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## *Exploring The Philosophy Behind Teachers' Lesson Preparation Practices in Secondary Schools in Kayunga District, Uganda*

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### **Abstract**

*Following the contemporary indefinite prevalence of lesson preparation practices among teachers, this study explored the philosophy behind teachers' lesson preparation practices in view of enhancing effective teaching and learning in Uganda. While the study's teachers' lesson preparation practices were conceptualized as making schemes of work and lesson plans, the philosophy underlying these practices were conceptualized as teachers' beliefs about students' learning, the nature and sources of valuable knowledge, and the values they aim to instill in students. The Danielson's 1996 framework for effective teaching model informed this qualitative descriptive triad case study, underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. Nine teachers from three schools (three from each school) in Kayunga district, participated in this study. Data was collected from the teachers, their head teachers, directors of studies and students. The findings revealed that philosophy underlying teachers' lesson preparation practices is pragmatism reflected in learning through doing, valuing experience and reflection, adapting education to real-world contexts, and fostering habits of mind that prepare students for active participation in society. The study recommends that school managers such as head teachers should regularly follow up closely on teachers' pragmatic lesson preparation practices, putting into consideration that drawing formal lesson plans may not be the only effective way of planning to teach.*

**Keywords:** *Teachers' lesson preparation practices, Philosophy of education, Contemporary preparation of lessons.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Lesson preparation is a critical component of effective teaching, shaping both instructional delivery and student learning outcomes. In contemporary education, the way teachers prepare lessons reflects not only pedagogical strategies but also deeper philosophical beliefs about teaching and learning (Buchanan et al., 2022). Owing to this,

Uganda is currently implementing the National Teacher Policy (NTP) to professionalize and standardize the teaching profession (MoES, 2019). However, the philosophy underlying teachers' lesson preparation practices to enhance teaching/ learning process remains largely unexplored, hence the current study. The philosophy behind teachers' lesson preparation practices in secondary schools has evolved significantly over time, influenced by prevailing educational theories, societal needs, and broader philosophical shifts. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, lesson preparation was heavily influenced by the ideas of Johann Friedrich Herbart, whose model emphasized moral and intellectual development through a structured five-step process: preparation, presentation, association, generalization, and application (Barrow & Woods, 2021). This systematic approach to lesson planning was rooted in a belief that learners developed best when guided step-by-step by the teacher, and it was widely adopted in teacher training institutions across Europe and North America (Barrow & Woods, 2021). During this period, teachers were viewed primarily as transmitters of knowledge, and the lesson plan was a tool for delivering content in an orderly and controlled manner.

From the 1990s onwards, the constructivist philosophy gained prominence, emphasizing that learners actively construct their own understanding through interaction with content and the environment. This led to a more dynamic approach to lesson preparation. Teachers were now expected to design lessons that scaffold student learning, accommodate diverse learning styles, and promote autonomy. Differentiated instruction became central to this philosophy, with teachers preparing varied materials and activities to meet the needs of all learners (Ntumi, 2021). In this context, lesson planning extended beyond content delivery to include strategies for inclusion, collaboration, and formative assessment. The underlying belief was that education should empower students to construct meaning rather than passively receive information. In recent years, particularly within African contexts, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of philosophical reflection in teachers' lesson preparation.

In Uganda including Kayunga District, schools exhibit a range of philosophical orientations influenced by their founding bodies, religious affiliations, educational policies, and societal expectations which significantly shape teachers' lesson preparation practices (SSekamanya & Kasirye, 2021). For example, teachers in government-aided secondary schools often align with essentialism as they focus on delivering a fixed body of knowledge, emphasizing national curriculum standards and an examination-driven approach to learning (SSekamanya & Kasirye, 2021). In contrast, missionary-founded schools such as Catholic, Anglican, or Islamic institutions tend to blend perennialism and essentialism, combining academic rigor with moral and religious instruction (Musisi & Zziwa, 2019). International and elite private schools embrace progressivism or constructivism, utilizing modern pedagogical methods that prioritize student agency and holistic development (Namubiru, 2020). Meanwhile, rural and underfunded schools lean towards behaviorism, focusing on discipline and control to effectively manage large class sizes and limited resources (SSekamanya & Kasirye, 2021). One wonders the philosophy behind teachers' lesson preparation practices in Kayunga.

