

Block

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LEARNER SUPPORT: DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS

UNIT 1**Cognitive Skills** 7

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UNIT 4**Problem Solving Skills** 60

MDE-413: Learner Support Systems and Services

(New Course in place of ES-313: Learner Support Services)

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MDE-413: Learner Support Systems and Services

Course Outline

Block 1 : Learner Support: An Introduction

- Unit 1 : Learner Support: A System's Approach
- Unit 2 : Learner Support: Some Basic Issues
- Unit 3 : Support Services: Institutional Arrangements and Models
- Unit 4 : Developing a Self Directed Learner

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- Unit 1 : Cognitive Skills
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- Unit 1 : Counselling
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- Unit 4 : Organizing Counselling and Tutoring Services

Block 4 : Assessment of Learner Performance

- Unit 1 : Learners' Assessment in Distance Education
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- Unit 3 : Tutoring Through Correspondence
- Unit 4 : Supplemental Interaction

Block 5 : Management of Learner Support

- Unit 1 : Learners' Expectations in Distance Education
 - Unit 2 : Management of Support Services
 - Unit 3 : Monitoring Learners' Progress
 - Unit 4 : Library and Information Services to Distance Learners
-

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Learner support services are indispensable components of the ODL system (ODLS). It is important not because of its relation to the Distance Education theories, but it is a key for learners' successes and their persistence in the ODL system. It is a fact that in Distance Education, there is the geographical separation of teacher and learner. In addition to it, sociopsychological factors affect the learners in their learning and completing the courses. The sociopsychological factors include language, culture, motivation, inadequate skills or preparation, anxiety, time and work or family constraints. Distance learners, therefore, need various support services that would help them to be successful learners. Learner Support Services (LSS) are treated as learner centered facilitating functions of ODLS which take into account problems of distance learners at pre entry stage, during the course of studies and at the course completion stage. In this regard, it is noted that learner support not only bridges sociopsychological distances, but also fosters learners for their personal development and the accomplishment of learning goals. In the light of the separation of the learner from the teacher, the techniques and mechanisms to provide support assume a significant dimension in the teaching-learning transactions through the distance mode. This course MDE-413 discusses about the concept of various Learner Support Systems and Services and their interrelationship with other elements of ODL, theoretical background of LSS and factors affecting the nature of support services. Some important mechanisms of learner support namely contact programmes, counseling, and distance teaching through tutor comments on assignment responses have been discussed thoroughly. It also describes the institutional mechanisms for providing learning support. After working through this course, you should be able to:

- describe the basic principles and methods of learner support,
- explain the importance of support services in the ODL system,
- discuss learner support services as a sub-system of any ODL institution,
- organize academic counseling and other support services, and
- assess and report the performance and progress of distance learners,

This course consists of five blocks. These are:

Block 1: Learner Support: An Introduction J This block discusses the concept of support services as a major component of ODL and various institutional models and arrangements in providing Learners Support Services (LSS).

Block 2: Learner Support: Development of Skills J Various learning skills such as Study skills, Cognitive skills, Problem solving skills, Reading and Writing skills have been discussed to develop a self directed learner.

Block 3: Counselling and Tutoring Services J All the issues related to Counselling and Tutoring services like skills, qualities, media and

technology in counselling and organizing counselling and tutoring services have been analyzed.

Block 4: Assessment of Learner Performance J Various components of Assessment in Distance Education like Tutor Comments, Tutoring through Correspondence and Supplemental Interaction have been emphasized.

Block 5: Management of Learner Support J Some important aspects of LSS such as Learners' Expectations in DE, Management of Support Services, and Monitoring Learners' Progress have been analyzed.

Each block of this course consists of four units. We begin each unit with the section 'Introduction' followed by 'Learning Outcomes'. It articulates briefly:

- what we have presented in the unit, and
- what we expect from you once you complete working on the unit.

In the last section of each unit, under the heading, 'Let Us Sum Up', we summarise the whole unit for purposes of recapitulation.

Besides, we have given self-check exercises under the caption 'Check Your Progress' of Self-check Exercises at a few places in each of these units which invariably end with possible answers to the questions set in these exercises.

What you are expected to do is to go through the units and jot down important points in the space provided in the margin. This will help you to make notes and prepare for the examination. At the same time, you will be able to save time during your revision. Therefore, we advise you to use these margins.

We hope that we have given enough space for you to work on the self-check exercises.

The purpose of giving self-check exercises will be served satisfactorily if you compare your answers with the possible ones given at the end of each unit under 'Feedback to Check Your Progress Questions'. You may be tempted to have a furtive glance at possible answer(s), as soon as you come across an exercise. But we do hope that you will overcome the temptation and turn to these possible answers (which are not the best answers necessarily) only after you write you won. These exercises are not meant to be submitted to us for correction or evaluation. Instead, the exercises are to function as study tools to help you keep on the right track as you read the units.

Besides this, counselling is also provided at your study centres for this course. Attending a counselling session will help you to clarify your queries and doubts. Counselling sessions are also the time when you can meet other learners, and see the diverse nature of the learner profile. If your learning style is discussion and interaction based, it is always suggested to attend the counselling sessions. Along with the counselling sessions, there are other media materials, and services available in this course, and you may like to take advantages of these by attending the teleconference sessions/virtual classes as and when conducted. You will receive information about special arrangements regarding this from time to time.

In this course, you have to submit one assignment consisting of both essay type and short answers type questions which carries 25%

weightage. We suggest the following norms to be strictly practiced while you are working through the assignments:

- Write your roll number legibly as indicated in the Programme Guide.
- Before you put down anything in words, assimilate what you have read and integrate it with what you have gathered from your experience to build your answer.
- Make the best use of the block and the additional reading materials for diligently working through the assignments.

Beside the assignment, you have to appear in term-end examination for this course which carries 75% weightage.

About this block

This is the second block of the course “Learner Support Systems and Services”. After discussing the basic issues of learner support services and institutional arrangements in the first block, now we will make an attempt to focus on some basic skills for developing a self-directed learner. In Distance Education (DE), learners are expected to acquire knowledge through creative methods by working on the activities or exercises given in the self-learning materials. For an effective learning and exhibition of knowledge one needs some basic skills like study skills, cognitive skills, problem-solving skills, reading and writing skills. Therefore, we have discussed all these skills elaborately in the units separately throughout this block.

In the first unit, we have discussed the cognitive skills which help learners to read effectively, write passages, essays, reports, make numerical calculations and expedite Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills. Cognitive skills, which comprise of knowledge, skills and action help learners to accelerate their learning activities in more effective and efficient ways. After discussing cognitive skills and their components, we have tried to discuss how cognitive skills are relevant in distance learning. Besides these, we have also focused on some important concepts like Bloom’s taxonomy, mind mapping and concept mapping. The second unit is all about study skills. In the teaching-learning process, the issues like what to learn and when to learn are being given importance, but how to learn has not been given that much priority. Hence, study skills are highly essential for an effective learning. In this unit, we have discussed about various study skills, their need and importance in open and distance learning.

There is virtually no systematic teaching of reading and writing skills at higher level of education. Consequently learners suffer in developing these skills at advance stage. Therefore, in the third unit we have tried to present the basic concepts of reading and writing. We have discussed their nature and various stages involved in the process of both reading and writing. Generally reading and writing skills can be put to good use only if the learner is confident and can solve the problems faced. The fourth or the last unit will help you in developing the skills required for problem solving. In this unit, initially we have discussed scientific attitude which is essential for problem solving and how to develop that attitude. We have also focused on some important concepts like making sound decisions and identify and utilize the strength and opportunities for overcoming weaknesses and threats.

UNIT 1 COGNITIVE SKILLS

Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Learning Outcomes
- 1.2 What are Cognitive Skills?
- 1.3 Components of Cognitive Skills
 - 1.3.1 Perception
 - 1.3.2 Memory
 - 1.3.3 Logical Thinking
 - 1.3.4 Concentration
 - 1.3.5 Rational Attitude
- 1.4 Cognitive Skills and Distance Learning
 - 1.4.1 Technologies as Cognitive Tools
 - 1.4.2 Reading and Writing Techniques
 - 1.4.3 Developing Communication Skills
- 1.5 Bloom's Taxonomy
- 1.6 Mind Mapping and Concept Mapping
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.8 References and Further Readings
- 1.9 Feedback to Check Your Progress Questions

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In distance education (DE), learners are expected to acquire knowledge through creative methods by working on the activities or exercises given in the self-learning materials. In addition to these they also need to remember some important dates, for example, teleconferencing schedule, virtual class timings, last dates for submitting assignment responses, filling up term end examination forms, etc. The learners require cognitive skills to carry out these responsibilities in accordance with their abilities.

Cognitive skills are those skills which help learners to read effectively, write passages, essays, reports, make numerical calculations, and expedite Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills. Neisser (1967) said that cognitive skills are the processes by which sensory input is transformed, reduced, encoded, stored, recovered, and used.

The major concern for a distance learner is: In what ways s/he can learn better and effectively? In other words, they desire to know how learners use the learning tools in their learning activities. If we say they need to learn some procedures to do so then that leads to another question: What skills they need to adopt or develop so that they can have command and control on these procedures? Cognitive skills, which comprise of knowledge, skills and actions help learners to accelerate their learning activities in more effective and efficient ways. Thus, it is a prerequisite for knowledge acquisition.

The specific subject matter that is operational for investigative purposes encompasses mental states and processes (Butterfield and Dickerson, 1976). Several processes associated with cognitive behaviour are perception, information, representation in memory, use of knowledge (Norman and Rumelhart, 1975), sensation, imagery retention, recall, problem solving, and thinking (Neisser, 1967). The manner in which a learner employs these various processes in relation to his/her personal cognitive capabilities for the efficient use of information, in activities such as comprehension, listening, and reading, is the major determinant of individual differences in the acquisition of skills (Simon, 1975).

1.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

This unit will explain the significance and need of cognitive skills in teaching learning domain in global and distance education in particular. It further analyzes and examines how cognitive skills help learners in their learning activities.

After working through this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the components of cognitive skills;
- Explain 'cognition' in teaching learning contexts;
- Illustrate types of memory;
- Elucidate the significance of cognitive skills in the open and distance learning;
- Analyze the revised Bloom's taxonomy on cognitive learning; and
- Differentiate Mind Mapping from Concept Mapping.

1.2 WHAT ARE COGNITIVE SKILLS?

Cognitive skills are the basic mental abilities that we use to think, study, and learn. In the context of distance education, they are regarded as any mental skills that are used in the process of acquiring knowledge, covering a wide variety of mental processes such as; ability to identify images, analyze sounds, recapitulate information, search facts in memory, associate and dissociate different pieces of information and use them in appropriate contexts. Cognitive skills accelerate learners' efficiency, strengthen their ability, and capability in learning activities. In a sense, they make learners' learning easy and comfortable. It is stated that cognitive skills are the skills that help learners in the transfer of their skills to the requisite skills to facilitate their study and establish learning as an easy processes. With the help of cognitive skills we can cognize objects, events, concepts, in the appropriate contexts. Thus, the basic question needs to address here is that "What is cognition?". Cognition in teaching learning domain is interchangeably used as 'knowledge'. It is an 'apprehension', or 'consciousness', or 'awareness' of an object. It reveals or manifests all objects just as the light of a lamp reveals all physical objects. The object of apprehension may be a substance, quality, an act, an emotion, the existent and non-existent things of the world. But in all these cases, cognition means there must be something that stands out as the object of knowledge.

Cognition is of two types. These are:

- i) Presentative cognition
- ii) Representative cognition (memory)

In presentative cognition, the objects are directly presented whereas in case of representative cognition (memory) the objects are indirectly recalled. All sorts of cognition may not be valid because to have a valid cognition, there should be the right apprehension of an object. In other words, cognition is valid when knowledge of an object must correspond to the reality. Thus, it states that a valid cognition is the manifestation of an object as it is.

There are some situations where knowledge of an object is presentative in character but not valid, such as; 'doubt', and 'error'. Doubt arises due to the isolation of mind between certain positions. In 'doubt', the cogniser is unable to decide the content of cognition. For example; the snake and a rope are alike. As a result, we are in a position to doubt a rope as a snake. This happens because of the following reasons:

- i) Something is presented before the cogniser
- ii) Cogniser is unable to decide the cognition
- iii) Certain alternatives are equally forcing to recognize the object
- iv) It results in the form of interrogation.

Consider the issue 'error'. It is also representative in nature but not a valid cognition. In 'error', an object is cognized as having certain characteristics and these fall outside of its being. Thus, it is a wrong apprehension in which the object is taken for what it is not. For example, cognizing shell as silver.

Now, what we mean by the terms 'cognition' and cognitive skills should be clear to you.

1.3 COMPONENTS OF COGNITIVE SKILLS

Cognitive skills have some essential components. These are:

- Perception
- Memory
- Logical thinking
- Concentration
- Rational attitude.

Let us discuss these components in the context of distance learning and acknowledge their role in teaching learning activities.

1.3.1 Perception

The term "perception" is understood here as looking things in right perspectives. But it is noticed that different people perceive an issue differently because of various reasons which we are not elucidating here because it is not our present concern. Since they perceive differently they have different opinions, and therefore they treat an issue differently. For example, "She is sharp". This sentence is

understood differently by her teachers, parents, colleagues, and intimate friends though it conveys one and only one meaning, i.e. about her talent. Thus, perception is contextualized, subjective, and depends on many other extraneous surrounding factors. To support this argument Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) says that we see things not as they are but as we are. In the context of DE, It is suggested that learners should perceive things or facts correctly and by doing so they can adapt right perception and hence, it should guide them to achieve their goals. For example; Susama and Mamata have received their assignment responses back with tutor comments and grades. Susama got 'A' whereas Mamata got 'B' grade. In this situation, Mamata claims that Susama wrote assignment responses by getting help from me and scored higher than me. Thus, there may not be proper evaluation happening in the DE setup. Again, the evaluation procedures may not have been followed strictly by the evaluators. Hence, she got demotivated towards her studies. In this case, it is advised that Mamata should perceive the fact correctly why she did not receive 'A' Grade instead of comparing Susama's grade with hers and getting disoriented in her studies.

Check Your Progress 1

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

List the components of Cognitive Skills.

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1.3.2 Memory

Memory as one of the main components of cognitive skills helps learners in remembering, and recapitulating events, or concepts, or particular objects in their actual forms. It is of five kinds. These are:

- i) Short term memory: It lasts from a few seconds to a minute.
- ii) Long term memory: An ability to recapitulate the long past events.
- iii) Receptive memory: Remembering the physical postures of an object of recent past.
- iv) Sequential memory: Remembering things in an order.
- v) Rote memory: It is a habit to learn and remember certain information.

These memories are not only assisting learners to recast their study

content on time but also relate this information to their experiences for better understanding. Long term memories become the library of facts upon which learners build their concepts and accumulate knowledge. Short term memory helps to capture the dynamic data during the learning experience.

Apart from these memories, there are two other important memories also found in teaching-learning activities.

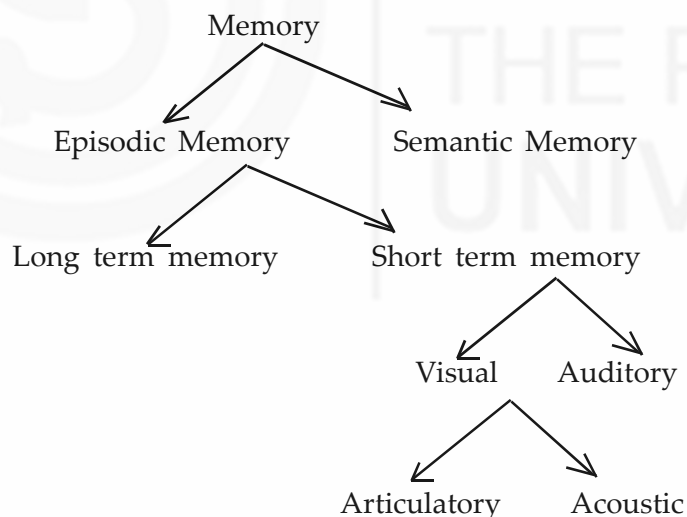
- a) Episodic Memory
- b) Semantic Memory

Episodic and Semantic Memory

Episodic Memory is memory for personal experience; Semantic Memory is for acquiring the knowledge about the world. Knowledge available for an attempted understanding of learning strategies comes mainly from studies of Episodic Memory. But probably most of what goes in a practical learning situation is recognition of Semantic Memory (O'Neil, H.F. Jr and Spielberger, C.D., 1979, P.102).

According to Tulving (1972), "Episodic Memory receives and stores information about temporally dated episodes or events, and temporal-spatial relaters among those events. Semantic Memory is the memory necessary for the use of language. It is a mental thesaurus, organized knowledge a person possesses about words and other verbal symbols, their meanings and referents, about relations among them, and about rules, formulas, and algorithms for the manipulation of these symbols, concepts, and relations" pp. 385-386.

A diagram of the memories is placed below for your understanding and reference.



The function of memory is irreplaceable in learning activities. This is so because learning is to understand, conceptualize, analyze, interpret, remember, and recapitulate the issues or events. Hence, memory becomes a vital component of learning. Learning through any means requires memory functions because it is the memory that decides the correct and relevant information to receive and process, from the irrelevant and unnecessary information among other varieties of information. Memory helps us to recall where the particular information is located and how it can be traced out.

1.3.3 Logical Thinking

Thinking logically means thinking step by step or in a chronological order. And to do so learners need the support of mental processes. And these can't be inherited from our ancestors nor would it be considered as a matter of genetic endowment. To think logically on an issue is to acquire a systematic study and understanding. It guides us to apply our reasons constantly and consistently to achieve a particular pre-determined goal and even assists us to get multiple solutions of a problem. It improvises our performance in reading, writing, searching/ browsing, and organizing study materials.

1.3.4 Concentration

Concentration is one of the chief mental functions of human beings. It is an ability that assists learners to remain mentally alert on a particular object, issue, subject content, etc. and observe the same carefully. Without concentration there may be no activity, be it academic or non-academic.

You might have experienced that at times plenty of things stimulate your sensory receptors. But all are not transformed into mental representations. You select one or two objects depending on the priority of your work and time limit, and you ignore the rest. If you can not select and concentrate on a particular object, then your mind may be distracted by a number of uninvited stimuli around you, such as; smell, taste, noise, etc.

