LESSON PLANNING COMPETENCY OF
ENGLISH MAJOR UNIVERSITY SOPHOMORE STUDENTS

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Abstract:

This study examined the lesson planning competency of English major sophomore university students enrolled in a government higher education institution in Cebu City, Philippines. We employed a descriptive survey research design utilizing primary and secondary data gathered from the study respondents and from online peer reviewed research journals. Data analysis included assessing the strength, weakness and extent of lesson planning competencies as well as lesson planning outcomes. The study is anchored on the experiential learning theory (ELT) which contends that experience plays a central role during the holistic adaptive process of learning. ELT merges experience, perception, cognition and behaviour. As a process, ELT considers learning as knowledge creation through the transformation of experience. Findings revealed that common lesson planning pitfalls include limited teacher experience and access to instructional materials, poor students' interests; less spontaneity in the classroom, limited freedom, teacher's struggle upon starting a lesson, and assessment not matching the learning objectives which often confuses the pre-service teachers. University sophomore students manifested strength towards lesson planning competency with very high capability to construct an effective lesson plan. The study also found out that lesson planning competencies are highly useful for pre-service teachers in developing their potentials. In conclusion, exposure towards improving instructional planning helps sophomore students recognise opportunities towards developing strategies which enable to overcome challenging situations in the teaching practice. Moreover, becoming aware of the challenges toward lesson planning allows sophomore students to be prepared of their tasks in the actual setting. Well-executed lesson plan brings about competent teachers who become effective and efficient educators. We recommend that

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lesson planning activity should partake through a series of analysis commencing from instructional planning.

Keywords: lesson planning, lesson planning competency, instructional planning, experiential learning theory, English major students, pre-service teachers

1. Introduction

Planning for instruction is a process of intentionally and distinctly setting up various tasks and activities to engage students in the learning environment. It basically provides systematic means for developing lessons which include the establishment of an objective, activities, strategies and steps towards achieving authentic assessment of the teaching practices and learning processes (John, 2006; Cruickshank, Jenkins and Metcalf, 2006; Panasuk and Todd, 2005).

Factors which influence instructional planning include, but are not limited to, teacher experience, teacher access to instructional materials, student interests and abilities (Warren, 2000; Cruickshank, Jenkins and Metcalf, 2006). Challenges in instructional planning include consumption of time and the limitation of freedom and spontaneity in the classroom. Even more, instructional planning is a critical and a fundamental component of teacher effectiveness in the classroom (Cruickshank, Jenkins and Metcalf, 2006) where structured lessons have to be handled with precision.

Teachers have to be cleared about what students expect to learn and how instructions can be effectively delivered. They have to be keen in noticing prior needs and be flexible in whatever circumstances come their way. Accordingly, teachers are expected to be always ready towards effective lesson plan delivery and how to implement them to during the class ensuring that students fully understand what are discussed in the classroom setting. In so doing, a teacher is able to appropriately determine the degree of his strengths and weaknesses and how learners perceived the subject (Harmer, 2008; Franklin and Stephens 2008).

For many years, educators including some experienced teachers are determining how they can plan effective and efficient lessons. In the Philippine context, it is mandatory for teachers to prepare lesson plans, deliver them and assess students' learning (Rodriguez and Abocejo, 2018) which is vital in determining the needs, strengths and weaknesses of student teachers toward lesson planning. Assessing the various challenges of students facilitate understanding as to how teachers can address their students' concerns in formulating strategies and solutions when caught in any lesson planning circumstance (Franklin and Stephens 2008).

This paper argues that assessing sophomore students' lesson planning competencies facilitate teachers' effectiveness in developing their learners on lesson planning preparations, effective delivery and efficient implementation. Lessons planning is considered an inherent skill of future basic education teachers (Spencer, 2003). When successfully delivered, lesson planning implementation enable teachers in letting their student learners achieve a successful learning outcome.

