

# A MODEL FOR DESIGNING ANY LESSON

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## TO THE STUDENT

When you have studied the contents of this chapter, you ought to be able to do the following:

- \* describe some general fundamental aspects of a lesson situation;
- \* show the significance of the lesson structure for designing a lesson;
- \* interpret a functional model for designing a lesson;
- \* explain the significance of the concept "particularization" for designing a lesson.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In their practice, teachers have to deal with a wide variety of instructional and learning activities. The situations within which these activities occur are extremely diverse and often place particular demands on a teacher's resourcefulness and creativity. Yet, when school activities are viewed as a whole, it is obvious that a LESSON constitutes an extremely important activity for both teacher and pupils. A lesson is the axis around which the practice of teaching in the classroom revolves (Van der Stoep, 1973: 4). A lesson is a particular situation in which a teacher has to take the initiative; consequently, a part of his personality is reflected in the lesson. The ways a teacher manages a lesson situation often serve as important criteria for judging his proficiencies. This means that an important part of any teacher preparation program is focused on the skills and proficiencies required to **design** and **present** lessons.

The aim of this and the following chapters is to formulate basic guidelines for designing **any** lesson. Since it is important to maintain the perspective that a lesson situation involves an extremely complex series of activities, it is necessary to emphasize some fundamental aspects of a lesson situation.

(a) A lesson is an event that occurs only among persons. It has a purposeful sequence of activities in which all participants actively take part.

(b) Each participant, teacher as well as student, takes part as a total person. Affective, cognitive, and normative aspects can always be distinguished during the phases of a lesson, but they cannot be separated from each other. Thus, interpersonal as well as teaching relationships always are established during a lesson, and they can be decisive factors for the meaningful completion of each lesson.

(c) Any lesson is thoroughly planned, and there must be purposeful activities by teacher and pupils. The teacher's activities basically are purposeful and planned interventions with respect to the child's learning activities (Van der Stoep, 1973: 5).

(d) During a lesson, instructional and learning effects are striven for which reflect the degree to which the teaching (lesson) and learning aims are achieved. "In this respect, the lesson has a dynamic, progressive, demanding character which the pupil may not refuse. In this sense, the lesson has educative value because the child changes [toward adulthood--G.Y.] to the extent that he learns" (Van der Stoep, 1973: 6).

(e) It is both possible and necessary to distinguish among particular but **essential** matters that generally are valid for any lesson situation. When these essential matters or activities are described and structured according to their inherent relationships, there is mention of a **lesson structure**. The concept "lesson structure" indicates that it is a **conveyer of the meaning** of the lesson content that is **lived-experienced as really essential** by the participants when a lesson is given.

## 2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LESSON STRUCTURE AND DESIGNING A LESSON

The lesson structure is a theoretical construction written about by didactic and subject didactic theoreticians. However, this theoretical construction has to reflect the essential aspects of the original (i.e., primordial) activities of **teaching** and **learning** in the lesson context. When this is done, such a lesson structure can serve as a **guideline** for **designing** new lessons. Professional teacher educators ought to be able to design new lessons with facility on the

basis of their **insights** into the meaning of the lesson structure. School practice shows us, however, that not all lesson designs are based on insights into the lesson structure. Two obvious additional ways of designing a lesson are distinguished:

(a) A teacher can observe some models and then follow their examples when he later gives a lesson. The danger of this approach is that the teacher may merely copy without being able to give a professional account of what he is doing;

(b) A teacher plans merely on the basis of experiences without being able to provide any theoretical account for his activities. Such planning tends to be impulsive and haphazard. This strategy clearly can succeed but when it fails, the teacher cannot give an account to himself as to why it failed.

It is not the intention to provide a complete discussion of the origin and foundation of the lesson structure within the primordial experience of educating. In this connection, the works of Van der Stoep, Louw, and Van Dyk can be read. For the purpose of this textbook on designing a lesson, many of the pronouncements of these authors are elaborated on and organized in new ways to achieve a functional structure that can be applied to designing any lesson.

### **3. THE LESSON STRUCTURE AS A MODEL FOR DESIGNING A LESSON**

The lesson structure explicated here has to have a functional character because it needs to be applicable to designing a lesson. The functional relationships among the components have to be interpretable for designing a lesson. In the following chapters each of the components are treated fully. However, at this stage, it is necessary to provide a comprehensive overview of a functional model that, in our judgment, can contribute to the purposeful structuring of the teacher's planning activities.