To improve your concentration, you should adhere to these guidelines:

- a) Ensure understanding of the subject contents
- b) Retain and maintain interest in the subject matter
- c) Have a purpose while doing any activity
- d) Make sure your attention is focused
- e) Transform good procedures into habits
- f) Reward yourselves once you achieve the pre-set goals

Concentration is of three types; (i) an ability to concentrate on a particular task (ii) an ability to focus on several important tasks at once (iii) an ability to filter irrelevant information and remain focused on a particular task. Concentration is an act of will and doesn't happen automatically. Thus, concentrating on a particular task guides learners to fix their priority and set their attainable goals which help them in achieving success. This practice even assists them in grasping the study contents systematically.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Write the types of concentration.

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Rational attitude is interpreted here as positive behaviour towards an issue or an object, or subject of a study. It says not to give up your hope on any issue. If you are determined and committed to do a task, and wish to work on your shortcomings to overcome the avoidable barriers, you can reach your target. This enables them to fix achievable goals on a par with one's abilities and capabilities. It guides learners to move in the right path. It helps them to take correct decisions on an issue. To develop this attitude one needs to be focused on a particular attainable goal. For example; all distance learners want to successfully complete their courses within the stipulated time and achieve success in their studies. To do so one should develop the rational attitude within himself/herself and try to do the regular academic activities on time. Even by doing self assessment questions and exercises they can enhance their learning experiences. Further, rational attitude assists learners to search and process the information by overpowering their laziness. It develops the critical thinking and creative approaches in their studies. Thus, it empowers learners to consider the learning activities as a routine work and easy task.

In these ways, components of cognitive skills immensely assist learners to do their routine activities religiously, regularly, and enable them to comply and complete their study tasks in time.

1.4 COGNITIVE SKILLS AND DISTANCE LEARNING

Cognitive skills are intended to promote inquiry learning which is a part of educational methods. To define inquiry learning, it is interpreted as an educational activity in which learners either individually or collectively investigate a set of phenomena—virtual or real, and draw conclusions on it. According to Dejong and Van Joolingen (1998), learners direct their own investigatory activity but they may be prompted to formulate questions, plan their activities, draw and justify conclusions about what they have learnt. They come to understand that they are able to acquire knowledge that they desire, virtually in any content domains, in a way that they can initiate, manage, and execute on their own, and that such knowledge is empowering (p.496). Since DE inherently accommodates different learning styles, learners prefer to adopt technological instructions in their learning. This is so because the technological environments are multimodal and are supported by audio, video, texts, and provide facilities to individual as well as groups to interact in synchronous and asynchronous formats. Technological platforms support learners to represent linear and nonlinear content, and hence providing a variety of learning tools to cater different learning styles adopted by learners. In this context, Bruner (1961) says that a strategy developed by a learner in accordance with cognitive abilities and situational demands would be most effective in relating new information to previously obtained experiences.

Learning and cognition are highly interdependent with each other because both need a platform called 'understanding'. According to

Novak, meaningful learning involves the assimilation of new concepts and propositions into existing hierarchies (Lanzing, T., 2004). Salomon, Perkins and Globersen (1991) suggest that cognitive tools or mind tools refer to technologies, tangible or intangible, that enhance the cognitive powers of learners during thinking, problem solving, and learning. In Jonassen's (1970) view learners are active constructors of knowledge. He expresses that cognitive tools are developed to function as intellectual patterns to enable and facilitate critical thinking and higher order learning. Cognitive skills empower learners to design their own representation of knowledge and use those to support deep reflective thinking. Thus, cognitive tools enable learners in mindful challenging learning. Dansereau (1978) says that cognitive skills help learners to identify the relevant and pertinent materials for their courses. It also helps them to retrieve information under appropriate situations or contexts.

1.4.1 Technologies as Cognitive Tools

In distance education (DE) settings as such the technological intervention is quite a common phenomenon. Here, technology doesn't stand alone as media, rather it is observed as integrated phenomena. Learners learn in technological environment through multiple media. The use of web-based learning or online learning falls within this category. Learning through technology requires learners' self regulation, motivation, and time management approaches. It helps learners to learn successfully in DE settings. Participation in technological environment becomes crucial for learning to happen and this can facilitate, collaborate, and cooperate lifelong learning. Thus, learning through technology is an inquisitive approach to effective learning.

In the technological platform, nothing stimulates DE except web based learning. The web is now causing educators, instructors, and even learners ranging from pre-school to higher education to identify the very nature of teaching and learning differently. Researches have found that web can facilitate free teaching which may liberate learners from the physical boundaries of classrooms and the time constraint of class schedule. The earlier practice of classroom lectures becomes webcasted through multimedia which inspires learners in their learning experience. Learning through multimedia helps learners to reorganize and reinvent. Thus, it supports learner-centric education rather than teacher centric instructional curriculum.

Learning through technology certainly has potential benefits provided learners show their inclination on technological use and are acquainted with its multiple applications. In this regard, Cuban (1993) pointed out that the following advantages can be derived by using computer in teaching learning domain:

- i) to keep the education system at the forefront of technological development and learners' skills up-to-date with those expected in the workforce;
- ii) to increase efficiency and productivity in teaching and learning; and
- iii) to enable more self-directed learning

Cognitive skills help in improving learners' reading and writing techniques, considered to be essential tools for all learners. Further, communication skills are also guided by the cognitive skills. Here we will discuss how reading and writing techniques and communication skills help distance learners in accomplishing their study tasks.

1.4.2 Reading and Writing Techniques

In the context of DE, reading and writing techniques are the key issues for the learners. It is so because they need to deal with these two activities in a rigorous manner. To enhance reading and writing techniques they require cognitive skills, such as concentration, memory, logical thinking, and communication skills which have been discussed earlier in this unit. These features help a distance learner to carry forward his/her learning tasks in a successful manner.

There are five stages to acquire the reading competency which is supported by cognitive skills, prescribed by Chall (1979). In the first stage, learners learn the basic decoding skills. It means they learn the letters of the alphabet: how to represent the letters phonetically, what the letters are for, and how to distinguish similar looking words (e.g. book vs. ball). In the second stage, learners involve in consolidating what was learnt in the first stage. Extensive practice with reading materials that is already familiar and known permits learners to concentrate on written words and practice their decoding skills. In the third stage, instead of concentrating on learning to read learners begin to use reading to learn, i.e. they use reading to acquire new knowledge about the world. In this stage they learn new facts, concepts, and events of the world besides their concentration lie only to progress in their learning and understanding the issues that they are reading. In the forth stage, learners read to acquire new points of view and new multifaceted concepts. At the final stage, they learn to use written materials to serve their own specific purpose, i.e. they know which parts of a text to read, which to skim, and which to avoid (Chall, 1979, p.44).

Whenever we discuss study techniques immediately SQ3R techniques (S: Survey, Q: Questioning, R₁: Reading, R₂: Reviewing, R₃: Recalling/recapitulating) appear in our mind though these do not constitute all the activities of study techniques. It suggests some other techniques as well, such as;

- a) Developing time management approach
- b) Familiarizing with the course
- c) Self-motivation
- d) Coping with stress
- e) Setting attainable, achievable, and possible goals
- f) Peer-group interactions
- g) Developing online search skills
- h) Evaluating one's own progress at regular intervals

By practicing these techniques, learners can organize, plan, and execute their study effectively and purposefully, and hence, learning

becomes an easier and lifelong phenomenon for them. Without these skills learning will be difficult or just impossible for them. The key to solving a pertinent learning challenge is to strengthen a learner's basic processing or cognitive skills.

1.4.3 Developing Communication Skills

Communication skills assist learners to communicate their thoughts intentionally and purposefully. It suggests that one can share his/her feelings, emotions and even inner desires to others if he/she uses the correct vocabulary in the sentences before his/her deliverances (either written or utterances). Communication skills help us to construct not only a bond between 'learners and tutors', but also among their peer groups. In addition to these, they assist in accessing subject contents in an easy, comfortable, and progressive ways.

All these components of cognitive skills together suggest that learners can enhance their learning experience by adapting and practicing these skills in their study tasks. Further, these assist learners not only in identifying images, analyzing sounds, recapitulating information, searching facts in memory but also in learning scientifically and arguing logically. By supporting in these ways cognitive skills encourage and inspire learners to do multiple activities in various fields and be creative in their approaches and understanding.

From the above analyses it is asserted that there are two basic elements required for the development of cognitive skills. These are 'language' and 'logic'. The developments in use of language alongside the logical organization of thoughts are basic prerequisites for building cognitive skills and exercising learners' ability to handle study tasks and preserve update information for their learning activities. Both are in a process of continual development and they allow learners to construct and use certain skills which are vital for the acquisition of knowledge and for the further development of human activity, behavior, and movement.

Cognitive skills comprise of information processing tools and all the data which one possesses throughout one's life. Without the development of cognitive skills we will be having great difficulty in handling information, transferring them into knowledge, and being able to use them in actual learning contexts.

A basic question arises on 'learning', i.e. how does a learner improve his/her thinking while learning? Bloom's Taxonomy may help to answer this question in an appropriate manner.

1.5 BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Bloom attempted to answer this question by developing a method of classification for thinking behaviours that were believed to be important in the processes of learning. Eventually this framework became taxonomy and was found in three domains.

The cognitive – knowledge based domain, consisting of six levels

The affective – attitudinal based domain, consisting of five levels, and

The psychomotor – skill based domain, consisting of six levels.

Here, we will discuss only the cognitive domain because of its relevance in this unit. Bloom has depicted the six cognitive levels of thinking in a stairway. It starts with the lowest level named as 'knowledge' and ends with the highest level termed as 'evaluation'. The sequences from the lowest to highest level are: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. This taxonomy is presented in a hierarchical form because if a learner is functioning at the 'analysis' level it is assumed that s/he has mastery over the study contents or subjects at the 'comprehension' and 'application' levels.

This hierarchy of 'thinking' and 'learning' in educational paradigm is changed in the later period by Bloom's pupil **Lorin Anderson**. The later version is much appropriate because it is framed keeping in mind the latest curriculum of subject of studies available across the globe, instructional design of materials, technology integration, creative and critical thinking of learners, and the assessment and evaluation patterns used in the academic programmes in the educational domains scattered in all countries of the world. In short, it has been revised by considering the present demand of teaching learning activities. The changes are found in three broad categories: terminology, structure, and emphasis. The major category is prominently marked in the changes as *verb forms instead of nouns*. These changes are also presented in the hierarchy forms. In this case, the lowest level is 'remembering' whereas the apex level is 'creating'. It follows from lowest to highest in this stairway—remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. This structure is known as Bloom's revised taxonomy.

The new terms are defined as:

Remembering: Retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from long term memory.

Understanding: Constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining.

Applying: Carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing.

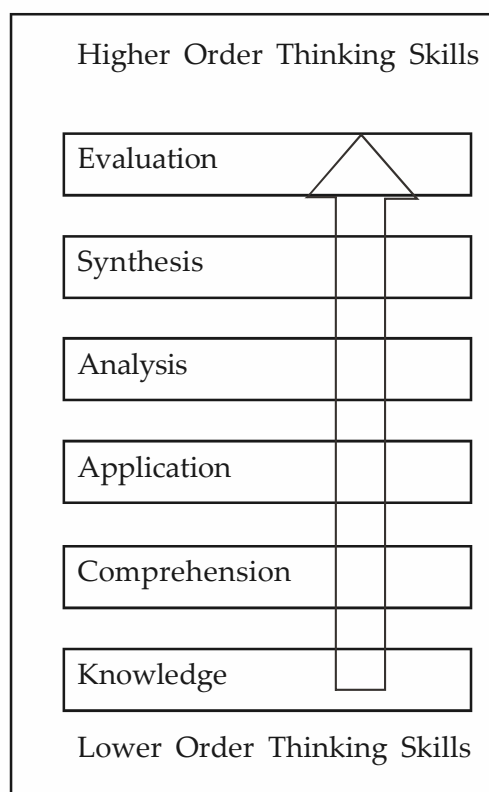
Analyzing: Breaking material into constituent parts, determining how these parts relate to one another and to an overall structure, or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing.

Evaluating: Making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing.

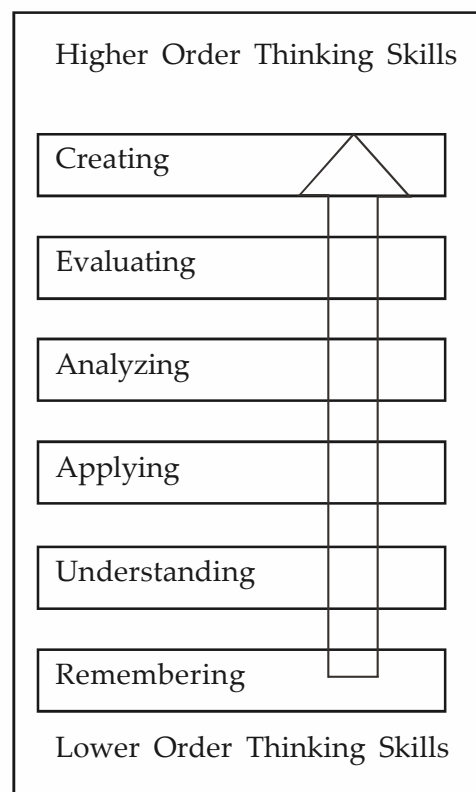
Creating: Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; recognizing elements into a new pattern of structure through generating, planning, or producing.

(Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, pp.67-68)

Graphical presentations of Bloom's old and revised taxonomy are presented below for your understanding and reference.



(Old Version)



(Revised Version)

Check Your Progress 3

- Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Write the differences between Bloom's old taxonomy and revised taxonomy?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Now let us discuss the two important tools 'mind mapping' and 'concept mapping', and discuss their association with cognitive skills in relation to learning and understanding events and concepts.

1.6 MIND MAPPING AND CONCEPT MAPPING

Cognitive skills play a major role to construct mind mapping and concept mapping while studying Self Learning Materials (SLMs). When learners read the SLMs it is expected that they should understand, conceptualize and relate the information to their experiences for better and effective learning. To do so they often require mind mapping as well as concept mapping tools. Let us discuss these tools and see how they help distance learners to make their learning easier and faster.

In mind mapping, it is always found to be a core concept that branches out into some relevant and related sub-concepts. It is presented in a hierarchical or tree format. Again, the sub-concepts further branch out into sub-sub-sub concepts. For example; the concept 'pen' branches out into writing, plastics, ink, paper, etc. Further, the sub-concept 'ink' branches out into blue, green, red, black, etc. Thus, it is stated that mind mapping is a powerful technique that allows learners to make the best use of their brain power by harnessing the full range of their cognitive skills. A mind map can be used either for note taking, or note making. It replaces the inefficient method of linear note-taking and opens up the creative processes and provides a diagram of the whole concept which cannot easily be obtained by any other methods. By using the mind mapping tool, learners can combine words, pictures, icons or symbols, sounds, colors and may be other imagery structures those relevant and fit into organizing their ideas.

Mind maps are also considered as brainstorming diagrams based on a central idea or image, typically used to aid in organization, problem solving, and decision making. A mind map is a graphical way to represent non-linear ideas and concepts. It is a visual thinking tool that helps structuring information, helping learners to better analyze, comprehend, synthesize, recall, and generate new ideas. Mind maps are used to generate, visualize, structure, classify ideas, and as an aid in study, organization, problem solving, decision making, and writing. Mind maps and concept maps are different on the ground that mind maps focus on only one central word or a principal idea whereas, concept maps connect multiple words or ideas together. We will discuss the 'concept mapping' in the next passage and analyze how cognitive skills help to frame the concept map on a particular concept or word. See the pictorial diagram of mind mapping in Figure 1.1.

Example of Mind Mapping

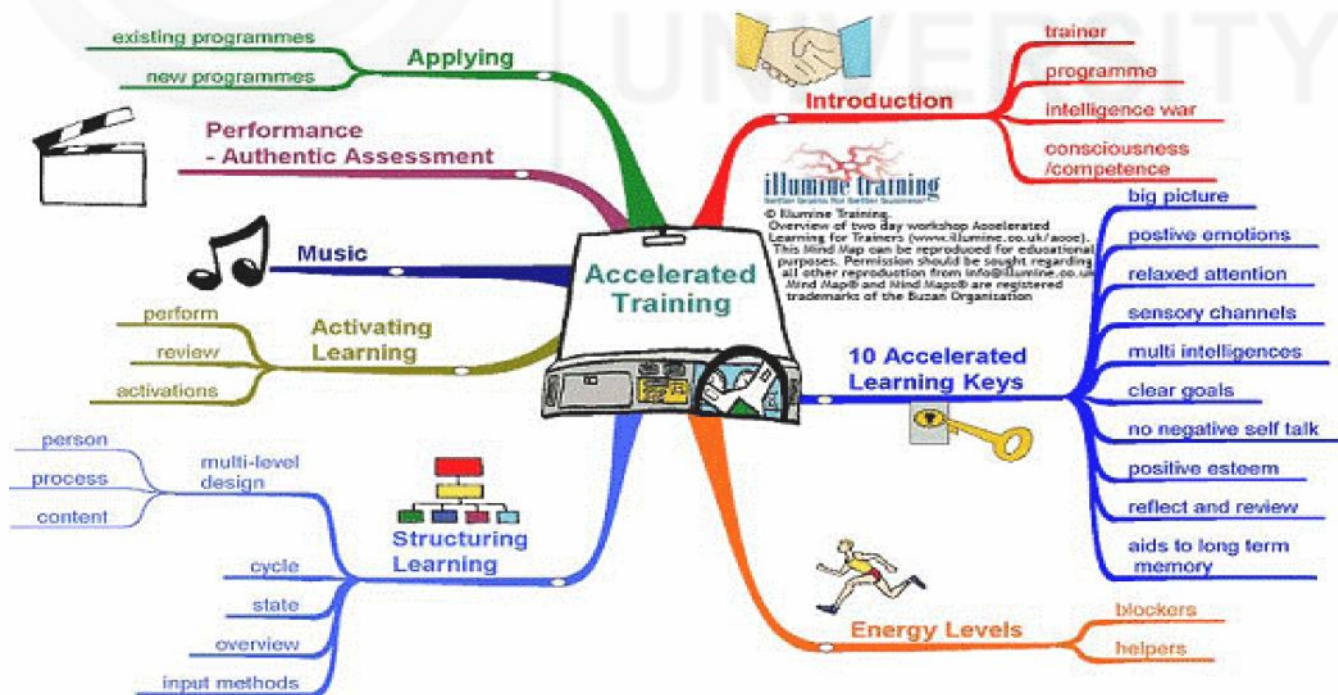


Figure 1.1

Source: <http://www.mind-mapping.co.uk/mind-maps-examples.htm>

Check Your Progress 4

- Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

What is mind mapping?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Concept Mapping

Concept Mapping is a graphical tool for learning, developed by Novak and Gowin (1984). A concept map is a diagram to show the compact relationships among concepts. They are graphical images for organizing and representing knowledge. A concept map represents the relations between ideas, images, concepts, or words, as a road map represents the locations of highways and towns. In a concept map, each word or concept is connected to another and linked back to the original word, image, or concept. By the help of concept maps learners can develop logical thinking and study skills which are part of cognitive skills. Therefore, concept maps ascertain meaningful learning. To adapt and adhere to the concept mapping tool in learning activities is to learn meaningfully in any context. Thus, learning becomes a unique and creative phenomenon.

