

Medical faculty members' attitude on lesson planning Semnan University of Medical Sciences

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ABSTRACT

Background: Lesson planning has a distinct role in enhancing education quality, as well as maintaining the friendly and dynamic atmosphere of the academic environment and increasing student's initiatives for achieving better educational attainments. Lesson planning is a process for defining the goals, understanding the needs, and specifying available tools and possible limitations. Lesson planning is a written description of this process, which shows the materials, the route, the time, and the place of instructions, as well as a method for evaluating students.

Purpose: to identify the attitudes of Semnan University of Medical Sciences (SUMS) on lesson planning.

Methods: Fifty-three faculty members of the SUMS participated in this study. A questionnaire was used, which contained 8 demographic questions, and 24 r questions for identification the faculty members' attitude.

Questionnaires were distributed among the faculty members in sealed envelopes, without denoting their names. The questionnaires were gathered after being completed. Results were analyzed by calculating the mean, standard deviation, absolute and relative frequencies, and using Chi-square and Fischer exact test at the level of 5%.

Results: It was shown that 88% of faculty members favoured lesson planning before the beginning of the semester. But they found lesson planning a difficult task, because of their heavy workload. Of the faculty members, 60.4% organized their teaching classes according to a designed lesson plan, and believed that it did affect the quality of their teaching, but 49.1% disagreed with distributing the designed lesson plan among the students.

Discussion: Although professor favoured lesson planning and find it necessary to work according to such a plan, workload and lack of knowledge are defined as two main obstacles in doing so. It is believed that by decreasing the professor's workload and provision of lesson planning workshops, these problems could be solved. Professors did not favour informing the students about the contents of the lesson plan. But students' awareness of the lesson plan can improve student's viewpoints on the quality of educations. It can also guide the student's activity, motivates the students, as well as produce a dynamic interaction between instructors and their students to pay particular attention to the lesson plan. Considering all these possible benefits further studies is needed to specify the effect of revealing lesson plan for the student. Professors were interested in participating in workshops held for improving lesson planning skills and modern teaching methods. This shows that the need to learn has been formed in faculty members, a need which should be answered by the authorities in universities.

Key Words: CONCEPTS, PROFESSORS, LESSON PLANNING

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Introduction

Lesson planning is an effective way for increasing the quality of education. If it were not well adjusted according to the needs of the students and society ineffective education and learning would be the natural but undesirable consequence. Most designed lesson plans are not organized in a student-oriented manner. In contrast in most modern education programs, the bilateral teachers learners interaction is the center of focus.

Lesson planning is a process for defining the goals and understanding the needs, specifying available tools and possible limitations. Lesson plan is a

written description for this process; where the materials, the method, the time and the place of education as well as methods for evaluating the students are described in detail.

Human beings have limited capacity for learning, and it is impossible to learn all different skills and sciences. The life is short, and forgetfulness makes the learning opportunities even more scarce. On the other hand many people don't have the required competencies to follow a self-learning program.

Lesson planning, is a sort of economization of the limited capacity for learning. The human brain is more valuable to be just filled with random

information. Therefore it is necessary to find the best way for optimizing the learning quality. Lesson planning gives a better understanding of the quality of teaching to the students, meanwhile produces coordinated and targeted pace for the educational activities. Lesson plans clarify the vague goals, and shows the correct way of teaching to the instructors. It induces new initiatives, augments the efficacy, and increases the sense of responsibility in the students. All these can lead to a guided cooperation of the students in their educational programs. Lesson plan produces a dynamic interaction between the students and their teachers. The students find acceptable reasons for achieving the lesson objectives. Considering all these potential benefits, one should know how much interested the professors are in lesson planning, how much they practically use them, what their problems are in designing and using the designed lesson plan, what their proposed solutions are.

In SUMS, in order to strengthen teaching according to lesson planning a committee for lesson plan assessment was formed which specified the criteria for the assessment. The results of the assessment as well as the committee opinions on ways to improve the lesson plans were returned to professors. At the next stage, the chiefs and members of different departments took part in discussion sessions. Teaching hints for lesson planning were also prepared and distributed among the professors.

In order to assess the results of this program, we decided to assess faculty members of SUMS attitude on lesson plan benefits and limitation.

Materials & Methods

This was a descriptive study. Fifty-three of the full time faculty members of SUMS from a variety of faculties who had taken part in SUMS education

programs, during one or two successive semesters in 2000-2001 were included in the study. Questionnaires were used for data gathering. The questionnaire was designed by researchers and included 32 closed questions and 5 open ones. The questionnaire has two parts. The first part included 8 demographic questions (age, sex, education, the place of work...), while the second part was designed to identify the faculty members viewpoints on the necessity of lesson planning and its applications, the possible problems and obstacles, their opinion about a specialized committee for lesson planning, the effect of lesson planning on the quality of education, and the usefulness of the teaching hints pamphlets on lesson planning.

