

## Lesson Planning and the Rights of Educators

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### ABSTRACT

Lesson planning occupies the central part of teaching and learning, it is considered the nucleus of pedagogic situation because it converges all essentials of teaching and learning. A well planned topic is obliged to be followed by points such as methods of teaching (question and answer, discussion, observation etc.), teaching approaches (inductive and deductive), teaching aids which are directly related to methods, approaches and topic. From aims and objectives to learning outcomes and assessment standards, form a well-planned activity. Mishra (2008:5) says that: “a lesson is a structured period of time where learning is intended to occur... planning a lesson involves teacher’s purposeful efforts in developing a coherent system of activities that facilitates the evolution of student’s cognitive structures.”

There is a general consensus that lesson planning is important and that; for a teacher to go to class and teach learners without proper lesson plan is like jumping into eating food before washing hands. Educators know the importance of lesson plans; they were as well taught on how to develop a convincing ones at colleges of education and various universities. Educators have full knowledge of the consequences of transgressing the laws of teaching and code of conduct as outlined in SASA, ELRC and SACE. The main aim of this study is to collect data related to the influence of teacher unions and infiltration of politics into the noble profession, teaching. Politics in education has changed the original teaching profession character to that of defiance of all educational policies and acquaintance of negative political rights to indulge in mischievous activities like teaching without daily lesson plans.

### Keywords

Unions, lesson plan, educator, curriculum, Department of Education (DoE), policy documents

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### Introduction

Apartheid era in South Africa was characterised by limited choice of professions and skills training for black people. Black people in particular were channelled to choose from nursing, police and teaching. These three professions were regarded as most prestigious and honourable compared to bricklaying and roadworks which anyone could do with less academic qualifications. The fierce political pressure that mounted in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, lead to the emergence of new underground political anti-apartheid movements to replace the banned ANC (African National Congress) and PAC (Pan Africanist Congress of Azania). Africanist politics spread into educational circles, SADTU (South African Democratic Teachers Union) monopolised and accumulated more than 80% of educators. South African educators became so unionised to pile up massive and enormous pressure to the apartheid regime of the time to abolish apartheid.

History has shown that the major aim of the establishment of teacher unions, especially black unions, was to fight for the rights of teachers, (e.g. to oppose strongly the implementation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953) and to pursue

political interests of African teachers (e.g. the abolishment of the pass laws). From the 1980s, when apartheid structures were beginning to dissolve, there was a growing feeling among younger teachers in particular that teacher unions had to confront the government head-on and use militancy if necessary. These young teachers were politicised by the 1976 uprisings, many of whom were still students at that stage (Hartshorne, 1992:304).

This implies that the fight that teacher unions launched was authentic and relevant, and teachers would do anything to frustrate the apartheid regime. Recurring teacher’s strikes, passive resistance and radical actions like standing firm against completion of useful educational tools like scheme of work and lesson planning described the culture of the time. South African educators developed the culture of non-compliance even towards completion of lesson plans thus transgressing their code of ethics and conduct.

According to the SACE code of conduct for teachers, the main responsibilities (see Section 5: SACE Act 31 of 2000, Page E-17) are: Plan, prepare and deliver lessons. Today curriculum advisors of all districts and circuits are continuously losing the battle of persuading

educators to complete daily plans for efficient teaching and learning. A departmental official wanting to see educators' lesson plans is perceived villainous and could be reported to the teacher' unions. Unions continued protection of mischievous and illicit acts, influenced teachers to have the so called rights not to produce evidence of what they teach in class in the form of lesson plans, which on the contrary the DoE as the employer reserves all the rights to demand, thus culture of teaching and learning (COLT) is compromised.

The enhancement of the culture of learning and teaching (COLT) is important in education. To achieve this aim teachers play an important role because they are responsible for the one crucial part namely teaching...The professional attitude of teacher and the perspective of teaching as a profession can also play an important role in the enhancement of COLT. In these circumstances it is important to recognise the role that the teacher unions can play in the enhancement of COLT as well as in the professionalism and motivation of teachers (Heystek & Lethoko, 2001:222).