See the pictorial diagram of concept mapping in Figure 1.2.

Example of Concept Mapping

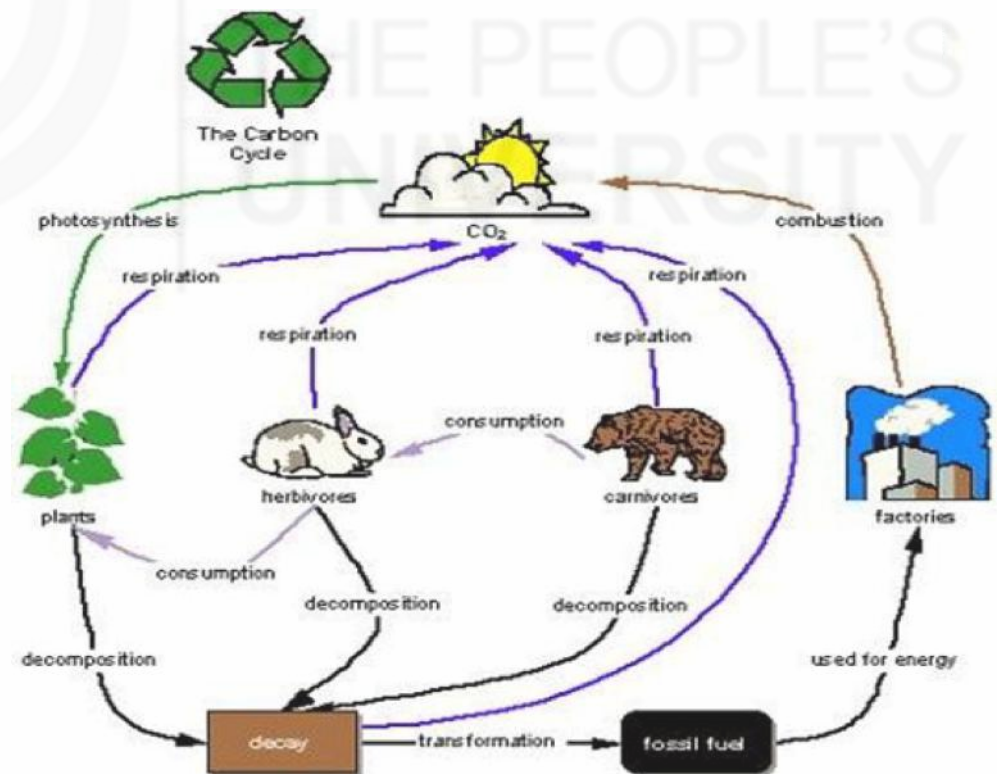


Figure 1.2

Source: <http://www.informationtamers.com/Find-best-visual-form-for-information-management.html>

1.7 LET US SUM UP

Cognitive skills are understood as the basic mental abilities that we use to think, study, and learn. To interpret in the context of distance education, it is regarded as any mental skills that are used in the process of acquiring knowledge.

Cognition is of two types. These are:

- i) Presentative cognition
- ii) Representative cognition (memory)

In presentative cognition, the objects are directly presented whereas in case of representative cognition (memory) the objects are indirectly recalled. All sorts of cognition may not be valid because to have a valid cognition, there should be the right apprehension of an object. In other words, a cognition is valid when knowledge of an object must correspond to the reality. Thus, it states that a valid cognition is the manifestation of an object as it is.

Cognitive skills have some essential components. These are:

- Perception
- Memory
- Logical thinking
- Concentration
- Rational attitude

Memory is of five kinds. These are:

- a) Short term memory: It lasts from a few seconds to a minute
- b) Long term memory: An ability to recapitulate the long past events.
- c) Receptive memory: Remembering the physical postures of an object of recent past.
- d) Sequential memory: Remembering things in an order.
- e) Rote memory: It is a habit to learn and remember certain information

Concentration is of three types: (i) an ability to concentrate on a particular task, (ii) an ability to focus on several important tasks at once, and (iii) an ability to filter irrelevant information and remain focused on a particular task.

To improve one's own concentration, one should adhere to these guidelines:

- a) Ensure understanding of the subject contents
- b) Retain and maintain interest in the subject matter
- c) Have a purpose while doing any activity
- d) Make sure your attention is focused
- e) Transform good procedures into habits
- f) Reward yourselves once you achieve the pre-set goals

Learning through technology certainly has potential benefits provided learners show their inclination for technological use and are acquainted with its multiple applications. In this regard, Cuban (1993) pointed out that the following advantages can be derived by using computer in teaching learning domain:

- to keep the education system at the forefront of technological development and learners' skills up-to-date with those expected in the workforce;
- to increase efficiency and productivity in teaching and learning; and
- to enable more self-directed learning

The revised Bloom's taxonomy is presented in a stairway from lower order thinking to higher order thinking skills: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

The terms are defined as:

Remembering: retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from long term memory

Understanding: Constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining

Applying: Carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing

Analyzing: Breaking material into constituent parts, determining how these parts relate to one another and to an overall structure, or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing

Evaluating: Making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing

Creating: Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; recognizing elements into a new pattern of structure through generating, planning, or producing

Cognitive skills play a major role to construct mind mapping and concept mapping while studying self learning materials. When learners read the self learning materials it is expected that they should understand, conceptualize and relate the information to their experiences for the better and effective learning. To do so they often require mind mapping as well as concept mapping tools.

Mind maps and concept maps are different on the ground that mind maps focus on only one central word or a principal idea whereas, concept maps connect multiple words or ideas in together.

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1.9 FEEDBACK TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

Check Your Progress 1

The essential components of cognitive skills are:

- Perception
- Memory
- Logical thinking
- Concentration
- Rational attitude.

Check Your Progress 2

There are three types of concentration. These are: (i) an ability to concentrate on a particular task, (ii) an ability to focus on several important tasks at one time, and (iii) an ability to filter irrelevant information and remain focused on a particular task.

Check Your Progress 3

The differences of Bloom's old and revised taxonomy are found in three broad categories: terminology, structure, and emphasis. The major category is prominently marked in the changes as *verb forms instead of nouns*. The old taxonomy has presented the six cognitive levels of thinking in a stairway. These are; knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. But in the revised taxonomy the cognitive levels of thinking are presented in the following hierarchical order—remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

Check Your Progress 4

Mind maps are considered also as brainstorming diagrams based on a central idea or image, typically used to aid in organization, problem solving, and decision making. A mind map is a graphical way to represent non-linear ideas and concepts. It is a visual thinking tool that helps structuring information, helping learners to better analyze, comprehend, synthesize, recall, and generate new ideas.



STRIDE

In 1990, The Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Vancouver, Canada, The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, proposed to set up a training institute for Distance Education in South Asia region. Accordingly, the erstwhile Division of Distance Education of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), established in 1986-87, was upgraded into the Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) in 1993. Over the years STRIDE has responded to the Distance Education needs of many countries in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean region.

The objectives of STRIDE are to:

- identify training needs of different target groups already involved and those expected to get involved in open distance education.
- build up a resource base of up-to-date information, training materials, courses and expertise, and make such resources available whenever needed.
- develop training strategies and training materials to meet the various needs of different types of individuals and distance teaching/training institutions.
- organise and conduct training and staff development activities for the identified target groups and institutions through various strategies leading to completion of certificates, diplomas and degrees.
- promote research in Open and Distance Education at the fundamental, experimental and application levels in order to constantly enrich the training programmes and management processes and meet the challenges of the expanding educational environment.
- offer research degree programmes to eligible target group leading to M.Phil and Ph.D degrees.
- respond to the needs of dynamic systems of education and development using information and communication technologies.

Capacity Building Activities organized by STRIDE for:

- IGNOU Teachers/Academics/Non-teaching Staff
- State Open Universities (SOUs)
- DDEs/DEIs (Distance Education Institutes and Dual-mode Universities)
- Collaborated Institutions and Partners
- Overseas Distance Education Institutions and Other International Agencies

“शिक्षा मानव को बन्धनों से मुक्त करती है और आज के युग में तो वह लोकतंत्र की भावना का आधार भी है। जन्म तथा कारणों से उत्पन्न जाति एवं वर्गगत विषमताओं को दूर करते हुए मनुष्य को इन सबसे ऊपर उठाती है।”

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“ Education is a liberating force, and in our age it is also a demonstrating force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances.”

- Indira Gandhi

STRIDE Activities Academic Programmes

- M.A. (Distance Education)
- M.Phil. in Distance Education
- Ph.D. in Distance Education
- Post Graduate Diploma in E-learning (PGDEL)

Training Programmes (IGNOU/SOU/DEIs/Overseas)

- Induction and orientation programmes
- Specialized training on specific areas
- Self-learning material development (SLMD) workshops
- Refresher programmes in DE and other disciplines
- Staff development Programme for Administrative/Non-teaching Staff
- Training of Academic Counsellors (Face-to-Face)
- Academic Counsellors Training-Online (ACT-Online)
- Training for Developing Research Proposals in ODL
- Research in distance and online learning
- Development of Multi Media Courseware
- Development of Online Courses
- International Customized Training

Research and Programme Evaluation (Studies Completed)

- English as Medium of Instruction in Distance Education (1992)
- Need Analysis for the Programme of Training of Trainers (TOT) in the Developing Self-instructional Material for use in Distance Education in Asia, Africa, South Pacific region (1995)
- A Study on the Utility of MBA Programme of IGNOU as Perceived by Students who successfully completed the Programme (1995)
- A Feedback Study on the Utility of BLISc Programme of IGNOU as Perceived by BLISc Graduates (1995)
- Programme Evaluation in Open & Distance Learning: A Case Study of MADE Programme of IGNOU (1997)
- Exploration of Strategies to Meet the Needs of the Disabled in India (1997)
- Partner Institutions and Students Support Services: Students' Feedback (1999)
- Distance Education and Job Market: A Case Study of IGNOU Graduates (1999)
- Training Need Analysis and Development of a Training Design for Using Distance Learning Methodology for Training Central and State Government Functionaries (1999)
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- Study of Models of Materials Development in Distance Education & Development of Performance Indicators (2000)
- Learning Strategies and Academic Performance: A Study of the Successful Distance Learners of PGDDE Programme of IGNOU (2001)
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- Programme Completion, and Learners Persistence and Dropout in Distance Education (2004)
- Students' Perception of Workload in Distance Education (2004)
- Impact of Distance Education Programmes of IGNOU in Personal and Career Development of Distance Learner (2004)
- Objectives in SLM: A Critical Analysis of Their Expected Roles, Learners Perception and Usages (2004)
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- Tracer Study in Distance Education: A Case Study of IGNOU Graduates (DEC and STRIDE Collaborative Study) (2007)
- A Study of Cost Effectiveness and Cost Efficiency of Selected Programmes of IGNOU in Relation to Student and Institutional Costs (2007)
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- Learner's Perception of ICT: A Case of IGNOU (2010)
- Student Satisfaction in PGDDE and MADE Programmes of IGNOU (2010)
- Student Satisfaction Survey of IGNOU (2010)
- Programme Evaluation in Distance Education: In-depth Study of Selected IGNOU Programmes (2011)

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UNIT 2 STUDY SKILLS: HOW TO STUDY BETTER

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Learning Outcomes
- 2.2 Need and Importance of Study Skills
- 2.3 Study Skills: Building Good Habits
- 2.4 Effective Listening
- 2.5 Effective Reading
- 2.6 Effective Writing
- 2.7 Communication Skills
- 2.8 Improving Vocabulary and Identifying Learning Style
- 2.9 Study Skills and Distance Teaching/Learning
- 2.10 Time Management
- 2.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.12 References and Further Readings
- 2.13 Feedback to Check Your Progress Questions

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Studying, since time immemorial has been the process wherein the teacher 'spoon-fed' the students and they were dictated 'what' to learn and 'when' to learn. The 'how' to learn was never a part of the teaching process. The students did not venture outside the realms of the prescribed boundary of books and the administered course materials. Libraries did exist but the learners were not informed how to make the best use of the libraries. It is in this context that study skills acquire importance.

Study Skills are difficult to define. There is no specific definition for a study skill. The wide variations in the methods and habits of studying practiced by learners make it difficult to define and list specific studying skills. However, in layman's terms we may say 'study skills' are 'the different aptitudes that can be developed in order to improve a learner's capacity to learn'. It is a process of learning. Good use of study skills can lead to one becoming a proficient and effective learner.

Study skills are often divided into two types. One type is to know the sources from where to collate information that are necessary for inclusive learning. For example if you were asked to give a write up on the 'Role of youth in Indian politics', you must know where to find the information and how to incorporate the information acquired for your best learning. For this purpose, you should know which book to read if you are consulting the library, what section in the newspaper to look into if scrutinizing the newspaper, which website to check if browsing through the internet, which teacher to discuss it with etc.

The second type is to know the techniques to use to learn the materials once they are available. You should use specific skills and strategies to organize the materials and write on the information collated.

2.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this unit we attempt to highlight the various ways in which you can improve your learning. We shall try to incorporate Study Skills which aim to help you enhance your learning so as to retain the knowledge acquired. Other related topics like reading and learning styles, how to be an effective communicator as well as an attentive listener and how to write assignments effectively have also been included in this unit. Time management skills have also been briefly discussed.

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Define 'Study Skills';
- Understand the importance of study skills in learning;
- Adopt the best method suited to your learning style;
- Enhance your ability to learn more and become an effective learner;
- Incorporate the study skills for your distance learning;
- Be a good communicator; and
- Manage your study time.

2.2 NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF STUDY SKILLS

Effective study skills must be practiced. It is not enough simply to "think about" studying; you have to actually do it to improve it, and in the process use information from what you do to get better. Often question arises as to why is there a need to know study skills, the answer is simple – to help an individual reach the optimum level of understanding and knowledge through his/her own effort. So now we come to the point where we discuss the significance of teaching a study skill. Many a times, as a learner you have complains about not being able to study properly. For example, a lot of times, you, as a learner have said 'I don't remember what I have studied though I spent the whole day studying' or 'I study best when I am listening to music' etc. You may have heard or made statements of this kind. The fact of the matter is that difficulties while studying is very common with every individual, a problem for you may not be for the other or vice-versa. This problem of studying arises more so in the realm of higher education. This is because higher level of education requires more 'active studying' than studying at school where we are spoon fed with information by the school teachers. The higher the educational level the more active studying on the part of the individual learner is required. The learner is expected to develop his/her own study strategies or habits and study on his/her own. This independent studying becomes difficult if the learners have no idea about the study skills and therefore it is recommended that study skills be taught at the early level of education.

When a learner does not develop his/her study skills, chances are that it may lead to either poor study habits or wrong concepts pertaining to studying. Knowledge of study skills would help the learners spend lesser amount of time in studying and learning more. It is difficult to make an exhaustive inventory of skills to be taught. Nevertheless, we have attempted through this unit, to list a few essential skills that a learner should acquire to study independently and effectively. However, one must remember that there is no simple and concrete formula that will apply to all learners; it may differ from learner to learner. The following are discussions with a focus on study skills.

Check Your Progress 1

- Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Write down five reasons why you need to know about Study Skills?

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2.3 STUDY SKILLS: BUILDING GOOD HABITS

Just like not all fingers of a hand are same, no two people study the same way. For instance, the method of studying adopted by person X may not always work for person Y. However, there are some general techniques that may result in learning by both. For some, a particular subject may be interesting and that studying it is not work but pleasure whereas for others it may be an effort to study that particular subject. Everyone is different, and for some students, studying and being motivated to learn comes naturally. As a student your learning is dependent on your ability to study effectively and efficiently. As mentioned, study skills must be worked upon to improve it. Just lying around and thinking about it is not going to help you learn. In order to develop effective study skills you should keep the following in mind:

Preparing a schedule

Before you think about the process of studying, you must make a schedule. If you don't have a schedule or plan for studying, then you will not be able to deal with the time that you have in your hand and allocate timings for different subjects. It is most important that once you prepare the study schedule you stick to it and follow it. For example, prepare a study schedule day-wise, starting from Monday or week-wise whichever is convenient.

When to study?

The problem of when to study is vital. It is suggested that you study when you have no tension or anxiety about anything and you are relaxed and feel free to study.

Where to study?

Many of you may be faced with the problem of where to study. The answer to this question is simple: you can study anywhere! The place you choose to study should be suitable for your learning and be free from any kind of distraction.

In order to build an effective way to study it is also pertinent that you know the different strategies that you can use to improvise your learning. The different strategies are: thinking skills, SQ3R method, note-taking skill, outlining text etc. We shall discuss them in detail.

Thinking Skills

Everybody has the ability to think. We may think about different things at the same time or may stick to only one aspect of thought. Everyone has thinking skills, but few use them effectively. Effective thinking skills cannot be studied like mathematical formulae, but must be built up over a period of time. One must develop his/her thinking skills gradually and use it for his/her learning purpose.

SQ3R

SQ3R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review. This is a five step strategy appropriate for all subjects and for all classes. This will encourage learners to become independent in reading study materials. We shall discuss more in detail about SQ3R strategy in the section on reading skills.

