



**EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF LESSON PLANNING  
ON EFL TEACHERS' CLASSROOM PERFORMANCES  
IN THE PROCESS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN  
LANGUAGE IN BENINESE POST BEGINNERS' CLASSES**

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**Abstract:**

This research aims to examine the challenges English teachers face during lesson planning and their impact on the academic performance of their learners. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect data from five (5) secondary schools, three (3) public and two (2) private. 50 English teachers were administered a questionnaire. A focus group was held with ten (10) pedagogical advisors and ten (10) inspectors to understand better their perception of the challenges related to lesson planning and their impact on learners' motivation and academic performance. The data analysis shows that most teachers are neither experienced nor trained in teaching English. In addition, school authorities have little control over preparation sheets, and lessons are conducted disregarding pedagogical standards. The data also reveals that the use and importance of lesson planning sheets are positively appreciated by all teachers, pedagogical advisors, and school inspectors as a teaching and learning tool. According to them, good preparation reinforces learners' motivation and participation, hence improving their academic results. For better lesson planning, this study suggests that these teachers should be better trained on planning methods and techniques, taking into account the interests, needs, and perspectives of their learners.

**Keywords:** lesson planning, English teachers, motivation, performance

**Résumé :**

Cette recherche vise à examiner les défis auxquels sont confrontés les enseignants d'anglais lors de la planification des cours et leur impact sur les performances académiques de leurs apprenants. Des méthodes quantitatives et qualitatives ont été utilisées pour collecter des données dans 5 écoles secondaires, 3 publiques et 2 privées.

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50 enseignants d'anglais ont été soumis à un questionnaire et un groupe de discussion a été organisé avec 10 conseillers pédagogiques et 10 inspecteurs afin de mieux comprendre leur perception des défis liés à la planification des leçons et leur impact sur la motivation des apprenants et les performances académiques. L'analyse des données recueillies montre que la grande majorité des enseignants ne sont ni expérimentés ni formés à l'enseignement de l'anglais. En outre, les autorités scolaires ont peu de contrôle sur les feuilles de préparation et les leçons sont menées au mépris des normes pédagogiques. Les données révèlent également que l'utilisation et l'importance des fiches de cours sont appréciées positivement par tous les enseignants, les conseillers pédagogiques et les inspecteurs en tant qu'outil d'enseignement et d'apprentissage. Selon eux, une bonne préparation renforce la motivation et la participation des apprenants, d'où l'amélioration de leurs résultats scolaires. Pour une meilleure planification des cours, cette étude suggère que ces enseignants soient mieux formés sur les méthodes et techniques de planification en tenant compte des intérêts, besoins et perspectives de leurs apprenants.

**Mots-clés :** planification de cours, enseignants, Anglais langue étrangère, motivation, performances.

## 1. Introduction

A typical school classroom has all kinds of different learners. Some students learn faster, while others learn slowly. While some learn best by taking notes, others learn best by watching videos. To teach effectively, it is important to provide a variety of learning methods to ensure that no student is left behind. Lesson planning allows teachers to have an overview of the day or week with the activities to be carried out and the topics to be covered. In addition, it allows teachers to assess the scope of the lessons. Students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process, and many students can become bored when they attend standardised lectures and constantly take notes when they are not that kind of learners. Consequently, including a wide variety of activities in your lesson plan allows lessons to involve more students (Guedou, 2006).

However, unfortunately, according to Iwikotan (2020), most Beninese EFL teachers find it difficult to plan lessons. They either do not do it at all or do it poorly, which results in poor teaching. Sometimes classroom activities are conducted without the participation of the students. Moreover, the activities do not fit the learners' context, and they do not understand anything. Many teachers do not manage their time correctly and cannot always answer learners' questions (Keller, 2000).

This problem is because a large number of Beninese EFL teachers teach without any prior training. Even the regular training organised by the education authorities at the beginning of each year does not always cover lesson planning techniques. As a result, teachers face serious difficulties in making their lessons a real success. As a result,

teachers face serious problems in completing their lessons successfully. This situation results in boredom and demotivation of learners in English classes, and this phenomenon deserves to be changed.

