
UNIT 7 ORGANISING LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Structure

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Objectives
- 7.3 Nature of Learning Experiences
- 7.4 Providing Learning Experiences in the Classroom
- 7.5 Learning Experiences in School: Material, Human, Financial and Time Resources
- 7.6 Learning Experiences from the Community: Material, Human, Financial and Time
- 7.7 Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)
- 7.8 Role of the School Head in the Organisation of Learning Experiences
- 7.9 Skills Needed for Organising the Learning Experiences
- 7.10 Constraints
- 7.11 Unit-end Exercise
- 7.12 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.13 Suggested Readings

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Education is an attempt to mould and shape the behaviour of the pupils. 'Learning experiences' means learning activities undertaken in the school for shaping the learners' orientation to the content and ultimately enabling them to comprehend it effectively. 'Learning Experience' is the learning process.

The ultimate aim of the effectiveness of the school is not the amount of skill and knowledge acquired or the level of proficiency attained but the amount and level retained and used. It depends on the intensity and quality of learning experiences whether they can foster retention and transfer of learning experiences or not. The teaching methods and teaching aids generate learning activities. Teaching various subjects or other project work/activities in the laboratory or field are also examples of learning experiences. Only those learning experiences are considered good which lead to the attainment of specific educational aims and objectives.

As a School Head your understanding of the learning process, its principles and their organisation is essential and we would focus on these in this unit.

7.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- recognise the need to create and acquire learning experiences in school;
- find ways and skills of managing the learning experiences properly;
- display a thorough knowledge of resources and the way they should be utilised for organising and promoting learning experiences; and
- recognise the constraints in the management of learning experiences.

7.3 NATURE OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES

You, as a Head, must know that some important features of the task which affect the rate of learning, retention and transfer are:

- the perceptual clarity of the task;
- the meaningfulness of the material;
- the difficulty of the material; and
- those aspects of the task which interfere with the acquisition or retention of other material.

So you should ensure that teachers of your school also take into account these principles while selecting the learning experiences. The pupils' needs and interests, age, the range of ability, mental level of the pupils, interrelationship between subjects, and specialisation of the teacher in the particular subject are some of the other factors which a Head has to be vigilant about.

7.4 PROVIDING LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN THE CLASSROOM

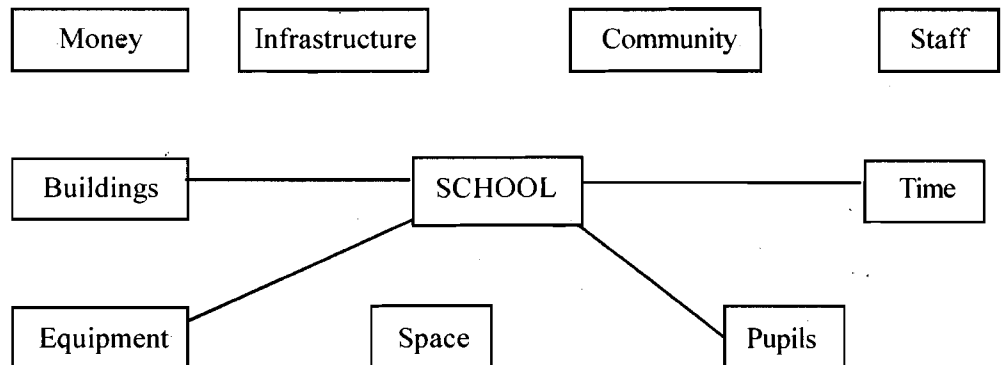
The learning experiences should function the way you wish them to in the light of the overall aims and specific objectives. It should be feasible in terms of time, staff expertise, resources etc. to learn the content. The learning experiences should enable students to develop thinking skills and rational power. It should stimulate in learners a good understanding of their own existence as individuals and as members of a group. It should foster in learners' openness to new experiences and a tolerance for diversity.

For providing learning experience, a cone of experience formulated by Edgar Dale can be helpful for more clarity. His suggestion to the organiser of learner experiences is to go as low on the scale as you need to, in order to examine learning, but go as high as you can, for most effective learning experiences.