Note-Taking

Note-taking will not be useful if one does not know how to take notes. It must be learned and refined. The most important thing to remember while note-taking is to make sure the writing is legible because if you cannot read your own writing after taking down the notes, it will be of no use to you.

Highlighting text

It has been described by many students that they are able to learn faster the text which has been highlighted. On the contrary underlined texts are not easily remembered. Hence, while reading a text, one should in the process keep on highlighting a text which is important.

2.4 EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Listening is very much an active process of selecting and interpreting information from auditory and visual clues (Richards 1983; Rubin 1995). In the distance education system listening is crucial for communication with regard to attending face-to-face tutorial, academic counselling, teleconferencing, listening to audio-programme, attending orientation programmes and so on.

Learning requires listening and listening well helps in communicating or expressing ourselves better. Learning effectively requires effectively listening which will in turn improve our communication skills. Most of you studying in the education system—conventional or distance education are not very good listeners. You allow yourselves to drift away from what is being taught. Most students make the mistake of thinking that hearing and listening is the same thing but the truth is

that they are entirely different. It is not difficult to improve our listening ability. The following are ways to improve the ability to listen:

Look out for meaning

During academic counselling or in a classroom teaching, when the academic counselor/teacher is teaching, pay attention not only to the words being spoken but to the thoughts and messages they convey. Try to identify the main idea and the context in which the words have been spoken. Listen attentively to the examples and description that follow the words.

Note-taking

If you just hear what your academic counselor/teacher is saying then you may note down points which will not make any sense later on. It is therefore, suggested that while the teaching takes place listen carefully and note down only the important points which you will be able to put together later on. For example, taking long notes is not going to be helpful because while trying to take notes of whatever the teacher is saying you will lose out on the other important points. Therefore, take notes of relevant points only.

Concentrate

It is quite normal for a student to wander away from the main topic that is being taught in class because he/she is unable to comprehend it. This happens because the student is allowing himself/herself to drift away from the class and not concentrate on the topic. The student hears what the teacher says but s/he does not process the information s/he hears due to lack of concentration. Effective listening requires that you concentrate and pay attention.

Be prepared

It is difficult to listen and concentrate when you are not prepared for a class. It is pertinent that you read the topic that has already been discussed in the class and come prepared for the same class the next day. This way it will be easier for you to concentrate in the class, participate actively in the class and better understand what is being taught.

Be interested

If you do not show any conscious effort of being interested in the teaching then you will not understand what the teacher is explaining. At this time you will just be hearing and not listening. As a consequence you tend to miss out on the significant content of the topic and details being addressed. As a student you should decide to be interested in the subject matter being addressed by the teacher. This will help you to listen more intently and effectively.

Focus on the speaker

You should look at the person who is delivering a lecture. You should be able to pick up non-verbal signs that the teacher sends out when s/he speaks. This way your ability to listen will improve and you may be able to avoid any kind of distraction.

Develop a rationale for your listening

List out your expectations from the class session and what you hope to learn during the class teaching. Listen for these things as your teacher talks. For example, be prepared for the class and when the teacher talks about certain issues which you are unsure of, take note of the same.

Don't be judgmental

Listen to what your teacher has to say; don't enter the class with a fixed opinion on the topic to be discussed. It is good to question as long as you remain open to the other viewpoints as well.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Do you think, as a learner, effective listening skills will help you to learn more? Why?

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2.5 EFFECTIVE READING

The SQ3R method has been a proven way to sharpen study skills. SQ3R stands for the initial letters of the five steps that should be taken in studying a text. The five steps are:

1. Survey
2. Question
3. Read
4. Recite
5. Review

SQ3R is a study technique, which was discussed by Robinson in 1961. This technique was modified into a system called SQ4R by Thomas and Robinson, 1972 (Glyn and Muth, 1994). Later, it was further modified by other researchers as SQ5R, SQ5WR and so on. We shall discuss them in detail but first let us discuss SQ3R in the given order.

Survey – It refers to a quick glance through the chapter of the course work. For example, after receiving the study materials you tend to open the materials and give a glance to the contents. This is known as survey. You may see how the programme has been divided into courses, how many courses are there and how many blocks are there in each course etc. This survey helps you to know the structure of the programme that you have opted for. Also, a survey of the 'contents'

tells you what topics are being dealt with. A survey of the index will tell you what contents are present in the course materials, the units etc. It also helps you to save time by directing you straight to the relevant pages. When you survey a chapter or a book, it helps you to grasp the main ideas contained in the book or chapter.

Question – There is a purpose why you choose to read the particular content of the course material. You ask yourself certain questions regarding the content such as, 'Are the contents worth reading'? 'Will the contents be relevant to my field'? 'How much time will I take to complete this Unit'? The important things to learn are usually answers to questions. Questions that you ask yourself should lead you to the five Ws (what, why, when, who and where) of study content; it will also explain the 'how' of a particular subject. When you ask yourself questions regarding the content of the course material as you read or study, the answers that you draw from these questions will facilitate you to make sense of the material and remember it more easily because the process will give you an idea about the contents of the subject. Don't be afraid to write your questions in the margins of your course materials as these questions will further enhance your learning as you answer them when you read along.

Read – Reading requires an active participation: it is NOT just running your eyes over the contents of the book. You as a learner need to develop a critical mind so as to answer questions you have asked yourself in relation to the contents of the subject matter. Reading self-instructional materials is different from reading a book, magazine, newspaper etc. Self-instructional materials are written in an interactive style and so you should prepare yourself to interact with the teacher that has been in-built into the course material. You should not read fast but instead read slowly so as to grasp the main ideas contained in the material. Be sure to read everything, including tables, graphs and illustrations as they can at most times convey an idea more effectively than the written text. However, at the reading stage it is neither advisable to make notes nor underline words or phrases. At this stage one must just read to get the idea and after reading through the entire text start underlining or marking the important points.

Recite – Reading a text is not the final step in learning; instead, it is the first step. Units/chapters that have been read need to be retained. Retention of what has been read will help you to improve the learning vis-à-vis improvement in concentration, enable you to ask questions pertaining to the text and develop a critical thinking. After reading through the whole unit you must try to recite or mentally recollect the key information and concepts. This will help you to remember what you have read. Try and develop an overall concept of what you have read in your own words and thoughts. The best possible way is to connect what you have read to the things that you already have knowledge of.

Review – It is a quick repeat of the other four steps: namely, Survey, question, read and recite. It is a review of what you as a learner have achieved while reading the text. During review, you should also go over the notes that you have written to help clarify points that you didn't understand. The best time to review is when you have finished studying the whole block. Waiting until just before the examination to begin the review process is not helpful.

SQ4R Technique

SQ4R stands for the initial letters of the six steps that should be taken in studying a text. The six steps are:

1. Survey
2. Question
3. Read
4. Reflect
5. Recite
6. Review

This SQ4R technique modified by Thomas and Robinson in 1972 added **Reflect** as a new step along with all the other steps in SQ3R technique. Let us understand what Reflect means. In general, it is good to reflect upon certain things similarly, while learning one should also reflect on the study materials as it helps to develop more ideas about the content and the meaning of the text. Reflecting helps you to remember information that is contained in the text. You may start reflecting on the content of the text during the second phase of your reading the text. While reading try to find the relation between what you have read and what you already know. This will help you to retain what you have learnt as it is easier to remember information that is meaningful.

SQ5R Technique

SQ5R stands for the initial letters of the seven steps that should be taken in studying a text. The seven steps are:

1. Survey
2. Question
3. Read
4. Reflect
5. Record
6. Recite
7. Review

Let us understand what **Record** means. While reading there may be some sentences or paragraph or even certain words which are difficult to understand or you do not know the meaning of. To help clarify such doubts you should note down and make a record for further reference. You may also record certain key concepts by underlining them or taking notes.

SQW5R Technique

SQW5R stands for the initial letters of the eight steps that should be taken in studying a text. The steps are:

1. Survey
2. Question

3. Write
4. Read
5. Reflect
6. Record
7. Recite
8. Review

Here, the letter W stands for **Write**. When you survey the text which you are reading it is certain, there will be some questions you may ask yourself regarding the text. Initially you may not have the answer to the questions and so writing down the questions will be vital for reference later on. As you go on reading the text the questions may be answered. If you do not derive any answers from the text then you may consult your academic counselor with regard to the questions and doubts you have written down.

Check Your Progress 3

- Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Explain the SQ3R method in your own words.

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2.6 EFFECTIVE WRITING

As a distance learner, one of the important aspects of your learning is writing. Having good writing skills will enable you to communicate effectively with your teacher. Since, assignments and one-way counseling are some of the methods through which you communicate with your teacher; the ability to write well becomes an added advantage in the distance learning system. As mentioned, there is no sure shot method for developing the perfect writing because there is no perfect writing. Writings which are able to effectively communicate what we want to say to the receiver *are* perfect writing. Following are some suggested ways to improve writing:

1. **Identify target:** Before you actually write anything, first identify to whom the writing is directed to. If the writing, for example, is for a teacher and you are needed to provide answers to the questions then you will have to write accordingly.
2. **Decide Content:** Once you identify your target, you can begin writing. Before writing always assume that the reader does not know anything, this will help you to write briefly and also effectively.

3. **Create an outline:** This is mainly helpful if you're writing a longer document such as a report, presentation, or speech. Creating an outline of what you want to write assists you in identifying which steps to take in which order, and they help you break the task up into manageable pieces of information.
4. **Structure your content:** The writings should be as "reader friendly" as possible. Never forget to use headings, subheadings, bullet points, and numbering whenever possible to break up the text. If you break up your writing into headings, bullet points etc., it will make it an easy read irrespective of the heavy text.
5. **Avoid mistakes:** When we talk about mistakes in writing, it is commonly associated with grammatical mistakes. Making unwanted grammatical mistakes will make you look unprofessional and will further give the impression that you have not read anything. More so, grammatical mistakes in writing can give an entirely new meaning to what you want to convey through your writing. For example there is a difference between she/see, there/their and than/then etc.
6. **Proofread:** Always remember to read once again what you have written. This will result in finding out the mistakes in the text, if any. Do not rush through your text while proof reading as you may miss some mistakes. Proofread twice—once for grammatical and spelling mistakes and the second one for content. The best way to proofread your writing is to give it to someone who has no clue about what you are writing. This way you will avoid any bias that may creep in.

2.7 COMMUNICATION SKILLS

We have discussed about various ways by which you could improve your study skills. More so, we tried to list out few steps through which you can enhance your listening and reading skills. Remember, these skills will only be effective if you follow them. It is important for a learner to know that adapting to a good reading and listening pattern would simultaneously result in an effective communication skill of the self. The ability to communicate effectively is one of the most important skills you can have, whether you are clarifying your doubts to your teacher, discussing ideas to your boss, or simply sending an official email or leaving a message. The ability to communicate is the primary factor that distinguishes human beings from animals. And it is the ability to communicate well that distinguishes one individual from another. What you say and how you say, will talk a lot about yourself. Effective communication is all about conveying your messages to other people clearly and unmistakably. It is also about receiving information that others are sending to you, with as little distortion as possible and always remember practice makes a man perfect. Though there are no set rules that can be followed to achieve good communication skills, the following are a few suggested ways by which you can try to develop your communication skills:

1. **Listen attentively:** If you listen carefully to the things and issues that are happening around you, you will be able to communicate effectively with your audience. Whenever a person speaks always listen to what he/she is saying and do not think about what you

are going to say next when the other person stops talking. Truly effective communication goes both ways. While it might be difficult, try really listening to what your partner is saying. Just hear them and converse back what they are saying so they know you have heard.

2. **Develop reading habit:** Once you develop the habit of reading and applying thoughts to what you read, your communication skills will improve. Reading helps you to know what is happening around you and when you communicate the same you will be able to provide exact details as well as authentic examples of the same.
3. **Maintain eye contact:** Whenever you interact with a person or more never forget to maintain a good eye contact. This is vital as it keeps all those present involved in the conversation. It keeps them interested and on the alert, during the course of the conversation.
4. **Begin with short messages:** While communicating it is important to begin with short and precise message. If your message is too lengthy, disorganized, or contains errors, then the message will be misunderstood and misinterpreted. Offering too much information too fast tends to create problem for the receiver.
5. **Ask questions:** As a person conversing with another person, you should never be afraid to ask relevant questions. The more questions you ask the better clarity you have regarding the issue you are talking about. This will give you the confidence and the ability to speak more effectively to the issue discussed and putting your points across.
6. **Speak clearly enough to be heard.** Whenever you speak, speak in such a manner that you are heard. Use appropriate tone and volume depending on the number of people you are interacting with. Using proper tone helps ensure that your listeners hear exactly what you are saying, and reduces possibilities for misunderstanding.

2.8 IMPROVING VOCABULARY AND IDENTIFYING LEARNING STYLE

In education, it is evident that your teachers or the others will have certain assumptions about your learning and your knowledge about certain issues depending on the kind of words that you use to express yourself. Developing a good vocabulary will assist you further in your personal as well as professional field.

There are many ways through which you as a learner can improve your vocabulary. The first and most important step is to start reading regularly. Very often it is seen that as students we do not read our subject materials and leave it aside only for last minute review. This should not be so. One should read the text regularly to develop a good vocabulary about the subject material. One may also read related novels or other literature. However, just reading through the text will not improve your vocabulary; for this, you must figure out the

meaning of the difficult words that you may have come across. The easiest way is to look them up in a dictionary.

Secondly, while reflecting on a text you have been asked to relate the sentences or words to what you already know as it is easier to retain information that is personally meaningful to you. Similarly, in order to improve your vocabulary you should attach personal meaning to the words that you are learning. One of the easiest ways to make a word personally meaningful is by associating it with familiar things, people, or events.

The third method through which you may develop vocabulary is by repeating the words over and over again so as to memorize the words. Taking a note of the words separately will also help you in reading the words. But, just reading the words or memorizing them will not help in building your vocabulary. The words that you memorize have to be explored for the many meanings it may have and then used those in sentences accordingly.

Identifying learning styles

There are a number of different learning styles and learning preferences. There is neither a right mix nor is there fixed learning style for every individual. One style may be suitable for a person while the same style may not at all be suitable to others. Let us now discuss the different learning styles that one may use to derive more learning. The different learning styles are:

- Visual Learning Style
- Auditory Learning Style
- Tactile Learning Style

Visual Learning Style: Visual learners are those who are able to grasp more and understand the meaning of the content in the text when presented in a visual format, i.e. pictures, diagrams or videos. Visual learners learn best when the concept of a study material is presented to them in the form of a visual presentation. When studying visual learners create diagrams and use pictures to understand and remember concepts and ideas. For example, when a certain topic is presented with the help of illustrations, the learner learning is more comfortable.

Auditory Learning Style: Auditory learners learn best by participating in class discussion, listening to the lecture or participating in group learning process etc. Auditory Learners are able to learn, understand and retain information better when they hear it rather than see it. For example, when a teacher delivers lectures or a person listens to an audio tape on a particular subject, he/she is able to learn more.

Tactile Learning Style: Tactile Learners, also commonly referred to as Kinesthetic Learners, are hands-on learners. They learn best when they are able to physically participate directly in what they are required to learn or understand. For example, in a lab when a person does the experiment through touching and feeling he/she is able to learn more.

There are other learning styles which may also assist you in your study. They are: Logical Style, Social Style and Solitary Style.

Logical Style: There are some learners who are able to retain their learning by 'doing' and not by reading; they follow the logical learning

style. This is different from tactile learning style. For example: if you like to involve yourself in mathematical reasoning or use your brain to analyse certain problems then you probably belong to the logical learning style.

Social Style: A social learner is able to communicate well with others and his/her learning is enhanced through verbal or non-verbal communication with the others. Social learners are able to derive more learning in a group setting where discussion takes place and there is ample scope for debate on the particular topic. For example, a classroom setting where the teacher delivers a lecture and there is possibility of countering what is being taught.

Solitary Style: Learners who tend to learn more when they study alone are solitary learners. They cannot learn when they are in a group setting unlike the social style learners; instead, they prefer places that are quiet and free from any distractions. For example, if you are alone in a quiet room and working through possible solutions and analyzing the contents by yourself.

You might be wondering why is it important for you to identify and understand your learning style. Awareness of your learning style is vital to your study and retention of your knowledge acquired. When you are able to make out your learning style it will be favorable for you to assume that particular style for continuing with your learning as it will facilitate you in understanding and analyzing what has been studied and thereby helping you in retaining the subject matter and improving your knowledge. Also, identifying the learning style and preferences that best suit you is an important part of developing effective studying.

Check Your Progress 4

Notes: a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Identify your learning style and elucidate on why the particular style suits you best.

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2.9 STUDY SKILLS AND DISTANCE TEACHING/ LEARNING

Here in this section we shall see how study skills are essential for an open distance education system. Many a time, as a learner you might wonder will study skills help you in a system in which the teachers and the learners are at a distance for most of the teaching/learning process. The answer is yes! In fact, in such a system the study skills acquire more importance and it is but apt for the learners to develop their study skills so as to learn efficiently and more effectively what has been taught to him/her through the self learning materials.

Study strategies/methods play a vital role in distance education. As mentioned before, the learner, being away from the teacher, depends mainly upon his/her course materials which are self instructional and if he/she does not develop proper study skills, then he/she is certainly at a disadvantage. A distance learner also depends upon audio-visual materials. But how effectively he/she infers meaning out of the content primarily depends on how he/she has developed his/her study methods. It is also assumed that the distance learners are mostly adults. Hence, the belief is that they know how to study. But this is often not the correct situation. Many distance learners, for one reason or the other, drop out of courses and one of the main reasons so to cite, is the lack of effective study strategies.

The issue that arises now is how to help the distance learners develop study strategies? The answer lies within the text of the distance education course materials, which are self instructional in nature. The design of the materials helps the learners to develop skills for studying. The study materials have questions that are directed to the learners. The use of these questions that draws out higher level of understanding of the text/content is regarded as one of the important study strategies. In the distance teaching materials the questions that enable the learners to develop skills to critically analyse the text and also note down important points and at the same time derive ways to solve a problem and evaluate the text are either merged into the text and/or asked in the form of 'Check Your Progress' and assignments. For distance learners who are following the visual learning style, there are graphs, illustrations, diagrams, charts etc. in the learning materials. Such kinds of non-verbal aids are more useful in helping the learner grasp the meaning of the content of the text.

