

# Flaws in the Authenticated Lesson Plans in the Department of Literature and Languages through the Lens of Trainee Teachers in Zambian Secondary Schools

Pethias Siame

*Department of Literature and Languages, Kwame Nkrumah University, Kabwe, Zambia*

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## Abstract

The paper presents common flaws in the lesson plans which were authenticated by Heads of Department (HoDs) in the Department of Literature and Languages across Zambia for student teachers from Kwame Nkrumah University who underwent their teaching experience in 2020 and 2022. A flaw is synonymous to defect, fault and pitfall which should be viewed as a challenge or problem which requires immediate attention and possible solutions. Teaching experience allows trainee teachers to apply theoretical knowledge and skills gained during their course of training. The study employed Critical Discourse Analysis framing to account for flaws in the authenticated lesson plans. Qualitative approach, observation and document analysis methods were adopted. Thematic and descriptive concepts were used to analyse the data. The study shows that some mentors of students on teaching experience did not guide the trainee teachers well. In addition, some HoDs did not take keen interest to check the nature of lesson plans before authenticating them. Lesson plans lacked brainstorming during introductions, had disoriented developments which lacked class and individual activities. It is recommended that HoDs conduct thorough discourse analysis of what they authenticate.

*Keywords:* Authenticate; analysis; discourse; flaws; Zambia.

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## 1. Introduction

The paper presents common flaws in the lesson plans which were authenticated by Heads of Department (HoDs) in the Department of Literature and Languages across Zambia for student teachers from Kwame Nkrumah University who underwent their teaching experience in in 2020 and 2022. In the context of this paper, a flaw is synonymous to defect, fault and pitfall which should be viewed as a challenge or problem which requires immediate attention and possible solutions (cf. Siame & Lubungu, 2022 December 25). It is envisaged that teaching experience is the mandate of the university to allow trainee teachers to apply both theoretical knowledge and skills gained during their course of training and any student who fails teaching practice should not graduate (cf. Siame & Lubungu, 2023 March 25). Based on the above literature, it can be argued that teaching practice is expected to be treated with the maximum seriousness it deserves. Unfortunately, Some Heads of Department (HoDs) do not seem to treat teaching experience with the gravity it deserves due to ill-prepared lesson plans which they authenticate for students which is at variance with (cf: Siame & Lubungu, March 25) who advocate for well-prepared lesson plans as a basis of lesson evaluation.

The paper problematizes the flaws in the lessons plans of trainee teachers which were authenticated almost by all Heads of Department of Literature and Languages in selected secondary schools. It is disheartening to note that some mentors of students on teaching experience did not guide the trainee teachers well. In addition, some HoDs did not take keen interest to check the nature of lesson plans before authenticating them as will be seen in the sampled lesson plans. Therefore, the aim of this study is to present the findings obtained from sampled lesson plans of trainee teachers on teaching experience from selected secondary schools in the Department of Literature and Languages across Zambia. The paper proceeds as follow; literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, results, discussion of results and conclusion.

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\* Corresponding author.