Understanding the philosophy behind teachers' lesson preparation practices enhances the effectiveness of teacher training and professional development by promoting critical thinking, adaptability, and intentional teaching (Ramnarain & Hlatswayo, 2023). Such philosophical inquiry is essential for uncovering the underlying beliefs, values, and assumptions that guide how teachers plan lessons (Ovens, 2022). While teachers' lesson preparation practices encompass setting learning objectives, sequencing content, selecting appropriate teaching methods and materials, anticipating student responses, and planning assessments König et al. (2022). Philosophy defines the goals, principles, beliefs, values, and forms of knowledge that are appropriate for individuals, considering their needs and interests (Lajul, 2002). One's philosophy is essential to one's practices as it offers a guiding framework that shapes decision-making, actions, and professional identity (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2020; Farrell, 2021). In the context of my study, lesson preparation practices mean the activities teachers engage in before classroom delivery

and philosophy refers to the teachers' beliefs behind their lesson preparation practices. Lesson preparation practices are indicated by making schemes of work and lesson plans whereas philosophy is indicated by teachers' beliefs about students' learning, the nature and sources of valuable knowledge, and the values they aim to instill in students. This study was carried out in Kayunga District and aimed at exploring teachers' beliefs about:

- i. student learning as reflected in educational philosophy during their lesson preparation practices in secondary schools.
- ii. nature and sources of knowledge considered valuable for students during their lesson preparation practices in secondary schools.
- iii. values they aim to instill in students during lesson preparation practices in secondary schools.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Lesson preparations typically include setting clear learning goals, selecting appropriate teaching methods, and incorporating diverse strategies to check for student understanding and provide feedback (Croft, 2022; Danielson, 1996; Rodrigues et al., 2020). Lesson planning is widely recognized as a cornerstone of effective teaching. According to Karim (2022), experienced and novice teachers alike acknowledge that detailed lesson planning correlates positively with improved student learning outcomes. Well-constructed lesson plans help teachers anticipate student needs and prepare appropriate responses, creating a responsive and adaptive teaching environment. Similarly, Wu and Chao (2020) as well as Lim et al. (2022) found that teachers' focus on ensuring that lessons are sequentially structured help students master foundational concepts before moving on to more complex ones. Moreover, Aherbach and Andrews (2018) emphasize formal planning and preparation as the bedrock of effective teaching. However, Koh et al. (2021) found out that experienced teachers often rely on their expertise and adaptability, focusing on the flow of instruction rather than strict adherence to plans. The philosophy behind teachers' lesson preparation practices in secondary schools was largely unexplored.

First and far most, teachers' beliefs about how students learn significantly impact their lesson preparation practices. According to Polat and Erbilgin (2021), teachers who hold constructivist beliefs prepare lessons that encourage students to build their knowledge through hands-on activities and collaborative learning experiences. These teachers often focus on preparing lessons with teaching aids to facilitate exploration, critical thinking, and problem-solving, rather than merely delivering content. On the contrary, teachers who adhere to more traditional, teacher-centered grounding, prepare lessons that emphasize direct instruction and knowledge transmission-essentialism. Xu and Brown (2019) argue that some teachers view their role as delivering expert knowledge, which leads them to prepare structured, content-heavy lessons aimed at efficiently covering the curriculum. This is especially true in subjects like mathematics and sciences, where foundational knowledge is often prioritized over student inquiry. However, many studies on the philosophical underpinnings of lesson preparation were conducted in Western contexts, with limited exploration of how these philosophies manifest in non-Western educational settings, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (Jackson & Campbell, 2020).

Besides, teachers' beliefs about the nature and sources of knowledge, commonly referred to as their epistemological views, significantly shape their lesson preparation practices. Epistemological beliefs play a crucial role in determining the instructional methods and materials teachers prioritize during lesson planning. Teachers who view knowledge as fixed and absolute often prepare lessons that emphasize content mastery and factual recall (Smith & Clark, 2022). Such teachers rely heavily on textbooks and authoritative sources, aiming to deliver accurate and comprehensive information. Conversely, teachers who view knowledge as dynamic and constructed through inquiry design lessons that encourage exploration, critical thinking, and collaborative learning (Brown & Lee, 2023). These teachers integrate diverse sources of knowledge, including peer-reviewed articles, multimedia, and real-world case

studies, to present multiple perspectives and encourage students to evaluate information critically. But SSegawa and Matovu (2020) assert that some teachers in Uganda were no longer complying with effective planning for their lessons. Could it be that they design lesson plans according to what works for them thus holding a pragmatists' view?! Hence, the need for the current study.

