Chapter 3

Review of Literature on Open and Distance learning mode: An overview of strategies of course delivery based on Self-Learning Materials (SLM)

This chapter reviews the teaching and learning processes of various distance teaching universities/open universities in the world, drawing insights from distance teaching universities. The chapter discussed design and development of SLM and various strategies of course delivery.

3.0. Introduction

Education is the vital tool for the development of any nation and human resource development. All the countries in the world are emphasizing on the development of education with a view to developing all the cross sections of the society. Looking at the educational scenario, in our country, last five decades have seen tremendous growth in the field of education. India comprises 17% of total world population. This makes approximately 1 billion population of different socio-cultural and economic background. The formal education is accessible more to those who are living in town and cities. The courses or programs that are offered by formal colleges/Universities are limited as they cater to the population of the particular sections of the society. Weaker sections of the society find it difficult to afford the admission in the universities, also their choices of courses are not offered by all the universities. On the other hand colleges/universities have rigid rules for admitting the students. Increasing demands in enrollments have put tremendous pressure and burden on the universities and ultimately the quality of education suffers.

The National Policy on Education (1986) found that in India, education opportunities are inadequate and are not equal. To overcome the problems of equality, cost-effectiveness of the present formal system of education is distance education and open universities provide education to the deprived as well as other sections of the society. Education can be made more accessible to meet the higher education needs of a wider class of learners. Distance education is an alternative to different clientele such as adults, housewives, college dropouts or those who have missed opportunities for regular studies (Matheswaran, 2005).
The last four decades have seen a tremendous growth in the field of Distance Education. The horizon of distance education has broadened widely so much that it is now considered as a separate discipline. As the growth rate is increasing day by day, the pressure of education on universities, colleges and schools is also increasing. The population of the world put great challenges and demand on formal education system. The growth of distance education has not only fulfilled the education needs of adults but also numbers of people who are enrolled in some other colleges but wanted to complete the courses are also participating in distance programs. And also those who are doing job and unable to attend colleges on a regular basis have enrolled themselves in distance course to complete their studies (Matheswaran, 2005; Satyanarayana and Seshranatam, 2000; Desai, 2010).

The history of distance education can be traced long back as correspondence education. According to Matheswaran (2005:5) ‘correspondence education implies that two or more parties are in contact with one another in writing. Consequently, correspondence teaching is taken to mean teaching in writing, in the course of which the learner and teacher regularly write to each other’. The delivery system was based on postal mail system in print form. The correspondence programs were first introduced in Europe and USA in the latter half of 19th century. In 1910, there were more than 200 correspondence schools in the United States (Young, 1984 cited in Ibid). Later other countries like Russia, Australia and New Zealand also used correspondence education. In England, numbers of private correspondence colleges were established. With the efforts of Gibson, ‘International Council for Correspondence Education’ (ICCE) was established in 1939. First world conference of the council was held in 1938 at Victoria B.C with 88 participants from Canada, Australia, USA, New Zealand and Scotland participated (Matheswaran, 2005:7).

The distance education as a concept has been used by the following different names in different countries like:

- Correspondence education (in most of the countries including India)
- Home study (North America and Europe).
- External studies- Open learning- open university off-campus’ studies (Australia)
- Extra-Mural (New Zealand)
- Education a distance (Spanish speaking countries).
A remarkable development in the field of distance education has been brought by the Commonwealth countries with the establishment of Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in 1988 at Vancouver in Canada as part of Commonwealth Minister of Education and Commonwealth Head of Government. COL has contributed to uplift the distance education system and improving the quality of course material, emphasized training and developing staff, improving delivery system and dual mode—which combines face-to-face learning with the distance education.

3.1. Difference between Formal and Distance education

Sims (Satyanarayana and Seshratnam, 2000:17) draw on the differences between the distance education and conventional education as ‘in the contiguous learning environments, communication is personal and face-to-face; in the non-contiguous environments communication may be personal and face-to-face for limited periods of time, but it is largely written, mechanical, electronic or some other means of communicating at a distance....Learning is fundamentally an individual process and each person enters the process with techniques and levels of achievement uniquely his own. The method of correspondence study provides simultaneously an educational device for individualization in three distinct senses- student ability, variety of course offerings and flexibility for time and place of study’.

It can be concluded from the definition that that difference between both the modes is of communication. The table below shows the differences between formal and distance education mode.
Table 3.1: Formal Vs Distance education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Education</th>
<th>Distance Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Learners meet on a regular basis in the classroom.</td>
<td>Learners may be separated by time and space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Learners meet their teacher daily.</td>
<td>Very rarely learners meet with their instructor face to face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Materials are used as instructed by the teacher.</td>
<td>Learning materials need to be self-explanatory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher need to be at the instruction where the course takes place.</td>
<td>Instructors can physically be anywhere.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Matheswaran, 2005)

Cropky and Kahl have differentiated the two systems in terms of psychological assumptions

Table 3.2: Face-to-face education and Distance education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Face to face education</th>
<th>Distance education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction between the students and teacher is on daily basis.</td>
<td>Communication is through counseling sessions or through some media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher can change her teaching style according to the learners' needs and demands.</td>
<td>SLM act as a teacher which delayed in adapting to the needs of learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom environment is built to support learning activities.</td>
<td>Learners environment is built to serve other purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct control of learners by teacher is possible.</td>
<td>No concept of teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning materials are not very objective in nature.</td>
<td>Learning materials are of very high standard, well organized and clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High degree of feedback and assessment is possible.</td>
<td>Low degree of assessment and feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-motivation, self-learning and planning level are low.</td>
<td>Self-motivation, self-learning and planning level are high.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Satyanarayana&Seshratnam, 2000:19)
3.2. Concept of Open and Distance Learning

Open and distance learning refers to education in which learners are provided with the learning resources without attending formal classroom sessions. This is the key feature of the learning experience (COL, 2003). It indicates distance education stress the openness of teaching-learning process as compared to the closeness of formal classrooms (Peters, 1993). Distance education refers to the physical separation of students from teachers and the ways to communicate to the tutor, institution is through writing letters, sending e-mails, counseling sessions, through telephone. Open learning on the other hand offer resources like print, audio-video materials, study centers, computer-based materials to the learners in a more flexible way in order to achieve the goals (COL, 2003).

Open learning refers to the learning which is free from usual classroom constraints of the traditional format. Open learning provides opportunities for those people who for some reasons were not able to complete their education. Basically distance learning opens wider access to adult population as well as to those learners who are unable to complete their education. It provides opportunities to compensate lost opportunities by acquiring skills and qualification. Open learning system provides equal opportunities for uplifting social and educational inequalities among learners. The term open means that there are no restrictions on the admission requirements, no entrance examination. Openness gives the students freedom to plan their study time, materials, working hours etc. (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000).

Matheswaran (2005:9-10) says ‘Open learning is an imprecise phrase to which a range of meaning can be and is attached. It eludes definition, but as an inscription to be carried in procession on a banner gathering adherence and enthusiasm, it has great potential. For its very imprecision it enables to accommodate any different ideas and aims and the two terms of the phrase carry with them emotional outcomes........’

3.3. Open Universities

Open universities are universities established to provide education to the mass free of ‘age’ ‘bar’, ‘caste’, ‘creed’, ‘sex’. The first Open University was established in United Kingdom as United Kingdom Open University (UKOU) in 1969 which marked a new turning in distance education. Perry (1977) said ‘through multimedia system that
harnessed educational broadcasting to correspondence teaching and others methods’
(cited in Matheswaran, 2005:10; Satyanarayana and Seshranatam, 2000).

Open universities incorporated the method of correspondence education by
integrating new methods and techniques (electronic media) brought in new
innovations to the teaching and print courses (Daniel, 1977 cited in Matheswaran,
2005).

3.3.1. The Global concept of ODL learning

Daniel (1991) ‘defines the term “open university” as a form of instruction in which
classroom session are not the primary means of communication, to call an educational
offering “open learning” is confusing unless the context indicates the dimensions of
openness that is to be understood properly’ (Matheswaran, 2005:41).

Garrison et al., (1987) ‘assert that learners have freedom to make choices. They are
also of the opinion that distance learners have the ability and skills to take
responsibility for learning and access to resources necessary for learning (Ibid).

Hanriet et al., (1985) ‘agree that one of the major tasks of distance/open education is
to foster not only the ability to work independently but also to maintain learner
autonomy, the exercise of personal choice, etc’ (Ibid). Kaye (1981) ‘outlined the
features of autonomous distance teaching institutions, of which the primary
component in open universities are:

a. Teaching, assessment and accreditation functions are integrated.
b. The institution is totally committed to external students and there is a strong
   motivation to develop and enhance distance methods free from the constraints
   and traditions of face to face teaching.
c. The institution is in principle far free to devise new educational programs for
   new target groups and to explore to the maximum potential of distance
   education methods in so doing.
d. The institution is also free to choose teaching methods and media curricula
   course structure policies etc. (Matheswaran, 2005:42).

Reddy (1986) said that distance learning will provide great opportunities to the
‘dropouts’ married woman and other who will find ways to educate themselves and
also those who are living in remote areas and unable to join formal universities can
complete their education through distance learning.
Rumble et al., (1982) have identified the following characteristics of distance teaching universities

- ‘Integrating media technologies to teach and distribution accordingly.
- There should be a clear division between those who designed course materials and provided on one hand and those who tutored and assess the learner on other hand.
- There should be local learning in corporate with design and production of materials.
- There should be effective contact hours between learners and tutor. The institutions should pay special attention to arrange meeting between learners and students often.
- And very well defined administration areas’ (Matheswaran, 2005:44).

According to Taylor (1983) open universities are welcomed worldwide and have been very successful in their attempt. They are here to stay and have proved their capabilities to ‘cater to the needs of people’ who with many reasons were unable to continue their education in conventional mode. He further adds that media had also played a good role in transforming distance education because earlier correspondence education did not provide effective print materials. But media like T.V education is being used to provide education to remote areas. Hence, visual medium provides better impact on distance learners (Matheswaran, 2005:45).

3.4. Distance Education: Indian Scenario

The Indian constitution provides equal opportunities for education to all Indian citizens. But the system of education in colleges and universities even in school has some fixed criteria for enrolling the students due to limited recourses available. As stated earlier many highly motivated could not afford higher education due to some reasons other than academic i.e. social, economic, environmental, etc. the term distance education incorporates the traditional formal system of education and has the characteristics of flexibility, content mode, media, materials and evaluation of learning, ‘flexibility in admission’, ‘choices of courses’, ‘duration of programs’ and ‘means of communication’ etc. (Matheswaran, 2005:8; Desai, 2010).

In India, the first pioneer step for the establishment of distance education was taken by University of Delhi in 1962. University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1963
established directorates of correspondence courses in universities and appointed Professor D.S. Kothari as chairman. In 1960s some major changes were brought in distance education by establishing four institutes of correspondence education were started only for graduation courses. By the 1970s to 80s, 21 universities started correspondence education. In 1994, 46 universities started correspondence education at all levels. In 1977-78 an increased number of 2.51% and 11.92% students enrolled in correspondence education. Gradually the increased number of enrollment encouraged the institution to upgrade the quality of courses, materials and institution themselves. UGC had taken steps in making distance education available to all who want to be a part of any distance program. The major step in distance education was achieved in 1975 and thereby bringing together 2330 villages of economically backward states. Similarly, Doordarshan’s education television (ETV) program school television (STV), higher education television (HETV). UGC’s countrywide classrooms are some major technological steps to provide distance education (Ibid).

3.5. International Structure and Organizations

The influence of distance education is very strong particularly in Asian countries like China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Israel, Pakistan, Korea, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. They are making extensive use of technologies and enhancing the quality of distance education. The scenario of distance education in these countries is mentioned below:

3.5.1. China

In 1960s, television Universities were set up in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenyang and in some other part of China to provide education to adult student to improve their higher studies. The National Multimedia Distance Learning Institution of China is called the Central Radio and Television University (CRTVU). Television Universities in Beijing which was established in 1979 presently is one of the largest distance education institutes in the world in which more than million students are enrolled. Television programs are transmitted by the Central China television (CCTV). Television classes also organize courses that are taught by part time tutors who sometimes also use audio or video tapes for teaching social science. However, radio is used mostly because it is the most common medium to deliver the social sciences courses.
3.5.2. Indonesia

In Indonesia, distance education was first started at primary level for school children in 1984. Students are supervised by a tutor and they followed a similar kind of curriculum as followed in formal school curriculum.

3.5.3. Korea

Korea operates distance program both in formal and informal education. The methods that Korea distance education adopts are:

a. Written material: correspondence texts, supplementary materials and the university newspaper.


c. Schooling: compulsory sessions held for testing lectures and practical or experimental work.

d. Special lectures were arranged by professors and other guests to facilitate students and teachers.

The Korea AIR and correspondence University has constantly taking steps in improving the materials and teaching methods to meet the require demands and needs of the learners. Different regional centers are opened at different places to improve the personal contact between tutors and students (Matheswaran, 2005; Satayanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2010).

3.5.4. Pakistan

The AllamaIqbal Open University (AIOU) is the oldest university in South Asia and is modeled on British Open University. Its existence came in 1974 after the act passed by the National assembly in 1974, then named People’s Open University. The university is well updated and uses multi-media instruction system. It operates through printed materials, uses radio and T.V programs for instruction, slides audio cassettes, film charts and leaflets, guidance workshop, courses assignments and internal assessments and semester examination (Ibid).

