ATTITUDES OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION STUDENT TEACHERS TOWARDS LESSON PLANNING IN ESWATINI

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Abstract
Lesson planning is an important component of teaching practice as it determines lesson delivery. However, little research has been done regarding attitudes of student teachers towards lesson planning in Eswatini. Therefore, this study sought to determine the attitudes of agricultural education student teachers towards lesson planning in Eswatini. The study employed a *descriptive correlational research design. It targeted a census of the agricultural education student teachers (N=40) who were doing teaching practice in the 2018/2019 academic year. A questionnaire was developed from the literature and used for data collection. The questionnaire was validated by three lecturers from the Department of Agricultural Education and Extension. The inter-item reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha and the reliability coefficient was found to be r=.77. Data were analysed using descriptive and correlational statistics. Findings of the study revealed that student teachers considered lesson planning an important part of teaching practice as it saves the student teacher from haphazard teaching, promotes orderliness, facilitates effective teaching and makes the teachers feel confident. Despite this, the student teachers also considered lesson planning to be tedious and time consuming. The general conclusion drawn from the study was that the agricultural education student teachers had a positive attitude towards lesson planning. Therefore, the study recommended that the school should ensure that all stakeholders collaborate to support the student teacher with the entire requirements for developing and delivering a lesson plan.*

Key words: *agricultural education, attitude, lesson planning, student teacher, teaching practice*

Introduction

Student teachers are exposed to a range of classroom experiences when they work in classrooms and schools during teaching practice (Leshem & Bar-Hama, 2008). One of these experiences is lesson planning. A lesson plan is the heart of being an effective teacher and makes the teacher feel confident (McNell & Wiles, 1990). Hence, every teacher training programme makes lesson planning a top priority area (Robbins, 2003). A lesson plan is a series of course plan units which provide direction for a teacher on the content to be taught and the manner to teach it (Spratt, Pulverness, & Williams, 2005). Hanane (2016) defines lesson plan as a guide for teacher's classroom management that helps teachers to facilitate the teaching and learning process.

Lesson planning impacts the teacher in the following ways: gives greater assurance and greater freedom (Borich, 2007); removes anxiety and bestows confidence (Moradi, 2019); strategize for the teaching (Iqbal, Siddiqie & Mazid, 2021; Spratt, et al., 2005); and useful to substitute teachers (Jensen, 2001). Also, lesson planning improves flow and order on the lesson delivery (Iqbal, et al., 2021; McNell & Wiles, 1990), saves time (Gafoor & Akhilesh, 2010); and serves as evidence to a teacher's professional performance (Airasian & Russell, 2007). According to the Ministry of Education and Training in Eswatini, lesson planning helps in the following manner: (i) indicates the preparedness of the teacher for the lesson, (ii) assists the teacher to decide on teaching and learning strategies, (iii) helps the teacher to identify and make corrections in both the pupils' book and the teacher's guide, (iv) assists the teacher to identify and carry out necessary activities or experiments prior to the lesson, and lastly (v) helps the teacher to decide on the assessment procedure (Manzini Inset Team, 2020).

Even though lesson planning is so important, Guneyli and Aslan (2009) report that teachers have varying attitudes towards lesson planning. Some teachers and administrators attach value to the lesson planning due to its contribution on lesson delivery. However, some teachers consider the preparation of a lesson plan tedious and time demanding, thus, some end up not following it when teaching (Yelon, 1996). Unfortunately, there is no study that has been conducted on the attitudes of student teachers towards lesson planning yet their attitudes could have a great impact on their teaching career. Therefore, this study sought to determine the attitudes of agricultural education student teachers towards lesson planning in Eswatini.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of the study was to determine the attitudes of agricultural education student teachers towards lesson planning in Eswatini. The objectives of the study were:

1. To determine the attitudes of high school agricultural education student teachers towards lesson planning.
2. To determine the extent to which high school agricultural education student teachers utilise lesson plans in teaching.
3. To describe the challenges high school agricultural education student teachers have regarding lesson planning.
4. To identify ways of improving lesson planning by high school agricultural education student teachers.
5. Describe the relationship between agricultural education student teacher's attitude and the demographic characteristics and background information.

