

# Evaluation as Enhancement: A Review of Continuous Assessment Strategies in Open and Distance Learning

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The aim of this study is to aware the ODL learners for self-directed learning habits and prepare to face the continuous assessment process during the study. The purpose of this paper is also timely completion and submission of work by the learner and remove the errors according to tutor's feedback. Through this study efforts are to introduce the learner about dynamic feature of open and distance learning (ODL) where teacher and learner are at distance, so feedback of tutor is the only major communicating tool between the teacher and learner. By using this tool learner can improve and upgrade their knowledge level to complete the programme successfully.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The descriptive exploratory research method was used to develop this research paper. The study was carried out with the help of literature review and different secondary data in the form of books on the related topic, research papers, articles, and various documents available online or offline. Content of the above resources which were limited to a few institutions and also few studies on importance of continuous assessment and importance of its appropriate framework were reviewed findings drawn and recommendations made.

**Findings:** It was found that continuous assessment supports, contributes and prepare the learners for final examinations. It provides the freedom to learner for best learning practices during the academic session. Tutor's feedback and reflection of grades in grade cards is an important part of the TL process. Learners' satisfaction and good results give the credibility to ODL system. Continuous assessment framework adopted by institutions and submission of work by learner and timely feedback on it by the tutors improve the students' academic achievement(s).

**Originality/Value:** The paper is original work and based on available secondary data. This paper may help ODL institutions how to improve success rate of learners and establish its credibility among target group.

**Paper Type:** Review of Literature

**KEYWORDS:** Open and Distance Learning | Continuous Assessment | Assessment Strategies | Evaluation | Assignments

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## Introduction

Open and Distance Learning is founded on a wide range of teaching-learning processes and strategies to maintain flexible and learners' friendly instructional and delivery approaches. ODL gives multiple opportunities to all for enhancing knowledge, developing skills, and upgrading qualifications for better career avenues. In the case of assessment too, varied tasks are assigned and different assessment tools are used to facilitate intended learning. This process starts with the reading of Self-instructional/learning materials (SLM or SIM) which are the main component for the TL process through distance mode. SLM may be in multiple forms like-print, e-resource (digital), audio, video, and multimedia-based resources. In these self-learning resources different activities, self-assessment questions (SAQs), Check Your Progress (CYP), examples and assignments are available which are attended by the learners to check their knowledge through a self-assessment process. Self-assessment is an important aspect of TL through distance as learners are mostly dependent on self-study and immediate feedback boosts their confidence and they get a chance to rectify their mistakes and prepare for the future. According to Andrade, et al, (2009), "self-assessment is a valuable learning tool for learners to identify their skill gaps, track their progress, revise their work, set a realistic goal, and see where to focus during learning. Self-assessment through continuous assessment (CA) strategies through SAQs, CYP, and other tools also help the learners with assignment writing and preparation for TEE. According to Mc Donald (2007) self-assessment is a key element for achievement in subject-related standard criteria.

Besides, these graded assignments (Tutor Marked Assignments-TMA) have to be completed and submitted within the allotted period. The tutor's feedback on the assignments plays an important role in assessing the knowledge and understanding gained by the learners. TMA also helps learners in preparation for the final examination. In the teaching-learning process, assignments are a medium of communication between teachers and learners. According to Kaul (1988), feedback or tutor comments are important for learners; through this learners can improve their knowledge. In ODL continuous assessment is an integral part. The process of CA helps the learners to upgrade the learning status with the help of self-assessment questions (SAQs), Check in Progress activities, and examples; these help the learners for assignments, writing, and preparation for TEE. The purpose of inserting these activities in SLM is learner's knowledge improvement and confidently face the exams for a favorable result in the committed period. According

to Mc Donald (2007) self-assessment is a key element for achievement in subject-related standard criteria. Through self-assessment understanding between learner and learning material, Self-assessment is a testing process of the learner's skill, evaluation by own may be good or bad.

In the TL process grades are provided by the tutor during the process of CA and later these grades are added to the grade card for preparation of the final result. In summative assessment, learners face the final examination and exam conducted at the end of the session for which session learner enrolled. In evaluation, assessment of overall knowledge of the learner and testing of learning outcomes are done and the final result is declared.