Considering all these realities, there is a need to explore the effects of lesson planning on EFL students' academic performance in the process of teaching English as a foreign language in Beninese post-beginner classes. The study attempts to answer the following research questions to achieve this objective:

- 1) What is the EFL teachers' perception of the impacts of lesson planning on EFL learners' academic performance?
- 2) What are the obstacles to effective lesson planning by EFL teachers in beginner classes?
- 3) How can EFL teachers be helped to develop effective lesson planning?

## **2. Literature review**

This section addresses the literature on the components of effective lesson planning according to some authors, the problems raised by poorly planned or unplanned lessons, and the impact of lesson planning on the performance of post-beginner learners.

### **2.1. The components of a lesson plan**

A lesson plan has five major components: class description, recent work, objectives, contents, additional opportunities, and assessment.

#### **2.1.1. The description of the class**

A good lesson plan must give a full description of the class. It must bear the class size regarding the number of boys and girls expected to attend the lesson and the time it will be held. The course length or duration should also be clearly indicated, as well as the days of the week when the teacher is expected to teach. Harmer (1983)'s view does not differ as he wrote this, *"The description of the class embraces a description of the students, a statement of [the] time, frequency and duration of the class, and comments about physical conditions and/or restrictions"* (p.230). According to him, the lesson plan should also bear the comments about what can be seen in the classroom and the different aids that are required for the lesson.

#### **2.1.2 Recent work**

Remembering what the learners have recently learned is vital for the teacher. It enables him/her to base the teaching of new material on the skills and type of language the learners have acquired through their recent work. Les Dangerfield (1985) stated:

*"[...] the students' present level in English will influence not only the teacher's choice of achievable objectives within the lesson but also the length of time spent on each activity,*

*the length of comprehension texts, the amount of new vocabulary introduced and, to an extent, the amount of freedom of production the students are allowed in the lesson."*

According to him, the lesson plan should also be based on students' previous performances and efforts to determine their actual learning capability.

### 2.1.3 Objectives

Clear and precise objectives must be included in the teacher's lesson plan because once in class, he/she will need to state them to the learners so they can know which skills or abilities they are expected to develop or learn through the classroom activities.

Dealing with what a lesson plan should provide, Les Dangerfield (1985) asserted, *"The first thing to decide is what should be achieved within a lesson. By making this an explicit, written statement, teachers provide themselves with simple basic guidelines from which the lesson can be planned and in terms of which it can be judged"* (p.18). The objective of a lesson is nothing but what should be achieved within a lesson. So, Les Dangerfield meant that the teacher should state the objective(s) of the lesson on his plan so that this could serve as a guideline for him to direct the learning activities efficiently. For him, objectives must be specific and include:

- **Cognitive objectives:** These will help the teacher determine after the lesson whether the pupils have been able to define, recognise, name, number, mention, arrange, translate, interpret, conclude, apply, distinguish, complete, produce, etc.
- **Emotional or sentimental objectives:** These enable the teacher to find out later whether the pupils have been able to demonstrate, receive, agree, feel, support, love, justify, review, follow, believe, initiate, resist, obey, etc.
- **Psychomotor objectives:** These are objectives that will let the teacher find out later whether the learners have been able to move, stop, prepare, check, operate, copy, reconstruct, execute, write, draw, design, act, build, etc.

Therefore, the particular aim, which is the objective of the daily lesson, should derive from the general purpose, which is the objective the teacher wishes to meet at a given time in the future.

### 2.1.4 Contents

Harmer (1983) declared, *"By far the most detailed part of the plan is the section in which the contents are written down."*

According to him, the contents section has five headings, which are:

- **Context:** It is the situation of the lesson, the subject of the learning. A flight timetable might be an example of context for introducing a new language.
- **Activity and class organisation:** It has to do with the different activities that the learners will be submitted to and the strategies they will follow to do them, such as lockstep, pair work, group work, etc.

