UNIT 4 DEVELOPING A SELF-DIRECTED LEARNER

Structure

4.0 Introduction
4.1 Learning Outcomes
4.2 Nature of Open Learning
  4.2.1 Individualized Learning
  4.2.2 Independent Learning
  4.2.3 Guided Learning
  4.2.4 Group Learning
4.3 Characteristics of Distance Learners
4.4 Self-directed Learning
  4.4.1 Models of Self-directed Learning
  4.4.2 Component of Self-directed Learning
4.5 Role of Learner Support Services in Promoting Self-directed Learning
  4.5.1 Role of Technology for Promoting Self-directed Learning
  4.5.2 Evaluation of the Self-directed Learning
4.6 Let Us Sum Up
4.7 Feedback to Check Your Progress Questions
4.8 References and Further Readings

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Today, you can observe that there is a growing pressure for increased results from the learners but with respect to the growing number of learners, there is a shortage of qualified and experienced teachers. This situation demands heavy investment in learning and development of individuals. One way through which the problem can be tackled to some extent can be through developing our learners as self-directed i.e. they become autonomous learners, who are in constant search of knowledge on their own. It is important to note here that the capability to become autonomous lies in each individual. Even, Greek philosophers as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle gave importance to the self study.

John Dewey (1916, 1938) also stated that all persons are born with an unlimited potential for growth and development; further he defined education as the agency that facilitates this growth and also cautioned that the teacher must guide rather than interfere with or control the process of learning. We also understand that learning is not limited to the classroom situations only but it can be extended to all situations. Since the self-directed learners are self motivated, they are attempting to gain new skills, knowledge, and attitudes to improve their performance in any field. The self-directed learning can be useful in improving family life and health, enjoying the arts and physical recreation, participating in a hobby, or simply increasing their intellectual capital. Hence, the only trait which is needed for the self directed learning is to have motivation.
Learner Support: An Introduction

In this unit, we would understand the meaning and nature of open learning, and also the importance of self directed learning. As a learner or as a teacher, the important task is to develop self directed learning skills among our learners. This present unit will throw some light on various components of self directed learning and the role of learner support in promoting this kind of learning.

4.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

- examine the nature of open learning;
- explain the characteristics of the distance learners;
- elucidate the meaning of Self Directed Learning;
- describe various components of Self Directed Learning;
- discuss the role of support services in promoting the Self Directed Learning; and
- analyse the importance of technology in promoting Self Directed Learning.

4.2 NATURE OF OPEN LEARNING

Distance learning is an excellent medium of learning for the adult learner. Because of the competing priorities of work, home, and school, other characteristics which have been discussed later, the adult learners desire a high degree of flexibility. Through distance learning, they prefer to have a possible control over the time, place and pace of education; however, it is not without problems.

Moore (1973) introduced the theory of independent study which is an important foundation of distance education; it suggests that successful teaching can take place even though teacher and learner are physically separated during the learning process. While this separation can occur in several ways depending on the nature of the course content and delivery medium, i.e. either electronically mediated (i.e. real-time, computer network or video teleconferencing) or traditional coursework (i.e., through print materials).

Hence, we understand that through distance education significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner through electronic or print mediums. Open learning, in turn, is an organised educational activity, based on the use of teaching materials, in which constraints on study are minimized in terms either of access, or of time and place, pace, method of study, or any combination of these.

McKenzie, et.al. (1975) suggests that open learning systems are designed to offer opportunities for part-time study, for learning at a distance and for innovations in the curriculum. The defining features of an open learning system include:

a) maximization of the component of flexibility

b) deliberate planning of educational opportunities

c) increasing the access of knowledge to individuals by using all modes of media thus ignoring the geographic distance.
Developing a Self-directed Learner

The term ‘open and distance learning’ is used as an umbrella term to cover educational approaches to provide learning resources to learners who are at a distance. Open and distance learning often makes use of several different media. Students may learn through print, broadcasts, the internet and through occasional meetings with tutors and other students.

The ‘open’ nature of distance learning has been formalized through open admissions, and freedom of selection of what, when and where to learn. The openness of distance learning is also seen in relatively flexible organizational structures, delivery and communication patterns as well as the use of various technologies to support learning.

