UNIT 2  TUTORING THROUGH
CORRESPONDENCE

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we intend to:

i) inform you about some fallacies which continue to stand in the way of
   the successful functioning of distance education programmes;

ii) identify the significant biases which stand in the way of successful
    two-way communication between distance learners and distance
    teachers; and

iii) suggest means for overcoming these fallacies and biases.

After having studied and worked through the unit, we expect you to:

i) identify the sources/causes of the fallacies mentioned above;

ii) identify and explain the biases we have talked about; and

iii) overcome these drawbacks (fallacies and biases) to render the much
    needed two-way communication pedagogically purposeful.

At the operational level you should comment on assignment-responses with
the understanding and care which they deserve, and thus make your
communication with the learners successful, i.e. you should be able to
distance teach successfully.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 1, we gave you an account of the types and levels of communication
that take place between a distance teacher and a distance learner. We also
suggested the parallels and contrasts which exist between the functions of
the conventional teacher and those of the distance teachers. Besides, we
suggested why comments need to be written on assignment-responses, and how to make the comments purposeful. This information, though valuable in itself, is not enough. In order to benefit from it at the operational level we need to know about the difficulties and the impediments we may face in putting into practice such information and also the means for resolving those difficulties/impediments.

To achieve this aim we shall be guided by a few experiments and the conclusions drawn from them. The advantage in doing so is that we will be able to present some supporting evidence for whatever difficulties we may identify and also for whatever solutions we may suggest. Consequent upon which, we hope, you will be convinced that such difficulties really do exist, and that they can be resolved, which, realization, we believe, is immensely significant for successful distance teaching.

2.2 DISTANCE TEACHING: TASKS AND PROBLEMS

In unit 1 we did suggest that distance teaching consists mainly of the academically useful conversation between the distance learner and the distance teacher ('mediated didactic conversation' in Holmberg’s words), and that the basis of this conversation is in the assignment-responses written by the former. What are the tasks involved in building this conversation? What are the problems in performing these tasks? Let us look into these issues below.

2.2.1 Tasks for the distance teacher

Think of this situation: a distance teacher has received an assignment-response on the basis of which he/she is to build his/her conversation with the distance learner who has sent it. What is the distance teacher expected to do?

i) compensate for the weaknesses of the units/lessons and the assignment;

ii) break the ‘isolation’ of the distance learner (see unit 1);

iii) sustain the distance learner’s motivation;

iv) evaluate and grade the assignment-response;

v) help the distance learner in improving and advancing his/her learning through purposeful comments; and

vi) answer the questions raised by the distance learner.

These six tasks put together constitute the process of distance teaching. Let us call them the major tasks. Seemingly simple operations, these tasks require reasonable effort. Experience and experiment has shown that to perform these tasks effectively a distance teacher needs to fulfil certain prerequisites, some of which are operational in nature and some psychological. In other words, to perform the task of distance teaching successfully distance teachers have to perform certain basic tasks (which we may call the minor tasks), and also approach their work with a certain required state of mind. If they do not perform the minor tasks, they can’t
perform the major tasks successfully, and if they do not also approach their work in the required state of mind, they can't distance teach effectively.

2.2.2 Difficulties involved in distance teaching

What are these minor tasks which we mentioned above? And what is the required state of mind?

The best that we can expect from an academic (employed by a distance teaching institution) is specialization or expertise in a particular subject. We can’t depend on his/her experience as a classroom teacher, for an equation in terms of job requirements between conventional and distance teachers does not exist. Besides, this academic comes from a particular educational culture, and we expect him/her to function in a very different one, a situation which will inevitably result in difficulties.

In what we have said, we are making two assumptions which define the problems/difficulties which a conventional teacher will face when he/she switches over to distance teaching. Let us put forward these assumptions explicitly:

i) A qualified academic (say a person with an M.A./M.Sc.... in the relevant subject) trained for, or experienced in handling face-to-face teaching and learning situations (i.e. face-to-face classroom teaching/learning) may not necessarily function as a successful and effective distance teacher. He/she needs certain specific skills to do so.

ii) Besides acquiring the skills specifically needed for distance teaching, the prospective distance teacher must overcome his/her ‘unconscious culturally induced bias’!

iii) If the prospective distance teacher is made aware of those biases, helped to overcome them, and also given the specific skills needed for his/her new job, he/she is sure to prove successful as a distance teacher.