- **Aids:** These are the necessary materials for the lesson. Some examples are Textbooks, pictures, the blackboard, etc.
- **Language:** This involves the kind of words the teacher expects the learners to use or to acquire from the learning activities. For example, if the teacher intends to teach how to make suggestions, he will indicate what kind of language items he wants the learners to use.
- **Possible problems:** These are activities the teacher may use to anticipate issues that may occur at the presentation stage. For instance, if some activities are complicated for the learners, the teacher should be aware of this and know what to do to cope with the situation.

## 2.2. Lack of training as a cause of failure in lesson planning

A trained English teacher is an artist, a technician of English teaching, and professionally skilled in coping with the whole education process, ranging from lesson planning to meet the learners' expectations. But unfortunately, most untrained teachers do not plan their lessons or do not do it appropriately, which leads to a poor quality of teaching. So, only training can help teachers to be skilled enough for lesson planning. Byrne (1980) developed the same point of view. He stated, "*If a teacher starts by doing a training course which provides teaching practice, there is usually time to prepare lessons in detail and [...] consult with tutors and fellow students, so that the process of preparation is developed carefully and systematically*" (p.64).

According to Harmer (1983), "*a well-prepared teacher needs to know a lot about his job before he can make successful plans*" (p.222). He meant that a teacher could not plan his lessons well if he has not gone through training since training is the most reliable opportunity for a teacher to be well informed about his profession. A teacher training course certainly includes the teaching of lesson planning. As a result, a trained teacher can plan his lessons appropriately, unlike an untrained teacher who will not know how to select the teaching materials and the learning activities concerning the learners' needs while planning.

## 2.3. Problems raised by unplanned lessons

Documentary research about unplanned lesson problems helps identify three significant problems: teaching at random, discipline problems, and failure to manage the classroom.

### 2.3.1. Teaching at random

Rajar (1972) asserted, "*The most important part of the teacher's work is his control of the instructional situation. This control is, to [a considerable] extent, determined by the teacher's plan for a particular class period*" (p.139). Through this assertion, Rajar (1972) showed how important a lesson plan is for a particular class period. For him, a teacher should not go to class without a lesson plan. If he does, he will teach at random. He will not know what the learners are supposed to be doing at a given moment in the class because he does not

have a lesson plan to guide him. He will also fail to provide appropriate answers to the learners' questions as he has not researched to be well informed about the lesson he wants to teach.

Harmer (1983) said, *"The most effective activities can be made almost useless if the teacher does not organise them efficiently"* (p.223). It is then incumbent on the teacher to ensure his lesson plan contains all the different types of information he needs and properly organises the learning activities. Then, he will be confident, for he knows in advance what can be done in the allotted time.

### **2.3.2. Discipline problems**

Showing that the learners' misbehaviours largely derive from the teacher's attitude, Anthony Mensah (1989) asserted, *"Your students may disturb your class because of your ineffective teaching. They may misbehave because you may not be doing what they expect you to do while teaching"* (p.44). This statement shows that the teacher is responsible for his learners' misbehaviours when he fails to meet the learners' expectations, which is the outcome of unplanned lessons.

Uninterested learners misbehave because they want revenge on a teacher who does not offer them any chance to learn. They are so bored and confused that they keep gossiping among themselves. Others eat in the classroom, sleep, fight or abuse the teacher just to be sent out of the classroom.

### **2.3.3. Failure to manage the classroom**

Robert Tauber (2008) affirmed, *"No classroom management technique will be effective for long if discipline is absent"* (p.9). According to him, it will be difficult for the teacher to manage his class when the learners prove to be undisciplined. Unplanned lessons pave the way for discipline problems in the classroom because learners always misbehave when teaching is short of exciting activities that can arouse their motivation. In addition, an unplanned or poorly planned lesson often leads to the wrong management of time, which may leave the learners without any learning activities at a given time of the lesson.

## **3. Research methodology**

This section describes the methods and techniques used to collect data and information. It comprises 1) the target population, 2) the research procedure, and 3) the description of the research instruments.

### **3.1 The sample population**

This research focuses on three categories of people. They are teachers, learners, and pedagogical advisers/inspectors. Only second-cycle learners have been considered because the study deals with post-beginners. In this perspective, questionnaires were administered to EFL teachers and learners in five randomly-selected schools.

