

RESOURCEFULNESS IN THE CLASSROOM

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INTRODUCTION

The Introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme in 1976 and now the Universal Basic Education (UBE) brought children of various ages and abilities into Nigerian formal school setting. This has swelled the students' population resulting in a teacher/student ratio ranging from 1:43 to 1:60. This expansion is weighty on pupil's enrolment and not on the provision of learning resources or qualified teachers. Thus, the outstanding picture in most classrooms is the issuing out and copying of notes. Teaching and learning have gone beyond reading out of old notes by a teacher to a group of frightened learners. Teaching and learning can sometimes become quite boring if pupils are seen as "empty vessels" to be filled. It could also be uninteresting if the teachers themselves spend all the time "talking and chalking!" such teachers are easily tuned out by the pupils. Thus to generate learners' interest encourage creativity and full class participation in all teaching and learning sessions learning should be resource-based and learners should be involved in their learning activities

A sound media programme in schools as envisaged is a prerequisite for high quality education in any nation. It is a well known fact that the quality of the out-put from any production process depends, to a very great extend, on the quality of input of the resources. School

system like an industry needs quality input for a corresponding quality output. Good resource materials and competently trained teachers are good inputs to the education industry. Media resources do have active roles to play in the education industry. Media resources do have active roles to play in the transfer of knowledge and in the provision of different types of motivation to the learner. Learning resources are therefore significant input of the school system.

Similarly, there are four basic principles involving learning which have remained unchanged over the years and which have dictated the need for every teacher to be resourceful. These are the fact that:

- Human beings learn as individuals
- They learn at various rates
- They learn using different styles and patterns and
- Education is a continuous process.

In addition to these basic principles is the paradigm shift in teachers' role. Teachers are no longer seen as custodian of knowledge, and disseminator of information that may not be useful to the learners in later life. A teacher's prime role is to provide a

wide variety of learning experiences and the nurturing of creative responses in the learner.

The implications of these principles to the human learning system is that the learning environment ought to be richly prepared to facilitate individualized learning to pupils in schools and even after formal schooling. Such exposure will develop and nurture reflective thinking in the pupils. Further implication of these principles is that the learning activities planned for the pupils should entail the teachers taking them out into their communities for:

- "Looking walk" or study trip,
- "Listening walk" with nature,
- Touching walk" and
- "Smelling walk".

Another implication is that the learners must have easy access to a variety of pre-selected learning resources. In practice this has not been so. Material resources that are essential in all teaching and learning events are often not available and accessible. Yet they play active roles in the transfer of knowledge and in the provision of different types of motivation to the learners.

A competently trained teacher any where in the globe needs learning resources to be effective in performing his/her instructional function(s).

In reality, of all the problems that plague education in this state the most intractable of them all is the dearth of relevant learning resources ad inadequate physical facilities. A cursory look at the present day learners will reveal that the students learning needs have changed from being taught to being guided and the learning strategies and resource provisions should likewise change. The burden of transferring knowledge has therefore switched from the teacher to the myriad of resources to be effective.

This paper gives a catalogue of strategies for achieving resourcefulness in the classroom.

WHAT DOES RESOURCEFULNESS ENTAIL?

Resourcefulness in teaching entails being ingenious in the handling of challenges. A resourceful teacher is one who can turn a dull classroom into a pleasant learning environment. Resourcefulness as used in this paper has to do with teaching in a way that involves the use of community resources that are familiar to the learners such

that their interest in the subject is enlivened. A resourceful teacher sees instructional problems as challenges and not difficulties. They merely lead him/her to search for alternative ways of handling the task. A resourceful teacher thinks very constructively. He/she is creative, has initiative, is resilient, optimistic, committed and sees uniqueness in the learners rather than in the teachers' teaching styles. He is the wealth of a school, for when the required resources are not available or if what is available appears obsolete, a resourceful teacher will create appropriate resources and environment for instructional use.

A resourceful teacher should therefore be one who is quick witted in mastering a difficult situation during any instructional event and finds a way to reach his/her goal. A resourceful teacher will always improvise. He/she will select, compose, make/construct and provide a substitute for something that is essential but which is not available.

ACHIEVING RESOURCEFULNESS

An effective class teacher can be resourceful by:

- Creating class resource corner of both realia and print media.

