



The Study Guidebook for Written Assignments in Britain and in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT :

Like past, in present era formal education is not meeting the needs of individuals both in developed and developing countries. Therefore concept of distance education has evolved as an alternative to the formal system of education. Study guides are most widely used and well known medium of instruction in distance education. Writing study guides is correctly, clearly and concisely is an art itself. The present study is designed to know how to write study guides with special reference of UKOU and AIOU. Objectives of the study is to find out the similarities and differences in study guides at UKOU and AIOU to specify problems involved in writing study guides, process and to give recommendations for its importance. Writing study guides are improved in developed countries. But most of the less developed have similar developmental problem in writing study guides. So this research is an effort to overcome the challenges in this regard.

1. INTRODUCTION :

Distance teaching simply means that student and teacher are at a distance from one another, with little opportunity for face to face contact. In developing countries distance education is playing vital role in imparting the education. Distance is not only use in a mode of education but also in other disciplines of life like farming, science education liberal art and business administration. Distance teaching and self study method developed specifically for the Open University under provided conditions that meet the constraints of individuals. This method is not spaces are time dependent. Courses offered by the Open University are fundamentally different from courses offered at other universities. At the Open University self –study material is offered to students. Sometime tutorial meetings are held to incorporate the problems.

The Open University also makes use of advanced technologies to improve its distance teaching. Assignments are an additional component of Open University courses (Woolf, 2007). The Open University's style of teaching is called 'supported open learning', also known as 'distance learning. Following are the main points which indicate that how OU is working on Kaye, (1989).

- Open learning (means that you will be learning in your own time).
- Supported (means support from a tutor and the student services staff at Study centers).
- Course materials (means a variety of media to help to learn like printed materials audio/ video cassettes, TV programmes, CD-ROM / software, web site, home experiment kit).
- Tutorials and Day Schools (means a chance to meet tutor and students, but is not usually compulsory)

The United Kingdom Open University is the first distance education University in the world. Britain took the first step to formulize the loose systems and shaped the first distance educational institution. The university is committed to equal opportunities for all. It is committed to create condition where all students participate equally in the university's activities.

For number of years the United Kingdom had been acknowledged as the leader in Part time education and training through this method, it is successfully pioneered supported open learning. The flexibility and quality of the Open University approach to teaching has led more than two million people to study with it and thousands of employers to sponsor their state on courses. Mackenzie et al. (1975, p.16) viewed the idea of late lord Crowther, the first chancellor of the Open University as ; "The open university would be open not only as to entry, but as to place (no campus), as to method (the use of any communication medium that promoted its educational purpose) and as to ideas (in that it would be conceived not only with necessary skills, experience but with all that human understanding can encompass."

More than two million people have studied successfully at university and university has earned a worldwide reputation for quality of courses and effectiveness of the supported open learning method.

The Allama Iqbal Open University was established in June, 1974, with the main objectives of providing educational opportunities to masses and to those who cannot leave their homes and jobs. In the last 25 years, the University has more than fulfilled this promise. It has opened up educational opportunities for the working people and has provided access to females on their doorsteps. It is now breaking new grounds in the fields of professional, scientific, and technical education. It is attempting to reach out to the remotest areas of Pakistan. It is also attempting to use modern information technology for spreading education in Pakistan.

AIOU is a unique educational institution

in Pakistan and as it is operating distance education system, Butt (1999, p-49) commented that it plays a significant role to create right kind of leadership. To produce leaders not only in the scientific and technological world, but also leaders in the social and economic spheres, leaders of commerce and industry and leaders of literature and religious knowledge. The author further elaborates that during the last two decades, this institution has made a substantial contribution towards the educational progress in Pakistan. This system (distance education) is suited best to our society because majority of our population still lives in the rural areas and it is difficult for them to attend the formal educational institutions. But distance educational system of AIOU provides an opportunity to the people to educate themselves in spite of certain cultural barriers; to enhance and improve their education. This system also opens the window of opportunities for the working class as it operates in the evening.