Furthermore, lesson preparation practices are profoundly influenced by the values teachers aim to instill in their students. Values play a central role in education, serving as a foundation for character development, citizenship, and social responsibility. Teachers, as custodians of moral and ethical standards, often incorporate values such as respect, discipline, critical thinking, and empathy into their lesson plans (Brown & Harris, 2023). For example, a teacher emphasizing civic responsibility design a history lesson that explores the principles of democracy and ethical leadership. Teachers frequently integrate values into lessons through subject-specific content. Literature and social studies, for instance, are commonly used to promote empathy, cultural understanding, and ethical reasoning (Jones & Taylor, 2022). Mathematics and science, while often perceived as value-neutral, are increasingly being taught with an emphasis on collaboration, perseverance, and ethical considerations related to technology and the environment (Ahmed & Malik, 2021). Additionally, teachers design lessons with character education which focuses on instilling virtues like honesty, responsibility, and kindness into students (Johnson & Patel, 2022). However, one of the challenges teachers face is balancing the demands of academic achievement with the integration of values into lesson preparation. While standardized testing and curriculum requirements often prioritize measurable academic outcomes, teachers who emphasize holistic education strive to incorporate values without compromising content mastery (Thomas & Carter, 2023). The values teachers aim to instill in students in secondary schools in Kayunga District were not yet known. Hence, the need for the current study.

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Different theories are related to the current study. These include; behaviorist theory, social learning theory, humanistic learning theory, and cognitive learning theory. Behaviorism theory asserts that learning is a result of the external environment's influence on observable behaviors for instance individuals respond to stimuli, and learning occurs through associations between stimuli and responses (Wahyuni & Azwar, 2022). However, the theory mainly leads to rote memorization and performance of specific tasks, but it might not promote deep understanding or transfer of knowledge to new contexts (Yoon, 2021). This made it inappropriate to inform the current study. In the same way, social learning theory (social cognitive theory) which contends that learning occurs through observation and imitation of others' behaviors, as well as the consequences of those behaviors, could not inform the current study (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020). This is because the theory might not fully address complex internal cognitive activities and might not address how cultural and contextual factors influence observational learning and the adoption of role models (Yoon, 2021).

Most appropriately, Danielson's 1996 model for effective teaching was used to underpin this study. This is because the model integrates theoretical and practical elements, making it suitable for linking philosophical concepts with teaching practices (Goe et al., 2020). This alignment supported my goal of connecting philosophy behind concrete teachers' lesson preparation strategies. Research by Nguyen and Smith (2023) confirms the continued validity and effectiveness of Danielson's model in various educational settings. Their findings suggest that the model remains a robust tool for assessing and improving teaching practices, reinforcing its suitability for my study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed the interpretivist paradigm. It used the qualitative approach. Besides, a descriptive tripartite case study design was employed. Three schools that were purposefully chosen from which three teachers were also

purposely chosen. The three chosen secondary schools were government-aided- Lion S.S, proprietary- Elephant S.S and government USE- Tiger S.S. The study used interview guides, direct observation checklists, focus group discussion guides, and documentary review guides to collect data. Data was thematically analysed. The study ensured transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability to maintain data quality control.

## RESULTS

The first objective of this paper was to explore teachers' beliefs about student learning as reflected in educational philosophy during their lesson preparation practices in secondary schools. Table 1 thus shows the results across the three schools.

**Table 1: Teachers' beliefs about student learning during their lesson preparation practices across the three schools**

Sub-themes emerged across all cases	Teachers' lesson preparation practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived awareness of lesson steps</li> <li>• Balancing theory and practical practice</li> <li>• Reflecting on the previous lessons</li> <li>• Embracing instructional improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Following lesson steps suited to learners' level.</li> <li>✓ Including both theoretical explanations and hands-on tasks.</li> <li>✓ Referring to learners' past performance when planning.</li> <li>✓ Revising lessons to improve clarity.</li> </ul>

From Table 1, the subthemes that emerged from the analysis of data about the teachers' beliefs on reality of students' learning which teachers exhibit during lesson preparation are presented.

First is perceived awareness of lesson steps. This sub-theme is used in this study to refer to the inclination by teachers to be well knowledgeable about all what they need to have their lessons successful even if without formal written lesson plans. From my observations during data collection, we were able to witness that teachers only made hand written notes as they planned to go to class to teach. When asked why they made such notes instead of drawing lesson plan documents in their interviews, they informed me that making hand written notes would easily help them to give students the real content students deserved. In fact, one of the teachers narrated to me that:

*My friend there is no way you can go to class without real notes you are going to teach the students, you may end up getting lost and students look at you as a fool. For me these notes are better than just writing a detailed lesson plan which some inspectors or administrators think are more important. May I ask you, do students learn better because you have made good lesson plans? No, they don't. It is just the way you have organized your real content systematically (Teacher B, Lion S.S).*

We interpreted these views to mean that teachers believe students learn best when content is clearly organized and directly relevant, rather than through rigid adherence to formal lesson plans. They see practical preparation, such as handwritten notes, as more effective for delivering "real" content that meets students' needs. This belief reflects a pragmatic philosophy, where the focus is on what works in actual classroom settings.