12. Verbal symbols
11. Visual symbols (signs, stock, figure)
10. Radio and recordings
9. Still pictures
8. Motion pictures
7. Educational television
6. Exhibits
5. Study trips
4. Demonstrations
3. Dramatised experiences plays, puppets and role playing
2. Contrived experiences, model simulations
1. Direct purposeful experiences.

7.5 LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOL: MATERIAL, HUMAN, FINANCIAL AND TIME RESOURCES

The main task of the Head of each school is to provide and deliver effectively an appropriate schedule using all the resources: material, human, finance and time which are readily available in the school.



The Head and the teachers should be creative and should not become over-dependent on outside resources for providing learning experiences. They can be made more positive, interesting, varied and, therefore, more effective through the frequent and selective use of resources.

The Head must plan, anticipate, consult, supervise and act in a timely manner to ensure that all the required resources are used fully.

Material Resources

Material resources include furniture, library, campus, laboratory equipment, sports goods. Teaching aids, science equipment, TV, radio, computer, sound projector, LCD and other motion pictures etc. The Head has to see that it is accessible to all when required. He must supervise whether the teachers consider their (material resources) use essential and effective or burdensome and a mere formality. Low cost teaching aids are attractive to all Heads, who run their school on small budgets. Hence, students can be involved in preparing Teaching Aids from scrap items.

Human Resources

The Head must be careful that teachers, non-teaching staff and fourth class employees also work amicably in order to make a congenial environment in the school which their promotes their learning experiences. Teachers' competencies, skill, knowledge and experiences must be utilised fully by providing them with a democratic environment. They should refresh their knowledge by attending seminars and conferences. New arrivals in the form of books and journals help them update their knowledge. All this will go a long way in making the instruction effective.

With the last human resource viz. the students' participation, when sought, learning experiences can be made effective as well as rewarding.

Financial Resources

A Head must plan a proper budget. Resources, which are purchased from school funds, require special attention. For this reason, the Head usually delegates authority and responsibility to the key teachers and ensures the provision of storage and appropriate management. When resources are scarce, then the Head must make a clear policy which is to be implemented effectively. He is to identify the ways in

which financial government provision can be supplemented. Fund raising activities can be organised with the help of parents, pupils and teachers. Lastly the initiative, confidence, honesty and financial knowledge of the Head make the working of the school excellent.

Time Resource

Time resources also contribute to pupil learning. Well-organised classes aim at effective use of time. Some guidelines can be like this:

- Treat time as a classroom resource.
- Arrange smooth transition from one activity to another with minimum change over time. Clarity of instructions will be helpful in this.
- Ensure that the pupils' time is fully and meaningfully utilised.
- Team teaching in selected areas where classes can be grouped for common learning activities is another way to overcome time constraints.
- The Head should see that the teachers are punctual.

Management of time resource is crucial to effective teaching.

The management of all the resources in the classroom can be helpful in reducing teacher burnout. Its use ensures effective teaching.

You as a Head must realise that managing the schools' resources more effectively will fulfil the objectives. The Head can bring it to the notice of the teachers that if they manage the resources well, they will become more creative and their lessons will show better results.

7.6 LEARNING EXPERIENCES FROM THE COMMUNITY: MATERIAL, HUMAN, FINANCIAL AND TIME

Learning is not confined to the boundary of the school. All learning experiences cannot be provided efficiently by or within the school. Many persons, places or situations can be available in the community for imparting education. These provide ample scope and opportunities for meaningful learning. These are interesting and motivating. These may be direct and realistic. So you (as a Head) could plan and utilise these resources and opportunities for your school. These resources may either be brought to the school or the school (teachers and pupils) can go to them. We discuss these in detail below:

i) Inviting various professionals or agencies

Professionals like doctors, environmentalists, social workers may be invited to schools. Some professionals like technicians, businessmen, engineers, corporate executives, media persons, actors, dramatists and persons from various walks of life can be invited in order to share different experiences. They can explain their unique aspects or problems. Similarly many government or non-government agencies could be helpful. Visitors can talk, demonstrate or screen films. Public relations departments have many educative programmes available with them. Pollution Department helps to form eco-clubs in the schools. These experiences are given by experts. These provide variety and novelty in learning.