1.2 Study Objectives

This study investigated the lesson planning competency of sophomore English major education students during the second semester of academic 2015–2016. Specifically, it determined the factors affecting lesson planning competency, identified areas of strengths and challenges, and the extent of usefulness of identified lesson planning competency.

2. Literature Review

Effective teaching is carried out by integrating students' prior knowledge of the lesson based appropriate activities for students' guidance (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005). Teachers employ recommended instructional practices to the entire class benefiting even those who are low achieving mentees (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). Some pre-service teachers confirmed that to have gone a long way in acquiring experiences and learning their lessons preparation for classroom teaching (Keengwe, 2012; Rodriguez and Abocejo, 2018).

One significant characteristic of teachers' success is the knowledge on know how to make new subject matter meaningful and interesting to students, implement explicit teaching decisions, and ensure that students acquire mastery of the subject matter (Coe, Aloisi, Higgins and Major, 2014; Rodriguez and Abocejo, 2018; Abocejo and Padua, 2010). As argued, even if teachers have gained theoretical knowledge about teaching, it does not necessarily mean that such knowledge is translated into practice (Wallace, et al., 2008). There exists a discrepancy between what is written and what is taught (Glatthorn, Carr and Harris, 2001), giving credence to the theory-practice gap. When a theory is to be transformed to best practice over the long term, feed backing, sharing, and observing by experts is essential (Wallace et al., 2008).

Lesson planning needs to be strategic, yet simple and accessible when preparing for a variety of language learners' needs. Wiggins (2005) and McTighe (2011) refined curriculum development and lesson planning into an accessible methodology. This helped identify desired outcomes, determine acceptable learning experiences in the classroom setting (Rao and Meo, 2016).

Certain approach to teaching and learning is to proactively consider adjustment of students' needs which are seen more effective than treating all students belonging to the same level (Tomlinson, 2000). Accepting the idea of differentiation is much easier than putting it into practice and making it work (Collins, 2001). Student individual differences are put into place by considering multiple intelligences whereby teacher devise a set of activities to appropriately cater the learners' needs (Fernandez and Abocejo, 2014).

Creating and addressing learning targets prior to start of instruction enable students to actively participate during the learning process (Khalil and Elkhider, 2016). These will allow pre-service teacher to evaluate how far they have mastered the content knowledge and solicit guidance when they feel short of their target goals (Stiggins, 2008). Employment of learning targets is proven beneficial when teachers ensure that
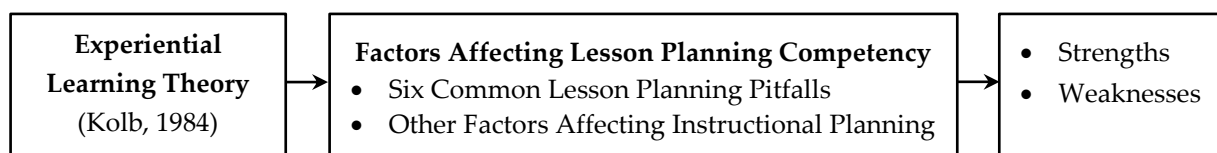
their pre-service students clearly grasp the objectives of their lessons (Rodriguez and Abocejo, 2018).

McTighe (2014) noted that in a more relevant way, assessment during instruction is not an easy task to develop. There are lots of challenges which teachers encounter as to what assessment method to use. Some teachers will just repeat the same assessment practices he is used to do (Wiggins, 2005). He further argued that "*explanation; interpretation; application; perspective; empathy and self-knowledge*" are the six phases of understanding which stressed equally important techniques in assessing how students understand during instruction as a synthesis of their work. Each phase, as examples, can be used as assessment (McTighe, 2011).

If a teacher begins with a well-defined targets of intended outcomes, authentic assessments can be rightfully achieve, reflective of what they teach and what learning they could expect from their students (Stiggins, 2008). Successful outcomes will then follow when teachers are able to make a clear learning objective towards smooth delivery of the entire lesson (Department of Education and Training, 2017). However, some research findings divulged that pre-service teachers could hardly make clear learning objectives, where their lessons could not produce the desired results once they mismatch assessment with the learning objectives (Rodriguez and Abocejo, 2018).