Theoretical framework

The study was framed using the Theory of Planned Behaviour [TPB]. This theory was postulated by Ajzen in 2006. The Theory of Planned Behaviour postulates that behaviour is a function of salient beliefs relevant to that behaviour. These salient beliefs are considered as the prevailing determinants of a person's intentions and actions. Basically, the theory has three components that influence intention and actual behaviour: Attitude (AB), Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) and Subjective Norm (SN) (see Figure 1). All these components are informed by the beliefs held by the individual. The Attitude is

mainly influenced by the Behavioural Beliefs (ABI). Individuals are believed to hold positive and negative attitudes concerning the behaviour. On the other hand, the Subjective Norm (SN) emanates from the Normative Beliefs (SNI). This is related to the perceptions of social pressure to perform the behaviour. Finally, the Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) is informed by the Control Beliefs of an individual. The behavioural control entails the perceived ability to complete the behaviour. In defining these antecedents Ajzen (2006) summarised them as follows:

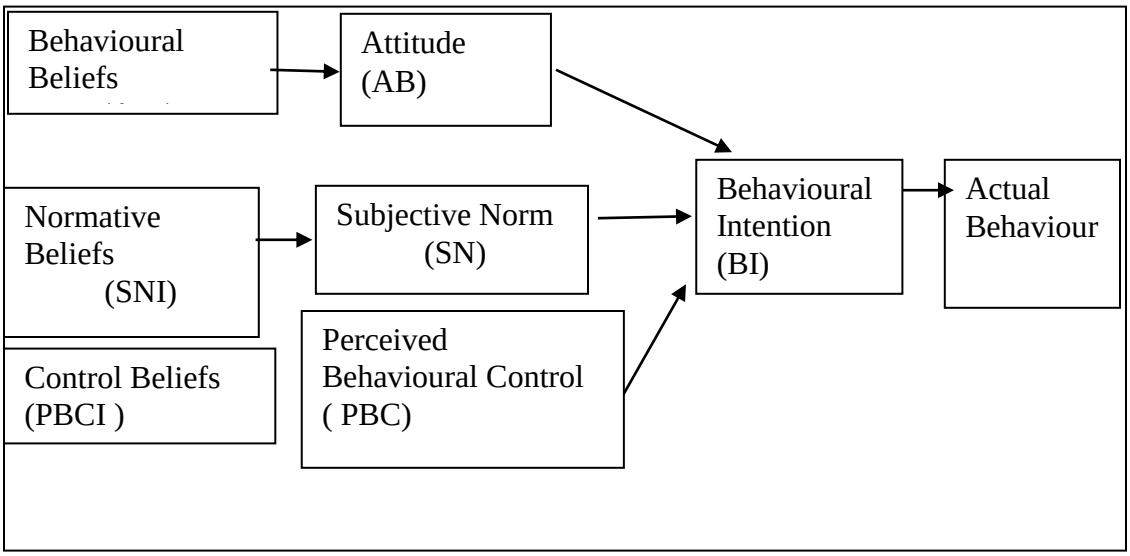

Figure 1. Theory of Planned Behaviour
Source: Ajzen (2006)

The Theory of Planned Behaviour is relevant to this study as it has the component of attitude that emanates from behavioural beliefs. As indicated already, student teachers hold varying behavioural beliefs regarding lesson planning. Some student teachers consider lesson planning as a valuable exercise towards effective teaching while other student teachers consider lesson planning a tedious and time consuming exercise. Such beliefs definitely result in certain kinds of attitudes that student teachers embrace towards lesson planning.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive correlational design. This design is appropriate in this study as it is relevant in portraying the phenomena under study [attitude of student teachers towards lesson planning] as they exist while attempting to establish the relationship between two variables [the phenomena and the respondents' demographic characteristics]. The study targeted a cohort of agricultural education student teachers (N=40) who did teaching practice in the 2018/19 academic year at the University of Eswatini. A close-ended questionnaire was developed from literature, and used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into five sections, namely: Section A- Student

Teacher Attitude [14 items]; Section B – Extent Student Teachers use lesson plan [12 items]; Section C – Challenges for using a lesson plan [13 items]; Section D – Ways of improving lesson planning [13 items]; Section E – Demographic characteristics and background information [6 items] – sex, age, home location, qualification, school location and school activities. A six-point Likert-type scale, having the following ranges: 1= strongly disagree; 2=slightly disagree; 3=disagree; 4=agree; 5=slightly agree; and 6=strongly agree, was used to measure the student teachers' attitude [Section A]; Challenges in lesson planning [Section C]; and Ways of improving lesson planning [Section D]. A numerical scale, using the following ranges: 1=Never; 2=Rare; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; and 5= Always was used to measure the extent to which agricultural education student teachers used lesson plan during the delivery of the lesson [Section B]. In Section E which is related to the demographic characteristics and background information, the respondents were required to circle or fill in the blanks. Three experts were purposeful randomly selected from the Department of Agricultural Education and Extension at the University of Eswatini to address content validity of the questionnaire as they are educators. The comments from the experts were helpful in improving the questionnaire before it was used for data collection. An appropriate picture [showing student a teacher writing a lesson plan] was put on the cover page to address issues related to face validity. Face validity is the extent to which a measurement instrument's items look like what is supposed to be measured. Post-hoc reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS version 20. The inter-item reliability coefficient was r=.77.