When a lesson is designed, the following aspects have to be planned separately and also with regard to their **coherent relations**:

(a) **Reducing subject contents.** Reducing the subject contents to their essentials and formulating the **learning aims**;

(b) **Aims of the phases of the lesson.** The reduced subject contents now are ordered according to specific **instructional aims** to be attained during the course of the lesson;

(c) **Lesson modalities.** Instructional and learning **activities** as well as supporting teaching and learning **aids** now are thoroughly planned. The **ways** the activities are going to be actualized specifically are planned;

(d) **Lesson form.** Finally, the form of the lesson is delimited by anticipating the **teaching method(s)** in relation to the **didactic ground forms**. The choice of a specific **methodological principle(s)** as well as certain **ordering principles** give a final flavor to the form of the lesson.

These four aspects are the basis for designing any lesson. The structural and functional relations among them are presented in the following model for designing a lesson. However, in order to maintain a perspective on the complexity of the activities while designing a lesson, the course of designing a lesson on the basis of this model now is considered. In the following chapters, each of these aspects is fully expounded.

### 3.1 Reducing subject contents

The first step in designing any lesson is to prepare the essential contents in their mutual relations as an ordered whole. Next, the teacher's task is to interpret and formulate these subject contents on the developmental level of the pupils. As subject expert, the teacher has the particular task of delimiting and structuring the subject terms, concepts, names, and symbols into meaningful mutual connections. On the basis of this reduction, a **hierarchy of learning aims** is delimited and **formulated** for the pupils. The level of proficiency (e.g., knowing or applying) on which the pupils are to practice and have mastery of the contents needs to be reflected in the learning aims formulated.

### 3.2 Aims of the (six) phases of a lesson

The teacher is the initiator of the lesson and during its course has to try to attain certain aims via his teaching activities. During the course of the lesson, the teacher will present the subject contents in