In total, fifty (50) EFL teachers, fifty (50) EFL learners, and twenty (20) Pedagogical Advisers/Inspectors have answered my questionnaires. These different categories of people have been selected for the reasons mentioned below:

### **3.1.1. The EFL teachers**

They appear as the main actors in the process of lesson planning. In fact, in the secondary schools in Benin country, school authorities are not involved in preparing lessons. Their role is to make sure the different materials the teachers and the learners need are available in sufficient numbers and see to it that everybody has easy access to those materials. It is up to each teacher to plan his lessons in accordance with the syllabus and the available materials. They are taken into account for this research work because their experiences and the difficulties they encounter while planning lessons are helpful.

### **3.1.2. The EFL pedagogical advisers and inspectors**

They frequently observe classes to see how well teachers are doing their work. This process enables them to have a good knowledge of the problems most teachers are confronted with. As such, they can know whether lessons are regularly planned or not. It is then important to seek their points of view about teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning and how far they react to urge teachers to plan their lessons.

## **3.2. The research procedure**

To collect data for this research, frequent visits to educational sites on the internet have turned out to be helpful. In addition, questionnaires have been addressed to the different categories of people included in the target population because they are the most involved in the teaching/learning process. Procedures and information from them are undoubtedly true and reliable. Consequently, three separate questionnaires were designed: one for EFL teachers, one for EFL learners, and one for EFL educational advisors and inspectors. It is worth mentioning that the questionnaires were distributed in different regions to maximise the likelihood of collecting data from all over the country, which would provide insight into the problems related to course planning in the country.

Classroom observations were used as it is necessary to see how teachers implement the content of their lesson plan and how those who do not plan at all take their classes to the practical stage of the teaching process. Oral interviews with teachers and learners were also used. The following lines describe these instruments.

### **3.3. The description of the research instruments**

This sub-section describes the different research instruments used to collect data in this study.

### **3.3.1. Questionnaire addressed to EFL teachers**

Fifty (50) teachers have answered this questionnaire. It comprises fourteen (14) questions described as follows:

The first five questions aim at collecting general information about the teachers, such as the location of their current schools, which will help to see whether teachers from different schools in different areas of the country have the same apprehension of lesson planning or not. It would also help to know their qualifications and teaching experiences to value these influences on the teachers' attitudes towards lesson planning.

- Questions 6, 7, and 8 are designed to find out how often English teachers plan their lessons. Their answers to these questions can help to determine the importance they attach to lesson planning because, from experience, only those who are aware of the benefits of lesson preparation can do it frequently, if not always.
- Questions 9, 10, and 11 are intended to check whether teachers are aware of unplanned lessons' disadvantages.
- Question 12 is designed to explore teachers' opinions on lesson planning, which may be derived from the extent to which they are aware of the disadvantages of unplanned lessons.
- Question 13 aimed to determine whether the authorities pressured teachers to plan their lessons.

Finally, the fourteenth question is designed to collect suggestions from the teachers on getting all teachers to properly prepare their lessons. Their answers to this last question might inspire us to make valuable suggestions at the end of the research.

### **3.3.2. Semi-structured focus group with EFL pedagogical advisers and inspectors**

This semi-structured focus group is meant to:

- Find out how often they visit teachers and whether their inspection visits allow them to make a link between lesson planning and teacher performance.
- Find out if they have any idea why some teachers do not plan their lessons well or at all.
- To find out how educational advisors and inspectors react when they see that some teachers do not plan their lessons and what actions they take to encourage these teachers to do so.
- To obtain suggestions from this target population on how to get all teachers to plan their lessons.

### **3.3.3. Class observation**

Some EFL classes were observed to check the similarity between the theories developed by some authors in the literature and the actual practice of teachers in classroom situations. This process would allow observing the extent to which teachers implement the content of their lesson plans or how teachers who do not prepare their lessons manage their classes when teaching EFL to post beginners. In addition, classroom observation



would allow examining whether the answers given by the teachers to the questionnaire are related to the reality of the classroom or not. During the classroom observation, special attention is paid to the teachers' classroom management, learners' behaviours, and their participation in learning activities. When they have finished their lessons, a look is taken at their lesson plans.

