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A RESEARCH UPON VARIOUS STRATEGIES FOR PREPARATION OF LESSON PLAN

A Research upon Various Strategies for Preparation of Lesson Plan

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Abstract –A lesson plan is an important methodological component of the learning process. The key purpose of the article is to analyse the current situation and suggest how the information technologies can assist in the development of lesson plans, their accumulation and retrieval, thus ensuring their effective application. The development of lesson plans and descriptions will allow educators reuse didactic resources (lesson plans) as an effective learning tool. The storage of didactic resources will allow teachers to use the best practices, and the same learning objects in different learning scenarios.

Planning ahead to identify a course of action that can effectively help learners reach their goals and objectives is an important first step in effective instruction. Lesson planning communicates to learners what they will learn and how their goals will be assessed, and it helps instructors organize content, materials, time, instructional strategies, and assistance in the classroom.

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INTRODUCTION

A lesson plan is an auxiliary teacher's work for preparing, organizing and conducting a lesson. By preparing for lessons a teacher writes a plan. It includes a topic, objectives, teaching structure, material for independent work of students, their work at separate stages, which students should be checked, etc..

The lesson plan can be treated as one of the learning object examples. Any digital resource, to be used for teaching, most frequently for learning and applicable in other learning contexts, is usually considered as a learning object (LO). In this paper, we shall use the notions of learning resources and learning objects synonymously (they are used like that in the European Learning Object Metadata Application profiles. In order that a resource might be used again, in another context, it should be related with the data describing the resource, the so-called metadata on the basis of which the work of LO storage is done: searching, generalization, importing into virtual learning environments and exporting out of them, assembling with other objects and so on.

Lesson plans were used in the education process long ago. Today's contemporary problem is how to present them in educational portals and resource repositories. The electronic learning process differs from the traditional way of teaching: one can use different tools (computer, e-mail, etc.), different types of resources (video or audio records, pictures and the like), work at different time and the like. The training process, in which the traditional teaching methods integrate internet teaching, is known as flexible learning, i.e., ever more popular learning model. Most important it is that this model allows reuse of learning resources.

The latest investigation of e-learning show that much time an effort are needed to develop new models, to improve the quality of learning objet and their usage. On the other hand, it is no less important to illustrate how learning object are applied in the learning process.

Teachers are developing lesson plan that:

- Stimulate teachers to take a deeper look at the everyday teaching process;

- Encourage teachers to think of specific needs of each student: proper learning styles and methods are chosen for planning and specific needs of students are taken into account;

- There is a splendid basis for cooperation of colleagues: teachers can render their experience to beginners teachers, thus encouraging professional improvement;

- Stimulate teachers to be innovators and propose new ways of teaching, to test new training aids and strategies for achieving better results;

- Help teachers to be fit, to have more confidence in themselves and get the better of problems that may arise in the training process;

- Assist in deepening teachers' knowledge and skills: careful lesson planning allows them to get an idea how and what is going on in reality.

Automated lesson planning systems are created however. These are mostly separate systems that do not follow to the metadata standards and are not meant for sharing the good teachers' experience. It has been noticed that learning object repositories and their search systems can realize the sharing of the good experience, but all that should be properly described.

A description of learning scenarios for sharing the good experience is presented in Roselli and Rossano (2006): the Experiences metadata model (EXM) of 8 categories has been proposed. The generated means enable us to transfer the description into the XML file based on the LOM standard.

Adult English language learners generally have limited time to devote to participating in language classes. A good lesson plan is an important tool that focuses both the instructor and the learners on the purpose of the lesson and, if carefully constructed and followed, enables learners to efficiently meet their goals.

A lesson is a unified set of activities that focuses on one teaching objective at a time. A teaching objective states what the learners will be able to do at the end of the lesson. Teachers use the information learned through the needs assessment to develop the objectives (See Needs Assessment and Learner Self-Evaluation Activity Packet, page II–5.) For example, if the learners identify "understand written communication from my children's teachers" as a goal, an objective might be "learners will be able to interpret a child's weekly homework form" or "learners will be able to read the notes that their children's teachers send from school."