In assumption (i) and (ii) above, we have stated the problems which a prospective distance teacher may face, and under assumption (iii) we have suggested the solution. Once these problems are resolved with the help of the suggested solution, the tasks listed in sub-section 2.2.1 can be performed successfully, i.e., the prospective distance teacher will succeed in distance teaching.

To identify these problems, Koul (1981) worked with a group of 58 prospective distance teachers (henceforth called trainees) who were adequately qualified in their subjects of specialisation, and also trained in the techniques of face-to-face teaching. These trainees were made to undergo a thirty hour training programme spread over twenty days. The training programme comprised lectures, reading assignments, take-home assignments, workshop sessions, discussions, preparation of reports and evaluation of course materials and assignments. The programme as a whole was divided into three phases:

i) Pre-teaching tasks — Problems and solutions (phase 1 presented in this unit).

ii) Teaching tasks — Problems and solutions (phase 2 discussed partly in this unit as ‘commenting’ and in unit 3 as ‘grading’).
iii) Post-teaching tasks — Problems and solutions.

We shall take up these phases one by one in what follows i.e., Units 2, 3 and 4 of this block.

2.3 PREPARING TO DISTANCE-TEACH — TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Usually a conventional teacher assumes that, given his/her subject expertise and training, he/she can distance teach with the same facility as in a classroom situation. But is this assumption tenable? Does a distance teacher need to perform any pre-teaching tasks? Is any preparation needed to distance teach? And if the teacher needs this preparation, to what degree would he/she be willing to undergo it? Let us look for answers to these questions.

2.3.1 Problem of motivation

The 58 trainees (mentioned above) were told about the relevance of distance education, and the strengths and weaknesses of the ‘written word’ as a medium of academic communication. This lecture was followed by a workshop session, which began with the instruction that henceforth all of them should consider themselves distance teachers, and that whatever task was assigned to them, should be performed with this role in mind, though their perception of what a distance teacher should or should not do in a particular situation was left to their judgement.

In the workshop session they were asked:

i) to study a teaching unit which was prepared for actual distance learners; and

ii) to prepare a brief outline of its contents, which could be used to distance teach the learners for whom the unit was prepared.

After the reading exercise was over, it was found that only 46% of the trainees showed interest in the exercise by preparing fairly accurate content outlines, 18% showed a half-hearted interest, 20% showed indifference, and 16% showed disinterest as they returned blank pieces of paper.

The first step in distance teaching is to study the teaching unit to get acquainted with its actual contents, its scope and the depth of treatment. It is not suggested that the distance teacher has to learn the contents, for he/she already is a subject expert. However, he/she must be acquainted with what the unit presents as he/she must see what the course writers want to achieve through it.

As already mentioned, only 46% of the trainees showed an inclination to perform this initial task.
Check Your Progress 1

Why did the remaining 54% of the trainees ignore the exercise?

**Note:**
- a) Attempt an answer to the above question, and list your views in the space given below.
- b) Do not proceed till you record your views clearly.

There could be three possible reasons why the trainees may have shown complete or partial disinterest in this exercise:

i) Had the trainees been informed in explicit terms that they were to read the unit with a view to correcting assignment-responses based on the unit, they would have studied it thoroughly.

ii) As the theme of the unit was familiar (known) to all the trainees, it may not have attracted their attention.

iii) The trainees had little motivation to do the task, and were thus not favourably inclined even to take the very first step in the process of distance teaching, i.e., to study the teaching unit and prepare a brief content outline.

The first of these views/reasons may be correct, but it does not explain why 46% of the trainees did really show interest in the exercise, though they too had no additional explicit or implicit information about the purpose. So the first view does not account for the complete data.

The second view/reason too fails to explain the whole data, i.e., if the topic was familiar and, therefore, held no attraction for some reader, it should have been so for all.

There seems to be a lot of strength in the third view/reason. It is trainee-centred, unlike the first two reasons, and sees that depending upon the degree of their motivation the trainees either did or did not study the unit properly. Obviously, the problems of motivation or of desirable attitudes are not exclusively learner-centred issues. It is not only the distance learners who face problems caused by the lack of motivation, distance teachers too face them, and they need to overcome them before they can do any good for the distance learner.

