teleconferencing. Out of these, teleconferencing specially stresses upon the participative model of learning and tries to imitate the classroom teaching scenario. The student can listen to the topics discussed in the teleconference sessions and also participate by asking doubts, queries to the subject experts present during the session. Similarly, radio and television enable the students to learn in-depth about their particular subjects. The blended learning process in ODL tries to combine the traditional teaching-learning process as in the regular mode with the students as not only being the receiver but also creating and modifying knowledge in the larger context. Such initiatives in the ODL try to reduce the gap between the student and the teacher.

To realise the ideals of alternative mode of learning, our university mainly initiated the setting up of a separate centre named Audio Visual Production and Research Centre (henceforth AVPRC) in 1986 with the aim of producing various audio as well as video programmes, to organise transmission of educational programmes over radio and television, to conduct training and programmes in communication. The interactive process employed in teleconferencing helps the students to take the help of experts and resolve queries, if any. The students in a way become part of the whole process of an interactive and participatory model of learning under the ODL system. In the next section the tables depict the students' responses towards the programmes telecasted through radio, television and teleconference which further helps us to gain insight into the feedback of the students related to this alternative mode of learning.

Table 2

Responses Related to Listening of Radio programmes of Dr. BRAOU

	Responses (%)	
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Courses	Regularly	Once in a week	Once in a month	Whenever convenient	NA	Total (%)
B.A.	25	41.67	0	0	33.34	100
B. Com	0	0	0	8.33	91.67	100
B.Sc.	1.41	5.63	5.63	14.08	73.24	100
Total	4.21	9.47	4.21	11.58	70.53	100

From the above table we see that the responses towards listening of radio programmes have been categorised under three headings namely, regularly, once in a week, once in a month, whenever convenient. However around 70% of the questionnaire across all the courses have not opted for any of the options. This is a higher percentage indicating the lack of awareness among students in relation to the radio programmes of our university.

At the same time, if we look at the responses from the students from B.Sc. course, we find that there is a mixed set of responses across all the four categories. While around 5.63% of students have said that they would listen to the radio programmes of our university either once in a week or once in a month, at the same time another 14.08% of them has opted for the response of ‘whenever convenient’.

While 8.33% of the students studying the B. Com course under our university have said that they would watch radio programmes whenever convenient. In case of B.A. programmes around 25% of them have said that they listen to radio programmes regularly and 41.67% of them have opted for the response of listening to radio programmes ‘once in a week’. This is a higher percentage as well as a positive response among all the other two courses.

Thus, if we look at the overall picture represented in Table 2, we see that most of the courses are showing a fairly low percentage related to listening of radio programmes. Due to various problems related to time, lack of motivation etc. many students tend to skip these radio lessons and instead follow only the course materials. Even if it’s not possible to listen to the radio programmes on a regular basis, it is also beneficial if they listen to it at least once in a week. A strong sense of commitment, the hunger for acquiring new knowledge and the aim to progress further in their lives are some of the factors that a student of ODL needs to aspire

for. Similarly, we will now try and focus on the responses of the students of Dr. BRAOU related to the video lessons in T.V.

Table 3

Responses related to watching Video lessons in T.V.

Courses	Responses (%)					Total (%)
	Regularly	Once in a week	Once in a month	Whenever convenient	NA	
B.A.	0	41.67	8.33	0	50	100
B.Com	0	0	0	8.33	91.67	100
B.Sc	1.41	5.63	2.82	14.08	76.06	100
Total	1.05	9.47	3.16	11.58	74.74	100

In an ODL system, video lessons in T.V. are rich in its content and have been found to be more appealing to students as compared to radio. The medium of T.V. can be used as a motivational tool to encourage learners to go in-depth of their particular subject. The visual factor adds to the fact that broadcasting programmes through this medium greatly enhances attention within students.

While we look at the above table, we see that 41.67% of students from the B.A. course, once in a week watch the video lessons broadcasted in television. This shows a positive response towards video lessons among the students from the B.A. courses. To boost the viewership of these video lessons among the other courses, a step-by-step process is to be followed. While many of them did not respond to the question addressing problems related to the video lessons; around 4% of them cited reasons like not getting time to watch these lessons, its also essential to note that many of them did not feel the urge or need to simply watch these lessons since they were already preoccupied with other issues like earning an income for their family among others. This presents before us a unique problem because the

issues/difficulties/barriers concerning a student from an ODL institution is very different as compared with the problems faced by students from a regular institution.