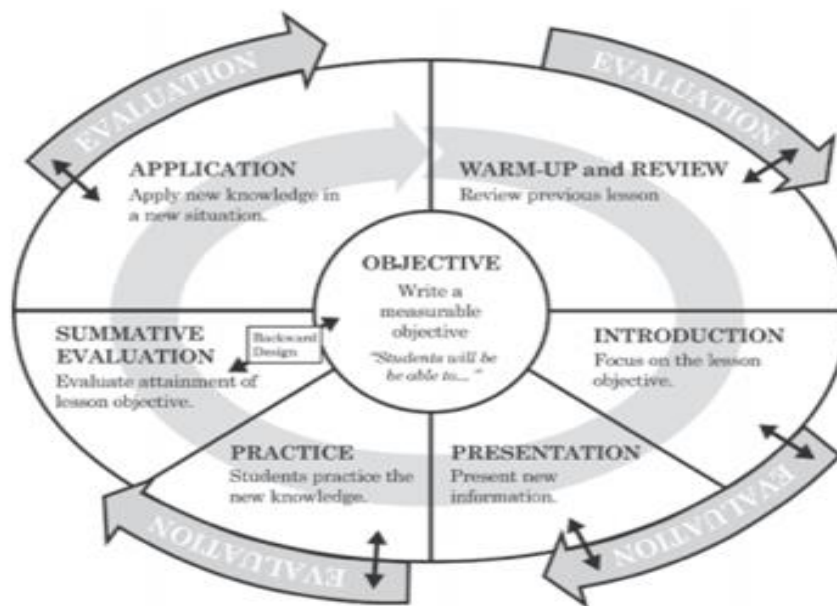
*E-mail address:* psiam@yahoo.com

## 2. Literature Review

A lesson plan is defined as a series of activities that cover steps within a curriculum and functions as the evaluation, and preparation for the next lesson (Brown, 2001). In addition, Wodak (2001) opines that lesson planning does not only represent the teacher's thought about the classroom activities, visualisation, and materials, but also the teacher's thought about the materials. Jayusna et al, (2022) argue that an effective lesson plan that includes a variety of mutual activities between students and the teacher is required for the instructional process. The above literature shows that a lesson plan is a very unique and delicate document which the teacher should use to mould the future of the learners. A well prepared lesson plan should consider the activities and materials both the teacher and learners are expected to use from the introduction to the conclusion. Bearing the above features in mind helps the teacher to be effective and learners enjoy the learning process.

Most teachers encounter problems in creating a lesson plan in terms of constructing learning objectives, indicators, choosing materials, deciding learning activities, choosing learning resources, time allocation, forming assessment procedures, determining learning method and the media to use (cf. Farid, 2014; Permana, 2010; Saputri, 2017). Scrivener (1994) argues that a lesson plan is guided by objectives that the students will assimilate, learn and perform. It should also serve as a usefull in-lesson reminder about the pre-lesson thought. Teachers should always bear in mind sustainable, measurable, attainable [achievable], reliable and time-bound (SMART) objectives. Siame & Lubungu (2023, March 25) argue that SMART objectives are necessary in lesson plans because they are the basis of lesson evaluation. Beeby (1977) describes lesson evaluation as "the systematic collection and interpretation of evidence which acts as a part of the process to do a judgment of value with a view to taking action." It is important for the teacher to consider the good characteristics of lesson evaluations which include; validity, reliability, practicability, fairness and usefulness (cf. Gronlund, 1966).

The importance of a teacher having a lesson plan cannot be over emphasised. TEAL (2010) outlines that a lesson plan provides a framework for instruction, and it guides implementation of standards-based education. Lesson planning establishes a road map for instructors of what has been taught and what needs to be taught. It allows teachers to focus on one objective at a time and communicate to learners what they will learn in each lesson. According to Dunsmore et al, (2019), a lesson plan's principal function is to keep the class on track with the lesson aim. A lesson plan also serves other vital functions, such as: it keeps a check on time within a class, it is a written record and allows the teacher to be prepared to effectively organise the class materials (cf. Jayusna et al, 2022). Therefore, the lesson plan cycle can be outlined in the figure as follows:



**Figure 1.** Planning wheel (Adopted from: TEAL, 2010)

Based on the lesson cycle above, every effective and efficient lesson plan which should be authenticated by a responsible HoD should consist of a number of activities. Firstly, the lesson should have warm-up activities to prepare the minds of the learners which helps them to link the new lesson to the previous lesson. Secondly, there should be introduction activities which should focus on the objectives to be achieved. Thirdly, there should be activities during the presentation of the new information which falls under lesson development. The fourth level should comprise learners' oral practice activities which also fall under lesson development. The fifth level should have a summative evaluation statement or conclusion concerning the achievement of the set lesson objectives. Finally, there should be activities for learners to apply in new or given situations. It is important to take note that each level of the lesson plan cycle should have expected responses from the learners.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This study employs the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995) framing to analyse the discourse challenges teachers face when designing and implementing lesson plans. Fairclough (1995) outlines that CDA is an integration between three things that is text analysis, analysis at the time the text was produced, received by listeners, and at the time of distribution, and a discursive analysis on sociocultural nature. Critical Discourse Analysis is a theory and method of analysing the way people, community groups, and even certain institutions use language to get things done, such as, lesson planning in the context of this study (cf. Richardson, 2017). In view of the above, HoDs are expected to use CDA principles when checking the lesson plans before authenticating them.