Thus, open and distance learning (ODL) combines two forms of education – open and distance – that focus on expanding access to learning. It is characterized by two factors: its philosophy and its use of technology. It can be summarised that most ODL systems have following aims:

- remove barriers to education
- allow learners to study what they want, when they want and where they want.

Open learning is characterized by the use of learner centred instructional methods of learning. As discussed, open learning is flexible and it is inbuilt in the nature of learning promoted in the open learning systems. Let us now understand the various forms of learning, which actually differentiate it from learning in formal settings.

### 4.2.1 Individualized Learning

Open learning is characterized by individualized learning as it is directed by the individual in order to meet learning objectives. During the individual learning process knowledge is created through the transformation of experience i.e. by making meaning out of the knowledge presented to him/her and then integrating it with the knowledge they have. This process is very much similar to the cognitive processes (assimilation and accommodation) as suggested by Piaget.

The nature of individualized learning is also very similar to distributed learning where the learning takes place using distributed resources. According to Saltzberg and Polyson (1995), “distributed learning is an instructional model that allows instructor, students, and content to be located in different, non-centralized locations so that instruction and learning occurs independent of time and place.”

**Benefits of individualized learning:**

a) Provides an amicable ambience, safe, free from peer pressure

   As the learners set their own learning objectives and also execute them on their own, therefore the peer pressure which rises in the formal systems due to competition, is not experienced here.

b) Enhances intrinsic motivation:

   - Challenged by competing with oneself (doing better next time)
● Curiosity (can explore new interesting facts without justifying it to the group)

● Control (use own time and sequence, do not need to report to others)

c) Develops self-discipline
d) Can accommodate ones’ own learning style, cognitive style and learning approach
e) Inspires learners to work on their own time and at their own pace
f) Encourages learners to practice skill as often as they wish and to master them
g) Develops personal gratification
h) Provides opportunity for authentic learning to take place based on the individual learning style

4.2.2 Independent Learning

Independent study is a process, a method and a philosophy of education whereby a learner acquires knowledge by his or her own efforts and develops the ability for enquiry and critical evaluation.

Learner independence is also known by a number of other terms: learner autonomy, independent learning, lifelong learning, self-directed learning or self regulated learning. All these terms refer to a concept where learners are involved in their own learning process. The learning process involves self setting own performance standards, evaluating the performance and reinforcing themselves. By being involved in this process, they start to make meaningful connections with the world and take responsibility for thinking and learning themselves. Hence, learning becomes more than the rote memorization of a series of facts and continues even after the learner has completed full time education.

It is a challenge to provide the correct amount of guidance without providing too much direction. Direction is needed to help learners on identifying areas of difficulty but too much direction distracts from their sense of ownership of the learning. There are a number of ways in which independent learning could be promoted in open learning systems. They are as follows:

● By giving choices

Giving opportunities to learners to make choices encourages them to reflect on their own interests and preferences. It will also make them start to take responsibility for learning. Examples of choices could be ‘Choose activity A or B for the assignments’ or ‘by giving choices to answer 3 out of the 5 questions’.

● Encourage learners to predict how well they did on tests

Before teachers return a test paper to their students, they could encourage the students to understand how well they did. One example could be to give a blank copy of the test paper to students to review in groups. This will start them reflecting about their strengths and weaknesses and the progress they are making. The reflective aspects of this process could help the students make an appropriate learning
plan. It will also help learners see that they are responsible for their learning.

- **Use authentic texts**

   Authentic texts are the activities which are related to real life situations, hence are more meaningful for learners. While, designing the questions for assignments, they can be based on authentic activities.

- **Encourage learners to keep learner diaries**

   These diaries can form a dialogue between the teacher and the learners which is mutually beneficial. It is an opportunity for teachers to see which areas students find interesting and where they might be having problems, and also it is a vehicle for students to reflect and write (or draw) honest comments about their learning. The diaries can be semi-guided initially but gradual ownership will give learners a sense of responsibility.

### 4.2.3 Guided Learning

If one talks about the meaning of guided learning, then it is an instructional strategy for small groups and works best when learners are acquiring and developing concepts or skills in a subject. It can also be used to consolidate and refine skills and understanding. Guided sessions are flexible and can last from 10 to 30 minutes depending on the nature of the task and objectives. But, even in guided learning the emphasis is working independently on a particular aspect.

