UNIT 11  SELF-LEARNING

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11.0  INTRODUCTION

In Block 2 we have discussed various aspects of teaching at a distance. By now you must have observed that in distance and open education the learner is at the centre of the teaching-learning process, i.e. distance education is fully geared to fulfill the educational needs and interests of the individual learners. The shift from teacher-centred education to learner-centred education makes it necessary that an environment of self-learning must be created by the institutions which offer distance learning programmes.

In Unit 10 you have studied the nature, characteristics and learning styles of distance learners. You have also studied the factors influencing the learning process or distance learners. As you must have noticed individualised teaching and learning at a distance is the essence of distance education. You may accept the fact that distance teaching through SIMs is aimed at enabling the learners to learn without or with little help of teachers. In this unit we will discuss the concept of self-learning and the related issues such as the factors that facilitate or influence self-learning and the skills required for effective self-learning. Since communication technologies are instrumental in revolutionising distance and open education we will discuss the role of communication technologies in self-learning also wherever necessary.

11.1  OBJECTIVES

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

- define the concept of self-learning;
- discuss the factors influencing self-learning;
- explain the study skills and communicational skills required for effective self-learning; and
- discuss the role of communication technology in facilitating self-learning.

11.2  SELF-LEARNING: THE CONCEPT

We have discussed the concept and process of learning in general in Course ES-332. Learning encompasses learner's capacity to acquire, represent, recall, respond to and use information. It refers to how we perceive, act, think and remember objects/things/
to reflect upon, understand and control one's learning (Dart, 1997). The emphasis is laid on the learner capability to learn according to his/her needs and ability or pace.

Knowles (1975, 1984) differentiated adult learning (*andragogy*) from child learning (*pedagogy*). His thinking is based on the premise that in the case of adult learners, there is a steady increase in their need and capacity to:

- be self-directing in their study;
- make use of their life experience in learning;
- identify their own readiness to learn; and
- organise their own learning around real experiences.

In this *andragogical* model of learning, the teacher is a facilitator who helps diagnose learning needs of learners, create a climate conducive to learning and design a series of learning experiences with appropriate techniques and resources (Knowles, 1984). The learners are expected to be goal-oriented, activity-oriented and learning-oriented. Knowles delineates self-learning with the following justification:

- Self-directed learners are better learners. They learn more things easily.
- They are fully capable of taking charge of their own learning. (Therefore self-directed learning is more in tune with natural process of their psychological development).
- They look for opportunities for development of appropriate skills.
- They are in favour of change in education and learning in the era of rapidly changing world of knowledge.

We may call self-learning as ‘self-managed’ learning or “self-directed” learning also. It is, therefore, usually argued that self-learning requires learners to be highly committed, self-initiative and self-disciplined. They are not only highly motivated but also able to sustain their motivation throughout their study.

Self-learning is characterised by certain learner-centred features of learning. It facilitates the learners to learn:

- When they want (according to their own time, frequency and duration convenient to them);
- How they want (according to modes of learning suitable to them); and
- What they want (learning objectives and content).

The learner who is accustomed to learn together with other learners under the direct supervision of the teacher might initially feel it difficult to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes through self-learning. In order to achieve it (self-learning skill) he has to train himself in the process of learning without or with little external support. He has to become autonomous in planning and controlling his learning activities and fix the time, duration and places of his learning. For the most part of his learning the learning becomes individualised and autonomous. Thus, self-learning is principally initiated and managed by the learner himself/herself.

Individualised, learner-centred learning lies at the heart of successful educational systems. It is more so with distance education system. Various media such as radio, telephone, fax, computer and satellite technologies have proved their worth in helping learners to stay in touch with the teacher and the institution. Distance learning promotes self-learning which takes place in the individual context demanding independent learning, to a greater extent.

