Lesson Planning: Outcomes & Responsibilities in Planning

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Introduction

Lesson planning is a fundamental procedure in structuring individual lesson outcomes that are mutually supportive of the overall course outcomes. Lesson plans assist in structuring lesson outcomes and activities associated with those outcomes. However, who is responsible for lesson planning? Who is responsible for setting individual lesson outcomes? Should all instructors follow one master lesson plan? Alternatively, can they frame their own if the course outcomes are still met? How do you check to see if the outcomes of the course are being met? Who is responsible if outcomes are not achieved? Lastly, how can one make the system more efficient in supporting outcome achievement? This seems like too many questions to attempt to answer within a short review of academic literature focusing on lesson planning. However, each question is mutually supportive of each other. This brief literature review has researched and analyzed the subject of lesson planning. The research data or rather the literature was comprised of multiple journals, white papers, and articles across the spectrum of lesson planning. It is a goal of this literature review that the research will assist in shaping responsibilities of individual instructors and course directors. The research will also assist in identifying best practices for instructors to implement while lesson planning. The results of the analysis on lesson planning are outlined in the proceeding paragraphs.

Who is responsible for lesson planning?

According to Dona Kagan and Deborah Tippins (1992), individual instructors should write their own lesson plans because it provides them the flexible to teach according to individual methods of organization and personality. Hugh Stickler (1967), Patrick Cabe (1996),
and Aaron Friedman (1974) support the argument that lesson plans are an instructor’s individual effort because it allows him or her to teach using a technique that they find comfortable. This in return leads to the instructor feeling confident while teaching instead of having to rely on well-detailed notes during class lectures. Joseph Justman and Walter Mais (1956) thirdly support that lesson plans should reflect an instructor’s individual effort. Thus, each instructor should frame and structure their daily lessons.

The method in which lessons connect to each other spurs the thought that just daily lesson planning is not sufficient. Should each teaching module be nested or connected with each other or can separate subjects be taught independently within the same course? This leads into the discussion of outcomes. Who is responsible for setting course outcomes or typically referred to as goals or objectives. Is it imperative that individual instructors follow exactly what outcomes establish or is there room for flexibility?

**Who is responsible for setting lesson and course outcomes?**

Aaron Friedman (1974) mentioned how instructors need to question themselves regarding “what do I expect my class to know at the end of this period…” (p. 442). This could translate into the outcome of a lesson is an individual instructor’s effort. There is a brief reference in Glenn Snelbecker’s (1987) article on institutional design that mentions teacher biases and curriculum design as belonging to higher administrative individuals then teachers (p. 35). Within curriculum design is the designation of course outcomes (objectives, aims, or goals) that are to be included in the course syllabus (Stickler, 1967, p. 129). Within the department of military instruction, the course director sets the course outcomes. Robert Yinger (1980) mentions that the majority of teachers think of planning lesson objectives as a second thought (p. 110). Instead, they focus on activities and resources first (Yinger, 1980, p. 110). Course outcomes should come
from course directors to the instructors. How that outcome is conveyed to the student is up to the individual instructor through their lesson activities.

While course outcomes seem to be the sole responsibility of course directors, should they as well set sub objectives that can easily be adopted by instructors into their daily lesson plans? Should the course director allow her instructors to establish their own sub objectives and to what mechanism is there to ensure they are nested into the overall course outcomes. The issue with the sub objectives not nested is one unintended consequence of allowing freedom of design to individual instructors. The process should be the course director sets the overall outcomes. Then through a faculty development workshop the course director and instructors could jointly work on establishing sub objectives for daily lessons. This way instructors feel like they have input and the individual instructor will be more knowledgeable on the course outcomes. This promotes clarity within the course being taught. In addition, it acts as a feedback tool for the course director regarding his or her outcomes at the same time.

Is it necessary for all instructors to follow the same lesson plan?

According to Hal Basham and Robert Davis (1967) if instructors are teaching the same curriculum, they do not necessarily need the same lesson plan but they do need the same outcomes. Basham and Davis (1967) define outcomes as “action verbs” from a student-oriented perspective that demonstrates knowledge (p.130). Each of the fourteen articles reviewed for this brief study highlighted the individualized of lesson plans. This means that each instructor is responsible for his or her own lesson planning. This occurs regardless if one instructor is teaching a course or if twenty instructors are teaching the same course. Each instructor needs to create his or her own unique plan.
However, even if lesson plans are an individual effort it is still important to note that each lesson plan needs to include objectives that tie back to overall course outcomes. For example, even though there are several instructors covering the same material on the same day, each needs to ensure that their activities tie back to outcomes stated for the course. Additionally, if an instructor sets sub objectives for daily lessons it is important that they be clearly stated, feasible, and nested with the overall course outcomes. The counter argument is that if a course director wants to instill more control over their instructors they could assign a standardized lesson plan and take all design and adaptability away from their instructors. However, lesson planning should be left to the individual instructor.