#### 4. Presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion of the findings

This section includes the presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion of the data collected through the questionnaire addressed to the EFL teachers, the semi-structured focus group with EFL pedagogical advisors and inspectors and the classroom observation.

##### 4.1 Presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data

The presentation, analysis and interpretation of the different data collected are as follows.

##### 4.1.1 Presentation and analysis of the data from the questionnaire addressed to the EFL teachers

Fifty (50) EFL teachers have responded to this questionnaire. Their answers are presented in three different tables according to the objectives of the questions, which are:

- The EFL teachers' qualifications;
- The EFL teachers' teaching experiences and attitudes towards lesson planning;
- The EFL teachers' suggestions.

**Table 1:** The EFL teachers' qualifications

Qualifications	Number	Percentage (%)
BAC	00	0.00
CAPEM	00	0.00
BAPES	02	4.00
LICENCE	28	56.00
MAITRISE	10	20.00
CAPES	09	18.00
DEA	01	2.00
DOCTORATE	00	0.00
TOTAL	50	100.00

Table 1 presents the academic and professional qualifications of the EFL teachers interviewed. These data show that the vast majority (80%) of the teachers surveyed are not professionally qualified to teach English at either the undergraduate or graduate level.

**Table 2:** The EFL teachers' experiences and attitudes towards lesson planning

Questions	Answers	N°	Percentage (%)	Total
1. How long have you been teaching in secondary schools?	a) From 1 to 5 years	16	32.00	50
	b) From 5 to 10 years	24	48.00	
	c) More	10	20.00	
2. What level do you teach?	a) First cycle only	7	14.00	50
	b) Second cycle only	1	2.00	
	c) Both	42	84.00	
3. Do you always plan your lessons before class?	a) Yes	36	72.00	50
	b) No	14	28.00	
4. Do you find it too difficult to plan a lesson?	a) Yes	23	46.00	50
	b) No	27	54.00	
5. Do you think a teacher can conduct unprepared lessons and meet all learners' expectations?	a) Yes	4	8.00	50
	b) No	46	92.00	
6. How can students feel about unprepared lessons?	a) Interested	2	4.00	50
	b) Bored	48	96.00	
7. What do you think of lesson planning then?	a) Indispensable	49	98.00	50
	b) Optional	1	2.00	
	c) Useless	0	0.00	
8. Do any authorities make teachers plan their lessons?	a) Yes	22	44.00	50
	b) No	28	56.00	

Table 2 presents EFL teachers' experiences and attitudes towards lesson planning. The data collected indicate that the EFL teachers interviewed have a positive attitude towards lesson planning, despite their lack of teaching experience due to effective training. Furthermore, they all concurred on the importance of lesson planning in teaching and learning EFL and its productive effects on students' academic performance.

The last question of this questionnaire is meant to seek EFL teachers' suggestions about effective lesson planning. Their answers are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3:** EFL teachers' suggestions for effective lesson planning

<b>Question:</b>					
If you think that teachers should necessarily plan their lessons, could you make a few suggestions to the education authorities so that they could know how to handle the matter?					
Expected answers	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1. Pre-service and in-service training for teachers	40	80%	10	20%	50
2. Improving teachers' living conditions	20	40%	30	60%	50
3. Getting teaching materials available for teachers	17	34%	33	66%	50
4. Regular class visits to teachers	21	42%	29	58%	50
5. Checking teachers' lesson plans	20	40%	30	60%	50

Table 3 presents the teachers' responses to the last question in the questionnaire sent to EFL teachers. This question asked EFL teachers for their opinions on five practical suggestions for improving lesson planning practice in Beninese secondary schools. Their responses recommended initial and in-service teacher training (80%), improved living

conditions for teachers (40%), provision of teaching materials for teachers (34%), regular classroom visits for teachers (42%), and verification of teachers' lesson plans by pedagogical advisors and inspectors (40%).