Though distance education is often thought of as independent learning due to the physical separation of the learner from the institution, pedagogically it need not be so (Seaton, 1991). Self-learning encompasses both the aspects of physical separation and greater pedagogical control by the learner. The essence of this type of learning is to be seen in the degree of learner control over what, when and how learning takes place. The greater the degree of learner control, the greater is the learner's autonomy and hence self-learning.
but, as the learner matures, he/she develops independent thinking and uses it to acquire knowledge. Self-learning then becomes more real and meaningful. In distance education, the learners, because of their separation from the teacher and institution, are more close to the idea of self-learning which is an important feature of distance education. Learning materials, tools and technologies are chosen to meet the needs of the learning by way of facilitating their self-learning. Self-learning depends more on the learners themselves — their motivation to learn, their commitment to learn on their own with the necessary self-discipline. Learning at a distance is a good test of self-reliance and self-determination of the learners. DE makes the learners understand that most knowledge, perceptions and insights come from their own actions and form their own initiatives. Thus, the learners come to realise that the best teacher is really oneself, and that personal efforts made in this process of self-learning are the most productive.

We know that there are no short-cuts to learn. Successful independent study involves a great deal of concentration. Self-learning is a hard and demanding task. It depends on the following main pre-requisites:

- a desire to learn;
- clear and realistic goals;
- systematic approach to studies; and
- adequate academic support.

In our discussion in this section we have tried to highlight the fact that in self-learning the responsibility for learning is shifted from the teacher to the learner. It gives the learner the autonomy to make decisions and accept the responsibility for selection of suitable learning strategies to achieve the learning goals.

We can thus conclude that the concept of self-learning particularly in distance education system, is essentially characterised by:

- A learner-centred approach to learning;
- Learner's responsibility for his learning;
- Flexible provision of education to meet individual needs, interests and requirements; and
- Use of specially designed and prepared learning materials (see Unit 7).

### 10.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING SELF-LEARNING

The importance of developing learner autonomy has been a significant concern for a long time. The major concern here is to understand factors that foster independent learning and, more importantly, learner autonomy. Learner autonomy, as mentioned earlier relates to self-directed learning and hence self-learning. Unlike institutionally rooted
Innovative teaching approaches and specially designed learning materials help/facilitate self or independent learning. The following factors related to course design found to be important by Dart (1997), are useful for a better understanding of self-learning:

- Course design helps learners’ to develop knowledge about their own learning by emphasising the importance of seeking meaning, understanding, and seeing things in a different way. This can be effected through the provision of activities that require accessing different sources of information.

- The course design should make the learners aware of their own learning process through activities that demand analysis, application, evaluation and reflection.

- The design should provide opportunities to the learners to experience autonomy and self-direction in their learning through their active involvement in the learning process.

- The learners should be convinced that the materials they are learning through is useful, interesting and challenging.

- The learners should be made aware of the models of desirable learning behaviours (processes) and outcomes (products).

It means that the approaches to teaching and the nature, type and quality of materials will have their bearing on self-learning.

Jarvis, Holford and Griffin (1998), reviewed research studies conducted by various experts and concluded that some measures are needed in order to promote self-learning. Important measures are as follows:

- Provide information on certain topics through different sources of information.

- Serve as a resource for an individual or a small group of learners on certain portion of learning content.

- Assist learners to assess their needs and competencies so that each learner can map out his learning path.

- Provide feedback on their learning plan.

- Locate available resource or secure new information on topics identified through need assessment.

- Build a resource collection of information, media and models related to a variety of topics or areas of study.

- Work with learners outside formal and group settings as a stimulator.

- Help them develop an attitude about and approach to learning that fosters independence.

- Promote discussion, raising of questions and small group activity to stimulate interest in the learning experience.

- Help develop a positive attitude towards learning and self-directed inquiry.

- Manage a learning process that includes such activities as continuous diagnosis of needs, acquisition of continuous feedback and fostering of learner involvement.

- Serve as an evaluator of learner accomplishment both throughout and at the end of a learning experience.

The above measures, if ignored, would affect self-learning.

Let us now discuss some important factors which effect self-learning in the distance education context.
Learning at a Distance

Motivation: Self-learning to a large extent depends on the motivation level of the learners. They may undertake learning for its own sake. The motivation may be instrumental, the means to some end, such as the career; motivation may be intrinsic for self-satisfaction. When there is a high degree of motivation among the learners, learning becomes wholly self-guided in controlling the educational activities.