The distance learning materials also use conjunctive features such as, 'however', 'moreover', etc. to ensure easy reading and better understanding. These conjunctives help the learners understand easily where the writer contrasts or supports a statement or connects one sentence with a preceding sentence. The glossaries in the teaching materials prepare the learner for any problem that he/she may encounter while reading the text. It may also explain particular concepts which the learner may have doubts about while reading the texts. Glossaries that are at the end of the texts are known as 'reference' glossaries. They inform the learners the various books that have been referred while writing the text.

The distance learning materials have blocks which are divided into units which are further divided into sub-themes for the easy comprehension of the learner. It also contains a brief introduction in relation to what the learner will read and learn about while going through the text. The 'Introduction' also sums up what has been learnt in the previous unit while introducing the learner to the new unit. This helps in building a bridge between two units. Such efforts, in turn, help in creating rationality more effectively in regards to the subject content. The use of 'Let Us Sum Up' is self-explanatory. They are introduced within the text when a move is made from a particular topic to another. Sum-ups are also used at the end of each unit to help the learners put together what have already been read. Moreover, 'Sum-ups' facilitate the learners to grasp the main idea presented in the unit without reading through the whole unit. The most effective method of distance education materials is that it is writing in a narrative style. It makes the learner feel that they are constantly

interacting with the teacher. This style also helps the learners to read better and retain better what is in the text. Incorporating the features that have been discussed above help the distance learners to develop many important study skills but then, incorporating these features in the distance materials alone will not improve the study skills of the learners. It has to be practiced by the learners through serious and systematic efforts.

2.10 TIME MANAGEMENT

Personal time management skills are essential skills for learners especially in the distance education system. It is important because there is no teacher to guide you through the hours of study or no supervision over what you do. You are in control of the time you have at your hand and if you use the time effectively whether you are employed, a student in some other university, a home-maker or even a fresh student, if you do not use the time appropriately, you will never achieve your learning goals. People who use time management techniques go on and become achievers in all walks of life. Placed below are some time management techniques which may be useful for you:

- 1) **Set a goal:** To start managing time effectively, you need to set goals. Without goal setting, you tend to idle away your time on issues which may not be important at all. Setting goals in the initial stage will save an enormous amount of time, effort and frustration in the future.
- 2) **Prioritize:** Whenever you are undertaking new assignments be it studying, writing notes, preparing proposals always prioritize your work according to the most important. Never keep aside what is more important and do the less important ones. This will help to achieve your learning objectives.
- 3) **Have a plan:** Having a plan will enable you to know what to do to minimize the unwanted interruptions you may face during the day. It is accepted that as a distance learner you are performing a multiple role, hence to have a stable study time it is advisable that you have a plan so that your study time/hour does not get affected.
- 4) **Don't put off work:** Putting-off learning for a later day will only lead to more frustration as your work will pile up and that any task seems impossible. Once you delay learning for few hours or a day, it will continuously lead to less time for your other learning. Avoid delaying your work; stick to the plan that you have charted for yourself and only then you will achieve your learning goal.
- 5) **Prepare a time-table:** A good time-table will enable you to achieve your goals as per the priorities set up by you and facilitate learning according to your plan. Creating a good time-table includes being aware of the factors that affect the time you have for learning. An effective time-table includes scope for interruption, and unforeseen event that otherwise may cause disorder with your learning objectives. By creating such a time-table, that reflects your priorities as well as supports your personal life, you will be able to balance your learning goals as well as your personal life.

- 6) **Learn to say 'Yes' and 'No':** When we cannot say 'No' to other things which we will not be able to deliver, we create the expectation among others and in turn put the pressure on ourselves. Learn to make quick decisions and say 'Yes' or 'No' instead. This honesty will be appreciated and you will also not waste your time. This way, you can stick to your schedule and achieve your learning objectives.

2.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to define study skills though it is not possible to conclusively define it. The unit has attempted to highlight the important study skills which a learner may incorporate while studying also, information has been given on the learning styles as well as ways to improve one's vocabulary while learning. The unit has also dealt with why study skills are important for an open distance education system and the roles of a distance learner in developing their study skills. Emphasis has also been laid on the time management skills for learners, especially distance learner so that they are able to coordinate their time for proper learning. Improving one's communication and listening skills have also been discussed for effective learning. A good learner follows strategies that suit him/her for learning, though there is no fixed thumb rule to be a good learner.

2.12 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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2.13 FEEDBACK TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

Check Your Progress 1

It is important for every learner to know about the study skills because these skills will (a) help a learner reach the optimum level of understanding and knowledge through his/her own effort, (b) motivate

the learner to develop independent style of learning, (c) no knowledge of the study skills will lead to either poor study habits or wrong concepts pertaining to studying, (d) knowledge of study skills will help the learner spend less time in studying and learn more, and (e) study skills will enable the learner to engage in active studying rather than rote learning.

Check Your Progress 2

Yes, as a learner effective listening skill will help me to learn more. This is possible as listening well help in communicating or expressing ourselves better. When we listen to the talks during class we are able to concentrate properly on the subject matter and the concentration makes it possible for us to take proper notes. When the teacher speaks and we listen, we are able to look out for meaning of the contents and this helps us to understand the subject matter more effectively. All these then, help us to be prepared for further exams.

Check Your Progress 3

The SQ3R method is related to the reading skill. The knowledge of the SQ3R method will introduce the learner to the subject and also assist in his/her learning process.

The SQ3R stands for:

Survey: This is the process whereby we glance through the curriculum and get an idea of the content in the course work after we receive the course materials.

Question: Here, the learner asks him/her-self once again, whether the course will be beneficial for him/her. When questions regarding the content of the course material are answered it will facilitate the learner to make sense of the material and remember it more easily because the process will give him an idea about the contents of the subject.

Read: While reading, the learner develops a critical mind thereby answering the questions that have been asked before. However, reading is not just going through the texts; it involves understanding of what has been read. In distance education, the teacher is inbuilt into the contents and hence, the materials have to be read slowly and carefully to impart better understanding.

Recite: Going through what has been read will enable the learner to develop a clear understanding of the texts. After reading through the required content, the learner should attempt to remember what has been already read; this will help him/her to develop an overall concept of the subject and lead to improvement in concentration.

Review: It is going through the entire process of survey, question, read, recite and review. This process helps the learner to clarify certain issues related to the text. The best time to review is after reading through the entire course and before the exams.

Check Your Progress 4

You may write the answer to this question as per your own learning style and suitability.

UNIT 3 READING AND WRITING SKILLS

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Learning Outcomes
- 3.2 The Reading Process
- 3.3 Stages of Reading
 - 3.3.1 Perception and Word Recognition
 - 3.3.2 Comprehension
 - 3.3.3 Evaluation and Reaction
 - 3.3.4 Application
- 3.4 Developing Reading Skills
 - 3.4.1 SQ3R Technique of Reading
 - 3.4.2 Skimming and Scanning
 - 3.4.3 Intensive and Extensive Reading
- 3.5 The Writing Process
 - 3.5.1 Planning
 - 3.5.2 Translating
 - 3.5.3 Reviewing/Editing
- 3.6 Developing Different Types of Writing Skills
 - 3.6.1 Paragraph Writing
 - 3.6.2 Essay Writing
 - 3.6.3 Letter Writing
 - 3.6.4 Report Writing
 - 3.6.5 Sharpening Your Writing Skills
- 3.7 Enhancing Reading and Writing by Using Technology
 - 3.7.1 Acquiring Reading and Writing Skills by Using Internet
- 3.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.9 References and Further Readings
- 3.10 Feedback to Check Your Progress Questions

3.0 INTRODUCTION

There is virtually no systematic teaching of reading and writing skills at higher levels of education. Consequently learners suffer in developing these skills at advanced stage. Therefore, in this unit we have made an attempt to present the basic concept and nature of reading and various stages in the process of reading. As the learner moves from lower to higher stages of reading, his/her critical and creative levels of comprehension improves a lot, which helps in developing divergent and convergent thinking. Various skills and techniques of reading help the learners as active consumers of information. Skills of skimming and scanning, intensive and extensive reading help the readers to benefit from various forms of reading materials at higher levels.

Recent researches on writing have provided us with an important insight: good writers go through certain processes which lead to successful pieces of written work. They plan the intent and put their thought in an appropriate language and style. The final draft is prepared through reviewing and editing. Writing skills for different

types of written forms differ in its approach and style. These skills could be developed and sharpened by constant practice of reading and writing varied forms and formats of written material.

3.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Define 'reading';
- Describe reading process;
- Identify the stages in reading;
- List important reading comprehension skills;
- Teach SQ3R technique to your learners and adopt it effectively for your study purposes;
- Describe writing process;
- Be familiar with different forms of writing; and
- Distinguish the salient features of each of these types of writing skills.

3.2 THE READING PROCESS

Reading is a process whereby a reader brings meaning to and gets meaning from print. This implies that readers bring their experiences as well as their emotions into play in order to derive meaning from text. Reading for meaning is the activity we normally engage in when we read books, journals, newspapers etc. It involves looking at sentences in a text and understanding the message they convey, in other words, making pause of a written text. Reading is thus an active process. When we read, we do not merely sit as passive receivers of the text. We also draw or help us guess what the text will pay next. Thus reading may be defined as a multifaceted and layered process in which a reader by actively interacting with the text, tries to decide what has been encoded by the writer/author. In this process the learner establishes a meaningful communication with the writer.

Thus reading is an interactive process. It is purposeful, selective and text based. The reading speed varies according to one's purpose in reading and the content of the text. It involves complex cognitive skills. Some one has called it a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' as it involves guessing, inferring and predicting the coming events based on the given situation.

Check Your Progress 1

- Notes:** a) Write your answer in the space given below.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

State why reading is seen as active interaction with the reading material. Your answer need not exceed eight lines.

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3.3 STAGES OF READING

In the process of reading, the learner passes systematically through the following stages:

- Perception and word recognition
- Comprehension
- Evaluation and reaction
- Application

3.3.1 Perception and Word Recognition

This stage of reading is also known as mechanical aspect of reading or 'reading on the lines'. While going through this stage, the reader first perceives the right word (structure) and its pronunciation. The image or the concept of the word is formed in his/her mind with the association of form, sound and meaning of the word altogether. This recognition of word is based on our past experience. A skilled reader recognizes the word as a whole instead going through each syllable like the beginner reader. Sometimes the advanced reader comprehends the meaning of a phrase/sentence without going through each word separately. At times a word or phrase acquires another meaning in a different context. The word 'rational', for example, besides its general use, is used in mathematics in a special sense.

3.3.2 Comprehension

In the second stage of reading we go deeper into literal meaning of the material read. Thus comprehension requires the abilities of critical thinking and reading. Besides literal comprehension, interpretations are essential for higher order of reading. Interpretation takes the reader beyond the printed page by requiring him/her to put together ideas which the author has not explicitly related to one another in the text. As an outcome of this process, the reader is able to process information and draw conclusions.

At critical level of comprehension the reader considers the relevance, authenticity and utility of a factual material. For example, if the reader is looking at a novel, he/she evaluates the logic of a character's behavior in comparison with his/her own experiences or own observation of characters in other works, e.g. novel or story. Interpretative and critical levels of comprehension is also known as 'reading between the lines'.

Creative reading level of comprehension uses divergent thinking skills to go beyond the earlier discussed levels of comprehension: literal, interpretative and critical reading. At this stage the reader tries to come up with new or effective alternative ideas, solutions etc. to those presented by the author. He/she goes beyond the described situation and creates new situations on the basis of his own experience, inference and imagination. This stage of comprehension is also known as 'reading beyond the lines'.

3.3.3 Evaluation and Reaction

While comprehending the text, the reader goes on determining the utility, appropriateness and reliability of the information and ideas

received. A good reader should always go on evaluating the events, ideas, characters or intentions of the author. At the same time he/she goes on reacting ideally to the material read. For example, if an author justifies the need of freedom of every person in modern times, as a reader of this text, I may react that freedom should also go along with certain responsibilities, and both should have their place for the development of the individual and the society. Higher level of comprehension must always lead to the development of evaluative capacity and appropriate reaction, among the reader, towards, the material read. Evaluation and Reaction should be the by product of critical and creative reading.

3.3.4 Application

The final stage of any reading activity should evolve in the application of acquired knowledge, ideas, experience, skill, attitude and values in one's own life. Whatever positive reactions a person has formed while reading the material must become the part and parcel of his/her personality. Any reading activity should be considered fruitful only if it brings the desirable changes in the readers' thoughts, feelings and actions. The goal of any fruitful reading activity should be the transformation of the personality of the reader by assimilating the positive ideas and values, and applying the same in his/her day to day life.

Check Your Progress 2

- Notes:** a) Write your answers in the space given below.
b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What are the four levels of comprehension?

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2) Describe the third stage of reading process, i.e. evaluation and reaction.

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3.4 DEVELOPING READING SKILLS

We have understood different stages/levels of reading process in the previous section. While selecting any reading material and teaching the same we should be careful to develop the appropriate reading skills and techniques to achieve the goals of reading. For example, literal comprehension may require the skills of understanding word meaning, sentence and paragraph comprehension. For developing critical and

creative reading, the skills to be employed may be: finding the central idea, generalization, drawing inference, prediction on the basis of given facts, analysis and synthesis, critical evaluation of the material read, etc. Besides these, the following techniques and skills may also be employed for successful readings:

- SQ3R Technique of Reading
- Skimming and Scanning
- Intensive and Extensive Reading

3.4.1 SQ3R Technique of Reading

Students at higher level are normally provided a lengthy list, but they cannot afford to spend time to read everything. Moreover, different texts require different approaches depending on what the learners are expected to get from them. The implication is that the strategy should be flexible in tackling text materials. The one strategy that gained wide acceptance is the SQ3R technique.

SQ3R stands for the initial letters of five steps that should be taken in studying a text. The five steps are:

- 1) Survey
- 2) Question
- 3) Read
- 4) Recall
- 5) Review

Survey

It refers to a quick glance through the preface, chapter headings, summary, index, etc. of the text. Surveying a text helps the readers grasp the main ideas. The preface helps to decide whether or not the book deserves his/her attention. A quick survey of contents tells what topic the author is dealing with and how the themes have been organized. The index tells instantly whether or not the text contains what are needed.

Questioning

After surveying the preface and contents you may ask questions like:

- How far can I depend on this book?
- Will the book be helpful to me as its preface suggests?
- Whether the book deals with the topics that I want to go through in detail?

Since questions are generally more helpful if given at the beginning or end of a chapter by the author himself, it is always better to note them during the survey. Having made your survey and started to question, you are now ready for the third step – reading the text.

Read

Reading text material demands critical and creative skills. Use of these skills for comprehension have already been discussed in section 3.4. Unless we read actively and intensively the intended textual material,

the questions which have been formulated can never be answered satisfactorily.

Recall

What has been read needs to be recalled for retention. Regular attempts to recall will help improve your learning in three ways—improving concentration, giving you a chance to clarify your doubts and remedy your misinterpretations and developing your ability to evaluate, react and apply what you have read.

Review

The purpose of reviewing is to check the validity of our recall. We must review the material read periodically. The best way to do this is to do a quick repeat of the four steps discussed earlier i.e. survey, question, read and recall.

Check Your Progress 3

- Notes:** a) Write your answer in the space given below.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Suppose you are teaching SQ3R technique to your students. Say in about 10 lines whether you would ask them to strictly follow the logical order in which SQ3R is presented. Substantiate your answer.

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3.4.2 Skimming and Scanning

By Skimming we mean glancing rapidly through a text to find out its general content, central idea or gist. We do this, for example, when we want to find out whether a certain article is relevant to our own area of study or research, or when we glance over a page of newspaper to see if there is anything worth reading in detail, or when we go through a book to find out its subject matter.

By scanning on the other hand, we mean darting over much of a text to search for a specific item or piece of information that we wish to discover. This skill also involves the ability to reject or pass over irrelevant information. It is the kind of reading we do when, for example we read through a biographical account to find out the date on which a certain event happened, or glance through the telephone directory looking for a person's telephone number. We may also see the table of contents or index of a book to find out whether certain aspect of a problem has been dealt within the book.

3.4.3 Intensive and Extensive Reading

The aim of intensive reading is to arrive at a detailed and thorough understanding of the text. It involves the learners working through the

short passage and examining it closely and in detail. The material for intensive reading is chosen with a view to developing the student's power of judgment and discriminative reading of interpretation and appreciation. Students learn to read with careful attention and concentration.

Extensive reading, on the other hand, involves reading in quantity for one's own enjoyment. It provides the students an excellent opportunity to increase reading speed, developing reading interests and reading habits. Extensive reading is normally carried out by the students on their own, outside the classroom. It complements the learning that takes place in the classroom as it provides valuable reinforcement of language already presented in the classroom as well as gives students useful practice in skills such as inferring meaning from the context when structures and vocabulary are not familiar.

3.5 THE WRITING PROCESS

Recent research on writing has provided us with an important insight. Good writer goes through certain processes which lead to a successful piece of written work. He/she starts off with a plan and thinks about what is to be conveyed and when. After writing the first draft, the writer is constantly reviewing, revising and engaging in the creative process. In this process the writer goes through the following stages:

- Planning
- Translating
- Reviewing/Editing.

3.5.1 Planning

Before putting pen to paper, a good writer always tries to answer the following questions:

- What subject matter, format and style should I select for my writing?
- Who is supposed to read this?

The planning stage is also known as the prewriting stage. While writing, the plan need not be strictly adhered to. As an author goes on writing, the plan may change slightly according to the mood of the writer or on the demand of the composition. In real life, writing normally arises out of a genuine need to communicate something to somebody but in the classroom that need has to be created in such a way that students are motivated to write on their own.

3.5.2 Translating

Here, translating means putting ones thoughts into appropriate language and style, i.e. finding the right words and sentences as well as choosing the right style of presentation. For example, sometimes in a few sentences while illustrating his/her point of view the authors used to provide appropriate examples. Few authors provide the main central idea in the concluding sentences or at the end of the paragraph. The chosen form of writing may be prose or poetry. If it is prose, its format may be essay, story, letter, dialogue, one act play,

biography or autobiography etc. The style of presentation may be descriptive, reflective, critical or creative. Thus the first draft of writing is prepared as per plan.