Writing Techniques of Studies Guides in Distance Education

Writing study guides is an important form of communication. Good writers use different writing techniques to fit their purpose for writing. For good writing, techniques may be used (Mangrum, 2007).

- Description: - Description helps the reader more clearly to understand the people, places, and things about which the writer is writing. It is the most common form of writing.
- Exposition:-Through exposition, a writer informs, explains, and clarifies his/her ideas and thoughts. Exposition goes beyond description to help the reader to understand with greater clarity and depth the ideas and thoughts of the writer. According to Owen (2004, p.147) is of the view that, "The printed page became exposition for ideas. Today, electronic media threaten the primacy of study guides but interestingly, study guides and printing material remain the primary teaching media in distance education."

Narration: - Through narration, a writer tells a topic. A topic has characters, a setting

setting, a time, a problem and attempts at solving the problem.

• Comparison and Contrast:-Through comparison and contrast, a writer points out the similarities and differences about a topic. Comparison is used to show what is alike or in common. Contrast is used to show what is not alike or not in common.

Main Ideas for Writing Study Guides

REDW is a good strategy to use to find the main idea in each paragraph of a reading topic Meggs (1998, p.10). Using this strategy will help us comprehend the information contained in topic. Each of the letters in REDW stands for a step in the strategy.

Read: - Read the entire paragraph to get an idea of what the paragraph is about. As writer read or to form a picture in their mind of what learners are reading. Once writer has a general idea of what the paragraph is about, go on to the next step.

Examine: - Examine each sentence in the paragraph to identify the important words that tell what the sentence is about. Ignore the words that are not needed to tell what the sentence is about.

Decide:-Reread the words writer writes for each sentence in the paragraph. Decide which sentence contains the words writer's select that best describe the main idea of the paragraph. These words are the main idea of the paragraph.

Write: - Write the main idea for each paragraph in study guides. This provides a written record of the most important ideas. This written record will be helpful if writers have to take a test that covers the topic.

Factors for Designing and Using of Study Guides

The following psychological conditions and principles are important factors to consider in the design and use of instruction study guides, presented by Kemp and Dayton (1995, p.69) are as follow ;

- motivation
- individual difference
- learning objectives
- organization of the content
- pre learning preparation
- emotions

- participation
- feedback
- reinforcement
- practice and repetition
- application

The learner must have been helped to recognize or discovered generalizations relating to the topic or task. According to Kamfer (1995, p.14).Each one of these conditions or principles of learning can be applied directly or indirectly in the design of the various instructional media. Many of these principles also relate to the manner in which the media are subsequently used in correlation with accompanying printed materials and activities.

Planning and Designing of Study Guides

According to the Planners of distance education the printing material is important in distance education but the presentation and design of print material are also important. Study guides are the material more frequently used in distance education. It is natural that so far educators paid more attention to print material than to other media. Chand (1990, pp.38-40) throws lights on the systematic selection, evaluation and utilization of study guides. No doubt study guides play very important role in making teaching and learning process successfully but may be design according to the following factors ;

- Aim of education
- Nature of learner
- Nature of subject matter
- Environment of locality

Development Process of Study Guides

Both in developed and developing countries writing need a special type of trained staff for course development being distinct from formal system. Because in the distance education system. Self instructional course material in the form of study guides with Allied material and Media material support. The main personnel involved in the development of study guides are course coordinators, reviewers, designers and editors have to prepare study guides.

Sequence of Study Guides

Sequence is defined as the order in which content is presented to the reader. So content is split up into segments, which are presented to the learner over a period of time in different orders. This order is called sequence traditionally content are criteria for traditional sequence is as follows:-

Simple to Complex:- In this approach, sequence is seen as a progression from simple, subordinate components to complex structures which in turn are the subordinate components of given mere complex super cent age ordinate structures.

