

The Important Role of Lesson Plan on Educational Achievement of Iranian EFL Teachers' Attitudes

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Abstract

Lesson plan is a written description of education process in which it is shown *what, when, where* and with *which* method learners should learn and *how* they should be assessed. Lesson plan is one of the key factors in the educational process. According to the literature available, unfortunately few studies have been conducted on this issue in the context of Iran. Therefore, the effect of EFL teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning on improving teaching process seems to be neglected to some extent. With regard to this gap, the present study was an attempt to survey 93 English teachers' views concerning lesson plan at secondary high schools and institutions. Participants in this study answered a Modified Questionnaire, adopted from Ramaila et al. (2014). This Questionnaire was used to measure teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning and the degree of educational differences among them. Data analysis was done by utilizing descriptive statistics and T-test. The results showed that English teachers agreed with utilizing lesson plan. No significant difference was observed among teachers' views concerning the given variable. The findings revealed that due to the importance of lesson plan, holding specialized workshops may provide information for developing better course plans.

Keywords: Lesson Plan, Educational Achievement, EFL Learners, Teachers' attitudes

Introduction

Lesson plan is a written description for this process; where the materials, the method, the time and the place of education as well as methods for evaluating the students are described in detail. Human beings have limited capacity for learning, and it is impossible to learn all different skills and sciences. The life is short, and forgetfulness makes the learning opportunities scarcer. On the other hand many people don't have the required competencies to follow a self-learning program. Lesson planning is a sort of economization of the limited capacity for learning. . Farrell(2002) defined a lesson plan as “a unit in which it is a sequence of correlated lessons around a particular theme or it can be specified as a systematic record of a teacher's thoughts about what will be covered during a lesson”(p. 30). He further adds that a daily lesson plan is a written description of how students will move towards obtaining specific objectives. It describes teaching behavior that will result in the students' learning. Shrum and Glisan (as cited in Farrell, 2002) point out that for English language lesson, the effective objectives of a lesson plan describe what students will be able to do in terms of observation, behavior, and using the foreign language.

Spratt, Pulverness and Williams (2005) pointed out that lesson plan is a series of course plan which provides direction for a teacher of what kind of materials of study to be taught and how to teach them. Learners are expected to get bored during the teaching process & Language teachers need to think of this challenge. The way to overcome this problem is in teachers' hand.

Teacher proper decision – making & planning seem to be crucial in avoiding students' reluctance during teaching materials. Lesson plan is one option for teachers to manage the class properly. Lesson plan is teacher-made depending upon the class & learners' needs, that is, according to Naimie et al. (2012), teaching styles & learning styles should be compatible. There is a saying stating that "well planned is half done".

Amininik et al. (2000) believe that Lesson plan preparation by faculty members is one of the appropriate ways for promotion of education quality; it can help the lecturers in teaching as guidance. According to Coppola et al. (2004) Lesson plan is main foundation of educational structure and it is core of education. Faculty members should not be present in class without a lesson plan because it is required for a successful teaching. Houston and Beech (2002) believed that since there were students with different characteristics and a range of abilities in a class, meeting the different learning needs of students can create several problems for teachers. As stated by kame'enui and simmons (1999 as cited in Houston & Beech, 2002) the best source of action to meet this challenge is to design effective lesson plans.

Lesson planning is an important process in teacher trainees' gaining experience since it forces them to reflect on what to teach, how to teach and how to evaluate (Yildirim, 2003). Unfortunately, there has been little research on pre-service teachers' lesson planning experiences. Since there is limited attention in the literature on teacher trainees' lesson planning skills, this study aims at gaining insights and attitudes about the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher trainees in terms of applying and producing lesson planning and if their understanding and attitude might be moderated by variable as teachers' educational degree.

Research Questions

The present study is designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' attitudes towards the use of lesson planning in the class?
2. Is there any significant relationship between teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning and their educational degree?

Research Hypothesis

1. There is a significant relationship between teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning and their educational degree.