Here, the learner takes control of their learning through a managed process. In the open learning systems, the learners are provided structured learning material, with just the right amount of challenge and support so that they can control their learning. Since, the teacher is not present physically, the text is arranged in such a way that it is easily understood and clues or access devices are provided in the text to complete the learning task. For example, the programme guide, where the information regarding the nature of programmes, demands from the learning, how to proceed for the successful completion of the programme is provided, which helps the learner in successfully completing the programme.

It is important to note here that there should be sustained and proactive support and challenge must be provided to the learners by intervening time to time during the course of learning. In the open learning systems, this is done by giving exercises in the text in the form of developing a design, plan or practice.

### 4.2.4 Group Learning

Group learning is an instructional strategy where multiple knowledge and stimuli (from the group members) can give the individual opportunities to learn new things or inspire that individual with ‘hints’ to help him/her learn. Group learning allows students to develop problem solving, interpersonal, presentational and communication skills. These are generic skills that are beneficial in any walk of life. These are usually promoted at the Study Centres where the learners are provided a chance to meet with the peers.
Interaction usually takes place in the workshops, contact programmes being conducted for the learners.

### 4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF DISTANCE LEARNERS

Distance education has provided an opportunity for students to learn life long. Much of this increase in the number of learners in the distance education programmes is because of the flexibility in terms of age and time provided by distance education. This distinguishing nature of distance education differentiates its learners from the conventional face to face learning. Most of the distance education students in higher education are adult learners. According to Harper and Kember (1986), approaches to the study of the characteristics of the distance education students are basically similar to those of students studying in conventional (face to face) environments.

Let us discuss these characteristics:

- **a)** Learners belong to remote/widely scattered geographic areas
- **b)** Conveniently located institutions offer limited programme options
- **c)** Their work schedules conflict with campus-bound course schedules. This includes people who work on shifts, travel frequently on business, work for long hours, and/or are in the armed forces
- **d)** Personal and family commitments conflict with campus-bound course schedules. This includes having children at home and taking care of aging parents.
- **e)** Learners are intrinsically motivated, which is also a pre-requisite of distance learning because of the many barriers distance learners encounter. Barriers appear to be learning conditions such as geographical distance, isolation from instructor and peers, lack of
Developing a Self-directed Learner

access to support such as libraries, technical assistance, financial aid, tutors and academic advisors.

f) Dille and Mezack (1991) studied the profile of students who enrolled in telecourses (courses delivered through television) focusing on locus of control (internal/external attribution of success and failure) and learning style (e.g., verbal, visual, or kinesthetic) as predictors of success among college distance education students. They found that locus of control is a significant predictor of success and persistence in distance education courses.

g) Distance learners have accumulated life experiences in diverse areas. They tend to favour practical learning activities that enable them to draw on their prior skills and knowledge.

h) They are autonomous and self-directed. They are self-reliant learners and prefer to work at their own pace.

You might have discussed these characteristics in detail in your other courses as well.

4.4 SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

John Dewey (1938) proposed that all individuals are born with an unlimited potential for growth and development and suggested that education is the agency that facilitates this growth. Further, he cautioned that the teacher must act as a guide and should not interfere or control the process of learning. Contemporary adult learning theory, which also values a learner-centred approach to adult education and places experience at the heart of learning, is a testament to the enduring influence of Dewey.

The term ‘self-directed learning’ emerged in the North American literature in the mid-1970s as a result of learning projects research conducted by Tough’s (1971) in which he demonstrated that self-teaching was a natural process among many adults, and Malcolm Knowles built his andragogical model on the basic assumption that adult learners are self-directing (Knowles, 1975, 1980) and provided a first definition of self-directed learning. He described it as a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resource for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes.

Since then, self-directed learning has become a prominent feature of adult education and some educators suggest that adult education is synonymous with self-directed learning. Philip Candy (1991), did the most comprehensive analysis and discussion of self-directed learning, he proposed in his conceptual framework that self-directed learning is both a goal and a process which embraces four distinct phenomena: personal autonomy, self-management, learner control, etc. Not surprisingly self-directed learning is also known as autonomous learning or self regulated learning. Zimmerman, (1986, 1989) described it as degree to which learners are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviourally active participants in their own learning process. Such learners personally initiate and direct their own efforts to acquire
knowledge and skill rather than relying on teachers, parents, or other agents of instruction.