The second subtheme is balancing theory and practical practice. This sub-theme is in reference to teachers ensuring that the content to be taught is not only for passive retention by learners but also carries some practical sense. From my observations during data collection, I saw one of the teachers carrying materials which I had earlier observed in their schemes of work such as grass, pesticides and soil as he planned to go to class to teach. When asked why he



carried such materials in an interview, he informed that this would easily help him to make his students learn naturally. In fact, in his own words the teacher narrated to me that:

*For me the subject I teach are a practical one. There is no way I can teach certain content without using teaching/learning aids as you have seen them in my scheme of work. A student needs to see what I am talking about physically then she or he realizes that oooh this is what the teacher is talking about. This is what makes the students to learn the real content and understand better (Teacher C, Lion S.S).*

This data highlights teachers' belief that students learn more effectively when theoretical content is supported with practical experiences. The teacher intentionally integrates physical materials and real-life examples into lessons to make learning more concrete and relatable, believing that seeing and engaging with real objects deepens understanding. This belief reflects a constructivist philosophy, where learning is seen as an active process rooted in creating knowledge.

The third subtheme is reflecting on the previous lessons. This sub-theme focuses on teachers' evaluation of their past lessons to determine what worked well and what did not. When doing a documentary review, I saw comments in teachers' schemes of work under the remarks column such as “not taught because of rain”, “lesson well taught”, and “some students didn't understand”. In an interview with them, I asked them why they had such comments and their reasons rotated around helping them to know what and how to plan for their next lesson well. One teacher for example narrated in his own words to me that;

*As a professional teacher you have to evaluate your lessons to know what worked and what didn't work so that you can plan well for the next lesson. Now if you don't reflect on the lesson you have taught then how do continue with the next lesson? When you reflect on your previous lesson taught you will be able to know which area needs to review in the next lesson so you plan appropriately. For instance, you can repeat some subject matter that was not understood by the learning instead of just continuing with the next the content (Teacher B, Lion S.S).*

However, the practice was different when it came to the responses of the other teacher I interviewed. When I consecutively saw her marking books from the staffroom a few minutes after her lesson while noting down some comments as she marked, I was forced to asked her about his practice and she declared to me that;

*I usually mark students' activities immediately after lesson and as I mark, I take record of their mistakes...in case if I happen to have another lesson in that same class, I plan to start with correcting them. This helps me to know what to be organized as I plan for them. For example, if students have failed the activities, I will have to repeat the whole lesson and if they have passed, then I continue to the next content (Teacher A, Lion S.S)*

This data reflects a strong belief among teachers that effective student learning depends on continuous reflection and adaptation. Teachers actively evaluate their previous lessons—through written remarks or immediate feedback from student work—to assess what was successful and where learning gaps remain. This reflective practice demonstrates a pragmatic philosophy, where teaching is seen as a dynamic process that evolves based on student response and context.

Embracing instructional improvements. In this study this is in reference with teachers making sure that outdated content is not included in teachers' planning for learners since situations keep on changing and so is what is supposed to be taught to learners. Teachers made edits in their teaching notes before going to class to teach such content. To them, Learning is meaningful when it is connected to real-life contexts and applications. Besides,

learning should be influenced by students' cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and societal norms. When for example asked why they kept on simply editing notes instead of drawing the formal lesson plans, one teacher said that:

*I personally no longer teach in abstract, I know that our bosses want effective planning of our lessons by drawing lesson plan, but for me it's about what I give to my learners and that's why I only make my notes improved as a way of preparation for my lessons. In fact, I mind more about whether my students will grasp easily what I give them since I know that learning is a process of information processing and conceptual understanding as I plan (Teacher F, Elephant S.S).*

This data illustrates teachers' belief that learning should be current, relevant, and aligned with learners' real-life experiences and contexts. The practice of continuously editing teaching notes—rather than relying on rigid, pre-drawn lesson plans—demonstrates a commitment to instructional adaptability and responsiveness to changing content, learner needs, and societal conditions. This perspective aligns with a pragmatism and constructivist philosophy, where learning is viewed as a process of constructing understanding based on experience, cultural relevance, and context.