STEPS FOR PREPARING A LESSON PLAN

Below are six steps to guide you when you create your first lesson plans. Each step is accompanied by a set of questions meant to prompt reflection and aid you in designing your teaching and learning activities.

(1) Outline learning objectives

The first step is to determine what you want students to learn and be able to do at the end of class. To help you specify your objectives for student learning, answer the following questions:

- What is the topic of the lesson?

- What do I want students to learn?

- What do I want them to understand and be able to do at the end of class?

- What do I want them to take away from this particular lesson?

Once you outline the learning objectives for the class meeting, rank them in terms of their importance. This step will prepare you for managing class time and accomplishing the more important learning objectives in case you are pressed for time. Consider the following questions:

- What are the most important concepts, ideas, or skills I want students to be able to grasp and apply?

- Why are they important?

- If I ran out of time, which ones could not be omitted?

- And conversely, which ones could I skip if pressed for time?

(2) Develop the introduction

Now that you have your learning objectives in order of their importance, design the specific activities you will use to get students to understand and apply what they have learned. Because you will have a diverse body of students with different academic and personal experiences, they may already be familiar with the topic. That is why you might start with a question or activity to gauge students' knowledge of the subject or possibly, their preconceived notions about it. For example, you can take a simple poll: "How many of you have heard of X? Raise your hand if you have." You can also gather background information from your students prior to class by sending students an electronic survey or asking them to write comments on index cards. This additional information can help shape your introduction, learning activities, etc. When you have an idea of the students' familiarity with the topic, you will also have a sense of what to focus on.

Develop a creative introduction to the topic to stimulate interest and encourage thinking. You can use a variety of approaches to engage students (e.g., personal anecdote, historical event, thought-provoking dilemma, real-world example, short video clip, practical application, probing question, etc.). Consider the following questions when planning your introduction:

- How will I check whether students know anything about the topic or have any preconceived notions about it?

- What are some commonly held ideas (or possibly misconceptions) about this topic that

students might be familiar with or might espouse?

- What will I do to introduce the topic?

(3) Plan the specific learning activities (the main body of the lesson)

Prepare several different ways of explaining the material (real-life examples, analogies, visuals, etc.) to catch the attention of more students and appeal to different learning styles. As you plan your examples and activities, estimate how much time you will spend on each. Build in time for extended explanation or discussion, but also be prepared to move on quickly to different applications or problems, and to identify strategies that check for understanding. These questions would help you design the learning activities you will use:

- What will I do to explain the topic?

- What will I do to illustrate the topic in a different way?

- How can I engage students in the topic?

- What are some relevant real-life examples, analogies, or situations that can help students understand the topic?

- What will students need to do to help them understand the topic better?

- Plan to check for understanding

Now that you have explained the topic and illustrated it with different examples, you need to check for student understanding - how will you know that students are learning? Think about specific questions you can ask students in order to check for understanding, write them down, and then paraphrase them so that you are prepared to ask the questions in different ways. Try to predict the answers your questions will generate. Decide on whether you want students to respond orally or in writing. You can look at Strategies to Extend Student Thinking m, http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/P4 4.php [21 to help you generate some ideas and you can also ask yourself these questions:

- What questions will I ask students to check for understanding?

- What will 1 have students do to demonstrate that they are following?

- Going back to my list of learning objectives, what activity can I have students do to check

whether each of those has been accomplished?

An important strategy that will also help you with time management is to anticipate students' questions. When planning your lesson, decide what kinds of questions will be productive for discussion and what questions might sidetrack the class. Think about and decide on the balance between covering content (accomplishing your learning objectives) and ensuring that students understand.

