

# **Failing to Plan Is Planning to Fail to Teach Effectively; An Exploration into Effective Lesson Planning and Learning Experiences of Class 8<sup>th</sup> Students**

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## ***Abstract***

*This study investigated into the effects of lesson planning on effective teaching. The study is qualitative in nature and was delimited to the eight government middle schools of Tehsil Babuzai District Swat. Eight (8) teachers and Sixteen (16) students were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The results showed that most of the teachers understand the importance of lesson planning but when it comes to the implementation of the lesson planning the views of the teachers and the students are divided. Majority of the students are of the view that teachers are using only one method of teaching with no activities and with no variety in the teaching techniques. While teachers are of the opinion that overcrowded classrooms and time management are the main issues that stop them from using and implementing proper lesson planning. Further those students whose teachers' rely on traditional methods with no prior planning their students are introvert, shy and prone to avoid taking part in the activities.*

**Keywords:** Lesson Planning, Learning Experiences, Teaching Techniques, Overcrowded Classrooms

## **Introduction**

Lesson planning is one of the important steps towards effective teaching. Proper planned lesson allow the teachers to manage their lessons in a way so as to ensure maximum learning out comes and also to achieve the learning goals. Lesson plan is the technique in which the teachers are autonomous to design objectives which they think to be more specific and accurate (Stigler, & Hiebert, 2009). It also include the activities which can help in achieving the objectives, arrangement of the activities, time allotment for every part of lesson plan and implementation of lesson plan, it brings the true teaching into the classroom. Without such planning it is not, in most, cases possible to achieve the desired objectives. Reed and Michaud (2010) claimed

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that the process of planning a lesson gives the opportunity to the teachers to evaluate their own understanding with respect to the lesson which is to be taught.

Similarly, according to a research study conducted by Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) with 60,000 students, concluded that teacher is one of the most important factors that affect students' academic achievement and planning a lesson is the most important aspect of teaching. Planning a lesson covers teaching in real meanings which gives the teacher reflection into their teaching, progress, deficiencies, accuracy in terms of methods, so that the teacher can carefully plan lesson next time to overcome his/her problems and brings improvement in the teaching learning process.

Further, it is in planning that teachers translate syllabus guidelines, institutional expectations and their own beliefs and ideologies of education into guidelines for actions in the classroom (Calder head, 1984). Lesson planning also help covering the student's behaviors, students who are weak in the classroom; shy, non-participative, or learning disabled. Furthermore, according to Darling-Hammond (2008) who support the claim that lesson plan is the teacher's own responsibility and effort that helps him to teach with such technique that is comfortable for both the teacher and students. This will help the teacher to teach with confidence instead of relying on notes and other keys.

The researchers are of the belief that lesson planning gives the opportunities to the teachers to think deliberately about their choice of lesson objectives, the types of activities that will meet these objectives, the sequence of those activities and the material that are needed for conducting those activities (Cicek, & Tok 2014; Meyer, 2015). Furthermore, Waterman, and He (2011) in their research concluded that lesson planning gives the insight to the teachers so that they can modify or make changes in their teaching. Additionally, they were of the opinion that inexperienced teacher are not

always interested in making lesson plan and thus their students have always low academic performance.

Similarly, Anfara Jr, Lenski, and Caskey (2009) also stressed on importance of lesson planning without which teaching is incomplete and dull. Furthermore, it enables the teachers to implement the plan in the classroom learning environment in more congenial and reflective manner which positively leads to the achievement of learning target. Jalongo, Rieg, and Helterbran (2007) considered that lesson planning brings innovation in teaching because teachers can involve the students in different learning activities which the teacher would not able to do without planning. Lesson planning gives the teachers indicators of students' progress and if there is a problem in their planning they can reform their lesson planning according to the needs of the students and the goals they selected. They claimed that the teacher entering the class with pre-planning has high academic performances of students and on the other hand students have always weak performances if the teacher enters the class without prior lesson planning.