3.5.5. Sri-Lanka

The Open University of Sri-Lanka was established in 1980. Sri-Lanka Government had collaboration with Swedish International Development Agency for their distance educational program.
3.5.6. Thailand

The largest Open University in the world is Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) which is in Bangkok. The university was established in 1978. It is operated by the University Council and Academic Senate. There a series of study centers to reach the students all over the country. The multimedia approach is used for instruction. Apart from print materials, radio and TV broadcast are also used to make students to learn at their own. Audio and video cassettes are available for various courses at study centers. The university offers two types of courses i.e. degree and non-degree. Tutorial and counseling sessions are also arranged at the study centers (Matheswaran, 2005; Satyanarayana and Seshranatam, 2000)

3.5.7. Canada

Athabasca University was established in 1970 in Alberta, Canada with an aim to provide education to adult Canadian at an undergraduate level. The overall function of the University is divided into three areas; Academic, Finance and Administration & development. The President is the chief Executive officer and VC of the University and reports to the governing council.

The programs run by University are individualized study program and University determined program. In the first program, the needs of students are taken care of, students can plan and implement programs, and in the second one administering studies are designed to fulfilled the needs of people in education. Students are given counseling session before taking admission and according to the need and level they are given courses, assignments and examinations.

3.5.8. Australia and the South Pacific Region Australia

Australia and the South Pacific External Association (ASPESA) have seen tremendous growth and consistently making developments in the field of distance education in Australia. Various distance education centers are functioning all over the Australia under the same head. Some of them are Deakin, New England, Murdoch Queensland, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education (Matheswaran, 2005).
3.5.9. New Zealand

New Zealand Technical Correspondence Institute (NZTCI) provides training and development of staff and study materials. NZTCI is a national organization which teaches vocational subject at tertiary level. The teacher training program continues for 12 weeks. These trained teachers provide training to students for vocational examinations. NZTCI also encourages adult learning. With the guidance of staff trainers and other experienced teachers students are motivated and supported in preparing teaching materials and evaluating the work of students (Ibid).

3.5.10. Europe

The Fern Universitate was established in 1974. The students who are benefitted from this system at Fern Universitate are:

- Full-time students
- Part-time students
- Guest students

The study centers are well equipped with new technologies such as audio-visual media, projectors, recorders, reference library, and photocopying machines. Students are provided pre counseling sessions before admission. Students’ progress is assessed by using continuous assessment and term-end examinations. Print materials are used as a prime source for studying but tapes, video cassettes, computers, telephones etc are also used as the medium for distance teaching. The universitate attracts the students from several part of the country (Matheswaran, 2005).

3.5.10.1. United Kingdom

With the establishment of Open University in England in 1969, new changes and innovations were brought in distance education. Apart from print media, it introduced audio-video materials and established personal guidance and contact system between student and tutor. Print materials are used as the main source for instruction but radio and television broadcast along with notes are supplemented (Matheswaran, 2005; Satyanarayana and Seshranatam, 2000)
3.6. India

3.6.1 Dr. B.R Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU)

In 1982 by an act of Andhra Pradesh Government, Andhra Pradesh Open University was established. It aimed to provide equal opportunities for educating women, including housewives, and adults without any age bar, caste, choice of courses etc. Study centers are well equipped with new technologies and students are provided counseling, audio-video lessons, practical sessions, library facilities and admission guidance etc. continuous assessment, assignments and final examinations are used to assess the students’ performance.

3.6.2 Nalanda Open University (Bihar)

Nalanda Open University was established in 1987 with the specific objectives to

- Provide education opportunities to those who were unable to complete their education in formal universities with so ever reasons and wanted to pursue their education further.
- Provide education to all, free from age restriction, choices of course, methods of teaching, etc.
- Reach remote areas and disadvantaged people in particular.
- Offer variety of courses, degrees and diploma and to make provision for further advanced studies such as research.
- Lay emphasis on vocational and conventional courses, leading to award of degrees and certificates.

3.6.3 Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University

Madhya Pradesh Bhoj University was established in 1991 with the main objectives to promote good quality of education, less costly, to ‘reach the unreached’, using technologies and communication strategies for better access.

3.6.4 Tamil Nadu Open University

Established in 1920, under the Act no. 27 of Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. Specifically the objectives of TNOU are to

- Provide education parallel to formal education system.
- Provide chance to those who left their education and want to continue again.
- Promote easy access to education
- Provide vocational and professional training opportunities for those who are employed and want to upgrade their knowledge and skills.
- Design an innovative study system, flexible and easily approachable to every citizen.

3.7 Distance Education Council (DEC)

The distance education council is ‘an apex body of distance education in India’. DEC is established under the IGNOU Act on the recommendation of UGC in 1992. The functions of DEC are as follows:

1. DEC, take care of all the Open/Distance universities and it promotes education, maintained its standard.
2. To establish a network among all the open/distance universities in the country in consultation with the State governments and other concerned bodies.
3. To identify the local areas and places where distance education universities can be established. Identify the needs of different groups and accordingly designed programs to meet their demands, to promote education and encourage learning.
4. To make education flexible and open so that it can be reached to unreached people and places.
5. To take steps in developing and sharing instructional material prepared by different open universities by maintaining copyright system in order to avoid duplication of material.
6. To maintain payment and prescribe fees of different courses to learners.
7. To appoint review committees from time to time in order to assess the performance of distance/open universities.
8. To prescribe courses and programs with their patterns and structures.
9. To describe in broad terms the admission procedure, evaluation, courses requirements, assignments and credits, awards, certificates, diploma and degrees to the learners.
10. To appoint professionals to provide assistance and advice to DEC for various programs (Matheswaran, 2005).

3.8 Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)

IGNOU is considered one of the best and longest Open University in India. The stress of educating all put a great pressure on government which in turn puts more responsibilities and pressure on formal education system. According to National
Policy on education (NPE) of India decided to extend education to non-formal system which would expand the learning teaching facilities in the country. With this aim, in 1985, IGNOU was established. IGNOU has this major responsibility of educating people of country and promoting open and distance learning in the country. IGNOU has been established under an Act of parliament which has very wide and clear objectives of lifelong education, promoting adult education, providing opportunities to those who left their studies because of some personal or other reasons, educating housewives, educating young learners who could not make into main stream education (Matheswaran, 2005).

IGNOU offers a wide range of courses and programs including different diplomas, degree courses and different certificate courses. Ample of choices are given to learners for choosing the course according to their needs and requirement. IGNOU is an established body which is responsible for promoting and coordinating distance education system in the entire country. Under the act of IGNOU, two very important centers are established namely Distance Education Council (DEC) and Staff Training and Research Institute for Distance Education (STRIDE). IGNOU has also received recognition from international agencies like:

1. ‘The Oversea Development Administration (ODA), United Kingdom.

3.8.1 Academic Programs at IGNOU

The most striking feature of courses offered by IGNOU is that IGNOU offers courses for two types of learners. The first category comprises of learners who do not have any qualifications i.e. they have never attended any formal institute. The second category comprises of those learners who have some formal qualification. Another important feature is that the course is prepared in the form of credits. IGNOU offers short term and long term courses in the areas of Graduation, Post-graduation, Research, Diplomas, Training programs, Vocational programs etc.

3.8.2 Instructional Materials

In order to cater the wider needs of students IGNOU makes use of modern communication technologies as well printed materials to impart knowledge. The university therefore is a multi-media university using printed textbooks, radio, and
T.V broadcasting, audio-video and face-to-face teaching method. The course materials are prepared by the team of experts; the audio-video materials are also decided by them. Radio is also used as a medium of instruction in remote areas where other facilities like library, study center, regional centers are not available.

3.9 Strategies of Course Delivery: Introduction to Self-learning Materials (SLM)

Of all the teaching media available in ODL context, printed materials are the main and basic for the distance learning. In ODL, students are away from teachers and SLM plays the role of a teacher. The various sources provided the formal classrooms are in-built in SLM themselves. SLM are totally different from regular materials or textbooks. They possess distinctive features which make them unique and attractive. Table given below will summarize the differences between SLM and textbooks (Satyanarayana and Seshranatam, 2000)

Table 3.3: Some differences between Textbooks and Self-Learning Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbooks</th>
<th>Self-learning materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumes interest</td>
<td>Arouses interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written for teacher use</td>
<td>Written for learner use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No indication of study time</td>
<td>Gives estimates of study time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designed for a wide market</td>
<td>Designed for a particular audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely state aims and objectives</td>
<td>Always gives aims and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually one route through</td>
<td>May be many ways through it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured for specialists</td>
<td>Structured according to the needs of learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little or no self-assessment</td>
<td>Major emphasis on self-assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom anticipates difficulties</td>
<td>Alert to potential difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally offers summaries</td>
<td>Always offers summaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impersonal style</td>
<td>Personal style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dense content</td>
<td>Content unpacked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dense layout</td>
<td>More open layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers view seldom sought</td>
<td>Learner evaluation always conducted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No study skills advice</td>
<td>Provides study skills advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be read passively</td>
<td>Require active response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims at scholarly presentation</td>
<td>Aims at successful teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Lockwood, 1998:11)

Textbooks are usually written for teacher’s use. In contrast, SLM have to be written for learner use. It is a collection of materials which may include published content from which learner is expected to make the best out of it. The language and level must be pitched according to the learner’s requirement. SLM gives clear indication of how long would it take to study, all the supplementary thing in the materials like exercises, self-check exercise, audio tapes, assignments all are indicated by the study time. Another table given below summarizes a comparison between typical ODL materials and a typical textbook.
Table 3.4: Comparison of ODL materials and textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ODL materials</th>
<th>Textbooks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are usually divided into units, and gives learner a plan for study.</td>
<td>Are divided into chapters, based on topics and give no study time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is always a study guide to tell on how to use the materials and how to study.</td>
<td>There is no concept of study guides and study guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include study tips</td>
<td>Do not include study tips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include examples</td>
<td>Include examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include diagrams and pictures</td>
<td>Include diagram and pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include numerous activities</td>
<td>Have few or no activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide feedback on answers</td>
<td>Do not provide feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are tightly structured</td>
<td>Are more loosely structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address the learner as ‘you’</td>
<td>Use passive language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a generous layout, often including space for learners to write in</td>
<td>Have no space for learners to write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempt to meet all the needs of the learners</td>
<td>Assume that the learner has a teacher who will be able to transact the printed text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: COL, 2005:15)

SLM are designed with specific aims and objectives that are to be achieved by learners at the end of the course. Depending on the needs, interests, abilities and time available to the learners, SLM follow through different routes (Lockwood, 1998).
3.9.1 Features of Self-Learning Materials (SLM)

SLM are designed to provide individualized instruction. It has a focus on individual learner and motivates him/her to study by deciding his/her own pace. There is no fixed time-table or routine to follow. Many learners manage their study time to suits their working hours.

An important feature of SLM is that it provides standardized content. Every learner receives the same material free from personal bias, preferences of teacher trainer. Content is selected on the basis of the prescribed syllabus, moving gradually step by step so that it could match up with the learners' level. Course designer take care of the fact that contents should neither be too lengthy nor too short that might confuse the learner. Contents are divided into sections and sub-sections with stated objectives which have to be achieved by the learners. The content of the SLM are presented in a simple and clear way so that learner cannot search for extra materials. Although there is no restriction for the learners to use remedial materials if require. Contents are self-explanatory, analyzed logically before it is presented. Continuity among the units and paragraphs are maintained because SLM is designed for self-learning.

The kind of teaching that is provided by the SLM is very structured and explicit. Every unit is structured by giving brief introduction and guide to provide the general structure of the course. Self-check exercises are given at the end of every unit for the self-assessment. Learner can monitor his/her performance through these exercises. SLM possess in-built teacher which makes it more interactive. The use of language is more personal to make the learners realized that a teacher is interacting with them through materials.

SLM provides necessary help, guidance, hints, and suggestions at every stage so that a learner should not be feel left out. This directs the entire learning process by motivating and encouraging learners to study more (Lockwood, 1998).

3.9.2 Familiarity with the concept of SLM

The teams of experts are involved in preparing SLM. The course writers go through different strategies to adopt the best suited learning sequence that visualizes in the units of the course. Designing SLM is a process that works more systematically in order to translate learner's needs and goals into successful learning. However, the
learners are the best judges to decide which learning style strategies will suit them best.

![Diagram of the SLM design process]

Figure 3.1: The SLM design process (source: COL, 2005)

The above figure shows that material design has to identify the goals and needs of the target group and creating the material that enable them to meet the goals of the course. For creating SLM, instructional designers draw insights from the existing learning theories material below:

3.9.3 Theories of Instructional design (SLM)

ODL has mainly drawn upon three theoretical approaches

1. Cognitive theory of learning
2. Constructivist theory of learning

Gagne (1968) stresses that instructional designer should keep in view the needs of particular group for particular type of learning. He advocates the behavioral approach, in which he describes the conditions that students needed for learning things like rules, concepts and problem solving. Another theory which lays emphasis on characteristics of individual is in terms of cognitive theory. More recently, constructivist approach is gaining prominence because it emphasizes the learner’s own activities as the mechanism for learning (Elen and Clarebout, 2001 cited in COL, 2005).