Prerequisite Learning's:- According to Waller (1994, p.157) concept of hierarchical leaning is consistent with this approach. This principle is followed in subjects, which consist largely of laws and principles such as composition, grammar and geometry. To understand one set of laws or principles, the learner may acquire the prerequisite learning.

Chronology: - An absolute chronology just includes a strange sort of event called a date which is common to all absolute chronologies covering the same period of time. According to Aitken (2007, p.129), "Chronology, as the science of locating historical events in time, is part of the discipline of history. A chronology may be either relative that is, locating related events relative to each other or absolute locating these events to specific dates in a chronological era. In that these dates are themselves events, the difference between the two blurs a little." This principle suggests sequencing content according to chronology of recorded events. This is particularly important if one accepts a casual relationship between events to understand.

Increasing Abstraction: - Content may be sequenced according to the idea that one learns most effectively what is closer or more meaningful to the learner. In a similar manner, content may be sequenced from concrete to abstract. According to Mifflin (1992, p.214), "Abstraction is the process of generalization by reducing the information content of a concept or an observable phenomenon, typically in order to retain only information which is relevant for a

particular purpose." In this way learner can understand concrete concepts before moving into abstract, idealistic or theoretical concepts.

Important Aspects of Units of the Study Guides

Study guide units provide actual teaching by itself and are a substitute for both a textbook and the exposition of teacher. Study units are complete substitute for what an efficient teacher brings about in class. The important aspects of the guides, according to Waller (1997, p.147) are given as the following ;

- Introduction
- Objectives
- Page design
- Heading
- Numbering systems and sections
- Use of I Cons / symbols/ diagrams
- Self-assessment exercises
- Activities
- Summary
- Bibliography

According to Rashid (1999, p.117), they are given as the following ;

- Introduction
- Objectives
- Content notes
- Summary
- Activities
- Self-assessment exercises
- References

These section headings are further expounded by Rashid (1999) as ;

Introduction: - Each unit has introduction. This gives the background of the unit and defines the problem one is going to deal with. A well-written introduction invites the students to precede fun to know what is to be going on.

Objectives: - Objectives of the units are statements at the beginning of a unit tell students what they may be able to do as a result the unit's material. Objectives describe results and similar to a road map that indicates where, when and how learner

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has arrived at his destination. According to Rashid (1999, p.101) reasons for writing objectives are as follows ;

- Limits the task and removes all ambiguity and difficulties of interpretation.
- Ensures that measurement is possible, so that the quality and effectiveness of the learning can be determined.
- Enable both teachers and students to distinguish between different varieties or forms of behavior which learning strategy is likely to be desirable.

Provide a complete but concise summary of the course, which can serve as conceptual framework or advance organizer for learning.

- Content Notes: - Content notes are important aspects in the unit. It explored the topic with study notes. It also includes an action plan and strategy that student can take up for detail study and to comprehend the ideas from related material. According to Davis (1992, p.73) ;

- Encourage the students to think on their own and
- Include essential concepts of the content.
- Form a logical sequence of ideas from simple to complex
- Properly divided into subsections.
- Integrated to reinforce concepts of the content.

According to Hughes (1993, p.14) “contents only of the facts, concepts and generalization or the knowledge related to particular subject of theme”

- Summary: - According to Rashid (1999, p.111), “It is a map of the main text describing each section and outlining the conclusion one is moving to. It is short version of the main text”. It includes the key facts and conclusion and reinforcement.

Study guides of M.A Education /M.Ed programmes do not have summaries. Avis (2002, p.321) said main points may keep in mind to finalize the study guides as under;

- Find out what students are interested in.
- Find a subject that students like.
- Write outlines.
- Research until eyes hurt - looking especially for facts that are not easily accessible.