Learning materials: Self-learning depends on the provision of effective learning materials which are specially designed to enable learners to learn independently. The materials must be based on the theories of teaching and learning, and appropriate media selection and their application. The quality of learning materials has a strong bearing on independent learning. The learning materials need to be developed to meet the needs of the individual learners who choose, for a variety of reasons, to learn primarily alone. The materials should be sufficiently well-designed, developed and presented to make learning easy and manageable for the learner. Lack of clarity in the learning materials could lead to frustration and subsequently disengagement of learners from the programme, especially if external learning support is not adequately available. It is very important that teachers strive for excellence in the instructional quality and efficiency of support services as well. Many distance educators emphasise the importance of clear objectives, instructions, realistic expectations and self-contained nature of materials for independent learning. These factors have been identified as the most effective ones that help learners in their study. In this way we can empower the learners both by providing the conditions under which they can learn best.

Education background: The past learning experiences of the learner influence the quality of independent learning. Educational background and job experience, grades/marks obtained in the previous study and academic ability are significant variables which influence the quality of self-learning. Learners' perceptions of their academic ability have appeared to be highly predictive of success or otherwise of their study attempts. Some open learning institutions have developed bridge or enabling courses to help learners attain minimum level of pre-requisite qualifications to cope with the academic demands of a given programme of study.

Environmental factors: Learning, for that matter any human behaviour, is a function of the person in relation to his/her environment. The importance and role of the environment in which learning takes place need not be over emphasised. It means that we should look at a learner's autonomy and his/her ability to exercise autonomy from environmental perspective.

Learning support: Teacher's support at an appropriate time also facilitates learning. According to Baath (1979), learners learning at a distance need help in defining their goals, selecting appropriate learning materials, working through their learning activities and evaluating their progress. Sewart (1978) recognises learners' constant need for advice and support throughout their studies. The introduction of human element plays an important role in facilitating self-learning. Opportunities for ready access to a teacher (or an academic counsellor) to answer the queries which might arise in the course of their study and motivate the learners to keep up their interest to study.

Check Your Progress

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

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

2. List out the factors that contribute to promotion of self-learning in the context of distance education.

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11.4 SKILLS FOR SELF-LEARNING

The learners should be advised on how to study on their own. Adequate skills for self-learning help the learners derive the greatest possible benefits from pedagogic activities like listening, viewing, speaking, reading and writing. They need to adopt essential strategies to learn independently and continue their study.

In this section we shall discuss, in brief, the study skills, reading skills and writing skills required by a learner for self-learning. The inputs in this section have been taken from the course materials of the Post-Graduate Diploma in Distance Education (PGDDE) of IGNOU and the Handbook: How to Study, of IGNOU.

11.4.1 Study Skills

Study skills help the learner gain maximum from the learning materials. These skills demand readiness and active mental exercise on the part of the learner. Thus, the learner has to apply all his capabilities to effectively handle and process information. These skills help the learners spend less time in studying and learn more.

There are two aspects of self-learning. One, the learning materials should help the learners work more effectively. So the learning materials are designed in such a way to offer the learners maximum learning experience. Second, the learners should develop adequate study skills so that they can get the maximum from the learning materials - be they printed text or non-print media.

Learners with adequate study skills can make important decisions about various aspects of their learning. These aspects include:

- How to study: preferred methods and media of learning.
- Where to study: locations(s).
- When to study: start/finish dates, pace of learning.

Learning at a higher level relies upon a variety of basic learning skills. The learners adopt different approaches to study independently. In reality there is no one specific set of skills that constitutes effective studying. As there is no singular way of teaching or learning, there is not a readymade formula of learning independently. Nevertheless, to become an autonomous learner you must improve your skills of acquiring knowledge by reading, developing study techniques of your own, asking relevant questions (yourselves and others), participating in group discussion actively, taking notes, etc. Thus the autonomous learner has to learn new learning behaviours to cope with his study.

It is difficult to make an exhaustive inventory of study skills. Considering the features of self-learning, we discuss here three vital concerns in developing effective study skills in autonomous learners. They are:

- When to study?
- Where to study?
- How much to study?

Let us discuss each concern in detail in the same order as presented above.

When to study: To achieve the course objectives effectively and efficiently, the learner should plan his/her study time and spread it over a period of time. Taking other commitments and availability of spare time into consideration, one should learn as to how to plan one's own study. The learners should know about systematically planning and organising their studies. The learners should be made aware that being regular in their studies would help them retain and organise what they are studying.