## Review of Literature

### Assessment Practices in ODL

Assessment and learning both have a strong and meaningful relationship with each other. The Third International Conference on 'Assessment for Learning' in Dunedin, New Zealand (2009) defined it as "every day practices for learning by the students, teacher, and peers, it seeks and responds for information sharing and is busy in dialogues, demonstration and observation and it enhances cognitive learning. According to Rowntree (1987), "If we wish to discover the truth about an educational system, we must look into its assessment procedure". Sometimes there is a need to search for a new solution for teaching and assessing the learners and requirements to develop an e-learning system because the platform for teaching-learning should be convenient and comfortable for both teacher and learner. So information technology plays an important role at present time for best TL practices. Using multiple options for self-evaluation and continuous assessment (technology-based) are always demanded by the users either faculty or learner. Assessment is an integral part of educational planning, preparation, and delivery (Cotton, 1995) therefore different methods, strategies, and processes are implemented to test the students' knowledge and overall performance during the session. The ODL institutions keep adjusting their curricular, instructional practices, SLMs from time to time focusing on self-study, self-assessment, observation, and feedback by the teacher. Learners adjust their learning strategies and performance goals accordingly. According to Cotton (1995), good assessment is the best way to test, improve and demonstrate knowledge. In the Theory of Assessment, pp 24, he classifies the assessment in three categories as reflected in Figure 1.

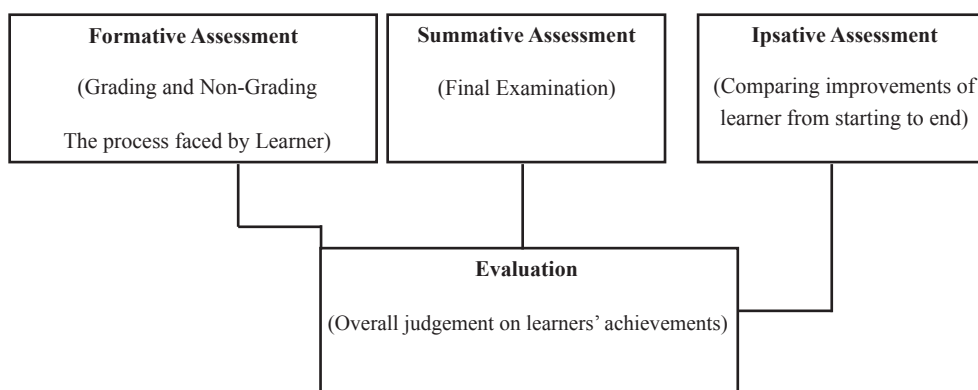


Fig. 1: Three categories of Assessment (Cotton, 1995)

## Continuous Assessment

Accordingly to Crooks (1988), continuous assessment consolidates learning by encouraging active learning strategies. Corrective feedback helps students to monitor their own progress and to develop a self-evaluation skill which culminates in increasing performance.

In the ODL system, CA is a special need to assess the learners as distance learners do not enjoy the same opportunities as face-to-face learners to demonstrate their learning. They have less chance in which they can diagnose their errors and mistakes. Therefore it becomes very essential to maximize opportunities for self-assessment and inbuilt simulated feedback mechanisms for meaningful learning. The continuous assessment mechanism in the ODL system involves both the grading and non-grading assessing process as shown in Figure 2.

### Continuous Assessment

1. **Non-grading** -Activities, Exercises etc.  
(Attended by learners)
2. **Grading** - Assignments are given by the tutor  
(Timely submitted by the learners)

Fig. 2: Continuous Assessment Mechanism

In this context, SLM plays a crucial role because best practices for CA depend on study material provided or arranged for the learners by the institutions. Learners attempt the SAQs, CYPQs, different activities, and exercises (non-credit base) and submit assignments timely (credit base) for their knowledge test and preparation for the Term End Examinations.

### Evaluation in ODL

In evaluation, it includes overall knowledge testing and learning outcome assessment and according to that grading and ranking is provided to the learners by the institution. It takes place only at the end of a learning activity, therefore called summative assessment as well which means conduction of formal of term-end examinations. According to Kizlik, B. (2012), "summative assessment is used primarily to make decisions for grading or determine readiness for progression. Typically summative assessment occurs at the end of an educational activity and is designed to judge the learner's overall performance".

