

Teacher Planning Templates: Helpful Tool or Waste of Time? A Comparative Analysis of the Perceptions of Novice and Experienced Teachers in the UAE and USA

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Lesson plan templates are a frequent requirement in schools around the world. School administrators often choose a standard lesson plan style and require the consistent layout for all teachers of all grade levels and across all disciplines. Lesson planning, when done well, should be a guide for both teachers and administrators of the educational concept the students need to learn, how the teacher will teach the concept, and how student learning will be evaluated. Lesson planning is a time-consuming task for the teacher and a requirement and expectation by which administration oversees instructional practices in schools. This research study sought to obtain, evaluate, and analyze the perspectives of administrators and teachers from both the United Arab Emirates and the United States on the perceived usefulness of lesson planning templates in the planning process. A quantitative method employing a close-ended survey was used to obtain data. An exploratory factor analysis was applied to determine perspective of teachers on the value and utility of completing templates for instructional planning purposes, and an independent variable T-test was applied to examine similarities and differences in perspectives based on time in the field. The impact of the study could shape future views on the practice, benefits, training, use, and research of lesson planning templates.

Keywords: novice teacher, experienced teacher, lesson planning templates, administrative requirement, teacher planning

Introduction

Virtually every teaching position requires the submission of a lesson plan to the administration of the school. Many administrators, for varied reasons, insist on the utilization of a specific template by all teachers in all subjects across all grade levels. Review of the literature indicates that the implementation of a standardized lesson planning template is often intended to facilitate to ensure a specific structure within the classroom or a change in process. For some teachers the template provides a helpful support, giving guidance and structure to support the creation of meaningful effective lessons. For others, completion of the lesson planning template constitutes a menial task, not useful in the planning of their lessons. The

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process may be seen solely as an administrative requirement, taking time away from the *actual* planning of activities and instruction.

This research examines two research questions. The first focuses on the descriptives of the participants in the survey, all teachers from the UAE or USA. The second examines whether relationships exist among the survey responses, inquiring about their perceived utility of planning templates and their interactions and experiences using them, between novice and experience teachers in the USA and UAE. Determining whether time in the field plays a role in the perceived utility of standardized lesson planning templates and reviews teacher opinions regarding the benefit of the utilization of lesson planning templates in implementing effective lessons. The research also examines the underlying reasons behind these perceptions.

Planning templates are designed as aides in the teaching process. Their purpose may be best served for those who have teaching in their zone of proximal development rather than mandated universal employment by all teachers across all disciplines regardless of their experience and instructional expertise. This research analyzes if benefits are or are not seen by the teachers themselves. If no benefit is perceived in the utilization of a standard planning template, should the requirement of submission be reexamined by administrators? Should the utilization of lesson planning templates be adjusted to provide greater support to teachers and promote wider adoption of the practice? With the uncertainty of benefits, or perceived benefits, of lesson planning templates it should be examined why the practice is so widely utilized. As the profession of teaching has transformed into a more data driven profession, perhaps the transition has not adequately valued the benefit of this previous best practice, or perhaps it is longstanding.

This research begins with a brief introduction, followed by a thorough review of existing literature on the topic of lesson planning templates. The research questions and research methodology are explained followed by the data analysis and the findings of this research. The paper will conclude with a discussion and conclusion including recommended areas for future research.

Operational Definitions

For the intent of this research, teachers with 5 or more full years of in-field teaching experience will be noted as “experienced” teachers, and teachers with less than 5 full years of in field teaching experience will be noted as “novice” teachers. “Benefits” are defined as seen or felt improvements in teaching from the perspective of the teacher or administrator. “Administrator” will refer to leadership staff in schools not classroom teachers.

Literature Review

Every teacher can remember their first day in front of their very first class. Excitement, nervousness, and a lingering question of whether what they had planned was going to work. For many, their lesson plan template provided a security blanket to ensure their success as they moved through the lesson. The

experienced teacher next door stood by their classroom door smiling and encouraging their students with phrases such as, “No worries, you got this!” The experienced teacher casually greeted their students at the door with hugs, waves, high-5’s, and a casual very real sense of calm. The novice teacher watched this scene and longed for that sense of confidence and calm born with experience. So, what does the literature say about the role of the lesson planning template and process in transitioning a novice teacher into an experienced calm confident teacher?

John (2006) reviewed the teaching of the dominant lesson planning model lesson to student teachers. This researcher identified three goals: 1) to critically think about the dominant approach used, 2) to compare the dominant model with lesson planning done by both novice and experienced teachers, and 3) to suggest an alternative dialogical model of lesson planning. John found that giving student teachers a lesson planning template helped to guide their thought processes. The researcher also found that a template ensured that these individuals, who were new to teaching, understood what thought should go into planning an effective lesson, as well as, to effectively align to a planned curriculum. In turn, the utilization of the lesson planning template provided the new teacher with a sense of security in delivery of the lesson.

Mcalpine, Weston, Berthiaume, and Fairbank-roch (2006) examined the thought processes of teachers in the stages of lesson planning then reflection. Their interview protocol insured participants be experienced classroom teachers who have previously developed approaches and strategies to their instruction. The rationale that the use of novice teachers may provide inaccurate data in assessing pre and post lesson thought processes. As instructors developed their instructional models, they may frequently change approaches as they become more experienced. This supports the conception that an aid such as a planning template may be more beneficial for teachers with less experience.

