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Attitudes of Secondary School Agriculture Teachers towards Lesson Planning

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Abstract: *Lesson planning is the key requirement for effective teaching; thus, every teacher training programme should prioritize it. However, little research has been conducted on lesson planning by teachers in Eswatini. Therefore, the study sought to investigate the attitudes of agriculture teachers towards lesson planning in Eswatini. The study was a descriptive survey targeting secondary school agriculture teachers in Eswatini (N=363). A sample of 180 secondary school agriculture teachers was randomly drawn from the population. A valid questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was 74% reliable. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings of the study revealed that agriculture teachers considered lesson planning to be important as it saves the teacher from haphazard teaching, promotes orderliness, is the heart of effective teaching, and makes the teachers feel confident. On the contrary, the agriculture teachers considered lesson planning to be tedious and time consuming. The study recommended that schools should provide periodic refresher courses and a template that can reduce the energy and time needed for lesson planning.*

Keywords: Agriculture Teacher, Attitude, Lesson, Lesson Plan, Planning

Introduction

Lesson planning is essential for effective teaching. It builds a teacher's confidence and should be a focus in teacher training (Çelik, 2019; Reingold *et al.*, 2021). However, many teachers often overlook lesson planning after graduation due to time constraints and limited support from their institutions (Oduor *et al.*, 2022). A lesson plan offers clear guidance on what materials to teach and helps with classroom management, enabling teachers to facilitate the teaching and learning process effectively (Richards & Bohlke, 2011; Fareh, 2020). It includes setting objectives, selecting resources, and outlining strategies to reach learning goals (Yinger, 2020).

Teaching and learning are the main purposes of a school, and they depend on good preparation. Therefore, preparing, using, and assessing each lesson carefully is crucial. A lesson plan helps assess a teacher's ability to prepare, understand the content, choose the right teaching methods, identify needed materials, and plan assessments (Kizlik, 2017; Reingold *et al.*, 2021). It also helps teachers review textbooks and guides for accuracy and aids in conducting activities or experiments before class. Lesson planning boosts teachers' confidence and independence in the classroom, leading to better performance (Çelik, 2019). Additionally, it ensures lessons within a unit connect, organizes content and activities well, saves time, and promotes a thoughtful approach to teaching (Yinger, 2020; Richards & Bohlke, 2011). By avoiding disorganized instruction, it supports decision-making on lesson objectives, suitable activities, timing, material use, and classroom management (Fareh, 2020; Reingold *et al.*, 2021). Lesson planning also encourages teachers to reflect on how current, previous, and upcoming lessons connect, ensuring coherence between learning activities and assessments. Moreover, it breaks classroom monotony and increases student engagement (Richards & Bohlke, 2011; Çelik, 2019). Lastly, lesson planning allows teachers to assess their grasp of the content and identify areas for improvement (Kizlik, 2017).

A well-organized lesson plan is key to a successful teaching experience (Richards & Bohlke, 2011). However, creating interesting and effective lessons needs commitment and dedication. It should go hand in hand with dynamic delivery strategies and sound classroom management techniques (Fareh, 2020). Lesson plans also serve practical purposes. They provide documented proof of a teacher's professional performance and can be included in teaching portfolios for evaluations or job applications (Çelik, 2019).

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Moreover, they are vital for substitute teachers, ensuring continuity and consistency in instruction (Reingold *et al.,* 2021). While crafting engaging lessons requires time and effort, even the best plan loses its value without effective teaching strategies and well-managed instruction (Yinger, 2020).

Marzano and Pickering (2003) suggest that teachers approach lesson planning in various ways. Some focus on detailed daily plans, while others plan mentally. Some only write lessons to meet administrative needs. Many teachers stop formal planning as they gain experience, saying that detailing objectives and content takes too much time (Reingold *et al.,* 2021). Guneyli and Aslan (2009) found that teachers have different views on lesson planning. Many think it provides structure, encourages reflection, builds confidence, and saves instructional time (Çelik, 2019). However, a major challenge teachers face in planning is the added burden of other tasks, such as preparing for practical sessions, sometimes even during holidays (Oduor *et al.,* 2022). Some teachers also find lesson planning tedious and time-consuming, especially when juggling it with other school duties (Fareh, 2020).