Although many course writers today favor the constructivist approach as the only one to use. But ODL course writers frequently make use of all three approaches. Some constructivist writers also acknowledge that other theories have their own place. Jonassen (et al, 1993) say ‘we believe that the initial knowledge acquisition phase is better served by instructional techniques that are based upon classical instructional design techniques. Classical instructional design is predicated upon predetermined learning outcomes, constrained and sequential instructional interactions, and criterion-
referred evaluation’ (cited in COL, 2005). The table below summarizes the common use of three theatrical approaches.

Table 3.5: Some uses of Learning Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of theory</th>
<th>Learning tasks to which theory is often applied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>Rote memorizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give training on the routine tasks like opening a bank account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning arbitrary information (example, irregular verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning rule systems (example, the rules for assessing a writing an essay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning procedures where variation is not acceptable (example, writing a procedure for making tea).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Focus on problem-solving activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classifying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concept learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasoning and argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructive</td>
<td>Case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complex situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Real-world problem solving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: COL, 2005:5)
Learning devices that course designers' uses for developing learning materials are the following:

Table 3.6: Learning devices associated with each type of theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of theory</th>
<th>Learning devices used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Behavioral     | States the learning objectives.  
|                | Tasks are broken into small steps.  
|                | Mostly tasks have clear right or wrong answers.  
|                | Learners are assessed according to the stated learning objectives.  
|                | The learning packages describe clearly what is to be learnt.  |
| Cognitive      | Learning objectives are stated  
|                | Tasks are broken into small steps  
|                | Learners assessed against the stated learning objectives.  
|                | A wide variety of tasks, but within the scope of the stated objectives.  
|                | Material is ‘chunked’ into small, meaningful pieces.  
|                | Simplification of real-world situations  
|                | The learning packages tend to prescribe what is to be learnt.  |
| Constructive   | Learner choice of task or situation  
|                | Authentic, real-world tasks  
|                | Case studies  
|                | Complexity of the real world presented in the tasks |
Collaborative learning tasks
Opportunities to learn from observing others
The learning package tends to be open-ended in terms of what is to be learnt
Self-evaluation rather than formal assessment.

(Source: COL, 2005:6)

3.9.4 Developing Self-learning materials

SLM are the basic and most widely used in all the distance teaching institutions. Material designers take care to ensure the course quality and make it more interactive so that a distant learner would be able to bring best out of it without the help of a teacher. There are many aspects which are considered while preparing the SLM. The most common aspects are:

3.9.4.1 The Beginning of the Unit

It involves introduction to the unit and gives the direction to the learner on how to proceed through the unit. It is divided into three parts. The first part is structure of the unit. It involves structuring of contents in a unit. Structure gives content a logical arrangement and divides them into sections and sub-sections. The second part involves objectives of the unit. Every unit has stated objectives which define what is expected from a learner and what he/she would be able to do after completing the unit. Objectives also help the course writers to arrange their contents and assessment questions accordingly. Objectives also guide tutor to comment on learners' assignments. Though there are no fixed criteria for objectives. Course writers might feels difficulties in selecting objectives of a unit. Too many objectives may create confusions for the learners and too less might not communicate properly.

The third part includes the introduction to the unit. It is a brief summary before the main body. Introduction gives the learners the idea of what they are going to study in the unit. Introduction includes a brief statement of objectives, provides an outline of the course, advices the learners on how to make use of supplementary media and other sources (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000).
3.9.4.2. Structure of the unit

The main body is divided into sections and sub-sections. These sections introduce new ideas and concepts on the topic on which the particular unit is dealing and relates to the objectives. The self assessment questions are also the part of sections to check whether the learners have understood the material or not. Therefore, the general design of the main body of the unit comprises explaining a topic, self-assessment questions, exercises or activities.

The units are divided into sub-sections to maintain the interest of the learners. Hence, sections, sub-sections, boxes, examples, sign post, SAQ, help the learners in understanding the nature and structure of the unit. The course writers conceptualize and work out the contents of a unit as a whole. The detailed structuring is termed as 'concept mapping' (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000:85; STRIDE, 2005).

After concept mapping, the course writers takes into account the presentation of matter into:

Small steps: the contents are divided into logical and small ‘chunks’, and each chunk is divided into section or sub-sections. Sequencing of content is also important. Sequencing helps the in deciding the nature of the subject matter. Sequencing can be done in chronological order, cause and effect etc. apart from types of sequencing, few things should be taken into considerations:

a. From known to unknown: The new knowledge will be meaningful for learners if it is related with their previous experience or to known and familiar situations.

b. Easy to difficult: To motivate learns the unit should be started with easy concept and gradually moving to the complex concepts. The level of learner’s understanding should be considered by the course writers while designing the simplicity and complexity of the unit. Course writers should never judge their knowledge with that of learners’ knowledge.

c. From particular to general: A particular concept should be generalized. This method is more suitable in social sciences. Examples and illustrations help in making generalization.

d. From actual to representative: The learners learn quickly if the events are actually presented before them. If exposure to real world is not possible than use of charts, graphs, pictures, diagrams, etc, can be used to
make the content more presentable and easy for learners to grab the information.

e. **Personalized style:** This is very important that a learner should get involved in the teaching-learning process. Course writers generally address the learners as 'you'. Materials are the strong medium of conversation between a tutor and a learner. Therefore, materials give the learners the satisfaction of being taught by the teacher, who is not physically presented.

f. **Language:** Distance learners are from different background with different cultures. Course writers try to use simple and clear language which can be easily understood by the learners. When a writer uses difficult term a distance learner fails to understand its meaning.

SLM should encourage learners to read and get involved in the material. Direct language should be used which could communicates directly with the learners. But this not an easy task for course writers to use easy words all the time. There are few questions which usually arise when we say simple and easy. How simple it should be? How to write in simple language? To answer these questions, writers should consider who the learners are? The course writers decide the language based on their earlier experiences with the course, learners, background knowledge, intellectual growth and maturity determine the use of language. Most of the course writers have teaching experiences, which help them in knowing the learner's expectation from the material (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000; STRIDE, 2005).

3.9.4.3. Assessment

In a classroom situation, teacher and learners have plenty of opportunities to assess the learning but in distance mode opportunities of assessment are less. In distance, learners mainly learn on their own, in isolation from teacher and other fellow learners. Therefore, SLM have in-built assessment criteria in the form of questions which give learners chance to monitor their progress. It provides the feedback on how well they have achieved the objectives of the unit. SLM include activities that help the learners to assess their own knowledge and understanding levels. Self-assessment question (SAQ), exercises, assignments are some other types of assessment provided to the distance learners. At the end of the term, the final examination mainly measures learners’ performance.
SAQ should be written keeping in mind the objectives of the unit and should occur frequently in the unit so that learners may get continuous assessment. Activities serve the pedagogic purpose. Activities involve learners to relate the text with practical experience.

3.9.4.4. End of the unit

The last part contains the summary, glossary, bibliography. The important points of the unit are summarized and presented at the end of the unit. It helps the learners to re-collects the information. Usually summary is presented in the form of points.

Glossary is an important feature of SLM. It helps learners comprehend the meaning of difficult words that occur in the unit. Suggested bibliography provides the learner to access more materials that should be easily accessible to them. And lastly, the answers of SAQ are provided (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000; STRIDE, 2005).

3.10 Counseling in Distance education

One of the most important features of Distance education is counseling sessions. Counseling sessions are important because this is the medium when distance learner get opportunities to meet his/her tutor, discussing problems regarding course, assignments etc. Counseling sessions can be formal or informal depending on the situation. Counseling involved problem solving and learning activity. Although counseling seems to be very complex in terms of learners’ expectations from tutors, helping new learners to adjusting with new learning atmosphere, making learners comfortable with distance atmosphere and course materials. Learners on the other hand feel disconnected with the tutor, classroom, classmates and regular studies makes him more anxious and increases the chance of dropping out from a course of study. The limited face to face interaction between tutor and learners limited the opportunities of learning, motivation top learner therefore, counseling sessions are required to eliminate their problems (Banerjee, 1987).

3.10.1 Role of a Counselor

Challenging but a positive role has to be played by a counselor. A counselor’s main purpose is to help the learners to overcome with their problems therefore counseling session should have rapport between learners and the counselor. Counselor needs to be elaborate, encouraging and have positive attitude while handling learners’
problem, enquiries and providing assistance wherever necessary. Counseling should be done in a way that it should help the learners to reach at a meaningful conclusion (Banerjee, 1987).

3.11 Learners' Assignments

Assignments hold the central position in ODL education. The importance is due to the fact that it is the only way to establish a contact between a tutor and a learner. Individual learning and feedback process is also determined through assignments.

3.11.1 Function and Purpose of Assignments

Assignments are important source to test how effectively learners have understood the course. Learners also assess their own progress through assignments. According to Lewis, assignments on submitting provide a dialogue between a tutor and learners. Learners receive feedback and advice on their work; assignments on the other hand help the tutor to understand the learners' understanding of course, their problematic areas, strength and weaknesses. Assignments also help the tutor to understand the course as a whole. Assignments also contribute to the final grades in the course of many ODL universities. Assignments constitute up to 30% of final scores. Therefore, distance learners also take writing assignments very seriously and try to complete them on time (Satyanarayana and Sesharainam, 2000; STRIDE, 2003).

According to the surveys conducted by the European correspondence school and the British Open University the following are the main functions and purpose of assignments.

1. Assignments provide effective feedback after which learners can correct their mistakes and can check their progress.
2. Learners get motivated by the tutor's remark and they can perform better.
3. Through assignments tutor provides individual help to learners.
4. Activate learners' knowledge by focusing on important learning objectives.
5. Enable learners to go through the materials.
6. Encourage learners to develop regularity of work.
7. Create opportunities for contacts between tutor and learners.
8. Prepares learners for formal examination.
9. Prepares learners how to deal and complete work before deadline.
10. Give measures on how well students have understood the course and how successful their work is.

11. Maintain and develop learner's motivation and commitment to their studies.

3.11.2 Types of Assignments

Assignments are classified into two types

1. Tutor marked assignments (TMAs)
2. Computer marked assignments (CMAs)

Further TMAs are classified into several types. They can be open, unstructured essay, role play essay, description, narration, notes, and paragraph writing, etc. CMAs further are divided into two categories; one category is that in which everything is given, learner is supposed to choose the correct answer like multiple choice, matching, true-false, arranging points in a logical sequence, etc. Second category is that in which learner has to supply one word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, etc.

ODL universities consider writing assignments as very important tool of learning which should be prepared and written very carefully. Some experienced distance teachers provided guidelines on how to write assignments. Assignments should be related to the objective of the course, questions should be well structured avoiding any ambiguity.

Race provided some criteria for designing assignments

1. Questions should have clear and unambiguous language.
2. Assignment must relate to the stated objectives of the unit.
3. Questions should be prepared according to the level of learners.
4. Prepare learners through assignments for the final examination.
5. Provide assessment criteria to the learners (cited in Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000).

3.11.3 Types of Tutor's comments

Comments or remarks provided by tutor on assignments have great impact on students' learning as they motivate them for further studies and sustain their interest which is very important in ODL. Assessment is greatly judged by tutor's comments. Learner assesses their progress through comments if provided to them. Therefore, tutor has a responsibility to provide constructive comments on assignments. Tutor's comments therefore should be of teaching type. If they are not they lose the purpose
of teaching-learning at distance. This is the difference between conventional marking and distance marking. In conventional mode, teacher tries out to point out the mistakes but in ODL mode. A tutor also point out mistakes but with proper explanation, write constructive and meaningful comments and thus providing motivation to the learners by suggesting student his learning style, level of performance, and their strength and weaknesses. Tutors comments can be broadly classified into non-teaching comments and teaching comments. Non-teaching comments have mainly negative impact on learning as they are negative in nature and hollow in their approach. They mislead the students and no motivation is provided to the students whereas teaching comments are mainly positive in nature. They are more individualized in nature as they provide constructive comments.

3.11.4 Tutor’s written comments on assignments

Rowntree (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000) provided a list on how tutors written comments should be:

1. Highlights the important points and draw students’ attention to the facts if they have not paid to it.
2. Draw students’ attention to the gaps in the learning and provide help in explaining and interpreting facts.
3. Suggests how learners can present their ideas more effectively and clearly.
4. Extend help on how learner can further elaborate his/her answer.
5. Ask explanation and clarification for vague answers.
6. Specify on how a piece of work has been improved in terms of content, organization, mechanics etc.
7. Motivate students through comments like well done! Well try, still you can do better! Etc. (Satyanarayana & Sesharatnam, 2000).

3.12 Problems of Distance learners

A number of studies have been conducted in this area to basically understand the needs, problems, motivation to continue the courses etc. of distance learners. Researches and practices of distance learning have shown that SLM and electronic materials are not enough to support independent learning. They fail to solve several problems of ODL learners related to study techniques and learning, isolation, personal
problems which affects the learner’s work. Some major problems of distance learners are:

1. Learners’ isolation from teacher, students, institution, creates frustration among them and the cause of eventual dropouts.
2. No regular feedback and delay in assignment feedback creates tension among learners.
3. Adjusting to the distance atmosphere and SLM delays the learning
4. Limited library services and other resources due to the geographical constraints (Satyanarayana and Sesharatnam, 2000; Nellaiyappan, 1999).