John (2006) suggested that while some individuals find lesson planning to be creative and thought-provoking, others find it unorganized, stressful, and chaotic. The researcher pointed out that a lesson planning template can successfully guide the inexperienced teachers through the thought processes that experienced teachers naturally develop. While Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development focused on the child, his model has been applied across age groups as its popularity has grown. Burkhauser and Lesaux (2017) note that experienced teachers adapt curriculum to meet the needs of students and school requirements more easily than novice teachers. The template can serve as an aide to teach and organize thoughts to ease the cognitive load for inexperienced or struggling teachers. Many school improvement plans are initiated with planning templates to guide a change in practice. Borda et al. (2018) gives an example of this practice documenting a school leadership’s attempt to create common practices across the school. Teachers were asked to use a specific template to create consistency and common aspects from classroom to classroom to support student learning. This is only one example of what is a frequent practice across the globe.

While linear models do give consistency throughout schools and districts and can help guide teachers that have difficulty planning, teaching is anything but

linear. These benefits seem to be lost when discussing the use of templates with experienced teachers. Ramírez et al. (2017) conducted a research study looking at the planning process and how tasks were performed in the classroom with all variables in play. This research brought into question what is truly coming first the teaching and practices or the planning and knowledge of the classroom. Pointing out that while there is a connection between the planning and the teaching, these two topics are vastly different practices. Real teaching has many variables that planning itself may not consider. Both the utility and effectiveness of lesson planning are warranted and important. Some teachers complete lesson plan templates after the teaching of lessons rather than before. The template in this type of situation being used as a reflective tool rather than a planning aid. In this situation, the teacher's self-created mental template guides the instruction rather than the standard template checklist short circuiting the purpose and intent of the formal lesson planning template.

John (2006) indicates that for many student-teacher instructors teaching with a specified template can be a convenience for grading and assessment purposes. For policy makers, lesson plans templates can be one way to hold teachers accountable to what these individuals believe teachers should be doing within a lesson. Teaching has changed dramatically over the last 60 years, yet lesson plan templates have remained surprisingly constant since the 1940's; emphasizing six primary areas: 1) objectives, 2) vocabulary, 3) resources, 4) starter, 5) main activity, and 6) plenary. With few variances including *differentiation*, *timings*, *technology*, and details within each heading. "Although a variety of lesson-planning formats and approaches are recommended for use, few of the formats are derived empirically" (p. 483). This researcher suggests that in a profession that requires such flexibility, lesson planning should likewise possess a degree of flexibility. Goals should be subject to adjustment as the lesson develops in order that all important factors can be considered to best enhance learning.

The findings of the previous research were also supported by a study conducted by Ramírez et al. (2017). The Ramirez study focused on early childhood education teachers working with students three to six-years-old in the subject area of information and communication technology (ICT). These teachers were not required to use a template, they planned their lessons based on their own experiences and preferences. The study looked at how much planning, and which planning, gets carried out in the actual classroom experience as opposed to which planning ends up changing and needing to be adjusted on the spot due to variables in play in an actual classroom setting. Ramirez and colleagues directly point out that, "In fact, the elements that teachers handle and consider when planning are very wide-ranging, although what they actually put down in writing when they have to comply with administrative regulations on planning is quite another matter" (Ramírez et al., 2017 p. 714). This research supported the idea that lesson planning has two aspects: 1) planning for teaching and 2) writing to satisfy administrative requirements.

Ramírez et al. (2017) found that teachers that were able to adhere closely to their lesson plans devoted much of their time planning for activities and situations that could arise in the classroom as opposed to focusing on items frequently listed

on lesson plan templates such as “materials” and “objectives.” The study also demonstrated the reduced importance of various aspects in teaching brought on by strict adherence to template requirements and found that most of the actual planning went to activities which tend not to be primary factors of many lesson planning templates. As the field of teaching becomes more data-driven in all subjects, these results may be applicable across disciplines. While this study focused on the subject area of ICT, the results can be generalized to many other subjects and disciplines.

Given the prevalence of lesson plans in teacher-education programs, a surprisingly limited account of empirical data has been used to inform these tools. Wilson (2019) promotes ten key elements in planning a lesson and argues that the utilization of these ten key elements will create an effective experience for your learners. Wilson’s ten steps follow:

- 1) Audience-consider the students and their personalities.
- 2) Effective learning strategies - include spiraling lessons.
- 3) Have the end in mind - set concrete goals and clear lesson objectives.
- 4) Write formative assessments considering benchmarks, pacing, and reinforcement.
- 5) Differentiate instruction.
- 6) Design for peer instruction.
- 7) Work examples - consider background knowledge and the needs of learners when creating examples and algorithms – utilization of fading examples.
- 8) Show why/how ideas work and are supported and point out common misconceptions.
- 9) Challenge and encourage learners - avoid demotivating.
- 10) Active learning - allow students to be a part of the discovery, not a bystander in the lesson.

Some of these steps are included on many lesson planning templates, most notably steps three, four, and five. Many of Wilson’s steps are implemented independently and seem to be considerations in teacher planning, but not administrative paperwork for submission. For example, *step 1: considering your audience* is frequently left off templates but constitutes an important aspect in starting preparation for any lesson. *Step 2* discusses the idea of spiraling topics to include old topics as review, while connecting to current benchmarks, and preview upcoming lessons that will use the same ideas. This continuity of instruction in learning is common among teachers yet is seen on very few templates. Peer instruction may be frequent in teacher planned activities; however, many templates do not require the details of planned activities. Steps seven and eight require the planning of examples to be used, grow, and extend throughout the lesson. These concepts often do not appear on lesson plan templates. Steps nine and ten are about teacher student interactions which are also rarely considered on templates.