In continuation to the study of Jalongo, Rieg, and Helterbran (2007); Ayres (2014) further added that lesson planning is fundamental aspects of teaching; it helps the teacher in shaping and defining the responsibilities of teacher during teaching. He concluded that lesson plan is not just simply planning a lesson but it is rather a very complicated task of teaching because every class needs different strategies of designing lesson plan due to different age students, understanding, level, grade, learning styles. The teacher should be able to take in consideration the needs of the students and the goals of the lesson and carry the class according to their lesson plan. It is important to use an energetic lesson plan that's asked for feedback during the class to deal with student's encouragement. Furthermore, lesson plan helps in the perspective of the teachers in three areasspecially, in content knowledge, informative knowledge, and the potential for students' achievement. At the end of the

process he found that teachers believed that lesson plan positively affected their content knowledge which directed them to gain self-confidence and deeper understanding. The teachers also mentioned that lesson plan improved their pedagogical knowledge and student's achievement. Furthermore, Rachelle and Meyer, (2005) investigated that lesson planning impact teachers, instructional strategies in the field of self-reflection, incorporating problem-solving activities, and encouraging cooperative learning. The study revealed that lesson planning does improve teachers' content knowledge, improve teachers as well as in students' achievements. Lesson plan is like supporting teacher in a class, it gives more help to the teacher in the class and makes him/her self-reliant and self-confident.

Fattahi (2009) claimed that when academic members (teachers) are not interested' lesson planning; will always lead to low and unsatisfactory level of learning environment in their classroom. He finds that academic members (teachers) are not always interested in lesson planning because they are not participating in formal workshop or any other educational courses that is meant for enhancing their knowledge importance about lesson planning. He further suggested that if an institution needs to improve their students learning achievements so the faculty members need to take proper training of lesson planning and other important aspects of teaching which help them out to teach effectively. Keeping in view all the above discussions and empirical evidences, this study intended to investigate students' and teachers' experiences from the perspectives of lesson plan at elementary level in district Swat. To explore the research problem following two major research objectives were formulated;

1. To explore the teachers' understanding and their perceptions regarding the effectiveness and use of lesson plan at elementary level in the subject of English



2. To investigate students' satisfaction regarding lesson planning and the effectiveness of their teachers' teaching at elementary level in the subject of English

### **Research Methodology**

Qualitative research design was adopted for the investigation of the effectiveness of the lesson plan and its benefits for the students in terms of learning and for the teachers in terms of effective teaching. Researchers explored students' learning, teachers' teaching that how a teacher is using different techniques in their teaching to enhance learning and also the deficiencies of their lesson plan, strengths and other aspects which can effects students learning.

Further, the nature of the study was narrative for which data were collected through semi structured interviews from teachers and students. Semi-structure interviews enabled the respondents to openly discuss different dimensions of the lesson planning. Moreover, good point about semi structure interview is that it gives the researcher the advantage of discussing a research problem extensively and at the same time it helpkeeping the researcher on track on the pre-formulated questions. Moreover, in order to capture the true essence of the interviews, a recording device was used so that the chances of missing important information during transcription can be reduced too it's maximum. Population of the study were included all 85 government middle schools teachers and students of Tehsil Babuzai, District Swat. Total number of English teachers in these schools is eighty five (85). Researchers selected 8 English teachers and 16 students through purposive sampling technique. Furthermore, the researchers selected 1 English teacher and 2 students from each school through convenient sampling technique. The reason for selecting only 8 schools of the total number of 85 is that these schools are situated in the far flung areas, however, efforts were made to select schools from both Urban

as well as from rural areas so as to obtain a representative data for the research problem.

### Data Analysis and Discussion

All the data gathered through semi structured interviews from teachers and students were analyzed and different themes have been extracted. The details of the extracted themes were presented as;

**Teacher's knowledge of lesson planning:** This segment of the research findings includes investigation of the teachers' knowledge of the lesson planning.

**Table 1 Teachers' perceptions about lesson planning in percentage**

Statements	Number of teacher	%
Teachers knowledge about lesson planning	08	100
Teachers who teach through lesson planning	5	62.50
Awareness regarding the purpose of lesson planning	6	75.00
Lesson planning is important only to inexperienced teachers	5	62.50
Overcrowded classrooms are hurdles in lesson planning	2	25.00
Time management is a problem in implementing lesson plan	2	25.00

As shown in the table 1 that 100% of the respondents' knew what lesson planning is. Similarly 62.50% of the teachers actually were teaching through lesson planning and 75% of them were also aware about the purpose of the lesson planning. For example a teacher in the government Middle school Dagg (pseudonym) believed that *"Lesson planning is the preparation for the class before entering the class to teach more effectively"*.