It is important to note here that during self-directed learning individuals can become empowered to take increasingly more responsibility for various decisions associated with the learning but it does not necessarily mean all learning will take place in isolation from others; thus, whatever is learnt from one situation in terms of both knowledge and study skill, they are able to transfer in another situation.

Thus, self-directed learning involves the consistent and appropriate application of self control skills to new situations. It is a product of interactions between three components as suggested by Bandura’s (1997) triadic model; personal characteristics, processes, and environmental factors as shown in the figure below:

![Triadic Model](image)

a) **Personal Attributes/Characteristics**

Personal attributes refer to learners’ motivations for and capability of taking responsibility for their learning (Garrison, 1997). It also includes the use of resources and cognitive strategies. These personal attributes/characteristics of learners in a specific learning context, together with their prior knowledge of the content area and prior experience with the learning context affects the learning outcome.

b) **Processes**

Processes refer to learner’s autonomous learning processes. These processes include planning, monitoring, and evaluating one’s learning. Depending on the level of learner autonomy, a learning experience can range from an instructor lecturing 100% of the class time (no learner control) to an independent study experience (almost complete learner control).

c) **Context**

Context focuses on environmental factors which impact on the level of self-direction provided to the learner. This includes both the instructional design elements and support elements. Design elements include the resources, structure and nature of the tasks in the learning context. These resources could be embedded in the specific learning context and could be designed by the instructor as instructional support. Similarly, the specific learning context may decide on the structure of the course.
The self directed learners set their own learning performance standards, evaluate the quality of their performance, and then reinforce themselves against their internal standards. According to Zimmerman (2000), self regulation or self direction is both cyclical and dynamic process. It is cyclical because results of prior performance are used to guide and refine current affairs. It is dynamic because personal, behavioural and environmental factors which affect learning are constantly changing. But the self directed learners monitor their use of cognitive processes, their affective states, and their environmental conditions in such a way that they maximise their chances to achieve their pre-decided goals (Zimmerman, 2000).

There have been different perspectives about the nature of self directed learning; but after reviewing the literature you can find that self directed learning has been seen both as a process and a personal attribute. Let us go through some definitions in order to understand its nature. According to Harrison (1978) it as a process of organizing the instruction focusing their attention on the level of learner autonomy over the instructional process. Others view self-direction as a personal attribute (e.g., Guglielmino, 1977; Kasworm, 1988), with the goal of education described as developing individuals who can assume moral, emotional, and intellectual autonomy (Candy, 1991). Also, Brockett and Hiemstra (1991), who presented their views of self-directed learning as instructional method and as personality characteristic, said that the first perspective involves a process which the learners assume primary responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating their learning. The second dimension centres on a learner’s desire or preference for assuming the responsibility for learning (Brookfield, 1987).

### Check Your Progress 2

**Notes:**

a) Space is given below for your answers.

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

i) What do you mean by self-directed learning?

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ii) Explain self-direction as a personal attribute.

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### 4.4.1 Models of Self-directed Learning

Several models have been proposed to understand SDL, starting with Mocker and Spear’s Two Dimensional Model in the early 1980s to a more recent model from Garrison’s Three Dimensional Model in the late
1990s. Let us discuss them briefly, in order to gain better understanding of Self Directed learning:

a) Candy’s Four-Dimensional Model

i) According to Candy (1991), SDL is an umbrella concept having four dimensions and also it was suggested that a learner’s self-direction might be different in different content areas. The proposed four dimensions are as follows:

a) Self-direction as a personal attribute (personal autonomy);

b) Self-direction as the willingness and capacity to conduct one's own education (self-management);

c) Self-direction as a mode of organizing instruction in formal settings (learner-control); and

d) Self-direction as the individual, non-institutional pursuit of learning opportunities in the natural societal setting (autodidaxy).

b) Brockett and Hiemstra’s Personal Responsibility Orientation Model (PRO)

Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) provided a rationale for SDL as a process and goal. According to them, SDL is a process in which a learner assumes primary responsibility for planning (includes assessing needs, securing learning resources), implementing, and evaluating the learning process and SDL is a goal, which focuses on a learner’s desire or preference for assuming responsibility for learning in terms of learning, it is the ability or willingness of individuals to take control over the choices they want to pursue. Along with this goes responsibility for accepting any consequences of one’s thoughts and actions as a learner.