Wilson (2019) also contrasted the needs of novice and experienced teachers as illustrated by the following quote. Within *step 7: using fading examples* the researcher stated:

A worked example is a step-by-step demonstration of how to solve a problem or do some task. By giving the steps in order, the instructor reduces the learner's cognitive load, which accelerates learning. However, worked examples become less effective as learners acquire more expertise, a phenomenon known as the 'expertise reversal effect.' In brief, as learners build their own mental models of what to do and how to do it, the detailed step-by-step breakdown of a worked example starts to get in the way. This is why tutorials and manual pages both need to exist: what's appropriate for a newcomer is frustrating for an expert, while what jogs an expert's memory may be incomprehensible to a novice (Wilson, 2019, pp. 6-7).

Many experienced teachers may suffer from "expertise reversal effect" when planning lessons for administrators. A step-by-step example, like a template, may be useful for inexperienced persons who need a guide to complete a new task, while frustrating and stifling more experienced teachers.

Staiger and Rockoff (2010) found that many differences in teaching approaches exist between experienced and novice teachers. As such, the planning that goes into teaching lessons differs greatly between these groups. Both explicit and implicit data have shown students being taught by novice teachers as opposed to being taught by an experienced teacher show lower gains in achievement. Differences in teaching style and approach are noted frequently between experienced and novice teachers. This research provides the foundation for the operational definition of novice and experienced teachers used in this research.

Lutovac and Kaasila (2018), examined one teacher's view of teaching contrasting his opinions through his preservice years forward to his acquisition of 15 years of experience. While a novice, this teacher relied on his strengths in his academic area (mathematics) and textbooks to plan teacher centered learning opportunities. During this time, he felt that if he was teaching and the students were listening intently the lesson was going well. Stating he was surprised by the degree of difference in academic levels among his students. This teacher felt that part of being a good teacher was the ability to answer students' questions immediately-with an explanation to get to the answer as quickly as possible. He looked at himself more as a content area specialist and prepared his lessons in that way. At this stage in his career, a lesson plan template seems to have been supportive of his style and may have guided him through the process.

These opinions were found to have changed as his career progressed. Lutovac and Kaasila (2018) also identified significant changes in his teaching perspective and approach. These researchers again interviewed this teacher fifteen years later and identified a very different perspective. Experience had changed his teaching style to a more student-centered approach. He focused more on how student's think, and less about the content he was teaching. He no longer used the textbook to plan lessons (making listing page numbers on a template an extra duty) and focused on more on pedagogy and his instructional approach. The teacher had become more realistic about his expectations of his students and the amount of

differentiation it takes to reach them all, understanding that they may be reached at various levels (knowing your audience). He also pointed out that he learned to focus on his pupil's "identity development" making sure his students separated their academic skills from how they see themselves as human beings and worked to positively build their confidence ensuring to point out positive theory even with incorrect implementation. This teaching style does not seem to follow a template style planning approach.

Lutovac and Kaasila (2018) provide this example of a developed teacher who has gained experience and a new approach on teaching throughout his years. Where he used to spend time focusing on content when planning his lessons, he now focused on student interaction with the material, differentiation, and student wellbeing. These researchers propose that moving to a student-centered approach from a teacher centered approach is something that is learned over time. Subsequent changes to lesson planning and the time spent focusing on specific parts of the planning become the result of experience in the classroom.

In the teacher's novice years, he used a very structured, textbook-driven approach consistent with the requirements of many lesson planning templates. His behavior is also consistent with the expectations taught to student teachers by the training programs of many educational institutions. As a fifteen-year veteran teacher, his approaches to teaching did not align with the linearity that a template provides; therefore, making the lesson plan template an additional administrative task.

While the aforementioned research consistently agrees that experience leads to changes in teaching, it is more importantly noted for this research study that experience generally leads to an improvement in teaching. Ost (2014) found that experience within grade levels impacts teaching and the achievement level of students, predominantly in mathematics, where benchmarks change throughout grade levels. Ost (2014) also found that many teachers find time constraints to be a major hinderance to planning effective lessons. By continuing to teach consistent curriculum, teachers have already completed many of the administrative tasks required, often including the submission of lesson planning templates. Many have also experienced the sequencing of the lesson in previous years, having already noted changes that should be made to the lesson and possible changes in the sequencing in previous reflective moments. Their planning time being available to focus on pedagogy and the individuality of their students in order to meaningfully impact their lessons. They have experiences with student-centered approaches and have developed expertise in implementing those activities that are likely to be the most successful. Given all this, one could deduce that the more experience a teacher has, the less time it takes to prepare an effective lesson.

Ost (2014) noted that less than half of teachers remain in a consistent grade level in their first five years of teaching. This is notable because the research study also shows higher gains in students that have teachers with grade-specific experience, especially in mathematics. Grade specific experience allows teachers to spend less time constructing effective lessons, as the groundwork has previously been laid, and there is less time on administrative tasks. In turn, this dedicates

more time to plan for classroom events that may arise impacting sequencing of classroom instruction, differentiation, and character building.