An effective lesson plan should consider the needs and learning styles of individual students and the resources available in the teaching environment (Tomlinson, 2017). Teachers are encouraged to use backward design principles, starting with clear learning standards and real-world applications to make lessons relevant and meaningful (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Using visual aids and demonstrations instead of just verbal explanations can greatly improve students' understanding and retention of the content (Mayer, 2021). Also, involving students in deciding how to complete assignments, planning assessments ahead, anticipating common misunderstandings, and attending professional development workshops can help teachers refine and strengthen their lesson plans (Çelik, 2019; Reingold *et al.,* 2021).

Lesson planning is seen as a basic need for effective teaching. In Eswatini, all pre-service teachers learn how to develop and implement lesson plans. Agriculture teachers also regularly attend workshops to enhance these skills. Yet, lesson planning practices vary among teachers. Some skip detailed planning due to time constraints or see it as just an administrative task, which can hurt teaching quality. Given agriculture education's practical nature, consistent and well-structured lesson planning is particularly vital. However, little research has been done on secondary school agriculture teachers' views on lesson planning in Eswatini. A related study has looked at agricultural education student teachers' attitudes (Tsikati, 2023), but a gap remains in understanding how practicing agriculture teachers perceive lesson planning in light of their specific challenges. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring these teachers' attitudes, and providing insights to enhance a positive attitude towards lesson planning by agriculture teachers in Eswatini.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to determine the attitudes of high school agriculture teachers towards lesson planning in Eswatini.

Objectives of the study

The study sought to:

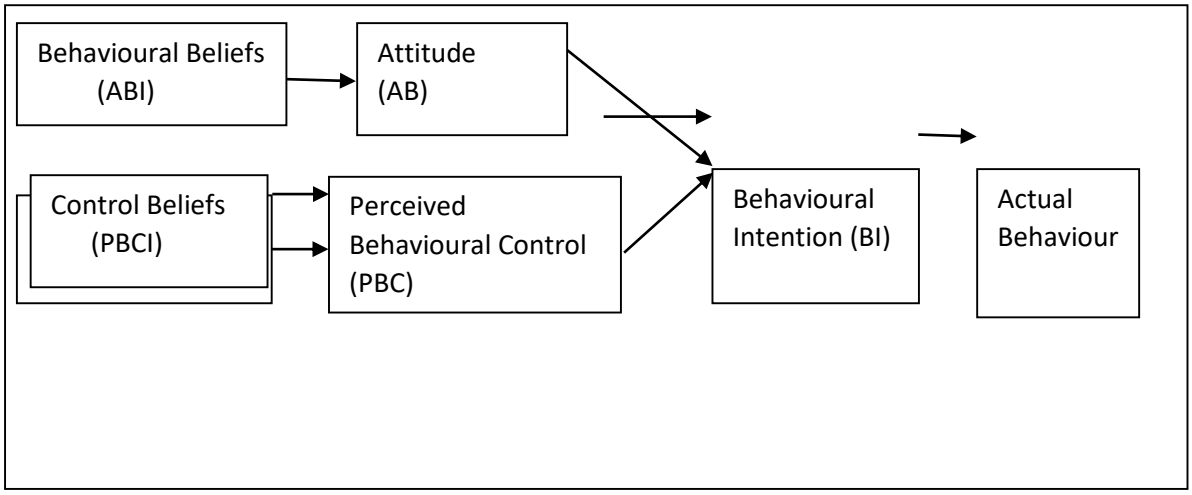
1. determine the attitudes of high school agriculture teachers towards lesson planning.
2. determine the extent to which high school agriculture teachers use the lesson plans during teaching.
3. describe the challenges encountered by high school agriculture teachers in lesson planning.
4. identify ways of improving lesson planning in the classroom by high school agriculture teachers.
5. identify differences on the high school agriculture teachers' attitudes by their demographic characteristics and background information.

Theoretical Framework

The study was framed by the Theory of Planned Behaviour [TPB] postulated by Ajzen in 2006. The Theory of Planned Behaviour posits that behaviour is a function of salient beliefs relevant to that behaviour. These dominant beliefs are seen as the predominant determinants of a person's intentions and actions. The theory has three proponents that affect intention and actual behaviour: Attitude (AB), Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC), and Subjective Norm (SN) (see Figure1). Attitude is mainly influenced by behavioural beliefs (ABI). Individuals are believed to have positive and negative attitudes toward behaviour. The Subjective Norm (SN) emerges from the Normative Beliefs (NB). This is related to perceptions of social pressure to perform the behaviour. Finally, behaviour control involves the perceived ability to complete the behaviour. It is the sufficient degree of control over behaviour. A

person only realises an intention or desire when it is satisfactorily strong and perceives social support (i.e. subjective norms) and behavioural support (i.e. perceived behavioural control). The success of any attempt to execute a behavioural plan depends on the effort put in and the individual's control over factors such as required information, skills, ability, availability of a workplace plan, willpower, presence of mind, and opportunity. Successful lesson planning depends both on favourable intention and sufficient behavioural control (i.e. perceived and actual). Ajzen (2006) summarised them as outlined in Fig 1.