Under CBCS, revised course materials, new examination patterns and other such changes has been met with mixed responses.

When we are discussing about alternative modes of learning it is also essential to throw light upon the students' feedback related to teleconferencing. As an alternative mode of learning, teleconferencing aims for a participatory approach towards teaching learning paradigm under the distance learning model. In Table 3 we will get the picture related to whether the student's watch or participate in the teleconference programmes broadcasted by our university.

Table 4

Responses Related to watching Teleconference Programmes

Course	Responses (%)			Total (in percentage)
	Yes	No	N.A.	
B.A.	33.33	66.67	0	100
B. Com	0	66.67	33.33	100
B.Sc.	5.63	94.37	0	100
Total	8.42	87.37	4.21	100

The programmes broadcasted under teleconferencing tries to explore further the minute details or information related to various courses under the ODL system. It is a method wherein the student can participate and raise queries related to different topics and subject experts would try and resolve such issues. This greatly emphasises on the active involvement of the student community and trying to build up an inquisitive approach towards their study. In table 3, along with some of them not answering the questions, an even higher number of

them also denied watching these programmes. While some of them said that they were not aware about the programmes, many students cited various other difficulties.

The various reasons for not watching Teleconference programmes are:

- a) Lack of Time
- b) Not comfortable with the present timings
- c) Prior work commitment
- d) Improper information from study centre
- e) Unaware about the programmes

9. EXAMINATION PATTERN UNDER CBCS

The examination pattern under the new semester system has also changed and instead of exams held yearly, it now takes place after every six months. This kind of a new pattern in the examination model under the ODL system is viewed as a burden by many students. More or less 57.5% of the students felt that they were not comfortable with the examinations held semester wise. Some of the problems that they faced while writing examinations every six months relate to the system being time consuming, travelling to the exam centres (very costly), not receiving textbooks on time. The study reflected that it is also an issue when the examination centres keep on changing and are not consistent. Since the study tries to gather feedback from students of an open university, a *unique situation* prevails where most of the students have a job along with their studies. This raises the issue of balancing between taking leaves from jobs and also appearing for the examinations. Around 11% of the students felt that it's difficult to balance between jobs and exams under the semester system. Women in this regard were particularly stressed as many of them would have to manage homes, look after their families and kids. The new system was putting a burden on most of them.

The study was aimed at gathering feedback from students from the third semester. This was done mainly to ensure that those who have already given or appeared for their semester examinations are considered. However, many of them pointed out difficulties related to the examination pattern and problems emerged such as not getting leaves to appear for these examinations, difficult to manage between work and studies. With added new curriculum under the CBCS, almost 73.12% of the students felt that it was an added burden. The students also expressed lack of interest to appear for these semester examinations, and at the same time many of them even complained about not getting text books on time. Since it

was a new system, there were also no old question papers, or test papers which the students can use as their reference. Hence many of them found the examination pattern difficult and tedious. The students from the B.Sc. courses were also facing problems such as not getting sufficient leaves to come and attend practical classes. Almost 42.13% of them felt that the practical classes under the semester system was overwhelming and because of which many of them were not able to grasp the things being taught in these classes.

Irrespective of all the courses, the students, in general, failed to see or understand the positive aspects of the semester system. The new structure under CBCS was mainly aimed at promoting grading system which was to the advantage of students, advocating for an interdisciplinary approach, facilitating students' mobility, aiming for a continuous and comprehensive evaluation/assessment as well as bringing in standardisation of education in the process.

While talking about these difficulties in introducing a new system over and above the already existing one, its essential to point out the benefits of counselling sessions under the ODL structure. The counselling sessions under the ODL system is of utmost importance. The study centres of our university are each governed by co-ordinators, as well as faculties taking up classes for various subjects on every Sunday. In a society, any new change, be it an idea, thought or a new perspective; at the beginning it is always viewed with a sceptical view. The same situation is there in the minds of the students is in the present scenario.