Altayli and Dagli (2018) conducted a study at primary schools to examine differences in the perceptions of novice teachers (in their first two years), mentor teachers, and administrators. The role of administrators in supporting and helping guide teachers through career changes was also examined. Where the data showed novice teachers facing difficulties due to their lack of experience, the administrator's assigned mentor teachers to provide guidance and support rather than assigning the linear framework provided by a lesson planning template. This process was shown to be successful; however, the utilization of this model did add responsibilities to administrators and experienced teachers.

Altayli and Dagli (2018) observed that one should not discount the ability of novice teachers to bring new perspectives to experienced teachers noting that the technological revolution has left many experienced teachers without digital experience. Novice teachers may bring a level of technological expertise to offset corresponding areas of weakness in experienced teachers. As teaching has begun to take a turn toward more data driven practices, experienced teachers often had their training focus on pedagogy as opposed to the utilization of technology and employment of data analytics.

As changes continue to arise in education, lesson planning templates are often employed to guide the change yet training on utilizing the provided templates is often overlooked. Borda et al. (2018) provide an example demonstrating how a lesson planning template was provided to teacher to aid in creating a common structure throughout the school. Unfortunately, no provision was made to train the teachers to utilize the provided template. Teacher training programs often follow the same pathway as they place more focus on the utilization of data driven analytics without putting sufficient emphasis on guiding teachers to develop and analyze the required analytics. The question arises as to which teachers are more impacted by the lack of adequate training: novice teachers or experienced teachers.

Schmidt (2005) points out that teaching is a rare profession in that many people believe they have lived experience through observing their teachers during their schooling years. This gives many people the false perception that anyone can teach. With the ever-growing shortage of qualified teachers around the world many school systems are resorting to bringing people into the teaching profession from other areas in the workforce. Schmidt found that though these individuals may be considered content experts, they have little to no training in pedagogy. Many of these individuals do not make it past the novice stage of teaching as they quickly realize the workload associated with being an educator. They are often overwhelmed by the behind-the-scenes portions of teaching that were never observed from the student perspective, primarily, the extensive lesson planning. These teachers are rarely trained to utilize templates for the purposes of planning. Instead, they are given the template as an administrative requirement, thus, creating a disconnection between the planning and the template.

An abundance of research has been conducted into the topic of lesson planning templates; however, little has been produced to examine perceptions of lesson planning templates across global boundaries. As technology advances and new

methods are developed, teachers across the world continuously update their teaching tool bags. One thing that has not changed over the last 40, or more, years is the administrative requirement of submitting a lesson plan, generally using a standardized template. As discussed previously in the Introduction and Context, there have been numerous studies looking at small groups of teachers, their preparation routines, and the outcomes of the lessons after implementing the teachers' plan of instruction. In these studies, researchers have found that discrepancies exist, to varying degrees, in terms of lesson plan utility between and among novice and experienced teachers. These studies have not examined the global arena.

Review of the available literature indicates differing planning needs of novice and experienced teachers; however, the researcher has ascertained that a gap exists in the perceived usefulness of lesson planning templates based on the teacher's experience levels. No previous research was identified to address the issue on the global stage. This research is intended as a step towards closing these gaps.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The goal of this quantitative exploratory research was to discern the existence of relationships between or among the responses obtained by a twenty-question survey administered to teachers in the United States and in the United Arab Emirates. Factors examined included but were not limited to years of experience, location of service, and perceptions towards the utilization of lesson planning templates. This study aimed to examine teacher's attitudes towards administrative requirements towards completing and submitting lesson planning templates. The framework guiding this study centered on how time in the field and teacher experience influenced the degree of usefulness lesson planning templates serve both novice and experienced teachers.

The study examined two research questions. Research Question One was utilized to identify the descriptives associated with the survey while Research Question Two was employed to identify the existence of relationships between or among the survey response variables. These two research questions follow.

Research Question One: What are the survey responses for novice and experienced teachers in the United States and the United Arab Emirates?

Research Question Two: Do relationships exist between or among the survey responses for novice and experienced teachers in the United States and the United Arab Emirates?

The following null and alternate hypotheses were formulated to examine research question two.

Ho: No relationships exist between or among the survey responses for novice and experienced teachers in the United States and the United Arab Emirates.

Ha: Relationships exist between or among the survey responses for novice and experienced teachers in the United States and the United Arab Emirates.

Using the above research questions and hypotheses as a guide, this study aimed to ascertain teacher's perceived benefits in completing lesson planning templates for instructional planning. Frequently practices differ based on time in the field of teaching while simultaneously changing the perspective of utility of many teaching tools and administrative tasks. This may be creating a gap between best practices and useful practices between novice and experienced educators. The findings of this exploratory factor analysis will provide critical insight into this problem of practice and contribute to closing the gap in literature and data concerning the utility of lesson planning templates and instructional planning itself.

Research Methodology

In response to Research Question One, the study provided the survey response descriptives of number, mean, and standard deviation for each of the survey questions. The hypotheses for Research Question Two were examined via the utilization of exploratory factor analysis. This dimension reduction technique first employed the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy to determine how suited the data set was for factor analysis. KMO scores of .400 or higher were deemed appropriate indicative of the suitability of the data set. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was employed to determine that the data set differed significantly from the identity matrix and thus has sufficient correlations to warrant the utilization of an exploratory factor analysis. A significance level of 0.05 or less was deemed appropriate (Waller & Lumadue, 2013).

This research examines the degree of utility and perceived benefit in completing a lesson plan template in preparation for teaching a lesson between novice and experienced teachers in the UAE and USA. For the purposes of this study, a novice teacher will be defined as a teacher with five or less years of in-field teaching experience and an experienced teacher as one having more than five years of in-field teaching experience.