In this context, a study was conducted by Chander (1991) which concluded that the rate of dropouts and failures among distance learners are more in high than formal learners. The lack of interaction between learners and teachers fails to provide motivation, encouragement and continuous feedback to the distance learners which create learning problems for them. (Nellaiyappan, 1999).

3.13 Students support services

Students support services form an integral part of distance education system. According to Croft (1991) ‘any services actual than the course material which an institution provides to its students to realize the instructional objectives of the course’ (cited in Gupta and Gupta, 1999: 88).

In distance, students support services are important for distance learners because they are isolated from teacher, students and institution. They come from diverse background i.e. educational, economic, social, occupational, geographical etc. The purpose of students support services is to minimize the effect of isolation and regular contact program (Gupta and Gupta, 1999).

3.13.1. Types of students support services

3.13.1.1. Study centers

Shukla (1994) views ‘study centers as a way to strengthen students support services’ (Matheswaran, 2005:78). For the smooth working of study centers, administration needs to be very effective. Study centers are connected to the regional centers of the areas to maintain the close contacts with the students. To ensure good communication between study centers, regional centers and officers are require to visits centers
regularly. Assignments are also distributed from study centers and tutors are also available at the centers.

3.13.1.2. Library

Libraries contribute tremendous support to both formal and distance education. Devi (1994) discusses the role of library in ODL as a networking for accessing other reference materials, print, audio and video. The main emphasis is on active participation of students. They need help library staff (Matheswaran, 2005).

3.13.1.3. Counseling/ Personal contact program

ODL universities generally provide counseling session. The real purpose of counseling sessions is to meet learners and discuss their problems regarding the course, assignments etc. Generally, the real purpose of counseling session does not achieve to a large extent, even though the students who attended counseling sessions have expressed positive opinion about the counseling session. The attendance of students in counseling sessions remains low because the sessions are optional. Besides, distance learners have other priorities over education and geographical imitations also contribute for low attendance (Ibid).

3.14 Conclusion

The purpose of this review is to find out how far SLM design strategies can accommodate writing tasks effectively in order to enhance learners' performance. Distance education is an alternative system of education growing rapidly developing mode of learning. Open and distance learning is considered as important system of education both in the developed and developing nations. At present, distance education system is playing an important role in imparting of knowledge through non-formal mode by organizing learning activity outside the structure of the formal education to meet the specific learning needs.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the realities and familiarization with ODL system. The concept of distance education and various other sources related to the concept have been addressed in the chapter. The chapter provides insights on how ODL universities operate, the role of SLM, and various students- support services available to ODL learners.
Chapter 4

Review of Literature on Assessing Writing at Formal and Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode

This chapter reviews the literature on assessing writing in formal and ODL mode in terms of assessment of different tasks types, testing measures, benchmarks and methods of assessment in ODL.

4.0. Introduction

Assessment is a useful activity which involves purposeful methods of interaction in order to gain the understanding of what learners have achieved. The primary function of assessment is to develop a sense of improvement in the learners rather than simply grading and marking their performance. Grading comes later; the main purpose is to identify the problems of learners and subsequently improving their learning and performance. Erwin in Brown and knight (1994) ‘assessment is the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and the development of students……the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analysing, interpreting and using information to increase students’ learning and development’ (cited in Morgan and O’Reilly, 1999:13).

Assessment is not solely for the benefits of learners. Various stakeholders have put pressure on institutions and teachers, for designing effective assessment procedure. According to Nightangle et.al (1990) assessment needs can be divided into the following four groups:

1. Students’ needs: The purpose is to know how well they are progressing in their studies, if they had reached the desired goal and or expected level of satisfaction or not.

2. Teachers and Trainers’ needs: This assesses the students learning outcomes as to know how well teacher’s activities are effective in terms of attaining desirable learning outcomes.

3. Institutions’ needs: The main purpose is to provide the evidence of actions of institutional aims. To know how well program and teaching staff are effective in obtaining their stated aims such as making judgements on admission programs and course evaluation.
4. Community needs: The purpose is to know how well the institution, teachers, students will serve the society’s needs (Morgan and O’Reilly, 1999).

4.1. Assessment and Testing

Assessment and testing are often misunderstood as a same thing but there is a difference between the two. ‘Testing is more formal and standardized; assessment is based on a collection of information about what student knows and what they are able to do’ (Dikli, 2003:13). In testing student knows the procedure of scoring while in assessment the methods differ for collecting information according to different context and time (Law & Eckes, 1995 cited in Ibid).

Deitel, Herman and Knuth (1991) define assessment ‘as any method used to better understand the current knowledge that a student possesses’ (online document, cited in Dikli, 2003:13). Testing can be defined as single-occasion, un-dimensional, timed exercise usually in multiple choice or short answer form. For a long time in school, students learning and writing were measured through testing. Testing is just a part of assessment, assessment is used more widely (Kuliek, et al., 1990 cited in Ibid).

4.2. Assessment and Evaluation

Often assessment and evaluation are used interchangeably. But both these terms have different meaning and purposes. Thorpe (1988) says ‘evaluation is not synonymous with assessment, because evaluation is the procedure of assessing values to the learning outcomes during and at the end of a course. Assessment focuses on the learning of students and results (marks/grades) may be used as a source of information for evaluation’ (STRIDE, 2003:27).

Assessment provides feedback on learner’s performance, knowledge skills, and attitudes for better learning outcomes. Evaluation on the other hand ‘determines the level of performance that helps in decision-making policies on high level’ (Bachr, 2010:7). Assessment and evaluation both have significant purpose in education and when used correctly and both add significant value to teaching and learning. Although assessment and evaluation are used for different purpose and reasons but both the process involve similar methods of collecting evidence to observe the performance or the outcome, both requires a performer and a person who collects the information about the performance. Table 4.1 gives the summary of similarities and differences.
Table 4.1: Overview of Assessment and Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the purpose?</td>
<td>To improve the future performance</td>
<td>To determine the quality of the present performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who performs?</td>
<td>Assesse</td>
<td>Evaluatee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who set criteria?</td>
<td>Assess and assessor</td>
<td>Evaluator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When can feedback occur?</td>
<td>During or after a performance.</td>
<td>During or after performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On what is feedback is based?</td>
<td>Observations, strongest and weakest points.</td>
<td>Level of quality base on a set standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is included in the report?</td>
<td>What made the quality of the performance strong and how might one improve future performance?</td>
<td>The quality of the performance often compared to set standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who receive the report?</td>
<td>Assesse</td>
<td>Client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the report used?</td>
<td>To improve performance.</td>
<td>To make judgements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: adapted from Baehr, 2010: 8)

Evaluation determines whether a standard was met to the set criteria and assessment provides feedback on performances, strength and weaknesses of students, areas of improvements and insight (Ibid). In table 4.2 some more differences are stated
Table 4.2: Differences between Assessment and Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on the learning of the students.</td>
<td>Focuses on the way the various components of a course perform—e.g. the syllabus, the teacher, the resources, and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on the performance of the students (grading or marking).</td>
<td>Focuses on the performance of the provider and the provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment results may be used as a source of information for evaluation.</td>
<td>Evaluation results have no direct bearing on students’ assessment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: adapted from STRIDE, 2003:29)

4.3. Traditional Assessment tools

For a long period of time, most widely used traditional assessment tools were multiple-choice test, true/false, short answers and essays.

True/False: It is a more kind of a decision making activity in which student choose the correct answer out of two given options. These tests are easy to score and easy to administer. The drawback with this kind of method is that real knowledge of learners is not tested. Guessing increases the chance of success by 50 percent especially when the test item is false. It becomes hard to understand whether the student really knows the correct answer or he/she is guessing. However, guessing can be avoided if learner is asked to give explanation for the incorrect answer or rewrite the statement correctly but this will affect the scoring (Simonson, et al., 2000 cited in Dikli, 2003).

Multiple-choice tests: Multiple-choice tests are commonly used by teachers, school and institutions and organizations for the following reasons:

1. They are fast, easy and economical to score.
2. Scores are more reliable than subjective questions.
3. They reduce the chances of learners guessing the correct item as in the case of true/false items (Bailey, 1998: 130 cited in Ibid).
Simon (2000) and others discuss the disadvantages of multiple-choice tests. They claim that it is difficult to construct good multiple-choice tests since it is very time consuming. Hughes criticizes multiple-choice testing for the following reasons:

1. The multiple-choice test only tests recognition knowledge.
2. Guessing can also be there which affects scoring.
3. A multiple-choice test doesn’t test the writing ability of learners.
4. Backwash may be harmful.

Essays: Essays are considered to be more effective assessment tool because they assess the higher order learning skills. Students real understanding of topic is tested and writing skills is also get assessed.

The disadvantage of using essays is that they are not very practical and time consuming to score. Also scoring is not much reliable because of the subjectivity. To maintain the authenticity in scoring, a rubric can be designed to score the essays. A rubric is defined as a scoring criteria scale which allows teacher, institution to mark the students’ performance (Ibid).

Short-answer tests: It is kind of a test where learners are required to write a brief answer on a topic or fill in words, phrase or statement.

4.3.1. Traditional assessment Vs. Alternative assessment

The focus from traditional assessment is now shifting toward alternative assessment. According to Bailey (1998), ‘traditional assessment is indirect and inauthentic’ (cited in Dikli, 2003:15). Law and Eckes (1995) also stated the same issue that traditional assessments are single one short test i.e. they can measure student’s progress at a particular period of time, and test score cannot identify the progress, problems of students during a test. Bailey (1998) says that traditional methods do not provide any kind of feedback to the learner which is very important point for assessment. Law and Eckes (1995) say that these tests only measure lower order thinking skills of learners.

Alternative assessment on the other hand measures the higher order thinking skills. Learners get opportunities to display what they have learned and understood. Alternative assessment focuses on the learner’s performance and growth. Alternative assessment is developed with particular aim in a context over a time that gives a teacher a chance to measure the strength and weaknesses of the students in a contexts
and situations (Law & Eckes, 1995 cited in Dikli, 2003). Simonson (2000) discusses the advantages of alternative assessment— they tend to simulate real-life contexts. Learners have opportunities to practice more authentic activities that they might encounter in real-life situations. These real-life-based activities give learners chance to transfer and apply their skills to solve the various problems related to real-life situations. Alternative assessments give better understanding to the instructor about student learning (Winking, 1997 cited in *Ibid*).


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional assessment</th>
<th>Alternative assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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(Source: Dikli, 2003: 16)

According to Bailey (1998) traditional assessment seems to have all the negative aspects but that is not the case. There are advantages to traditional assessment like there are disadvantages of alternative assessment. Traditional assessment tests are more reliable, objective and valid. On the other hand, alternative assessment lacks in reliability and validity as they carry more subjectivity. Simonson (2000) also claimed that ‘proponents of alternative assessment suggest that the content validity of “authentic task” is ensured because there is direct link between the expected behaviour and the ultimate goal of skill/learning transfer’ (Simonson *et al*., 2000
cited in Dikli, 2003:16). Law and Ecke (1995) pointed out that alternative assessment can be laborious on the part of teachers because of the diversity of products in portfolios and can be time consuming (cited in Ibid).

4.3.2. Alternative Assessment Tools

According to Simonson (et al., 2000) there are three approaches to alternative assessment, authentic assessment, performance-based assessment and constructivist assessment. Reeves (2000) streamlines three main ways to integrate alternative assessment into online learning settings: cognitive assessment, performance assessment and portfolio assessment. However some researchers and educator have used performance assessment and authentic assessment interchangeably. Wangsatorntanakhun (1997) says that performance-based assessment includes both authentic and alternative assessment. Performance-based assessment can be described as student’s performance that is evident directly or indirectly and the assessment task should represent ‘real-world’ problems and issues (Elliot, 1995). Authentic assessment means that task should give learners the experience to the real-world i.e. learners should be able to solve real-life problems by applying their cognitive ability through the use of language. In order to have effective performance-based assessment, instructor needs to pay attention to the following points

1. Assessment task should reflect the understanding to what has been taught.
2. Learners should be given the scoring criteria before they start the task.
3. Briefing the learners about the assessment task and kind of performance expected from them before they attempt a task.
4. Self-assessment criteria should also be included for students to assess their own learning and understanding of task.
5. Comparing student’s performance with other students and according to the set criteria of performance (Elliot, 1995 cited in Ibid).

Portfolios and projects are two types of alternative assessment techniques.

Portfolios: It consists of collection of students works that display the level of mastery of skill of the task over a period of time (Kulicke et al., 1990 cited in Ibid). Portfolios are a good way of assessing student’s progress by collecting their work that exhibit their efforts, progress and achievements in particular area. Because of their nature,
portfolios require a lot of hard work from students and time commitment from teachers (Bailey, 1998 cited in *Ibid*). The advantages of portfolio assessment are

1. Students will get the idea about what they know and what they can do?
2. It will supplement the report cards or standardized tests.
3. It is a good way to show parents their child progress.

One such assessment used at distance is electronic portfolios. An electronic portfolio is a technology-based assessment. The functions of electronic portfolio are as same as the traditional portfolio. The only difference in traditional and electronic portfolio is that it takes little space because the students' records are stored in computer, hard disk. Rubric can also use to assess the quality of work in portfolios (Abrenica, online document cited in *Ibid*).

**Projects:** Projects can be done in a group or individually. They are more authentic and mostly based on real-life situations and concepts. Development of plan at work, research proposals, and multimedia presentations etc. all come under projects.