The counselling sessions lay the groundwork for answering various questions or queries. Since most of these counselling sessions are organised in order to cater to the needs of the students, these sessions try to adhere to the local regional population. This would stress upon removing barriers to language if any, since many students are not proficient in English and are able to express themselves better while using their mother tongue. More than 60% of the students from all the courses found the counselling sessions to be beneficial and these sessions helped to reduce the complexities of the semester system to a great extent.

Thus, we see that although at the onset the newly introduced semester system posed as an unknown area, slowly with the help of the counselling sessions, efficiently conducting examinations, and timely supply of course materials would go a long way in overcoming any complexities, problems in the long run.

10. CONCLUSION

The transformation or the changes within CBCS have been met with a myriad of challenges. While the problems concerning the new system increases further when applied in an open university system. The ODL institutions have to grapple with various obstacles, some of the reasons related mainly with the insufficient funds from the higher educational bodies, encourage and motivate students to come and join the learning process, lack of proper facilities concerning insufficient teachers, inadequate laboratory set up and also issues within the study materials.

Nevertheless, the ODL institutions prove to be a solid platform for enriching the minds of the students with new ideas, thoughts, and knowledge systems. This is particularly true for students who were not able to complete their studies on time and even so for those who (irrespective of their age) have the zeal to study further. It is this openness within the ODL structure which is quite unique and in contrast with the existing regular form of education.

Unlike in the regular form of education where each of the courses have their own set of eligibility criteria, age restrictions etc, open university system tries to open its doors for including all students who have an interest in learning further.

Dr. BRAOU also went a step further and even included the jail inmates in their mode of studying. A recently published report in Telangana Today said that around 193 inmates that included 174 men and 19 women have successfully cleared the eligibility test for various courses, which was held in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh on June 16, 2019.

However, we cannot deny the fact that the introduction of the new CBCS system and its unique approach for study are at times confusing for the students. In case of open and distance learning, the problem increases as the students are not in constant contact with their teachers, absence of daily classes as well place them in an unfamiliar position.

With more than 60% of students believing in the idea behind CBCS, the negativity towards the semester system emerges mainly from a sense of doubt, or scepticism in the minds of the students. Further the new semester system puts additional burden on the teachers as well wherein they are overburdened with completing materials in a short span of time, not having requisite expertise on certain specialisations within a particular subject, finding the entire process tedious and lengthy. In such a scenario, doubts regarding the semester system among the students under ODL raise the level of ambiguity in several instances.

The issues or problems highlighted by the students in relation to the semester system, more or less cover areas such as: not conducting classes on proper time, not getting study materials on time, less time for preparing for exams under the semester system, study centres being at a great distance. These issues are really essential to take students' opinions about the CBCS system into account to make it a success, workshops, training sessions, counselling sessions in this matter can help to a great extent in making the students comfortable with the changes. The questionnaire for the study was administered only to the students who have already appeared for their first semester examinations. This was done with the sole purpose of getting feedback from students who had already studied under the new semester system. These students can provide us the necessary data related to CBCS system under open university and pave the way for addressing the required steps to be taken for making CBCS system a success.

The way forward for ensuring smooth conduct of the CBCS is:

- a) To stress upon the dissemination of knowledge about the system, the courses under it
- b) To ensure that new students under ODL or even the existing ones are provided with a small booklet of information containing details about what CBCS and how it is different from the usual, regular mode of education
- c) An orientation programme for the new students would also help in clearing of doubts, if any
- d) To appoint additional faculty for teaching open elective courses under CBCS in order to reduce the extra burden upon the existing faculty
- e) To conduct workshops, seminars and free distribution of pamphlets related to CBCS
- f) To conduct yearly studies related to feedback from students concerning CBCS and comparing it with earlier studies to understand the change in the mindset of the students.

The aim of CBCS under ODL is to ensure the smooth facilitation of new ideas, thoughts and enrich the learners further in the process. In the area of higher learning, obstacles concerning CBCS are always expected because of it being in its initial stage. It is more so, when such semester system is applied on the ODL institutions upon the already existing yearly system of evaluation.