Questions in the survey were designed to accrue data: testing the perceived usefulness of lesson plan templates; testing who finds the process of completing the template helpful in the sequencing and preparation of lessons; ascertaining a perspective of the attitude of educators toward the task of completing lesson plan templates; examining the extent of training given on utilizing lesson planning templates; and comparing how the length of time of in-field service has influenced the perceived utility of templates for teachers.

Data Collection and Surveying

For this study, a twenty-question survey was sent to novice and experienced teachers in the UAE and USA using a Microsoft Forms link for easy dispersal. After requesting participation from all immediate contacts fitting the criteria, participants were asked to continue passing the survey to their contacts using a snowball method of disbursement to reach as many respondents as possible. All participants had the option to discontinue the survey at any time if they felt

uncomfortable with the line of questioning or felt their anonymity will be disclosed in any way. The Microsoft Forms platform was utilized to make dispersion and accessibility of the survey convenient across countries for all participants and SPSS Software was used for a clear analysis of the data.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

The survey was presented to expert faculty at the American University of Ras Al Khaimah as well as Master of Educational Leadership students to establish content validity prior to being distributed. Names and identifying information were not collected. A generic set descriptive criteria was gathered to include country (USA or UAE), language of preference, number of years in the field, gender, type of school, and educational level to secure trustworthiness and ambiguity by the participants. A Cronbach's split alpha was utilized to test reliability with an anticipated score of 0.80 or higher. The actual alpha score was 0.61 which did not meet anticipated levels but provides reasonable assurance that the data have moderate reliability.

Limitations and Delimitations

The survey inevitably began as a convenience-cluster-self-selecting sample of teachers due to availability and includes all the limitations traditionally associated with self-disclosed responses. To mitigate for these limitations, the researcher used a snowballing method of disbursement to contacts from those respondents, in both the UAE and USA, who had previously responded. The survey was delimited to participants in the field of education in the UAE and USA where access to multiple contributors was available. The survey was given in English and Arabic to extend the research to local as well as expatriate teachers in the UAE.

Data Analysis

Findings in Response to Research Question One

The study began with an examination of survey descriptives in order to answer Research Question One. Table 1 provides the number, mean, and standard deviation for each of the twenty-survey questions. Several of the questions are not designed to provide sequential responses moving from one response to a more emphatic response. For example, questions such as language of preference, gender, marital status, age range, location of employment, and educational level do not lend themselves to this type of analysis. The numeric counts of the responses for questions one through twenty are provided in Tables 2 and 3. The reader should note that this dual examination of the responses provides greater insight into the survey responses.

Table 1. Survey Response Descriptives

Question	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. I prefer the survey to be taken in English or Arabic.	143	1.31	0.465
2. What is your gender?	143	1.75	0.435
3. What is your marital status?	143	1.53	0.927
4. What is your age range?	143	4.47	1.757
5. Where is your employment?	143	1.84	0.372
6. In what type of institution are you employed?	143	1.16	0.372.
7. What is your highest educational level?	143	1.44	0.623
8. How often are you required to submit lesson plans to administration?	143	3.12	0.562
9. Which lesson plan template model does your administration require?	116	3.23	0.954
10. Do you aspire to become an administrator?	143	1.64	0.665
11. How many years of teaching experience do you have?	143	3.74	1.306
12. If you found a template that had all required elements, would you:	143	2.08	1.040
13. The main reason I complete lesson plan templates is to:	143	2.03	0.918
14. I find lesson planning templates to be:	143	2.34	1.087
15. I started using lesson plan templates:	143	2.80	0.847
16. My administration, when it comes to completing lesson plans:	143	2.51	1.059
17. My mentality for lesson plan template submission came from:	143	1.53	0.982
18. I have found completing lesson plan templates helpful.	143	2.86	1.029
19. The longer I teach a particular topic/subject/class:	143	2.94	0.998
20. When it comes to training on lesson plan templates:	143	2.04	1.122

Source: Survey Data Compiled Using SPSS.

The response counts by question category are provided in Table 2. These findings further illustrate the response patterns for survey questions one through eleven.

Participants in the study included 106 who selected to take the survey in English and 37 who selected to take the survey in Arabic. Thirty-five (35) were male and 108 were female. The majority of the participants were married (89) with 34 being single, 12 divorced, and one widowed. The most common age ranges were 30 to 45 years. Thirty-five (35) participants were from the United States, and 105 were from the United Arab Emirates. The most common educational levels were the bachelor's (84) and master's (53). The study included 28 novice teachers with five or less years of service and 115 experienced teachers with more than five years of experience.

Table 2. Question Counts by Response Category for Questions One through Eleven

Question	Category	Count	Category	Count
1. I prefer the survey to be taken in English or Arabic.	English	106	Arabic	37
2. What is your gender?	Male	35	Female	108
3. What is your marital status?	Married	89	Single	34
	Divorced	12	Widowed	1
4. What is your age range?	<25	2	25<30	16
	30<35	26	35<40	31
	40<45	33	45<50	11
	50<55	13	55<60	8
	60 up	2	No Answer	1
5. Where is your employment?	USA	38	UAE	105
6. In what type of institution are you employed?	Public	124	Private	19
7. What is your highest educational level?	Bachelor	84	Master's	53
	Doctoral	3	Other	3
8. How often are you required to submit lesson plans to administration?	Never	27	Daily	12
	Weekly	78	Not Stated	26
9. Which lesson plan template model does your administration require?	No Template	8	My Choosing	18
	Mixed	29	By Admin.	61
10. Do you aspire to become an administrator?	Yes	58	Not At This Time	71
	No Answer	14		
11. How many years of teaching experience do you have?	0-2	10	2-5	18
	5-10	26	10-15	31
	15+	58	No Answer	0

Source: Survey Data Compiled Using SPSS.