Figure 1:
Theory of Planned Behaviour Note. Source: Ajzen, 2006



Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design targeting agriculture teacher (N=363) at high schools in Eswatini. A stratified random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 180 agriculture teachers from the four regions in Eswatini: Hhohho (n=48); Lubombo (n=37); Manzini (n=59) and Shiselweni (n=36). The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling table was used to determine the sample size. A close-ended questionnaire was developed from literature, and used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into five sections, namely: Section A- Teacher Attitude [14 items]; Section B – Extent teachers use lesson plan [12 items]; Section C – Challenges for using lesson plans [13 items]; Section D – Ways of improving lesson planning [13 items]; and Section E - Demographic characteristics and background information [6 items] that is sex, age, home location, qualification, school location and school activities. A six-point Likert-type scale, having the following ranges: 1= strongly disagree; 2=slightly disagree; 3=disagree; 4=agree; 5=slightly agree; and 6=strongly agree, was used to measure the teachers' attitude [Section A]; challenges in lesson planning [Section C]; and ways of improving lesson planning [Section D]. A numerical scale, using the following ranges: 1=Never; 2=Rare; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; and 5= Always was used to measure the extent to which the agriculture teachers used lesson plans [Section B]. In Section E - the demographic characteristics and background information, respondents were required to circle or fill in the blanks. Three experts from the Department of Agricultural Education and Extension at the University of Eswatini, reviewed the instrument for content validity; and their comments were incorporated prior to data collection. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 30 agriculture teachers who did not participate in this study. The inter-item reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS version 20; and the reliability coefficient was r=.74 which means the questionnaire was 74% reliable.

Data were collected between February and March 2019, and the respondents were given a fortnight to complete the instrument. The questionnaires were hand-delivered by the researchers to the agriculture teachers. Reminders were made two days before the questionnaires were collected after the two weeks. Letters seeking permission to conduct the study were written to the Director of Education in the Ministry of Education and Training, school principals and the respondents and permission was granted. The

respondents were requested to fill and sign the consent form. To ensure confidentiality, the questionnaire was formulated such that respondents' names were concealed. Furthermore, the questionnaires from the respondents were only accessible to the researchers. Descriptive and inferential statistics in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 were used for data analysis.

Results and Discussions

Demographic characteristics and background information

Table 1 indicates that most of the respondents were male agriculture teachers (n=118, 65.6%). A majority of the respondents were aged 31-35 years (n=59, n=32.8%; while 56 agriculture teachers (31.1%) were aged 36-40 years. Half of the agriculture teachers (n=91, 50.6%) lived in semi-urban areas. A sizeable number of the agriculture teachers resided in rural areas (n=71, 39.4%). An overwhelming majority of the agriculture teachers held an undergraduate degree (n=160, 88.9%). Also, a majority of the agriculture teachers (n=72, 40.1%) were teaching in schools found in rural areas. There were 70 teachers (38.9%) teaching in semi-urban areas.

Table 1:

Demographic characteristics of the respondents (n=180)

Demographics	**f**	**%**
Sex		
Male	118	65.6
Female	62	34.4
Age		
20-25	4	2.3
26-30	26	14.5
31-35	59	32.8
36-40	56	31.1
41-45	29	16
46-50	5	2.8
51-55	1	0.6
Home location		
Urban	18	10.0
Semi- urban	91	50.6
Rural	71	39.4
Highest professional qualification		
Certificate	1	0.6
Diploma	15	8.3
Degree	160	88.9
Master's degree	4	2.2
School location		
Urban	38	21.1
Semi-urban	70	38.9
Rural	72	40.0

