It Is Only A Bad Plan That Admits Of No Modification: Implications For The Teacher And The Lesson Plan

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ABSTRACT
This paper basically attempts to make a critical analysis of the moral maxim of Publilius Syrus which states that; “It is only a bad plan that admits of no modification” in relation to the teacher and the lesson plan. Publilius Syrus was a Latin writer of maxims who flourished in the first century. Having been released 2000 years ago, the maxim implicitly and inadvertently advocates that a lesson plan which cannot be necessarily modified when it is needful is a bad plan. It also makes manifest the truism that as a personnel in the teaching business there is always need to become conscious of the required moment when the need for the amendment of lesson plan becomes germane and not necessarily to be too rigid but rational in our thinking when it comes to lesson planning as teachers. The paper further presented a succinct biography of Publilius Syrus and explicated the concept of lesson plan, examined the effective lesson planning strategies for teachers and the implications of the maxim on the teachers. Having critically considered all these, the researcher concluded that; the understanding of the maxim will enable the teachers to compensate for intellectual, behavioural or physical disabilities of all respective stakeholders in the classroom. By way of further encapsulation, it was recommended that; every teacher should be compulsorily made to have good knowledge cum mastery of the moral maxim as they set out to face the classroom environment where they will have to deploy the disparate models of lesson plan. It was also recommended that; teachers should be made to twig that the capacity to present lesson plan commences with the comprehension and internalization of Publilius Syrus’s moral maxim which will help to give the teacher a better appraisal of the anticipated outcome of their lesson and how to react towards such outcome.

Keywords: Plan, Lesson Plan, Modification, Bad

INTRODUCTION
Since it is unequivocal that it is essential for curriculum to evolve and change with the purpose of meeting the changing demands of life and the prerequisites of the world of work in our contemporary milieu and because the nature of the work environment has changed or is changing dramatically, it then follows that a clear understanding of this maxim and its subsequent enforcement by the teacher cannot be excused or divorced from the educational system. Therefore, if that being the case, this maxim under due consideration becomes increasingly momentous and timely for them.

In this contemporary milieu where and when the economy is changing from manufacturing to knowledge-based and service-based economy, the dire need for the institutionalization of this perception of Publilius Syrus in the educational policy planning and implementation of classroom lessons should not be treated with kid-gloves. Undoubtedly, it is always welcoming for subjects’ curriculum design to be modified to meet the changing societal trends since it is only a bad plan that admits of no modification. Ceaseless questions needs to be asked before embarking on lesson plan modification the best way to prepare
learners for those changing environmental or situational conditions (Jones & Ducket, 2006). Be that as it may, the quality and effectiveness of a lesson plan will depend on:

- The disposition of the teacher at that given period of time
- The professional competence of the teacher
- The intellectual dexterity of the teacher
- The environmental condition the teacher finds himself at that particular time
- The rationality of the teacher
- The inclination of the teacher
- Educational background of the teacher
- Availability of instructional materials for the teacher

When lesson plan is said to be bad, it could simply mean that its foundation is faulty and when it is said to be good, it could mean that it is realistic. Hence, from this maxim it therefore becomes indicative to avow that all lesson plan require some iota of modification should the need arise. Lesson plan could be conscientiously, meticulously and/or necessarily doctored in order to fit into the present classroom conditions at every given point in time. Indeed, all lesson plans are not beyond modification; they must be constantly accessed and reassessed for a proper identification of any lacuna and therefore, seek to cover them up accordingly so as to be in tune with the classroom contemporary trends at all times.

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS AND EXPLICATIONS

The Succinct Biography of Publilius Syrus

Publilius Syrus was a writer of Latin maxims who flourished in the first century. He was an origin of Assyria and was brought as a slave to Italy, but by his wit and talent, he won the favour of his master, who freed him and educated him. His mines in which he acted himself had a great success in the provincial towns of Italy and at the games given by Caesar in 46BC. Publilius Syrus was perhaps even more famous as an improviser, and received from Caesar himself the prize in a context in which he vanquished all his competitors, including the celebrated Decimus Laberius. All that remained of his ‘corpus’ is a collection of his sentenciae. This is a series of moral maxims in iambic and trochaic verse. This collection must have been made at very early date, since it was known to Aulus Gellius in the 2nd century AD. Each maxim consists of a single verse, and the verses are arranged in alphabetical order according to their initial letters (Total War Centre, 2015).