A few questions were also asked to identify the faculties' viewpoints on different workshops on education planning. The questionnaires were distributed among professors of different departments in sealed envelopes, without denoting their names. They were gathered after being completed. For quantitative analysis, mean and standard deviation were calculated, while for qualitative analysis, absolute and relative frequencies were used. In order to verify the presence of any relationship between demographic information and faculties' viewpoints, chi-square and Fischer exact tests were used at the level of 5%.

Results

It was shown that 88% of the professors favoured lesson planning prior to the beginning of the semester (table1), but they found it a difficult task because of their heavy workloads. Many of the professors requested for a reduction in their workload. Only a minority of the professors were against lesson planning.

The results show that 60.4% of all professors

TABLE 1 FACULTY MEMBERS' VIEWPOINTS ON NECESSITY OF LESSON PLAN

| Faculty | Faculty of Medicine | | Faculty of Nursing | | Faculty of Rehabilitation | | Faculty of Health Sciences | | Others | | Total | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-----|--------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|----------------------------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|
| The necessity of Curriculum writing | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| Yes | 18 | 82 | 10 | 91 | 5 | 100 | 9 | 90 | 2 | 100 | 44 | 88 |
| No | 4 | 18 | 1 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 12 |
| Total | 22 | 100 | 11 | 100 | 5 | 100 | 10 | 100 | 2 | 100 | 50 | 100 |

managed their classes according to a lesson plan, and 50.9% of them believed in the role of lesson planning in improving the quality of education, but did not favour the distribution of lesson plans among the students.

The professors agreed with formation of a specialized committee for lesson planning and most of them (56.6%) found the committee's point of view effective (to some extent) in designing their own lesson plans, but were not interested in participating in this committee. Of all faculty members, 49.1% had read the teaching hints about

lesson planning, and found them of acceptable quality and effective. They also favoured provision of more educational aids for lesson planning but they were not interested in contributing to it (table 2).

The results showed that both male and female professors, consider lesson planning a necessity. Of female professors, 29.4% believed that heavy workload and lack of knowledge about lesson planning are the two main obstacles in this regard, and admitted that lesson planning did affect the quality of their classes (table 3).

TABLE 2 FACULTY MEMBERS' RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE (2000)

| Questions | Answers | | | | | | Total | |
|--|---------|--------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|--|-------|-----|
| | Yes (%) | No (%) | To some extent (%) | No idea (%) | Indeterminate (%) | | No. | (%) |
| Do you find lesson planning necessary before the beginning of the semester? | 83 | 11.3 | 0 | 0 | 5.7 | | 53 | 100 |
| Have your viewpoints about teaching changed since the introduction of lesson planning? | 20.8 | 17 | 58.5 | 0 | 3.8 | | 53 | 100 |
| Do you agree with making a specialized committee for lesson planning? | 54.7 | 11.3 | 34 | 0 | 0 | | 53 | 100 |
| Do you agree with selecting the members of the specialized committee of lesson planning from the professors of the universities? | 54.7 | 1.9 | 24.5 | 0 | 18.9 | | 53 | 100 |
| Have the recommendations of the specialized committee affected your viewpoint about the lesson plan development? | 17 | 17 | 66 | 0 | 0 | | 53 | 100 |
| Have the recommendation of the specialized committee affected your viewpoint about the lesson plan you design? | 22.6 | 15.1 | 56.6 | 0 | 5.7 | | 53 | 100 |
| Are you interested in joining the specialized committee of lesson planning? | 26.4 | 45.3 | 0 | 28.3 | 0 | | 53 | 100 |
| Do you find the activities of the specialized committee of lesson planning necessary? | 60.5 | 17 | 0 | 18.7 | 3.8 | | 53 | 100 |
| Do you agree with lesson planning in different education departments? | 77.4 | 11.3 | 0 | 9.4 | 1.9 | | 53 | 100 |
| Has lesson planning been effective in increasing the quality of teaching in your classes? | 32.1 | 15.1 | 50.9 | 0 | 1.9 | | 53 | 100 |
| Do you agree with informing the students about the contents of the designed lesson plans? | 32.1 | 49.1 | 0 | 17 | 1.9 | | 53 | 100 |
| Do you agree with the current form of lesson planning? | 54.7 | 24.5 | 0 | 18.9 | 1.9 | | 53 | 100 |
| Do you read teaching hints about lesson planning? | 47.2 | 3.8 | 49.1 | 0 | 0 | | 53 | 100 |
| Are teaching hints of acceptable quality? | 32.1 | 7.5 | 56.6 | 0 | 3.8 | | 53 | 100 |
| Have teaching hints helped you in designing lesson plans? | 28.3 | 18.9 | 52.8 | 0 | 0 | | 53 | 100 |
| Should the distribution of the teaching hints be continued? | 50.9 | 7.5 | 39.6 | 0 | 1.9 | | 53 | 100 |
| Are you interested in helping medical Education Development and Research centre in preparing teaching hints? | 30.2 | 60.4 | 0 | 0 | 9.4 | | 53 | 100 |

The information showed that all professors from different age groups did not defer in their answers to different questions. The answers were the same in both male and female faculty members but this was not statistically significant.