However, there could be many other causes for the phenomenon discussed above, some of which we will now discuss.
2.3.2 Problem of isolation

On being informed that only 46% of them had shown interest in the first exercise, one could see that some of the trainees felt sorry, while others were amused about it. We were now ready for the second workshop session, which started with a lecture about a check-list that could be used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the unit/lesson (under consideration) as a self-instructional unit. It was explained that the check-list consists of the following points:

i) Are there any access devices (learning aids such as glossaries, self-check exercises, summaries, etc.) built into the unit? If so, are they effective?

ii) Have the objectives of the unit been stated? If so are they explicitly and clearly stated?

iii) Does the content agree with the objectives? If it does, does it maintain a desirable standard?

iv) Does the structure of the unit conform to the principles of course-design? If it does, does it promise to contribute the maximum possible to the learning process?

v) What is the nature of the presentational features of the unit? Are they pedagogically useful?

It was suggested that the above check-list could be used for an adequate assessment of any course-unit. So, it was used to evaluate the given unit that they were working on. To perform this task, the group of trainees was divided into fifteen smaller groups, with at least three trainees in each group, which was then asked to perform the following three tasks:

i) read the same unit more carefully than before;

ii) discuss (within the group) the content and the various features of the unit; and

iii) prepare a report (groupwise) on the strengths and weaknesses of the unit on the basis of the check-list given above.

The exercise was done, and the group reports submitted. It was interesting to note that in spite of repeated readings of the unit and group discussions within the framework of the check-list provided for the purpose, the assessments of the unit made by various groups did not agree with one another on some of its most significant portions. It was a clear indication of the fact that distance teachers (trainees in this case) may be ‘isolated’ from one another, i.e., they think differently; react and respond to a unit differently. Thus, it is not only the distance learners, but the distance teachers also who have to face the problem of ‘isolation’. Of course, the nature of ‘isolation’ in the two cases must differ (see Unit 1 of this block).

Obviously, the various groups interpreted the unit and its structure differently in so far as the points of emphasis in the reports prepared by them differed quite clearly; and some of the groups were not ready to change their stand even after they were allowed time to discuss the issues among themselves once again.
This exercise points to the fact that a distance teacher may take a definite and rigid ‘personal’ stand about the content, the structure and the purpose of a unit, and his/her stand may or may not be in agreement with what is intended by those who prepare the unit.

This ‘isolation’, as indicated by the disagreements mentioned above, is a serious issue. In most cases, various distance teachers will be working on the same unit with hundreds of learners. These distance teachers need to interpret the units in nearly the same way, otherwise differing messages will go to different groups of learners.

One way to overcome this difficulty is that the structure of the unit be clear, thematic presentation be unambiguous, and that provision be made for giving an adequate orientation to distance teachers wherever necessary. This brings in a strong argument for ‘training’ distance teachers before they are commissioned for the task of distance teaching.

### 2.3.3 Problem of study-skills

From the second workshop described in sub-section 2.3.2 above, we moved on to the third workshop, which, in effect, was an extension of the second one.

Now all the group reports were put together in an open session. The weaknesses of each report were identified and a better understanding of the structure and the content of the unit was developed by moderating the inconsistencies in them, removing internal contradictions, weeding out some baseless remarks, etc. (For example, whereas group 12 had written that each section of the unit had an adequate range of self-evaluation exercises, group 3 wrote that the self-evaluation exercises did not cover all the points presented in the unit.) After a long discussion we succeeded in effecting convergence in the case of a number of divergent views. At every stage of this discussion, the course/unit writer’s views and the objectives of the unit were used as focal reference points. Consequently, a collectively agreed upon understanding of the structural and thematic components of the unit was accomplished.

During this long discussion, it was realised that at least one of the reasons for divergent views and reports was the difference in the level of study-skills which the trainees brought into use to prepare those reports. Some of the trainees did not appear to bother about the details, some appeared to interpret words and phrases too literally, some attached as much importance to essential details as they did to non-essential ones. (An interesting example: one remarked that there was no spelling mistake in the unit, though such mistakes did exist there.)

Obviously, no two people can have exactly the same range of study-skills, but if the differences in study-skills are going to affect the interpretation of units, something needs to be done to help the prospective distance teachers—which, again, points to the proposal that they need to be trained. Once again, we need to remind ourselves that study-skills do not pose problems only for learners, they also pose problems for distance teachers. This, however, is not to suggest that conventional teachers do not face these
problems. In fact, they face them as well, but we need not go outside the context at this moment.

Check Your Progress 2

Turn to section 1.0 (Objectives). We proposed to talk about some 'fallacies' and some 'biases' there, some of which we have already discussed. List the 'fallacies' and 'biases' we have talked about. You will experience the benefit of this exercise only if you work on it before you move on to sub-section 2.3.4.

Note: Space for your answer is given below.