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study were 93 EFL teachers from high schools and institutes in Eyvan in the province of Ilam and city of Ilam- west of Iran, 53 of whom were female and 40 were male. Selection was done from all available professional experienced teachers having university education. Table 1 shows the characteristic of participants according to educational degree.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of teachers by educational degree

Variable	Categories	Number of Participants
Educational degree	AA & BA Degree	43
	MA & PhD Degree	50

Instrument

In the present study which is a Likert-type measure, a questionnaire was used to elicit information from participants. This questionnaire, developed by Ramaila and Ramnarian, consists of 29 items with two sections. Section A of the questionnaire sought information about the teacher such as educational degree. Section B of the questionnaire contained statements to which teachers had to respond on a Likert scale indicating the extent to which they agreed with the statement.

The scale was answered as follows: 1- strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Uncertain, 4- Agree and 5- Strongly Agree. Total score of the answerers showed the extent to which they agreed with lesson planning. In this study, the reliability coefficient of questionnaire was computed by Cronbachs' alpha. The result indicated that reliability coefficient was 0.78.

Procedure

In this study, collecting data started at November to December 2014. The probable needed time for filling out the questionnaire was about 10 minutes. In this study, for collecting the data, questionnaire in the form of paper and online (using email) was spread up to different English Language teachers.

Statistical Procedure

T-test was used in order to analyze the gathered data in this study. According to Hatch and Farhady (1982), "T-test is probably the most widely used statistical test for the comparison of two means because it can be used with every small sample size" (p. 108). Using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16, descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and standard error of measurement were computed.

Results

To investigate teachers' attitudes towards lesson plan based on educational achievement, t-test was used. According to the results, all teachers in this study agreed with using Lesson Plan. In order to examine this question in detail, distribution of teachers' answers towards use of lesson plan in class is presented in Table 1. This table shows distribution of teachers' answers based on questionnaire, namely Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Uncertain (neither agree nor disagree), Agree, and Strongly Agree.

Table 2. Frequency and Distributions of Teachers' attitudes towards use of lesson plan in the class

Scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0
Disagree	0	0	0
Uncertain (neither agree nor disagree)	12	12.9	12.9
Agree	74	79.6	92.5
Strongly agree	7	7.5	100.0
Total	93	100.0	

Listed in Table 2 are the descriptive statistics on the views of Iranian teachers about Lesson Plan according to their educational degrees. The means and standard deviation scores are

presented. T-test was run to assess teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning according to their level of education.

Table 3. Mean and Standard deviation of teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning according to educational degree

Group Statistics						
		Educational degree	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning	A.A & B.A	43	99.44	11.10	1.69	
	M.A & PhD	50	100.74	10.98	1.55	

As Table 4 below reveals, there is no great difference between means of two groups. In Table 3 T-test results for the comparison of the teachers' views about lesson planning according to their educational degree are provided.

Table 4. T-test for investigating the relationship between educational degree and teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning

	Levene's Test Equality of Variances							95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
	Equal variances assumed	0.044	0.835	-0.56	91	0.573	-1.29814	2.29662	-5.86009
Equal variances not assumed			-0.56	88.64	0.574	-1.29814	2.29843	-5.86533	3.26905

The findings of this Table (3) state that *there is no meaningful relationship between educational degree and teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning*, since the obtained T of these groups are -0.56, and significance level is more than 0.05, therefore this hypothesis is rejected .

Discussion

Most of teachers admitted that lesson plan is important in increasing the quality of education. This study set out to investigate teachers' views towards use of lesson plan in the class. The main findings of the study could be discussed in the following lines.

The first finding of the study regards English teachers' views towards use of lesson plan in the class, the result of the study suggest that the most of teachers agreed with use of lesson plan and no one disagree with lesson plan. Therefore, the first research question was positively answered.