Some adult learners might face problems in deciding when to study. Besides pursuing their studies, they have certain social, professional and family commitments to fulfill. Considering these commitments, they should plan their studies in such a way that they study on a regular basis and find some time from their busy schedule on daily basis. The point that we want to bring home is that there should be a regular schedule of study and nothing should be left to the examination time or the eleventh hour.
Where to study: You might agree with us that a motivated, self-directed, ideal learner should be able to learn anywhere: in a quite place like a library, in a crowded bus/train, in park. But let us be realistic. Most of us cannot entirely shut off our minds to distractions: environmental and psychological. By implication, the place of study should be as free as possible from such distractors as might steal away our attention. The place of study should be well lit and properly ventilated. We should remember here that every learner may not get what he/she wants. Efforts, however, should be made to create a conducive learning environment in the place of study.

How much to study: The third step is to determine the amount of time to be spent in studying. It should be recognised that the amount of time we spend in studying will depend on the subject and the level of mastery we already have and that we want to attain. It also depends on whether you are a slow learner or not. It is, therefore, unrealistic to set a hard and fast rule about the amount of time we should spend on a specific subject. It varies from learner to learner. Fortunately, the more we plan our work the more time we get for deep thinking and reflection.

There are also other means which help us gain maximum from the learning materials. We shall discuss some of them here.

Knowing the text: The learners should know the various parts of the learning materials. Helping them know the parts of the learning materials can save their time and effort. Here are a few suggestions that we should take note of while studying printed text materials:

- **Survey the text:** A quick glance through the text helps us see how the teacher presents the content - whether he/she presents topic headings in bold letters or in the margins, diagrams, charts, graphs, etc.

- **Read the preface/introduction/foreward:** It contains the teacher’s explanation of the learning material - his purpose/plan of writing the text, and his description of the organisation of the text. The preface also explains how the text is either different from others in the field or a further contribution to the field of knowledge.

- **Read the contents:** The list of contents will give us a comprehensive idea of what to expect from the learning materials. This also helps us to locate the topic(s) we want to read.

- **Glance through the index:** The index helps us identify whether or not what we need is included in the text. It really is a valuable aid, because it helps us find specific information that we need.

- **Check for a glossary:** A glossary of the key/crucial words is helpful because it gives us the meaning of specialised expressions, words or phrases used in the text.

Interpretation of non-verbal items: By non-verbal items, we mean maps, charts, tables, graphs, etc., which help us understand the complex and abstract concepts. Some of us employ these techniques to make the ideas clearer. If we are given opportunities to work with various types of illustrative materials, we shall certainly be in a better position to make out meaning from what we are reading. We, therefore, should acquire the skill of learning from non-verbal items.

We need to gain skills in interpreting illustrative materials. Maps, charts and graphs are the items we generally use in our learning materials. Let us talk about some non-verbal items.

- **Maps:** There are many different types of maps, and each stresses particular feature of a bit of information. Each map has a key that needs to be interpreted correctly to get the relevant information. For example, political maps use colour coding and definite boundary line types to indicate political divisions, administrative divisions, etc. Usually, maps present keys indicating what various colours, lines, etc., represent.

- **Graphs and charts:** These are used to present data concisely. Most of us have at one time or the other prepared a chart to exhibit some information. There are different types of charts and graphs. The kinds of information that can be charted are too numerous to state. It would be superfluous to list all the different types of charts, graphs and kinds of information. Our purpose is to give a general awareness of the use of charts and graphs for self-learning.
we should mention here that a graph is more limited in what it can illustrate than a car because the former is usually more structured and gives some specific information, while the latter is a broader display and it can display many different kinds of information at one and the same time.

**Concept mapping:** When we study, we make a graphic representation of the topics (concepts) we are learning. This graph is the ‘concept map’ representing what we are going to study. Concept mapping is a learning strategy in which learners identify key concepts in the body of a subject matter and arrange them in a meaningful way around the focus point. All the concepts are inter-linked with each other. Preparing a good concept map requires that we have the skill of critical thinking because we have to make insightful judgements on what formats, words and phrases best represent the information which we have gone through and what will help us to recall the information, whenever we need it.

Here is a technique we could use. We should:

- choose and determine the amount of information for studying;
- read through the whole material that has been chosen for studying;
- locate the central idea/theme of what is being read;
- re-read each paragraph to identify the main topic in each paragraph; and
- note down the central idea and the topics of the paragraphs studied in easily accessible format.