Further evidence from the analysis of data collected from the relevant documents indicated that, a number of changes aimed at improving the content prepared to be taught had been done in the teachers' schemes of work and curriculum guides that I observed. In their schemes of work and curriculum guides, assessments are prepared at the end of each lesson and some are modified in red pen to fit what exactly had been taught. Nevertheless, Teacher F's students were heavily pumped with notes by the teacher and were thus hardly left to fully construct their own knowledge based on their experiences and interactions since most of the questions were knowledge-based and thus not strongly relevant to some lessons' expectations. For Teacher E, assessments were in form of questions related to what had been taught and these were orally responded to by the students. As such, a proper record of feedback could not easily be traced despite the fact that I personally observed it during my observation of her lessons.

The data reveals that teachers' lesson preparation practices are influenced by varied educational philosophies. Some adopt a pragmatic approach, favoring practical content organization over formal planning, while others, like Teacher F, reflect essentialism through content-heavy, authoritative teaching. Teacher E's use of informal, interactive assessments points to progressivism. These differing approaches highlight how teachers' beliefs shape their instructional choices and views on effective learning.

Observing peer support teaching. This is in reference to the tendency by teachers to support themselves in the process of preparing what is to be taught to their students. During data collection, were informed that teachers did departmental scheming where advise was given among themselves and were thus able to design suitable schemes of work. When asked why they prepared their schemes of work together with the peers, their reasoning was around the fact that their students' learning would be more of an active process if what is planned for them is joint effort of different teachers and in this way, students would easily construct their own knowledge based on their experiences and interactions as predicted by the teachers during their process of drawing schemes of work. One teacher for example said:

*My friend, the new curriculum requires us to do as we prepare for our students to achieve the necessary competences...in most cases it is not easy to sit alone and think of all these things however much the guide books are available. So, for us here we form groups in our departments and do the scheming together (Teacher H, Tiger S.S).*

The data shows that teachers believe collaborative planning enhances lesson quality by focusing on what works best in real classroom contexts. Through peer support in departmental scheming, they value shared expertise and

reflective dialogue as practical strategies for improving teaching. This approach reflects a pragmatist philosophy, where planning is driven by usefulness, adaptability, and the goal of making learning more effective and relevant for students.

The second objective of this paper was to explore teachers' beliefs about nature and sources of knowledge considered valuable for students, as reflected in educational philosophy during their lesson preparation in secondary schools. Table 2 presents the results from the three schools.

**Table 2: Teachers' beliefs about nature and sources of knowledge considered valuable for students during their lesson preparation practices across the three schools**

Sub-themes emerged across all cases	Teachers' lesson preparation practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowing students to build knowledge progressively</li> <li>• Ensuring compliance to national curriculum guidelines</li> <li>• Avoiding pedagogical mistakes</li> <li>• Aiding learners' research skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Organizing content from simple to more complex ideas.</li> <li>✓ Aligning lesson objectives with national curriculum.</li> <li>✓ Reviewing plans to eliminate errors or unclear instructions.</li> <li>✓ Planning tasks that involve investigation and reporting.</li> </ul>

From Table 2, the subthemes that emerged from the analysis of data about the philosophy behind teachers' beliefs on nature and sources of knowledge which teachers exhibit during lesson preparation are presented.

First is allowing students to build knowledge progressively. This sub theme is used in this study to mean teachers' focus on designing their lessons in a way that scaffolds learning, meaning that each lesson is crafted building on prior knowledge and skills, allowing students to develop a more profound and complex understanding over time. On viewing teachers' scheme books, I saw that teachers indicated dates/weeks/periods to particular content to be taught and during the interviews with them, when I asked why they were doing that, they said that they wanted students to build on knowledge progressively. One teacher for example narrated that;

*We usually indicate particular time like dates, periods, and weeks for particular class because we want to know which content to be taught first and which one should come last. In most cases we arrange the work from simple to complex. Students go on building on information from a simple subject matter to a harder one because understanding the first one helps you to understand the next one because they are connected especially in our mathematics (Teacher A, Lion S.S).*

The data reflects a constructivist philosophy of education, where teachers' lesson preparation practices are rooted in the belief that valuable knowledge is best acquired through a structured, cumulative process that builds on learners' prior experiences and understanding.

Ensuring compliance to national curriculum guidelines: This sub-theme is used in this study to refer to teachers' commitment to aligning their lesson plans and instructional methods with national educational policies and standards. From my observations during data collection, I was able to witness that teachers carried curriculum guides including teachers' guides in their bags, others under their desks where they sit in the staff room. When asked why they moved with such materials during their interviews, they informed that this would easily help them stay within the requirements of the national competence-based curriculum as a way of trying to remain compliant. In fact, one of the teachers narrated to me that:



*The curriculum is our main guide, and we cover all required content, and you have to do what others are doing. Now what if you teach your own content and they the government comes to know that you are teaching content different from what they gave out. You will be in trouble. So, you have to follow exactly the schemes and lesson plan guides given by the government (Teacher A, Lion S.S).*

The data reflects an essentialist philosophy of education, where teachers' lesson preparation practices are driven by a belief in delivering structured, standardized, and authoritative knowledge as prescribed by national curriculum guidelines.