Data collection was done in April 2019. The respondents were given a fort night to complete the questionnaires. The questionnaires were hand delivered by the researchers to the agriculture student teachers. Reminders were made two days before the questionnaires were collected after the two weeks had elapsed. The respondents were asked to complete a consent form as a measure to address issues of informed consent. Also, the purpose of the study was clearly explained to the participants before they signed the consent forms. To ensure confidentiality, the questionnaire was formulated such that respondents' names were concealed. The questionnaires were only accessible to the researchers. Descriptive [frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation] and correlational [Pearson product moment] statistics in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 were used for analysing the data.

Findings and discussions

Demographic characteristics

Table 1 indicates that most of the student teachers were males (n=24, 61.5%). A majority were aged between 20-25 years (n=18, n=47.4%) and 44.7% of the respondents (n=17) were aged between 26-30 years. Most of the student teachers came from rural areas (n=25, 64.1%). Lastly, 90% of the respondents (n=36) did the 12 weeks duration teaching practice.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (n=39)

Demographics	f	%

Sex		
Male	24	61.5
Female	15	38.5
Age		
20-25	18	47.4
26-30	17	44.7
31-35	3	7.9
Home location		
Urban	2	5.1
Semi- urban	12	30.8
Rural	25	64.1
Teaching Practice Duration		
Eight Weeks	4	10.0
Twelve Weeks	36	90.0

Attitudes of student teachers toward lesson planning

Table 2 indicates that the following were dominating attitudes of agricultural education student teachers towards lesson planning in Eswatini: saves the student teacher from haphazard teaching (M= 5.17, SD= 0.80); promotes orderliness (M= 5.15, SD=1.00); heart of being an effective teacher (M=5.07, SD= 1.06); makes the student teacher feel confident (M=5.02, SD=1.17) and gives the student teacher greater assurance (M=5.00, SD=0.97). Student teachers also considered lesson planning in the following manner: promotes development in thinking (M=4.73, SD=0.90); saves time (M=4.68, SD=1.31); can be copied from previous years (M=4.37, SD=1.22); is tedious (M=4.20, SD=1.52); and gives the student teacher greater freedom in teaching (M=3.90, SD=1.24). It was observed that the respondents disagreed with the following statements; that lesson planning can be done in the head (M=2.61, SD=1.36); it is not necessary at all (M=2.24, SD=1.24) and does not involve teaching aids (M=2.15, SD=1.17). The findings of the study are consistent with what was reported by McNell and Wiles (1990). McNell and Wiles pointed out that lesson planning creates orderliness and development in students and enables student teachers to achieve the objectives of the lesson. Student teachers are able to make decisions about the form and content of their instruction, such as how much presentation, questioning, and discussion to do when they design a lesson plan. Kola (2021) also found out that effective lesson planning promotes good teaching and curriculum policy implementation.

Table 2: Attitudes of agriculture student teachers toward lesson plans

Items	**M**	**SD**
Saves the student teacher from haphazard teaching	5.17	0.80

Promotes orderliness	5.15	1.00
Is the heart of being an effective teacher	5.07	1.06
Makes the student teacher feel confident	5.02	1.17
Gives the student teacher greater assurance	5.00	0.97
Promotes development in thinking	4.73	0.90
Saves time	4.68	1.31
Can be copied from previous years	4.37	1.22
Is tedious	4.20	1.52
Gives the student teacher greater freedom in teaching	3.90	1.52
Can be done in the head without writing	2.61	1.36
Is not necessary at all	2.24	1.24
Does not involve teaching aids	2.15	1.17
Overall	**4.18**	**1.17**

Extent to which student teachers utilise lesson plans in teaching

Table 3 presents data on the research question that solicited information on the extent to which agricultural education student teachers utilised lesson plans during teaching practice. The student teachers indicted that they **always** used or referred to the lesson plan under the following circumstances: when writing the topic on the board based on the lesson plan (M=4.73, SD=0.63) and evaluating the lesson after teaching (M=4.54, SD=0.64).