Attitudes of agriculture teachers towards lesson plans

Table 2 indicates that teachers felt that lesson planning saves the teacher from haphazard teaching (M= 5.61, SD= 3.74); promotes orderliness (M= 5.17, SD=0.88); and is a heart of being an effective teacher (M=5.03, SD= 1.06). Agriculture teachers further agreed that lesson planning boosts teacher confidence (M=4.92, SD=1.41), promotes development in thinking (M=4.81, SD=1.06), is tedious (M=4.53, SD=1.24), gives the teacher greater assurance (M=4.32, SD=1.31), saves time (M=4.29, SD=1.13), can be copied from previous years (M=4.09,SD=1.39), and gives the teacher greater freedom in teaching (M=4.08, SD=1.35). However, the respondents disagreed that lesson planning can be done in the head (M=2.38, SD=1.59); it is not necessary at all (M=2.09, SD=1.39) and does not involve teaching aids (M=2.09, SD=1.33). The findings of the study are consistent with research indicating that lesson planning fosters orderliness and supports student development, thereby enabling teachers to effectively achieve instructional objectives (Reingold, Baratz, & Reingold, 2021). Similarly, Tsikati (2023) reported that lesson planning saves the student teacher from haphazard teaching; promotes orderliness;

heart of being an effective teacher; makes the student teacher feel confident and gives the student teacher greater assurance. Using Ajzen's (2006) Theory of Planned Behaviour, the findings suggest that agriculture teachers hold strong positive attitudes toward lesson planning, perceive social and professional expectations to engage in it (subjective norms), and believe they have the ability and resources to implement it effectively (perceived behavioural control), which together reinforce their intention to plan lessons systematically.

Table 2:

Attitudes of Agriculture teachers towards lesson planning (n =180)

Items	M	SD
Saves the teacher from haphazard teaching	5.61	0.74
Promotes orderliness	5.17	0.88
Is the heart of being an effective teacher	5.08	1.06
Makes the teacher feel confident	4.92	1.41
Promotes development in thinking	4.81	1.06
Is tedious	4.53	1.24
Gives the teacher greater assurance	4.32	1.31
Saves time	4.29	1.13
Can be copied from previous years	4.09	1.39
Gives the teacher greater freedom in teaching	4.08	1.35
Can be done inside the head	2.38	1.59
It is not necessary at all	2.09	1.39
Does not involve teaching aids	2.09	1.33
Overall	***4.86***	***1.22***

Rating Scale: 1= strongly disagree; 2=slightly disagree; 3=disagree; 4=agree; 5=slightly agree; and 6=strongly

Extent to which teachers utilise lesson plans in teaching

Table 3 presents the extent to which agriculture teachers utilise lesson plans in teaching. The study revealed that teachers were always using lesson plans for the following: posing questions during teaching (n=124, 68.9%); writing the topic on the board (n=114, 63.3%); making movement in class (n=109, 60.6%); evaluating after teaching (n=106, 58.9%) and commending positive behaviour (n=98, 54.4%). Table 3 also indicates that the agriculture teachers often utilised the lesson plan by following it from the beginning to the end (n=98, %=54.4), using the planned interest of approach (n=81, 45.5%); distributing textbooks to the students as indicated in the lesson plan (n=69, 38.3%); engaging students by partaking in hands-on activities (n=68, 37.8%); and showing students material related to the lesson plan (n=68, 37.8%). Sometimes the agriculture teachers were using the chalkboard to write objectives from the lesson plan (n=63, 35.5%).

The findings of the study align with recent research suggesting that effective lesson plan implementation involves clearly presenting lesson objectives, using engaging introductory strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. Moreover, thoughtful lesson planning allows teachers to reinforce positive behaviours and commend student effort as part of classroom management and motivation (Richards & Bohlke, 2011; Çelik, 2019). A study on the attitude of student teachers towards lesson planning revealed that student teachers always used or referred to the lesson plan when writing the topic on the board based on the lesson plan and evaluating the lesson after teaching (Tsikati, 2023). Tsikati also reported that the student teachers often used lesson plan to ask learners questions, writing notes on the chalkboard, spark interest on the students to learn, and so on. The findings of the study are consistent with the Theory of Planned Behaviour(Ajzen, 2006) that agriculture teachers' use of lesson plans in classroom activities reflects strong behavioural intentions influenced by positive attitudes toward lesson planning, perceived professional norms, and a sense of control over lesson delivery—factors that collectively shape and sustain their actual teaching practices.

