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Setting Lesson Goals, Objectives and Outcomes: Teachers' Perspective

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Extended summary

The aim of this paper was to examine the opinions and procedures used by teachers relative to the definition of the lesson goals and their operationalization in teachers' written lesson plans, while taking into account the differences among teachers in terms of their years of work experience, the scope of professional development and the school subjects that they teach.

The research draws upon the theories claiming that defining educational goals is one of the most important phases in the whole educational process (Antonijević, 2012, 2013; Barrow, 2002; Moor, 2010; Noddings, 2003; Standish, 2002; Waks, 1969; White, 2010, 2013). Another important approach that was taken into consideration in this study is the operationalization of educational goals by making a taxonomy promoted worldwide by Benjamin Blume (1956) and continued by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001). Apart from analyzing educational goals and objectives, the paper discusses the contemporary concept of the outcome-based education as a model of operationalization (Despotović, 2010; Levkov, 2010; Spady, 1994a, 1994b).

The methodology used in this research is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The survey designed for the purpose of this study is a combination of a questionnaire, descriptive scales and ranking scales. In addition, a protocol for analyzing teachers' written lesson plans was developed and the categories for evaluation were constructed by applying the inductive method (Maksimović, 2014).

The research sample consisted of 290 early primary school and subject teachers and 51 lesson plans. According to the results, 93, 5% of the respondents state that lesson goals must be clearly defined. Lesson goals were identified in 41 out of 51 analyzed lesson plans. As far as the concretization of the lesson goals and objectives is concerned, some differences were identified

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in the respondents' answers: while 30% of respondents indicated that they set objectives, and approximately 60% indicated that they define both teaching objectives and outcomes, the analysis of the lesson plans shows that the objectives were defined in 17, and outcomes in 10 lesson plans, while both were defined in only one lesson plan.

The results also indicate that in the process of operationalization early primary school teachers and subject teachers do not rely in equal measure on the following factors: students' abilities, interests and knowledge; the content of teaching units and teachers' professional knowledge and competences ($\chi^2(2) = 130,720, p < .001$). It was also established that teachers with over 25 years of work experience rely more than any other sample group on their professional knowledge and skills in the process of operationalization of lesson goals. Their responses differ from the responses of other groups in the following manner: from respondents with up to five years of work experience ($U = 1489.5, p < .05$), from respondents with six to ten years of work experience ($U = 1339.0, p < .01$), from respondents with 11 to 15 years ($U = 697.5, p < .01$), from respondents with 16 to 20 years of work experience ($U = 1062.0, p < .01$), and from respondents with 21 to 25 years of work experience ($U = 830.0, p < .05$). In line with these findings is the result that teachers who have been working for less than ten years generally believe that they have limited competences in terms of operationalization ($\chi^2(2) = 19.399, p < .001$). The research results can also be discussed from the perspective of teachers' professional development that is generally aimed at the development "of a didactic professional identity" characterized by the strengthening of the competences needed for solving methodical questions and the realization of lessons (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; quoted in Vranješević, Vujisić Živković, 2013: 589). As far as the perception of the main obstacles to the process of operationalization is concerned, the teachers involved in the research cited: overloaded curricula, insufficient teaching tools, high demands of educational authorities in terms of administrative work, as well as students' attention span and inactivity in class.

The findings of this study can be useful for the researchers and professionals involved in the educational process, given that they illustrate the challenges that teachers are faced with in concretizing their goals. The findings also provide a basis for further consideration of the adequate support to teachers in this process. A regular pattern was identified in the teachers' responses: the more years of work experience they have, the less they report that they have limited competences for the operationalization of lesson goals. This fact may have implications in the context of providing support to teachers, primarily novice teachers, as well as on the strengthening of their didactical and methodological competences, which can be achieved by cooperating with pedagogical counselors, providing mentoring support of the more experienced teachers, exchanging know-how with colleagues who are faced with the same challenges, and by working on possible solutions.

Why is it important to analyze the opinions of teachers, the procedures they use in formulating lesson goals and the operationalization of these goals in teachers' written lesson plans? Getting an insight into teachers' attitudes and the challenges they are faced with can help us to identify potential causes of these problems and recommend appropriate support to teachers. If we want to create favorable conditions for the work of teachers, it is important to identify and understand the needs of teachers. Given that teachers view the curricula as a limiting factor

in the process of concretization of lesson goals, the creators of educational policies can help in overcoming this obstacle by acknowledging teachers' opinions and experience.

Key words: educational goals, operationalization of educational goals, educational objectives, educational outcomes, teachers.

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