Van Dijk (1993) argues that CDA focuses on the relationship between discourse, power, dominance, imbalance in society, and how the discourse is reproduced and maintains the relationship between power and imbalance. In this study, HoDs have the power to check the discourse provided by teachers and analyse it before authenticating the lesson plans. The theory has been used to account for how CDA practitioners experience a lack of uncertainty between the practice of discourse and social and cultural structures. This shows that there is a lapse between theory and practice when teachers are designing lesson plans. The theoretical lesson plan should depict the practical activities learners are expected to perform at various stages and various materials the teacher has prepared to make the learning process effective and enjoyable. In this context, the CDA is more descriptive than a Conversational Analysis (CA). Fairclough (1995) and Wodak (2001) argue that CDA framing specifically emphasise the interdisciplinary study of discourse by trying to mediate between the linguistic and social background of the given texts.

Ballard (1980) shows that discourse analysis deals with a text which is the coverage of a process and a product that requires to be well-analysed in a specific social context. This entails that CDA is used to discuss social phenomena by indicating external factors, ideology, power, inequality, and afterward using social and philosophical theories to analyse written and verbal texts which are later interpreted. Using CDA, the paper analyses the written lesson plans and interprets the flaws that exist in the authenticated documents by Heads of Departments for novice teachers.

The choice of this theory is in line with Fairclough (2012) who emphasises that in CDA, an analyst is expected to analyse texts and interactions by first analysing the problems faced by a particular person or community they are facing. Therefore, CDA helps the researcher to first identify the problem to be analysed, in this case, the flaws in the authenticated lesson plans through the lens of trainee teachers.

### **4. Methodology**

This was a qualitative study that is non-numerical and subjective (Brink & Wood, 1998). The research involved three (3) of Zambia's provinces, namely; Central, Southern and Copperbelt. Primary data were collected using observation method. The document analysis or desktop method was adopted during the collection and analysis of secondary data which were used to justify the primary data (cf. Chaleunvong, 2009). The study had a sample size of six (06) secondary schools in six districts which were sampled purposively. Two districts were selected per province. One lesson plan was sampled per school per district. Data were analysed thematically using descriptive and analytical concepts. Data analysis went hand in hand with data collection (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999).

### **5. Results (Presentation of Findings)**

The study was conducted to establish the flaws in the approved lesson plans which were prepared by trainee teachers during their teaching practice in selected secondary schools in Zambia. Below are the flaws in the sampled lesson plans which were authenticated by HoDs:

5.1 Lack of SMART Objectives

OUTCOMES - Having the teacher taught the lesson -PSBAT -

- (i) know what a descriptive composition is.
- (ii) write a recommendable descriptive composition.
- (iii) use adjectives and adverbs correctly.

CONTENT	TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES	LEARNER'S ACTIVITIES
Introduction Brainstorming	-teacher ask some learners to describe their friends orally. -teacher introduces the topic by writing it on the board.	-Two or three learners describe their friends. Learners copy the topic in their exercise books.
DEVELOPMENT 1 RULE EXPLANATION	-A descriptive composition gives a picture of what somebody or something looks like or feels like. In other words, to describe is to paint a picture of someone or something so that one can easily visualize them when one comes across them. - This type of composition is best written using adjectives and adverbs. - An adject is a word that indicates a quality of a person or thing referred to by a noun. - An adverb is a word that adds more information about a place, time, circumstance, manner, cause	Learner's copy the teachers explanation and ask questions where necessary.

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Figure 2. Kalulushi district (Copperbelt Province)

In Figure 2, the verb 'know' in objective (i) is not measurable which is against the notion of SMART objectives.

5.2 Lack of Mind Capturing Introductions

2. Use idioms in a sentence correctly

3. \_\_\_\_\_

KNOWLEDGE: Idioms

SKILL: Application

VALUES: Awareness and appreciation

T/L MATERIALS: \_\_\_\_\_

REFERENCES: English, ruben, page 4, Internet

INTRODUCTION: Teacher to put up two sentences on the chalk board and ask pupils to identify and give meaning to the sentences.