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2.3.4 Summative comments

In this sub-section we have attempted to identify three common fallacies which we need to take note of (See sub-section 3.3.6 also). It is commonly believed that distance learners face the problems of motivation, isolation and a lack of study-skills. Having accepted this, it is suggested that distance teachers must help distance learners overcome these problems [(see items (ii), (iii) and (v) under sub-section 2.2.1)]. However we little realise that uninitiated distance teachers themselves face the same problems.

It is therefore quite possible that an uninitiated distance teacher cannot effectively help a distance learner. It is only a highly motivated distance teacher who can motivate his/her learners; it is only a distance teacher who has overcome his/her own isolation who can help break the isolation of a distance learner; and it is only a distance teacher who has mastered a variety of study-skills, who can help distance learners improve their study-skills.

These fallacies pertaining to the three factors — motivation, isolation and study-skills — have their roots in the 'unconscious culturally induced biases' of our society. And the teaching community is a part of the same society. Having grown up in the classroom situation and having acquired the education, it provides, the conventional teacher unconsciously, i.e., without making any conscious effort for the purpose, develops a few biases. In other words, the culture such a teacher grown up in induces a few biases in him/her — among them the belief that the problems mentioned above are exclusively those of the learners, above them all. Society that the teacher is away from accepts this stand but the institution of distance education cannot. One of the ways to break these biases is to expose them — in our experimentation with 58 trainees, we attacked these biases by slow degrees as we exposed their weaknesses one by one. The trainees had to see and be convinced that:
i) not all of them would take interest in reading a teaching unit;

ii) not all of them would assess the quality of the unit accurately; and

iii) it needed considerable effort to see the teaching unit from the viewpoint of the course/unit writers.

This attack was reinforced by lectures and discussions arranged in between the various workshops. The themes touched upon were:

i) social acceptability and academic tenability of distance education;

ii) socio-economic significance of distance education; and

iii) the question of ‘equivalence’ with regard to face-to-face education and distance education.

By the end of this first phase of the experiment, the trainees were convinced that in order to interpret a unit from the viewpoint of the coursewriter, one could not depend exclusively on one’s own knowledge of the stated theme of the unit, that the unit needs to be studied appropriately in terms of its theme as well as structure; and that they do face the problems of motivation, isolation and study-skills, which they need to overcome if they want to function effectively as distance teachers.

Check Your Progress 3

Turn to the last portion of sub-section 2.2.2, and take a look at the first item there — pre-teaching tasks. Now, recall what you have studied so far and write down what these pre-teaching tasks are.

Note: a) Space is given below for your answers.

b) Compare your answer with the last paragraph of sub-section 2.3.4.
2.4 DISTANCE TEACHING-1

In the second phase of the training programme the trainees were made to work on assignment-responses pertaining to the unit they had worked through in phase 1, which we have described in section 2.3 above.

All the 58 trainees were given:

i) an assignment on the unit which they had studied in phase 1;

ii) nine responses to this assignment prepared by nine different distance learners who had studied the unit earlier and worked on the assignment.

Having handed over the copies of the assignment and those of the nine responses to all the trainees at the same time, we asked them to distance teach those nine learners, i.e., evaluate the responses and write whatever comments they thought appropriate. With this began the actual process of distance teaching.

2.4.1 Distance teaching — A four-step process

Having studied the teaching unit and assessed its weaknesses and strengths, structural as well as thematic, the distance teacher must be able to assess the assignment too, so that he/she may assess the responses in the light of the characteristics both of the corresponding unit and of the learner. The process that follows appears to consist of four steps.

i) The distance teacher must understand (from the point of view of the course writer) what the assignment demands of the learner, and build what may be called the 'assessor's ideal response' (AIR, for short) to the problem posed in the assignment. AIR is essentially a hypothetical answer, for the distance teacher is not expected to write it down, though in subjects like mathematics or physics this can also be the real answer too. An assignment-response which matches the AIR (of the concerned assessor, i.e., the distance teacher) will be rated high. Thus, AIR serves as a measure for the assessment of the various responses the distance teacher receives.

ii) Having decided on the AIR, the distance teacher must be able to discover such weaknesses in the responses as might be traced back to the weaknesses/defects of the assignment and/or the teaching unit. This ability on the part of the distance teacher is of great pedagogic significance, for if carried away by his/her own AIR, irrespective of the weaknesses of the assignment and the teaching unit, his/her assessment of the response is likely to be biased, and most probably the comments made will be lopsided.