Piñeiro Ruiz, (2009) has also supported the claim in his research and noted that *"a plan is a mental structure or the map [which] teachers need initially to help them through the landscape"*. Similarly, another teacher from Government middle school Dang (pseudonym) explain lesson plan in detail

and discuss the ways he was preparing his lesson plan. He defines lesson plan as *“Lesson plan is pre-planning before entering the class which allow the teacher to manage his/her class according to the learning objectives of the lesson”*. From teachers interviews it seems that all the teachers understand lesson plan well and can explain what the lesson plan is and how it is used. All the teachers were agreed that lesson plan allow the teachers in the class to achieve his/her goals easily. In the same vein another teacher from government middle school bandea (pseudonym) while expressing his views about the importance of lesson planning noted that *“Yes, (lesson planning is important) because with lesson plan goals of the lesson can easily be achieved.”*

However it was not the case with all the teachers who believed that lesson planning is important for all the teachers. The teachers who were found planning before entering the class as they were also of the opinion at the same time that lesson planning is necessary only for the teachers who are new in teaching profession. For instance a teacher in the government middle school Bandae was of the opinion that; *“New teachers must need lesson planning while experienced teachers do not need lesson planning because they teach the whole course many times and novice teachers are often facing problems in the classroom while teaching, because they are teaching the course for first time”*.

Furthermore, majority of the teachers (62%) believed that lesson planning is most important for effective teaching because lesson planning help them out in increasing self-confidence. Further out of the total sample population 62.5% teachers believed that lesson planning is very important for effective teaching because lesson planning allow them to teach effectively and covers all the important points of the lesson which will not be possible without prior planning. These were endorsed by a teacher from government middle school landea (pseudonym) who claimed that *“Yes, lesson plan is important because with prior planning of the lesson, learning goals could become easy and possible to be achieved within the given time”*.

Without doing prior planning of the lesson, it is not only a teacher who fails to fulfil his/her purpose rather the cost of the failure is too big. His/her failure cost learning opportunities to students who might not get the chance of learning that specific topic till certain period of their lives. Moreover 25% teachers from the selected sample believed that overcrowded classroom has always been a barrier for them to implement the lesson plan. Mr. Ali Rehman from Government middle school Qash (pseudonym) stated that *“The main difficulty I always face is that there are 60 to 55 students in my class which always make problem for me to adjust the goals and to achieve those goals within the given time. It is difficult to attract 60 to 55 students at a time toward the learning experiences in the classroom within 50 minutes time”*.

Furthermore, the teachers argued that argued that there are so many problems with overcrowded classroom, there are different mental levels of students and often there are always more students who are very weak in study so the teachers always tries to carry the weak students along and it needs more time so most of the times the teaching learning objectives are either not achieved or only limited objectives are achieved.

Similarly another problem with overcrowded classroom is that teacher cannot arrange activities for the students because the teacher has no time to perform activities on the students due to the large number of students. The teacher is also required to give equal time to each student. Moreover, as some of the teacher mentioned in particular that one of the problems with overcrowded classroom is that teacher has no stamina to attract the students focus again and again towards the learning. Another teacher perspective about over crowded classroom was that. *“Overcrowded classroom always distract me during my teaching because students are making noise and scuffling with each other that results into wastage of time which is otherwise meant for teaching to them. Next day when you come to the classroom, you are focused*

*on finishing the course instead of focusing on activities or individual differences”.*

As mentioned above by the teachers during interviews that overcrowded classroom could possibly be a problem to a certain degree in a sense that overcrowded classroom hamper the smooth dispensation of the classroom activities but it also show a different side of the truth that these teacher need to see too. The other side is that overcrowded classrooms are difficult to manage but lesson planning provides opportunities to the teachers for overcoming this difficulty by planning certain activities for students so as to engage them in the learning activities instead of allowing them the chance for distraction. Also students' distraction, according to the researcher understanding, goes back to the reality of them (students) not being engaged in the classroom activities which the teacher need to focus on and devise ways of engaging them in the classroom proceedings.