ii) Visiting the places of learning experiences

Many a time it is essential or useful to visit the place where the resource exists. Students and teachers visit historical places (forts, Taj Mahal...) scientific industries/laboratories (Thermal power plants, National Physical Laboratory...) botanical gardens,

zoos etc. Guides or other competent persons can explain the things or processes there. Such visits are very interesting and informative to the pupils as well as to the teachers. Proper planning for the visit – selection of place, duration, purpose, cost, stay arrangement etc. – should be done well in advance to avoid unnecessary inconveniences.

You as Head of the institution should plan these out-of-school learning experiences to derive maximum benefits for your students. Your position and liaison with authorities or community should be able to achieve the desirable objectives.

7.7 USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT)

All educational decisions are in the hands of the service providers: what information is to be presented, for how long, in what sequence, and even in the case of such current instructional broadcasting the schedule – when it is to be shown. The boundaries between entertainment, public information and educational services can become blurred. A Shakespeare play, a concert or an informational series such as the successful cosmos series carried by the Public Broadcasting System, may be considered important instructional resources as well as entertainment.

Computer assisted instruction is the best-known interactive technology. If a student is progressing slowly, he/she can practise at home and if one has mastered a section, he can jump ahead to more advanced material.

Educational software on the computer would take a student through sequences of slides and text presentation, providing information and administering tests. ICT can be used to plan course work and manage the classroom. Daily tasks such as grading and record keeping is possible. Teleconferencing via radio, television or computer allows teachers to exchange experiences, develop curricula and co-ordinate educational programmes. ICT in the form of cable, direct broadcast satellite, low power television and video cassette and video disks will greatly increase the number of information channels coming into the home, school and office.

7.8 ROLE OF THE SCHOOL HEAD IN THE ORGANISATION OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES

As school is a special agency wherein the planned learning experiences and activities are provided with the objective of helping pupils to achieve the goals of education. Organisation of learning experiences means employing the various available human or material resources for deriving maximum benefit for the pupils. The human resources, particularly the Head and teachers have an important role to plan and present these experiences.

Guidelines for the organisation of learning experiences

The School Head holds a key position in the institution. When you accept this responsibility (as a Head), everyone expects you to provide efficient and dynamic leadership in all activities of the school. You become a planner, provider, guide, trainer and supervisor.

As a Head you have to plan and arrange the human and material resources. You would guide, train and supervise the teachers and the pupils. You will often have to attend to the parents' problems and suggestions. Appraisal of every activity and everyone is the responsibility of the Head. Your job is multifaceted in nature and scope. The Heads have challenging job of organising appropriate learning activities and experiences. Discussions with some successful School Heads and other sources have given us a few guidelines which may be helpful in this regard. These are as follows:

- Essential and adequate human and material resources should be procured.
- Institutional plan or calendar of various activities should be prepared in consultation with the faculty members.
- Proper co-operation and co-ordination among the staff members is essential for the effective organisation of the various activities.
- Creative and innovative practices or projects from teachers and pupils should be encouraged.
- Staff meetings and internal seminars should be utilised to train teachers to use innovative methods or aids.
- Individual differences among the learners and the teachers should be recognised and taken care of.
- The teachers should be assigned duties keeping in view their qualifications, areas of interest and workload factor.
- The personality of the Head should reflect his/her commitment, scientific attitude humanly approach and adequate knowledge.
- Democratic attitude and transparency in his/her functioning should be visible. It helps to win the trust of teachers and pupils.
- Supervision of the work of teachers by the Head should aim to help and guide them to improve the teaching-learning process.
- Morning assemblies could be used for moral education and developing proper social attitude.
- Regular monitoring of various programmes is essential for progress.
- The Head should encourage teachers and pupils to improve teaching aids/equipment. This may be helpful in making up financial shortfalls to some extent.
- The Head should collaborate with nearby schools or even colleges to share their resources to organise proper learning experiences.
- The Head should use his/her good position to utilise the resources of community (professionals, agencies etc.) to promote learning activities in different modes.