iii) Thirdly, the distance teacher has to consider the organisational aspects of the responses. Here, he must take into account how the response has begun, what the middle is like, and how effective the ending is. Considerations like the logical development of the response, the language used — its correctness and clarity — the presentation of arguments etc. come under the organisational aspects of the response. Here, again, the distance teacher will depend on his/her AIR. However, it is possible for a distance teacher to be carried away by the language and style of a response despite poor or even irrelevant content. It is,
therefore, necessary that fairly precise values are assigned to the various organisational aspects of responses.

iv) Lastly, the distance teacher must grade the response, and this grade should very clearly be reflected in the comments he/she writes on the response. These comments may have one, more or all of the following functions:

a) keep the distance learner motivated, i.e., on the course;

b) break the walls of ‘isolation’ which the distance learner is surrounded by; and

c) help the learner improve his/her learning through comments that teach, i.e., the ‘teaching type’ comments (see unit 1).

Whatever may be the occasion of these comments (whether they are written as comments on responses, as explanations for the grades awarded, as replies to letters or representations), the distance teacher has to direct his/her efforts towards one aim, namely to ‘effect teaching successfully’.

Can an uninitiated distance teacher perform these tasks satisfactorily?

2.4.2 Assessor’s ideal response

To answer the above question, we once again turn to the activities of our experimental group of 58 trainees. (To build appropriate links in the argument, please turn to the introductory note under section 2.4 above.)

The trainees had already gone through the unit thoroughly (see section 2.3) when they were asked to study the assignment, and prepare a note indicating what each of them thought was the ideal response to the assignment. Only 51 AIRs were collected as 7 of the trainees did not take part in this activity. It is interesting even in a sense incredible, that only 4 AIRs depicted an accurate understanding of the assignment, while the rest touched upon items which were not dealt with in the unit. You may recall that all the trainees had agreed to a common interpretation of the unit (see section 2.3). Yet when it came to the preparation of the AIRs they ignored this consensus. Most probably in an attempt to prepare a good answer/response, most trainees depended on their own knowledge of the subject matter while formulating their AIRs. It appeared as if bits of the teaching unit and those of the assignment became ‘invisible to them’ and the focus of the assignment was lost by many of them.

This phenomenon brings to light yet another aspect of ‘unconscious culturally induced bias’ (UCIB, for short) — it is quite likely that while assessing the assignment-responses, the uninitiated distance teachers will look at the assignment in terms of their own subject expertise, rather than what is available and/or intended in the unit/lesson concerned. Such a bias must affect both the process of distance teaching (in the sense of making purposeful comments), and the process of assessment (in the sense of grading the responses). Let us stop for a moment, and think of ways to solve this problem.
Check Your Progress 4

Do suggest a way or two, which may help a distance teacher overcome the difficulty in preparing his/her ideal response for an assignment.

Note: Please proceed only after you answer the above question in the space provided below.

One answer to this question is that the course-writer prepares an outline of the ideal response and sends it to the distance teacher to guide him/her in assessing the responses.

Another way is that the distance teacher is oriented towards using the unit/lesson concerned along with the corresponding assignment to build an ideal response. Whatever the case the distance teacher should not start assessing responses, before he/she conceives the ideal answer — not necessarily in writing — for otherwise the assessment is bound to be faulty.

2.4.3 Assessor's comments

Please turn to the last sentence in sub-section 2.4.1. It is a question, to which we replied only partially in sub-section 2.4.2. Now, we shall present another part of the answer.

After the trainees had finished writing their AIRs, they were asked to assess and write comments on the first three of the nine responses we had given them. (Before you proceed, take a quick look at Unit 1 of this block).

Ample time was given for this exercise, which was attended by only 50 trainees. Of these fifty, eight did not write any comments at all. Data on the nature of the comments is presented in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1: Comments by uninitiated distance teachers — a profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response Nos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You will notice from the above table that out of 222 comments written, 29.8% were hollow comments, 54% negative comments (the highest among all), and only 3.6% were teaching type comments (3.2% positive and 0.4% constructive multiplier types). Of these we picked up 87 non-teaching type comments to analyse the variations in the focus of the comments. Thirty comments of the negative type (432 words) attacked the content of the responses, 23 negative comments (160 words) focused on errors in the language used, and one negative comment (54 words) attacked the organisation of the response. 6 comments (41 words) were quite rude.

It is true that the comments on content, the language used and the organisation of the responses presented are desirable, as they are pedagogically relevant, but unless they are constructive (see unit I), they turn out to be of the non-teaching type and serve no real purpose at all. Some distance teaching may have taken place at this stage, but it is clear that such teaching was not effected consciously. If any real distance teaching had been effected, the table would have show a good number of constructive and global type comments, which it does not.