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STEP	CONTENT	TR'S ACTIVITY	PUPILS ACT
1	1. It rained cats and dogs in Lusaka last week. 2. Stop telling stories, hit the nail on the head. Idioms	Tr to ask Ppls to identify idiomatic phrases	Expected answers (i) cats and dogs (ii) Nail on the head
2	An idiomatic phrase is a figure of speech whose meaning can't be derived from the words that make it up. Class discussion	Tr to define key terms of the lesson. Tr to facilitate a class discussion with the ppls.	To participate in the class discussion.

① why are idioms important?  
② Give oral examples of Idioms.

Figure 3. Monze district (Southern Province)

TEACHINGS AND LEARNING MATERIALS/RESOURCES, Chalk Chalkboard, Senior Secondary English Learner's Book GRADE 11 MK

REFERENCES

STAGE	TEACHERS ACTIVITY	LEARNER'S ACTIVITY
INTRODUCTION	<p>Teacher will revise the previous lesson (Impossible Conditional sentences) by asking questions</p> <p>Teacher will introduce the new topic and write it on the board.</p> <p>(i) Using 'Unless' in conditional sentences                      ii " " "Even if" in conditional sentences</p>	<p>Learners will answer.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;"> <p>REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA                              MINISTRY OF EDUCATION                              CHIFIRIRI SECONDARY SCHOOL</p> <p style="color: red; font-weight: bold;">21 FEB 2022</p> <p style="color: red; font-weight: bold;">A / Had checked</p> </div>

Figure 4. Mkushi district (Central Province)

Figures 3 and 4 show introductions which are thought provoking. However, both figures lack expected responses and strategies depicting how learners ought to answer the questions, such as, pair work. As can be seen in Figure 3, class discussion has no expected answers which is also evident in Figure 4.

5.3 Disoriented Lesson Developments

This part presents data on learners' expected responses, oral activities, individual activities and lesson conclusion.

5.3.1 Lack of Learners' Expected Responses

	<p>Worked</p> <p>Group</p>	<p>buy goods and for the company. Account Clerk. The Person deals an enquiries and can with</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Task</u></p> <p>What kind of opp are there after study the course</p>
<p>Conclusion: The teacher and Pupil do whole lesson.</p>		
<p>Evaluation: This was just okay</p>		
<p>checked                      lecturer                      24/02/2022</p>		

Figure 5. Kitwe District (Copperbelt Province)

Figure 4 does not show the expected responses from the learners. This is problematic in an event that the incumbent subject teacher is not around and another teacher in the department is required to help.