### Assessment Strategies of Selected ODL Institutions

#### 1. Open University Hong Kong (OUHK)

Open University Hong Kong offers academic programmes in multiple disciplines and at different levels. University adopts a credit system for each programme. Credit transfer system for learners is a unique feature in the university that opens the doors for flexible learning and gives a chance to shift from one discipline to another. Assessment and evaluation mechanisms cover both, the

continuous assessment and final examination. Marking by the tutor is tutor mark assignment (TMA) and computer mark assignment (CMA). For continuous assessment purposes, OUHK maintains the progress information of learners on Form E-SA. The E-SA form is specifically prepared for mentioning the learner's achievements and feedback during the continuous assessment. Tutor records the performance/grading details of learners in this form and submits this filled feedback Form(E-SA) to the Registrar for preparing the final exam's result. In case a learner has doubts on scoring given by the tutor on form E-SA then the learner can write directly to the Registrar before 07 days of examination. Students will have to obtain satisfactory grades in both the assignment and examination to complete the programme (Todd et. al, 2000).

#### 2. Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU)

STOU, Thailand set up in 1994 received the Institute Award of Excellence from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and International Council of Distance Education (ICDE). In the beginning, there were fewer opportunities for distance learners in higher education but after a few years, STOU started programmes in distance mode. University's instructional system is run through in the form of radio and television broadcasting, multimedia, audio/videotapes, face-to-face tutorial, library facilities, and print materials. In STOU, for assessment and evaluation for the programme of bachelor degree student course blocks are divided into two types: theory courses and practical courses. The learners at the graduate level are assessed by assessment tools such as assignments, end-of-course exams, dissertations, and presentations about vocational experiences. For the practical courses, grading is based on the makeup and requirements of each course. At the undergraduate level written exams have a weight of 80% and assessment technique is used according to specific course requirements. For the practical courses, grading is based on the requirements of each course and the criteria decided by the institution.

STOU calculates only those courses that the student completes with level H or S grades. An H grade has a value of 4.00 per course while an S grade has a value of 2.30 per course.

For the Master Degree programme University evaluates students from the: Assigned work, Semester Examinations, Thesis examination for comprehensive and independent study, and Graduate Professional workshop (Prudtikal, 2000).

#### 3. The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL)

In Sri Lanka, distance education was introduced in 1972. The OUSL is the only open and distance mode University to offer the programmes from certificate level to doctoral level. Students' performance and progress are assessed by a specified number of assignments. After the checking and grading, these assignments are returned back to the students. Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs) are mainly on the written work, project type assignments and on experiments or research work. Computer Marked Assignments (CMA) on work done through online mode and on that work done marking by the computer. Tutor also marks assignments

called End-of-Module (EMAs) but in this work done by the student is a long piece of work done or can say submission of all work done which is assigned by the teacher from time to time. Learners attend/attempt all these in continuous assessment and with minimum eligibility 35% in continuous assessment and for science subject 40% to fulfill the criteria to attend the Term End Examination. In case students are unable to qualify the exams in a committed period for a dedicated course or programme then re-register for that particular programme and these students are called repeat students. Those students who are eligible but do not clear the final exams sit in the exams again. The process of assessment and Evaluation followed for the learner in OUSL as shown in Figure 3.

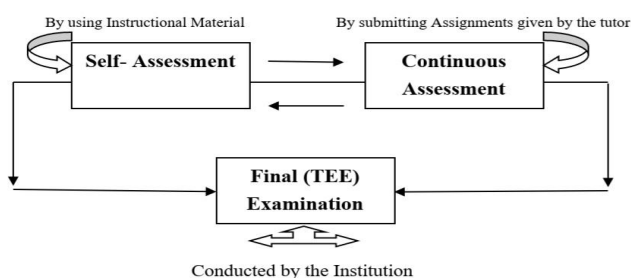


Fig. 3: Assessment and Evaluation System in OUSL

#### 4. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)

IGNOU was established in 1985, offering programmes in multiple disciplines for the learners at higher education level through ODL and Online mode at national and international level. IGNOU is also called by name of "The People's University". It provides instructional material for learners in various forms like print material, digital form material by e-gyankosh, e-library, radio and T.V. channel (GyanVani and Gyan Darshan) for live educational programmes, interactive radio counseling (IRC), regional services division sessions (RSD) programme by the faculty at multiples disciplines and courses. These help learners in clearing their doubts and aware/update them from coming academic activities during a particular academic session. IGNOU follows a three-tier system of evaluation: (a) self-assessment activity in the form of self-assessment questions (SAQs) and unit end questions/terminal questions (TQs) built-in along with the self-instructional course materials, (b) assignments, and (c) term-end examination.