Activities: - Each unit of study guides consists of activities. Content of study guides consist of two main elements,

theoretical and practical activities. According to Rashid (1999, p.119), “Theoretical activities cover the philosophical, sociological and psychological foundations of course and activities are the concrete and abstract of foundations of education”. According to Gagne (1989, p.56), “Activities are meant to keep students purposefully engaged with material”. Main objective of activities is to prepare learner to meet all difficulties and also to plan through. Various processes such as communities of content style of presentation use of audio and video aids through various activities.

- Self-Assessment Exercises:- Self-assessments are very important part for the effective running of distance education programmes. These exercises and questions provide a valuable feed back to the students on their program. Such exercises give a key means of summarizing and reviewing. The main information to be learned self-assessment questions. According to Ellington (1993, p.50) has the following characteristics.

- Test the related objectives.
- Identify the domain to be evaluated.
- Contain relevant concepts, knowledge and skills.
- Include specimen or model answer.
- Program from simple to difficult questions.

- Reference Material:- The package of related material to the students in order to supplement the instruction in course by giving extracts from various books, journal etc and suggesting relevant reading material. This related material leads the learner to comprehend the ideas and tell detail about authors and books related to the topic.

- Bibliography / References: - When assembling a final bibliography, list our sources, texts, articles, interviews, and so on in alphabetical order by authors with last names. Sources those don't have authors (encyclopedias, movies) should be alphabetized by title. There are different formats for bibliographies. However one of the most widely used and easy to understand is the APA system. In study guides we recommend the APA style.

Format of Study Guides

According to Rashid (1999, p.106), "Each study guide consists of half credits course is usually divided into nine units. Each unit of study guides directs the students activating in covering as relation of the syllabus".

Page Design: - In printed material of study guides, one of the most common page sizes is in A4.

Type Size: - Hartely and Burnhill (1997) recommend a ten point II type a twelve point line-t-line faced. Some time ten point sizes is used in a text.

Type Face: - The most commonly used in educational material type face, Helvetica medium and times medium is used but has not been mix two type face in the study guides.

Use of Emphasis: - A single column structure is probably for an A4 size page, especially where the text is frequently broken by table, graphs etc. Burnhill (1997) argues for paragraphs separated by line spacing at the beginning of the paragraph.

Paragraphs: - The headings are a way of breaking up the text. By using paragraphs, breaking up text is divided into manageable chunks. In this way the students may follow a logical flow of ideas from one paragraph to another. According to Austin and Ault (1996, p.49), "Paragraphs are reasonably short, which give the reader an opportunity to breath before going on to the next idea".

Headings: - Headings prove a superior visual impact by breaking up the continuous text. The student can glance at the headings and sub-headings and get a good preview of what is to come. According to Austin and Ault (1996, p.123), "Headings and sub-headings also make it easier to use the text for reface and review".

Graphics Illustrations: - Graphs are designed to provide an immediate understanding of the relationship between figures and thus help trainees grasp the meaning of statistics. Graphs are simplified to considerable degree by displaying only the eventual data required, particularly when the relationship between figures and quantities is shown. Commonly used graphs are line graphs, bar graphs, pie graphs and pictorial graphs to explain the phenomena.

A wide variety of material has developed to provide graphic images for diverse purpose. This includes graphic charts, diagrams, cartoons, posters and maps. Graphics used in study guides are universally utilized as media. The use of graphic media with the message design to improve educational matters relating to every day life (Cheema, 2005).

Lay Out of the Unit: - After the title cover, each unit has a full title page with the writer's name. A reverse title page includes copyright and data of publication, unit objectives, content, self-assessment questions, summaries, activities, self-assessment questions and bibliography.

Hartley and Burnhill (1997, pp.94-95) views that layout contains the following elements:

- Define goals and desire terminal behaviour
- Plan strategy and define materials
- Teaching strategy and methods
- Evaluation and recycling

Aims of this Study

The present study on a comparison of study guides in current use will provide information to academicians, writers, course coordinators and editors, to make modifications in the future.