5.3.2 Lack of Learners' Oral Activities

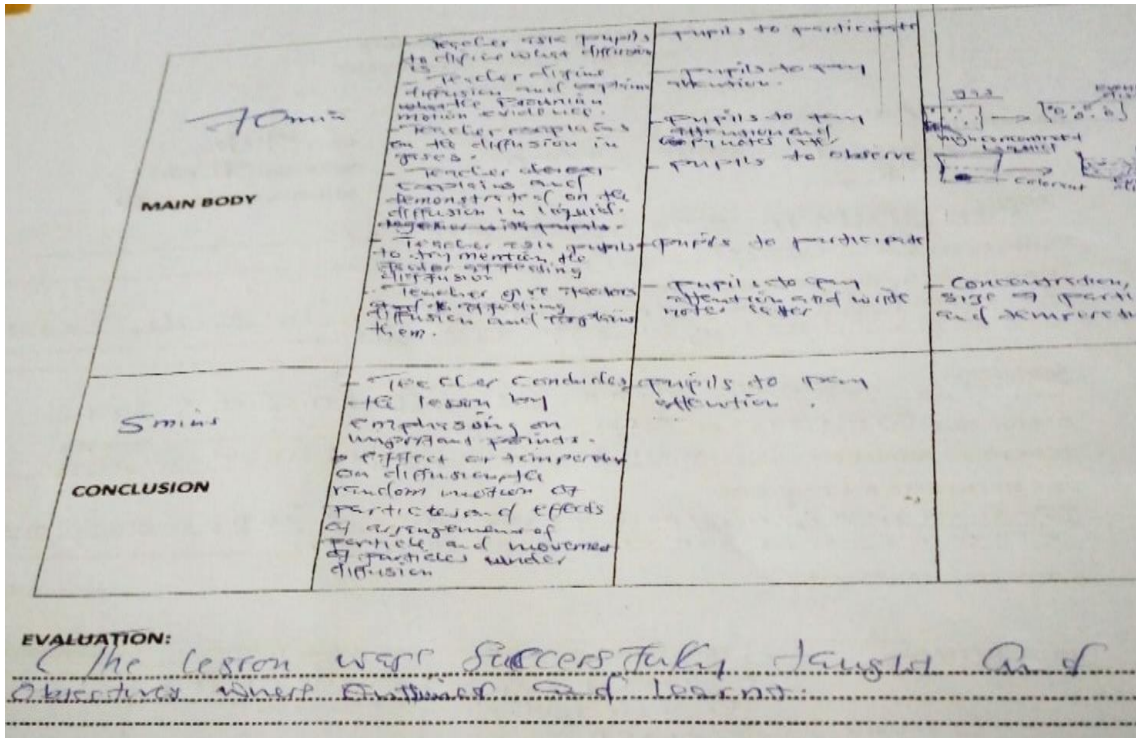


Figure 6. Namwala District (Southern Province)

In Figure 6, the teacher did not prepare and conduct an oral activity for the learners to practice.

5.3.3 Lack of Learners' Individual Activities

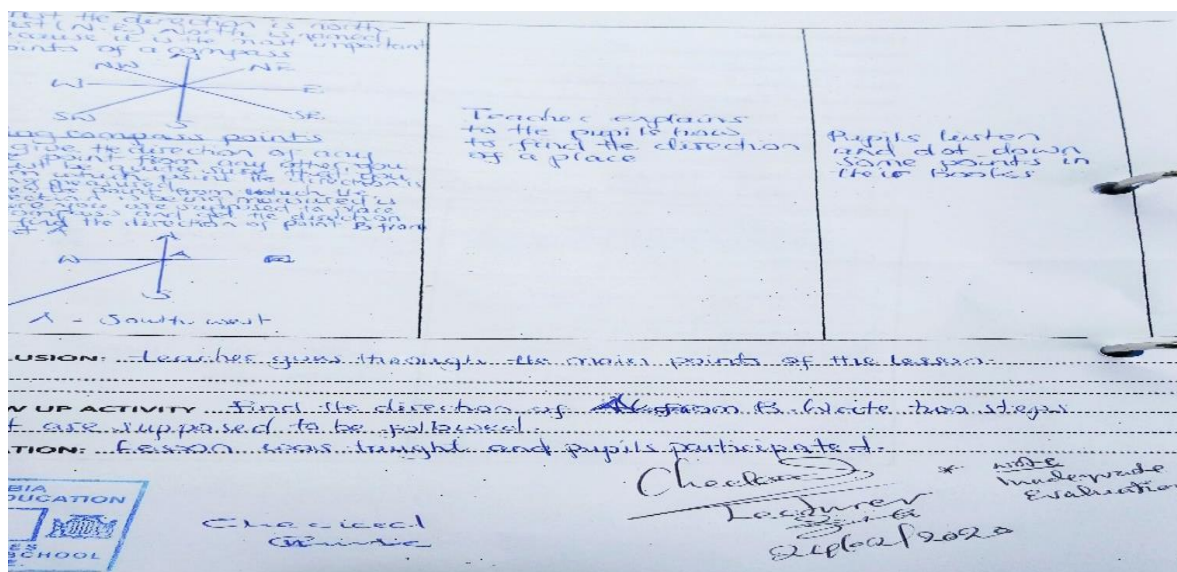


Figure 7. Mpongwe District (Copperbelt Province)

Figure 7 does not have activities for learners to apply the learnt knowledge and skills. This entails that the teacher did not prepare activities to enable learners apply the learnt knowledge they acquired during that day. This shows that the lesson plan lacks the application stage.