It is indeed acceptable to acknowledge that the main role of teachers is to plan lessons according to set standards prescribed by NCS (National Curriculum Statements); and the role of teacher Unions is envisaged to align and correct teacher's activities towards good practices not to protect undesirable practices.

### **Sociocultural theory of cognitive development**

This study was underpinned by sociocultural theory of cognitive development. Sociocultural theory is an emerging theory in psychology that looks at the important contributions that the society makes to individual development (Cherry, 2019). This theory stresses the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live. Sociocultural theory also suggests that human learning is largely a social process.

Most educational theories converge their emphasis on the patterns of child development, from childhood stage to adult stage. The sociocultural theory is no exception; culture and societal influence can as well be associated with this theory. Educators are not aliens, they were born and bred in our societies, and they were negatively affected by societal politics and equally suffered from the evils of apartheid. Their societies exerted

a lot of pressure that compel teachers to mobilise and form unions with only one objective; to assist the ANC to fight apartheid regime.

Political influence originated from societies; developed into culture of revolt and non-resistance to undemocratic and oppressive activities, which lead to development of teacher unions which are willing to protect teacher's mischiefs on the other hand compromising the quality of teaching and learning. Threats to teachers' working conditions and professional judgment pose particular challenges for teacher unions as the organisations whose role it is to defend them from such attacks (Bascia and Osmond, 2013). The only predicament created by unions is when the quality of education and teaching is compromised while in the process of teacher protection.

Sociocultural theory of cognitive development is associated with Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) was a Russian teacher who is considered a pioneer in learning in social contexts. As a psychologist, he was also the first to examine how our social interactions influence our cognitive growth. He was convinced that learning occurred through interactions with others in our communities: peers, adults, teachers, and other mentors.

Vygotsky (1896-1934) further outlined three main concepts related to cognitive development: (i) culture is significant in learning, (ii) language is the root of culture, and (iii) individuals learn and develop within their role in the community. Culture can be defined as the morals, values, and beliefs of its community members, which are held in place with systems and establishments. Acceptable attitudes and conduct are communicated by the use of language. Culture is shaped over time as the result of specific events, whose messages are then conveyed to its members. Vygotsky explained that culture consistently affects cognitive development by affecting human behaviour. He wanted others to realize that there is a complex relationship between culture and human development. It is a cycle; at the same time that culture is influencing an individual, that individual is in turn creating culture.

According to Vygotsky (1896-1934), culture is significant in learning and language is rooted in culture, and culture is shaped over time as a result

of specific events. The latter psychologist's submission is conformable with our study which is 'lesson planning and the rights of educators. Teachers adopted the culture of their society through language and further influenced by societies to develop the attitude to rebel against apartheid regime to form teacher unions. Teacher union's main objective was to protect teachers against prejudices of apartheid system. Bascia and Stevenson (2017:57) submitted one convincing argument that: "Unions are representative organisations that exist to promote the interests of their members." The sociocultural theory of cognitive development is the most appropriate theory to enable the study to arrive at suitable and convincing results. This theory was then used to collect and analyse data.

### **Research methodology and research design**

The study was determined to research about the educational problem that is persistent in education, which is: lesson plan and the rights of educators. To address this educational problem, we found a qualitative research approach to be most appropriate because it allowed us to intermix with participants of a selected society to collect relevant data. Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. In it, we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them.

Kothari (2004:30) says that "qualitative research is especially important in the behavioural sciences where the aim is to discover the underlying motives of human behaviour. Through such research we can analyse the various factors which motivate people to behave in a particular manner or which make people like or dislike a particular thing." Educators dislike the right thing to do, 'lesson planning' which is capable to give direction and expected results in any teaching and learning situation. There are underlying factors that need to be investigated and analysed, all which qualifies qualitative research design to be key in this study. The next section of this study addresses appropriate sampling method.