The table also reveals that the student teachers **often** asked learners questions based on the lesson plan during teaching (M=4.44, SD=0.71); writing notes on the chalkboard guided by the lesson plan (M=4.20, SD=1.03); using the planned interest approach to introduce the topic (M=4.20, SD=0.75); scanning the lesson plan while teaching (M=4.20, SD=0.81); complementing positive behaviour to make the lesson plan effective (M=4.15, SD=0.76); using the chalkboard to write objectives from the lesson plan (M=4.07, SD=1.25); using the lesson plan to guide the lesson from the beginning to the end (M=4.00, SD=0.99); showing learners material related to lesson plan (M=3.85, SD=0.85); and engaging learners by partaking in hands-on activities from the lesson plan (M=3.78, SD=1.06).

The findings of the study confirm those from Powell (2009) that implementation of lesson plan includes the following; writing the topic based on the lesson plan on the chalkboard; having an interest approach as an introduction to the main topic of lesson plan; and evaluating the lesson. Powell further argued that a teacher should complement positive behaviour and hard work through proper lesson planning. Furthermore, Doyle (1984) also recommends that teachers should prepare classes such that they engage learners on hands-on activities as the learners learn better by doing than listening.

Table 3: Extent to which student teachers utilise lesson plans in teaching (n=180)

Items	**M**	**SD**
Writing the topic based on the lesson plan on the chalkboard	4.73	0.63
Evaluating after teaching on the content in the lesson plan	4.54	0.64
Asking the learners questions during teaching based on the lesson plan	4.44	0.71
Writing notes on the chalkboard related to the lesson plan	4.20	1.03

Using interest approach to introduce the main topic of the lesson plan	4.20	0.75
Scanning the lesson plan while teaching	4.20	0.81
Complementing positive behaviour to make the lesson plan effective	4.15	0.76
Using chalkboard to write objectives of the lesson plan	4.07	1.25
Following lesson plan from the beginning to the end	4.00	0.99
Showing learners material related to the lesson plan on how to use it	3.85	0.85
Engaging learners by partaking on hands-on activities	3.78	1.06
Distributing textbooks to the learners	2.93	1.44

Never = ≤1.45 Rarely = 1.45-2.44 Sometimes = 2.45 – 3.44 Often = 3.45 – 4.44 Always ≥ 4.45

Challenges regarding the use of lesson plan by student teachers

As table 4 below indicates, student teachers indicated the challenges they faced regarding the use of a lesson plan during the planning stage. The following challenges were expressed regarding lesson planning: teaching materials being inadequate (M=4.68, SD=0.89); lesson planning being tedious thus taking a lot of time (M=4.41, SD=1.37); building flexibility to deal with emerging issues in lesson plan (M=4.30, SD=1.24); arousing student interest from the lesson plan (M=4.18, SD=1.15); planning in advance (M=4.18, SD=1.15); and insufficient time to cover even practical sessions (M=4.08, SD=1.62). Other challenges faced by the student teachers regarding lesson planning were: having many school responsibilities (M=3.73, SD=1.09); inability to use the lesson plan during lesson delivery (M=4.35, SD=1.37), failing to achieve objectives (M=3.70, 1.52); strategic delivery of lesson plan (M=3.68, SD=1.29); and poor connection with previous lessons (M=4.07, SD=0.99). The findings of the study reiterate those from Iqbal, et al. (2021) that some teachers fail to adhere to the lesson plan. Veenman (1984) also found that teachers fail to build flexibility into lesson plans so that they can deal with emerging issues.

Table 4: Challenges Regarding the Use of Lesson Plan

Items	**M**	**SD**
Teaching materials are inadequate	4.68	0.89
Lesson planning is tedious thus taking a lot of time	4.41	1.37
Building of flexibility to deal with arising issues in lesson plan	4.30	1.24
Striking on student interest from the lesson plan	4.18	1.15
Planning in advance	4.18	1.15
Many practicals involved in the subject, less time to lesson plan preparation	4.08	1.62
Having many school responsibilities	3.73	1.32
Failing to achieve objectives	3.70	1.52
Inability to deliver the lesson plan to the learners	3.68	1.29
Poor connection with preceding or subsequent lessons	3.65	1.25
End up not following the lesson plan	3.46	1.43
Inability to follow lesson plan when teaching	3.03	1.44

Ways of improving lesson planning

As table 5 below indicates, student teachers indicated the following as measures that can be used to improve lesson planning; by the use of relevant teaching aids (M=5.43, SD=0.79); attending workshops (M=5.17, SD=7.96); and planning ahead (M=5.07, SD= 0.69). Other ways that can be used by agriculture student teachers to improve lesson planning include: planning with student interest in mind (M=4.90, SD=0.72); relating lesson plan to real life (M=4.85, SD=1.15); providing more opportunities for learners to choose how they accomplish tasks (M=4.80, SD=0.93); and having different resources of the content (M=4.73, SD=1.14). The findings of the study share similar sentiments with those by Brophy (1984) who noted that teachers should know the important things to cover in the lesson plan, and should solicit relevant teaching and learning resources. Additionally, Brophy also argued that teachers should reflect on the lesson plan and relate it to real life.