#### **4.1.2. Semi-structured focus group with EFL pedagogical advisors and inspectors**

In addition to the questionnaire sent to EFL teachers, a semi-structured focus group was held with 10 pedagogical advisors and 10 EFL inspectors via WhatsApp. These responses indicate that all the pedagogical advisors and inspectors positively valued the use of the lesson plan as an important tool for EFL teaching and learning. According to them, good lesson planning leads to motivation and active participation of students, which positively impacts their academic performance: *“create a friendly classroom atmosphere in which students can easily communicate with their instructor and classmates”*. She added that *“lesson planning improves students' language skills development”*. Another inspector declared that the *“use of lesson plan in EFL classes helps to save time and effort”*.

The responses of pedagogical advisors and inspectors in the semi-structured focus group corroborated the fact that student interactions improved significantly when instructors planned their lessons properly. They also support the idea that regular use of lesson plans breaks down students' fear and emotional barriers to communicating in the classroom and helps teachers make their students feel more comfortable with their peers and teachers. Their overall responses and comments indicated *that EFL teachers show a positive attitude and perception about the use of lesson plans in their classes*.

#### **4.1.3 Findings of class observations**

Classroom observation aims to check whether EFL instructors actually plan their lessons before coming to the schools. In addition, special attention is paid to students' reactions to the teacher's questions and learning activities.

During these class visits, it was noticeable that EFL teachers use many strategies to teach English and that some of them use visual aids in addition to textbooks to make teaching and learning as enjoyable as possible. In fact, it appeared that the learners were really motivated. However, some of them did not participate in the different activities because they could not answer the questions due to a lack of vocabulary and shyness. Others did so because they were also asked to work in groups. It led the teachers to go around the class, group by group, to manage the class and see if all students were doing the assigned tasks.

## **4.2 Discussion of the findings**

The discussion of the results of this study is based on the data collected to answer the three research questions.

#### **4.2.1 EFL teachers' perception of the impacts of lesson planning on EFL learners' academic performance**

The first question aims to determine the perception of EFL teachers on the importance and impacts of lesson planning on the academic performance of EFL learners. The data collected from the teacher questionnaire, classroom observation, and teacher interview help to establish that EFL teachers have a positive perception of the importance of lesson planning. Furthermore, they believe that effective lesson planning leads to improved academic performance of EFL students.

Table 2 shows that 92% (46 out of 50) of the teachers admitted that a teacher could not conduct unprepared lessons and meet all the expectations of his or her learners; 96% (48 out of 50) of them admitted that learners get bored during unplanned lessons, and 98% (49 out of 50) said that lesson planning is indispensable. These data show that EFL teachers are aware of the significance and importance of lesson planning. Why do some not do it well or at all? The answer is that some EFL teachers are not trained to teach. Teaching is just a business opportunity to be seized before finding a better job, a source of money. As a result, they lack a professional conscience and do not care about achieving any goal. Furthermore, school authorities do not bother to check the planning of teachers. 56% (28 out of 50) of the teachers responded that no one ensures that each teacher plans his/her lessons. In our oral interviews, many other EFL teachers said the same thing. They said that even the pedagogical advisors only come to see how they teach without looking at their planning. School administrators and pedagogical advisors are then called upon to be more vigilant in carrying out their responsibilities. These results align with Biesta's (2020) findings, who also found positive teacher perceptions of the potential for quality lesson planning in EFL classrooms. In their study on the relationship between effective lesson planning and student performance in EFL. Byrne (2021) also found similar results.

#### **4.2.2. The obstacles to effective lesson planning by teachers in Beninese secondary schools**

The second research question aims to elucidate EFL teachers' difficulties in planning and teaching lessons in post-baccalaureate classes. The data collected through the EFL teachers' questionnaire reveals three (03) major situations that prevent most teachers from planning their lessons according to the academic and emotional needs of the students. The first difficulty is related to the teachers' professional qualifications. Table 1 shows that most of the teachers interviewed are not sufficiently qualified to teach English as a foreign language in secondary schools. Only 04% (02 out of 50) of them hold the BAPES and 18% (09 out of 50) the CAPES, whereas these two qualifications are required for teachers of the first and second cycles of secondary education in Benin. The percentage of teachers with only academic qualifications is 78% (39 out of 50).