Some pre-service teachers soften struggle how to do the introduction when they do lesson transition and how to motivate their students towards the lesson proper (Evans, 2012). If a pre-service teacher finds it difficult to begin a lesson, then several minute activities may be shifted to extended anticipatory or exploratory lesson phase (Flynn et al. (2004). Jones, Vermette and Jones (2011) reported that this may require set of activities just to bring about learners' attention. Eliciting prior knowledge helps students accomplish basic understanding needed during the lesson planning (Jones, Vermette and Jones, 2011).

Pre-service teachers often lack authenticity of their prepared lessons and cannot fully engage their students which can be better offset if they consider recalling facts than focusing conceptual meaning (Ridriguez and Abocejo, 2018). A large proportion of students' works are merely note-taking than synthesis or application of ideas (Jones, Vermette and Jones, 2011). In order to address this problem, students need to conquer the misconceptions that teaching is merely a transmission of knowledge and learning (Darling-Hammond and Brandsford (2004).

| **Experiential Learning Theory** (Kolb, 1984) | → | **Factors Affecting Lesson Planning Competency**
 • Six Common Lesson Planning Pitfalls
 • Other Factors Affecting Instructional Planning | → | • Strengths
 • Weaknesses |

Figure 1: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study anchors its theoretical framework from the experiential learning theory (ELT) advocated by Kolb (1984). The ELT argues that experience plays a crucial role in the learning process which is intended to be an adaptive learning process

combining experiences, perceptions, cognition and behaviour. ELT also posits that, learning as a process, creates knowledge by means of experiential transformation (Atherton, 2013) where knowledge becomes a result of the combination of grasping and transforming experiences (McCarthy, 2010; Kolb, Boyatzis, and Mainemelis, 2000). Among the common lesson planning pitfalls which novice teachers struggle to incorporate in their daily lesson, are the demands of pre-service teachers' activities and commitments (Rodriguez and Abocejo, 2018). As novices, pre-service teachers often go off-tangent and find themselves in difficulty bridging the gap between university studies and pre-service teaching practice commitments (Jones, Vermette and Jones, 2011).

With regard to strengths and weaknesses toward lesson planning, Dewey et al. (as cited in McCarthy, 2010) argued that learning happen in a cyclic manner. These happen when a student shifts his way of thinking by contemplating from learned experiences (Menaker, Coleman, Collins, and Murawski, 2006). The argument of experiential learning theory mirrors similarities with the constructivism whereby *"learners construct the meaning from experiences"* (Jadallah, 2000). The fundamental learning attributes of constructivism include active participation of the learner in the learning process, the recognition of prior learning as the foundation to present learning, interaction with teachers and co-learners for a deeper understanding, shared meaning of concepts, and focusing on real-world tasks such as authentic assessment (Yount, 2010).

More importantly, experiential learning is associated with empirical evidences (Baker and Robinson, 2016) and it affects lesson planning competency (Miettinen, 2000). Once deployed into the real world of the educative process, the experiential learning becomes beneficial to future educators (Menaker, Coleman, Collins, and Murawski, 2006).

3. Methodology

This study employed descriptive and correlational survey research designs. The respondents included university sophomore (second year) education students from a government-run university during the second semester of academic year (AY) 2015 - 2016. It is during this semester where lesson planning is introduced to education major students. The study respondents were drawn through stratified and simple random sampling techniques.

The list of target respondents was secured according to class schedule and section. The actual survey data gathering was officially permitted by Vice President for Academic Affairs, per recommendation from the Dean of College of Teacher Education (CTE) of the institution under study. Empirical evidences from peer reviewed journals were also considered focusing on factors affecting lesson planning competency. In the analysis, we incorporated evidences from online peer reviewed journals highlighting the different factors affecting lesson planning competency. Survey questionnaires were distributed to randomly identified respondents. Ethical consideration was observed

throughout the conduct of the study. Written permissions were obtained prior to data gathering with informed consent duly signed by involved respondents assuring voluntary participation of each respondent. The study objectives and desired output were clearly explained. The gathered research data were collated and organized for analysis and interpretation; they were dealt with utmost confidentiality and were solely utilized for the purpose of the study.