Table 3. Question Counts by Response Category for Questions Twelve through Twenty

Question	Category	Count
12. If you found a template that had all required elements, would you:	1. Recommend this template to the administration.	52
	2. Submit the template.	55
	3. Show my colleagues to see what they thought.	15
	4. Continue to use the current template as required.	21
13. The main reason I complete lesson plan templates is to:	1. To satisfy administrative requirements.	54
	2. To ensure appropriate planning and pacing of my lessons.	43
	3. I need templates to plan what I will do in class activities.	38
	4. Because it is good practice and helps me think through the lessons in advance.	8
14. I find lesson planning templates to be:	1. Administrative necessity without practical application.	15
	2. A way to organize previously planned material.	37

	3. A helpful tool in planning.	68
	4. An essential tool in planning.	23
15. I started using lesson plan templates:	1. I do not use templates.	10
	2. In college in my education classes.	27
	3. In my first five years of teaching.	42
	4. After teaching for more than five years.	64
16. My administration, when it comes to completing lesson plans:	1. Understands that teachers have different planning needs.	38
	2. Listens to teacher's needs and tries to keep submitting as convenient as possible.	39
	3. Is supportive but strict when it comes to submitting.	37
	4. Is not concerned with teacher's opinions.	29
17. My mentality for lesson plan templates submissions came from:	1. My experience as a teacher.	105
	2. My college classes.	17
	3. Research and reading.	8
	4. Tradition.	12
18. I have found completing lesson plan templates helpful.	1. Never.	14
	2. At the start of my career.	43
	3. When I start teaching a new topic.	37
	4. My entire career.	49
19. The longer I teach a particular topic/subject/class:	1. Has no bearing as they are no longer helpful.	9
	2. The less benefit is received.	52
	3. No change.	33
	4. More benefit is received.	49
20. When it comes to training on lesson plan templates:	1. No desire for training.	67
	2. Not seeking but can benefit.	34
	3. Would appreciate training.	20
	4. Would appreciate and believe all teachers would benefit.	22

Source: Survey Data Compiled Using SPSS.

Findings in Response to Research Question Two

The null and alternate hypotheses supporting Research Question Two were examined via the utilization of exploratory factor analysis. The findings of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity are provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.611
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	467.4
	Degrees of Freedom	190
	Significance	< 0.001

Source: Survey Data Compiled Using SPSS.

The KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy exceeded 0.400 indicating the data set's suitability for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity returned a significance of < 0.001. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected in favor of the alternate

hypothesis. Relationships were found to exist between or among the survey responses for novice and experienced teachers in the United States and the United Arab Emirates. An exploratory factor analysis was then conducted to examine the number of underlying factors driving participant answers. Seven factors were identified with Eigenvalues at or above 1.0. Additionally, the factor loading associated with these seven factors were identified using principal component analysis and a Varimax rotation. Table 5 includes an analysis of the seven factors, and Table 6 provides the factor loadings. The rotation converged in 11 iterations.

Table 5. Total Variance Explained

Initial Eigenvalues			
Component	Total	% Of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.07	15.352	15.352
2	2.34	11.675	27.027
3	1.77	8.867	35.894
4	1.57	7.868	43.762
5	1.27	6.324	50.086
6	1.23	6.131	56.217
7	1.07	5.323	61.540

Source: Survey Data Compiled Using SPSS.

The seven factors underlying participant responses accounted for 61.54% of the total variance in the data set. These seven factors validate the survey as actually measuring seven unique factors. To further explore these underlying factors, an examination was made of the factor loadings utilizing a Varimax rotation. These factor loadings follow in Table 6.

Table 6. Rotated Component Matrix

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. I prefer the survey to be taken in English or Arabic.	0.109	0.226	-0.074	0.786*	0.124	0.608*	-0.038
2. What is your gender?	-0.021	-0.047	0.038	-0.011	0.758*	-0.157	-0.123
3. What is your marital status?	-0.088	0.115	0.173	-0.019	0.149	-0.227	-0.738*
4. What is your age range?	0.072	0.840*	0.025	-0.172	0.064	0.083	0.043
5. Where is your employment?	0.030	-0.382	-0.085	0.668*	-0.081	0.076	-0.016
6. In what type of institution are you employed?	0.012	0.406*	-0.570*	-0.264	0.162	0.190	0.061
7. What is your highest educational level?	0.157	-0.041	0.689*	-0.102	0.100	-0.025	-0.044
8. How often are you required to submit lesson plans to administration?	-0.168	0.132	0.514*	-0.202	0.376	0.149	0.217
9. Which lesson plan template model does your administration require?	-0.011	-0.016	-0.546*	0.307	0.294	-0.229	0.237
10. Do you aspire to become an administrator?	0.038	0.236	0.229	-0.112	0.100	-0.426*	0.679*
11. How many years of teaching experience do you have?	-0.003	0.826*	0.000	0.130	0.044	0.099	-0.042
12. If you found a template that had all required elements, would you:	-0.101	-0.290	0.425*	0.060	0.159	0.120	0.329
13. The main reason I complete lesson plan templates is to:	0.716*	-0.148	0.036	0.287	-0.035	-0.043	0.105