The results also showed that, all professors with different educational programs (less than, equal, or more than 8 credits) in one semester, had same opinions, and no statistically significant association has been shown. Most of the professors (32%) were interested in participating in the workshops of advanced teaching methods and lesson planning. Other workshops were also interesting for faculty members.

Discussion

Most of the faculty members admitted that lesson plan is important in increasing the quality of medical education. A study performed by Amini et al. is compatible with our findings. In their study it was shown that professors favoured lesson plans and found it a necessary for lesson planning (3). The same results have been reported by Madjidishad et al(4). On the contrary the professors of SUMS have declared that, their heavy workload and lack of knowledge are two main obstacles in designing and using lesson plans. Answering the open questions, some of the faculty members have emphasized that lack of time and lack of initiatives were two other obstacles in the way of lesson planning. Assessing the underlying reasons of lack of interest can be a good subject for other studies.

It seems that, pre-judgement and previous personal experiences are the reasons of objection of a few faculty members against lesson planning. Teaching according to a designed curriculum can be of great educational help in this subgroup of professors and

can help them in achieving higher educational goals.

Amininik et al. tried to show a direct association between professors' assessment scores and applying lesson plan, but they didn't find any. They believed that lack of correlation between these two variables is probably due to absence of lesson planning in educational programs. Amininik believed that the time has come to evaluate the available lesson planning practices. This may help in increasing the education quality, and makes lesson planning a routine part of all educational programs.

77.4% of the professors agree with proposing their designed curriculum in a education group, so that it can be assessed by other professors. They also had no objection against making an assessment committee for curriculum designing.

It seems that most of the professors are against distributing lesson plan among students, or at least find it unnecessary. But it has been proved that students' awareness of lesson plan can improve student's viewpoints about the quality of education. It can also organize the student's activity, produce new motives among students as well as produce a dynamic interaction between teachers and their students. Considering these possible benefits, further study on this subject is warranted.

Many professors are familiar with lesson planning, and if they find the opportunity, they would participate in such activities. In the current study, 30.2% and 26% of faculty members were ready to take part in preparing teaching hints and entering the specialized committee of curriculum designing respectively. Discovering, and using these potential resources, can increase the available specialists needed for medical education development centers.

TABLE 3 OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF LESSON PLANNING: VIEWPOINTS OF SUMS FACULTY MEMBERS

| Obstacles in the way of curriculum designing | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|--|------|----|--------|-----|-------|-----|
| | F* | % | F* | % | F* | % |
| Heavy workload | 8 | 25 | 5 | 29 | 13 | 27 |
| Lack of initiatives | 3 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 6.1 |
| Lack of knowledge | 2 | 6 | 1 | 5.9 | 3 | 6.1 |
| Heavy work load & lack of initiatives | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5.9 | 2 | 4.1 |
| Heavy work load & lack of knowledge | 8 | 25 | 1 | 5.9 | 9 | 18 |
| Lack of initiatives & lack of knowledge | 2 | 6 | 5 | 29 | 7 | 14 |
| Heavy work load, lack of knowledge | 2 | 6 | 1 | 5.9 | 3 | 6.1 |
| Others | 6 | 19 | 3 | 18 | 9 | 18 |
| Total | 32 | 65 | 17 | 35 | 49 | 100 |

*F = Frequency

TABLE 4 THE WORKSHOPS REQUESTED BY FACULTY MEMBERS PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY

| Requested workshops | Frequency | % |
|--|-----------|------|
| Curriculum designing | 1 | 1.9 |
| Education Technology | 5 | 9.4 |
| Modern teaching methods | 8 | 15.1 |
| Curriculum designing & modern teaching methods | 6 | 11.3 |
| Content selecting and education technology | 1 | 1.9 |
| Content selecting and modern teaching methods | 2 | 3.8 |
| Education technology & modern teaching methods | 8 | 15.1 |
| Modern teaching & Evaluation methods | 3 | 5.7 |
| Goal writing & modern teaching methods | 1 | 1.9 |
| Curriculum writing, content selecting, modern teaching method, education technology, evaluation and assessment | 17 | 32 |
| Indeterminate | 1 | 1.9 |
| Total | 53 | 100 |

Thirty two percent of faculty members were interested in all different kinds of workshops held for lesson planning and advanced teaching methods. Workshops have been effective in increasing the knowledge of attendants.

It is recommended that medical education development centers provide the necessary tools for teaching the methods of lesson planning.

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