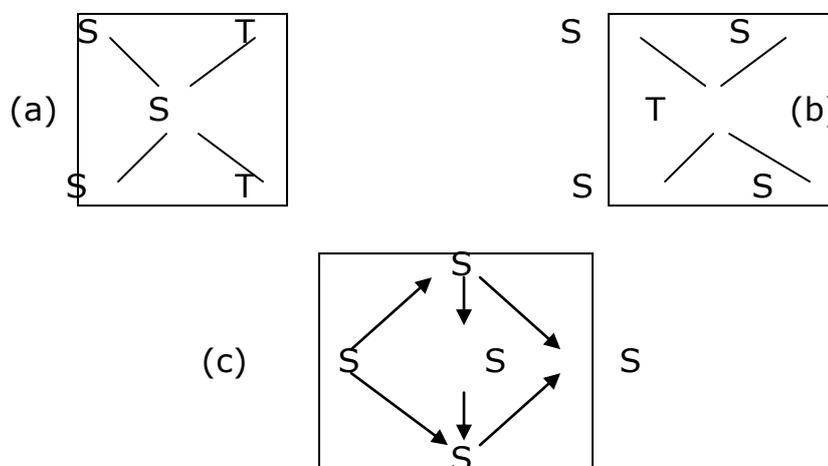
- Using progressive teaching approaches like role play, relay story telling, instructional games, individualized techniques, problem solving, demonstration etc.
- Maintaining a vertical file collection for prompt use of resources.
- Bringing in resource persons from the community.
- Visiting historical and production sites or industries e.g. cement, biscuit, ceramics factories etc.), games reserve, nature parks, science parks fishing settlement.
- Mounting attractive classroom display.

RESOURCE CORNER

- For learners in the lower basic level this will aid their language development.
- For middle level it will enhance their creativity as they take part in the display.
- For the upper basic class, class resource corner will help develop the much needed reading culture.

USE OF PROGRESSIVE OR LEARNER FRIENDLY TECHNIQUES

Interactive learning techniques will encourage full class participation in language class. It will create conditions that foster language use. Classroom set up can hinder or enhance interactive opportunities. If all learners face the chalkboard and the pupils sit in neat rows, learner to learner interaction is difficult. Round table or semicircle arrangement of desks on the other hand will make interactive tasks easier.



Drill and Practice

The learners are led through series of practical activities designed to increase fluency and competency in a new skill or to refresh an existing one. It includes feedback to reinforce correct responses and to remediate errors learners may have stored up along the way.

Games and Simulation

These are learning techniques used in solving various real life situational problems in the classroom. Wokocho (1992), Ekpo and Ekukinam (1998) observed that children learn through their play activities and that their play experiences serve as the primary vehicle by which they learn about themselves and their environment. An instructional games is a contest based on skills and/or chance played according to set down rules to achieve a purpose.

Relay Story Writing

This technique creates avenue to identify learners with potentials in literary writing. It is best handled in groups. A learner and member of a relay team starts from an imaginary story writing, stops half way but builds into the story enough promptings to guide the next writer. At the end of the specified time given, the stories are assessed for creativity and imaginative use of vocabulary.

Topics for relay writing can also be controlled. For instance, the Flag Day which is globally celebrated on June 14, could form a theme for this kind of activity. The learners could be asked to write about Nigeria History, origin of Nigerian flag and interpret the national

anthem, or about a scene they saw somewhere. Such activity could induce in them the spirit of patriotism.

Independent Study Technique

An individualized group instruction where learners work independently on assigned workbooks in small groups assisted by the lecturers. This is commonly used with senior students and the teacher's role is that of a facilitator, advisory and counseling. The learners make use of libraries, cyber café, community resource or laboratories.

- **Use of Vertical File Collection:** A resourceful teacher keeps a collection of cartoons, graphs, posters, charts, pamphlets etc. these will provide good substitutes.
- **Using Resource Persons** from the community is valuable learning resource.
- **Visiting Historical Sites:** This strategy is very relevant in the teaching and learning of History and Arts. This strategy is effective if the audience can become the actors. The learners could be assisted to explore some of the issues further with activities such as the "hot seat", or cross examination of characters. Its use could bring a period of history in a

challenging and thought provoking manner thereby breathing life into the content.

- Classroom display can be jointly prepared by both learners and the teachers.

CONCLUSION

Learners are the reason for teachers retention of their jobs, no learner no teacher. Therefore, teachers should endeavor to create friendly and enabling environment for all teaching and learning events. Schools were more beautiful and more active in the "good old days" because teachers were resourceful. In this paper I have endeavoured to stress the need to:

- Vary the instructional strategies used in the classroom.
- Vary the seating arrangement in the class.
- Increase the level of interaction among the learners by recording the sitting arrangement.
- Increase the frequency of the use of community resources (use of resource persons and study trips to historical and production sites).

I am fully in support of purchasing high technology media like television, computer and in giving the teachers the required

exposure in their use. But acquisition of technology alone does not translate into effective teaching. My emphasis in this paper is on how to produce “thinking and active teachers” who can produce great minds.

Students know effective and resourceful teachers and they respect them. Students prefer teachers who have teaching ability, good rapport and are open to them. Teachers should demonstrate to their learners that they are knowledgeable about their subject and can source for materials.

If this workshop has produced resourceful teachers, who can think and will constantly think about teaching and learning problems and attempt to solve them, then the funds and time expended on it is worthwhile.

Thank you.