There is no single way to construct a concept map because what works with one learner may not necessarily work or work equally well with another. The test as to whether or not the concept map is correct comes when the learner uses it for study purposes and finds that it does help him/her to learn significant amount of information.

Related to this concept are outlining, note taking/making and summarising. These concepts will be discussed in Sub-section 11.5.3 of this unit.

### 11.4.2 Reading Skills

Different people use the term **reading** differently. Since the meaning of the word, on any particular occasion, depends largely on the context in which it occurs, we should not, therefore, expect to find a single definition for reading.

Reading can be defined loosely as the ability to make sense of written or printed words. The learner uses the symbols to activate information from his memory and subsequently uses this information to arrive at a persuasive interpretation of written message. A broad definition that has been widely used and accepted is that reading is a process whereby a learner brings meaning to and gets meaning from printed text (the reading skill is related to the print medium). This implies that learners bring their backgrounds, their experiences, as well as their emotions in order to derive meaning from a learning text. If we are in conversation with someone, we can stop him and ask for explanations whenever, we need them. Similarly, when we have difficulties in reading, we need to interrogate the text. Since in learning at a distance the teacher is seldom available for consultation, the text is our only reference, and reading can, therefore, be described as our interrogation of or interaction with the learning materials.

Reading can be of two types: deep and surface. Some learners intended to reproduce the information to meet externally-imposed assessment demands, other intended to understand what the writer was trying to communicate to them through the unit.

**Stages in reading:** Keeping Barrett’s taxonomy of reading comprehension as a model, we present here six stages a learner systematically passes through in the process of reading, when he/she moves from lower to higher level of learning. The stages we have identified are:

- Recognition of words
- Association of meaning with symbols
- Literal comprehension
Let us discuss each one of these stages in the given order.

i) **Recognition of words**: By recognition of word, we mean the ability of the learner to translate orally or sub-vocally the written symbol into a spoken word. No reading can take place without recognising the word.

A majority of learners acquire the skill of word-recognition by the time they come to higher education. Even at the higher education level, they need consistent review and practice of the principles and procedures necessary for ease in word-recognition. Problems with word recognition may occur in any subject. Quite often in sciences a learner is faced with a number of new words with unknown pronunciations. These words have to be recognised, read, understood and learned.

ii) **Association of meaning with symbols**: The learner may readily pronounce the word he is familiar with. A mathematical or scientific symbol often stands for a complex relationship, which may be as difficult to understand as abstract verbal symbols. When the learner comes across a new word and learns it, and therefore he recognises it in different contexts, we say he has learnt a new concept. Let us take an example. A word like 'approximation' is used in Mathematics, English and Social Studies - in fact, a learner may come across it almost everywhere. Similarly, the word 'rational', for example, besides its general use in mathematics, is used in a special sense. There are words which have both highly generalised and technical meanings. There are also words which have only the technical meaning, they often belong to one particular area. Of course, with the passage of time such words also get generalised as they are used in more and more diverse contexts. All types of words have to be learnt because accurate communication takes place only when the teacher and the learner share a common understanding of the concept behind each word.

iii) **Literal comprehension**: It involves an important sub-skills—reading for facts and central ideas, noting down supporting arguments, etc. Various patterns of organisation of details produce different effects, though they may be essentially the same. Learners therefore, must learn not only to read for accurate literal understanding of individual facts but also to understand the particular relationship these facts may have to other facts in the learning material.

iv) **Interpretation**: Interpretation takes the learner beyond the printed words and visuals by requiring him to put together ideas. It also requires him to see the connections between what he is reading now and his past reading and life experience. As an outcome of this process, the learner is able to make inferences and draw conclusions. In other word, he learns to understand implied meanings of the word or visual. This process of reading is required in all subject areas though with differing degrees of complexity.

v) **Critical reading**: The evaluation aspect of the reading act—often called critical reading—requires the learner to depart from the printed word or visual in a different direction. At this stage, he makes judgements rooted in what he has read. His personal feelings and prejudice have little role to play, as he sorts out facts from opinions and evaluates the logic of the reasoning presented in the material he reads. The learner considers the relevance, authenticity and utility of factual material.

vi) **Creative reading**: Creative reading uses divergent thinking skills to go beyond the literal comprehension, interpretation and critical reading levels. At this stage, the learner tries to come up with new or effective alternative ideas, solution, etc. to those presented by the teacher in the learning materials.