In formative/continuous assessment it includes self-assessment (non-graded) and own written assignments (grading based) submission by the learners before the term-end examination (TEE) then learners are eligible to sit in the exams. TEE is conducted twice in a year, in the month of June and December. The weightage of these assignments in overall assessment grades ranges between 25% to 30% while the contribution of the written exams is 70 to 75%. TMA containing tutor's feedback/comments and grades/marks contribute in the preparation of final results which are done after TEE summative assessment).

#### 5. Anadolu University

Anadolu University was established in 1982 in Turkey. It is the only distance mode university for learners at a higher education level. Anadolu University has made considerable contributions to the Turkish Education System. Today due to the distance mode university and students enrolled at a large scale in all level's programmes and for various disciplines so it is considered among one of the 10 mega universities of the world (Daniel, 1998). AU provides instructional material in various forms like print material, T.V. programmes, recorded video cassettes, academic tutoring systems, and computer-assisted teaching. Learner's assessment is done by multiple-choice (MCQs) tests in the mid-term and final term. Weights for these tests are 30% and 70% respectively. An average score of 50% is required to "pass" a course. The students who failed have another chance to recover this 50% score again, after going through the formative and summative assessment.

Table 1: Outcomes of Selected ODL Institution's Assessment Strategies

Selected Open Universities & Processed Evaluation Procedure for ODL learner				
↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
<i>OUHK</i>	TMA's Tutor Mark Assignments	CMA's Computer Mark Assignmentst	E-SAs Evaluation of Student Achievements	TEE & FG (Final Grade Card)
<i>STOU</i>	Score Based	S Score Passing Score 2.30	H Score High Score 4.00	TEE & FG (Final Grade Card)
<i>OUSL</i>	TMA's Tutor Mark Assignments	CMA's Computer Mark Assignments	EMAs End of Module Assignments (Long piece of work)	TEE & FG (Final Grade Card)
<i>IGNOU</i>	SA Self-Assessment (Through self learning material)	CA Continuous Assessment (Self-assessment & assignments given by the tutor)	FA Formative Assessment (Evaluation of student work)	TEE & FG (Final Grade Card)
<i>AU</i>	MCHTs Multiple Choice Tests	CMA Computer Mark Assignments	Grading System	TEE & FG (Final Grade Card)

**Table 2: Assessment Strategies in Selected Studies**

<b>Zi Yan (2016)</b>	<p>The research was conducted at the Hong Kong Institute of Education to examine the psychometric properties of a newly developed self-assessment practice scale. Different kinds of scales were used for assessing the knowledge of learners in a continuous process. The study revealed that Psychometric properties fulfill the criteria of good practices of self-assessment and self-assessment encourages the learners for self-directed learning. It is also indicated in the study that self-assessment practices should be understood from two perspectives; first, it is self-directed activities and asking questions from ourselves and second is feedback from other sources. Studies</p>
<b>Karadag, N. et al (2020)</b>	<p>This study is based on an assessment and evaluation system opted by 11 mega open universities. Multiple assessment and evaluation tools were used by these institutions to determine the achievements level of learners. It was found in the study that in the levels of achievements there were variations and for the same tasks, there were differences in ranking. Because the chosen assessment tools were different in universities and designed according to discipline, subjects, and levels. In some disciplines, the assessment was a laboratory-based test and in some others disciplines, it was an activities-based test or assignment-based. There were different kinds of tools for assessment; however, the most frequently applied tool for assessment was multiple-choice tests (MCQs). The study also revealed that the strength of learners and number of assessors also affects the determining factor for choosing multiple choices of assessment tools for the learners because multiple disciplines, number of students, and assessors may affect the assessment process, it is time taking process. By using appropriate and valid tools for assessment of learners knowledge can give a fair result. Because these causes may vary the performance level and result of learners in ODL. ODL institutions require appropriate and valid assessing tools, methods, and techniques to assess the knowledge of learners for accurate results.</p>
<b>Navaratna, W.C. et al. (2013)</b>	<p>The study was conducted at the Open University of Sri Lanka for Under Graduate learners by choosing some specific courses. This study mentioned the importance of the association of continuous assessment marks (CAMs) with final examination marks (FEMs) for achieving good marks and grades in final results by the distance learners. It was found in the study that learners were not serious about continuous assessment (CA). If learners attended and submitted assignments timely then they are eligible to sit in the exams. Sometimes learners are eligible for final exams but do not sit in the final examination. In OUSL Continuous assessment marks ratio is 40% in formative assessment and 60% in summative assessment, so learners should work hard for final exams for better results. The study also presents that if learners are aware of all course activities and perform well from the beginning of the session then the association of both, CAMs and FEMs can give better results to learners and they can complete the programme in a committed period.</p>
<b>Lekamge, D. et al., (2015)</b>	<p>The study was conducted at OUSL with a sample of 290 students of the PG Diploma in Education Programme and teachers representing four regional and two study centers with the purpose of knowing the reasons why distance learners were not serious about continuous assessment? What problems did they face? And what the short-comings were? The study revealed that in the process of continuous assessment learners face problems related to assignments as assignment questions are sometimes not set according to the self-instructional material. Further, the students were also found slow towards submission of assignments and assignment submission processes and evaluation were also not up to the mark. Tutor's comments on the assignments were not clear therefore improvement in learners' knowledge may be slow. While, some language mistakes and inadequate information were seen in answer sheets checked by the assessors. Study reflects that some experiment based research should be conducted on some specific course to minimize the problems related to assignment submission, handling and evaluation. Such efforts shall help in building an effective mechanism to assess students leaning and timely feedback; besides, a healthy continuous assessment system and evaluation procedure gives positive direction to the distance learners.</p>