14. I find lesson planning templates to be:	0.640*	0.011	0.109	0.161	0.026	0.248	0.072
15. I started using lesson plan templates:	0.100	0.222	0.049	0.166	0.058	0.799*	0.019
16. My administration, when it comes to completing lesson plans:	-0.368	0.071	-0.076	0.203	0.297	-0.507*	-0.123
17. My mentality for lesson plan template submission came from:	-0.167	-0.102	-0.042	-0.077	-0.651*	-0.092	-0.056
18. I have found completing lesson plan templates helpful.	0.778*	0.240	0.112	-0.081	0.078	0.139	-0.080
19. The longer I teach a particular topic/subject/class:	0.802*	0.023	0.026	-0.006	-0.006	-0.056	-0.030
20. When it comes to training on lesson plan templates:	0.614*	0.004	-0.171	-0.074	0.081	0.043	0.026

Source: Survey Data Compiled Using SPSS.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

a. Rotation Converged in 11 Iterations

* Exceeds |0.400|

Overview of Factor 1

Factor 1 accounts for 15.352% of the variance in the sample data set. Questions 13, 14, 18, 19, and 20 have significant factors loadings. These questions relate to the usability of lesson planning templates in satisfying administrative requirements and as helpful tools in planning. Factor 1 was not influenced by the age, experience, or location of the respondents. This factor has been named, Template Usefulness. Notably the questions of significance in factor 1 are not associated in any way with the working experience of the participants. Specifically, novice teachers and experienced teachers may be said to possess similar opinions of the usability of lesson planning templates. This finding is not consistent with the literature examined.

Overview of Factor 2

Factor 2 accounts for 11.675% of the variance in the sample data set. Questions 4, 6, and 11 had significant factor loadings. These questions address the age of the teacher, the type of institution of employment, and the number of years teaching experience. This factor has been named, Teacher Experience, as it is the only factor linked to the teacher's age and teaching experience. Notably, the teachers in the public sector appear to be more experienced than those in the private sector.

Overview of Factor 3

Factor 3 accounts for 8.867% of the variance in the sample data set. Questions 6, 7, 8, 9, and 12 have significant factor loadings. The questions address the type of institution, educational level, frequency of lesson plan submission, lesson planning model, and use of the required template. This factor has been named, Lesson Planning Practices. Notably, teachers in the public sector appear to possess higher levels of education than those in the private sector. The private sector may

have less rigorous expectations for the utilization of lesson planning templates than the public sector.

Overview of Factor 4

Factor 4 accounts for 7.868% of the variance in the sample data set. Questions 1 and 5 have significant factor loadings. These questions address the preferred language and geographic location of the teacher. This factor has been named, Location. The analysis indicates that more of the Arabic speakers are employed in the United Arab Emirates as would be expected with limited Arabic speaking institutions located in the United States.

Overview of Factor 5

Factor 5 accounts for 6.324% of the variance in the sample data set. Questions 2 and 17 have significant factor loadings. These questions address the participant's gender and knowledge of lesson planning templates. This factor has been named, Gender. Notably, females appear more likely to accept lesson planning templates based on their experience as a teacher. Males appear to rely more on research, reading, and tradition.

Overview of Factor 6

Factor 6 accounts for 6.131% of the variance in the sample data set. Questions 1, 10, 15, and 16 have significant factor loadings. These questions address the language of preference, aspiration to become an administrator, utilization of lesson planning templates, and the administration's understanding that teachers have different planning needs. This factor has been named, Administrative Aspirations. Analysis of the factor loadings indicates that Arabic speakers are less likely to aspire towards administrative roles and are more likely to expect administrators to be more sympathetic towards understanding that teachers have different planning needs.

Overview of Factor 7

Factor 7 accounts for 5.232% of the variance in the sample data set. Questions 3 and 10 have significant factor loadings. These questions address the participant's marital status and administrative aspirations. Notably married participants were more likely to aspire to become administrators. This factor has been name, Marital Status. The analysis indicates that married respondents were more likely to hold aspirations towards becoming administrators.

Summary of Findings

The exploratory factor analysis indicated that seven factors drove participant responses. These seven factors were: 1) template usefulness, 2) teacher experience,

3) lesson planning practices, 4) location, 5) gender, 6) administrative aspirations, and 7) marital status. These factor loadings indicate that novice teachers and experienced teachers may be said to possess similar opinions regarding the usability of lesson planning templates which contradicts the findings of previous literature. For this study, teachers in the public sector appeared to be more experienced than those in the private sector. Teachers in the public sector also appeared to possess higher levels of education than those in the private sector. Teachers in the private sector may have experienced less rigorous expectations for the utilization of lesson planning templates than their counterparts in the public sector.

More Arabic speakers are employed in the United Arab Emirates as would be expected with limited Arabic speaking institutions located in the United States. Females appeared more likely to accept lesson planning templates based on their experience as a teacher while males appeared to rely more on research, reading, and tradition. Arabic speakers were less likely to aspire towards administrative roles and were more likely to expect administrators to be more sympathetic towards understanding that teachers have different planning needs. The analysis also indicated that married respondents were more likely to hold aspirations towards becoming administrators.

This structured quantitative study helps close the literature gap examining the utility of lesson plan templates across the UAE and USA as well as drawing attention to other areas for further examination.