Table 3:
Extent to which Agriculture teachers utilise lesson plans in teaching (n=180)

Variable	N		R		S		O		A	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Ask learners questions during teaching	3	1.7	4	2.2	8	4.4	40	22.2	124	68.9
Write topic on the chalkboard	1	0.6	3	1.7	35	19.4	27	15.0	114	63.3
Mobile in class	5	2.8	11	6.1	11	6.1	43	23.9	109	60.6
Evaluating after teaching	3	1.7	1	0.6	20	11.1	50	27.8	106	58.9
Complement positive behaviour	-	-	3	1.7	19	10.6	60	33.3	98	54.4
Write notes on the chalkboard	1	0.6	13	7.2	56	31.1	57	31.7	53	29.4
Use chalkboard to write objectives	10	5.6	17	9.4	63	35.0	43	23.9	47	26.1
Distribute textbooks to the learners	13	7.2	17	9.4	41	22.8	69	38.3	40	22.2
Used in interest approach	-	-	7	3.9	59	32.8	81	45.5	33	18.3
Follow lesson plan from beginning to end	1	0.6	11	6.1	40	22.2	98	54.4	30	16.7
Show learners material related to lesson plan	7	3.9	15	8.3	69	38.3	68	37.8	21	11.7
Engage learners by partaking in hands on activities	2	1.1	15	8.3	69	38.3	68	37.8	26	14.4

Rating Scale: 1=Never; 2=Rare; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; and 5= Always

Challenges regarding the use of lesson plan by agriculture teachers

Table 4 indicates that agriculture teachers felt that there was insufficient time for both theory and practical activities (M=4.93, SD=1.12); inadequate resources (M=4.71, SD=1.08); lack in the creation of interest (M=4.63, SD=1.06), and that lesson planning was tedious (M=4.54, SD=1.18). The respondents also felt that other school responsibilities impacted negatively on effective lesson planning (M=4.51, SD=1.09). Other challenges faced by the agriculture teachers in lesson planning were lack of proper strategies in delivering the lesson (M=4.35, SD=1.37), time consuming to prepare lesson plan (M=4.11, SD=1.32), lack of or poor cohesion in the lessons (M=4.07, SD=0.99), inability to build flexibility to deal with emerging issues in the lesson plan (M=4.00, SD=1.03). The findings of the study are consistent with recent research indicating that some teachers struggle to follow their lesson plans consistently, often deviating during instruction, and that limited flexibility in planning can hinder their ability to respond to emerging issues during lesson delivery (Çelik, 2019; Reingold, Baratz, & Reingold, 2021). Tsikati (2023) reported the following prominent challenges faced by student teachers in lesson planning: teaching materials being inadequate, lesson planning being tedious, inflexibility to deal with emerging issues in lesson plan, inability to arouse student interest from the lesson plan, inability to plan in advance, and insufficient time to cover also practical sessions.

Table 4:
Challenges regarding the use of lesson plan

Item	M	SD
Insufficient time to cover even practical activities	4.93	1.12
Teaching materials are not available	4.71	1.08
Creation of interest on lesson plan	4.63	1.06
Preparing a lesson plan is tedious	4.54	1.18
Having many school responsibilities	4.51	1.09
Strategy to deliver the lesson plan to the students	4.35	1.37
A lot of time needed to prepare the lesson plan	4.11	1.32
Poor connection with preceding lessons	4.07	0.99
Building of flexibility to deal with arising issues in lesson plan	4.00	1.03
Planning in advance	3.90	1.17
Diverting from lesson plan	3.75	1.39
Failing to achieve objectives	3.71	1.34
Not able to follow lesson plan when teaching	3.57	1.41
Overall	***4.21***	***1.20***

Ways of improving lesson plans

Table 5 indicates that lesson planning by agriculture teachers in Eswatini can be improved by providing relevant teaching aids (M=5.73, SD=0.86); attending workshops (M=5.40, SD=1.96); creation of presentations that are more in showing than telling (M=5.38, SD=0.97); having different resources for the content (M=5.37, SD=0.86) and planning ahead (M=5.36, SD= 0.89). Agriculture teachers can also improve lesson planning by knowing their students (M=5.29, SD=1.10), providing more opportunities for students to choose how they accomplish tasks (M=5.18, SD=0.97), considering students' mistakes (M=5.14, SD=0.87), and relating lesson to real life (M=5.03, SD=0.86). The findings of the study are consistent with Tsikati (2023) who found that lesson planning could be improved by the use of relevant teaching aids, attending workshops, and planning ahead. Recent scholarship emphasizes that teachers should identify the key concepts to be addressed in a lesson and be resourceful in selecting relevant teaching materials (Tomlinson, 2017). Teachers are also encouraged to apply backward design principles by aligning lessons with national learning standards and crafting essential questions that connect learning to real-life contexts, thereby increasing student motivation (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Table 5:

Ways of improving lesson plan

Items	**M**	**SD**
Using relevant teaching aids	5.73	0.86
Attendance of workshops on lesson plan	5.40	1.96
Creating presentations that are more in showing	5.38	0.97
Having different resources for content	5.37	0.86
Planning ahead	5.36	0.89
Knowing your students	5.29	1.10
Providing more opportunities for students to choose	5.18	0.97
Considering students' mistakes	5.14	0.87
Relating to real life	5.03	0.86
Planning test ahead of time	4.99	1.31
Thinking backward	4.28	1.15
Checking of the lesson plan daily by the principal	4.21	1.39
Overall	***4.64***	***1.78***

Differences of agriculture teachers on attitude towards lesson planning

Independent t-test for dichotomous and analysis of variance for multi-chotomous demographic variables were used to identify differences of agriculture teachers on attitude towards lesson planning. Table 6 reveals that there was no significant difference on the attitudes of agriculture teachers by the demographic characteristics and background information. However, Tsikati (2023) reported that there was a positive medium relationship existed between the agricultural education student teacher's attitude and the teaching practice duration. Tsikati also reported a low positive correlation between the agricultural education student teachers' attitudes and the age of the student teachers.

Table 6:

Differences of agriculture teachers on attitude towards lesson planning

Demographic variables	**N**	**M**	**SD**	**Value**	**p**
Sex					
Female	61	4.13	.635	t=.458	.64
Male	118	4.10	.426		
Age					
20-25 years	4	4.48	.322		
26-30 years	25	4.28	.54		
31-35 years	61	4.15	.60	F=1.893	.09
36 - 40 years	55	4.03	.43		
41 - 45 years	29	4.02	.40		
46 years and above	6	3.87	.18		
Home location					
Urban	18	3.93	.46		
Semi-urban	91	4.13	.39	F=1.295	.27
Rural	71	4.12	.63		

Conclusion

The findings of the study are consistent with salient literature on lesson planning. The attitudes of the teachers are both positive and negative. A majority of the agriculture teachers argue that lesson planning saves the teacher from haphazard teaching, is the heart of effective teaching, and strengthens the confidence of the teacher. However, there were negative teacher attitudes which included that lesson planning was tedious and time consuming. The study also concluded that agriculture teachers used lesson plans in their teaching and followed the lesson plan. The teacher also stated specific objectives and evaluated their lessons. However, it was observed that agriculture teachers have a challenge regarding developing an interest approach, soliciting instructional materials, and using lesson plan for practical activities. The findings imply that agriculture teachers fully understand the significance of lesson planning. This is consistent with recent research indicating that lesson planning promotes structure and helps prevent disorganized teaching (Reingold, et al., 2021). The study also implies that the Department of Agricultural Education and Extension of the University of Eswatini should strengthen the teacher preparation or pre-service training programme by equipping student teachers on the preparation and effective use/implementation of lesson plans for practical activities.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and Training should provide periodical training for teachers on lesson planning; so that they are not frustrated, but enjoy the lesson planning exercise. The agriculture teachers had challenges in the implementation of the lesson plan; especially with interest approach and practical sessions. Thus, it is recommended that refresher courses should concentrate on these areas. School administrators must provide the necessary teaching aids to enhance the development and implementation of lesson plans. An electronic template should be developed to reduce the amount of work and the time taken in lesson planning.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper or otherwise.

Authors' contributions

Phetsile Francis: Conception/design, development of data collection instrument, analysis, interpretation of data, revised manuscript (30%)
Phetsile Francis and Alfred Tsikati: Conception/design, data collection, analysis, interpretation of data, editing and first draft (20%)
Phetsile Francis: Analysis and Interpretation of data (10%)
Phetsile Francis: Interpretation of data, first draft and revision (10%)
Phetsile Francis: Data collection, interpretation of data and first draft (10%)
Alfred Tsikati: Interpretation of data, first draft and editing (10%)
Phetsile Francis and Alfred Tsikati: Data collection, interpretation of data and first draft (10%)

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