Every act of reading potentially affects not only every other act of reading but also the non-reading acts which a learner will perform. The simplest, most direct way in which creative reading affects the learner is in the growing confidence he acquires in the use of the skills. These skills, at a certain stage, become so natural to him that he develops an automatic approach. When he needs to skim, he automatically does so. When he needs
to read for complete recall, he does it. Thus, he learns to assimilate skills, concepts, attitudes derived from reading. At this stage the learner comes to know how to get into a printed page, a map or a diagram, how to get what he wants from it and how to get out of it when anymore time spent on it would be a waste.

The skills involved at the various stages of the reading act can be grouped into the following three categories.

- Set purposes for reading, ability to survey material and determine an appropriate technique for the reading of any given piece of material.
- Ability to handle graphic and illustrative materials.
- Ability to locate, comprehend and combine information from a variety of learning resources.

SQ3R technique of reading

Different learning materials require different approaches, depending on what the learners expected to get from them. The implication here is that the strategy should be flexible in tackling text materials. One strategy that gained wide acceptance is the SQ3R technique. Here we shall present this technique in detail.

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

- Survey
- Question
- Read
- Recall
- Review

We shall discuss each one of these in the given order.

Survey: It refers to a quick glance through the title page, preface, headings, etc. of a text. Surveying a text helps you grasp the main ideas. A glance at the title page may give you the:

- general subject area
- level of approach
- lesson writer's name, and
- date and place of publication

The preface of a learning material will give you more details. It will help you decide whether or not it deserves your attention. The structure of the lesson is yet another source you should never ignore when making a preliminary survey. A quick survey of the structure tells you what topics the teacher is dealing with and how the topics have been organised.

A survey of the structure will tell you instantly whether or not the text contains what you need. It will also help you save time and efforts by directing you straight to the most relevant learning points.

Question: Your survey of the learning text will raise some questions in your mind. For example, after glancing at the title page, preface and structure, you might ask yourself.

- How far can I depend on this text?
- Will the text be helpful to me as its preface suggests?
- Why should the writer devote a whole unit or chapter to this or that topic?

These general questions are of some help to you in deciding how to treat the text.
When you turn from surveying the text as a whole to the specific topic, your questions will become more specific. At times, the lesson writer himself will pose questions at the beginning or the end of a unit or lesson. Since questions are generally more helpful if given at the beginning of the unit, it is always better to take note of the questions stated at the beginning and at the end of the unit. We should not overlook the writer’s questions which may prove very helpful to effective reading.

Having made your survey and started to question, you are now ready for the third step in the SQ3R technique i.e. reading the text.

**Read:** Reading text materials demands a critical mind. When we read a text, we apply our minds with all our critical skills. Unless we read ‘actively’ the questions which have been formulated can never be answered satisfactorily. Two important suggestions should be listed here:

i) It is not advisable to make notes at this stage. We may tend to note down the writer’s opinions/words rather than our own. This does not help understanding and learning.

ii) This is not the stage to underline words or phrases either. In our second reading we may find that whichever words/ phrases have been underlined are not very critical for our purpose.

Keeping these two points in view, what we should do at the first reading is just to look for the main ideas and other details.

**Recall:** Reading a text is not the final step in learning. It is, instead the first step in the learning process. What is read needs to be-recalled for retention. Deliberate attempts to recall what you have read will help improve your learning in at least three ways: help improve concentration, chance to remedy misinterpretation(s), and develop critical reading.

**Review:** The purpose of reviewing is to check the validity of our recall. The best way to review is to do a quick repeat of the other four steps - survey, question, read and recall.

Having discussed the SQ3R technique of reading, we should be able to say whether or not we should strictly follow the logical order in which SQ3R is presented if we adopt this technique. Although the steps of SQ3R are in a logical and natural order, there may be overlaps and repetitions between them. For instance, even while the emphasis is on survey or ‘read’ we may still find ourselves asking questions or we may want to interrupt the third stage (i.e. read) for the purpose of recalling and reviewing or even for the purpose of repeating ‘survey’. Nevertheless, there is no harm in adopting SQ3R in the same order.