<p><b>Chaudhary, S. &amp; Dey, N. (2013)</b></p>	<p>In this study, three case studies have been conducted for various disciplines at the level of Bachelor and Master Degree Programmes. Distance learners raised the issues related to course transactions being improper during the session, lack of information regarding academic activities, framing of questions in assignments not being proper and feedback given by the tutor on assignments in the form of grading and comments were not clear and proper. It has been noted in the study that the final result of distance learners affected by these causes and learners were not satisfied. So there is a necessity to improve the whole process related to these issues. The study suggested the following strategies for improvement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Course transactions must be timely.</li> <li>2. Assessment of assignments should be done by subject experts.</li> <li>3. Information for academic activities, workshops, assignments and, exams should be timely.</li> <li>4. Requirements are to design the assignments questions appropriately according to the course or syllabus.</li> <li>5. Tutor comments should be proper on assignments as feedback to justify the grades or ranking.</li> </ol> <p>So to achieve the purpose of assessment there is a need for good practices and strategies in ODL. Continuous assessment and evaluation systems should be valid and reliable. Careful observation of all aspects of students' assessment can help to organize it constructively.</p>
<p><b>Ramon-Munoz, R. (2014)</b></p>	<p>The study presents that in Spanish universities assessment has standard practice since the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This case study was conducted at the University of Barcelona and done especially for one subject World Economic History and conducted to see the effect of continuous assessment on it. Total 4419 students were taken as a sample for the period of 2003 to 2013. After going through practical activities and continuous assessment, the findings of the study reflect that continuous assessment has a positive effect on the academic performance of learners by creating good awareness during the learning process and going through continuous assessment process. Continuous assessment grade contributing to final exam marks. The study recommends that there is a requirement of improvement in the learning activities and improvement in the marks of tests given by the learner and also in exercises and activities. So learners should attend all these seriously and their results can be better.</p>
<p><b>Tripathi, P. &amp; Fozdar, B. I. (2007)</b></p>	<p>The study was conducted at IGNOU in India for the graduate level students. The purpose of this study was to investigate learners' perceptions about the use of continuous assessment in the Bachelor Degree Programme of IGNOU. Results of the study revealed that the majority of learners were in favor of continuous assessment because it assists and helps the learners for knowledge improvement and also prepares for the final examinations. It was found in the study that learners strongly believe in the different continuous assessment formats and they preferred short and objective type questions. Students reported that tutor's feedback on the assignment was not received timely. They also reported delays in reflections of assignment grades/marks on grade cards and this led to the late announcement or delay in declaration of final results.</p>
<p><b>Adela, M. (2014)</b></p>	<p>This research was conducted in Ethiopia and the sample was 160 students from two private universities- St. Mary's University and Unity University and 03 Government Universities (Bahr University, Haramaya University and Jimma University). The sample was collected from multi-level like at University level, Department level, from senior to junior level staff and year wise also. It was found in the study that in formative evaluation there was repeatedly narrative feedback used. The assessor/ invigilator/visitor used some specific comments or statements to define the feedback of learners because sometimes learners arranged written assignments from the market on payment bases. Learners were not serious about the study and did not gain knowledge during the learning process. The invigilator noted that learners were cheating and some uncomfortable environment was created at the exam centers and these disturbances delayed the assessment and evaluation process. Due to this result was not clear and not at the right time and some errors also were there as a result. If learners work hard and submit the assignment timely, then in the TL process, good assessment and evaluation practice improves the performance and quality work done by distance learners. In the summative assessment of learner, examiners, center coordinators, invigilators and scorers should give the marks or grade honestly and genuinely. Conversion of all these facilities in online mode or in e-learning form as per requirement from time to time can improve the transparency for assessment and evaluation practices.</p>
<p><b>Day, I. N. et al. (2018)</b></p>	<p>This study was conducted in Leiden, Netherland to tell the learning abilities and practices of learners in continuous assessment and other activities. The study reported that characteristics of learners vary because their interest in learning is the main factor of the study. There were equal opportunities for all learners but still, the result was different from each other. Student's characteristics also include motivation, previous achievements, dedication, individual efforts, and many more factors work on it and all these fulfill the relationship between student's academic achievements and with characteristic. Student characteristics include motivational constructs, previous achievements, and more demographic information.</p>