The above list of suggestions for the School Heads presents only a microscopic view. These guidelines may be unending. But as Head you have to devise your own ways of working. Your intelligence and experience should prove to be your guide.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Write your answers in the space given below.

1. Enumerate any three needs for organising learning experiences.

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2. Describe the role of the Head in organising learning experiences in 30 to 40 words.

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Activity

As a Head you must have faced some problems in organising learning experiences. Mention some of them and how you sorted them out.

7.9 SKILLS NEEDED FOR ORGANISING THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Our institutional planning may be an ideal one but if the execution does not match with it, the whole system of organisation of the learning experiences is likely to fail. Some managerial skills are essential for the proper implementation of the planning. Thus, the personnel involved in managing these should possess or try to acquire some of the requisite competencies.

Some of the basic abilities and skills required by the Heads of the schools are described as follows:

- i) Ability to select proper learning experiences according to the set objectives;
- ii) Ability to identify the pupils' needs;
- iii) Ability to select suitable personnel to devise desirable learning activities;
- iv) Ability to ensure proper division of work and time for each teacher and for every class;
- v) Ability to identify and encourage the talented pupils in various curricular and co-curricular activities;
- vi) Ability to provide leadership to the teachers and the pupils;
- vii) Ability to monitor and supervise and progress of various plans and guide the concerned personnel;
- viii) Ability to maintain harmony, liaison and co-ordination with the faculty and the non-teaching staff;
- ix) Ability to mobilise out-of-school resources for the benefit of pupils; and
- x) Proper skill to deal with the human beings involved – teachers, pupils, parents, officials etc.

7.10 CONSTRAINTS

The School Head's job is multifarious in nature viz. procuring resources; planning learning activities and experiences; administration of schoolwork; and co-ordination and supervision of teachers, pupils and various programmes etc. As pointed-out earlier, you can well visualise the enormous responsibility and challenge in organising the various activities. Some problems do arise. Some may be due to teachers and pupils. Some others may be due to material, financial or time resources. Some of the constraints affecting the efficiency in teaching-learning process are as follows:

1. Lack of finances
2. Lack of skills and expertise among teachers for using or developing innovative strategies
3. Teachers' indifferent attitudes and slackness in using new methods or resources;
4. Pupil's unwillingness and low interest in accepting new modes of learning;
5. Non-availability of new technological resources of learning in the school;
6. Limited available time of learning to implement a scheme or project;
7. Local conditions – like shortage or no supply of electricity

The above list is just a sample of the few. So your job is difficult but challenges offer opportunities. In spite of so many constraints, you can make use of your ingenuity and utilise the co-operation of your team to create an environment of congenial learning. Your creative approach to liaise with the community and human handling ability could help to make up some handicaps or deficiencies of resources.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

1. List any three constraints while managing learning experiences.

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7.11 UNIT-END EXERCISE

Consult with members of your staff or other Heads and prepare a plan to train your teachers to use/devise new strategies of teaching-learning process.

7.12 LET US SUM UP

Learning experiences are the means for attaining educational goals. Children learn by thinking, feeling and doing. Man and material resources help in organising learning experiences. Certain general principles may be borne in mind in organising various learning situations. Head holding the key position has the main responsibilities to make the whole education process an effective one. So, you as a head should act as a facilitator, guide counsellor, provider and organiser for the provision of meaningful learning experiences keeping in view the various constraints.

7.13 SUGGESTED READINGS

Jaswant Singh (1964): *Successful Headmasters: A Practical Guide to Educational Administration*, Delhi University Publishers, Jallundhur

John. P. De Cecco (1968): *The Psychology of Learning and Instruction Educational Psychology*, Prentice Hall Inc.

Ralph Garry (1965): *The Psychology of Learning*, Prentice Hall of India (Pvt.) Ltd.