This point was confirmed by most of the teachers who were interviewed, as almost all of them had not received any training before they started teaching. Most of them answered that they did not even want to teach, but the impossibility of finding other

more interesting jobs forced them to join the profession as part-time teachers without any prior training. Worse, the Beninese government does not organise frequent and adequate in-service training to enable them to develop professionally. This situation is detrimental to our education system because these teachers cannot have the methodology required to teach effectively. The government should reflect on the problem to find an effective solution.

The second obstacle indicated by EFL teachers as a hindrance to effective lesson planning in EFL post-baccalaureate classes is the teaching experience of the respondents, as shown in Table 2, which shows the teachers' lack of experience and their attitudes towards lesson planning.

Table 2 reveals that only 20% (10 out of 50) of the surveyed teachers have been teaching for more than ten years. 32% (16 out of 50) have been teaching for five years or less, and 48% (24 out of 50) of the respondents have teaching experience of between five and ten years. The implication is that most EFL teachers are not only untrained but also too inexperienced in dealing with post-starters. Teaching in the second cycle requires more knowledge, preparation, and teacher experience. Learners at this level are expected to be more mature than undergraduates in analysing teachers' classroom behaviours, especially how they teach and manage their classes.

Unfortunately, Table 2 shows that 84% (42 out of 50) of the same respondent teachers teach at both undergraduate and graduate levels, while 02% (01 out of 50) of them teach only at the graduate level. In short, although they are not well trained and have little teaching experience, most of them are qualified to teach English as a foreign language to post-beginners. Obviously, it will not be easy for these teachers to meet all the needs and expectations of post-starters who are increasingly eager to learn new and valuable knowledge; and it should not be forgotten that it is more difficult to convince teenagers than small children in the first cycle who are still at an early stage of learning English. The only way they will be able to do their work acceptably is to prepare their lessons as well as possible.

The third obstacle resulting from the others mentioned above is the fact that some teachers ignore the steps of lesson planning or decide not to plan their lessons before coming to class. Thus, 28% (14 out of 50) of the teachers responded that they do not always plan their lessons. This number of teachers is less than the one of those of them who say they always do. However, it is alarming. No teacher should fail to plan their lessons because lesson planning is too serious to be optional. The success of a lesson depends on how well it has been planned because planning helps teachers to organise and manage the class to achieve the objectives. Furthermore, the same planning may not be useful to a teacher in another year, as the learners are different and may not have the same background. It is, therefore, clear that a successful teacher must continue to plan or readjust his or her plan according to the current context of the learners. From this point of view, the fact that 28% of teachers do not always plan their lessons is a bad thing.

Furthermore, 46% (23 out of 50) of EFL teachers responded that it was difficult for them to plan their lessons, implying that it is not even easy for those who do so. So, where is the guarantee that they are doing it well? Of course, not all teachers interviewed fail to plan well, but some may fail to plan well because of the difficulties they face. Once again, training is essential as well-trained teachers cannot find it difficult to plan lessons.

These findings corroborate the investigation of (Brown, 2020; Harmer, 2017) in their study of the challenges faced by EFL instructors in lesson planning. Nissa and Jayadi (2015) also reach similar conclusions in their studies of EFL students.

#### **4.2.3 Effective strategies to help EFL teachers plan lessons**

The third research question concerns practical suggestions to help EFL teachers plan lessons in post-baccalaureate classes. Table 3 shows that all five suggestions met with the consent of the EFL teachers. 80% (40 out of 50) of the teachers suggested that teachers should be trained. This finding represents the highest percentage, suggesting that most teachers are aware that training is at the top of the list of solutions to problems related to lesson planning. This was confirmed in the oral interviews, as most teachers admitted that they do not even know the exact data that should be included in their lesson sheets, apart from the expected answers to the activities.