Avoiding pedagogical mistakes. This is in reference to teachers' ability to always remain on the right track even if he or she makes certain modifications in what was earlier planned. The analysis of data obtained from lesson observations indicated that, teachers were in most cases sticking to what they had planned for that very lesson and only diverted where he or she was ready to handle the diversion. During the observation of one of teacher D's lessons, the teacher would call upon students to role play and these had been planned in the scheme of work. However, where students tried to divert from what had been planned in scheme of work, the teacher would immediately intervene and corrected them to avoid compromising with the way learning activities were set to achieve the desired competences. When I asked him why he did so, he had this to say;

*My work as a trained teacher is to see that all the activities I plan to carry to class contribute directly to achieving specific learning competences....so where I see that learners want to divert my intensions, I try to immediately bring them to the right direction. Even our science curriculum guides and textbooks provide standardized knowledge which we have to strictly teach to our learners (Teacher D, Elephant S.S).*

The data reveals a strong essentialist philosophy underpinning teachers' lesson preparation practices, particularly in their beliefs about the nature and sources of valuable knowledge.

Aiding learners' research skills. This is used in this study in reference to ensuring that students are able to find solutions to certain problems by themselves especially by searching for such solutions. From my observations during the process of data collection, teachers had planned so many assignments for each lesson and simply carried only set questions to class from where they only gave time to students to find out the solutions to such questions. The teachers' main point here was ensuring learning that involves the learners' mental processes of acquiring, storing, and retrieving information. In fact, the research about the assignments given targeted learning that is observable through changes in students' behavior as a result of conditioning them. However, during my interview with the head teacher, he was worried that some teachers on many occasions fail to implement what they plan. He urged that:

*There is a lot that these teachers plan to teach learners and hardly put it in practice...if I can pick out their schemes of work here, some of them because they hate marking of students' books, they plan so many assignments and they don't give them to the learners as planned. So, some of their nice stories should not excite you (Head teacher, Tiger S.S).*

The data reveals that the philosophy underlying teachers' lesson preparation practices, as reflected in their beliefs about the nature and sources of valuable knowledge, is largely constructivism.

The third objective of this paper was to explore teachers' beliefs about values they aim to instill in students, as reflected in educational philosophy during their lesson preparation in secondary schools. Table 3 presents the results from the three schools.

**Table 3: Teachers' beliefs about values they aim to instill in students during their lesson preparation practices across the three schools**

Sub-themes emerged across all cases	Teachers' lesson preparation practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering analytical skills</li> </ul>	✓ Creating tasks that involve comparison, reasoning, or problem-solving.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative achievement of learning objectives</li> </ul>	✓ Planning group work with clear, shared goals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For effective record keeping</li> </ul>	✓ Storing lesson plans neatly for future reference or review.

From Table 3, the subthemes that emerged from the analysis of data the teachers' beliefs about values they aim to instill in students, are presented.

**Fostering analytical skills:** This is used in reference to teachers' prioritization of analytical skills when preparing for their lessons, especially by planning to challenge students to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information. When analyzing teachers' schemes of work, I found out that teachers planned lessons that included open-ended questions, debates, and inquiry-based activities. When they were asked why they having such practice in plan, their responses rotated around fostering analytic skills into students. During the interview with one of the teachers for example, the teacher narrated that;

*You see when you include open-ended questions, debates or scenarios in your planning for the lessons, students can easily develop their critical thinking skills which lead to understanding content deeply. They can reason out certain things and their thinking capacity is developed. These are the students we want to have in the challenging global world and that's why they are also taught with challenging assignments (Teacher A, Lion S.S)*

We interpreted these views to illustrates that teachers' preparation practices reflect a progressivist philosophy, supported by constructivist views of learning.

**Collaborative achievement of learning objectives.** This is in reference to ensuring that the targeted competences are the same for all the classes and streams though taught by different teachers. From the interviews, teachers of the same subject but teaching different streams of the same class schemed together as a group. Even then, these teachers emphasize working effectively with others, resolving conflicts, and valuing collective efforts as a way through which even their learners can be helped to develop the ability to understand and share others' feelings, which is often seen as vital for fostering harmonious relationships among students. In fact, the collaboratively drawn schemes of work were shared with the director of studies' office for constructive advice before they presented them finally for approval and filing. When asked why they did collaborative scheming for their lessons, they had this to say:

*All our students need to achieve the same competences and that is why we try to scheme together and teach students of different streams the same material...we can't also forget the fact that we need to instill a sense of equity and fairness that should help our students appreciate the principles of justice and advocate for what is right all the time. (Teacher D, Elephant S.S).*

The interpretation of this subtheme is that a social reconstructionist philosophy underlies teachers' lesson preparation practices, as seen in their emphasis on collaboration, equity, and shared responsibility.

