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**TÍTULO COMPLETO DEL TRABAJO:** Exploring Teachers' Planning Decisions Through an Online Reflective Teacher Community.

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**PARA OPTAR AL TÍTULO DE:** Magister en Didáctica del Inglés

**FACULTAD:** Educación

**PROGRAMA O POSGRADO:** Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés

**CIUDAD:** Neiva

**AÑO DE PRESENTACIÓN:** 2019 **NÚMERO DE PÁGINAS:** 149

**TIPO DE ILUSTRACIONES (Marcar con una X):**

Diagramas\_\_\_ Fotografías\_\_\_ Grabaciones en discos\_\_\_ Ilustraciones en general\_\_\_ Grabados\_\_\_  
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Inglés

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|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Decisiones de planeación | Planning decisions |
| 2. Reflexión                | Reflection         |
| 3. Comunidades en línea     | Online communities |
| 4. Conocimiento             | Knowledge          |
| 5. Creencias                | Beliefs            |

**RESUMEN DEL CONTENIDO:** (Máximo 250 palabras)

Este estudio de investigación cualitativo y de caso busca identificar el conocimiento y las creencias detrás de las decisiones de planeación de los docentes después de participar en una comunidad reflexiva de maestros en línea. Los participantes fueron tres profesores de inglés de un instituto de idiomas extranjeros en Huila, Colombia. Se recopilaron datos durante la implementación de la estrategia pedagógica que consistió en la creación de una comunidad reflexiva de docentes en línea, en la que se desarrollaron cinco tareas reflexivas. Los datos fueron recopilados a través de entrevistas, encuestas y artefactos que promovían la reflexión de los docentes. Los hallazgos sugieren que la incorporación de elementos de colaboración e interacción profesional entre pares en el diseño de tareas que conllevan procesos de reflexión, a través de discusiones reflexivas mediadas por computadora, permite la reflexión crítica, en diferentes niveles de reflexión, y mejora el nivel de conciencia de los docentes sobre sus fuentes del conocimiento. Asimismo, se encontró que existe una estrecha relación entre el número de contribuciones reflexivas, el nivel de profundidad de reflexividad y la trascendencia a otros contextos educativos. Esto es considerado por los investigadores como desarrollo profesional.



**ABSTRACT:** (Máximo 250 palabras)

This qualitative case research study seeks to identify the knowledge and beliefs behind teachers' planning decisions after participating in an online reflective teacher community. The participants were three English teachers from a foreign language institute in Huila, Colombia. Data were gathered during the implementation of the pedagogical strategy which consisted of creating an online reflective teacher community and in which five reflective tasks were developed. Via interviews, surveys, and teacher's reflection artifacts, the data were collected. The findings suggest that the incorporation of elements of professional collaboration and interaction among peers by means of computer-mediated reflective discussions in the design of reflective tasks, enables critical reflection, in different levels of reflection, and enhance teachers' level of awareness about the sources of teachers' knowledge. Likewise, it was found that there is a close relationship between the number of reflective contributions, reflectivity depth level, and transcendence to other educational contexts. This is considered by the researchers as professional development.

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Exploring Teachers' Planning Decisions Through an Online Reflective Teacher Community

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Master thesis submitted as a partial requirement to obtain the master's degree in English

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Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés

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2019

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**Dedication**

*This dissertation is dedicated to our beloved families whose sacrifice and support have been fundamental for the achievement of our goals, without them none of this could have been possible. To our parents whose unselfish effort allowed us to get to this point. To our teachers for giving us their knowledge and academic experiences.*



### **Acknowledgements**

We would like first to thank our thesis advisor Edgar Alirio Insuasty, Ph.D. of the Education Faculty at Universidad Surcolombiana, who was always available to support us during every step of this research study. He was always concerned about our progress and provided us with insightful ideas to achieve the objectives proposed.

Special thanks to professor Gilma Zuñiga, whose kind words of support, constructive comments and suggestions became an essential pillar of the entire process of this research study.

We also like to thank Instituto de Lenguas Extranjeras de la Universidad Surcolombiana (ILEUSCO), teachers who participated in this research study, without their collaboration, the entire research study could not have been opportunely conducted.

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative case research study seeks to identify the knowledge and beliefs behind teachers' planning decisions after participating in an online reflective teacher community. The participants were three English teachers from a foreign language institute in Huila, Colombia. Data were gathered during the implementation of the pedagogical strategy which consisted of creating an online reflective teacher community and in which five reflective tasks were developed. Via interviews, surveys, and teacher's reflection artifacts, the data were collected. The findings suggest that the incorporation of elements of professional collaboration and interaction among peers by means of computer-mediated reflective discussions in the design of reflective tasks, enables critical reflection, in different levels of reflection, and enhance teachers' level of awareness about the sources of teachers' knowledge. Likewise, it was found that there is a close relationship between the number of reflective contributions, reflectivity depth level, and transcendence to other educational contexts. This is considered by the researchers as professional development.