Here, you can observe the combination of both the process and personal attribute perspectives. Also there is an integrated social context in this model which has implications for the role of institutions and policies in SDL. Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) defined the social context as different physical institutions where learning takes place, such as community colleges, libraries, and museums.

c) Garrison’s Three-Dimensional Model

Garrison’s model of SDL also includes the perspectives of SDL as a personal attribute as well as a learning process. According to Garrison (1997), SDL is accomplished by three dimensions interacting with each other: self-management, self-monitoring, and motivation. In educational settings, self-management involves learner’s use of learning resources within the learning context. Thus, the focus of Garrison’s (1997) model is on resource use, learning strategies use, and motivation to learn. Garrison explained that self-management involved learners taking control of the learning context to reach their learning objectives.

Characteristics of the self-directed learner

According to Winne (2001), the self-directed learners have following characteristics:
a) Set goals for extending their knowledge and sustaining their motivation

b) Can manage the emotions well

c) Periodically monitor their progress towards the goals

d) Revise their strategies to fine tune their progress towards goal

e) Evaluate obstacles that may arise and necessary adaptations.

**Knowles (1971) puts forward three immediate reasons for self-directed learning, which are as follows:**

a) Self directed learners take the initiative in learning (proactive learners), learn more things, and learn better, than do people who sit at the feet of teachers passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners).

b) Self-directed learning is more in tune with our natural processes of psychological development i.e. maturation. The learner develops the ability to take increasing responsibility for our own lives.

c) The new developments in education put a heavy responsibility on the learners to take initiative in their own learning. Students entering into these programmes without having learned the skills of self-directed inquiry will experience anxiety, frustration, and often failure, and so will their teachers. Hence, it can be deduced that self-directed learning not only actively involves the learners in the learning process but also develops them as more responsible and effective social beings.

Now, having understood the meaning of self-directed learning, it is important to understand the various components of the self-directed learning process. Let us discuss them in the following section.

### 4.4.2 Components of Self-directed Learning

According to Zimmerman (2000), the components of the self-directed (self regulated) learning can be grouped into three categories, which are as follows:

a) Forethought Process and self beliefs that are there prior to learning

b) Performance Process that are present at the time of the task

c) Self reflection Processes that occur after the completion of the task.

Since, the self directed learning is a cyclical process, hence the components of SDL occurs in different phases which are as follows:

a) **Forethought Phase**

As understood, this phase comes before starting the task. Therefore, it covers all the activities which the learner performs before actually starting the task. This phase has been divided into two categories: goal setting and preparing strategies. During goal setting, the self-directed learners, not just specify the long term goals but divide the goals into achievable sub-goals. For example, in order to get ‘A’ grade in the Term End Examination, the self-directed learner, will set sub goals i.e. number of hours to be devoted to a subject, working on the unit end
exercises, working on previous year question papers and so on. Thus, self-directed learner will constantly assess themselves and the learning tasks to select the appropriate strategies necessary for attaining the learning goal.

b) **Performance Phase**

This phase is also divided into two categories/components: the self control and self observation. You can understand that the self control processes will be necessary to focus meaningfully on the task. This can be achieved through self instructing about the steps to carry out the task and by using metacognitive skills which help in understanding one’s own process of learning. For a distance learner, it is very important to have a skill of self control as there could be many distracters (pressure of workplace, family responsibility etc.). Another component of self observation is also known as self-monitoring, includes self recording through keeping a journal or a logbook about the activity carried out and self experimentation or trying out different behaviours.

c) **Self-Reflection Phase**

Like the above two stages, this stage also consists of two categories: self judgement and self reaction. Self judgement is also known as self-evaluation, whenever we label our performance as good or bad, we are engaged in self-evaluation. This can be done through comparing our present performance against previous performance or our expectations. Self reaction is composed of self satisfaction, which one gets after achieving the goal set in the forethought phase. Now, you might have got an understanding about the meaning and components of the self directed learning. In the next section we will focus on how to develop the self-directed learner and what kind of support is needed for becoming the self-directed learners.