Discussion

The bulk of available literature represents teaching practice in the United States or the United Kingdom. Little research exists which examines teaching practice from a global perspective. While many of the findings of this study contradict findings of previous studies, the reader must recognize that the previous studies were not conducted on the global field. These studies were in specific environments. The current study not only examines teaching practice in the United States but reviews practice in the United Arab Emirates. As the UAE is a Muslim nation with different social morals and expectations than the United States, it stands to reason that educational practice and teacher expectations would differ. For example, Schmidt's (2005) study found differences in the opinions of novice and experienced teachers in regard to the importance of lesson planning templates. The current study primarily involved teachers in the UAE and identified no differences in the opinions of novice and experienced teachers finding instead that females and males utilize lesson planning templates for different reasons. This finding was interesting in light of the differing expectations for men and women in the UAE.

The importance of training to use lesson planning templates was only significant for Factor 1 which had no impact on location or preferred language. In other words, teachers in the USA and the UAE were not polarized on this issue apparently holding similar views. While views of the need for training are similar, difference do exist in regard to views to becoming an administrator and expectations

of administrative support. These differences illustrate the need to broaden research concerning instructional practices across a broader range of global forums.

Moving to a Data Driven Classroom

In recent years teaching has been moving to a more data-driven profession. While most planning templates have remained constant with a focus on sequencing and pedagogy, teachers may be moving away from this type of formatting and moving toward documents that show results of teaching rather than the plan of teaching. Questions arise as to the engagement of data driven teaching across global perspectives. While views regarding the utilization of lesson planning templates in some cultures, global views regarding data driven teaching may also exist.

Filling Teaching Positions

Additionally, with an extreme teacher shortage in many countries, these positions are often being filled by individuals coming from other areas of the world and from a wide range of workforce backgrounds. These teachers may arrive with differing views and expectations. Recognition of these differences may serve to enrich the educational environment leading to potential new areas of improvement. The views of novice and experienced teachers may more consistently blend in order to seek a common instructional path.

Conclusions

The literature reveals that many reasonable aspects exist for requiring teachers to use lesson planning templates. The reader must recognize that many of these studies were only conducted in one or two cultures and may not represent the broader global environment. As the structure is now, many teachers are required to complete these documents while not recognizing any benefit in this practice. For these aides to serve a restructuring or supportive purpose, they need to be accompanied by training into their utilization. As teachers gain experience in structuring lessons, or in a new practice or structure and develop expertise, the practice of template completion may become less practical and more of a menial administrative task. Teachers not seeing purpose in required templates leads to minimal effort put into them, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

If these documents are simply a convenience for teacher-trainers and administrators, a push from policy makers, or a box to check rather than a useful tool in a teaching; the practice of submitting these templates may need to be reexamined and/or substituted with a more meaningful and purposeful task to teachers.

The goal in all schools is to employ the best teachers to produce the most successful students. Teachers who were most successful in implementing their planned lessons spent their time planning activities carefully and considering the

classroom dynamics with a focus on what they knew about their students and their personalities. These teachers were able to ‘plan to adjust’ activities on the spot when unanticipated events arose. Lesson planning can differ from grade to grade, subject to subject, teacher to teacher, and even school to school. Teaching is a profession of flexibility. The skillfulness and the sequencing of effective lessons are no doubt related to the teachers planning and expertise, but little connection has been made to the planning template they do or do not use.

The differences between novice and experienced teachers are great; but the perception of lesson planning templates is one thing they share. Novice and struggling teachers tend to be learning and changing large parts of their teaching philosophies dominantly in their first years in the field. Tending to plan for the short-term, one week at a time as time permits, and in general, following the sequence of learning outcomes as they have been presented to them. This type of structure aligns with the structure of lesson planning templates, but notably is not ideal for classroom and student success. Successful teachers tend to plan for long-term goals. These teachers change the sequencing of benchmarks to give flow to the lessons and are not afraid to spend more time on some learning outcomes and less on others if such works in the classroom. These attributes are not areas of focus or even noted on most templates. Regardless of which type of teacher researched, many are not seeing a benefit in the practice of completing lesson planning templates. This itself is a reason to reexamine the practice of requiring submission for all teachers as it currently stands in many institutions.

Given what is available in the literature and the findings of this research, a better understanding of the process of lesson planning and the use of lesson planning templates is of utmost importance. While this research may have helped clarify the problem in practice, an examination into the intended purpose behind the requirement of completing lesson planning templates is essential to improve and/or correct it.

Recommended Areas for Future Research

This study is intended to guide future research. Accordingly, the following studies are recommended.

Parallel and duplicated quantitative studies throughout the world are recommended to compare data and strengthen the understanding of the views of teachers as a whole and throughout cultures. Multiple comparative studies strengthen the overall understanding of all topics and there is a lack of data collected in this area of education and teacher perspective.

The purpose and motives behind lesson planning templates should be examined from a broader global perspective. What are the practices in other nations, cultures, and across differing religions? Do differences exist in Muslim, Hindu, and Christian nations? What are the practices in nations that have been deeply impacted by colonization?

The impact of new teachers on the data-driven classroom should also be examined. Are these new teachers more open to technological innovation and the utilization of data analytics?

Differences in cultural expectations for the classroom should also be examined. How has the shortage of teachers impacted the global classroom? How has the influx of non-traditional sources of new teachers changed the educational field?

This research has identified some areas of discrepancy between global practice and the findings of current literature. These perceptions are areas recommended for future research. Perceptions of teachers should also be compared to those of administrators.

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