### **Sampling method**

The study adopted probability sampling or random sampling and or chance sampling. Random sampling from a finite population refers to that method of sample selection which gives each possible sample combination on equal probability of being picked up and each item in the entire population to have an equal chance of being included in the sample (Kothari, 1990:60). The random sampling was considered appropriate method as it enabled researchers to intermingle randomly with participants and thereby acquire extensive knowledge, and collect required data for the study.

### **The study site and sample**

The study took place in four South African secondary schools in Limpopo Province at Capricorn District over a period of three months (in the first term of the year). The first term was regarded as the most suitable term because it is the term that sets the scene and dictates the right momentum. we selected two underperforming schools and two best performing schools. From the four schools four principals, four departmental heads and four teacher union representatives were interviewed. A total of twelve participants were interviewed. The participating schools are found in the Mankweng circuit of the Capricorn South District and all schools are situated in the Mankweng Township next to the University of Limpopo. This Township is an epicenter of local politics and had succeeded to produce renowned politicians such as Peter Mokaba.

we gave a comprehensive explanation of the purpose and procedure of the study and satisfactorily sorted participants consent. we reached a consensus with participants that their participation is entirely voluntary, pledged our commitment to confidentiality, privacy and anonymity as much as possible. Participants were then made to sign a consent forms upon agreement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Consent by participants to partake voluntary implied that they agree to be interviewed as well. Interviews are the important vehicle to collecting reliable data vital to help the study to arrive at admirable and relevant endings. The next section deals with how data was collected.

### Data collection

After cordial agreement with interviewee to participate, we then created a conducive environment for us to interact. Using the structured questions, we then began to ask each participant separately whether educators at their schools do prepare lesson plans before going to class, whether they see the importance of lesson plans and reasons why most educators had developed a negative attitude towards an activity which can lead to improvement of results.

On asking all these questions, we tried as much as possible to be friendly and accommodative. Kothari (1990:99) argues that the interviewers approach must be friendly, courteous, conversational and unbiased. The interviewer should not show surprise or disapproval of a respondent's answer but he must keep the direction of interview in his own hand, discouraging irrelevant conversation and must make all possible effort to keep the respondent on the track. In this study, data was developed through two methods, structured interview and policy analysis.

### Interview style

Interviews are typically used when seeking the views and opinions of people with specific perspective. This study adopted the structured interview style which follows a set of specific questions which are worked through systematically (MacDonald & Headlam, 2015:23). This type of interview is used when the researcher wishes to acquire information where the responses are directly comparable. The structured interview style was coupled with factfinder interview type, most precisely face to face. This interview styles put our study in the best position to collect reliable and analyzable information. Same questions were asked to different participants of four schools, the responses by different interviewees were compared and relevant deductions drawn for proper analysis.

The interview schedule concealed the three key principles of sociocultural theory of cognitive development: socially constructed knowledge, social and curriculum integration tools and internalisation of data generation and analysing. Firstly, we asked them about the reasons why educators had developed a negative attitude towards lesson planning over time and how all

schools in the province received and concurred with common knowledge of defiance. Secondly, we asked them about the common curriculum integration tools that need to be organised for teaching and learning to unfold. Lastly, that the external interaction will then become internalised into a transformed version of interaction and become part of human independent developmental achievement. The initial plan was to visit each school representative three times to allow sufficient time to collect first hand data from reliable participants. The first visit was for the arrangements and the introduction of the study. The second visit was for the initial/actual interviews. The third visit was used for feedback and debriefing. For proper data recording and evidence, we managed to collect samples of lesson plans from two best performing schools. Because it was the first term of the year, the interviews went as planned and we managed to interview all participants.