4.4. **Purposes of Assessment**

There can be various purposes of assessment but Rowntree (1990) identifies two major purposes for assessing students. They are:

1. To provide support and feedback to learners and to improve their ongoing learning.
2. To estimate what they have already achieved through grade or written assessment.

Both these purposes point out the formative and summative assessment procedure. Formative assessment is related to continuous assessment of learner's performance and summative assessment refers to what learner's has achieved at the end of the course i.e. summative. Formative includes all those activities which are meant for motivating, for enhancing the students' learning with clear indication of their progress. In ODL, formative assessment usually takes place in the form of:

1. 'Non-assessable activities and feedback in study materials (Morgan and O'Reilly, 1999:15).
2. Self-assessment questions, activities and quizzes
3. Feedback on assignments from tutor.
The main purpose of summative assessment is to record and report the student's achievement at the end of the course. Therefore, summative assessment usually takes place in the form of end-course exams, whereas course work assignment contributes to the final examination marks. In ODL context, continuous assessment is a very beneficial approach as it will structure the learning and breaks down the assessment procedure into steps that will ensure the ongoing interaction between teachers and learners which will bring motivation, encouragement and confidence in students (Morgan and O'Reilly). The continuous assessment in ODL is through tutor marked assignments (TMAs) and computer marked assignments through which learners get an idea of their learning and progress (Stride, 2003).

4.5. Norm Referenced and Criterion Referenced Assessments

There are two grading criteria for assessment which are used in higher education. The discussion is important because they express teaching and learning and learners' achievements.

4.5.1. Norm-referenced assessment

It sets the standard for awarding grades by using the achievement of a group of students. During the initial period, students are ranked between 0-100 scales in a group. Norm-referenced assessment provides a description of where student's achievement lies in relation to other members in a group rather than focusing on individual competencies and qualities. Therefore, it does not give detailed summary of individual student's progress ability (Morgan and O'Reilly, 1999; Luftig, 1989; STRIDE, 2003).

4.5.2. Criterion-referenced assessment

It clearly underlines the criteria and performance standard of each student. If these criteria and standards are met then the students achieves the 'corresponding grade irrespective of how others in group have performed or how many have achieved the same grade' (Morgan and O'Reilly, 1999:18). The strength of criterion referenced assessment is that it provides clear focus on assessment on learning and gives detailed description of learner's achievement and standard achievements (Morgan and O'Reilly, 1999; Luftig, 1989; STRIDE, 2003). However, norm-referenced assessment has less or no place in ODL context and this issue is debatable (Morgan and O'Reilly, 1999).
4.6. Writing assessment

Learners and teachers both see assessment as an important process for improving writing. Writing assessment involves teacher’s response to the student’s written work in the form of comments, grades etc. Writing assessment usually fall under the category of classroom context and standardized testing context.

4.6.1. Types of writing assessment

4.6.1.1. Indirect writing assessment

Indirect assessment is not classroom based assessment as it is applied to a larger sector than a limited classroom number. It is standardized writing assessment which involves multiple-choice test for testing students’ grammar, vocabulary and written expressions. About 40 to 50 years ago, standardized tests were used to assess students’ potential in writing at the time of admission and placement (Camp 1993, Perkins 1983, White, 1993 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Stiggins, 1982 and Crusan, 2002). The indirect measures for testing writing abilities are vocabulary, sentence grammar and writing usage. For more than 25 years most of the writing assessment in USA used indirect measures of writing ability like multiple choice testing (Crusan, 2002). However, in the past 25 years, the US practice of indirectly assessing writing ability has been criticized from many academic reasons (Bullock, 1991; Conlan,1986; Moss, 1994; Stiggins, 1982; White, 1986, 1990 cited in Crusan, 2002). The problem was with the validity (Bachman & Palmer, 1996), ‘ethics’ (CCCC Committee on Assessment,1995; Courts & McInerney, 1993; Spolsky, 1997; White, 1994a), ‘efficiency’(Williamson, 1994), ‘the inability to measure skills that teachers consider important’(Hamp-Lyons, 2001).Some researchers (Hamp-Lyons, 1990;Huot, 1990a) have claimed that indirect assessment of writing by means of a multiple-choice instrument is now a thing of the past (cited in Crusan, 2002:18).

Though they are still being tested but many of these techniques have been replaced by direct measures of writing abilities. The use of standardized indirect assessment to measures the writing ability has been decreased (White, 1995 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

The advantage of indirect assessment is that if a test is carefully developed than it will be highly reliable. To match the current assessment needs of writing abilities, assessment has shifted its focus on composing process. This led the focus away from
indirect measurement of writing (multiple choice-tests, evaluations of mechanics) and shifted towards direct measurement of writing abilities through eliciting writing samples (Onore, 1986). Writing assessment attracts more importance to content validity and constructs validity and these two issues cannot be addressed by indirect writing assessment. The increasing emphasis on construct and content validity has put the writing assessment more toward the use of direct writing assessment (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

4.6.1.2. Direct writing assessment

In the beginning of 1970s, writing assessment turned towards the production of controlled students writing samples. Direct assessment addressed the need for the assessment of writing in a real context but at the same time it becomes different to collect and evaluate the writing data as an indicator of overall writing abilities. For better assessments results, standardized assessment has collaborated with direct assessment for various validity issues such as to assess the audience impact, task type, type of topic, nature of rater, training of rater, assessment rubric for grade assignments and the types of grading scales used. These kinds of issues are also important for classroom assessment but they are considered in large-scale assessment situations (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Greenberg, 1992).

Direct writing is usually considered with the assessment of direct writing samples task producing greater evidence of reliability and validity (Stiggins, 1982; Crusan, 2002). Diedrich (1974:1) stated ‘the reasoning of writing samples based on writing ability as it is convincing to teachers of English, to prospective employers, and to the public as actual samples of each students’ writing, especially if the writing is done under test conditions in which one can be sure that each sample is the student’s own unaided work. People who uphold the view that essays are the only valid test of writing ability are found of using the analogy that, whenever we want to find out whether young people can swim, we have them jump into a pool and swim’ (cited in Brelend, 1983:1). Therefore, from Diedrich (1974) it can be concluded that if one wants to know how an individual can perform in any given task, a test of performance in that task is needed.
4.6.1.2.1. Types of Direct writing task

In this section, a brief summary of various types of direct writing tasks has been discussed. Task types are ‘infinite’ in variety but only those writing task are discussed which are specific to the study. Following are some of well-known types of writing tasks:

1. Letters: There are various types of letters which an examinee can ask to write. For example, formal letter that will include job application letter to editor, complaint a product or service. Or any informal letter like letter to a friend/relative etc.

2. Narrative: Narration can be in the form of letter also, narration can of real or imaginary situation also; autobiographical account, a description of a vacation, and historical description would be some types of narration.

3. Descriptive: Although narration is usually written in descriptive form but involves the description of a series of events. For example, descriptions will include description of an object, it look, how it works etc.

4. Argumentative: it involves writer to take some issue and write persuasively on that issue, using evidence and personal reading experiences.

5. Expressive: Some tasks involve expressing personal opinion on some issue or events (Breland, 1983).

4.6.1.3. Standardized direct assessment (SDA)

SDA of writing mostly involves assessment of writing abilities on a single topic for a brief period. Essays are good example of this category. A group of trained raters holistically rate the essays. All essays are rated by two raters usually and if any discrepancies are found in the score than they are assessed by third rater.

Test of written English (TWE) is one of the largest direct assessment measures which have exceeded a quarter of a million candidates per year in last five years (ETS, 1992, Test of Written English Guide 1992). The test is based on single topic essay for which writers are given 30 minutes. The test has high reliability and validity and the results have directly contributed to the improvement in task development, task and topic comparison, time for writing, essay rater training and essay scoring (Carlson et al, 1985, Golub-Smith et al.1993, Hale 1992, Henning 1992, Stansfield 1986 and Ross, 1988 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). Another commonly used direct assessment is
used on holistic scoring in British examination has been developed by International English Language Testing (IELTS). This is a joint product of British Council and the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (ULES). This is a test for second language speakers of English

Large-scale writing assessment also takes place in other countries for assessing writing abilities for both L1 & L2 English students. The Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating (ASLPR) is a major exam for testing English language. It was essay as a mode of testing (Ingram, 1990 and Ingram & White, 1984). A similar kind of examination is conducted in Hong Kong annually and around 15,000 students between the age group of 16-18 years appear for Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) (Milanovic, 1987). In USA, two programs are run by Michigan Composition Board and the California State University Composition Board. The Michigan Composition Board, started in 1979 assesses the writing abilities of all incoming undergraduates to the university. 50 minutes essay writing is given to the students where they are placed under three levels of writing programs. Every year approximately 6,000 students appear for the test (Hamp-Lyons and Condon, 1993 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). The California State University conducts two hour writing test that consists of single writing test for 40 minutes. The writing samples are than sent to different campuses of the California state College and University. Scoring procedures are carefully controlled and test achieves high reliability measures (Greenberg, 1988 cited in Ibid).

The different type of large scale assessment approach is carried out in the USA by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) program for writing assessment (Appalebee et.al, 1986, 1990a, 1990b). Students who appear for NAEP receive a booklet which consists of sets of background questions and sets of reading and writing tasks for 1 hour. NAEP has increased the time allocation from 1 hour to 1 hour 25 minutes for completing writing tasks. In the past 25 years, around 1,300,00 students have appeared for the test.

A final major international step was taken by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) to understand the writing development through direct writing assessment. In IEA, students were assessed through different grades at three different levels in 14 different countries. There are eight different
writing tasks ranging from description to letter writing to essay type (Degenhart 1987; Gorman et al, 1988; Purves et al, 1984; Vahapasi 1988 cited in Ibid).

4.6.1.4. Classroom-based direct assessment

Students' writing abilities are almost determined by the writing samples assessment. Classroom assessment is largely based on providing feedback to student's written drafts for performing better. If assessment is not carried out in a class then the classroom teaching is considered incomplete. There are number of ways in which in-class assessment can be carried out. In a classroom, assessment of writing can be based on a single writing task, series of writing tasks, writing project or a writing portfolio. Assessment can be formative, summative, focussing on formal, rhetorical, content aspects of writing, assessing writing as independent skill or integrated with other skills. Grading can be analytical or holistic depending on the purpose of assessment (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

The most common form of classroom assessment is summative which is often based on single essay writing for relatively limited time. However, this assessment has less validity and to increase the validity in a single essay students are given more time to develop on a topic and multiple writing sessions are fixed for the essay itself. It also involves students into multiple drafting, revision, editing their own draft which in itself a kind of self-assessment of their own writing. When students are involved in writing processes, teachers spends more time in convincing the students regarding the importance of pre-writing, brainstorming, planning, writing, revising. It is important that summative assessment should be done in accordance with the on-going instruction i.e. formative assessment. Formative assessment of writing is carried out in the form of multiple-drafting, revision, editing, etc.

Another kind of writing assessment refers to ability students to write a short series of assignments during the final week of a course and making assessment of series of writing task produced by students. The advantage of such assessment is that student's writing can be assessed on different genres and not on a single task and the disadvantage is that it requires more careful scoring criteria which have to be fair and easily interpreted by the students.

Writing assessment based on classroom context can use different scoring approaches; the most likely chosen options are analytical scale rating which has always been a
popular way to assign grade to student's written drafts (analytical scoring has been discussed in detail in section 4.8.1.3).

Non-quantitative assessment is adopted by teachers if they are not comfortable with the numerical scoring. Some teachers feel that scoring does not provide purposeful feedback to writing and student's focuses are more toward scores rather than on writing. Non-quantitative method will include feedback on student's essay. The teacher response will be in the form of responses to highlight strong and weak points of the essays, suggesting student ways to improve their writing. A non-quantitative assessment would include the review of process, particular problems that were difficult to solve, strong points of the writing, irrelevant information that to be deleted and focusing issues which require more attention in the next writing stages.

Alternative approaches to assessing writing are relatively uncommon process of assessing writing. Unlike other grading approaches discussed above which provide evaluative feedback at some point of writing process, alternative approaches do not always have such a fixed evaluation criteria (Pierce and O'Malley, 1992 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). One form of alternative assessment which is commonly used is assessment conference. In this form of assessment, student-teacher conferences are set up to assess the student's progress, to discuss the problems, plan future goals, highlight the strong and weak points etc. the use of conferences is to give learner the ownership and responsibility over the assessment process. Teachers who don’t allow students to involve in assessment procedure would not favour this process. Before a conference begins, teacher and students should have clear purpose and goals so that maximum time is utilised in assessment.

Self –assessment procedure is another different way of assessing writing which involves students. Teacher provides some guidelines or rubric according to which students check their progress. The guidelines are designed in according to particular genre and criteria which are to be assessed.

Teacher-focused form of non-graded assessment is one of the ways of classroom assessment which is based on teacher observation. It involves records of teacher observation of students’ progress and of their weak and strong areas of writing. Teacher prepares notes on student’s performance of a writing assignment and keeps records of discussion made on draft. These records and notes make the basis of
student's assessment. This process is more suitable for those teachers who don't believe in grading but report the progress to the students in the form of written comments.

Lastly, informal assessment is also a part of assessing students writing which involves teacher observation and it stresses non-grading, negotiation and discussion with students. It is based on the assumption that students will bring self-motivations for working on their writing abilities. From the point of view of language, it is not very feasible since it requires more formal mechanism of assessment procedure (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

4.6.2. Problems with direct assessment

Largely in most of the assessment situation, making simple assumption about the development of writing test have been replaced by using many variables which may have impacted on students' performance like students' background, interests, needs, topic, amount of time given for completing the writing task etc.