However, as noted in the data from the teachers' interviews it is clear that overcrowded classroom is a big barrier for some teachers to implement his/her lesson plan well which is a problem that cannot be totally ignored. Beside overcrowded classrooms, another problem that surfaced during the data analysis of the teachers' interviews' is that of time management. 50% of teachers believed that limited (50 minutes) classroom time is a big hurdle in achieving teaching learning goals. Teachers were of the opinion that they cannot deliver their lessons in the limited duration while teaching in the overcrowded classroom. They were of the opinion that we try to teach by doing prior planning of the lessons/topics but due to time limitations all the learning goals within the given time are mostly leftunachieved.

In continuation to the above Mr.Waqas (pseudonym) from Government middle school Tall (pseudonym), while recording his opinion stated that *“The main problem for implementing lesson plan is time, which always becomes a big problem for me to achieve my goals because there are always 40 to 45*

*minutes of class and having 50 to 60 students in a class it is very difficult to attract the focus of students.*

### **Students Responses about Teaching Effectiveness**

In order to investigate the teaching effectiveness of the teachers' students responses yield the following data.

**Table 2 Students responses about teachers' teaching**

Statement	No of students	%
Teacher using verity of teaching of teaching method	6	37.5
Teachers are teaching with one method	11	68.75
Teachers asks questions between the lecture	4	25
Teachers perform activities on students	7	43.75
Teacher is not hard worker	14	87.5

The above table showed students' responses about the teaching of their teachers. During the interviews 68% of the students were of the opinion that their teachers always teach to them using one method of teaching. Gulmohammad (pseudonym) is the student of Government middle school aboha (pseudonym) recorded his views and said that *"yes, our teacher is always teaching us with one method (lecture method)"*. Another student from Government middle school Dagg (pseudonym) expressed his opinion as following; *"Yes, our teacher is teaching us with only one method. He is not using some other method or technique in the class. Our teacher just read the lesson to us"*.

From the students responses above it can be concluded that most of the time students are passive spectators of teachers' active teaching. It was also noted during the data analysis of students, interviews, students' responses about teachers' teaching are different from that of the teachers. During the teacher's interviews 62.50% of the teachers were of the opinion that they are using variety of techniques and do proper lesson planning, however, the students data gained from the interviews shows that 68.50 of the teachers teach only through one method i.e. lecture method. During the interviews students

were asked whether they feel that their teacher is hard worker? Also the students were made to understand what hard worker means; like the one who give individual attention, ask questions, use variety of techniques and quizzes etc. in response to the above mentioned question, 87% of the students were of the opinion that their teacher is not hard working and that they are not satisfied from their teachers. However, the actual word “unsatisfied” was mentioned only by 50% students while rest of them used different words that mean that their teacher is not hard working. This portion of the data is directly in conflict with the data taken from the teachers where 62.5% of the teachers claimed that they are teaching through proper lesson planning, which means using variety of teaching methods, techniques, asking questions and involving students in activities.

However, some (43.7%) students did confirm that their teacher uses variety of techniques during classroom teaching. A student from Government middle school Kach (pseudonym) stated that; *“No, our teacher teaches us in different ways. He teaches us in group method and cooperative method, at the end of the lesson he asks questions”*. Furthermore, it was noted that many students about the teaching methods and the teachers avoidance of teaching through lesson planning is not only effecting the quality of teachers’ teaching but it is also seriously jeopardizing the learning opportunities of the students in country like Pakistan where educational opportunities are not easily accessible and available to everyone.

## **Discussion**

Findings of the study show that 100% of the teachers included in the sample group aware of the lesson plan and understood that what is lesson planning and what the purpose lesson is planning is and how it will be implemented. Furthermore, majority (62.50%) of the teachers were reported as designing/preparing lesson planning for their class and thus according to the data generated from teachers interviews have more chances of achieving their

goals. Pressley, Brown, El-Dinary, and Allferbach (1995) described goals as general statements about what must be accomplished in order to attain and satisfy students' needs. Teachers have always one basic goal of their teaching that more students learn.