5.3.4 Inadequate Lesson Conclusions

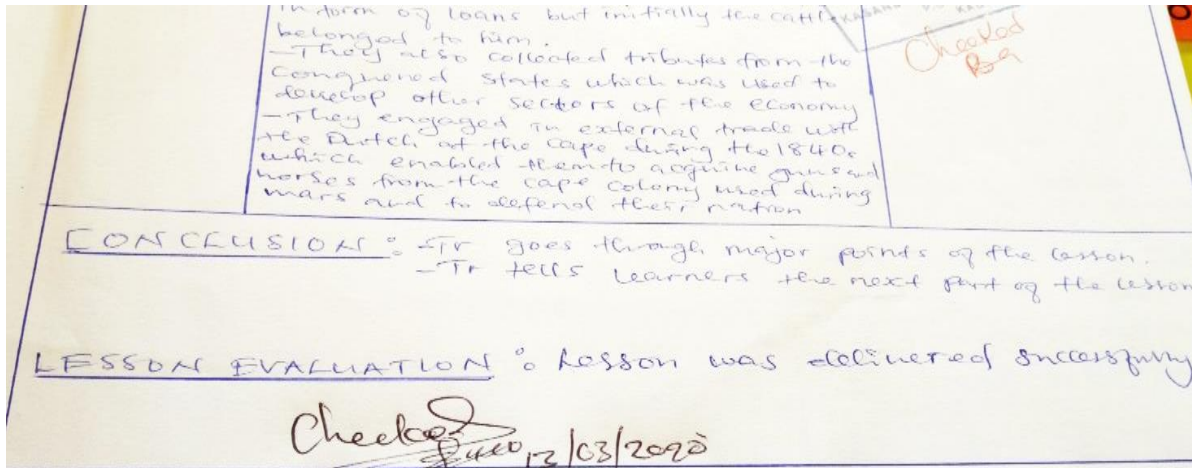


Figure 8. Chisamba District (Central Province)

Figure 8 does not have activities and information on how the teacher and learners concluded the lesson. This shows that the lesson plan did not have summary activities and was not adequately concluded.

5.4 Poor Lesson Evaluation

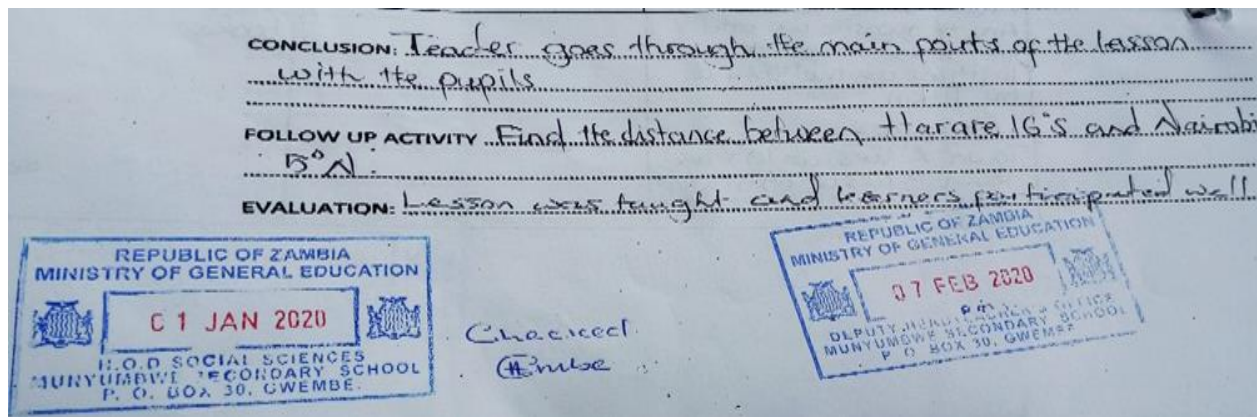


Figure 9. Gwembe District (Southern Province)

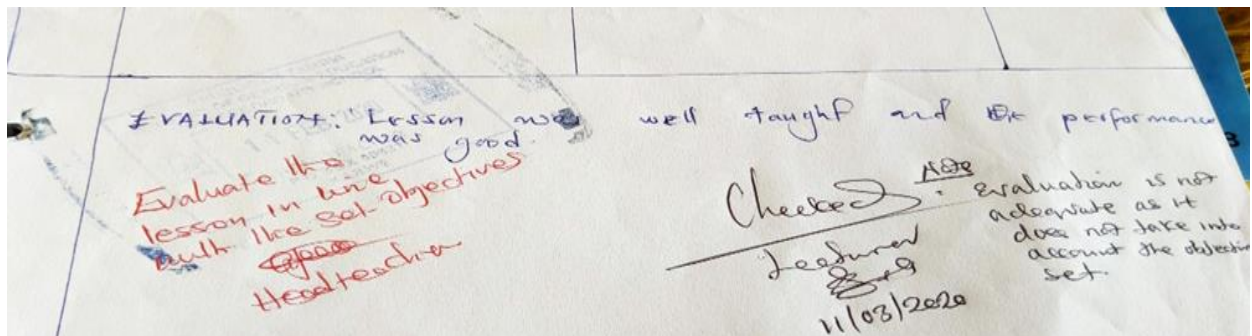


Figure 10. Kabwe District (Central Province)

