

20 - 22 March 2026

Lisbon , Portugal

Student teachers' views on using ChatGPT in lesson design

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Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools, such as ChatGPT, are increasingly being used by student teachers to support practical tasks, including lesson design. While these tools can help generate useful ideas to incorporate into lessons, many student teachers use them informally and with little guidance. This raises questions about how student teachers understand and use ChatGPT in lesson design, and how teacher education programmes can support responsible and critical engagement with such tools.

In 2024, 150 fourth- and final-year student teachers at a South African university completed a questionnaire about their views and experiences of using ChatGPT, with a specific focus on lesson design. From these responses, 50 questionnaires were randomly selected for in-depth analysis. A thematic analysis was conducted, and recurring patterns were identified.

Four main themes emerged from the data. First, participants viewed ChatGPT as a helpful tool for generating ideas for lessons, particularly for developing activities and questions to include in lessons. Second, students reported that ChatGPT supported their learning by clarifying academic concepts, unpacking assignment requirements, and assisting with academic writing. Third, participants expressed concerns about overuse and misuse, noting that heavy reliance on ChatGPT could limit critical thinking, creativity, and independent problem-solving, and may lead to plagiarism. Finally, students questioned the accuracy and relevance of AI-generated content, especially when it did not align with the South African curriculum or typical classroom contexts.

These findings suggest that teacher education programmes should not discourage the use of GenAI, but should guide student teachers in using tools like ChatGPT thoughtfully and ethically. Explicit support for critical judgement, contextual adaptation, and responsible use may help future teachers design

meaningful lessons while maintaining their professional integrity.

Keywords: Chatgpt; Ethical AI Use; Generative AI; Lesson Design; Teacher Education