4. Results and Discussion

Lesson plans are created with important purposes. Monett and Weishaar (2015), provided reasons for creating/using lesson plans according ordered by preference (Figure 2). In general, educators create lessons plans to structure their teaching in a timely way (87%) and to define clear learning goals (83%). About, 35% of teaching faculty use lesson plans to map out the use of different teaching methods. Or at least (13%), lesson plans help teachers with their lesson flow. It is not surprising that teachers might be more aware of pedagogical knowledge based on a time lined structure and defining clear learning goals and the rest follow.
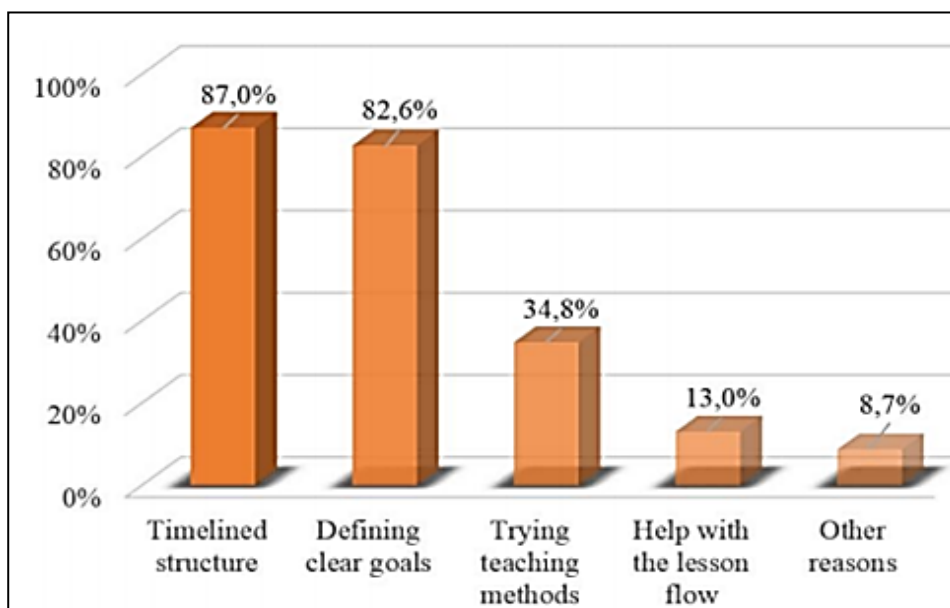
Figure 2: Reasons for creating/using Lesson Plans
(Source of basic data: Monett and Weishaar, 2015)

4.1 Factors affecting lesson planning competency
As can be gleaned from Table 1, the factors which affect lesson planning competency include teacher access to instructional materials, students' interest and abilities; consumption of time and teacher experience. These were identified to have always influenced on planning competency. The rest of the pre-identified indicators (Table 1) have often influenced the students' planning competency. The findings yielded confirmed the respondents' points of view from the six common lesson planning pitfalls for novice educators and the other factors affecting instructional as reported by Jones,

Jones, and Verrmette (2011). These include limited teacher experience and access to instructional materials, poor students' interests; less spontaneity in the classroom, limited freedom, teacher's struggle when starting the lesson and assessment not matching the learning objectives that often confuses the pre-service teachers.