(5)   Develop a conclusion and a preview

Go over the material covered in class by summarizing the main points of the lesson. You can do this in a number of ways: you can state the main points yourself ("Today we talked about..."), you can ask a student to help you summarize them, or you can even ask all students to write down on a piece of paper what they think were the main points of the lesson. You can review the students' answers to gauge their understanding of the topic and then explain anything unclear the following class. Conclude the lesson not only by summarizing the main points, but also by previewing the next lesson. How does the topic relate to the one that's coming? This preview will spur students' interest and help them connect the different ideas within a larger context.

(6)   Create a realistic timeline

GSIs know how easy it is to run out of time and not cover all of the many points they had planned to cover. A list often learning objectives is not realistic, so narrow down your list to the two or three key concepts, ideas, or skills you want students to learn. Instructors also agree that they often need to adjust their lesson plan during class depending on what the students need. Your list of prioritized learning objectives will help you make decisions on the spot and adjust your lesson plan as needed. Having additional examples or alternative activities will also allow you to be flexible. A realistic timeline will reflect your flexibility and readiness to adapt to the specific classroom environment. Here are some strategies for creating a realistic timeline:

- Estimate how much time each of the activities will take, then plan some extra time for each

- When you prepare your lesson plan, next to each activity indicate how much time you expect it will take

- Plan a few minutes at the end of class to answer any remaining questions and to sum up key points

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- Plan an extra activity or discussion question in case you have time left

- Be flexible - be ready to adjust your lesson plan to students' needs and focus on what seems to be more productive rather than sticking to your original plan

STRUCTURING A LESSON

- Before starting with your topic, you should motivate your students and prepare them for what is ahead of them. Choose something catchy, particularly interesting. This does not necessarily have to do something with the topic you are teaching in this lesson. Also, warm-up or ice-breaking activities are very helpful.

- The motivation phase is followed by the developmental phase. In this phase the teacher prepares the students for the upcoming topic, e.g. according to the topic of the lesson, students are tuned into the topic using pre-tasks. In this phase the students work on issues they need to know in order to successfully manage the processing phase.

- The processing phase is the body of the lesson. Here, the students solve the main task. This should also be visible in the timing of the lesson: Processing and evaluation should take up two thirds of the lesson's time.

- Application/fixation/consolidation of new knowledge

- The final phase is an evaluation during which the students present the tasks' results. This should take up at least as much time as processing. Make sure that you go beyond a pure "please read out your answer!" by raising further questions and discussing further issues. Giving constructive feedback is essential for the learning process.

SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PLANNING LESSONS

A good lesson plan involves consideration of more than just what is going to be taught (the objective) and how it will be taught (materials, equipment, and activities). The following elements also need to be thought about and planned for:

- Sequencing—Do the activities move logically so learners are progressively building on what they already know? Do the activities flow well? Are transitions between activities smooth?

- Pacing—Are activities the right length and varied so that learners remain engaged and enthused?

- Gauging difficulty—Do the learners have enough skill and knowledge to do the planned activities? Are the instructions clear?

- Accounting for individual differences—Do the activities allow for learners of varying proficiency levels to receive extra attention they might need, whether below or above the norm? Are all students actively involved?

- Monitoring learner versus teacher talk—What is the balance between learner talk and teacher talk? Does the lesson allow a time for learners to interact, producing and initiating language?

- Timing—Was the amount of time allotted for each part of the lesson sufficient? If the planned lesson finishes early, is there a backup activity ready? If the lesson wasn't completed as planned, how can the next class be adjusted to finish the material?

Most of these aspects of lesson planning are learned by experience, so it is important for the instructor to evaluate how the lesson went at the end of each class period. Ask the following questions:

- What went well? Why?

- What did not go as planned? Why?

- If I had it to do over again, what would I change?

- What have I learned about my students that I can account for in future lesson planning?