3.5.3 Reviewing/Editing

This may be regarded as post-writing stage. Many good writers keep reviewing their work as they write. From writing the first draft to the stage of editing one needs much rethinking and reorganization of ideas and language. The writer has to adopt a reader's perspective here and assess whether the ideas expressed and language used in the composition are easily comprehensible to the reader. At this stage, good writers add or delete the content or linguistic expression according to the demand of the subject matter or the requirement of the reader.

The process of monitoring is in operation right through the above three stages of composition. As we plan, we monitor our ideas; while drafting, we monitor the other mechanisms including punctuation, vocabulary and grammar. Reviewing and editing are also forms of monitoring.

Check Your Progress 4

- Notes:** a) Write your answers in the space given below.
b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

What is the importance of planning, translating and reviewing in the writing process? Write three sentences for each of them in the space given below.

1. Planning

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2. Translating

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3. Reviewing

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3.6 DEVELOPING DIFFERENT TYPES OF WRITING SKILLS

The major types of written composition are:

- Paragraph
- Essay
- Letters
- Reports

We shall discuss below each of these forms of writing and the related skills.

3.6.1 Paragraph Writing

Paragraphs form a part of any continuous piece of writing, e.g. essays, reports, letters etc. The characteristics of well written paragraph are:

- a) It has unity – Each paragraph deals with specific idea. Generally most paragraphs have a topic sentence which contains the key idea of the paragraph.
- b) It has coherence – Each sentence is a paragraph, which logically follows from the previous sentence, and anticipates the next sentence.
- c) It is well organized – Each paragraph has a definite plan. Various types of paragraph organization may be: narration, i.e. time sequence or organization of events, comparison and contrast etc.

While writing a paragraph, the writer should keep in mind the ideas of unity, coherence and proper organization of ideas.

3.6.2 Essay Writing

Essay writing is an important form of written composition. In this form we express our ideas and experiences about any topic in a well organized and effective manner. The expression becomes lurid when supported by lines from poetry etc.

Normally an essay has three parts – introduction, main body and conclusion. We begin the writing of an essay by introducing the main idea or event expressed in the main body of the essay. The quality of an essay is judged by an effective and interesting introduction. The main body of the essay consists of a number of well organized and coherent passages explaining and discussing various aspects of the topic. While concluding the essay, the writer provides the gist of the whole composition in such a manner that it leaves a lasting impression upon the reader.

3.6.3 Letter Writing

Letter enables us to communicate with people who are away from us. Every letter has a writer, a reader and a situation. Some of the purposes for which we write letters are to inform, to invite, to enquire, to complain, to express sympathy, to congratulate, etc.

Letters are of two types: formal and informal. Formal letters are written for business purposes usually among strangers. Informal letters include all correspondence between members of a family, friends, relatives, etc.

The important parts of a letter are: the writer's address, date of writing, the receiver's address, salutation, body of the letter, writer's signature and full name.

3.6.4 Report Writing

A report describes an event or an experience. Reports are of several kinds: newspaper reports, reporting events of a social, political or religious function, national or international games/sports competitions, scientific inventions, business meetings, etc. The following are the salient features of a report:

- 1) A report is brief and complete.
- 2) It is usually written in third person.
- 3) It includes only relevant details.
- 4) It is accurate and has no digressions.
- 5) Ideas are logically arranged.
- 6) It avoids emotional overtones.

3.6.5 Sharpening Your Writing Skills

If you are one who has a hard time finding the right word or expression for writing, don't feel that you are alone. Developing strong writing skills needs practice and patience. For many people writing clearly and concisely does not always come easily. However, there are general ways, you can sharpen your skills. There are some suggestions.

- a) Write everyday or at least as often as you can. Keep a daily journal. Content is not important here, but the act of writing is. Consistency is the key when you develop your writing skills.
- b) Read as much as possible. Exposing yourself to what others have written is a great tool. Read books, newspapers and magazines. This will help you understand more about style, sentence structure and word usage.
- c) Join professional writing class or an online course to help you develop your writing skills.
- d) Learn basic grammar rules. Writing guides such as "The Elements of Style" can be found in the reference section of any library. Once you have mastered the basics, writing skills will be easier to develop.
- e) Prepare to write more than one draft. No one's writing is perfect the first time. Read out loud what you have written – this can help pick up errors you might not have noticed otherwise. Perhaps you can ask a trusted colleague to proofread your work as well.

Check Your Progress 5

- Notes:** a) Write your answers in the space given below.
b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Write an attractive introduction and conclusion on one of the following topics:

- a) The India of my dream
- b) The computer age
- c) Secularism

Introduction

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Conclusion

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2) Differentiate between letter writing and report writing by giving three characteristics of each:

a) Letter Writing:

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b) Report Writing

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3.7 ENHANCING READING AND WRITING BY USING TECHNOLOGY

In this technological world, reading and writing do not limit to only print version, rather they encompass technological medium also. Here, the term 'technology' is treated as 'computer' and 'internet

enabled computer' although it has some other meanings attached with other tools, such as: telephone, audio/video cassettes, radio, etc. Just by seeing the texts of a book learners may not interest in reading, in a similar way by holding a pen in front of a white paper does not arise any interest in writing. The mechanism or procedures required to develop reading and writing skills have been discussed in the previous sections.

In this section, the analysis will focus on how technology improves learners' learning in DE contexts. Learners in the information technology enabled world are pleased to read and write by using technological tools, and more prominently with internet enabled computer and computer machines. Computer as a tool does not only help learners to read the text on screen but also assists them to edit text in parallel with reading. While reading on internet they can listen audio, watch video, and do many other activities of their interest. This is so because of the multimedia insertion in the computer machine. It is assumed that learning becomes interesting and creative in its approach.

Advances in technology have provided learners word processors, e-mail, interactive websites, video games, pod casts, and DVD facilities to use in their reading and writing purposes. These new media facilitate different ways to convey information. Distance learners by adapting technology medium do navigate the required information and become master on new techniques. Thus, it is asserted that to acquire reading and writing skills through technology, one should become proficient in using computer, internet, and related technologies.

Reading online guides learners to acquire critical thinking and research strategies to search for the correct information that they require for their studies. For example, to search a simple information a learner needs to assess a list of suggested sites and then analyze web contents for relevance to the question at his/her hand.

3.7.1 Acquiring Reading and Writing Skills by Using Internet

Reading on internet gives pleasure to learners because, unlike a paper book, it is enabled with texts, videos, audios, and links to different other websites. Some of the reading benefits learners derive from online platforms are as follows, though these are not considered as the complete list.

- i) Learners can get their preferred learning styles, such as; visual, hands-on, auditory, etc.
- ii) Websites offer content clues and organized structures of contents, such as subheads, diagram, and clickable definitions of unfamiliar terms, which help emerging readers to develop stronger comprehension skills.
- iii) Navigating and exploring websites make learners predict what they will read next.

- iv) By using e-mail tools, they can send their opinions or arguments to their friends and also receive their feedback on time. Hence self-encouraged to read and write on internet platform. This tool provides excellent reading and writing practice in an informal and low-stress setting.
- v) Text that is available in electronic format assists in accommodating learner with disabilities who use screen or text readers (Orkwis & Mclane, 1998)
- vi) With electronic text, learners can change the letters size, appearance, and layout to accommodate their needs.
- vii) Since reading resources and writing activities are available on the internet, and internet sites often contain graphics, sound, video, and animation, hence these motivate learners to excel in their studies.
- viii) Reading supported by graphics, illustrations, drawings, pictures, and other visual illustrations inspires learners to overcome the barriers while reading textual materials.

As many learners, those many learning styles, are their reading styles. Hence, catering education to different learners should have multiple strategic approaches. And, internet can serve this purpose. It accommodates all sorts of learners due to its unique features and creative aesthetic design platforms.

The recent proliferation of electronic text, talking story books, trade books, and internet based textual materials enthrall learners to use various technological tools and methods for their learning activities. Learners with disabilities benefit to a great extent by using technology in their reading and writing purposes. Learners with disabilities have problems with reading fluency, text comprehension skills, vocabulary learning, and abstract reasoning from text presentations from the paper based books. But these are eradicated by using the technology in their learning methods.

According to Orkwis and Mclane (1998) many customized electronic instructional materials and techniques are available. These materials and techniques help learners to access textual information and adapt different learning styles that suit them.

Reading and writing methods have been changed over the past few years after the intervention of internet based electronic materials. There are a few softwares used in reading and writing purposes. These are (Castellani, J. & Jeffs, T., 2001):

- a) Text-reading software
- b) Word-prediction software
- c) Visual concept-organization software
- d) Graphic-based writing software
- e) Writing templates
- f) Fundamental skills software

Text-reading software—integrates word prediction by letter, word, and sentence; highlights and scans words as text is read; provides auditory feedback and speech synthesis; offers definitions, spell-check, and thesaurus support for highlighted words; and abbreviation expansion for commonly used words, phrases, and or large text blocks.

Word-prediction software—offers beginner, intermediate, and advanced user dictionaries; predicts by letter, word, and sentence; highlights and scans words as text is read; provides auditory feedback and speech synthesis; and can often be used with switch/alternative keyboard access.

Visual concept-organization software—provides graphic templates and character webs; offers visual structure for understanding events; cause and effect, and writing outlines; allows for individual user templates; and support for brainstorming.

Graphic-based writing software—provides story-boarding and framing; works with pictures, sound, music, voice recording, and text for story representation; provides spell-check and speech feedback; and integrates pictures found on the internet into writing products.

Writing templates—provide structural frameworks for letter, resume, outlines, checklists, and report writing.

Fundamental-skills software—word attack, sentence mastery, symbol recognition, switch-activated communication software, phonics, electronic storybooks, and simulation software.

Alternative input devices—switch access, Morse code, alternative keyboards, touch screens, voice recognition, and on-screen keyboard.

(see <http://chd.gse.gmu.edu/telecomm/main.html>).

How can reading and writing activities be combined with available technology tools? There are many methods to teach children with disabilities to read and write. Regardless of the reading approach, once students have chosen authentic materials, teachers can decide the best method to work with a student on any given text passage. Providing repeated opportunities for students to build their reading and writing skills through available technology tools starts by having students choose the materials they would like to read. Then adapt these materials so that students can work independently.

On the internet, the interest inventory provides a blue print for selecting writing and reading topics of learners' interest. By searching with the help of internet tools, learners access to their reading level materials of their interest. By using text readers software, learners can track the text, convert text to speech, learn unknown vocabulary and avail opportunity to work on higher level of passages. In addition to these, searching the internet for useful educational text can be overwhelming, given the current limited time for planning.

Text readers have inbuilt features that allow learners to study independently by receiving text-to-speech feedback, built in thesaurus, and spell checkers. Web browsers have the built in capacity to enlarge, change the colour, spacing, and count the number of words in a line. Each of these features can help learners of physically disabled category who have difficulties in reading and comprehension

making. This in turn increases learners' attention and motivation, provides opportunities for them to practice reading strategies and work independently with texts (Castellani, 2000).

Table 1: Reading and Writing with the Internet

Time Frame	Reading Activities	Writing Activities	Using the Internet
Before	- Recognize reading level - Identify vocabulary and begin creating word list for new or difficult words, prepare prediction questions or questions specific to the text you have found on the Internet - Use fundamental skills, software skills (Laureate)	- Recognize writing level - Use visual concept organization software, such as inspiration, graphing software (Flowchart) - Use fundamental skills software	- Complete Interest Inventory - Scan for pictures - Prepare (preview) links ahead of time, bookmarks - Search for information, locating text sites on grade level - Find materials for grade level (Flesch-Kincaid or 90% rule) - Find information on the Internet, based on student preferences or by conducting individualized student searches (using browsers that automatically spell check, etc.)
During	- Use text readers, grammar, abbreviation expansion - Reread text, have computer read, take turns reading with student - Use an available electronic dictionary, thesaurus	- Answer questions to expand on story and provide detail - Use writing templates and word-prediction software - Use graphic-based writing software - Turn questions and answers into sentences	- Make decisions about interest and authenticity of materials and student motivation - Transfer pictures and text to a disk or word processor for further work with information
After	- Provide comprehension activities with extended activities through different learning modalities - Look at suggested readings on similar topics by the same author	- Publish and share work with others on the Internet - Create a literacy portfolio for each student - Create booklets on Internet sites and have students	- Create booklets on Internet sites and have students rate the story site (rate the stories) - Search for related future reading activities and extensions

Source: Castellani, J. and Jeffs, T. (2001), P.66

3.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we learnt that:

Reading is an integrative and interactive process, and it is difficult to give a single definition of reading.

Reading process involves four stages, i.e. perception/word recognition level, comprehension, evaluation/reaction and application levels.

Comprehension consists of literal, critical and creative levels. These levels are also known as reading 'on the lines', 'between the lines' and 'beyond the lines'.

A good reader always evaluates the material read, reacts to it as per his/her own experience and background, and finally applies the assimilated ideas in his/her own life.

Among the various skills of reading, we discussed SQ3R technique – Survey, question, read, recite and review.

The basic skills of reading are skimming for gist, and scanning for specific information.

The two types of reading are: intensive reading that involves examining a text closely and in detail, and extensive reading that involves reading fluently for immodest ending the plot and enjoyment.

Writing is basically a creative process. The writer goes through the stages of planning, translating and reviewing/editing while writing any composition.

A good writer first plans the content, format and style of the writing according to the need and interest of the reader.

After planning he/she translates the subject matter into appropriate language and style. Thus the first draft of the writing is prepared. Later on this draft is reviewed and edited in order to make it comprehensible to the reader.

Writing various forms of composition require respective writing skills which need to be developed and sharpened by constant practice and patience. For example paragraph wiring requires unity and organization of ideas while essay writing requires effective introduction, well organized body and concluding remarks.

A good writer should read prominent author's writings, and develop mastery of the language, expression and style of his/her own.

On the internet, the interest inventory provides a blue print for selecting writing and reading topics of learners' interest. By searching internet tools, learners access to their reading level materials of their interest. By using text readers' software, learners can track the texts, convert texts to speech, learn unknown vocabulary and avail opportunity to work on higher level passages. In addition to these, searching the internet for useful educational text can be overwhelming, given the current limited time for planning.

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3.10 FEEDBACK TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

Check Your Progress 1

When we read a text, whatever it may be, we do not passively absorb what is given in it. We normally interact with it actively and breathe meaning into the words to get the writer's message. Hence, reading is defined as active interaction with the text.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Four levels of comprehension are: Literal, interpretative, critical and creative.
- 2) A good reader after comprehending the text, evaluates the events, ideas, characters or the intention of the author. At the same time he/she should react ideationally and intentionally about the author's expressed ideas and intentions etc.

Check Your Progress 3

Although the steps in SQ3R are in logical and natural order, sometimes overlapping and repetitions may be found among them. For example, even while we are passing through survey or reading, we may be repeating our survey while recalling or reviewing.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) **Planning:** At the pre-writing stage, the writer plans the subject matter, format and style and uses it while writing the composition. Along with this he/she also considers the choice and interest of the reader.
- 2) **Translating:** The first draft is written as per the plan. The language and style of presentation used are appropriate according to form and format of the composition.
- 3) **Reviewing:** In the final draft, the writer rethinks and re-organizes the ideas and language of the composition wherever necessary. Additions and deletions may be carried out as per the demand of the subject matter or the requirement of the reader.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) The topics should be written as per your own choice and in your own likeness keeping in mind the introduction and the conclusion.
- 2)
 - a) Letters are of two types – formal and informal. Formal letters are written for business purposes while informal letters are written to the members of the family, friends or relatives. The language and expression are also formal or informal as per the types of the letters.
 - b) Report describes an event or an experience. It is brief and includes only relevant details. It is accurate and ideas are logically arranged.

UNIT 4 PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS

Most people spend more time and energy going around problems than in trying to solve them.

- Henry Ford

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Learning Outcomes
- 4.2 Approaching a Problem
 - 4.2.1 Perception of a Problem
 - 4.2.2 Scientific Attitude for Problem Solving
 - 4.2.3 Developing Scientific Attitude for Problem Solving
 - 4.2.4 Applying SWOT for Problem Solving
 - 4.2.5 Decision Making for Problem Solving
- 4.3 Managing Stress
- 4.4 Time Management
- 4.5 Confidence Building in Learners
- 4.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.7 References and Further Readings
- 4.8 Feedback to Check Your Progress Questions

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Norman Vincent Peale, the author of the bestseller, *The Power of Positive Thinking* had said that how you think about a problem is more important than the problem itself. So always think positively. We have to accept that problems are a part of our lives. We also need to understand that the solution for a problem lies more within us than in external sources. Such an outlook is based on the conviction that an analytic mind and perseverance can help in overcoming problems. Therefore, it reposes faith in the ability of distant learners to analyze the problematic situation and identify the resources at their disposal with which they can overcome the problem. However, they may require your guidance in such processes. The previous unit prepared you to develop reading and writing skills in learners. But reading and writing skills can be put to good use only if the learner is confident and can solve the problems faced. This unit will help you in developing the skills required for problem solving.

It has been rightly said that Student Support Services are important from the psychological perspective. Traditional students have many physical clues of their attachment to the institution. Providing support services to the distance learners is essential for developing the feeling of belonging to the institution for students who do not have access to traditional clues (Usun, 2004). As you are involved in providing student support services, students may look up to you for guidance for their problems. Therefore, in this unit we shall first discuss, scientific attitude, which is, essential for problem solving. Thereafter we have discussed how you can help your students in developing scientific attitude, make sound decisions and identify and

utilize the strengths and opportunities for overcoming weaknesses and threats. Next, our discussion centers on the management of stress and time and thereafter on the need for building confidence in learners.