The Concept of Lesson Plan

A lesson plan is an abbreviated written account of the lesson preparation for a single day or period. It helps the teacher to ensure that contents are presented sequentially, and that the objectives are pursued and attained within the time limit. A lesson plan is a detailed explication of the teacher’s classroom lesson in which the teacher plans to teach on a specific day. A lesson plan is crafted by a teacher to serve as an instructive guide throughout the day's classroom endeavor. Lesson plans traditionally includes; the name of the lesson, the date of the lesson, the objectives that the lesson focuses on, the materials that will be used and a summary of the lesson (Achuonye & Ajoku, 2003; Meador, 2017).

Agreeing with Meador (2017), and Achuonye and Ajoku (2003) that a lesson plan is a teacher’s detailed description of the course of instruction for one class, it could be posited that such details will vary depending on the preference of the teacher, subject being covered, and the need and/or curiosity of students. According to Cox (2017), a lesson plan is a step-by-step guide that outlines the teacher's objectives for what the students will accomplish for a given day. Cox (2017) who opined that crafting of a lesson plan involves setting goals, developing activities and determining the materials that will be used also highlighted the component parts of a lesson plan to include the following; objectives and goals, anticipatory set, direct instruction, guided practice, closure, independent practice, required materials and assessment.

Consequent upon this, a lesson plan could be perceived to mean that chronologically arranged and scrupulously crafted framework that guides the teacher in the accomplishment of the classroom teaching
A lesson plan is a detailed framework of lesson that explicates the procedure and modus-operandi for the presentation and realization for the teacher’s specific behavioural objectives. A lesson plan simply put, is a complete manual for the teacher’s classroom instruction. It helps to specify the what, who, where, when, and how of teaching in the classroom according to the discretion of the classroom teacher. Summarizing in a very basic term, a lesson plan is the teacher’s guide for running a specific lesson and it includes; the goal (what the students are supposed to learn), how the goal will be reached (the method and procedures) and a way of measuring how well the goal was reached (test, worksheet, etc).

Effective Lesson Planning Strategies for Teachers
Planning a lesson as a teacher requires a distinctive strategy application considering the theory that it is only a bad plan that admits no modification and also taking due cognizance of the fact that if a lesson plan is not scrupulously planned, it may amount to unnecessary waste of scarce resources. The teachers are to couch the lesson plan in such a way that all the available resources could be judiciously used to realise the subsidiary aims of the lesson. This is sequel to the fact that the lesson plan serves as the teacher’s road-map of what students needs to know, and how it will be done effectively during the class time, the teacher needs to deploy a strategic model that will involve the specification of concrete objectives for students’ learning which will help to determine the kind of teaching and learning activities that will be used in the class, while these activities will define how to check whether the learning objectives have been accomplished (Milkova, 2017).

However, as a teacher, the following strategic steps could be followed in order to be able to craft an effective lesson plan (Milkova, 2017);

- Outline learning objectives
- Develop the introduction
- Plan the specific learning activities
- Plan to check for understanding
- Develop a conclusion
- Create a realistic timeline