What could be the causes of this phenomenon?

In the first place, we believe that if an ‘assessor’s ideal response’ is defective, as was the case with many of them in this experiment (see sub-section 2.4.2 for details), the comments are bound to be off the point. Secondly, an uninitiated distance teacher, because of his ‘unconscious culturally induced bias’ handles assignment-responses the way he/she would mark an exercise book or an examination answer-book. In the former case, he/she marks the mistakes to be looked into by the learner and, if possible, discusses them; in the latter case he/she puts dashes and crosses here and there, and then the marks or a grade at the top of the response. In either case there is no room for any kind of comment, not to speak of teaching type ones. The writing of comments in such cases is a rare phenomenon.

Thirdly, once again because of his/her ‘unconscious culturally induced bias’ the uninitiated distance teacher feels most concerned with the content of a response, and feels satisfied if he/she marks his/her disagreement or disapproval. That he/she has to write teaching type and global comments does not appear to him/her to have any importance.

However, to draw the above conclusions after just one trial may not be reasonable. Accordingly, we asked the trainees to take up another set of three assignment responses (i.e., nos. 4, 5 and 6) for assessment and write comments on them.

2.4.4 Improved didactic communication

Before the trainees started their second exercise, i.e., writing comments on assignment-responses 4, 5 and 6, they were instructed to, as a rule

i) write comments; and

ii) try not to write harmful comments.

The results of this exercise are given below:
A comparison (of Tables 2.1 and 2.2) shows that there was no appreciable
difference between the two attempts as far as the profile of the comments
was concerned, except that no harmful comments were written this time, and
that each one of the trainees wrote comments unlike in the first attempt when
eight trainees didn't write any comments at all.

This second exercise in writing comments was followed by a series of
lectures and seminars covering topics like tutor-comments (non-teaching and
teaching type comments), the pedagogic and psychological purpose of such
comments, the significance of two-way purposeful communication and the
main role of a distance teacher — writing comments to help the distance
learner improve his/her performance.

These activities were followed by the third exercise in making written
comments using assignment responses 7, 8 and 9. The results were as
follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of trainees who took part in the exercise</th>
<th>No. of hollow comments</th>
<th>No. of negative comments</th>
<th>No. of positive comments</th>
<th>No. of constructive comments</th>
<th>Total No. of comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45*</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* In this third exercise three trainees did not participate, and so the total number of trainees
was reduced from 48 to 45.)

Check Your Progress 5

Compare the results shown in Tables 2 and 3 and write down the
improvements you notice in the profile of comments.

Note: a) Please do not proceed until you work this exercise out.
b) Write your answer in the space given below:
We notice that:

i) 'global' comments were written for the first time during the third exercise;

ii) the percentage of 'teaching type' comments went up by 20.7% (from 13.5% to 34.2%); and

iii) the percentage of 'negative' comments went down by 21.1% (from 61.5% to 40.4%).

However, the percentage of 'hollow' comments recorded a marginal rise, showing that it may not be so easy to do away with them. Besides, even at this stage, no trainee wrote any 'personal level' comments. But, more and more experience, we believe, should help the distance teachers to overcome these weaknesses.

It is evident that uninitiated distance teachers can't enter into purposeful communication with distance learners straightaway. They might do so, successfully, as they get more and more experience, which may take a long period of time. A trained distance teacher, on the other hand, should be able to function purposefully right from the very beginning of his/her career.

In essence, the conventional teacher will have to do away with the 'unconscious culturally induced biases' to make his/her way as a successful distance teacher.

### 2.5 LET US SUM UP

We identified and discussed a few fallacies pertaining to the notions of motivation, isolation and study-skills. We concluded that problems of motivation, isolation or study-skills don’t trouble learners only (as is commonly believed), but also by distance teachers who need to overcome them to work effectively.

Secondly, we tried to emphasise that most of the weaknesses of conventional teachers functioning as distance teachers arise from the biases which conventional educational culture forces on them. We identified some of these biases and suggested ways to overcome them.

Finally, we outlined the process of distance teaching, showing what difficulties may arise at different stages of the process, and how those difficulties may be resolved.

If we turn to the list of items in sub-section 2.2.1 (namely, the tasks of a distance teacher) we notice that we have yet to talk about:

i) the problems involved in grading; and

ii) answering the questions raised by the distance learners.

We shall take up grading in unit 3 and answering the questions etc. (i.e., Supplemental Communication) in unit 4 of this block.