<b>Van Zyl, C. et al (2021)</b>	<p>This research was conducted on the implementation of continuous assessment to make it more effective towards academic performance and the learning process. Findings of the study suggested that before starting CA and implementing of it, learners should be aware of CA framework during his/her study.</p> <p>The study also revealed that the implementation of CA framework for learners should be implemented carefully because its advantages and disadvantages may be possible. In a CA framework students practiced and are assessed regularly and this can help the students to identify their errors or mistakes at the initial level with minimum risk. By considering all these abilities of learners in CA, these can fill the learning gap quickly. If learners' overall performance is assessed by the tutor appropriately and timely then this whole process of the CA system for implementation as a CA framework will fulfill its advantages. Except this if CA framework implementation is not proper for learners and they are not aware of it and not attended timely, then ignorance in CA process may create the problems not for the learners only, it may also put the institution and tutors in trouble. Assessment of learners during learning activities and overall monitoring of learners if not done properly then this will be considered as disadvantages in implementation of CA framework.</p> <p>In the CA framework, academic departments can contribute for more effective learning. This framework increases the success rates and retention rates in the teaching-learning process. Even though this is a time-consuming exercise it is still required for the student.</p>
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**Table 3: Outcomes of Selected Studies Assessment Strategies**

Year of Study	Author	Study On	Result/Outcomes
2016	Zi Yan	The Self-Assessment Practices of Hong Kong Secondary Students: Findings with a New Instrument	Positive result and useful for learner
2020	Karadag, N. et al	Assessment and Evaluation in Mega Universities	Recommended that must use the appropriate tool to assess the knowledge of learner discipline wise for accurate result
2013	Navaratna, W.C. et al.	A Study on the Effectiveness of Continuous Assessment as a Learning Tool	Positive and better result after gone through continuous assessment process, recommended that familiarization of learner with CA
2015	Lekamge, D. et al	Effectiveness of New Innovations Introduced to the Continuous Assessment Mechanism of the Postgraduate Diploma in Education Programme	Learner not satisfied with assignments questions and not proper marking and comment by tutor
2013	Chaudhary, S. & Dey, N.	Assessment in Distance and Open Learning System (ODL): A Challenge	Lacking informations and academic activities, during the session. Recommended that assignment checking must be through subject expert
2014	Ramon Ramon-Munoz	The Evaluation of Learning: a case study on continuous assessment and academic achievement	CA has positive effect on learner's academic performance, contribution of it improve the result of learner
2007	Tripathi, P. & Fozdar, B. I	Learner Perceptions of Continuous Assessment in the Bachelor Degree Programme of IGNOU	Timely tutors feedback contribute to prepare the grade card/final result
2014	Adela, M.	Challenges and Implementation of Measurement, Continuous Assessment and Evaluation in Open and Distance Learning in Ethiopia	Assessor/ invigilator comment are valuable, recommended appropriate feedback and comment on submitted work, learner must gone through true work practices
2018	Day, I. N. et a.	Explaining individual student success using continuous assessment types and student characteristics	Learner's individual efforts and interest encourage for best learning practices
2021	Van Zyl, C. et al	Implementing Continuous Assessment in an Academic Programme for More Effective Learning	Recommended for implementation of CA frame work and familiarization of learner with CA