**How do you measure lesson and course outcomes?**

Beth Hurst (2001) stresses that course outcomes are achieved by conducting comprehension activities. Comprehension activities are problem-solving activities where students discuss how they generated their unique answer to solving a particular problem (Hurst, 2001, p. 693). She seems to follow a more subjective approach by using assessments with her students in order to have them learn the capability to discuss problem solving followed by a instructor critique. Anthony Mangione (1969) follows the traditional model that objectives are what are testable within a course. Lesson measurement and achievement seems to center upon in-class activities and the sub-outcomes individual instructors set. It seems, as performance evaluation verses potential is the consensus of whether or not a course outcome has been met by the student body or not. However, who is responsible for establishing performance criteria is not well defined in lesson planning based literature. However, it can be assumed that an inherent task for course directors is to set the performance evaluation criteria in relation to measuring course outcomes.
Linking back to the proper establishment of clear outcomes is the need for clear evaluation mechanisms. If outcomes are not measureable in an observable action such as a written test or physical demonstration of a skill such as shooting a rifle then the outcome is not written well. Alternatively, is it possible that the outcome is not measureable at that instance. In terms of military training, military science has an outcome that states that students will demonstrate basic Soldier skill understanding in order to be successful in field training the next year. This leads to two evaluations one of basic Soldier skills and then comparison to the assessment mechanism for student completion of summer training. If students excel in the course but fail in the field, is the course still successful? Is it okay to link outcomes with a secondary outcome? Should this second outcome then be included when assessing success of a course? It would be easier to keep separate outcomes separate. Maybe the military science course outcome should be added as a sub objective under the over arching military education program outcomes. What skills should be taught within the course regarding basic Soldier skills? The course director must clearly state which skills in particular the instructors within the department should focus on. Thus, a learning point is having clarity when establishing outcomes and setting limitations using sub objectives to narrow the spectrum of knowledge or skills to be instructed during the course.

**Conclusion**

The literature on lesson planning assisted in answering the proposed questions. The literature also assisted in raising new questions for future discussion. After analysis of fourteen articles regarding lesson planning it was easy to view common trends that are best practices for course directors and instructors. Such best practices include defining roles and multi tiered outcome-lesson planning. By analyzing lesson planning, it assists in shaping and defining the responsibilities of a course director verses instructors. Some tasks are the course director’s
responsibility such as setting outcomes (objectives or goals) and making them clear to the staff (the instructors, teachers, administration). It is the individual instructor’s responsibility to plan each lesson and ensure their assigned outcomes are met. Even if multiple instructors are teaching the same course, each instructor must design his or her own lesson plan. This defining of roles would assist in clarifying responsibilities to incoming instructors during their initial training. In addition, by having clear defined roles and responsibilities it will make the system more efficient.

Outcomes are set at the course director level and implemented through lessons designed by individual instructors. It is important to use a dynamic lesson-planning tool that facilitates flexibility and includes a feedback mechanism to deal with student stimulation during class. Robert Yinger (1980) argues that the traditional model of lesson planning that includes “specifying objectives, selecting learning activities, organizing learning activities, and specifying evaluation procedures” is too linear and does not allow for the flexibility needed in the classroom to respond to student’s needs (p. 108). Instead, Yinger (1980) suggests that the MacDonald-Eisner model of designing activities first then connecting them to outcomes is more suitable (p. 108). Another outcome of Yinger’s research on lesson planning is that good teachers begin by looking at yearly planning then break it down to the daily level as exampled below:
Joseph Justman and Walter Mais (1956) also stress the importance of long range planning of outcomes or course objectives and then weaving individual lessons plans in pursuit of those outcomes (p. 52). Without the initial establishment of outcomes by the higher authority (course director) the instructor will not know what desired end state (outcome) is to be obtained through his or her instruction.

Basham and Davis (1967) best described evaluation of outcomes when they compared testable actions to a particular outcome. How outcomes are evaluated should not be vague and should be well defined and provided to students. Evaluation criteria should be a responsibility of the course director since he or she is the individual who defines and frames the outcome. This does not mean they are solely responsible for designing every evaluation tool. Nevertheless, the course director should be able to frame what criteria exceeds the standard, makes the standard, marginally achieves the standard, or fails the standard. Again, the course director is assigned the responsibility of establishing and setting the criteria to measure outcomes. It is an individual instructor’s responsibility to instruct his or her students in a manner with a well defined evaluation criteria.
Thus, lesson planning is a fundamental requirement needed to effectively instructor. Lesson planning begins with well-defined outcomes and evaluation criteria established by the course director. Evaluation criteria established by the course director needs to be actionable, meaning it can be demonstrated. For example, if the outcome is that a student can draw a tactical graphic then the evaluation should be a scenario where the student has to draw a tactical graphic by hand without references. It is on the onus of individual instructors to plan their lessons in a suitable means for them to facilitate the passing of knowledge to their students. The instructor while in the process of passing of knowledge needs to support the course outcomes. If lesson plans are mutually supportive of course outcomes than a particular student’s evaluation will accurately reflect their proficiency on course material. Thus, the review of literature assisted in clarifying responsibilities of a course director verses instructor. The research also assisted in defining how outcomes fit into the lesson planning process. In addition, many additional questions were spurred by this brief analysis on lesson planning literature that will assist in future research and academic debate.
Annotated Bibliography