Table 5: Ways of Improving a Lesson Plan

	M	SD
Using relevant teaching aids	5.34	0.79
Attendance of workshops on lesson planning	5.17	1.09
Planning ahead	5.07	0.69
Planning with student interest in mind	4.90	0.72
Relating to real life	4.85	1.15
Providing more opportunities for learners to choose how they accomplish tasks	4.80	0.93
Having different resources for content	4.73	1.14
Considering learners' mistakes	4.55	1.13
Principal checking the lesson plan daily	4.15	1.49
Thinking reflectively	3.90	1.16

Relationship between agricultural education student teacher's attitude and the demographic characteristics and background information

Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to establish the relationship between agricultural education student teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning and the demographic characteristics and background information. The correlations were interpreted using Davis (1971) descriptors outlined below.

Correlation value	**Interpretation**
0.01 – 0.09	Trivial / none
0.10 – 0.29	Low
0.30 – 0.49	Medium
0.50 – 0.69	Essential
0.70 – 0.89	Very strong
0.90 – 0.99	Almost perfect

Source: De Vaus (2002)

Table 6 depicts that a positive medium relationship (r=.34) existed between the agricultural education student teacher's attitude and the teaching practice duration. The

result implies that as the teaching practice duration is increased, the students developed a positive attitude towards lesson planning. As Mdluli, Tsikati, & Myeni, (in print) indicate, teaching practice duration seem to have an impact on the effectiveness of student teachers. Mdluli et al. further argue that there is need to ensure that the teaching practice duration is adequate to ensure that student teachers are exposed to some of the teaching activities such as lesson planning. The results also indicate that a low positive relationship (r=.20) existed between the agricultural education student teachers' attitudes and the age of the student teachers. Once again, this seem to indicate that as the student teachers grow, a positive attitude towards lesson planning is developed. Similarly, Herwiana (2017) found out that age was a factor in effective teaching. However, literature is inconclusive on whether young teachers are more effective than old teachers or vice versa.

Table 6: Relationship between agricultural education student teacher's attitude towards lesson planning and the demographic characteristics and background information

Demographic variables	**Correlation (r)**
Sex	.12
Age	.20
Home location	-.11
Teaching practice duration	.34

Conclusions and implications

Based on the findings, the researchers concluded that the attitudes of agricultural education student teachers towards lesson planning in Eswatini were generally positive. Even though the agricultural education student teachers agreed that lesson planning was tedious; they still believed that a lesson plan saves the teacher from haphazard teaching; is the heart of being an effective teacher, and strengthens the student teacher's confidence. Another conclusion drawn from the study was that student teachers seemed to utilize lesson plans in their teaching as they indicated that they followed the lesson plan when teaching, referred to it when they wrote the topic and notes on the chalkboard and when they asked learners questions during teaching. They also indicated that they used the lesson plan to evaluate the lesson after teaching. However, based on the findings, the researchers concluded that agricultural education student teachers had challenges in developing an interesting approach to introducing the topic or lesson, soliciting instructional materials and having enough time to prepare a lesson plan.

The findings imply that agricultural education student teachers in Eshwatini fully understand the significance of a lesson planning in the teaching and learning process. The findings are consistent with Iqbal, et al. (2021) who posits that lesson planning promotes orderliness and prevent haphazard teaching. Furthermore, the results have implication for the Department of Agriculture Education of the University of Eswatini to fortify the preparation of student teachers by strengthening areas such as helping students to develop interesting approaches to lesson delivery.

Recommendations for action

From the findings and conclusion of the study, the researchers recommend that the Department of Agricultural Education and Extension should strengthen the preparation of the student teachers in lesson planning, as it is key in lesson delivery. This is because the agricultural education student teachers seemed to have challenges in the implementation of the lesson plan especially to develop strategies to make the lesson interesting. All stakeholders involved such as the University, school administration, department of agriculture, parents and student teachers should work together to solicit the necessary teaching aids which will enhance the development and implementation of the lesson plan. An electronic template should be developed which will reduce the amount of work and time taken in lesson planning.

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