### Policy analysis

Policy analysis was adopted as supplementary data collection method. WE requested policy documents from the nearest circuit (Mankweng circuit). The policy documents included the SASA (South African School's Act), the ELRC (Education Labour Relations Council), NSC (National Curriculum Statement), and NPA (National Protocol for Assessment). All these education policies advocated for proper preparation of daily activities. We later developed a checklist using the above documents as point of reference. Data collection involves organization of data, reduction of data and description of data. Data collected through the audio tape device was repeatedly organized until categories were formulated, which led to development of themes. Themes were later reviewed, refined and named for production of a proper report.

### Findings

Analysis of interviews and policy data lead to main findings, which we classified under three themes: i) educational/curriculum policies, ii) social-cultural issues and iii) political related issues. Detailed discussion of these four themes unfolds in the section that follows.

We found that at the two underperforming schools, there were no curriculum policies in



place and no educator had any idea what they look like and their functions. The principal had an idea what curriculum policies are, but have not kept any of them in the office.

At the two performing schools, we found that the principal had kept all the curriculum policies in the office and educators knew about them but no educator is completing daily lesson plans before going to class and no one including the principal and DH (Departmental Head) dared advice educators to do so.

When enquiring about why daily plans by educators are not enforced, both principals of performing and underperforming indicated that they are scared educators will report them to their unions. Cowen and Strunk (2014:10-12) argue that teacher unions have political and legislative influence on educational policy that favours their members and their perceptions in issues that relate to educational matters. History has it that unions will not hesitate to protect one of their own if he/she is pushed into a predicament of completing daily lesson plans.

### **Socio-cultural issues**

We took time to dig deep into the reasons behind teacher's negative perception towards the right thing to do, which is daily lesson preparations which of course have the potential to yield better results and improve the wellbeing of learners. All participants of both performing and underperforming schools equivocally forwarded same reasons that daily lesson plans were since abolished when all South African educators went to union buildings and threw lesson plans and related documents during country's teacher mass action.

It was later accepted across the country that wanting to see lesson plans from any South African teacher, is considered an insult and taboo. Bascia (1998) shared a view that teacher unions are conservative institutions that are more concerned with teachers' wellbeing, which has a tendency of alienating the educational interests of the learners." This culture of negative lesson plan perception was transmitted from one teacher generation to another.

### **Political related issue**

It is somewhat difficult to differentiate between political and socio-cultural issues, nevertheless political issues will attempt to answer the

question, what will happen if the DoE may reinstate the implementation of daily lesson plans to all schools. The teacher unions must in fact assist the DoE to re-implement the right decisions. Mafisa (2017: 71) submitted a sensible statement that teacher unions are intended to work in partnership with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) for the melioration of education through the involvement of their members to take part in many departmental endeavours in improving the quality of education. When asked if they will welcome and embrace the re-implementation of daily lesson plans, all educators (Departmental heads and principals) in both performing and underperforming schools indicated that they can only cooperate if told by their unions to resume the daily preparations.

## **DISCUSSION**

The main finding was that the four schools both performing and underperforming have educators who just teach without proper planning. The ideal situation calls for phase educators to meet and align the topics, then grade educator's meeting will follow, teaching approaches set, lesson plan template filled, while extracting content from textbooks and finally each educators confidently go to respective classes and teach relevant topics. At the end of the lesson, educators will give common activities in the form of class works and home works. The following were the main findings, firstly, we found that it is not difficult for educators to complete daily lesson plans, but they have just developed negative attitudes towards daily lesson plans due to the precedence that was set before 1994 when all black organizations and unions were united to challenge and fight the racist government. The same pressure that increases workload is also responsible for politicians asserting increasing control over teachers and the way they conduct their work (Stevenson, 2007).

Secondly, that teacher training institutions fairly do their part of training teacher trainees on proper methods of teaching of which daily lesson planning is key during their three year of teacher training. The prospects of good practices like proper planning and good recording methods are followed by better results and production of competitive learners. we found that in all the schools we visited, educators and principals of

both performing and underperforming schools are aware that it is good practice to plan, but they just developed a negative attitude and will hate anybody who advocates for completion of lesson plans.

