

CHAPTER FOUR

LEARNER-CENTRED TEACHING AT THE BEGINNING OF A LESSON

Hooks

A hook is a learning activity at the beginning of a lesson. It captures students' interests. It hints on what students are about to learn, and it connects what they are about to learn to what they already know.

****Technique #10 KWL Chart**

KWL stands for Know, Want to Know, Learned. It is a good way to help students access what they know about a topic, think of questions about a topic, and keep track of what they have learned. Teachers introduce a topic. Students list what they know about it. Then they generate questions about the topic. Finally, students read or listen to the teacher to answer questions and summarize what they learned.

K	W	L

****Technique #11 Real-World Problems**

This is about linking the lesson with real-life situations. A teacher may ask the students to solve a problem that connects with the lesson objectives before teaching the topic of the day. For instance, before teaching *parallelogram* a mathematics teacher may ask the students the following question: “Anna, Muhammad, Asha, and Ibrahim live at the four corners of an apartment building. Anna lives 50 meters away from Asha. If each pair of opposite sides of the apartment is parallel, how far apart do you think Muhammad and Ibrahim might live from each other?”

****Technique #12 Tell a Story**

A short but engaging story that relates directly to the main purpose of the lesson is a good way to get students thinking about the topic. It can be particularly useful if the story comes from the teacher's life and shows that s/he has a sense of humor or that s/he, like the students, sometimes makes mistakes but s/he has learned from them. For example, a geography teacher might tell a story about how she got lost

because she did not have a compass, and then she could begin teaching about how students use this important tool for determining direction.

Technique #13 Quick Write

This is a short writing prompt that can help tap into students' prior knowledge that is directly related to the topic for the day. For example, the first lesson of a unit on the earth could begin with this Quick Write prompt: "Has the earth always looked the way it does today? If not, how has it changed? What changed it?"

Technique #14 Video or Audio Clip

A teacher may use a video or audio clip connected to the lesson objective to attract student attention, generate interest and help teach the lesson. For instance, a chemistry lesson could be enriched with a video that shows what happens when sodium reacts with water.

Technique #15 Social Barometer

A teacher puts on the board a statement to which the students strongly agree, strongly disagree, or place somewhere in between. Students form a 'barometer' in the room with their bodies by making one side of the room the 'strongly agree' and the other side 'strongly disagree' and another side "neutral side" after the statement is read out. A statement paused by a teacher should allow 'open-ended' responses. For instance, a civics teacher teaching about democracy may write a statement saying "General elections in Tanzania follow democratic principles." Students then move to the part of the room designated with *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree* depending on their opinions. They talk to the others in their group and then share the reasons they have in common with students who have different opinions.

Ice-breakers

These are activities designed to 'break the ice' or to break the silence in a room where people are gathered with those unfamiliar to them. The activities help students; learn the names of people in the room and something about their backgrounds, dreams, or opinions about a topic to be discussed during the class or seminar. The philosophy underlying the use of ice breakers is that people learn best in an environment where they feel comfortable with the people around them (Vavrus, 2011).

****Technique #16 Name Chain**

A teacher puts students in groups of 8-10 people. The first person in the group starts by introducing her/his name and what s/he does. For instance, “My name is Anna. I like Physics.” The next person in the group repeats what Anna said and s/he adds another sentence. For instance, “Her name is Anna. She likes Physics. My name is Janeth. I like Chemistry.” The third person repeats what the two said and adds the third sentence. “Her name is Anna, she likes Physics. Her name is Janeth. She likes Chemistry. My name is Benjamin. I like Civics.” The game continues with other students in the group.

Technique #17 Interview Me

The teacher divides students into pairs, or the students select their own partner about whom they know very little (in other words, they should not interview their close friends). The students in pairs interview each other for three to five minutes on the first day of class. The teacher can also provide general guidelines for the interview, as in “find out three facts about your partner’s family or about a favorite sport or hobby.” After the interviews, the teacher reassembles the group and selects a few students from different pairs to introduce their partners to the whole class.

Technique #18 Four Facts Game (One is a Lie)

Each person writes down three to four facts about themselves, one of which is not true. Each person takes a turn reading his/her list aloud and the rest of the class write down one fact they think is the lie. When all are done reading the lists aloud, the first person reads his/her list again and identifies the lie. The rest of the class sees how well they did. The game continues with others identifying the lies in their lists and others checking the correctness of their guessing.

Technique #19 The Talent Show

Every student in the classroom selects one talent or special gift that s/he possesses and can demonstrate for the group. They introduce themselves, explain what their special talent is, and then perform their special talent for the group. In a large class, a teacher could have 3-4 students each day or once a week share a talent throughout the term.

Technique #20 Circle of Friends Game

This is a good greeting game for students who are meeting each other for the first time (e.g. Form 1 or Form 5). Students form two large circles, one inside the other. Students in the inside circle face the students in the outside circle. A teacher asks the circles to take one step in the opposite directions, allowing them to meet each new person as the circle continues to move very slowly and as they introduce themselves.