Strategic Lesson Planning Steps

1. **Specific learning objectives:** clearly identify and state in measurable terms what you intend to achieve at the culmination of the lesson. Check if such objective is realistic or not and use adequate action words to express them.
2. **Introduction/Preamble:** Unequivocally establish the facts of the lesson and identify areas that will be covered in the lesson contents.
3. **Learning experiences:** Plan the specific experiences that will bring about effective learning experiences. Decide on the better and acceptable mode of delivering the lesson contents to the learners. Use adequate instructional strategies that synchronize with the topic.
4. **Comprehensibility:** Plan to check for the student’s level of comprehension and understanding. Check if the students will be able to understand the lesson considering their demographic composition which may include their age, sex, background, among others.
5. **Conclusion and Preview:** Draw conclusion based on the presentation of the lesson and the expected learning outcome. Preview to check for general omission or error and make amends where necessary.
6. **Timeframe:** Develop a timeframe that is realistic for each of the stages. This will enhance your effective time management strategies and possibly make possible the complete delivery of the entire lesson contents of the day.
It is Only a Bad Plan that Admits of No Modification: Implications for the Teacher and the Lesson Plan

Piblilius Syrus' moral maxim is critical and pivotal in the teaching and learning situations or experiences. It is an aphorism that should be at the back of every trained teacher especially during his/her preparation towards teaching. Infact, it is highly requisite in every teaching preparation processes. This is because, couching a lesson plan without any modicum of anticipated further modifications by the teacher as a result of the dynamism in the learning environment may amount to abysmal realization of the established instructional and behavioral objectives of the lesson. It is a moral principle that should also serve as a guide to the teacher while in the classroom; the teacher really needs to bear in mind especially when teaching aids are meant to be used.

This maxim has become imperative because it is coming at a time when there is prevailing mind-fix and ready made excuse syndrome for inaction amongst teachers regarding “lack of”, “inadequate this or that”. In view of this maxim, teachers have to come to terms with the fact that if they continue to wait for perfect conditions, no effective teaching and learning will take place. However, a teacher may not want to admit that his lesson plan requires modification when the teacher believes that government truly possesses the resources to equip the laboratories but prefers to spend same on frivolities he may be unwilling to think out alternative ways of presenting instructions. One of this core focuses of this assertion is to actually see how teachers could be enabled to develop into well-integrated people capable of adapting, through creative thinking, into the classroom learning and teaching conditions at every point in time. That is, their ability to continue to positively pattern and re-pattern their educational plans, social policies and existential ideologies.

It is unequivocal that it is only a bad lesson plan that admits of no modification because, the success of teachers’ activities in classroom are adjudged by the quality of learning experiences the students garners which often times requires a cornucopia of teacher creativity, effectiveness, efficiency and resourcefulness. That is to opine that, the creative dexterity of or opulence of the teacher in the areas of being able to instantaneously improvise by way of modifying its teaching objectives when the need arises in order to possess the ability to achieve particular teaching objective via a well modified lesson plan talks more of an effective teacher.

Some lesson plans are subject to further necessary modification while some others may not. For Syrus (2015), those plans that are not capable of being modified are expected to be considered as being unpopular and hence, should be set aside. When the much needed teaching aid cum instructional materials are not readily available, the teacher is to improvise by modifying the already existing lesson plans in order to obtain a favourable landing at the culmination of the teaching and learning process. When a lesson plan becomes such that it defiles all iota of possible modifications, it could to some reasonable extent be considered to be a bad plan. Little wonder Syrus (2015) will opine that bad is that plan which cannot be changed.

Since the most pertinent thing one is trying to develop or implement may turn out to be the opposite idea or thought that one is working on, Syrus’ maxim becomes justifiable to a reasonable degree so far as the teacher or the teacher in training and his lesson plan is concerned. However, it now becomes pivotal and critical for teachers to be continually conscious of this necessary aphorism of Syrus and see to its effective implementation in their quotidian classroom preparatory activities, teaching activities and in their professional teaching career makes for an effective professional teacher.