Thirdly, we found that the giant teacher union are not supporting the DoE (Department of Education) as they are expected to. The teacher unions have the prerogative to advice their constituencies that; it is policy to complete daily lesson plans and less curtesy. we practically found that instead of advising their constituencies, teacher unions ironically will protect their members if found to be on the wrong side such as lack of proper planning, poor record keeping and teaching parallel to curriculum policy documents.

Fourthly, that educators as union members are still living in the world of fierce revolt against the government even though the current government is new, democratic and elected by them. Amoako (2014:149) ascertains that SADTU was formed not only to protect and fight for the improvement of the conditions under which teachers worked, but it also had a covert political mandate to align its struggles with the national democratic struggle to end apartheid rule. What is most surprising is that even novice educators fresh from universities; who have been taught best teaching practices; immediately after being employed they drastically change, abandon all good practices and indulge in mischiefs.

### **Recommendations**

After successful collection and analysis of data, interaction with interviewees of the four schools, the performing and underperforming schools, we came up with the following recommendations that can assist many institutions to improve their results and recommendable legacy of good practices.

#### **Daily lesson plans be compulsory**

A lesson plan serves as a guide that a teacher uses daily to determine what the students will learn, how the lesson will be taught and how learning will be evaluated. Lesson plans make it possible for teachers to function more effectively in the classroom by giving a detailed outline that they adhere to during each class. Lesson plans further encourage team teaching both for phase and grade educators. Wong (2009:12) says that an effective teacher knows how to design lessons for student

mastery; which is reflected in lesson plan. During planning, grade educators will sit around the table, get the topic that needs to be taught, analyse it and come up with different approaches to teach the topic, prepare learning aids and suitable assessment. We therefore recommend that the Department of Education makes daily lesson plans compulsory for the benefit of learners and good practice.

#### **Teacher union's advocacy for daily lesson plans**

Teacher unions have powers to advise their members to 'toe the line' and make daily lesson plans their second culture. Barber (1996:171-194) is of the opinion that teacher unions do not specifically respond by addressing educational crisis. To a large extent, the unions are concerned with more general labour issues which cut across the whole world. If only unions can redirect their focus and offer less to labour issues to addressing educational crisis. Unions must persuade their constituencies to complete daily lesson plans, assess learners, give each learner special attention and generally improve the state of affairs of learners.

#### **Monitoring and evaluation of Implementation of educational policies**

It is mandatory for educational policies to be implemented without fail. We therefore recommend that the Department of Education must use all available human resources to enforce the implementation of educational policies such as daily lesson plans, phase and grade planning, and actual teaching and assessment. The circuits and district curriculum advisors must frequently monitor that educators prepare lesson plans. The second integral activity is evaluation of the whole process. Evaluation is a task which has its purpose in identification of merits and deficiencies and it is an integrative part of the control task (Fullan, 2001). The quality functionality of tasks is measured by means of evaluation. If monitoring and evaluation of educational policies is fairly done, our education system will be relevant spot on.

### **Conclusion**

There is an expression that says that 'if you fail to plan, you are planning to fail'. One of the most important activities a teacher must do is to plan

lessons. In order to prepare learners for success, lessons must be planned thoroughly and include all components of an essential curriculum. Thus, educators must always have record that a good teacher is the one who is able to plan and keep records properly, in fact teaching is all about planning for the success of learners who are regarded beneficiaries.

It is strange, but some teachers do not complete detailed lesson plans every day and then wonder why students do not learn. Although years of experience can shore up less-than-complete planning, nothing compares to well-planned lessons. Comprehensive plans increase the likelihood that lessons run smoothly, so that students receive quality instruction (Cunningham, 2009). The instructions in this context are qualitative because they were planned (according to learners' level of comprehension) and recorded. Educators must therefore disregard their so-called 'rights' and respect the core interests of beneficiaries, children.

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