Table 1: Extent of influence of identified factors affecting lesson planning competency

Lesson Planning Competency Indicator	Mean	SD	Extent of Influence
Teacher access to instructional materials and student interest and abilities	5.36	0.67	Always Influenced
Consumption of time	5.32	0.76	Always Influenced
Teacher experience	5.28	0.79	Always Influenced
Spontaneity in the classroom	5.16	0.83	Often Influenced
The Learning objective is unclear	4.98	1.30	Often Influenced
Limitation of freedom	4.95	1.12	Often Influenced
The teacher does not know how to start the lesson	4.80	1.53	Often Influenced
The assessment does not match the learning objective	4.72	1.43	Often Influenced
Students do not create an assessment of their understanding or the assessment is completed outside the class	4.71	1.19	Often Influenced
Students do not create evidence of their developing ideas	4.57	1.20	Often Influenced
Students are passive recipients of knowledge	4.55	1.44	Often Influenced

Ranges for the weighted mean	Responses	Interpretation
5.167 - 6.000	Strongly Agree	Always Influenced
4.334 - 5.166	Agree	Often Influenced
3.501 - 4.333	Tend to Agree	Sometimes Influenced
2.667 - 3.500	Tend to Disagree	Seldom Influenced
1.834 - 2.666	Disagree	Rarely Influenced
1.000 - 1.833	Strongly Disagree	Not Influenced

The derived results implied that many of these factors highly influenced the pre-service teachers toward their lesson planning competency. It is evident that these concerns should be addressed appropriately to develop service students' instructional planning skills as they go along their higher years of lesson planning development. The remaining factors should be given importance as well since these factors are challenges that are commonly encountered by most pre-service teachers when planning and implementing the lesson. Furthermore, the results imply that these factors are commonly experienced by most of the pre-service teachers and/or can even be applicable to those teachers who are already on the field. This study helps us seek for answers on how we would address each challenge to obtain effectiveness and efficiency in lesson planning.

4.2 Strengths and weaknesses toward lesson planning

Assessing the strengths and weaknesses towards lesson planning by the teachers could be helpful towards identifying areas for improvement. As reflected in Table 2, out of the 219 respondents, 205 or 94% affirmed that they can follow "*specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound (SMART)*" learning objectives; about 89% could identify learning resources and support materials; 88% are able to list content and key

topics, do more research when necessary; 85% are capable of deciding what best teaching and learning methods can be achieved towards learning outcomes. As to providing students with immediate feedback, supports to learning objectives, 83% could finalize any linked assessment or evaluation, 81% could determine the number and level of learners to teach, 78% said they could master the subject matter, 78% could think about the structure of the session and timing of activities, and lastly 60% said that they could refine lesson plan.

Table 2: Students' strengths and weaknesses in lesson planning (n=219)

Effective Lesson Planning Competencies	Strength		Weakness	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Follow SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed) learning objectives	205	93.61	14	6.39
Identify learning resources and support materials	195	89.04	24	10.96
List content and key topics, and research more if needed	193	88.13	26	11.87
Decide on the best teaching and learning methods to achieve the learning outcomes	186	84.93	33	15.07
Prepared in providing students with immediate feedback to support learning objectives	186	84.93	33	15.07
Finalize any linked assessment or evaluation	182	83.11	37	16.89
Determine the number and level of learners to teach	178	81.28	41	18.72
Mastery of the subject matter	171	78.08	48	21.92
Think about the structure of the session and timing of activities	170	77.63	49	22.37
Refine lesson plan	132	60.27	87	39.73

As to the process, majority of the effective lesson planning competencies were strengths of the respondents when it comes to transitioning out theories and principles to application, planning and implementation. Refining a lesson plan is where they are primarily struggling and thinking about the structure of the session, the timing of activities and the mastery of the subject matter. Findings also that the following were found out to be influencing to the sophomore English major university students: teacher experience; access to instructional materials; student interest/abilities, and consumption of time (Table 1). In a broader sense, findings revealed that sophomore English majors' students have the potential to construct effective and efficient lessons; however, there is still the need to pay attention to specific areas which pre-service students struggle to provide them directions in their teacher-training experiences.