A lesson plan acts as a road map for a class session. It identifies the destination (objectiveof the lesson) and marks out the route (activities for each stage of the lesson). It is an aid for both new and seasoned teachers. New teachers should write down the details of each activity—perhaps even script them. Experience will guide how detailed a lesson plan needs to be. Sharing the plan with learners (e.g., writing the objective and a brief description of activities on the board) keeps both the teacher and the learner focused on where they are going, how they are going to get there, and when they arrive.

THE LESSON PLANNING PROCESS

Before the actual delivery of a lesson, instructors engage in a planning process. During this process, they determine the lesson topic (if states have implemented content standards, the topic should derive from them). From the topic derive the lesson

objective or desired results–the concepts and ideas that learners are expected to develop and the specific knowledge and skills that learners are expected to acquire and use at the end of the lesson. Objectives are critical to effective instruction, because they help instructors plan the instructional strategies and activities they will use, including the materials and resources to support learning. It is essential that the objective be clear and describe the intended learning outcome. Objectives can communicate to learners what is expected of them–but only if they are shared with learners in an accessible manner. Instructional objectives must be specific, outcome-based, and measurable, and they must describe learner behavior. Heinich et al. (2001) refer to the ABCD's of writing objectives:

- Audience – learners for whom the objective is written (e.g., ESL, ABE, GED);

- Behavior – the verb that describes what the audience will be able to do (e.g., describe, explain, locate, synthesize, argue, communicate);

- Condition – the circumstances under which the audience will perform the behavior (e.g., when a learner obtains medicine from the pharmacy he or she will be able to read the dosage); and

- Degree – acceptable performance of the behavior (i.e., how well the learner performs the behavior).

Learner assessment follows from the objectives. Based on the principles of backward design developed by Wiggins and McTighe (1998), instructors identify the lesson objective or desired results and then decide what they will accept as evidence of learners' knowledge and skills. The concept of backward design holds that the instructor must begin with the end in mind (i.e., what the student should be able to know, understand, or do) and then map backward from the desired result to the current time and the students' current ability/skill levels to determine the best way to reach the performance goal.

FORMAT OF AN EFFECTIVE LESSON PLAN :

The nature of the lesson plan will depend on the nature of the lesson. There are different kinds of lessons which are taught for different purposes. When the lesson is about language, its grammar is emphasized. A lesson can be affective when it appreciates literature and practical when it teaches people to use the language. It is the latter type of lesson which concerns us here. It is a type which necessarily involves a certain amount of learner participation and the more the participation, the more planning is required.

In the daily lesson, the teacher attempts to put his knowledge of theory, language and general guidelines for language teaching into practice. He knows that the students do not suddenly acquire skills, so he should plan to spend at least part of each period in review, in doing the assignment, and in introducing new material to be assigned for the next class period. Sequenced in this manner, the students are exposed to all assigned material in at least three consecutive classes. In attempting to build always from the old to the new, from known to the unknown, he can organize the class period in the following sequence: Review, View and Pre-view; generally speaking, approximately one fourth of the class period should be spent in review, one half in viewing the assignment and one fourth in pre-vievving new material and making the assignment.

Following is the format of a daily lesson plan which is not based on any particular lesson. In fact, this format can be considered as a general one, which can be broadly applicable and suitably modified to any kind of lesson and is very effective in obtaining specific results.

DAILY PLAN :

- Type of lesson

  i. Grade level

  ii. Time allotment

- Goals and Objectives

A. Goal of the teaching unit (Sample terms: Know, Understand, Appreciate, Grasp, Enjoy, Believe etc.)

B. Objectives of the teaching unit (Students will be able to write, recite, present, identify, differentiate, compare, contrast etc.)

CONCLUSION

To be effective, the lesson plan does not have to be an exhaustive document that describes each and every possible classroom scenario. Nor does it have to anticipate each and every student's response or question. Instead, it should provide you with a general outline of your teaching goals, learning objectives, and means to accomplish them. It is a reminder of what you want to do and how you want to do it. A productive lesson is not one in which everything goes exactly as planned, but one in which both students and instructor learn from each other.

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