**For effective record keeping.** This is in reference to teachers' ability to organize, store, and manage teaching-learning records in a way that is accurate, thorough and secure. Teachers' schemes of work that had been drawn for the last five years were seen in directors of studies offices and the recent ones had also been kept there. Teachers

indicated that, with the 21<sup>st</sup> century technological advancement today, their process of writing schemes of work as well as storing them for reference would no longer take much of their time simply because they would only make necessary improvements in their previous years' schemes through editing, given the fact that they had them already made in their computers which made their writing easier whenever needed. One teacher for example narrated that;

*My friend, there is nothing like losing my schemes of work on my side because everything is now digital, where we just store every term's schemes of work on computer and the only work I need to do is to update it by editing it within a few minutes (Teacher H, Tiger S.S).*

The data reflects a philosophy of essentialism in teachers' lesson preparation practices, particularly through their emphasis on structure, order, and the systematic preservation of instructional materials.

## DISCUSSION

Findings from teacher's interview, review of documents and lesson observations indicate that, although teachers claimed that they planned for their lessons, they only used various mechanisms of planning for what they taught without drawing the formal lesson plan documents. This finding is in line with the failure of use of lesson plans reported in earlier studies by MoES (2020) as well as Ssegawa and Matovu (2020) that some teachers in Uganda were no longer complying with effective planning for their lessons. However, it deviates significantly from Danielson's (1996) framework for teaching, particularly Domain 1: planning and preparation, which emphasizes thoughtful, evidence-based, and well-documented planning as a foundation for effective instruction. The philosophy behind teachers' practices reflects pragmatism, where practical experience and situational knowledge take precedence over formal procedures.

Findings of the study further revealed that, teachers' reality about students' learning was rooted from their own perceptions of awareness of lesson steps and this forms the central aspect of their lesson preparation. From the findings, the teachers' perceptions specifically emphasize the practical knowledge which they bring to the classroom, which they believe is more significant for effective teaching than the formalities of written lesson plans. This finding agrees with Koh et al. (2021) that experienced teachers often rely on their expertise and adaptability, focusing on the flow of instruction rather than strict adherence to plans. The finding however disagrees with Wu and Chao (2020) as well as Lim et al. (2022) who support teachers' focus on ensuring that lessons are sequentially structured to help students master foundational concepts before moving on to more complex ones reflects this understanding. While teachers in this study rely heavily on practical knowledge and teaching experience, Danielson's framework emphasizes that such knowledge should be integrated into a thoughtfully designed lesson structure, incorporating learning objectives, differentiated instruction, and assessment strategies. The underlying philosophy here is strongly pragmatism, where teaching is guided by what works in practice rather than by prescribed methods.

The study results also reveal that, teachers evaluate their own teaching practices and students' learning outcomes as part of their lesson preparation; and this process allows them to identify successes, address challenges, and plan more effectively for subsequent lessons. This is in line with Kraft et al. (2022)'s reflective processes which allows teachers to adjust their methods, providing a dynamic approach to lesson planning that prioritizes practical success over rigid adherence to predetermined plans. Relatedly, the finding also agrees with Li and Chan (2020)'s reflective practices that enable teachers to adapt their plans based on the successes and challenges they encounter, ensuring that instruction is continuously refined for better learning results. This finding aligns well with Domain 4: professional responsibilities in Danielson's (1996) framework for teaching, specifically the component reflecting on teaching. The fact that teachers evaluate their own practices and student outcomes indicates a commitment to

professional growth and continuous improvement. Such reflection is essential for identifying instructional strengths, addressing learning challenges, and making informed adjustments for future lessons. Additionally, this process contributes to Domain 1: planning and preparation, as reflective insights help refine lesson objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment methods. Although the reflection may not be formally documented, its presence demonstrates a foundational element of effective teaching as defined by Danielson's model. However, although reflective teaching highlights how this process is integral to improving student outcomes (Boud et al., 2021; Thomas, 2022), a study by Singh et al. (2021) disagrees claiming that this could hinder teachers' efforts to design and execute lessons that promote student-centered learning, leading to gaps between intended and actual practices. The teachers' practice of evaluating their own teaching and student learning reflects a pragmatic philosophy.

