

A MODEL FOR DESIGNING ANY LESSON

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N. J. S. BASSON

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.

1. INTRODUCTION

In their practice, teachers must deal with a wide variety of instructional and learning activities. The situations within which these activities occur are extremely diverse and often place specific 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 must take the initiative; consequently, a part of his/her personality is reflected in a lesson. The ways a teacher manages a lesson situation often serve as important criteria for judging his/her proficiencies. Thus, 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 which 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 are always established during a lesson and they can be decisive factors for the meaningful completion of each lesson.

(c) Any lesson ought to be thoroughly planned and there ought to be

purposeful activities by teacher and pupils. The teacher's activities are purposeful and planned interventions with respect to a 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 a pupil may not refuse. In this sense, a lesson has educative value because a child changes [toward adulthood--G.Y.] to the extent that he/she learns" (Van der Stoep, 1973: 6).

(e) It is both possible and necessary to distinguish among particular but **essential** matters which are generally valid for any lesson situation. When these essential matters or activities are described and structured according to their inherent relationships, there is a **lesson structure**. The concept "lesson structure" indicates that it is a **conveyer of the meaning** of the lesson content which is **lived experienced as 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 must reflect the essential aspects of the original (i.e., primordial, home) activities of [educative] **teaching** and **learning** in a 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 based on their **insights** into the meaning of the lesson structure. School practice shows, 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 later he/she gives a lesson. The danger of this approach is that a teacher may merely copy without being able to give a professional account of what he/she is doing;

(b) A teacher plans merely based on experiences without being able to provide any theoretical account for his/her activities. Such planning tends to be impulsive and haphazard. Clearly, his strategy can succeed, but when it fails, a teacher cannot give an account to him/herself 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 [home] experience of educating. In this connection, the works of Van der Stoep, Louw, and Van Dyk can be read. The purpose of this textbook on designing a lesson, is to elaborate on and organize in new ways many

of the pronouncements of these authors to achieve a functional structure which can be applied to designing any lesson.

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

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

When a lesson is designed, the following aspects must 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 a lesson.** The reduced subject contents are now ordered according to specific **instructional aims** to be attained during a lesson;
- (c) **Lesson modalities.** Instructional and learning **activities**, as well as supporting teaching and learning **aids** are now thoroughly planned. The **ways** the activities are going to be specifically actualized are planned;
- (d) **Lesson form.** Finally, the form of a 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 a 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, to maintain a perspective on the complexity of the activities while designing a lesson, the course of designing a lesson, based on this model, is now 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 coherent 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 a subject expert, a teacher has the task of delimiting and structuring the subject terms, concepts, names, and symbols into meaningful mutual connections. Based on 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 must be reflected in the learning aims formulated.

3.2 Aims of the (six) phases of a lesson

The teacher is the initiator of a lesson and, during its course, must try to attain certain aims via his/her teaching activities. During the lesson, a teacher presents the subject contents via the following model:

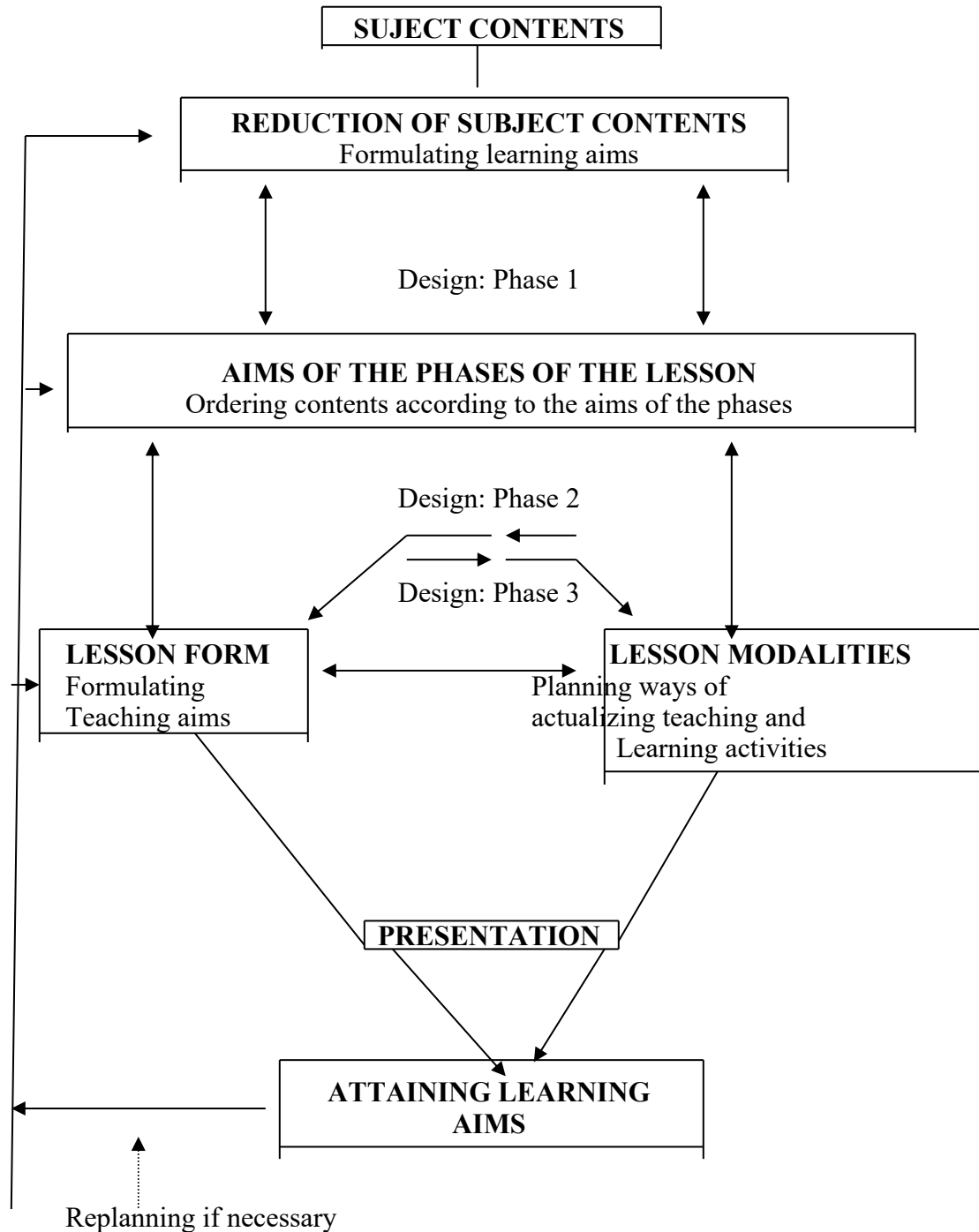


Figure 1.

A model for designing any lesson particularizes ways to the pupils so they can demonstrate certain achievements at specific moments of a lesson. Thus, as a lesson designer, a teacher must **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 a lesson do not necessarily have a fixed order in which they must 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 particularized nature of the subject contents, as well as their level of difficulty, determines the aims of the phases of the lesson a teacher strives for. Based on the complexity of the subject contents, it can happen, e.g., that during a lesson, more than one problem statement and formulation is 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 a lesson can also be observed with the help of the table of modalities presented in Chapter 3.

3.3 Lesson modalities

The **ways** in which a teacher and 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 a lesson. Matters such as a teacher's **style, tact, disposition, and functions**, as well as the disposition and functions of his/her pupils can determine the results of a 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 a teacher, now are planned in accordance with the subject contents and the aims to be achieved. The choice of appropriate teaching and learning aids which can increase the effects of the activities are now made. What must be thoroughly planned 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 a lesson certain instructional and learning activities recur. Based on 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 many of these forms of living also are of special significance for teaching (i.e., didactically), they are called **didactic ground forms** (Van der Stoep, 1969). These forms of living are familiar to the pupils and, hence, they have particular effectiveness and they can be planned for in a teacher's lesson design and eventual presentation. When, e.g., a teacher says to the pupils that they are going to **play** during a 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 which 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 a lesson. This is accomplished by the inductive and deductive **methodological principles**, as well as 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 used, 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 which always occurs under specific circumstances. Because it is always designed for a particular situation, a designer must consider 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 a 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 which 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 which are determined by the nature of the subject areas. As examples, some differences between the natural and the human sciences are briefly 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 which is constantly in force in the natural world. A result of this manifested lawfulness, what is formulated has the character of invariance.
3. Examples in the natural world are often exchangeable or interchangeable. A specific type of flower always shows the same essential characteristics, and if a teacher uses a petunia for his/her demonstration, or another similar type, it will make no difference. This offers possibilities to a natural science teacher, since he/she can provide each student with the same experience with equivalent examples from nature.
4. Natural scientists often work with attributes and types of concepts which can be identified and classified.
5. The essentials of natural phenomena can very often be determined through measurements and expressed numerically.