Undoubtedly, it is only a bad lesson plan that admits no change, but in every educational spectrum, before a lesson plan must be modified by the teacher, certain key questions needs to be asked and answered. Such questions may be highlighted as follows;

- Can the student actively participate in the lesson or will the behavioural objective not be realistic without necessary modification of the lesson plan should the need arise? Will some essential outcomes be achieved?
- Can a student’s participation be increased by changing the instructional arrangement and/or the lesson format via lesson plan modification?
Can the student’s participation and understanding be increased by changing the delivery of instruction or teaching method?
Can the changes in the lesson plan be made in the classroom environment or lesson location that will facilitate classroom active and inclusive participation?
Will the students need adapted curricular goals?
Will different materials and personal assistance be needed to ensure participation?
Will a separate activity need to be designed and offered for the student and a small group of peers (Tools for Teachers, 1999)?

Inferences deducible from the Maxim in Relation to the Lesson Plan and the Teacher

The following inferences could be deduced from the maxim of Pubilius Syrus the Latin writer of Sentensiae. They are highlighted as following:

- All good lesson plans are not devoid of necessary modification or alteration by the teacher.
- There exist both good and bad lesson plan. Each case depends on the intellectual dexterity of the teacher’s degree of professional opulence or development.
- Lesson plans are not completely free from impulse alteration. That is, it is not always occasioned by conscious adjustment or preparation.
- A lesson plan in the long run can be amended by the teacher to fit into the current educational situation or classroom conditions so as to actually enable the teacher achieve his instructional cum behavioural objectives.
- Lesson plans may continue to be redesigned until they are seeing to be serving out the purpose for which they were proposed.
- Change as it relates to lesson preparation by the teacher is an inherently occurring phenomenon of everyday life.

Criticisms or Shortcomings of Pubilius Syrus’ Moral Maxim

Just like a host of other principles, theories and/or maxims, Pubilius Syrus’ moral maxim has not failed to also have its own share of criticisms. For the benefit of clarity, such criticisms may be pointed out as follows;

1. Pubilius Syrus committed a fallacy of hasty generalization in logic since he believes that it is ‘only’ a ‘bad’ plan that admits of no modification. That is to say that, he invariably succeeded in affirming that every lesson plan remains good, favourable and realistic so far as it can be modified even though by nature it is unblemish in its self.
2. It appears to be encouraging poor preparations among policy planners cum developers and even teachers since it has been implied that even the ‘good’ plans are still prone to further modifications.
3. Lesson plans do not always need to be modified.
4. Improvisation or alteration of lesson plans may be requisite but not always mandatory for every learning condition.

CONCLUSION

This maxim as has been rightly put forward by Pubilius Syrus the Latin writer is timely and not out of place. It enables the teacher to compensate for intellectual, behavioural or physical disabilities of all the respective stakeholders in the classroom. Modification of lesson plans allows the teacher to use existing skills while promoting the development, acquisition or improvement of new skills. Sequel to the above inking and despite its criticisms we can still accord Pubilius Syrus some credence and profuse kudos for his well articulated postulate. However, it is desired that teachers, school administrators and even curriculum designers and implementers as a matter of superlative necessity, regard this dictum as a relevant guiding principle towards the implementation of instructional objectives and educational policies and programs.
RECOMMENDATIONS
The following recommendations are advanced for further considerations;
1) Teachers should regularly call to mind the fact as a teacher, unanticipated classroom occurrences may render a well couched and thought out lesson plan faulty. Thus, there should always be the need for the modification of lesson plans to be in tandem with unanticipated scenarios.
2) Since a lesson plan guides the teacher accordingly in the classroom proceeding, the teacher must take due account of the complexities of the classroom and divulge how to modify the lesson plan to fit into those complexities.
3) Teachers in disparate teacher-training institutions in Rivers State should be given the lucrative opportunity and avenue to brainstorm more on this moral maxim so as to further unravel its deeper meaning and implications to the lesson planning and utilization in general.
4) Teachers should be made to twig that the capacity to develop a presentable lesson plan commences with the comprehension and internalization of Publius Syrus’ moral maxim. This will help to give the teacher a better appraisal of the anticipated outcome of their lesson plan and to react towards such outcome.
5) Every teacher should be compulsorily made to have good knowledge cum mastery of the moral maxim as they set out for a teaching endeavour where there will be the use of disparate models of lesson plan.

REFERENCES