The SQ3R technique need not necessarily be confined only to printed materials. With suitable modification in the stages, we can apply this technique to electronic media too. The stage we may have to change is the third one i.e. read. This may be replaced by either ‘listen to’ or ‘watch’ depending on whether we are dealing with an audio or a video programme. The rest of what we discussed in relation to printed materials might as well be applied to electronic media.

### 11.4.3 Writing Skills

A self-directed learner spends much of his time either in reading the course materials, listening an audio programme, watching a video programme or writing responses to the assignments based on the course materials. Thus, writing skills are essential for him. Here we shall discuss some of the techniques involved in taking/making notes, summarising and outlining what we have studied.

**Note-making/taking:** Note-making help us mainly in two ways:

- It keeps us active while we are learning (and thus aiding to our concentration)
- It helps us have a record of what we have studied (irrespective of the media)

If we really want to have a grip on what we have read, heard (audio) or watched (video), it is always helpful to put a few words on paper than to depend on hazy memories. The memories may drift away in course of the time unless you nail them down with words. And you can keep your written record as a permanent reminder.
Note-keeping: There can be many ways of keeping notes. Ideally we should arrange our notes in an order, so that the notes on a given topic are kept together—whether we collect them from reading printed text, listening to lecturers or watching video programmes. In such a situation, bound note books are of little help because we shall be forced to store our notes in the order we wrote them. With a loose leaf binder, on the other hand, we can re-arrange our sheets of papers, at times we can remove some, re-write some, add new materials, etc.

In making notes, you should always remember that you need to put in only the essentials. You should not end up with putting together the mini-text.

In making notes on note cards, you can keep in mind the following:

- If you are quoting an author’s exact words, make sure you put them in quotation marks
- Try to summarise what you have read or heard but take care that you are stating facts, not opinions
- If you are giving your or someone else’s opinion, make sure you record this on the card so that you will not confuse the opinion with fact.
- Try not to make notes on matters of common knowledge.
- Do not make notes on the same information twice.

Now we shall talk about the ways of making notes. There are mainly two ways of making notes.

- Summarising
- Outlining

We shall touch upon each of these in the order given above.

Summarising: Summary is a condensed version, of the original. A good summary ought to be brief and ought to include only essential information. The main idea of the paragraph or the central idea of an article and the important facts should be stated not necessarily in the sequence presented in the passage (the sequence can be followed in the summary only if it is essential). In a summary we need to include only the information stated in the unit/lesson or article and not your opinions or what you think should have been included.

Outlining: Normally, we present the essential points in an almost diagrammatic fashion. This is called outlining. Where possible try to outline rather than summarise what we read or listen to. In an outline we can list even minute details which may not be possible in a summary. Here are a few guidelines for outlining whatever you read, see or listen to:

- Get a skeleton for your outline from the writer headings. Expand each heading into a meaningful sentence containing the main idea of the section or sub-section it belongs to.
- If the headings are only a few, you need to look at the topic, sentence or each paragraph in the section. It probably carries a main idea that you will need to put in your notes to help develop the argument. In case, you want to include important details, you can present them in parenthesis.
- Once you pick out the main ideas you can indent them from the margin according to their relative importance. For example, you can start the main items at the margin, indent second-order items by say half an inch; third order items go in by another half inch and so on. An illustration, is given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second-order item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third-order item</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It should not be construed that an outline could be made only by indentation. You can always use letters and numbers to outline a given topic. Generally the following norm is observed for outlining:

- Roman numerals (I, II, etc.) for the main topics, putting a period after Roman numeral.
- Capital letter (A, B, etc.) for sub-topics with a period after each capital letter.
- Ordinary Arabic numerals (1, 2, etc.) for details under sub-topics and small letters under the details for less important points. A period after each number and letter.
- Roman numbers, capital letters, ordinary numbers, and small letters in straight vertical lines.
- Each topic begins with a capital letter, whether it is a main topic, a sub-topic or a detail.
- Topics are usually phrases, sometimes sentences. They should not be mixed.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answer in the space given below.
   b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.
3 What are the important skills required for self-learning in distance education.