4.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Describe how a problem is to be approached;
 - Describe how you can develop skills for problem solving;
 - Discuss how you can help learners in managing stress;
 - Elucidate how you can assist learners in managing time; and
 - Explicate steps for building confidence in learners.
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4.2 APPROACHING A PROBLEM

If you are providing student support services to distance learners, you may often find students approaching you with their problems. With the passage of time, you may find that the nature of problems is quite diverse. However, you may also feel that the problems can be classified into certain broad categories like academic, administrative, and personal. Again, within these categories, you may find that there are many variations. For instance, administrative problems could be of various types like not receiving Self Learning Materials on time, not receiving the Admit Card for examination, problem in changing the medium of instruction and so on. Academic and personal problems also vary. You may also feel that there cannot be a standardized solution for the diverse problems faced. This is because the student population in distance education and the problems faced by them are heterogeneous. Another reason why standardized solutions are not always possible is that the same situation may be problematic for some and not so for others. Besides, how people approach a problem is also different. The next section will help you in understanding this.

4.2.1 Perception of a Problem

As you train your students for problem solving, you will first have to keep in mind that we may perceive the same problem in different ways. Hence, looking for a standardized solution may not be advisable and this is more so with a group of distance learners, with a heterogeneous profile. The content given below will help you in understanding this:

We find that the same situation is perceived and approached in different manners. There cannot be a standard solution but there is at least an approach that works, irrespective of the nature of the problem. Such an approach towards problem solving involves scientific method, which in turn requires a mindset or in other words an attitude – the scientific attitude. We shall discuss these in the next section.

Approach towards a problem

Ask your students to imagine a situation in which they are late for an important appointment some distance away but find their car/two wheeler has developed a problem. Ask them how they would solve the problem.

You may find that people perceive and react to a problem in different ways. While some would concentrate on fixing the vehicle first, others may first telephone to cancel/postpone the appointment. Some would leave their vehicle and try to get a lift or borrow someone's vehicle. You will find some saying that they would never face this kind of problem as they are never late and maintain their vehicle regularly. Some would say that they would quickly telephone and meanwhile check for the problem in the vehicle and if it is a minor one repair it. Yet some may abandon the vehicle as well as the appointment and go back home. We find that some naturally look for alternative resources, some are effective planners, and some leave a problem as such, and so on.

Source: Christopher, E.M. and Smith, L.E. (2009). Brain teasing activities to promote creative problem solving. My car won't start. Leadership Training. New Delhi: Viva. pp.98-100.

4.2.2 Scientific Attitude for Problem Solving

As scientific attitude is the precondition for adopting scientific method, let us discuss it first. What is meant by scientific attitude? What is its relevance for problem solving? Scientific attitude is a complex of several attributes. These attributes are too numerous to be listed. Hence, it is difficult to define scientific attitude. However, some of the important attributes that constitute scientific attitude are the following and you may think of some more:

- **Having faith in cause and effect relationship:** For example, low grades in the term end examination may be traced back to improper study habits.
- **Having objectivity:** This implies being free of all kinds of biases, while considering something. For example, the reaction to information should not be coloured by its source or any other thing. The information itself should only matter. For example while assessing an assignment, neither the student who has submitted it nor anything else except the assignment should matter.
- **Emphasis on empirical evidences:** Information supported by evidences may only be believed. Hence reactions should be elicited only by authentic information, rather than rumors, gossips and informal messages from grapevines.
- **Open minded, i.e. being receptive to novel ideas;** having a disposition to review earlier beliefs: For example, even after several decades of successful distance education, there are many who refuse to believe in it. Are they being open minded?
- **Critical thinking:** It is the ability to reflect, think rationally and originally, analyze and synthesize. Critical thinking actually requires both objectivity as well as open-mindedness.

The attributes discussed so far comprise scientific attitude. Some one equipped with scientific attitude will adopt scientific method for

problem solving. Scientific method, propagated by Francis Bacon, involves the identification of a problem and inductive and deductive thinking. There is an attempt to find a tentative solution to the problem and thereafter on the basis of the evidences available, the solution is accepted, rejected or modified. We shall not go into the details of this method. Scientific attitude and scientific method are integral to each other. Someone who adopts scientific method for solving a problem will not believe in half baked information nor will s/he get perturbed with rumours and hearsays. S/he will also be in a position to analyze the cause of the problem, collect the necessary information regarding the problem and search for viable solutions. Instead of looking for quick solutions and hastily conceived plans, which may themselves be fraught with problems, s/he would prefer to take an in-depth view of the problem. Hence, not only in carrying out investigations and studies but also for solving problems faced in daily life and those faced by distant learners, adopting scientific method helps. It has been rightly stated that through application of scientific attitude, a scientific domain of the world is created (Grinnell, 1992).

We come back to the question—Why is it necessary to nurture scientific attitude in distant learners? We have discussed that it helps in problem solving by adopting the scientific method. Let us discuss this point with certain hypothetical situations:

- A distant learner panics midway through her educational programme as someone tells her that students passing out from distance education institutions are not treated at par with those from the conventional system for employment.
- A distant learner gets anxious on hearing from some source that courses offered through distance education are not recognized.
- A distant learner following completion of the first year of one programme wants to drop out and apply for a related programme as someone has advised him that the latter would be a better choice.
- A distant learner does not find time to study.
- A distant learner is stressed as term end examination approaches.
- A distant learner is confused and is unable to decide in which programme to enroll.
- A distant learner is unable to work on the assignments.

Distant learners being at a distance from the institution may be vulnerable to hearsays and rumours. Scientific attitude ensures that no idea/solution/decision is treated critically till its soundness is judged by the weight of the evidence (Gauld, 1982). Hence, grounding in scientific method and developing scientific attitude will equip the learners to solve problems on their own.

You may ask your students to adopt the following steps for problem solving through scientific method:

- Identify and define the problem in an unambiguous manner
- Try to analyse the cause(s) of the problem
- Acquire relevant and authentic information about the problem and analyze it

- Think about the possible solutions, i.e. the alternatives, some of which may even appear unconventional
- Develop a strategy
- Evaluate the solution
- Adopt/reject/modify the solution.

4.2.3 Developing Scientific Attitude for Problem Solving

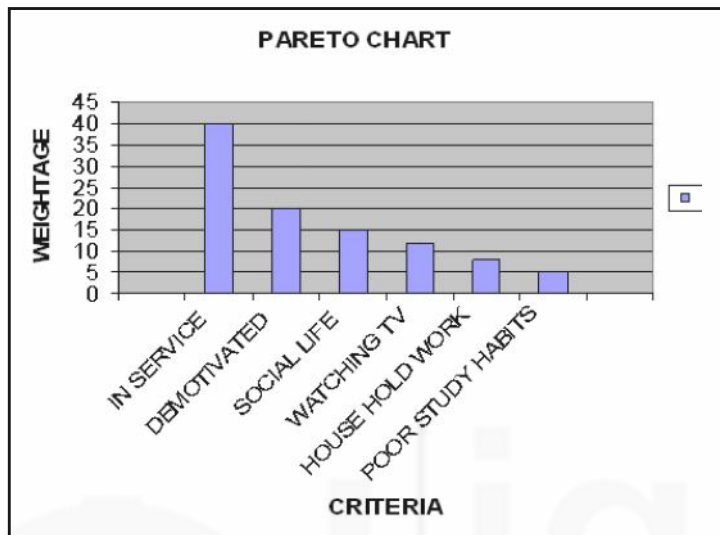
As a provider of student support services, if you can develop scientific attitude in your learners, they will be equipped to solve many of the problems on their own. How can you develop it in your learners? Developing scientific attitude may take a long time as it may involve unlearning unscientific attitudes. A lecture on the importance of scientific attitude may not suffice but may nevertheless be a beginning. You may also encourage students to carry out activities that can lead to the development of attributes comprising scientific attitude. Some of the activities are the following:

- **Discussions:** You may hold a discussion among your students during which they are encouraged to narrate anecdotes and experiences from real life supporting scientific attitude for problem solving.
- **Debates:** Participation in debates necessitates thought processes, listening, logically putting up arguments and counterarguments, placing arguments logically and in the proper sequence, being open to diverse but rational views and the like. This encourages critical thinking, essential for scientific attitude.
- **Brainstorming:** It brings out the originality of thought and encourages creative solutions. This technique also encourages participation of various members of the team.

For effective brainstorming, debates and discussions, you will have to create an environment that encourages freedom of thought and expression and at the same time moderate discussions so that the focus is not lost and there is no unpleasantness among the participants.

- **Exercises requiring inductive and deductive reasoning:** Logical thinking is essential for problem solving. Hence, providing learners with real and hypothetical situations and asking them to identify and state the problem in clear terms, bring out the specificities and arrive at a solution, examine it and then infer, will develop the abilities to analyze and synthesize.
- **Root Cause Analysis:** The objective of this technique is to help in arriving at the root of the problem. In this method you may present hypothetical problematic situations to your learners and ask them “**Why**” several times till they reach the fundamental cause of the problem. For example, a student confused about the course in which to enroll, may be asked several times ‘why’ till she sorts out the conflicting and confusing choices and clarity emerges.
- **Establishing Cause and Effect:** As a subsequent step to root cause analysis, you may ask your learners to prepare a flow chart to represent the relationship between an effect (the problem) and its potential causes. The diagram may help in drawing out the factors blocking the solution.

- **Pareto Charts:** A Pareto Chart is basically a bar graph and factors leading to a problem may be represented as different bars. The height of the bars represents frequency, which may be construed as the intensity of the factor. The plotting is done in a descending manner with the smaller ones towards the right. It helps to analyze the causes of a problem by identifying the factors leading to it. It is not necessary that all the factors leading to the problem be eliminated as some of them may be important.



In this example of a Pareto chart there is a hypothetical situation in which the problem is the lack of time for studying. There are various criteria like being in-service to poor study habits that consume/waste time. These criteria may be studied to determine those that cannot be helped and those that can be mitigated/eliminated. Thus it helps in analyzing the problem and in looking for a long term solution.

4.2.4 Applying SWOT for Problem Solving

SWOT analysis is used in business to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the business environments. It is a tool for reflection (Dess, Lumpkin and Taylor, 2005). The principle underlying strategic management process may also be applied for solving problems faced by individuals.

Strategic management process consists of the following five steps (Bratton and Gold, 2003):

1. **Mission and goals:** describes the values and aspirations.
2. **Environmental analysis:** Environmental analysis searches the internal environment for strengths (**S**), weaknesses (**W**) and the external environment for opportunities (**O**) and threats (**T**).
3. **Strategy formulation:** involves the evaluation of interactions among strategic factors and making strategic choices for meeting the goals.
4. **Strategy implementation:** involves the implementation of the strategy.
5. **Strategy evaluation:** determines the extent to which the actual change and performance match the desired change and performance.

These strategic factors are summarized by the acronym SWOT. While Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors, opportunities and threats are in the external environment. Learners may be guided to analyze their situation along the dimensions of SWOT. You may ask your students to list their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Let us try to understand this with the following **example**.

Problem: Lack of motivation in distant learners

Strengths: Sound previous knowledge required for the course in which enrolled.

Weakness: Not having enough confidence to study in isolation from peers and teachers.

Threats: Limited access to library, social commitments.

Opportunities: Availability of adequate self learning material in different media, scope for learning at own pace, time and place.

Even if we are aware of our goals, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, **articulating and listing them** helps in bringing them to the fore and addressing them. Hence, the learners may be asked to carry out this. Now the focus has to be on how best to tap the strengths, utilize the opportunities, overcome the weaknesses and face the threats. Thereafter the strategy to attain the goals may be fixed in the light of the SWOT. The learner needs to be assured about the strength and opportunities and motivated towards overcoming the threats and weaknesses. This is an attempt to develop optimism and look at the brighter side of a situation.

4.2.5 Decision Making for Problem Solving

Now let us discuss yet another aspect of problem solving, i.e. decision making. As stated by **Ritchie and Thompson (1988)**, problem solving includes decision making activities, which include the following steps as given in the following figure:

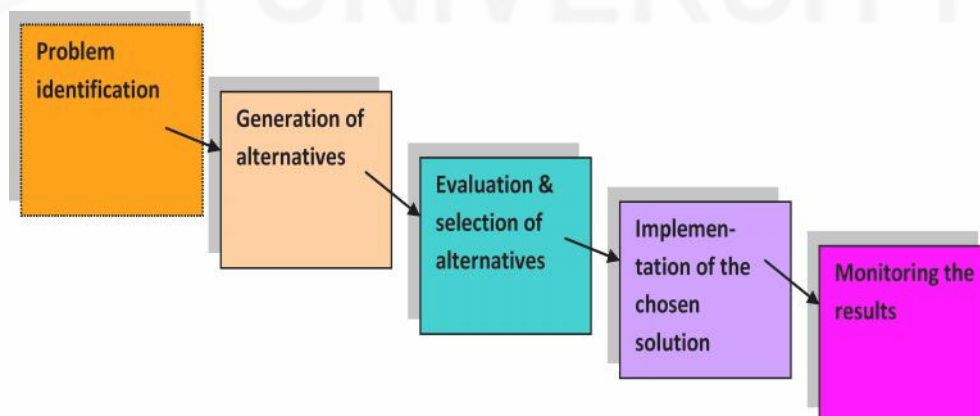


Figure 4.1: Decision making for problem solving

Many of the problems could be solved if right decisions are taken. Let us study this **example**.

Problem: Medium chosen is Hindi but the learner is facing problem in comprehending the content in the study materials as the language used is replete with difficult words, not used in daily life.

Step I: Problem identification: Difficulty in comprehending the content in the study materials.

Step II: Generation of alternatives:

- Opt for a change to English medium
- Buy a Hindi dictionary and continue with Hindi medium

Step III: Evaluation and selection of alternatives:

First option: Not having adequate communication skills in English. Hence rejected.

Second option: better to continue with Hindi medium and use dictionary. Hence selected.

Step IV: Implementation of the chosen solution, with a few units.

Step V: Monitoring the results.

In the light of the results the process may be repeated with the other alternatives.

Activity: Read about scientific method and its utility in research.

Check Your Progress 1

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

- 1) Think of a problematic situation commonly faced by distant learners. Explain how approaching the problem with scientific attitude can lead to the solution.

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- 2) Critically evaluate any one method discussed for developing skills for problem solving.

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- 3) In the perspective of the programme in which you have enrolled, list the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities as perceived by you.

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4.3 MANAGING STRESS

What is exactly meant by the term, 'stress'? Stress is difficult to define as it is subjective. Its causes, symptoms and results are not fixed. Stress arises when individuals perceive that they cannot adequately cope with the demands being made on them or with the threats to their well-being (Lazarus 1966). There are many more definitions that emphasize that stress is the result of demands exceeding the capabilities of an individual. In everyday usage stress generally connotes emotions like anxiety, fear, irritation, frustrations and the like (Organ and Bateman, 1986). As some one providing student support service to distant learners, you may come across, especially before the term end exams, learners who appear to suffer from symptoms like restlessness, inability to concentrate, not confident about their studies, continue to procrastinate important things, irritability, anxiety, depression, negative self image, low self esteem, lack of interest, and the like. These symptoms indicate that the student could be under continuous stress. These are some of the symptoms of long term stress, which is in response to a problem which persists over a long period of time. Stress may also be due to a problem that is restricted to a shorter period of time. For instance, you may find a crowd about to board a local train. The people may exhibit symptoms like dilated pupils, tense muscles, increased heartbeat, sweating and so on. These symptoms also indicate stress. These symptoms unlike those mentioned earlier are temporary in nature. They are more associated with the fight-flight response to stress. In the literal sense, this means readiness to fight the danger, or take flight from the situation. This type of stress is unavoidable and is also necessary. If such stress was not suffered by the people getting ready to board the train, in all probability the train would be missed. Such stress that makes us enhance our level of alertness and activity and work for a cause is known as 'eustress'. On the other hand long term stress that reduces our zeal for work and affects our health is 'distress'.

There are situations for which immediate flight/fight is not possible. They lead to gradual building up of stress and may lead to distress. First you have to understand the factors that lead to such kinds of stress and then help your students in managing it. An in-depth study of stress is beyond the scope of this unit. We shall emphasize more on stress management and that too in the context of distant learners. Why is it necessary for you to understand stress management? Many distant learners are in-service and have to juggle their time among household activities, career, social life and education. Such learners may be under tremendous work pressure. Some learners are no longer young and have resumed studies after a gap of a few years. Many are distant learners for the first time. Besides, isolation from peers and the problems of dealing with a formless institution and faceless teachers may be intimidating. Hence, there could be many reasons for enhanced stress level among distant learners.

To some extent stress is experienced by more or less all of us. Minor reasons like not getting the newspaper on time in the morning to major ones like the loss of a dear one, could lead to stress. Stress can be caused by many factors—academic, social, career related, personal and so on. In case of distant learners, many of these could combine to develop stress. Another important thing is that just as problems are perceived with subjectivity so are the factors leading to stress. Working

online may be a relief for some but stressful for others. Again, what causes stress today may not remain stressful in the future. People who are active and competitive may respond differently from those with a laid back attitude to a problem. While moderate degree of stress may even be beneficial, continuous and higher degrees of stress are harmful. Moderate amount of stress is in fact necessary for achievement. But prolonged stress may have impacts on health, family life, career and education. In case of distance education, it could lead to lower achievements and even drop outs.

You may come across students seriously preparing for their assessments. They appear to be confident and focused but nevertheless suffer anxiety regarding their performance. Are they also under stress? On getting a new job, we may be excited and under stress. Is it harmful? Do you feel stress can also have a positive impact? As said by Hans Selye, (a doctor by profession who is famous for his work on stress), stress is not something necessarily bad. Stress that leads to creativity and productivity may be desirable against that which affects creativity and productivity. Therefore it is the stress with a negative impact that needs to be managed.

As stated by Organ and Bateman, (1986) stress can be caused by factors that are social, physical, environmental and academic. We have discussed earlier that stress is usually associated with emotions like frustration, fear, irritability and anxiety. Frustration may be due to non reinforcement to one habituated to reinforcements. For example one getting appreciations regularly in the classroom in the conventional system may be stressed due to lesser frequency of reinforcements in distance education. A delay in feedback like delayed knowledge of grade in assignments can also be frustrating. At times conflict between equally strong but incompatible urges can cause frustration. For instance, there may be conflicting desires of appearing for term end examination in June and that for spending the summer vacation in the hills with family members. Anxiety and fear and hence irritability are often caused by ambiguities, change and the fear of unknown. If students are new to distance education, they may not understand the system well and hence suffer stress.