Findings will help the academicians / writers course coordinators and editors to make the study guide more interactive, affective and communicative.

The better quality of study guide will retain attention and motivation for students and can lead to better performance by tutors in improvement. So the comparison of study guide will provide feedback in turn for the improvement of study guides at AIOU and at other distance education universities around the world.

The aims of this study are to explore the development process of writing study guides at Allama Iqbal Open University and United Kingdom Open University; to compare the important aspects of writing study guides at UKOU from developed countries and AIOU from developing countries, and to explain the various patterns of writing study guides at UKOU and at AIOU.

2. METHODS :

The study was descriptive i.e. survey type. Population of the personnel and students involved are given briefly. In case of academicians / writers, 26 population from UKOU and 21 population from AIOU (total population was taken as sample i.e. 100% sampling). The course coordinators 26 as population from UKOU while 21 from AIOU (total population was taken as sample i.e. 100% sampling). The editors 11 from UKOU and 07 from AIOU (total population was taken as sample i.e. 100% sampling). Tutors i.e. 41 out of 59 (70 %) of UKOU of London region and 33 out of 47 (70%) tutors of AIOU of Lahore region were taken as random sampling. 105 out of 140 students of London region such as 75 % and 112 out of 150 students of AIOU of Lahore region i.e. 75 % were taken as random sampling.

3. RESULTS :

On the basis of results and findings of the study, the following 15 main points are reported as noteworthy ;

1. Most of the respondents of UKOU and AIOU agreed that study guides are effective media of distance education at the open universities.
2. Most of the respondents of UKOU agreed while some of the respondents AIOU disagreed as study guides are standardized according to the modern age.
3. Most of the respondents at UKOU agreed while some of the respondents at AIOU disagreed that study guides contain sufficient illustrations and examples.
4. Most of the Respondents at UKOU agreed while some of the respondents of the AIOU disagreed that activities in the corresponding unit motivate the students towards interaction.
5. Most of the Respondents at UKOU agreed, and some respondents at AIOU disagreed, that language of the study guide should be at the mental pace of the student.

6. Majority of the respondents of AIOU and UKOU disagreed that text of study guides is sufficient for sound preparation of examination.

7. Most of the respondents at UKOU and AIOU disagreed that bibliography for course are current and extensive.

8. Most of the respondents at UKOU and AIOU agreed that each unit gives a comprehensive picture of the unit

9. Some of the respondents of UKOU agreed while some of the respondents at AIOU disagreed that self assessment question of Study guide enable the student to check mastery objectives.

10. Most of the respondents agreed that text of study guides is up to date.

11. Most of the respondents of UKOU and AIOU agreed that objectives of each unit act as a road map for a unit.

12. Most of the respondents of AIOU and UKOU agreed that editor makes sure that document is clear, accurate, and cohesive.

13. Most of the respondents of UKOU and AIOU agreed that repetition of content may eliminate during editing.

14. Most of the respondents of UKOU and AIOU disagreed that study guides develop interest in learning.

15. Most of the respondents at UKOU and AIOU agreed that used of multimedia support such that audio / video cassette and computer disc may be provided along with study material.

4. CONCLUSIONS :

The following 10 recommendations are concluded from this study on writing guides in distance education universities.

1. Material of study guides may be made free from typographical errors and difficult words may not be used.

2. Multimedia support such as Audio and Video cassette and computer disc may be provided along with study material.

3. References for units of study guides may be extensive and up to date
4. Study guides may be enriched with sufficient illustration and examples.
5. Language of the study guide may be make more simple and easy.
6. Activities in the corresponding unit may write as that it direct interact the student.
7. The text of the study guide may prepared in detail for the sound preparation of examination
8. There is need of current and extensive bibliography for detailed study at AIOU.
9. Revision of study guide at AIOU is necessary in the light of new trend in the dimension of distance education.
10. Repetition of content may be eliminated during editing.

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