10.5 ROLE OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN SELF LEARNING

Throughout the world, communication technologies have acquired a central and powerful role in people's learning. They provide a valuable source of learning, knowledge, skills and attitude. Communication technologies provide self-development opportunities for all and empower them to become well-informed individuals of the society. The technologies which developed as part of the processes of industrialisation, provided lifelong education with its educational means. Technology will change the teacher's role from dispenser of knowledge to learners to that of facilitator of acquisition of knowledge from a variety of sources, in an individualised way. Technology, if properly designed, implemented and monitored can increase the productivity, in terms of both quality and quantity. Technology can be used for managing both information and activities.

One of the important initiatives for self-learning may be to establish a learning group which will permit learners to benefit from shared experiences of a group engaged in the same study. This has become more important for a developing country where all the learners may not have home-based access to modern communication technologies. The learning group (besides arranging affordable access to technologies) will provide opportunities to share and assess their ideas and points of view with others in the group. The group will provide a solid source of support for discussion and obtaining answers to important questions and believing that they could successfully complete the course. In fact, the learning group can contribute to the feeling that this was a 'real' class.

Communication technology provides the capacity for greater interaction, both immediate (such as in computer-assisted instruction) and delayed interaction (such as through audio/
video cassettes). To gain from various technologies, the learners should have the intention (mental and psychological readiness for learning) and the skill to use interaction effectively to accomplish the objectives. They should involve themselves in various cognitive tasks in terms of listening, viewing, reading, speaking and any combination of the above. Meaningful involvement of the learners in those tasks will keep them alert and active in their learning.

We have discussed the limitations and potential of different technologies in Unit 5 of Block 2 of this course. Our aim here is not to discuss the role of any individual technology in learning at a distance. Some technologies permit greater degree of autonomy than others. But we are tempted to refer ‘computer’ as a significant technology in distance education. Computer can work as a gateway to resources, collaborative learning and individual achievements. It provides a mode of communication which increases the possibility of learning independently.

Computer has brought with it some very interesting possibilities for self-learning. One of the applications of computer is to access internet which is one of the most important technological innovations to reach individual users, thus giving tremendous capability to them to learn individually. And this it does at a low cost. It provides learners access to the global world of electronic (computer) communication. Simply by connecting a computer to a telephone line, through a modem, the learner can obtain access to other computer networks, including the internet. Education provided automatically by computers, connected to networks, is capable of adjusting to the requirements of every learner.

The learners learning through distance mode need orientation and training in the meaningful use of communication technology and technology based sources of learning. They can be provided self-learning manuals giving step-by-step instructions to use communication technology-based components. It is important to try and understand as to how technology is to be effectively used in acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Appropriate use of technology in self-learning necessitates changes in the way learners engage themselves in the learning process.

11.6 LET US SUM UP

We hope that you enjoyed reading this unit, we started with a discussion on the concept of self-learning. Self-learning refers to attending to, acquiring and understanding information independently, without or with little support of the teacher. Self-learning is managed and directed by the learner himself/herself. We have discussed the various characteristics and different concepts of self-learning. In the fourth section, we have focussed on the various factors influencing self-learning. Some important factors such as motivation, learning materials, educational background, environmental factor and learning support are also discussed.

In the fifth section we have dealt with study skills—study skills, reading skills and writing skills—for self-learning.

In the last section we have discussed the role of technology in self-learning. We have argued that the existing and the emerging communication technologies have contributed to the effectiveness of distance education and, thus, self-learning. Computer and the internet are referred to as important technological innovations serving the cause of self-learning at present and on a large scale in future.

11.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Self-learning in distance education is characterised by the following features:
   i) Learner-centred approach to learning;
   ii) Learner's responsibility for his learning;
iii) Flexible provision of education to meet individual needs, interests and requirements;
iv) Use of specially designed and prepared learning materials.

2. The factors that contribute to promotion of self-learning in distance education are:
i) Intrinsic motivation of adult learners
ii) Effective self-instructional (learning) materials
iii) Educational background of learners
iv) Autonomy of learning
v) Learning support made available to learners.

3. Study skills, reading skills and writing skills are the three important skills required for self-learning in distance education. If the major medium of instruction is audiovisual, through cassettes, radio broadcast and telecast media or if there are audiovisual cassettes, radio broadcast and telecast supplementing print medium, then listening and viewing skills are also equally important for self-learning.

11.8 REFERENCES

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IGNOU (1994): “ES-313: Student Support Services”, Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education, STRIDE, New Delhi.