Figures 9 and 10 do not provide adequate lesson evaluations because they lack comments on the achievement of the lesson objectives which the teachers set. They do not also have comments on the materials used, strategies used as well as successes and failures of learners and how the teacher resolved them.

## **6. Discussion of Findings**

The themes that emerged out of this study were analysed as follows:

### *6.1 Lack of SMART Objectives*

The study reveals that the novice teachers did not prepare SMART objectives. The finding is at variant with Scrivener (1994) and Siame & Lubungu (2023, March 25) who argue that SMART objectives are necessary in lesson plans because they are the basis of lesson evaluation. It can be argued that teachers are always expected to bear in mind sustainable, measurable, and attainable [achievable], reliable and time-bound (SMART) objectives when designing lesson plans.

### *6.2 Lack of Mind Capturing Introductions*

The study reveals that most teachers were writing the lesson of the day without brainstorming the learners appropriately. Instead, they rushed into developing the lesson without sound contextualisation of the lesson of the day. A very good lesson introduction is the gist of the entire lesson direction. Jansen in Celce-Murcia (2001) submits that a lesson usually begins with a warm up and/review activities which correlates with TEAL's (2010) notion of a lesson plan on the planning wheel discussed under literature review in this paper. TEAL (2010) adds that lesson introduction provides a broad overview of the content and concepts to be taught and focuses the learner's attention on the new lesson. Teachers, therefore, need to decide how they will connect the day's lesson to the previous class meeting and how they want to interest and motivate their students for the day's activities. However, the findings in the present study indicate that most of the introductions in the sampled lesson plans fell short of interesting and motivating of the learners which were at variant with TEAL (2010)'s submission. For instance, some introductions were not mind-capturing and at the same time were not connected to the lesson of the day. One classic example was where the introduction provided a recap of the previous lesson on descriptive composition and yet the lesson of the day was on condition (structure). It can be argued that the two lessons are not related and, therefore, a teacher cannot introduce a lesson with such a recapitulation (Recap). Being a structure lesson on condition, the introduction should be contextualised using the structure of the day.

### *6.3 Disoriented Lesson Developments*

The study reviews that lesson plans which were prepared by novice teachers and authenticated by HoDs in Figures 5-8, lacked clear rule explanation, exemplification and oral practice activities, expected learners' responses and individual activities as elaborated in the sub-themes below:

#### *6.3.1 Lack of Learners' Expected Responses*

The sampled lesson plan in Figure 5 lacked the expected answers from the learners. This finding is in tandem with (Farid, 2014; Permana, 2010; Saputri, 2017) who argue that most teachers encounter problems in creating a lesson plan in terms of constructing learning objectives, indicators, choosing materials, deciding learning activities, choosing learning resources, time allocation, forming assessment procedures, determining learning method and the media to use. It can be argued that preparing learners' expected responses in the lesson plan demonstrates teacher organisation and effectiveness.

#### *6.3.2 Lack of Oral Practice Activities*

As observed in figure 6, the oral activities were not included in the lesson plan. During this stage, the teacher is expected to model the skills and provide opportunities for learners' guided practice (cf. TEAL, 2010). This stage is necessary during the learning process as it accords learners chance to digest the learnt knowledge and skills. The knowledge and skills can be actualised using strategies, such as; pair work, group work, dialogue, role play, speech



and drama. This is in tandem with TEAL (2010) who argues that during this stage, the teacher is expected to introduce a variety of activities that allow learners to work in groups, in pairs, or independently to practice the skills, concepts, and information they have learnt. Learners are expected to take an upper hand to demonstrate to the teacher that they have grasped the concepts. At this stage, the teacher does not leave learners completely free to work on the given tasks, but goes round to check and help the slow learners. This stage is necessary as it helps both the teacher and learners to evaluate the lesson delivery and achievement of objectives through oral activities. The evaluation of oral activities should precede the individual activities.