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**Check Your Progress 3**

**Notes:**

a) *Space is given below for your answers.*

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

i) What are the four dimensions of the self-directed learning as proposed by Candy?

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ii) How is forethought stage different from self reflection stage?

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4.5 ROLE OF LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES IN PROMOTING SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

The dominant feature of distance education is the physical distance that separates the teacher and learner. Because distance students are often placed in a unique situation in which neither teachers nor fellow students are physically present to clarify, discuss, or provide feedback, effective distance education requires a sound learner support system (Gunawardena, 1988).

Wright (1991) describes learner support as the requisite student service essential to ensure the successful delivery of learning experiences at a distance. Thorpe (1988) describes learner support as the elements of an open learning system capable of responding to a particular individual learning.

If the adult learners are willing and able to be self directed, then distance education systems have to modify their teaching in order to give chance to each individual to exercise autonomy. Knowles (1970) has made following suggestions:

a) Provide the physical environment and importantly psychological environment that shows that the learner is accepted, respected and supported and there exists a positive interdependence among the learners and teachers as joint learners or enquirers.

b) Put emphasis on self diagnosis of the learning need by diagnosing the present level of competence and minimizing the gap between desired competence and present competence.

c) Involve learner in planning a personal programme based on the diagnosis of needs, specifying the learning objectives and evaluating the extent to which they can be achieved.

d) The counsellor must act as a facilitator rather than a content expert.

The amount of support services an institution can offer largely depends on that particular institution’s capacity and resources at its disposal. However, these can be put into two categories like the following:

a) Academic, including such packages as tutorial, advising and counselling services.

b) Administrative functions, such as enrolment; admission and registration; record keeping; information provision; and delivery of study materials (Molefi, 2002).

But for developing a self-directed learners, the academic support plays an important role than administrative support. Therefore, in the following section, we will focus more on an academic support.

Following can be kept in mind, while designing self-learning materials:

a) Use modeling techniques: if you are planning to demonstrate the correct way to perform an activity, for example, helping the students to do the assignment in the better way. You can provide model answers, clues to write good answers.
b) Include the development of the self directed learning skills in your objectives for the unit.

c) Provide guided practice and corrective feedback: As you have noted earlier, self monitoring is important for developing a self directed learner. Thus, provide opportunities to evaluate their learning on a regular basis, which can be done through providing the self check exercises, assignments etc.

d) You can also ask them to keep a log or journal in which they can (i) state goals (ii) note how they prepared for and addressed the demands of their projects, assignments and other tasks (iii) assess the extent to which they have achieved the goals.

Role of the academic counsellors:

- Encouraging learners to articulate their learning goals. In the beginning learners need help developing their learning plan and establishing short-term goals so that they gain the skills necessary to manage their goals and plans later in their programmes.

- Helping learners understand their learning orientations, strengths, and areas for improvement early in their programmes so that they can use this information to develop their plans, goals, and assessment of their learning progress.

- Advising learners on the exploration and selection of learning opportunities that will meet their needs during the initial development of their learning plans. Later, learners will take greater responsibility for identifying their learning resources.

- Guiding learners as they progress toward established goals and encouraging them to evaluate their own progress.

4.5.1 Role of Technology for Promoting Self-directed Learning

As you might have noted, developing a self-directed learner will require a lot of effort in terms of time. In order to minimize the time, you can take help of technology to supplement your efforts. Online learning provides a platform to promote self directed learning. Now, let us examine how online learning supports three processes of self directed learning i.e. planning, monitoring and evaluation, which have been discussed earlier.

a) Planning

Unlike traditional classrooms, online learning provides flexibility for learners to pace their own study. Since online learning has asynchronous feature, the learner can plan learning anytime, anywhere. In synchronous learning (e.g., live chats or virtual classrooms), learners still have the flexibility to choose the most convenient place from which to participate.

b) Monitoring

In an online learning environment, the monitoring responsibilities are in large part left to the learner. They must decide whether they understand the subject correctly (Shapley, 2000) or are heading in the right direction with their course work.
In an online learning environment, the learners can get an instantaneous feedback from the teacher and also from the peers.