Further analysis of findings portrays that, ensuring compliance to national curriculum guidelines is that teachers' beliefs on the reality of students' learning are predominantly shaped by their obligation to comply with national curriculum guidelines. From the findings, teachers perceive adherence to the national curriculum as a non-negotiable professional requirement rather than a deliberate pedagogical choice, viewing it as the definitive guide to universal and essential knowledge. In fact, findings show that teachers' scheme of work are strictly aligned with pre-prepared guides provided by the government, reflecting a static and standardized approach to teaching. This finding disagrees with Basilaia et al. (2020) findings which revealed that rigidly adhering to pre-set plans might limit a teacher's ability to respond dynamically to student needs. Teachers' adherence to national curriculum guidelines aligns with Danielson's framework Domain 1: planning and preparation (1e – designing coherent instruction) which suggests a level of organization and predictability in lesson planning, fulfilling the structural expectations of the framework. But contradicts with 1b – demonstrating knowledge of students which emphasises understanding and responding to individual learner differences. The reliance on pre-prepared government guides and standardized schemes of work suggests a rigid, content-focused approach to teaching, which aligns with perennialist philosophy.

Furthermore, the data reveals a strong alignment between teachers' lesson preparation practices and the principle of community-based learning, which emphasizes integrating societal expectations and real-world applications into classroom teaching. From the findings, teachers view the community as both a source of knowledge and a platform for enriching students' learning experiences. They agree with Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) who argued that teachers often prioritize practical knowledge and contextual awareness over formal lesson plans, especially in dynamic teaching environments. The findings also agree with research by Chukwudi et al. (2021) who highlighted students who have access to personal learning materials at home demonstrate better comprehension and active participation in lessons, as pre-exposure to content allows them to grasp complex concepts more effectively. Findings align with Domain 1 of Danielson's 1996 framework model particularly demonstrating knowledge of resources (1d) which emphasises utilization of diverse materials and environments to support instructional goals. Findings reflect a pragmatic and socio-constructivist philosophy rooted in the belief that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and real-world engagement.

Findings finally showed that, teachers place emphasis on departmental collaborative scheming aimed at achievement of learning objectives as a core value they aim to instill in students as they prepare their lessons. From the findings, this approach reflects teachers' belief that promoting collaboration directly translates into fostering similar values of teamwork, empathy, equity, and fairness among learners. This finding agrees with Harris and Jones (2020) who found out that, teacher collaboration enhances professional learning communities, fostering innovation in lesson preparation and delivery. The finding also agrees with Smith and MacGregor (2022) who highlighted that teamwork and peer interaction are fundamental to collaborative learning strategies, enabling students to develop conflict resolution skills and construct knowledge through shared experiences. The findings

align strongly with Danielson's framework, especially participating in a professional community (4d), as teachers' focus on departmental collaborative planning reflects a commitment to shared responsibility and collegial practice. Findings reveal a social reconstructionist philosophy which emphasise social responsibility and equity, preparing students to contribute positively to society.

## CONCLUSION

The study makes the following conclusions;

- I. Teachers believe that students learn best through practical experiences, flexible instruction, and responsiveness to their individual needs. This reflects a pragmatic philosophy which holds that knowledge is best acquired through hands-on, meaningful experiences that are relevant to the learner's context.
- II. Teachers believe that valuable knowledge emerges not only from planned content but also from dynamic classroom interactions and real-world applications. This aligns with pragmatism's view that knowledge is constructed through interaction and application, not passively received.
- III. Teachers believe that values such as adaptability, collaboration, critical thinking, and responsibility are essential for preparing students to solve problems and apply knowledge meaningfully in real-life situations. Findings reflect pragmatism's focus on developing practical and ethical problem-solvers.
- IV. In summary, all three beliefs reflect the core tenets of pragmatism: learning through doing, valuing experience and reflection, adapting education to real-world contexts, and fostering habits of mind that prepare students for active participation in society. Thus, the philosophy underlying teachers' lesson preparation practices is pragmatism.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study makes the following recommendations;

- I. School administrators should support adaptive lesson planning by providing time, resources, and professional development, thereby encouraging teachers to integrate project-based, experiential learning and differentiated instruction into their lesson preparation.
- II. Curriculum developers should embed flexible frameworks that allow teachers to adapt content based on classroom dynamics and current events.
- III. Encourage collaborative lesson planning that integrates 21st-century skills across subjects. Teachers should be trained to design lessons that include group work, reflective thinking tasks, and problem-solving activities that build both cognitive and social-emotional competencies.
- IV. School managers such as head teachers should regularly follow up closely on teachers' pragmatic lesson preparation practices, putting into consideration that drawing formal lesson plans may not be the only effective way of planning to teach.



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