4.3 Usefulness of Lesson Planning Improvement Competency
Findings revealed that out of the ten given recommendations, six were considered as always useful: the use of learning targets; creating and addressing learning targets before instruction begins; using class time to provide learners ample space in reflecting and connecting the learning targets, the six facets of understanding include the "empathy, self-knowledge, perspective, explanation, interpretation and application"

commencing with well-defined targets of intended outcomes to develop assessments reflective of what are being taught and what students expect to learn; and lastly the exploratory phase.

Table 3: Extent of usefulness of lesson planning improvement competency (n=219)

Indicators for Lesson Planning Improvement Competency	Mean	SD	Interpretation
The use of learning targets is a powerful means through which teachers can provide themselves and their students with a clear understanding of the lesson's objectives (Stiggins, 2008).	5.50	0.71	Always Useful
When teachers begin with well-defined targets of intended outcomes, they are able to develop assessments that both (1) reflect what they teach and (2) define what they expect students to learn (Stiggins, 2008).	5.45	0.78	Always Useful
Creating and addressing learning targets before instruction begins also makes students active participants in the learning process by allowing them to assess their own mastery of content knowledge, acknowledge what they have learned and seek help if they are not reaching their target goals (Stiggins, 2008).	5.43	0.76	Always Useful
The Six Facets of Understanding: explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge provide legitimate and powerful ways to assess student understanding during instruction (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005)	5.41	0.71	Always Useful
The exploratory phase of the lesson is a set of activities which grabs the learner's attention, elicits prior knowledge, and helps students generate the basic understandings required during the lesson (Jones, Vermette and Jones, 2009).	5.40	0.74	Always Useful
Class time can be used to help learners make connections and reflect on the learning targets, thereby making personal meaning of their new understandings (Jones, Vermette and Jones, 2011).	5.26	0.76	Always Useful
Asking pre-service teachers to reflect on their own learning which stands to significantly change how they view effective instruction (Jones, Vermette and Jones, 2011).	5.12	0.95	Often Useful
Reversing the process in defining what topics need to be covered and create the assessment to match it (Jones, Vermette and Jones, 2009).	5.11	0.90	Often Useful
Teacher should begin the lesson planning process by identifying the desired results and then work backwards to develop the learning activities to help students to meet that end (Stiggins, 2008; Wiggins and McTighe, 2005).	5.00	1.11	Often Useful
In an effort to help novice teachers create authentic assessments of student understanding, a list of ninety activities teachers can use as demonstrations of student understanding (Vermette, 1998).	4.83	1.01	Often Useful

Ranges for the weighted mean	Responses	Interpretation
5.167 - 6.000	Strongly Agree	Always Influenced
4.334 - 5.166	Agree	Often Influenced
3.501 - 4.333	Tend to Agree	Sometimes Influenced
2.667 - 3.500	Tend to Disagree	Seldom Influenced
1.834 - 2.666	Disagree	Rarely Influenced
1.000 - 1.833	Strongly Disagree	Not Influenced

In terms of improving lesson planning competency, pre-service teachers manifested different levels of learnings toward what suit them best in enhancing their instructional

planning skills. These findings imply that these recommendations from previous researches prove effective when applied by education students. However, it is always the students' choice to follow what they know will help them develop their skills toward lesson planning.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the foregoing discussions, the factors which affect lesson planning competency influence the pre-service teachers' views toward effective and efficient lesson planning. The transition of the theories and principles into application, planning and implementation requires actual experience by the students. Access to instructional materials, students' interests and abilities, and teacher experience proved crucial to lesson planning skills development. In the study has confirmed that most of university sophomore students have specific areas of strengths where they are really excel. In essence, sophomore students become more competent when they are able to experience first-hand learning process, able to transform their pre-service teaching experiences with cognition and gain valuable knowledge with appropriate grasp of the learning outcomes. Finally, the study confirmed the argument of the experiential learning theory (ELT). Planning competency has bearing on the university sophomore students teaching performance. Maximizing their application can improve their success achievement towards an effective and efficient lesson planning outcomes. We hereby recommend that pre-service student teachers be provided and given appropriate exposures in enhancing their lesson planning competency by letting them optimize teaching experiences towards transformative learning outcomes.

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