The popularity of direct writing assessment and in particular with reference to it use of essay as single prompt on a holistic scored has generated criticism. Earlier problem occurred with the inter-rater reliability scores across essay (Garbe and Kaplan, 1996 and Brelan, 1983).

Recent criticism of direct writing assessment is related with holistic scoring which have raised the question about the content and construct validity of such approaches. The major issues are as follows:

1. Is it possible to assess writing sample on-time in a decontextualized situation?
2. Is it possible that student's writing sample for a brief period of time can represent student's ability to write in different situation with different purposes?
3. How can a single general rating reflect a student's ability to write?
4. How far assessing writing product will provide information on how student carried out writing process?
5. How can single prompt be generalised to other topic?
6. How can a brief writing sample be used to provide feedback and diagnose information of student's progress in later stages?
7. Are the raters concerned with the holistic score or concentrating on specific part of the essay?


Direct and indirect assessment focuses on different components of writing. Direct assessment measures the actual composition skills of learners. It provides necessary information for making decision regarding learners' writing. On the other hand, indirect assessment tests the ability of using convention of effective writing: grammar, punctuations, organization and so on (Stiggins, 1982).

4.6.3. Portfolio Assessment

A portfolio approach to writing assessment is a recent approach developed in assessment both in large-scale and in-class room contexts. Currently portfolio assessment is being used from primary school to university level to assess the writing abilities of students from L1 to L2 writing in a formal context (Weigle, 2002).

A portfolio can be defined as 'a purposeful collection of student works that exhibits to the student (and/or others) the student's efforts, progress, or achievement in a given area' (Northwest Evaluation Association, 1991:4 in Wolcott, 1998 cited in Weigle, 2002:198).

In case of writing, portfolio is a collection of written texts written for different purpose over a period of time. Portfolio assessment can be applied to different program and settings and there is a variation in terms of how portfolios are assessed and evaluated and used. However, there are certain characteristics which are common in many portfolio assessment programs.

Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) outlined nine characteristics of Portfolios:

1. A portfolio is a collection of written samples and not just one writing sample.

2. Over a period of time, a writer can display different writing varieties in different genre for different purpose and readers.

3. Portfolios are rich in context as they are closely related to the learning situation and displays what the writer has achieved within the context.
4. Portfolios provide ample time to the writers for revision and correction of their written draft before the final evaluation.
5. Students generally select the writing pieces with the guidance from instructor.
6. Due to delayed evaluation students can select the best writing piece which fulfil the evaluation criteria and can revise them before putting them into their portfolios.
7. Portfolio also involves self-assessment, in which student's reflect on their work and can arrange their portfolios accordingly.
8. Portfolios are very good means of measuring the student's growth along with the abilities achieved in linguistic accuracy, organization, developing ideas.
9. Portfolios provide a means for measuring development over time in a way that neither the teacher nor the student have expected.

From these nine characteristics, the most important components of portfolio are collection, selection and reflection of not a single but number of writing samples, which should provide evidence of student’s writing abilities (Weigle, 2002)

4.6.3.1. Portfolios in large-scale assessment

The best example of portfolio writing assessment is used in USA at the State University of New York at Stony brook. In the English Freshman Composition program students were asked to create a portfolio of their course writing. Portfolio should consisted of three revised essay (narrative, descriptive or expressive essay; an academic essay and the third essay is the critical analysis of another essay), one in class essay, cover sheet for each essay describing the process and purpose of writing each essay (Elbow and Belanoff 1991, cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

Raters were trained to give passing or not passing grades. The program is effective in involving student to write better, the purpose of this program is that students must take writing process seriously and write their draft keeping in view the real audience. The sense is developed that students are being assessed on the real writing production for the course (Elbow and Belanoff, 1991 cited in Ibid)

The problem with this approach is that it teachers are spend more time on evaluating students writing, while students may have more opportunities for cheating. Many universities have developed portfolio assessment program similar to State University of New York with some minor variations.
4.6.3.2. Portfolios of in-class assessment

Portfolios assessment in classroom context has many opportunities for assessing student writing abilities and can be used for both diagnostic and future placement purposes. The benefits of using portfolios in classroom are that it will be more in a controlled form than large-scale assessment. And, there will be larger on-going collection of writing sample that will present the student's writing abilities more successfully.

One of the important characteristics of using portfolio assessment in classroom is that it can be combined with other alternative assessment options for getting good results. Portfolios can be way of connecting students with their writing. It provides the teacher and students to discuss and work on various part of the writing. Portfolios not only accounts the strengths and weaknesses of students but also give account of student's efforts in writing progress, revision process, editing, re-drafting before the final submission.

In a class of younger students, portfolios become the source of information for the student's writing including informal writing, pre-writing, etc. And at the end of session, portfolio provides handful information on student's achievement which could be sent to the parents as a proof of achievement.

In colleges/universities or at more advanced level, portfolios become more personal record of student's development. Writing portfolios become more professional in this context where teachers and students organise materials, student writes his own introduction and explain the importance of each written draft he has produced. The use of portfolios in classroom appears to be more useful way of assessing writing (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

4.7. Writing as Performance Assessment

The ability to write well has become the important concern for both in second and foreign language writers. The ability to write and speak well in second language is recognised widely as an important skill for educational, business and professionally reasons. The acquisition of a specific language skill is important and to test that skill is equally important and writing is no exception for that. As the role of writing in second language increases, there is even greater demand for valid and reliable ways to test writing ability. The test of writing involves two basic components: one or more
writing tasks with instructions that tell writer how and what to write and secondly, evaluation process (Weigle, 2002)

According to Wiggins (1989), 'Performance assessment rely on students' work or judgement about their performance in completing a task that are used in evaluate their thinking skills (cited in Heck and Crislip, 2001: 19).

Bachman and Palmer (1996) conceptualised the notion of performance assessment. The performance assessment is defined as any assessment procedure that involves the 'observation of behaviour in the real-world or a simulation of a real-world activity' (Weigle, 2002:46). Because performance assessment engages the learners in real-world problem solving assessment task, therefore, it involves integration of knowledge and explanation of solution. Educational reformer argues that performance assessment can bring positive changes to school curriculum and institution by broadening the teachers' responsibilities in evaluating the learners' performance (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Resnick and Resnick, 1992; Smith, 1996 cited in Heck and Crislip, 2001). Performance assessment differs from traditional paper-pencil tests. Writing test that involves actual writing, opposed to completing multiple-choice items that, can be considered a performance test, since the written product represents a performance of writing. In case of writing, performance assessment can be discussed in two contexts: classroom-institutional assessments (including portfolio assessment) and national assessment by the National Assessment of Educational Progress Programme. In both these contexts, scoring is carried out with the help of primary-trait and multiple-trait scoring which is designed to assess the specific writing abilities for specific purpose rather than assessing general writing abilities (Faigley et al, 1995 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). Performance assessment is most likely carried out using multiple-trait scoring for assessing specific writing abilities that should be appropriate for placement purpose (Ibid).

McNamara (1996) provides a distinction between a strong and weak sense of performance assessment in language testing. In the strong sense, 'the focus of a performance assessment is on the successful completion of a given task that requires language use, and not on the language use itself'. For example, if a task aims to write a persuasive essay, than the writer is only successful if the reader is persuaded. In the weak sense of performance assessment, the focus of the assessment is on the language
used and not on the fulfilment of task. The purpose is to focus on the language
development not the ability to persuade (Weigle, 2002).

4.7.1. Test usefulness

Bachman and Palmer (1996:17) state that ‘the most important consideration in
designing and developing language test is the use for which it is intended, so that the
most important quality of a test is its usefulness’ (Weigle, 2002:48). The test
usefulness is defined on six principles which are also related to the writing
assessment. They are:

4.7.1.1. Reliability

It is defined as consistency of measurement across the different characteristics or
facets of a testing situation. A test is said to be reliable if individual student get same
score from one rater to the next and the same score is achieved on different occasions.
Reliability is considered as one of the important scoring measure and is important for
test validity. If a test score do not show consistency than it will become difficult to
make inferences and decision on the basis of test score. Reliability in a writing test
can is affected by several factors which are related to the writing task such as the
topic, the expected learning outcome and the variables that are related to the scoring
process such as the background and experience of the raters, nature of the rating scale
and the kind of training given to the raters (Weigle, 2002; Greenberg, 1992).

4.7.1.2. Construct validity

It refers to ‘the meaningfulness and appropriateness of the interpretation that make on
Construct validation means how well the test measures what it actually intendes to
measure. For example, if a test is designed to test business writing skills and writing
task is focusing only on letters and memoranda than the designing of a test is on a
shaky ground. For better results writing test has to generalise other genres such as
reports and minutes, executive summaries. Construct validity is related specifically to
each test and it depends on the definition of the ability of interest for a particular
testing context. The five important evidences that can be used to demonstrate the
construct validity are
4.7.1.2.1. Content analysis

It involves analysis of content and making judgements on subject matter to determine the adequacy and representativeness of the test content i.e. the area to which test results are intended to test (Weigle, 2002; Greenberg, 1992)

4.7.1.2.2. Authenticity

It is defined as 'the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a target language use (TLU) task' (Bachman and Palmer, 1996:23) i.e. a writing task must represents the writing of examinee that he will need in the world beyond the test. However, maintaining authenticity for some writing task is problematic. For example, in General English test, if a task is about writing a letter to the editor or job application than the expected results would be easily identified. In such cases test developers need to identify the main purpose of test i.e. less authenticity but high reliability (Weigle, 2002).

4.7.1.2.3. Interactiveness

It involves ‘the extent and type of involvement of the test taker, individual characteristics in accomplishing a test task’ (Bachman and Plamer, 1996:25 cited in Weigle, 2002:53). This means that a test taker must display language knowledge, cognitive ad linguistic resources to complete a task, topic knowledge and affective schemata. All these are characteristics for language testing. If a task involves writer to use all these characteristics than the task is interactive. A highly interactive task will include more than linguistics competence i.e. It will include strategic competence that will include goal setting assessment and planning.

4.7.1.2.4. Impact

This refers to effect of tests on individual (test taker and teacher), educational institutions to society. As Bachman and Palmer (1996) say that ‘tests are never administered in vacuum. Tests reflect the societal concepts, values and the test scores have consequences for individuals and group that must be considered carefully in making decisions regarding the administration and use of tests’ (Weigle, 2002:54). This impact of test on curriculum and instruction is referred as washback effect. Washback can have positive and negative effect on tests. Positive washback effect can
be defined as any effect of testing that encourages teacher to use best current practices in the pedagogy field. For example, recently TOEFL examination has introduced a writing sample as a part of Standard English, it includes 30 minutes writing sample and the scores of which are added to the total score and are also reported as a separate score to the test users. As a result many school who offered TOEFL preparation courses are focusing on writing essay rather than just on grammar only. This test has a positive washback effect.

However, washback is a complex process and results are not always straight forward. The design of test cannot guarantee the positive wasback effect. But beneficial positive washback can occur if a test taker, teacher and administration understand the purpose, goals of the test that should give the informative and reliable results. The test should involve the use of real-world language use with clear assessment procedure (Bailey, 1996 cited in Weigle, 2002)

4.7.1.2.5. Practicality

A writing test is practical only if the resources available for developing test related activities meet the criteria that required for developing or administering the test. Resources can be in the form of ‘human resources’, ‘material resources’, ‘time for designing tasks’, ‘administering the test’ and ‘scoring’ (Weigle, 2002:56).

4.8. Scoring Procedure for Writing Assessment Task

4.8.1. Rating scales

Scales are used in assessing the performance task like writing tests ‘implicitly’ or ‘explicitly’. It represents the theoretical basis upon which the test is framed. Because of this rater develops the scale for the abilities are to be measured by the test describing each scale clearly. The three main types of rating scales are:

4.8.1.1. Primary-trait scoring

This scoring trait is not so common and is not used in a large-scale writing assessment and in class assessment; mostly it is used in experimental studies. The use of primary trait scoring is not very economical because the guidelines of every written task have to be defined and written differently (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

Primary-trait scoring is related closely to the work of Lloyd-Jones (1997) for National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for a large scale assessment
programs for school in the US. The purpose of primary-trait scoring is to understand how well student can write with limited defined range of discourse (example, persuasion and explanation). In primary-trait scoring, the rating scale is defined according to the type of writing assignment. A scoring rubric is created for each writing task. Primary-trait assessment has not been widely used in second language writing assessment and little evidence are available to show how primary scoring can be applied in second language testing (Weigle, 2002).

4.8.1.2. Holistic rating

Holistic scoring is one of the most common forms of scoring for large scale writing assessment. Holistic scoring is based on a numerical scale ranging anywhere from 1-4 to 1-9. These scales are briefly described according to the genre and nature of scoring rubric (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). In a holistic scoring, writing script is read quickly at a glance and then judged against the scoring rubric or rating scale. An example of holistic scoring rubric in ESL is the scale used for the TOEFL writing test (see Weigle, 2002). Holistic rubric is designed to pinpoint reader's attention toward certain writing aspects, depending on the purpose that is essential to that particular context while providing relevant information on those aspects. Holistic scoring is considered to be more valid than analytical rubric because it reflects more authentic reader's reaction to a written text and in analytical scoring too much attention is paid to the parts which 'obscure the meaning of the whole' (White, 1984:408 cited in Weigle, 2003:114; Greenberg, 1992).