It was also noted that teachers who were teaching through lesson planning, their students were active participator and were satisfied from their teacher's performance. Teachers who plan for their class have always high expectations for students learning. As suggested by Ang, Klassen, Chong, Huan, Wong, Yeo, and Krawchuk (2009) an effective teacher has positive expectations for student success; and lesson plan reflects such expectations. Teachers who plan for students learning have more chances of achieving his/her goals of teaching. Teachers who do situational analysis and plan his/her lesson plan will always have high achievements in their teaching. One of the common factors about lesson planning during the data analysis was teaching through lesson planning among English teacher. Most of the teachers who used lesson planning for teaching were teaching the subject of English. According to Pressley, Brown, El-Dinary, and Allferbach (1995) and Woodward (2001) who approve that *"English teacher need to study some significant features before planning, gather ideas, material and possible starting off points, determine what the cognitive target and the purpose of the lesson will be and write that down as the general objective, consider the students' needs and personalities as individuals and as a group, and draft three or more specific objectives for the lesson"*

On the other hand teachers who do not do planning for their class, always face problems in their teaching as far as achieving of the learning objectives are concerned. Unprepared teachers are always confused in their teaching goals and sometimes go out of the lesson. As suggested by Hardman (2011), that in most educational contexts, a succession of jungle path lessons



will suggest to the students a degree of careless – or even negligence – on the part of the unprepared teacher.

The problem with unprepared teacher is that they have no mindset what to teach and how to teach and cannot answer properly to the questions of the students. Due to un-planning, teachers sometimes misguide the students so with lesson planning teaching has the idea what to teach and what to achieve. The same has been endorsed by Pressley, Brown, El-Dinary, and Allferbach (1995). According to Brown “lesson planning is an outline in terms of what students will accomplish by taking into account students’ needs and personalities as individual and as a group”.

Teachers can arrange his/her lesson plan according to the student’s needs, their mental level and other related aspects of students. Furthermore lesson plan also helps teacher to engage students in practical activities to promote more learning and teacher who performs activities with their students in the classroom are more intelligent and active participant, as stated by Beglar and Hunt (2002). “Opportunities for practice may force students to pay close attention to form and to the relationship between form and meaning”. Students can be easily attracted towards learning with the help of activities as recorded by 62.50% of the teacher in interview. However, unfortunately according to the data gathered from the students only 13.50% were teaching through lesson planning and teaching to students by using activities in the classrooms.

Although all (100%) of the teachers were found during data analysis to be aware of the importance of the lesson planning. Moreover, according to the data gathered from teachers (students data indicate otherwise) lesson planning is not only helpful for the teachers in terms of adjusting his/her teaching during the class but also manage students to attract students towards learning. Teacher who prepares their own lesson planning have no problem in the implementation of the lesson plan and will always clear about their teaching goals. According to Kagan, and Tippin (1992) suggested that every teacher

need to write their own lesson planning because it gives them the flexibility to teach according to their own method and adjust according to the situation in the classroom. Teachers who write their own lesson plan have no problems in achieving their goals; they were always clear about their goals and know how to achieve their goals as well. Cabe (1996) support this argument and note that lesson planning is the teacher own exertion because such lesson plan allow him/her to teach in a method which he/she feel more comfortable for them. Similarly, according to Justman, and Mais (1956) that “lesson planning should reflect an instructor’s individual efforts” teachers have opportunity to write their own lesson planning which they believe is more appropriate for their classroom teaching.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results and discussion of the study following major conclusions were drawn;

1. It was concluded that teachers are not using more than one method or do not bring innovation in their teaching through prior panning of the lessons.
2. After matching students and teachers responses only 13% teachers actually were found planning for teaching and do prepare them for teaching in advance.
3. Teachers who uses lesson planning in their teaching their students are active participator and intelligent and those teachers who do not teach with lesson planning have no proper method of teaching and performance in the class.
4. Similarly their students of those teachers who are not planning their lesson were found to be introvert and less active.
5. It is clear that majority of the students are not satisfied from their teachers who were not preparing lesson plan for their classrooms and the students have problems in learning from those teachers.

## **Recommendations**

After analyzing the data the following recommendations are suggested;

1. Based on the data it was found that majority of the teachers do not do lesson planning, therefore, the school head teacher is recommended to make proper arrangement to make lesson a compulsory component of teachers evaluation.
2. Further, it was also recommended that for struggling teachers in-service training/workshop at school level may be arranged to enlighten the teachers regarding the new approaches of lesson planning and its importance in the educational attainments of students.
3. Based on conclusions it was found that teachers try to avoid lesson planning on the pretext of time management and overcrowded classrooms, therefore, the curriculum planners should include such materials in the textbooks which can only be taught through activities.
4. Further, school authorities are recommended to make proper arrangements to overcome the overcrowded classroom issues.



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