

CHAPTER SIX

LCTS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NEW KNOWLEDGE AND REINFORCEMENT

This chapter presents Learner-Centred Teaching Techniques (LCTs) for the development of new knowledge and reinforcement stages of a lesson. Some teaching strategies discussed in chapters nine and ten can also be used in these two lesson stages.

****Technique #34 Case Study**

Students are provided with a narrative of a real-life situation that sets up a problem or unresolved tension which students can analyze, research, and resolve. Case study is different from other group activities because it involves a challenging problem that reflect a real life situation. By using a case-study a teacher has an opportunity to show students how they can apply the information they learn in class. This makes the issues discussed in class more relevant as students relate them to real life situations. A case study for Form 2 Civics in the unit on gender might include an analysis of a current gender-discrimination case that has been in the newspapers in Tanzania.

****Technique #35 Everybody Writes**

This strategy encourages students to write their answers before speaking and sharing with others. The teacher asks a question and instructs the students to write a short answer. Then the teacher calls on students to share their writing or directs students to do a turn and talk with a partner or form a small group to discuss the answers. This helps students build stronger writing skills and clarify their thinking. Teachers can also encourage students to use important vocabulary words or key concepts in their writing.

****Technique #36 Sentence Starters**

A sentence starter is a partial sentence written by the teacher that students are instructed to finish. It is used to help students improve their writing and direct their thinking toward a particular topic. This is very helpful for struggling writers who get stuck starting a sentence. When done creatively, a sentence starter can also focus student thinking and help students better understand the learning objective. For example, a Kiswahili teacher introducing the topic of proverbs might put the following sentence starter on the board and ask students to complete it: “Mtu ni watu manake...” The teacher could then call on a few students to share their completed sentences with the class.

****Technique #37 Word Walls**

In every subject there are key terms and words that students need to know to master the learning goals. These vocabulary words and concepts should be taught and reviewed every day and posted on the Word Wall section of the blackboard. Vocabulary words can be reviewed or introduced at the beginning of lessons and left on the Word Wall for future reference. Students can be instructed to use the vocabulary in their written responses or when answering questions or working with other students. Teachers should also include vocabulary questions on tests and quizzes.

****Technique #38 Countdowns**

When teachers give students a time limit for completing an activity it indicates to students that class time is precious and needs to be used as efficiently as possible. It can also change the pace in the classroom—from slower to faster—by saying, “OK, you have three minutes to solve these three problems. Ready, steady, go!” Countdowns are also a good way to help students practice tasks that often take a lot of class time, such as passing out class readers or papers, by assigning the student at one end of each row to pass back or across the row the books or papers as quickly and carefully as possible. The rest of the students in the row must also pass the book or papers as quickly as they can, and, in so doing, they save time by not requiring the teacher to pass out these materials. The teacher can turn it into a competition the first few times: *Which row can pass out the class readers the fastest and most carefully—no dropping or tearing the books? Here we go, 10-9-8-7...* The teacher then praises the students in the row that did it the fastest, and, in a few weeks, students will have learned to pass out materials efficiently without the need for much teacher involvement.

****Technique #39 Head Start**

As mentioned above, teachers who want to use every minute of class time to promote learning often put an activity on the board—a question to answer, a term to use in a sentence, a math problem—for students to work on while s/he is putting other information on the board or organizing materials for the day’s lesson. A teacher can devote one corner of the blackboard to *Head Start* activities that get students thinking about the lesson as soon as they enter the classroom and, in some cases, before the rest of the students arrive. Teachers can praise students who complete these each day and use them as a quick review of the previous day’s assignment or as a preview of the topic to be discussed that day.

Techniques #40 Interactive/Guided Lecture

This is one of the best alternatives for teaching new and difficult concepts. Interactive lecturing can be done in different ways, such as: giving students questions to answer at the end of the lecture; leaving gaps in the hand-outs or lesson notes on the blackboard for students to fill while a teacher is explaining the concept; and pausing for 1-5 min and asking students to answer a question, give an opinion, or discuss a concept in pairs, etc. All three options are meant to focus students' minds towards the presented concept. At the end of the lecture a teacher clarifies confusing concepts and corrects incorrect information. If possible, participation points should be given to students who answer correctly questions posed to the class. When appropriate, ask students to explain their answers.

Technique #41 Posting Student Work For Learning

This technique involves students working in class or at home to research a topic and prepare materials like a poster, notes or an essay to share with classmates. This technique provides opportunities for students to learn from one another and to use higher-order thinking skills like evaluation and synthesis. It can also save class time if the projects are assigned as homework. For example, in Civics students study democracy. Students are then assigned the task of reading about a democratic country and preparing a poster, a written piece or some notes about democracy in the selected countries. The next day students share their work with classmates. This technique encourages individual learning and provides opportunities for students to learn from their peers.

Technique #42 Learning Stations (Activity Circus or Gallery Walk)

This is a good strategy to review a lot of topics or to show multiple applications from a single concept or principle in a very enjoyable way for students. Learning stations are typically prepared by the teacher. Each station has a different task or focus related to the learning goal. Another approach is to assign peer tutors to create or manage a learning station. Peer tutors are given time to read and prepare materials like diagrams, models, photos, notes, or projects to explain the ideas for their station. During the lesson the peer tutors lead discussions, make presentations or provide assistance as their peers move from station to station. Learning stations require planning and preparation. There needs to be enough space for students to move between stations. Students need to know the task requirement at each station. Students are placed in groups and each group is assigned a different starting station. Then when the teacher signals the groups rotate and move to the next station. It is a good idea at the end of the lesson to discuss what the students learned.

Technique #43 Independent Practice

Independent practice is a time for students to work by themselves. It is also a critically important time for teachers to help struggling students in small groups or individually. Learner-centred teachers use this independent work time not to grade papers or sit at their desks but to assist students who need help.

Technique #44 Dictation

Dictation is a learning strategy that has been used for generations. The teacher dictates a word, sentence, or entire passage while students write down what they hear. This provides students with an opportunity to learn new words and practice their listening, spelling, and writing skills. When finished, the students check their work by comparing it with the original text.

Technique #45 Question Parking Lot

In a learner-centred classroom, students are encouraged to ask questions of the teacher and of their classmates to insure that they understand the lesson. However, a student may ask a question that is not related to the topic for the day or addresses a topic to be discussed the following day. In some cases, it makes sense to answer the question right away, especially if other students seem to have the same question. In other cases, it may make more sense to wait until the end of the lesson or until the next day's lesson to answer the question. In those cases, a teacher can write the question in a corner of the board—and in his/her lesson plan under “evaluation/remarks” so as to remember the question—in a spot called the *Question Parking Lot* where questions are ‘parked’ until they can be ‘driven’ back into the class discussion. The Question Parking Lot technique indicates to students that their questions are important and will eventually be answered or addressed in the future.