The disadvantages of holistic scoring are that a single score does not provide sufficient information about person's writing abilities because single score cannot rate the various aspects of writing such as syntax, vocabulary, organization etc. It is difficult to interpret the nature of holistic scoring because different raters might use different criteria for the same score. For example, one rater can give 4 on script because of its linguistic features (grammar, vocabulary) and another rater might give 4 to the same script for its rhetorical features (organization, content, development) (Ibid).

4.8.1.3. Analytical scoring

Analytical scoring includes rating of scripts on several aspects of writing or criteria rather than giving a single score. Depending on the purpose, a writing script might be
rated on features like content, organization, vocabulary, mechanics, language use etc. Therefore, analytical rubric gives much more detailed information about person's writing abilities in different aspects and for this reason it is more preferable to use analytical scoring.

One of the best and widely used analytical scoring in ESL was created by Jacobs et al. (1981). The scripts are rated on five aspects of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. These five aspects are distributed differently to show the emphasis on content first (30 points), next language use (25 points), and organization and vocabulary are given equal weightage (20 points) followed by mechanics with very little emphasis (5 points). Several colleges and institution has adopted for assessing training materials and sample compositions for fair scoring.

Another slightly different analytical scoring procedure for second language writing assessment is developed for the Test in English for Educational Purposes (TEEP) by Weir (1988). Weir's rubric consists of seven scales; each scale is divided into four levels with scoring ranging from 0 to 3.

A third type of analytical rubric is the Michigan Writing Assessment Coring Guide (Hamp-Lyons, 1990; 1990b cited in Weigle, 2002). It is used for entry-level university writing examination. Michigan Writing Assessment is scored on three rating scales: ideas and arguments, rhetorical features and language control. The scales were developed in consultation with the faculty members of the university (Ibid).

The analytical rubric provides more diagnostic information of the learner's writing abilities than holistic rubric do. It is easy to understand and inexperienced raters can also easily calculate the score (Francis, 1977 and Adams, 1981 in Weir, 1990 cited in Weigle, 2002). Analytical rubric is quite helpful for second language learners who have different exposures to writing skill. For example, a script is well developed but it has many grammatical mistakes. Analytical rubric can be more reliable than holistic rubric because 'additional items are added to a discrete-point test, so a scoring scheme in which the multiple scores are given to each scripts, They tend to improve the reliability (Hamp-Lyons, 1991b, Huot, 1996 cited in Weigle, 2002).

The disadvantage of analytical rubric is that it takes longer time than holistic rubric because rater has to make more than one decision on one script.
Another kind of scoring rubric is multi-trait scoring. In this, a rubric is designed with number of aspect of the essays, some rubrics may appear general and some might be more specific. Multiple-trait scoring is used for writing assessment that requires more polished profile of learners mainly for diagnostic purpose. The danger of using multiple-trait scoring us that it is difficult to use and design. Careful scoring is required, in cases where scoring is not done properly than issues can be raised regarding the validity and reliability of the scoring (Canale, et al, 1988; Cumming, 1990a; Hamp-Lyons and Henning, 1991 cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

4.9. Assessment in Open and Distance contexts

Course writers are busy in ODL context producing and writing voluminous study material. ODL universities assumes that their study materials will be driving force and shape the students learning and student will work in a manner as materials will direct them (Morgan &O’Reilly, 1999).

According to the researches into distance learners’ use of study materials (Marland et al, 1990; Parer, 1988) and the use of in-text activities (Lockwood, 1992, 1995; O’Reilly et al, 1997) suggests that there are far more complex ‘behaviours at work’. There are numerous ways in which ODL learners approach, their learning are always on prior importance for assessment decision. Take an example of student ‘Mary’, she is a nurse by profession and had registered in a part-time distance course to upgrade her qualifications. She has a family and children to look after. Her studies are important for her but her job commitment and family priorities give her less time to study. She received her study materials but has not get opportunity to open and read them. When she gets time, she open and quickly scans the units due to scarcity of time and other commitment she turns to assessment part and read it carefully. She closely observed that what is expected out of her? She now focuses on first week assignment; and for the successful completion of assignment and grades she outlined the important part of material that will be included in the assignments and rejected the entire volumes of material supplied to her. She also thought of taking help from her colleagues, internet and some other source of material as well (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983 cited in Morgan &O’Reilly, 1999).

In this example, Mary has largely ignored very well written and designed materials that were intended to provide her knowledge and learning on her subject. She just shaped her earning around the assessment task and planned her studies and
assignments according to that. Mary’s approach is more strategic one than pragmatic in which students are more focused on gaining good results in the given time (Morgan & O’Reilly, 1999).

It is important to note that argument here is not to prove that ODL materials are not important or less valuable, on the contrary they are very important indeed and serve as a backbone to ODL universities. However, the efforts of making SLM more readable will be useless if they are not tagged with the carefully designed assessment tasks. However, it is also important that Mary’s approach is not appropriate but majority of learners in ODL operate in the similar way. This raises the question of how well assessment tasks are presented in the material with the primary concerns of attaining the objectives of the course.

4.10. Opportunities for assessment in ODL learning

In formal classroom, teachers and students have numerous of opportunities for assessing their learning, problems, interests and motivations which are on the display during their learning encounters. But in ODL mode, learners hardly enjoy all these opportunities. ODL learners have very less chances to get assessed properly in terms of their needs, writing assignments, and learning outcomes. They don’t get opportunities to diagnose their own error or mistakes before sending their assignments to the tutor. Face-to-face learners can have follow up work for assignments and can rectify their error before and after submitting the assignments. Moreover they can discuss their problems in the class. While, ODL learners lack all these assessment possibilities and they require such follow up work through tutor checked assignments. Therefore ODL learners require inbuilt writing assessment tasks in terms of well-designed self-assessment criteria. Tutors and SLM also need self-assessment so that learners can have more practice before submitting the assignments. Learners in ODL mode need relevant assessment tasks and timely support marking scheme and follow up work for assessing writing assignments so that tutor’s feedback can contribute more to the learners’ understanding of SLM and assignments (Morgan & O’Reilly, 1999 and STRIDE, 2003).

Distance learners are more dependent on effective timely supported assessment. They are also dependent on continue ‘turnaround’ of assignments for getting feedback that will help them to write better and perform well.
4.10.1. Problems of assessment in ODL

ODL has been criticised sometimes for some pedagogical approaches that ‘counter’ its nature of openess and student-centeredness (Morgan and O’Reilly, 1999:24). Peters (1995) listed some of the lapses in ODL assessment. They are:

1. Few choices are available for learners for the assessment.
2. Assignments are not properly paced
3. Over emphasis is on final grade i.e. summative assessment and very less on formative assessment.
4. Very minimal opportunities are available to the learners for the self- assessment (Ibid).

More balanced criticism is provided by Gibss (1995) which includes:

1. Issues regarding marking scheme as openness assessment tend to produce higher average marks.
2. Concerns regarding the reliability in marking as ODL assessment tend to be individualised and difficult to compare.
3. No assessment device for stopping plagiarism, cheating and copying in the writing assignments.
4. Learners themselves do not accept other methods of assessment such as group work, portfolio assessment, peer assessment (Ibid)

There is a need to device proper assessment criteria in ODL framework which should include teachers/tutors, institution, course writers and students.

4.10.2. Key qualities of Open and Distance assessment

Following the work of Gibbs (1995), Rowntree (1977) and Broud (1995) the qualities of open and distance assessment are listed below:

1. A clear rationale and consistent pedagogical approach

From the very beginning, it is important to have clear idea of what is expected to achieve from subject and associated assessment. Gibbs (1995) pointed out that assessment of task should be in according to the course rationale rather than a general commitment to student centred learning. Assessment task helps in developing learning abilities of learners therefore they are required to be meaningful task.
Similarly, the pedagogical approach needs to be consistent and closely related to the rationale and assessment task of the unit.

1. Explicit values, aims, criteria and standards

The assessment design and criteria that underlie the judgment about students’ achievements should be clearly stated to the learners. When the learners know clearly what is required and expected out of them they are more likely to observe their learning and will drive more towards making their learning purposeful and better.

2. Authentic and Holistic tasks

It is very important to engage ODL learners in tasks which have work-place context and are based on real-life situations and problems. Authentic assessment tasks help to make judgement about whether learners are able to apply their cognitive ability in solving the task. Holistic assessment involves the meaningful and integral ways of assessing wide range of learners’ display of knowledge.

3. Sufficient and timely formative assessment

As there is separation of teachers from learners, therefore there is a less chance of formative assessment in ODL. Both formative and summative assessment should be integrated strategically to provide motivation, structured learning and create a kind of dialogue between tutor and students and help the ODL learners to look into their progress. Tutor can also help learners in identifying their problems and devising solutions for that.

Hence, assessment in ODL context may found in small packages as compared to formal assessment. ODL assessment need to developed in order to promote writing assignments and learning on a well-established ground (Morgan and O’Reilly, 1999; STRIDE, 2003).

4.11. Reliability and Validity of assessment in ODL

Reliability and validity are main assessing measures depending upon the nature of the test. Following is the discussion on validity and reliability.

It refers to what is meant to be measured in accordance with the objective of any given unit or lesson. To achieve validity, the assessment must test learner’s performance on each given objective and the assessment should provide the appropriate situation possible for measuring the specific abilities being measured. For
example, if the objective of the writing assignment is to test learner’s composition skills, then the question should not be framed for testing the grammar skills. In this situation the objective and the learning outcome will not match and the validity of this task will fail.

On the other hand, as discussed earlier reliability means the consistency in the assessment items. Reliability or consistency operates at the level of individual assessor and more than one assessor. Reliability is achieved when an assessor gives an identical response/solution to a problem. Every time the grades available must show sign of consistency. Then the test or score is said to be reliable. The key component in determining the reliability of an assessment is consistency in marking. There is always a chance for human error when more than one assessor is assigned to a group of student’s assignment responses. If all assessors tend to give similar grade then the reliability is achieved.

4.12. Methods of assessment in ODL

There are various methods of assessment in ODL. Following are the ways that guide students’ assessment.

1. Objective questions: This marking is a simple mechanical process of marking the questions. There are various types of objectives question like true false, fill in the blanks, multiple choices, matching and so on. Marking can be done by an individual or by a computer.

2. Short answer questions: Short answer questions consist of different types of questions which consist of one sentence answer, writing a paragraph, completing a table/diagram, preparing a list.

3. Long answer question: Long answer questions consist of long answer type like essay, reports and composition etc.

4. Presentation: To assess the presentation skills, the method has ‘high validity if it is assessed by a group’ (STRIDE, 2003:19)

5. Formative assessment: This method of assessment helps to monitor and develop student’s learning. It provides feedback to learners to improve their on-going learning. It includes all those activities which are designed to assess learner understanding of material and assignment, motivate them and provides indication of their progress. Self-assessment questions (SAQ) of SLM help the
learner to assess his/her understanding and comprehension level of unit. Feedbacks on assignments from tutor/counsellor also come under formative assessment.

6. Summative assessment: It provides total feedback at the end of the course achievements.

4.13. Assessment of SLM for writing tasks in ODL

Assessment of SLM at distance mode is still in struggling phase and assessment strategies need to be developed for effective writing abilities. Assessment of writing tasks in distance is relatively a new topic and not many studies have been conducted in this area. Till date very little has been said and done for assessment of writing skills in ODL context.

Writing courses that are offered in distance mode particularly are more challenging because writing skill itself is a very challenging activity and its development requires effective interaction with teachers, peers and materials in order to command over it. Lack of existing literature in the area of the assessing SLM particular for writing tasks has made it more difficult for students to assess their performance. Assessing the quality of writing assignments and tasks are an important way to assess the quality of SLM. There is a need to improve the assessment method and related strategies in order to enhance the learners performance (Tucker, 2012).

Many distance university faculties and colleges provide feedback to re-design their courses for distance learning but a distance coordinator has this responsibility to assess, evaluate and administer any distance program. If effective assessment strategies are applied to any distance writing course than it could provide benefits to a program and learners (Leverenz, 2008 cited in Ibid).

Old Dominion University offers The IDS-Professional Writing degree undergraduate program that specializes in writing. It provides learners practices in interpersonal organizational skills, composition skills and basic level of understanding in management, marketing and public relations (ODU, 2011, cited in Ibid). This program emphasised promoting writing across the disciplines, therefore an assessment method is needed to assess students' writing ability. Distance writing program is dependent on the learning assessment that takes place in each individual course. There are number of assessment methods, including maintaining electronic portfolios but
these methods are not sufficient in bringing out real quality writing work from
distance learners. Distance learning suggests that faculty, materials writers need
training to understand the needs and problems of distance learners (Valentine, 2002
cited in Ibid).

Any distance institution offering writing course needs to offer clear assessment
procedure for students. Assessment of course material and students assignments is
two important factors that cannot be ignored. Distance program require valid and
reliable methods of assessing students learning outcomes. Mateo (2007) have argued
that portfolio method is an important assessment tool that offers students learning
records for a period of time and how far developments are evident of students' performance. However, for better assessment results in distance writing programs
portfolio assessment is combined with other forms of assessment is required in order
to provide a better evaluation of students understanding and writing competencies
(Tucker, 2012).