The themes of this article are how students demonstrate knowledge competence and how to evaluate knowledge competence. Bashman and Davis are fixated on how evaluation criteria must be verb oriented. By assessing actions, competence on knowledge can be assessed. The difficulty lies in first assigning the outcomes of the course and then tying them to action-oriented events to assess knowledge proficiency among a student body. Furthermore, each lesson should contain “student-oriented” objectives that way each student knows how competency he or she is supposed to gain out of each lesson (Bashman & Davis, 1967, p. 131). This is another best practice that needs to be implemented into lesson planning for current instructors.


Lesson planning as an individual instructor’s effort is the highlight from this article. Cabe offers an acronym based mnemonic to assist in lesson planning that covers audience, topic, objective, messages, involvement, and check up (1996, p.149). His article stresses the importance of reaching course objectives and tying in assessments within individual lessons. Instructors are responsible for nesting their sub objectives with the overall course objectives. This delineation of responsibilities assists in answering some of the questions proposed in the analysis section of this brief paper. His mnemonic is a best practice for individual instructors to implement when they consider lesson development.

Setting lesson objectives within lesson planning is the instant take away from the Friedman article. Again, Friedman emphasizes that lesson planning is an individual instructor’s onus. However, the secondary highlight is the need to think about obtaining course objectives while conducting lesson planning. While it is important to plan activities, they must relate back to objectives that tie into course outcomes. This was an importance aspect highlighted in this article.


What to include within lessons and the thought process behind activities is the theme of Hurst’s article. She did however; offer a good tip on evaluation design. She emphasized problem-solving scenarios that allowed multiple solutions to be generated in order to allow students to explain their processes. In particular, this technique is can be easily applied to multiple disciplines. Scenario based evaluations assess multiple competencies and is a best practice for course directors and individual instructors alike.


Although this article is dated, Justman and Mais offer pertinent points for lesson planning. The focal point of this article stresses the importance of prior planning before lessons are executed. In particular, Justman and Mais emphasize the need for long range planning in support of achieving objectives during the academic year. In regards to daily planning the author offers insight of
focusing on activities, resources, evaluation, and feasibility as criteria when lesson planning in the short term. The last insight offered within this article is that lessons themselves have to be flexible.


The central topic of this article discusses lesson plan formats. Kagan and Tippins argue that there is no set approved lesson format that guarantees success. Additionally, the lack of forethought about lesson objectives and an overconcentration on in class activities is often the pattern most teachers follow (Kagan & Tippins, 1992, p. 478). The authors analyzed several teachers in order to analyze how they lesson planned. The results of their study included best practices of the most successful teachers. The result was that the teachers who used flexible lesson plans with forethought on course objectives were considered the most successful.


Much like the Yinger and Justman-Mais articles, Mangione highlighted the importance of long and short term lesson planning. Mangione spent the rest of his article offerings best practices to new instructors that focused on classroom management and how to gain rapport with students. How to resources in class activities that gain student’s interest was his second theme. However, he failed to mention the importance of tying lessons to course outcomes and the need to design activities that assist in the evaluation of course outcomes. His articles seemed as more of a how to adapt one’s personality to the classroom instead of focusing on lesson planning.

The focus of Snelbecker was to express the concern that instructors are charged with designing their own lessons and not to wait to be told what or how to teach. While he does mention that curriculum, coordinators (course directors) set outcomes it is the onus of individual instructors to design their lessons to support those outcomes. Another interesting point was the mentioning of textbooks as a tool to facilitate the course and not the exact frame of how a lesson should be taught (Snelbecker, 1987, p. 35).


Stickler’s article listed ten qualities needed in order to achieve a superior college course. His qualities were aspects that the course director needs to first design and then pass on to his or her instructors for implementation. Highlights include the need for clarity on course outcomes, learning experiences are well organized, and student achievement is evaluated in terms of if the course outcomes are realized or not. The take away for Stickler’s article is that he offers best practices for course directors in terms of setting outcomes and evaluation of outcomes. The rest of the qualities are practices that would suit individual instructors for adaptation into their lesson planning.


Within his article, Yinger analyzed the planning process that goes into lesson planning. The highlight of his analysis was the need for teachers to conduct five basic levels of planning. The five levels included “yearly planning, term planning, unit planning, weekly planning, and daily
planning” (Yinger, 1980, p.112). This article coupled with Justman and Mais (1956) stance on long term planning as a critical facet of instruction is one best practice that should be implemented by all instructors. The last highlight of the Yinger article is the various diagrams he created to visually depict the planning and thought process teachers use to lesson plan. The one-step that Yinger missed in his diagramming was a step that facilitated feedback into the planning process for future use. In general, the key take away for Yinger’s analysis is the need for multi-tiered planning.
References