Stress Management

It is said that stress to some extent is unavoidable and hence can only be managed and not eliminated. What should you do when you find your students are stressed? You may adopt the following steps (Source: Adapted from European organization for the safety of air navigation, 1996):

- **Recognizing:** Recognizing stress in learners and identifying the causes are necessary. Focus on recent and sudden changes in the behavior of your learners. Talk to them to confirm if they are really stressed.
- **Emotional support:** Communication and dialogues are essential for providing emotional support. Break in communication can in fact lead to stress. Communicate with your learners so that they feel that there are two people working on the same problem and that they are not grappling alone.
- **Logical support:** People often have knowledge of the solution; they only need to be encouraged to come out with it. Ask for the

solution, the alternatives, the priorities and motivate students to weigh the options and take the best decision.

Stress management for distance learners is often closely related to time management. We shall discuss this in the next section. You may also find that our discussions related to problem solving are relevant for stress management. You may guide your students to prioritize their work and prepare a schedule and motivate them to stick to it. You should try to build their self confidence by urging them to think positively. You may also advise them about stress busters like physical exercises, meditation, getting enough sleep. You could also ask them to practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing, yoga, meditation, imagining situations that are peaceful such as a riverside and mentally being there for some time. For beating stress these techniques are more useful than wasteful stress responses like sleepless nights, smoking, drinking several cups of coffee and the like.

How to prevent stressful situations?

You may like to prevent stress in learners rather than trying to manage it later on. For this you may take the following steps:

- *Guide learners in time management techniques.* We shall discuss it in the next section.
- *Lessen ambiguities by organizing sessions for orientation and induction to the concerned programme.*
- *Provide timely information* through mail, telephone, letters, manuals, brochures and the like to reduce uncertainties and thus stress. In case something gets delayed, inform about the delay, giving the reasons.
- *Provide timely feedback* for instance, regarding assignments.
- *Develop proper study habits:* Encourage students to get into the habit of making notes, regularly auditing them to check if they need to be updated, supplementing them, revising the notes regularly, carrying out assignments and projects on time, and the like.
- *Encourage collaborations:* During academic counseling sessions, you may organize group activities so that learners get to know each other and work together. Working with peers reduces stress.
- *Positive thinking:* Encourage your students to have only positive thoughts as actions are the products of our thoughts.

Activity

1. Read about Hans Selye and his contributions to understanding stress.
2. Think, if you are under any kind of stress. Determine the cause(s). Is it possible to eliminate/lessen them? If yes, how? if no, how, will you manage it?

4.4 TIME MANAGEMENT

Time is the most important among all the resources as its management is the key to efficient management of all the other resources. It

requires nothing beyond common sense to understand that time is precious and has to be utilized well. Yet we often struggle to manage time. It has been rightly stated that the way you spend your time determines how you live your life and who you are. Tomorrow is connected to today just as today is connected to yesterday (Douglas, M.E. 1975, quoted by Misra and Misra, 2001).

You will find that chatting on the telephone and internet takes up more time than we used to spend in writing letters. Watching television, having scheduled and unscheduled visitors, meetings, carrying out activities without clear objectives, searching for misplaced, attempting too many activities simultaneously, are certain things in which we often invest time. At times pursuing our hobbies and activities about which we are passionate also takes up a lot of time. What are your views regarding these activities as far as time management is concerned?

Activity

Ask students who approach you with problems related to time management, to list the causes of wastage of time and ask them to introspect.

Excerpt from a survey report on utilisation of time

A survey was carried out to determine if the huge amount of knowledge available through abundant number of seminars, books, pamphlets, articles and films on time management, are actually being applied by people in their own lives. A questionnaire was distributed among sales representatives and engineer managers to find out how time was used by these people and also to determine whether the different demands of the two types of jobs would cause them to use their time differently. It was found that for both the categories the top time wasters were the same, i.e. telephone interruptions, drop in visitors, scheduled and unscheduled meetings, and crises, lack of self discipline, procrastination and unclear communication. Among the top five time wasters, both the categories listed only one item which could be described as a personal shortcoming and this may be due to the human tendency to locate the source of problem to an external source than within them. The conclusion drawn from the survey was that the term 'time management' is a misnomer and it should be called self management as it is the key to time management.

Source: LeBoeuf, M. (2001). Managing time means managing yourself, In M. LeBoeuf, (Ed.), *Essence of time management*. Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House. Pp. 31-35.

Alice: Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?

Cat: That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.

Alice: 'I don't much care where.. ..

Cat: Then it doesn't matter which way you go.

This is a dialogue between Alice and the Cheshire cat in the novel, 'Alice in wonderland' written by Lewis Carroll. As long as we do not know where to go, i.e. have no fixed goal, we are unlikely to reach anywhere.

As you know, distance learners are not only adult learners but are also often in-service and with social commitments. Therefore, for them time management is all the more necessary. You have to impress upon your students that time is a unique resource that cannot be saved but is

always spent, but it has to be done wisely and that the way we spend our time is usually habitual. How can you help your students in managing time? You may take the following steps:

- **Setting goals:** You may explain to your students the need for setting goals. There is a need to have goals to know exactly where we want to reach and figure out our priorities. Without proper goal setting, we may fritter away time on low value or conflicting priorities. However, we need to remember that the goals should be specific and realistic. It is also important to determine the time we can devote to the goals we have set and set the deadline for each goal. It would also be better to have only a few goals at a time. Read the following dialogue.
- **Prioritise:** The process of setting priorities involves planning. It has to be done strictly on the basis of the goals.
- **Time analysis:** There is a need to analyse the way time is spent to determine wastages and proper utilisation of time.
- **Learning to say no:** Often claimants on our time are many and we need to resist the pressure than imprudently acceding to it (Wilkinson, 2001). This is important as it helps in checking over commitment, which dilutes effectiveness (Mishra and Misra, 2001). It is important that we do not take up work load more than we can reasonably cope up with.
- **The 80:20 Rule:** This is also known as the Pareto Principle or the '80:20 Rule'. This says that typically 80% of unfocussed effort generates only 20% of results. This means that the remaining 80% of results are achieved with only 20% of the effort. This ratio is only a generalization and may have some variations.
- **Set aside some time for organising:** We need to set aside some time for thinking, planning and reflecting.
- **Select prime time:** We have our prime time i.e. the part of the day when we are at our creative best and work with peak efficiency. For some it is morning (roosters) and for some it is late in the night (owls). Important activities can be carried out during the prime time.
- **Procrastination:** It is a major stumbling block in attaining goals. As suggested by Mishra and Misra (2001), we usually procrastinate, because of the following reasons:
 - *Unpleasantness of the task:* If an activity is perceived to be unpleasant, it is not taken up. However even unpleasant tasks may be attacked head on as getting such tasks finished leads to greater satisfaction (Figure 4.2).
 - *Difficulty of task:* A task perceived to be difficult is also put off. Such tasks may be analysed into smaller constituent units and we may focus on one unit at a time.
 - *Indecision as a cause of procrastination:* Taking decisions as mentioned in sub-section 4.2.4 may help in starting to move on particular course of action.

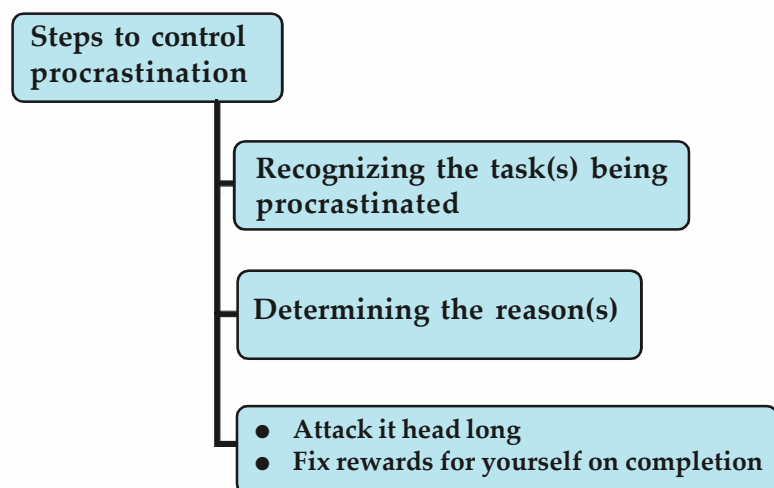
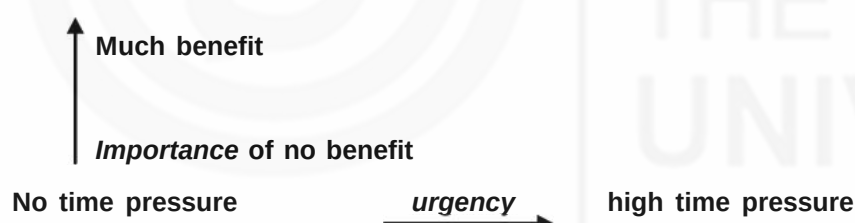


Figure 4.2: Steps to control procrastination

Activity log: Activity logs help in analyzing how one actually spends time. The first time some one who finds it difficult to manage time, prepares an activity log, s/he may be surprised at the amount of time wasted. Doing this for several days helps in establishing patterns regarding utilization of time. It can also help in identifying the prime time.

Preparing a grid for managing time: The grid depicted below is a tool that can help in sorting out activities as per their urgency and help in managing time.

Important but not urgent	Important and urgent
Low in urgency and importance	Urgent but of low importance



Source: Smith, S. (1999). Develop yourself, In S. Smith (Ed), *Be Your best*, New Delhi: Kogan Page Pvt. Ltd. P68-69.

While tools for time management like the grid discussed above, planner (yearly, monthly and daily), time logs and the like may be helpful for time management but they are to be treated only as means. Preparing them should not be a time consuming activity. Moreover, these tools are only as good as the users and depend on how well they are used.

Excerpts from: A Case Study of Teachers Coping as Distance Learners at the Open University, Malaysia

In a study by Dass (2001) on 534 distance learning students at Universiti Sains Malaysia, the two greatest challenges indicated by the majority of those surveyed were time management (75.5 percent) and study-related problems (74.9 percent). It is generally perceived that distance learning is convenient but later realized to be time-consuming and more demanding than traditional courses (Tucker, 2003). Thus, it has been reported that fewer than 50 percent of distance-education students finish their courses (Carr, 2000). At the University of Phoenix however,

65 percent of its learners satisfy the requirements to graduate. This is attributed in part due to the university understanding important learner considerations such as the importance of interaction between professor and other learners in the class, hand-holding their students and providing a 24x7 technical support (Martinez, 2003). In short, supporting learners by providing good administrative support is crucial.

At OUM, it was found that the main problems faced by the teachers were associated with life-related commitments. The teachers' primary complaints were that they found it difficult to juggle between study, work and family. Taking note of this problem, OUM included time management as one of the main topics in its counselling sessions for these teachers.

Source: Latifah Abdol Latif, Ramli Bahroom and Zoraini Wati Abas, "A Case Study of Teachers Coping as Distance Learners at the Open University Malaysia", in a book titled: *Rethinking Teacher Education*, Persatuan Perkembangan Profesionalisme Pendidikan Sarawak (PROFES), pg. 174-184.

4.5 CONFIDENCE BUILDING IN LEARNERS

So far you have read about the necessity for approaching a problem with a scientific attitude, making sound decisions, managing stress and managing time. Will these abilities have any impact on the level of self confidence? Why? Self confidence is the key to success. It is said that our abilities are quite similar but we differ due to the extent to which we are confident of them. The higher rate of drop out in distance education is a reflection of the lower levels of confidence among the students. You may find some young children quite confident of themselves, while there could be many adults who are not so sure of themselves. Confidence can be built in people. Therefore, you have to work towards raising the confidence level in such students.

There are certain behaviours that are usually exhibited by those who are confident and some by those who are not. Go through the comparison given below in the table.

Learner with confidence is likely to:	Learner having lower level of confidence is likely to:
prefer a seat in the front row	prefer a seat not in direct view of the teacher
be interactive	have his/her own comfort zone and prefer to stay within it; avoid interactions
look straight towards the teacher	avert the eyes of the teacher
be social	be a loner/befriend those like him/her
be willing to take responsibilities and lead	avoid taking responsibilities
be balanced in speech	be imbalanced in speech; may speak very less or could be garrulous; may leave sentences unfinished.
have realistic aspirations	have aspirations that do not match the actual potential

What are your views regarding the characteristics of the two kinds of students – confident and not so confident. Are there other such characteristics that you can think of? Is there also a third category of learners, those who are overconfident? What are your views about them?

How can you build confidence in learners? A positive self image is the key to confidence. Hence, it is necessary to ensure that students have a positive self image. Our self image is based on our experiences and perceptions of ourselves. It can be positive or negative. It influences the way we behave and how we feel about ourselves (Smith, 1999). Motivation and satisfaction about the task in which one is engaged greatly influences self esteem. A distant learner who is no longer motivated and satisfied with the educational choice s/he has made may not have a positive self image and hence confidence. As stated by Ritchie and Thompson (1988), there are three psychological states that are critical in determining a person's motivation and satisfaction on the job. These states are:

- **Experienced meaningfulness:** The work must appear to be meaningful and worthwhile.
- **Experienced responsibility:** The doer must believe that s/he is personally accountable for the outcomes of the efforts.
- **Knowledge of results:** The doer must be able to determine whether or not the outcomes of the work are satisfactory

Distance learners often fail to remain motivated. They may also not be satisfied with the choice they have made regarding their education. In such cases you have to remind them that the educational programme in which they have chosen to enroll is worthwhile and also make them feel that they themselves are accountable for successfully completing it. Timely feedback regarding assignments, projects, dissertations and so on will provide them with the much needed knowledge of the results.

We have mentioned some steps that you may take during the academic counseling sessions and other suitable occasions for building confidence.

Think of some more such steps that may be added to this list:

- **Be self confident:** For building confidence in others, you yourself need to be self confident. Only if your students find you enjoying a high self esteem and having a positive image about yourself, you can inspire confidence in them.
- **Induction:** Organizing induction programme for distance learners has many advantages. It provides the learners with the necessary information. The students can use it as a platform for clearing their doubts.
- **Regular information:** You have already read the need for authentic and timely information. Providing timely information to your learners even without their seeking it is necessary to reduce uncertainties and retain confidence.
- **Solving problems:** Persistent problems may take a toll on confidence. Hence, help your learners in identifying problems and solving them as discussed in the very first section of this unit.
- **Time management:** Try to help your students in managing time. One who is in a hurry and with incomplete preparation may not feel confident.
- **Study habits:** Develop in learners proper study skills. Note making, carrying out content analysis, regularly updating and revising the notes makes one feel confident before the assessments.

- **Communication Skills:** Often knowledge and skills possessed remain unexpressed due to the lack of communication skills. You may encourage learners lacking communication skills to express themselves at brainstorming sessions, debates, discussions and classroom interactions, so that they overcome the inhibitions faced in communicating orally. Your feedback in the assignments submitted by your learners can improve their skills of written communication.
- **Collaborative learning:** A social environment with peers reduces isolation. Hence, try to facilitate collaborative learning by building teams. Facilitating team work can enhance the confidence level of learners.
- **Appreciation:** Timely and positive feedback in the form of acknowledgement and appreciation builds self esteem in learners.
- **Positive Image:** Try to develop in your learners a positive image. You may apply the SWOT technique we have already discussed. Remind them of their achievements. Encourage them to identify their strengths and opportunities. Repeat to them so that they can overcome the weaknesses.
- **Accept self and others:** Remind them that no one is perfect. They need to accept themselves, people and at times even situations in life.

The following tool may be used in assessing one's self image and help take steps for being more positive. You may try this out with yourself and with your learners.

Answer the following questions:

- Review the self-made hurdles to your success.
- What habits, attitudes, beliefs and expectations do you have that act as hurdles in reaching the goals?
- What situations do you find uncomfortable and hence avoid?
- What boundaries do you place about yourself?

Steps to improve self image:

- Develop your goals.
- Be positive and consistent
- Remind yourself of your goals daily
- Keep imagining what it would be like to have success
- Focus on what you want to achieve
- Be a self starter

Repeat to yourself 'I can be successful' daily. Give yourself positive feedback and congratulate yourself on your success. Our self image is one of the most important influences on our behaviour and success.

Source: Smith, S. (Ed.) (1999). Develop Yourself in *Be Your best*, New Delhi: Kogan Page Pvt. Ltd. p 61.

Check Your Progress 2

- Notes:** a) Write your answers in the space given below.
b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

- 1) Give an example of a situation that leads to eustress.

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- 2) A 'To Do' list made on a daily basis for managing time is a tool, only as good as the one which makes it. Justify.

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- 3) Do you agree with the statement – 'Development skills for problem solving, managing stress and time is a prerequisite for building self confidence in learners? Give reasons for your answer.

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4.6 LET US SUM UP

The nature of problems varies. The perception of a problem is also subjective. Hence, looking for standard solutions for even common problems may be futile. However, the approach towards solving problems, irrespective of their nature should be scientific. Problem solving through scientific method involves identifying and clearly defining the problem; analyzing the cause(s) of the problem; acquiring necessary and authentic information about the problem and analyzing it; thinking about the possible solutions and evaluating the solution. Activities like brain storming, inductive and deductive reasoning and the like may help in developing critical thinking, planning and decision making and thus lead to scientific attitude. SWOT analysis used to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the business environments can help in problem solving by overcoming threats and weaknesses through opportunities and strengths. Decision making is crucial to problem solving.

Distance learners may experience greater stress than those in the conventional systems. Hence, stress management is necessary. This requires identification of stress and thereafter adopting techniques like regular communication with learners, helping them in managing their problems. Time management is also important and this can be done

by setting goals, fixing priorities, maintaining time log and so on. There is also an overriding importance of developing positive image in distant learners as it leads to confidence.

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4.8 FEEDBACK TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Time management is one such problem. Analyze the causes for not finding time and remove time wasting activities.
- 2) Brain storming brings forth creative solutions but shy students may not be very interactive. Unconventional solutions may not be acceptable to many.
- 3) You may write the Strength, weakness, opportunities and threat (SWOT) of the programme as perceived by you.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Preparing for an achievement test is due to eustress.
- 2) Lot of time may be consumed in making a 'To Do' list but it may not be adhered to.
- 3) Ability to adopt scientific method enables one to solve his/her problems to a great extent. This builds confidence. Someone who can manage time and his/her problems will not be a victim of severe stress.