To understand SDL phenomenon is only a first step in achieving the educational goal of facilitating learners’ learning. The key lies in the design of an effective online SDL environment.

4.5.2 Evaluation of the Self-directed Learning

As evaluation is the important component of the entire learning cycle, in the self-directed learning process the students are actively involved in the process of learning. Therefore it is important that a habit of self-monitoring/self-evaluation has to be established among the learners. Self-evaluation is defined as students judging the quality of their own work, based on evidence and explicit criteria, for the purpose of doing better work in the future. When we teach students how to assess their own progress, and when they do so against known and challenging quality standards, we find that there is a lot to gain. Self-evaluation is a potentially powerful technique because of its impact on student performance through enhanced self-efficacy and increased intrinsic motivation. Hence, the teachers need to encourage learners to reflect on what they did and revise attempted work. In the open and distance education system, it is done through posing self check answers in the text, in the form of assignments etc. Apart from these, there could be various other ways to promote and maintain self-evaluation:

a) By maintaining a journal
b) By keeping a dairy of events
c) By maintaining a personal portfolio: A portfolio contains a purposefully selected work of the students. This may include highlights of the student’s progress, samples of earlier and later work, and comments about the growth in learning. Then, the student and/or teacher might select items that illustrate the development of one or more skills with reflection upon the process that led to that development to show growth or change over time. These comments are made in the portfolio either by the learners or by teacher and sometimes by both teacher and students after identifying best pieces of work to showcase a student’s strengths or accomplishments.

The portfolio helps in following ways to the learners:

- to help develop process skills such as self-evaluation and goal-setting
- to identify strengths and weaknesses
- to track the development of one or more products/performances
d) By rubric: It is a scoring guide which organizes the criteria that describes what students need to complete for an assignment, and it measures the levels of proficiency of student work. Rubrics can be used in any content area. They are time consuming to create, but they allow students and parents to know exactly how a teacher will grade an assignment. When teachers design specific performance criteria, students know how they will be evaluated.
Rubrics allow students to better understand the meaning behind their grade. If students know exactly how their work will be evaluated, they are more likely to produce higher quality work. Rubrics allow students and parents to see specifically how a teacher arrived at a specific score. In addition, rubrics give teachers well-defined criteria for areas in an assignment that are subjective, such as artwork or style.

4.6 LET US SUM UP

In the present day educational scenario, where there is growing demand on the learners and the teachers to take the responsibility of learning. It is important that the self-directed learning skills are developed among the learners. The self-directed learning is a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, to diagnose their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify resources for learning, select and implement learning strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes. In this present unit, various models like Candy's Model, Hiemstra Model of SDL have been discussed which have focused on the learning as an active process. It has also been discussed that the self-directed learning process starts with the diagnosing of the learning needs of the learners and ends with the evaluation of the learning. But in the entire process right from the identification of the learning needs till evaluation, it is the learner who actively decides all the aspects of learning. Although, the learner is incharge of learning but the role of the teacher is not diminished but had changes from knowledge provider to knowledge facilitator. In this unit the support needed to promote self-directed learning through distance education has also been discussed in the unit. For any learning, the most important task is evaluation. It has been discussed that self-directed learning could be best evaluated through self-evaluation, for that the students can maintain portfolios, dairies of the activities performed by them.

4.7 FEEDBACK TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

Check Your Progress 1

i) The nature of individualized learning is also very similar to distributed learning because here learning takes place using distributed resources.

ii) By giving choices, authentic tasks, encouraging to keep diaries etc.

Check Your Progress 2

i) It is a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, to diagnose their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify resources for learning, select and implement learning strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes.

ii) Self-directed learning is a personal attribute because it develops individuals who can assume moral, emotional, and intellectual autonomy.
Check Your Progress 3

i) The four dimensions proposed by Candy are: personal autonomy, self-management, learner-control and autodidaxy.

ii) Forethought stage is a planning stage and self reflection is an evaluation phase.

4.8 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS