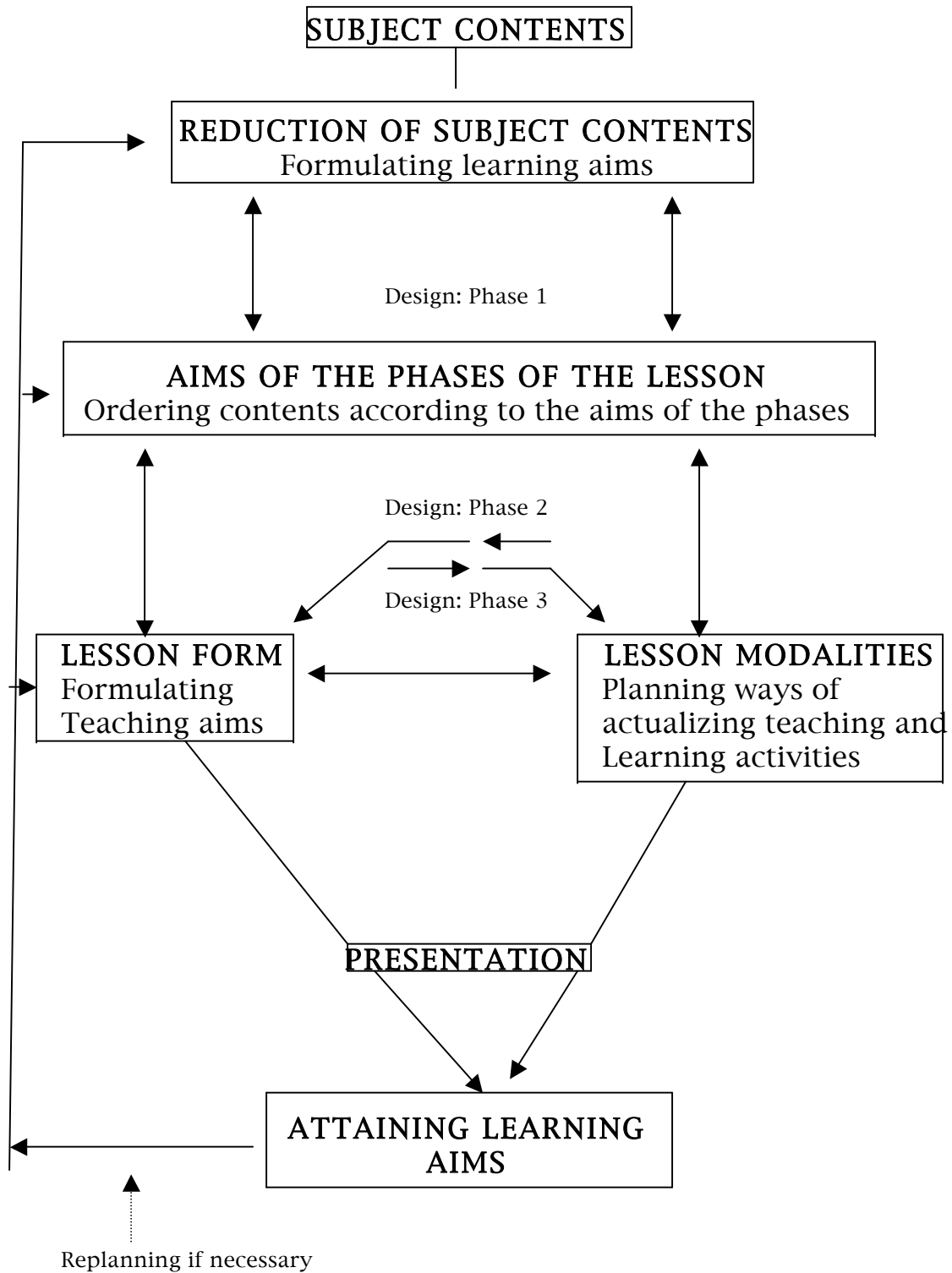


Figure 1. A model for designing any lesson

particular ways to the pupils so they can demonstrate certain achievements at specific moments of the lesson. As lesson designer, the teacher thus has to **order and structure** the **subject contents** such that specific aims can be striven for with the expectation that the pupils will achieve in accordance with them. **These aims of the sequence of the lesson do not necessarily have a fixed order in which they have to be actualized.** In designing a lesson, the order of the aims of the phases is guided by the purpose of maximizing the pupils' learning effects. The particular nature of the subject contents as well as their level of difficulty will determine the aims of the phases of the lesson the teacher will strive for. On the basis of the complexity of the subject contents, it can happen, e.g., that during the lesson more than one problem statement and formulation will be used.

The following aims of the six phases of a lesson are more fully treated in Chapter 2:

- \* actualizing foreknowledge;
- \* stating and formulating the problem;
- \* presenting the new subject contents;
- \* actualizing (controlling) the new contents;
- \* functionalizing (transferring) the new insights;
- \* evaluating the insights.

The permutation of aims during the course of a lesson also can be observed with the help of the table of modalities presented in Chapter 3.

### 3.3 Lesson modalities

The **ways** in which the teacher and his pupils are going to act to attain the instructional and learning aims during the phases of the lesson can influence enormously the quality and effect of the lesson. Matters such as the teacher's **style, tact, disposition,** and **functions** as well as the disposition and functions of his pupils can determine the results of the teacher's **ways of actualizing the lesson** as well as the quality of the **teaching relationship** established.

The learning activities of the pupils in connection with the instructional activities of the teacher now are planned in accordance

with the subject contents and the aims to be achieved. The choice of appropriate teaching and learning aids, that can increase the effects of the activities, now also are made. What has to be planned thoroughly here are the **ways** the activities are going to be **actualized**. In Chapter 3, the following three ways of actualizing are treated fully:

- \* accompanied (guided) actualization;
- \* collective (joint) actualization; and
- \* self-actualization.

### 3.4 Lesson form

During the course of a lesson, certain instructional and learning activities recur. On the basis of the repetition of these activities, a pattern or **form** of action becomes discernible. In the everyday lifeworld, these forms of activity are so familiar that they are typified as forms of living. Some of these typical forms of living are narrating, clarifying, discussing, talking, showing, and looking for. Because a number of these forms of living also are of particular significance didactically, they are called **didactic ground forms** (Van der Stoep, 1969). These forms of living are familiar to the pupils and, therefore, with particular effectiveness, they can be planned for in the teacher's lesson design and eventual presentation. When, e.g., a teacher says to the pupils that they are going to **play** during the lesson, they spontaneously and purposefully become involved in the situation. The reason is that play, as a **form of living**, is familiar to each pupil and they feel secure in the situation even though the contents presented are foreign.

When these instructional and learning activities that can be recognized as forms of living, are carried out to achieve a **teaching aim** the entire series of activities also is called a teaching method. Thus, a **teaching method** is the juncture between the lesson modalities and the form of a lesson.

A further aspect of the **form** of a lesson is how it can be determined by the structuring and ordering of contents during the course of a lesson. This is accomplished by the inductive and deductive **methodological principles** and also by the application of the **principles of ordering** the contents, e.g., linear, chronological,

and divergent. Thus, the form of a lesson is determined individually and collectively by four aspects:

- \* the didactic ground forms;
- \* the teaching methods;
- \* the methodological principles; and
- \* the principles of ordering.

By means of the lesson form actualized, the contents can acquire real meaning for the pupils. Therefore, planning the lesson modalities and lesson form are extremely important components of designing any lesson. In Chapter 4, the importance of the form in designing a lesson is discussed fully.

#### **4. THE CONCEPT "PARTICULARIZATION" AND DESIGNING A LESSON**

A lesson is a specific situation, and it always occurs under particular circumstances. Because it always is designed for a particular situation, the designer has to take into consideration the following three principles of particularization:

- \* the unique nature of the subject contents to be presented in the lesson;
- \* the developmental level of the pupils, e.g., grade 8 or 10;
- \* the possibilities and preferences of the teacher who is going to present the lesson.

##### **4.1 The unique nature of the subject area**

Each subject area has a particular nature and structure that give a unique character to its contents. The terrain studied by a subject area largely determines the types of concepts that will be functional. It is by no means the aim, nor is it possible, to give a complete exposition of the unique nature and structure of every subject area. However, two broad guidelines are presented that are determined by the particular nature of the subject areas. As examples, some differences found between the natural and human sciences briefly are presented.

(a) **Natural sciences.** Natural science subject areas are constructed by persons who enter a relation with the natural world.



Thus, here there is a subject-object relation in establishing subject matter contents about the object of study (natural world). Therefore, these types of subject contents have certain essential characteristics.

1. Invariability is a characteristic quality of natural science lawfulness.
2. The principle of causality is a conspicuous principle that is constantly in force in the natural world. On the basis of this manifested lawfulness, what is formulated has the character of invariance.
3. Examples in the natural world often are exchangeable or interchangeable. A specific type of flower always shows the same essential characteristics and so if the teacher uses a petunia for his demonstration or another similar type, it will make no difference. This offers possibilities to the natural science teacher since he can provide each student with the same experience with equivalent examples from nature.
4. Natural scientists often work with attributes and types of concepts that can be identified and classified.
5. The essentials of natural phenomena very often can be determined through measurements and expressed numerically.

**(b) The human sciences (humanities).** The subject contents of a large number of human sciences are the result of interpersonal relationships among people. A precondition for establishing this type of subject content is that the particular science has to be in a state that allows for an interpretation of subject-subject relationships. The essentials of specific modes of human actions often have to be identified and then ordered in a particular structural relation.

1. Persons often interpret this aspect of reality themselves and express it in language. A person's attribution of meaning in the form of language is very prominent in these subject areas.
2. Concepts that describe the formal aspects of the relationship or phenomenon very often are encountered in these subject areas. Poetry and the fine arts are good examples of this.
3. Value concepts such as are found in religion and in literature often are used in these subject areas.
4. Examples in these subject areas are not easily exchangeable or interchangeable. Real examples very often no longer are available in certain subjects, e.g., history. Thus, use has to be made of

substitute aids. Consequently, often use is made of the following modes of exemplifying: typical cases; models; resemblances; etc.

The teacher who designs lessons is an authority on his subject and always has to strive to present the contents in such a way that really reflects their nature or essentials. In this way, the pupils also will develop a value for and a love of the subject; therefore, this is an extremely important aspect to take into account while designing any lesson.

## 4.2 The pupil

A lesson always is designed for a particular group of pupils; therefore, the teacher should know his pupils' particular needs and potentialities and be able to interpret the contents on their developmental level. For our purpose, we only focus on a few fundamental axioms that Wiechers (1977:218-224) has formulated regarding pupils in the secondary school:

- (a) The adolescent acquires his unique identity on the basis of a sound and realistic knowledge of himself;
- (b) the high school student often is uncertain and insecure because of a quickly changing body and the greater demands placed on him. Thus, he yearns to receive his subject teaching without any negative feelings (e.g., aversions and antagonisms);
- (c) the adolescent is able to engage in more sophisticated thinking. Formal operational thought, that includes hypothetical-deductive thinking, is within the power of these students. Teachers of secondary school students are obligated to provide them with opportunities to solve problems of this nature;
- (d) these students expect that their teacher has a thorough knowledge of the subject and also that his lessons will be thoroughly planned and presented;
- (e) the adolescent eagerly turns to his peer group to discuss problems in his own lifeworld. Group work, teamwork, and participating in debates thus are meaningful activities for these students. Consequently, while designing a lesson for secondary school students, teachers can purposefully plan these types of activities;
- (f) as an adolescent, the high school student eagerly wants to be accepted by his peers; hence, much revolves around his apprehensions in social situations. The teaching relationship, which is initiated by the teacher, always should occur in sympathetic and

tactful ways. At all times, the teacher must protect the **dignity** of his pupils;

(g) non-verbal communication in the classroom has powerful significance for the teacher as well as for his pupils. The teacher's evaluations and attributions of meaning are transferred to the child, while the pupils, also on a non-verbal level, provide important information to the teacher. Attitudes, gestures, facial expressions can play decisive roles in actualization meaningful teaching relationships;

(h) pupils always have to be affectively (emotionally) supported by the teacher. This includes encouragement as well as sympathetic, purposeful intervention (guidance).

When designing any lesson, the teacher thus has to take into consideration the needs, potentialities, and developmental levels of his pupils. This is required for the choice of the specific modes of teaching by which the formulated learning aims can be meaningfully attained.

### 4.3 The teacher

When a teacher designs a lesson, the entire planning primarily is directed at serving the interests of his pupils. As teacher and subject expert, he has to design a lesson in such a way that the learning aims formulated can be attained during the lesson, even if this is at his own expense. Thus, a teacher should not plan a lesson based primarily on his own preferences and interests. In the act of teaching, each teacher should follow this principle, but it also is the case that each teacher is an individual with his own personality and potentialities.

Thus, a teacher who acts professionally must always place the interests of his students first; but, at the same time, on the basis of **self-understanding**, he needs to design a lesson within which he is able to completely validate himself as a **person with unique potentialities**. In other words, each teacher has to apply himself as an individual with unique potentialities and talents in the interest of his pupils.

To design a lesson in meaningful and purposeful ways, the teacher must be in a position and be ready and willing to determine and evaluate his possibilities as a teacher so they can be implemented in the lesson situation in the most effective ways. In general, he has to

strive to be an educator such as Maree (1982:5) expresses it: "Teaching asks of those who are willing to give in a spirit of joy that flows from an inner strength of enthusiasm, and who are persuasive builders of nations and conveyors of culture--they are good subject matter experts and worthy bearers of knowledge ... briefly ... they are true educators". Nevertheless, a teacher always remains the designer of a lesson and the initiator of teaching relationships. It is these personal qualities that need to be thoroughly understood, utilized, and practiced to plan the appropriate teaching strategies for a lesson. Decisions that have to be made before and during a lesson include the following matters:

(a) Can I improve the quality of the teaching relationships with this group of students by my exercise of authority, friendliness, firmness of actions, enthusiasm, humor, etc.?

(b) if as a teacher I tend to enter teaching situations in dominant, subjective ways by myself explaining or representing the subject contents, I must ask myself the following question beforehand: Are the subject contents of this lesson of such a nature that I should explain them, or can these pupils master the concepts through self-activities or group work? If the latter, then I have to design such a teaching situation;

(c) if as a teacher I am inclined to enter the teaching situation in dominant, objective ways, i.e., by readily using instructional aids such as prints, examples, films, models, I should ask myself the following question beforehand: Are the subject contents of such a nature that the pupils' learning activities really are assisted by the use of the aids or can the many learning aids possibly retard the learning activities? A lesson should not be designed for the sake of teaching aids that I have available or that I eagerly want to use.

To meaningfully and purposefully design any lesson, the above three **principles of particularization** need to be pondered by the teacher who is applying the model for designing a lesson. In the following chapters, each aspect of the model is treated fully.

## 5. SUMMARY

(a) The following important phases of designing a lesson are distinguished:

\* reducing the subject contents and formulating the learning aims;

- \* planing specific instructional aims that must be attained during the course of the lesson (the reduced contents must be delimited carefully for for the aim of each of the phases of a lesson);

- \* planing specific instructional and learning activities for each aim written down for each phase of the lesson as well as the ways of implementing these activities in accordance with particular principles.

(b) Designing a lesson always is carried out in accordance with three principles of particularization:

- \* the nature of the subject contents;
- \* the developmental levels of the pupils;
- \* the potentialities of the teacher.