Although at its infancy, the feedback studies concerning CBCS is the need of the hour. These studies need to be taken into account as it forms the basis for comparing it with future research projects. It also helps in paving the way for ushering in a new set of policy regulations, organising workshops as well as to get a glimpse about the students' perspectives related to the changes within the educational system. By realising the students as the main stakeholders in the process the present study sets out the path for an outlook focusing on the better application of the CBCS on the ODL institutions as well as to act as a guide for future course of studies related to the areas.

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QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM (CBCS) Implemented in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (A Feed Back Study)

I. Learners' Profile:

1. Name of the Programme : (B.A./B.Com./B.Sc.)
(Mention the Subject)
2. Name of the Course : _____
3. Year/Semester : I/II/III | I/II/III/IV
4. Name of the Study Centre : _____
5. Name of the Student (Full Name) : _____
6. Social Status : SC/ST/BC-A/B/C/D/E/OBC/OC
7. Date of Birth and Age : _____
8. Gender : Male/Female
9. Native Place : _____
10. Are you Working : ☐ YES ☐ NO
 If yes, Occupation : _____
 Department : _____
 Place : _____
11. Year of Joining the Course : _____
12. Marital Status : _____
13. Mailing Address : H. No _____
 : Street: _____
 : Place: _____
 : District: _____
 : Pin Code: _____
 : Mobile No: _____

II. About CBCS System in the University

14. Do you know about CBCS System : ☐ YES ☐ NO

15. Before joining the programme ☐ YES ☐ NO

Have you heard about CBCS :

16. In your opinion what is CBCS system : _____

17. Do you think CBCS system is suitable to ODL system? _____

18. In your opinion what do you think are the advantages of CBCS system?

19. After joining the programme in

Dr. BRAOU how do you feel

About CBCS System :

20. How do you feel about the course Materials prepared by the University?

(a) Very easy (b) Very difficult (c) Above average (d) Average

21. Did you receive your course material on time ☐ YES ☐ NO

22. Is content in the Course Material supplied relevant

(a) Yes (b) Not relevant (c) Partially relevant (d) Out of Context

23. Are you comfortable with Semester System? ☐ YES ☐ NO

24. Do you find difficult in writing exam for every six months

Please specify the problem ☐ YES ☐ NO

25. Do you find any general problem in studying Semester-wise

Please specify the problem

YES

NO

(a) Do you find the practical Training Classes are sufficient

Specify _____

(b) Do you find difficulty in attending the Practical Training

YES

NO

Twice in a year

26. If you are a B.Sc./Science student, how do you find practical training

classes

YES

NO

(a) Sufficient

27. Is the time convenient for you to watch Teleconference

If not, what time do you prefer

YES

NO

Specify

28. Do you feel semester system is useful & good

YES

NO

Specify reasons

29. Have you given your 1st / 2nd semester exams?

YES

NO

30. How do you find the exam pattern?

(a) Easy (b) Difficult (c) Moderate (d) Did not like

31. Do you feel the objective type questions in the exam question paper is

useful

YES

NO

32. How do you find the objective type? difficult?

If difficult, specify reasons: _____

33. Do you find the Counselling sessions for semester system is convenient

Do you agree with the following?

YES

NO

34. CBCS system protects students' autonomy

Why do you think so?

YES

NO

35. It improves the inter-disciplinary approach to be advantage of students.

Why do you think so?

YES

NO

36. It facilitates students' mobility

Why do you think so?

YES

NO

37. It helps earn credits at one's own path

Why do you think so?

YES

NO

38. It helps standardization of education

Why do you think so?

YES

NO

39. It promotes continuous and comprehensive evaluation/assessment

Why do you think so?

YES

NO

40. It promotes grading system to the advantages of students

Why do you think so?

YES

NO

41. It creates confusion with too many choices of students

Why do you think so?

YES

NO

42. It is expensive from the point of view of students

Why do you think so?

YES

NO

43. It promotes universal validity of the courses studied

YES

NO

Why do you think so?

44.It offers wide choice of course

YES

NO

Why do you think so?

45.For an ODL student, it is academically burden some

YES

NO

Why do you think so?