The results of the present study were to a great extent compatible with those of Hannon (2000); Saberian, Aghajani and Ghorbani (2003); Majidi, Asadi and Nemati (2000) Momennasab & Zah Tab (2002); Vakili et al (2003); Amininik (2000) who found that the academic staff agreed with lesson plan and believed that the most important part of the lesson plan was behavioral objectives while teaching method, educational aides and method of assessment was next in importance as in other studies. According to findings of these studies, the researches and expert's focus group stated that the academic staff using lesson plan were satisfied with it and in spite of some difficulties in its performance, they considered it as beneficial. Although professor favored lesson planning and find it necessary to work, their heavy workload and lack of knowledge are defined as two main obstacles in doing so. The results of this study are also similar with the ones obtained from other researchers such as Gafoor and UmerFarooque (2010) and Ruys, Keer and Aelterman (2012).

Moradana & Pourasadollah (2014) explored, majority of older, experienced and less-educated teachers stated that they don't usually use lesson planning and they don't need previewing lessons before class. However younger and novice teachers felt it's very useful for them, and give them much confidence in class. On the other hand, higher educated teachers stated that although they are important factors, they don't usually use them.

On the contrary, in study of Fattah, Jalili, Alizadeh, and Adhami (2009), most of faculty members didn't have positive attitude toward lesson planning, which is different from results of studies in other universities. For example Majidshad et al (2000) in a study in Gilan University of Medical Sciences stated that %75 of faculty members had positive attitude to lesson plan, and %63.9 of faculty members in this study made an effort to develop lesson plan, and %71.8 of them were satisfied with it. Stella (2012) explored the attitudes the use of lesson plans in chemistry instruction and found that very few head teachers, head of science department and chemistry teachers have negative attitude towards the employment of the lesson plan.

The second finding of this study regards teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning according to their educational degree. According to our finding there is no difference between teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning according to their educational degree. so, the second hypothesis was rejected

Taghipour (2013) found that positive attitudes towards lesson plan were meaningfully related to the educational level, e.g. the higher academic degree is the more positive attitude towards lesson planning would be. Fattahi et al (2009) concluded, there was no significance difference between the lecturers' attitude based on the faculty, but there was a significant difference on level of knowledge score based on academic rank. Ebrahimipour et al (2014) stated, there were no significant correlations between academic rank and compliances of taught content. The results showed a significant difference between the mean scores of different educational levels. Monitoring of implementation of the curriculum, along with empowering the teachers about developing and using their own course plan may improve the alignment between the course plans and the taught materials.

Conclusion

The present study explored English teachers' attitudes at high schools and institute towards use of lesson plan in the class based on their educational degree.

This result indicated that there is a significant difference between teachers' views according to their educational degree. It can be claimed that there is no difference between teachers' views on lesson plan according to educational degree.

The present findings revealed that most English teachers favored using lesson plan. Results showed that majority (%79.6) of the English teachers had interest in making the lesson plan. A well trained teacher should be able to enjoy planning for teaching. A few teachers (%12.9) are neither agree nor disagree in preparing the lesson plan. These are probably the untrained teachers. Specialized committee of lesson planning plays a key role as facilitator but the final decisions should be made by the teachers themselves.

By having a lesson plan, a teacher is able to manage his time, effort and resources efficiently. Obviously, developing a lesson plan can be difficult to do and requires efforts, energy, and time to accomplish. However, it helps teachers to save much time in the coming years since the lesson plan developed can be applied several times without forgetting to update it. Besides, it provides the teachers many ways such as variation of activities, methods and materials to keep the teaching process not monotonous and redundant. Furthermore, lesson plans can help teachers to achieve the goals and objectives appropriately as well as help them have great self-confidence and get rid of problems.

Inspired by the findings, a number of recommendations are put forward which may be beneficial for further studies. It is suggested to replicate this study at a national scale and cover a large number of subjects to elevate the generalizability of the findings. By conducting the same study in different cities, it can be examined whether the same results will be obtained by replicating this study in different contexts.

The instrument of this study was just limited to a questionnaire; further studies can adopt other instruments such as interviewing teachers and students in order to understand their awareness of lesson plan.

It is also recommended to expand and analyze the data by teachers of other fields, too. It would be interesting to see if science teachers were more interested in use of lesson plan than math teachers etc. The present study also focused just on quantitative study. In further studies, it can be done qualitative.

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