(b) **The human sciences (humanities).** The subject contents of many human sciences are the result of interpersonal relationships among people. A precondition for establishing this type of subject content is that a particular science must be in a state which allows for an interpretation of subject-subject relationships. The essentials of specific modes of human actions must often 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 which 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 are often used in these subject areas.
4. Examples in these subject areas are not easily exchangeable or interchangeable. Real examples very often are no longer available in certain subjects, e.g., history. Thus, use must be made of substitute aids. Consequently, often use is made of the following modes of exemplifying: typical cases; models; resemblances; etc.

A teacher who designs lessons is an authority on his/her subject and always strives 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 consider while designing any lesson.

4.2 The pupil

A lesson is always designed for a particular group of pupils; therefore, a teacher should know his/her 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 which Wiechers (1977:218-224) has formulated regarding pupils in the secondary school:

- (a) The adolescent acquires his/her unique identity from a sound and realistic knowledge of him/herself;
- (b) a high school student often is uncertain and insecure because of a quickly changing body and the greater demands placed on him/her. Thus, he/she yearns to receive his/her subject teaching without any negative feelings (e.g., aversions and antagonisms);
- (c) an adolescent can engage in more sophisticated thinking. Formal operational thought, which 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 that his/her lessons will be thoroughly planned and presented;
- (e) an adolescent eagerly turns to his/her peer group to discuss problems in his/her 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, a high school student eagerly wants to be accepted by his/her peers; hence, much revolves around his/her apprehensions in social situations. The teaching relationship, which is initiated by a teacher, always should occur in sympathetic and tactful ways. At all times, a teacher must protect the **dignity** of his/her pupils;
- (g) nonverbal communication in the classroom has powerful significance for a teacher as well as for his/her pupils. A teacher's evaluations and attributions of meaning are transferred to a child, while the pupils, also on a nonverbal level, provide important information to a teacher. Bodily attitudes, gestures, facial expressions can play decisive roles in actualizing meaningful teaching relationships;
- (h) pupils must always be affectively (emotionally) supported by a teacher. This includes encouragement as well as sympathetic, purposeful intervention (guidance).

When designing any lesson, a teacher thus must consider the needs, potentialities and developmental levels of his/her 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 is primarily directed at serving the interests of his/her pupils. As teacher and subject expert, he/she must design a lesson in such a way that the learning aims formulated can be attained during the lesson, even if this is at his/her own expense. Thus, a teacher should not plan a lesson based primarily on his/her 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/her own personality and potentialities.

Thus, a teacher who acts professionally must always place the interests of his/her students first; but, at the same time, because of his/her **self-understanding**, he/she must design a lesson within which he/she can completely validate him/herself as a **person with unique potentialities**. In other words, each teacher must apply him/herself as an individual with unique potentialities and talents in the interest of his/her pupils.

To design a lesson in meaningful and purposeful ways, a teacher must be able, ready, and willing to determine and evaluate his/her potentialities as a teacher so they can be implemented in a lesson situation in the most effective ways. In general, he/she must 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 remains the designer of a lesson and the initiator of teaching relationships. It is these personal qualities that must be thoroughly understood, utilized, and practiced to plan the appropriate teaching strategies for a lesson. Decisions which must be made before and during a lesson include the following matters:

- (a) Can I improve the quality of my 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 area 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 must 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 area 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** must be pondered by a 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;
- * planning specific instructional aims which must be attained during a lesson (the reduced contents must be delimited carefully for the aim of each of the phases of a lesson);

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

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

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