In addition, 40% (20 out of 50) of them suggested that teachers' living conditions be improved, and 34% (17 out of 50) wanted teaching mats to be made available. The living and working conditions of teachers are therefore deplorable. This finding explains the lack of motivation of teachers. Most respondents said teachers are the least well paid, although they work more than any civilian worker. They also explained that they are expected to perform well in the field of education while many schools still lack proper facilities. They complained that few teachers have textbooks that are supposed to guide them in lesson planning. As a result, they are frustrated and lose interest in their work. 42% (21 out of 50) of the teachers suggested that teachers be visited regularly. They wanted to teach coordinators and pedagogical advisors/inspectors to visit teachers more frequently to make a real contribution to improving their teaching. These results align with studies by (Jasmi, 2014; Utari, 2014) which showed a decreasing involvement of pedagogical advisors and inspectors in EFL classrooms. Some previous studies have found similar results (Schoenfeldt and Salsbury, 2019). Despite the various difficulties school authorities face, teachers need to base their lesson plans on students' learning styles and emotional and cultural needs (Skowron, 2018).

In light of these findings, some suggestions to some educational actors could be well addressed in our country.

### **5. Suggestions**

Throughout this work, it is clear that ideally, teachers should consider planning their lessons before they enter the classroom, as lesson planning is the only tool for successful

classroom management and effective teaching. Planning is only effective if teachers ensure that the following points are met:

- The lesson plan should include how the teacher will manage the class and avoid misbehaviour by learners.
- It should enable learners to develop a range of skills and competencies in the classroom.
- The plan should be interesting enough for learners to engage in the learning activities.
- It should contain enough content to allow learners to practice.
- The plan should also allow for checking the learners' progress during the lesson.
- It should be flexible and offer a variety of activities and methods so that learners who cannot learn with a certain method used by the teacher can still have the chance to learn with another method.
- The lesson plan should include a detailed timetable of the different activities so that the teacher knows what the learners must do at a certain point in the lesson.

In addition, we would suggest that teachers plan their lessons on an annual, monthly, and weekly basis as well. Indeed, it should be remembered that at the end of a school year, learners at a particular level are expected to have global attitudes and skills that cannot be taught in one class session, week, month, or term. The objectives of the daily lessons are meant to help teachers achieve these global objectives step by step. Thus, it will be beneficial for teachers to set annual objectives and plan lessons throughout the year to achieve them gradually. In doing so, they can plan daily lessons so that the partial objectives can be achieved at the end of each week, month, and school year term. This can help them to anticipate the materials they will need and the difficulties they may encounter in teaching a particular lesson at a particular time of the year. This way, they can ensure that materials are available and research their difficulties before the lesson begins.

## 6. Conclusion

The main objective of this research work is to explore EFL teachers' perception of the importance and impacts of lesson planning on EFL learners' academic performance, as well as the barriers to effective lesson planning.

To achieve such an objective, some works of prominent authors related to lesson planning in EFL teaching and learning help to understand its different dimensions and components better. A questionnaire was designed and sent to EFL teachers to collect reliable data. In addition, classroom observations are carried out in selected secondary schools to observe how teachers teach English, how they perform with the available teaching materials, and learners' reactions. In addition, 10 EFL educational advisors and ten (10) inspectors participated in the interviews.

Data analysis shows that most new EFL teachers have little teaching experience and are not trained to teach English. In addition, school authorities do not check teachers' plans. As a result, EFL teachers go into the classroom unprepared, to the detriment of the learners.

In fact, most of the EFL learners interviewed say that they are not satisfied with the performance of their English teachers. This lack of a plan mainly prevents teachers from meeting learners' expectations. Learners are confused and bored because the learning activities are not engaging, and they do not know what skills they are supposed to develop. So, they do not follow the lessons and misbehave to get back at their teachers. The analysis reveals that EFL pedagogical advisors and inspectors are not numerous and cannot help the overwhelming number of EFL teachers. They stated that they are not always satisfied with the performance of EFL teachers and claimed that some teachers do not plan their lessons and do not even bother to take into account the feedback from the counsellors/inspectors.

Furthermore, the study suggests that EFL teachers plan their lessons annually, monthly, and weekly. Therefore, teachers should set annual targets and plan lessons throughout the year to achieve them gradually. To generalise the results of the present study, it would be desirable that future research be conducted on the same issue, this time with more data and a research methodology. Ideally, a longitudinal study should be conducted based on the results of this study.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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