4.14. Assessment issues in Distance education

The contexts of assessment are applicable to any instructional setting institution
whether face to face or at distance set-up. However, there are some special credits
attached to assessment when it becomes the part of distance program (Simonson et
employing assessment strategies are determined by the delivery media, resources and
the time available. Some of the assessment strategies used in distance mode are as
follows-

1. Writing develops individually and sent by regular mail or by e-mail.
2. Tests (automatically handled by computer program)
3. Term paper (analysed by professor or assistant)
4. Oral or written tests
5. Assignments

There are several issues that must be taken into consideration in designing and
implementing assessment in distance mode. Simonson (2000) underline the essential
role of fairness of the assessment. He suggests that instructor should have flexible
approach with distant learner.
Nouwens and Towers (1997) pointed out effective assessment in distance mode includes the following:

1. Develop the learner's independent study skills.
2. Promote educational dialogue between the tutor and learners.
3. Help, identify and deal with learners' misconceptions.
4. Give directions to learning in key subject area.
5. Relate learning to students' work and experience.
6. Permit students to assess their own performance.
7. Provide fair, valid and reliable assessment.
8. Provide feedback about strengths and weaknesses of the study materials (Dikli, 2003)

Assessment of student's writing is a process which occurs at many times in a class to assess the writing performances of students at different stages throughout the course. Teachers assume different role while assessing the writing scripts of students. They motivate and facilitate written drafts of students. One of the major purposes of assessment is to provide feedback to students. Feedback is very crucial for the development of writing skill (University of Nebraska-Lincoln 2014).

4.15. Suggestions for Assessing Students Writing

Good assessment practice starts with pedagogical aim and sound design of assignments, description and expected learning outcomes for writing tasks. The feedback given on any task is dependent on the kind of expected learning outcomes. While designing writing assignments instructor should have clear purpose of expected learning outcomes. The idea is to devise mechanism to ascertain goals expectation. Therefore the issue is to locate appropriate method in terms of rubric design for various stages and for different types of writing tasks.

It is advisable to the writing teachers to start give early feedback to students' written drafts because it will give them idea about their about their progress. Students should get opportunities to revise their draft. However, it is important that a teacher does not need to provide feedback on each and every draft. Structuring time for peer feedback, self-assessment can be very effective way for students to receive feedback in the class and gradually become to learn to revise and edit their own writing. Providing excessive feedback will also discourage learners for revising and re-writing drafts.
Discussing the purpose of any written discourse will inform the students of the expected outcomes. Student work well when they know the importance of any written assignment. Explicitly related goals of writing assignments and motivate the learners better to achieve the desired goal. Also teachers should mention the assessment criteria to the students so that they can structure their assignments based on assessment procedure and marking (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2014).

Assessment of writing assignments is the main interaction between the students and tutor. Assessment also makes learners aware about the kind of work required from them in their working schedule, their attempt and efforts in understanding the course materials (Richwood and Goodwin, 2000 cited in COL, 2002).

Tutor need to keep in mind the goals of the course in order to improve the writing abilities of the ODL learners. The process of assessment is intended to enable learners to recognise their strengths and areas that need improvement. For successful completion of writing assignments and improving writing abilities ODL learners should at least have the provision to revise their assignments, re-submit them. The performance of learners should not compare as there is a wide diversity of learner’s needs (COL, 2002).

4.16. Means of Responding

Responding to students writing might occur at different levels of writing proves, from reading response to activities to brainstorming to drafting, revision etc. There are various forms in which teacher can respond to student’s written drafts.

1. Local comments: ‘Local’ means focusing attention to specific kind of criteria. For example, grammatical patterns, vocabulary or sentence construction, mechanics. Local comments happens to call attention to specific moments in the writing by highlighting them and explaining their importance like mechanic of writing. Local comments on written drafts are mostly given in the formative assessment stages.

2. Global: When the focus is more on the overall nature of writing rather than on specific criteria than the comments are global which usually comes at the end of the written piece in detail. It’s a kind of explanation of assigning grades/ marks with the reasons.
3. Rubrics: Charts or grids which are often used to assess student's written scripts against set criteria and scoring patterns. This kind of assessment helps in knowing effectively how well students' have met those criteria and or what exactly they lack. Scoring is relatively fair in such assessment procedure (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2014).

4.17. **Features of good Assessment practice**

In ODL, assessment practice includes assessing assignments. Mostly course writers are involved in designing the assignments and tutors are not generally considered while designing assignments. But it is very important all tutor should recognise the qualities of a well-designed assignments. Morgan and O'Reilly (1999) identify the following elements as good characteristics of ODL assignments design:

1. Assignments need to possess clear rationale with clear pedagogical implications.
2. Assignments need to have clear aims and objectives with set standard and criteria.
3. Assignments need focus on authentic and holistic tasks.
4. Assignments need to be flexible for learners to complete them.
5. Assignments need to be designed keeping in mind sufficient time for solving them with timely formative assessment.
6. Assignments need to have clear understanding of the learning content and perceptions.

Considering the important features of assignment design and assessment strategies to support learners in achieving the goals of assessment are:

4.17.1. **Fairness**

It implies that assignments are required to be design keeping in view the course contents and objectives. There should be a balance between SLM and assignments. Appropriate timing for completing the assignments should be given to the learners with proper space for receiving feedback from tutor. Fairness is also applicable for tutor in assessing assignments with fairly marking scheme.

4.17.2. **Clarity**

It is one of the most important features in designing and assessment of assignments. Clarity in assignments ensures that tasks are easy to understand and are unambiguous.
For assessing learners’ performance assessment strategies, principles and evaluation methods are required to be stated clearly with the assessment task to learners.

4.17.3. Centrality

There should be a significant link between assignments and assessment task. This will help the learners to follow the assignments and test their knowledge and understanding. The focus of assessment should have on how well goals of SLM have been achieved by the learners in completing the assignments.

4.17.4. Appropriately challenging

In assignments the writing task should be designed in a way that even the novice learner can perform well. But it should be helpful enough in developing new skills and knowledge. Assessment should be accommodating to the learners’ expectations in the given content, goal, and level of the course.

4.17.5. Interesting

The assessment task requires to meaningful and related to the real-world purposes. This will benefits the learners to establish the understanding of language use; it will create interest among them by relating it to their own situation or context. Assessment of learners’ task should highlight their efforts in completing the assignments. There should be guidance for next level by each time assignments are completed by the learners.

4.17.6. Effective

The assignments should be design in order to bring out the learners understanding of course. Learners’ writing must reflect how well they have understood the course objectives with proper strengths and weaknesses.

4.17.7. Flexibility

Flexibility is the term which has become synonymous to ODL context. Therefore, assignments are required to be managed by learners with different levels of knowledge and skills complexities. Maintaining flexibility in time for completing assignments.
4.18. Strategies for assessing writing tasks (assignments) at ODL

4.18.1. Face-to-face tutoring

Before any interaction, a tutor gets the copy of a student's assignment. Hence, it is advisable for tutor to go through the work of every learner and rate him/her in different categories like average, fair, and good without avoiding poor category. After reading the paper, tutor makes the commentary on the margin of the paper. On meeting the students, a tutor must explain them their weak points and strong points. A tutor should allocate 20 minutes for discussion and provide related feedback. A record of the discussion and suggestions given would make things clear to the students (Ferris, 2007).

4.18.2. Video-conferencing

It provides video and audio communication among the group of learners at different sites through phone lines and satellite or both. There is also a scope of Desktop video conferencing which uses computers that brings signal to an individual or a small group of learners. The transmission of video conferencing allows the learner to enter into the discussion by speaking into speaker. The biggest advantage of this procedure is that the learner(s) gets a chance interact with his/her tutor. Video conferencing can be done before the submission and after the submission of assignment. If it is done before the submission, than the motive will be a different one. This time students will play active role. They will share their problems and difficulties with the tutor. If video conferencing is arranged after the submission of assignment than the tutor needs to be active. A tutor must clarify the points for discussion. However, 'slow loading and bad transmission may hamper synchronization of the video and it may not be very affective' (COL, 2003: 127).

4.18.3. E-mail

This is one of the best used facilities for assessment in the ODL system. A learner can send his written work to the tutor again and again until he gets the satisfaction and tutor need to keep the patience while assessing the writing. Learners can send any particular topic through mail and there can be a regular follow up work through discussion among a group of tutors of an effective writing course. Tutor can also give tips, some guidelines on how to improve their writing, and point out the areas for
further improvement. Learner can save all these discussion and whenever he/she feels problem, it can be referred back for assistance (Ibid).

4.18.4. Telephonic conversation

Some minor problems can be discussed on phone and this will give learner a feeling that they are connected with the tutor.

However, there is a suggestion for both tutor and students that discussions can be planned before getting into any of these strategies discussed above. Planning will help in effective discussion and familiarize the learner with the use of technologies and at the same time good communication will satisfy the students and as well as tutors. While facilitating discussion online with groups, tutor need to remember that

- Who has signed on and follow up with anyone who has not appeared.
- Monitor the comments to make sure whether students are taking them in right spirit and working on the advice given.
- To encourage learner for further discussion and make them speak about their work, their problems and their weakness.
- Facilitate question and answer sessions.

4.19. Learners’ expectations from assessment of assignments

Assessment in ODL is considered very important because this is the only way to answer the questions and anxiety level of learners of about how they are doing. The reason of this reliability on tutors’ written feedback is due to the learners’ distanced from the learning atmosphere and the usual feedback that the learners get in a classroom (Commonwealth of learning, 2003:82). Let’s see some different reactions of learners on getting assessed by their tutors respectively.

Respondent 1: “I always took guidance from the tutors’ comments. I used to write my assignments in the light of their remarks. Their comments and suggestions guided me not only in my assignments but in the examinations as well.” (Samina, quoted in Kanwar, 2002 as cited in Ibid, 2003:90-91). Here, learner takes the comments in a way to improve his writing abilities and to upgrades his skills from lower to higher level.

Respondent 2: “my experience with a different tutor in the previous year had led me to expect an illusion of a conversation within the text itself. Frequent
comments within the text construct the reader as a collaborator and set the pattern for future reactions...the option to submit drafts...would have provided more opportunities for two-way conversation to develop than actually transpired". (Roberts, 2003 cited in Ibid).

This shows that learners do not accept harsh and obscure comment on their work. A recent study at Open University supported the view of learners and instructed the tutors to give feedbacks in a way that should lead to the motivation and encouragement rather than discouraging them. It is embarrassing for a learner to find red mark on the entire draft of writing. Correcting each and every mistake is not a good idea in distance mode. If a learner is looking for encouragement so encouragement is needed with good remarks (Gibbs and Simpsons, 2002, as cited in Ibid). Assessment plays an important role in learners’ progress. Getting feedback on their writing and correcting them make learners more curious about their work. They expect that their writing should be assessed properly so that opportunities for further improvement arise. What they expect can be summed up in the following points:

- A positive attitude from tutor: If a tutor uses harsh or more direct words while commenting on writing this discourages learners from writing. So it is always advisable to the tutor at distance and also at conventional mode to show positive attitude through their comments so that learner can get encouragement.

- Fairness in comment and in marking scheme: Learner can be judged through his work by providing fair and clear comments and instruction on writing.

- Relevance of comments to the issues and goals of the educational program or work project: Without Focus on personal comment. Comments should be related to the topic or the objective of the course.

- Completeness and coherence in the feedback: give very precise and complete feedback is required.

After a proper assessment, learner designs the strategies for further learning and writing and then they can target the expected goals of learning (COL, 2003:80).
4.20. **Tutors’ expectation from Assessment of assignments**

Assessment is not only important for a distant learner but it is equally important for a tutor as well. However both have different motives. In a classroom, a teacher can assess the learner through his/her participation but at distance the only way to assess the learner is through writing. While assessing writing tasks (assignments), a tutor identifies the strength and weakness of the learner and accordingly handles the problems. It is indeed a very difficult task for a tutor to assess learner’s writing where there are a lot of dos and don’ts attached with tutors’ assessment. Through assessment a tutor at distance wants the following:

- That a learner should identify the pattern of mistakes that he is committing and should work according to the instructions given by the tutor.

- After correcting the draft, learner should go through it and compare it with the previous one and differences should be recognized.

- Learners should send the revised version of the draft to the tutor for further assessment.

- Learners should take the comments in a positive way (COL, 2003:81)

4.21. **Assessing different types of writing assignments**

In ODL, assessment of assignments is of a great value. Tutor need to consider the range of strategies while assessing and giving the feedback on student’s assignments. The table given below outline various strategies for assessing different types of assignments in ODL.
Table 4.4: Assessing different types of writing assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments types</th>
<th>Skills and Knowledge</th>
<th>Marking strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essays, reports, journals</td>
<td>Thinking critically and making judgements</td>
<td>Provide feedback on each major topic and on presentation method. Award marks for quality of analysis, clarity, coherence and completeness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual or group work on case studies, scenarios</td>
<td>Solving problems and developing plans</td>
<td>Giving feedback on process and outcome. Award marks for organization, and completeness of analysis and solution, presentation methods and evidence of effective group interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports, journals, essays, summary, composition, letter writing</td>
<td>Communicating</td>
<td>Give feedback on selection of communication methods, award marks on process. Outcome, effective use of skills, appropriateness and effectiveness of application of methods/media.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: adapted from COL, 2003:101)