## Objectives

- To discuss the role and importance of assessment in ODL
- To describe assessment strategies of selected open universities
- To illustrate the benefits of continuous assessment for distance learners
- To identify gaps and suggest measures to address them efficiently

## Methodology

The present paper primarily focuses on strategies of continuous assessment adopted by selected ODL institutions and how distance learners benefited from these. The paper aims also to highlight the different aspects and importance of assessment and evaluation and tell about the grading and ranking structure of some specific ODL institutions. The descriptive exploratory research method was used to develop this research paper. The study was carried out with the help of literature review and different secondary data in the form of books on the related topic, research papers, articles, and various documents available online or offline were used. Content of the above resources which were limited to a few institutions was reviewed and findings were drawn and recommendations were made.

## Findings and Discussion

After going through the study, it has been found that continuous assessment (CA) supports, contributes and prepares the learners for final examinations (Van Zyl, C. et al, 2021). It provides the freedom to learners for designing their assessment plan during the session. CA framework, assessment can also form part of the learning system (Bjaelde & Lindberg 2018, 53pp) as the tutor's feedback and reflection of grades in grade cards is an important part of the TL process. In this system, it is the learner's responsibility to submit their own written assignments timely and it is also expected of the tutor that grades or marks given to the student are justified as fairness in the assessment speaks about the objectivity of assessment therefore those should not be subjective judgment (UNESCO, 2006). If a learner is eligible to sit in final exams then he or she must face the final examination. Learners' satisfaction and good results give an expansion to the ODL system and a robust, and an objective CA can help to improve students' academic achievement (Claveria, 2009, 2011, and Martinez et al, 2009). Therefore, to achieve the real purpose of assessment, there is a need for good practices and strategies in ODL. Continuous assessment and evaluation systems should be valid and reliable. Fairness in the assessment speaks about the objectivity of assessment and should not be subjective judgment (UNESCO, 2006). Careful observation of all aspects of students' assessment

can help to organize it constructively. After going through the study based on the reviewed literature, researchers feel that CA which includes self-assessment and formative assessment is an essential part of best learning practices.

Studies emphasized that the CA process is a compulsory task and important for the distance learner therefore the necessities of effective and reliable CA mechanism and strategies fulfill the requirements of best teaching-learning practices. During the CA process learners are mostly busy and engaged with the study. In ODL the use of instructional materials which are available for the learners in various forms like e-book, audio/video cassettes, print material etc. can be used for the study. In the process of self-assessment learners attend the activities, exercises and go through examples in the Check Your Progress section. These kinds of practices enhance and improve the knowledge of learners and prepare them for writing the assignments which are seen as major knowledge testing and communicating tool between the teacher and learner. Timely submitted assignments give benefits to the learner and prepare them for the final examinations. Timely submission of assignments by the learners helps and supports the successful completion of programmes in a committed period and this kind of practice definitely increases the success rate of learners at institutional level. In the present scenario, technologies are playing an important role not only in the TL process but and the summative evaluation and evaluation of assignments and different learning tasks as well. Therefore using good tools for assessing the knowledge of learners by the assessor or tutor may produce genuine and true results which is a must for learners' satisfaction.

In ODL, the learning abilities of every learner differ from each other and learning style, way of understanding, and pace and place is not the same among them (McKenzie & Schweitzer (2001). Thus, in the continuous assessment, the characteristic of students like self-regulation skills, ignorance about the CA process, individual learning environment, and their socio-economic and geographical limitations may be the causes for their low interest and motivation towards self and formative assessment. Therefore it is a big challenge in ODL to assess and evaluate all in an equal manner for true and real results. However, learner's satisfaction and completion of the programme remains the first priority of the distance education institutions by following all rules and regulations decided by the institutions from time to time.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Assessment of learners' achievements helps immensely in encouraging them to adopt deep learning strategies (Scouller, 1998; Gibbs 1999), therefore the process of continuous assessment and related strategies should start from the beginning of any academic session. So that learners get familiar with the course transaction, various academic activities and assessment and evaluation plan. Ignorance of