### *6.3.3 Lack of Learners' Individual Activities*

This is yet another pedagogical learner evaluation skill which did not reflect in the lesson plans in Figures 7. After learners have practiced the learnt knowledge and skills, further evaluation of the mastery of the concepts should be done by providing an individual activity. TEAL (2010) describes this way of assessing the mastery of knowledge and skills as 'production'. This stage is necessary because it requires learners to apply the learnt skills and knowledge individually. The teacher can evaluate individual ability and mastery of skills using activities, such as, projects, experiments, class exercises and home works. When the above activities are done, it is vital for the teacher to mark or assess the work to ascertain the mastery of the learnt skills and knowledge. The outcome of the activities at this level should determine the general evaluation comment(s).

### *6.3.4 Inadequate Lesson Conclusions*

Figure 8 illustrates shallow conclusions. Jensen (2001) suggests that the final section of a lesson plan should include comments that end the lesson such as review or summary of the lesson. The findings reveal a similar situation to Jensen's suggestions in that the conclusion stage was present in the sampled lesson plans. However, the summary of lesson popularly known as conclusion, in many cases, did not provide the specific questions and expected answers that addressed the cognitive closure of lessons. This stage should not be overlooked because it helps the teacher to consolidate the lesson of the day. It also helps slow learners to catch up where they were behind. Some of the suggested ways of concluding the lesson are: asking oral WH-questions based on what learners have learnt, asking one learner to state the main ideas grasped from the lesson or the teacher running through the main points. The above arguments are in tandem with TEAL (2010) who describes this stage in the lesson planning wheel as 'summative evaluation' which should be used to ascertain the attainment of lesson objectives before learners are subjected to individual application activities. Therefore, administering application activities highly depends on the consolidation of the lesson objectives which should be done during the conclusion of the lesson.

## *6.4 Poor Lesson Evaluation*

The last stage in the lesson plan is called evaluation which is like a double edged sword. Firstly, it requires evaluating the teachers' methodology, achievement of lesson objectives and the general lesson delivery. Secondly, there should be evaluation of the learner's performance which includes successes and failures. The present study reveals that the lesson plan evaluation component of most lesson plans which were approved by the HoDs was inadequate. The evaluation did not take into account the challenges of the lessons from both the learner and the teacher. Worse still, teachers did not capture the SMART objectives when evaluating the lessons. TEAL (2010) posits that lesson evaluation is meant to assess the attainment of the objectives by each learner in class. On the contrary, trainee teachers provided general comments such as the ones shown in Figures 9 and 10. Most scholars have stressed the important role lesson evaluation plays in the teaching and learning process. For instance, it contributes to formulation of objectives, designing of learning experiences and assessment of learner performance. Therefore, lesson evaluation should not be taken lightly as the case was in the presentation of findings where teachers simply commented 'the lesson was taught successfully'. The findings of the present study are at variance with Jansen in Celce-Murcia (2001) who postulates that 'lesson evaluation component provides an opportunity for honest reflection about what activities worked or did not work and why, as well as how the lesson could be improved or modified the next time around.' It can be argued that the general comments observed in the lesson plans from selected provinces could not make lesson plans a truly useful resource for future planning.

## 7. Conclusion

One conclusion which can be drawn is that there is ill preparation of lesson plans by both novice and seasoned teachers. Secondly, some novice teachers lacked creativity and innovation during lesson planning. Thirdly, some mentors were not competent enough to guide the novice teachers because they also had difficulties pertaining to lesson planning. There are misnomers during lesson development which is the centre of the lesson. Most lesson plans lacked tasks for learners to practice either in pairs or groups before they were exposed to individual activities. The researcher also observed that most lesson plans lacked expected answers as well as detailed content of the lesson. The other conclusion is that teachers had serious challenges with lesson planning which shows that they either lacked concepts of SMART objectives or were simply negligent. There is great need to promote continuous professional development (CPD) activities on lesson planning in the Department of Literature and Languages in Zambian secondary schools to mend the discussed flaws. Finally, the researcher recommends that HoDs should be going through the lesson plans to check the discourse used before authenticating them.

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