the CA process by the learner in ODL can affect the result of the learner. Researchers feel that formative assessment is an essential part for distance learners to assess their knowledge gained, so learners must go through the CA process to test their knowledge from time to time. In the CA process performance checking of learners and monitoring is a must. In the teaching- learning tutor's feedback is valuable for the learners because it removes the errors of the learner during the study. This plays an important role in ODL. In ODL, the assignment is a communicating tool between learner and teacher that contributes and helps learners for preparation of final exams. There is also a necessity to adjust the gaps highlighted in this study to make the ODL system more dynamic, smooth, transparent and interesting for all stakeholders and most importantly the distance learners. Therefore, based on the findings of the present study following suggestions are made:

- In ODL after enrolling in a programme, learners must be aware of all course activities from beginning to end.
- In an enrolled programme after receiving the instructional material (SLM) either in print form or in e-form, learners should go through the learning material very well.
- It is the learner's responsibility to submit their written assignment timely.
- Tutors need to evaluate the assignments timely. Feedback given by the tutor should be clear and justified either in the form of comments or grading with proper justification for the learner satisfaction.
- Feedback given by the examiner, visitor, and invigilator is valuable so they should avoid the narrative feedback (improper statements and inappropriate language) because due to this exams maybe stop, re-conduct and result may be delayed.
- Users either at teacher level or at institution level must be aware and familiar with the emerging technologies or e-assessment tools for using multiple assessment tools.
- In ODL, it is the institution's responsibility to facilitate the learners for all the facilities which are required during the course in good manners till completion of the programme.
- At the exam center, learners should maintain the discipline and follow all rules and regulations accordingly.
- Assignments, continuous assessment and evaluation in ODL are integral parts. Learning practices, knowledge-improving activities, and efforts for achieving the best result may be merged seamlessly into the overall learning mechanism.

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## Annexure 15.2.7

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### Reviewers Memorandum



**Reviewer's Comment 1:** The article highlights the importance of continuous assessment for distance learning. The literature review summarizes the finer points of the related research, particularly for ODL and continuous assessment. Self-directed learning is the most critical factor in achieving the learning outcome of the various academic courses. The importance of tutor engagement importance is also highlighted. Overall the research paper addresses the research objective in a very lucid manner. The paper has significant practical implications. The paper cites the five universities' distance learning program assessment procedures and the importance of creating strategies.

**Reviewer's Comment 2:** The paper is based on an exciting theme. The paper reviews the various assessment criteria of different ODLs and the overall strategies used by different Universities. Through the literature review, the paper reflects how self-directed learning prepares students for the final examination. The comments on the fair evaluation of tutors are considered necessary by almost all universities.

**Reviewer's Comment 3:** The paper is descriptive. The learning and assessment strategies of 5 Universities are evaluated in the paper. The overall audio-video, digital and reading material and the timely submission of summative assessments are very well related to student engagement.



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**Conflict of Interest:** Author of a Paper had no conflict neither financially nor academically.

### Editorial Excerpt



The article has 1% of plagiarism, which is the accepted percentage per the journal's norms and standards for publication. As per the editorial board's observations and blind reviewers' remarks, the paper had some minor revisions, which were communicated on a timely basis to the author (Pravesh and Ali), and accordingly, all the corrections were incorporated as and when directed and required to do so. The comments related to this manuscript are based on the overall theme of Open Distance learning, self-directed learning and continuous evaluation for the article "**Evaluation as Enhancement: A Review of Continuous Assessment Strategies in Open and Distance Learning**". The present research article discusses Continuous evaluation and self-directed learning for ODL programs as a cohesive student engagement. After comprehensive reviews and the editorial board's remarks, the manuscript has been categorized and decided to publish under the "**Review of Literature**" category.

### Acknowledgement



The acknowledgement section is an essential part of all academic research papers. It provides appropriate recognition to all contributors for their hard work and effort taken while writing a paper. The data presented and analyzed in this paper by authors (Pravesh and Ali) were collected first headedly, and wherever it has been taken the proper acknowledgment and endorsement depicts. The authors are highly indebted to others who facilitated accomplishing the research. Last but not least, endorse all reviewers and editors of GJEIS in publishing in the present issue.

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