*Keywords:* planning decisions, reflection, online communities, knowledge, beliefs

### **Resumen**

Este estudio de investigación cualitativo y de caso busca identificar el conocimiento y las creencias detrás de las decisiones de planeación de los docentes después de participar en una comunidad reflexiva de maestros en línea. Los participantes fueron tres profesores de inglés de un instituto de idiomas extranjeros en Huila, Colombia. Se recopilaron datos durante la implementación de la estrategia pedagógica que consistió en la creación de una comunidad reflexiva de docentes en línea, en la que se desarrollaron cinco tareas reflexivas. Los datos fueron recopilados a través de entrevistas, encuestas y artefactos que promovían la reflexión de los docentes. Los hallazgos sugieren que la incorporación de elementos de colaboración e interacción profesional entre pares en el diseño de tareas que conllevan procesos de reflexión, a través de discusiones reflexivas mediadas por computadora, permite la reflexión crítica, en diferentes niveles de reflexión, y mejora el nivel de conciencia de los docentes sobre sus fuentes del conocimiento. Asimismo, se encontró que existe una estrecha relación entre el número de contribuciones reflexivas, el nivel de profundidad de reflexividad y la trascendencia a otros contextos educativos. Esto es considerado por los investigadores como desarrollo profesional.

*Palabras clave:* decisiones de planeación, reflexión, comunidades en línea, conocimiento, creencias

### **Introduction**

An educational transformation is necessary to fulfill the demands for the development of the 21st-century citizen competencies which among others give a pivotal place to the strengthening of English proficiency. Language teaching professionals as direct responsible of this essential task face the challenge in our country to improve the level of proficiency of their students through their teaching practice, thus it is crucial to promote the professional development of English teachers.

Likewise, achieving the proposed objectives of the ILEUSCO Foreign Language Institute, in order to serve to the regional community in the improvement of the learning of foreign languages, implies offering teachers continuing professional development alternatives, so that their teachers' pedagogical practices have a real impact on the development of learners' communicative competence, but at the same time facilitate reflection on actual teaching practices. One of the main challenges in the field of professional development relies on those who are in charge of providing the strategies by which teachers engage in examining their practice by systematically reflecting on the relationship between teacher's thoughts and acts. Reflective practice research has been addressed extensively to look into the relationship between teachers' beliefs, teacher knowledge, and teaching practices.

In this line of thought and trying to respond to the local needs of the institution where this research project was conducted, we aimed to explore the knowledge and beliefs behind teachers' planning decisions at ILEUSCO Institute. By exploring the meaning that teachers give to planning, in this particular context, we hope to contribute to the understanding of actual planning practices and how these understandings relate to the area of continuing professional development of teachers. In this sense and due to the lack of spaces for teachers at ILEUSCO Institute to

reflect on their planning practices, we propose a pedagogical intervention that consists of the creation and implementation of an online reflective teacher community at ILEUSCO. In doing so, we provide teachers with opportunities to reflect on their teaching planning practices which will allow them to enhance their performance in the classroom and to achieve the language learning objectives, which respond to the students' needs. The creation and implementation of a technology-mediated community would also provide space for collaboration and learning, where teachers could come across and reflect on their teaching practices.

This research paper presents five different chapters. Chapter I, presents the statement of the problem, the rationale, the research question, and the research objectives. Chapter II comprises the literature review with the theoretical constructs of the research study. Chapter III describes the methodological design that frames both the research and instructional design. It includes the approach and type of study, the description of context and of the participants, the data collection procedure, and the description of the pedagogical strategy implemented. Chapter IV explains the development of the research stages and the data analysis procedures and descriptions. Finally, Chapter 5 includes the findings and main conclusions of this analysis, the pedagogical implications, as well as, the recommendations for future studies.

## **Chapter I**

### **Research Problem**

This chapter presents and explains the foundations of this research study. First, the reader will find the statement of the problem, next, the rationale and research question. Immediately after that, the general research objective and the specific ones are mentioned.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

This research study looks into the need to explore the knowledge and beliefs behind teachers' planning decisions at ILEUSCO. The institute was created with the aim of complying with one of the missionary objectives of the Foreign Language Program oriented towards social projection, in order to serve the regional community in the improvement of the learning of foreign languages, especially the English language. Among the different activities undertaken to meet this end, Language courses are offered to the general public and support for the training for English teachers in the region is provided. The target population of this research are the teachers that are in charge of the different English courses which are addressed to the general public. The choice of planning decisions as the focus for this study was decided upon having identified problematic issues related to teacher planning based on the findings of the Final report of the self-assessment process of the ILEUSCO (2012) and an interview conducted to the ILEUSCO academic coordinator. According to the institutional document, lessons taught by ILEUSCO teachers did not have a clear learning objective, teachers relied only on the activities of the text guide, without any comprehensible transitions between them. This led to unstructured lessons that did not have a coherent flow of development. In addition, teachers' planning was not fulfilling the expected requirements to achieve a meaningful learning process. Moreover, the lack of an established micro - curriculum in the institute did not help teachers in their planning task,

leaving them without a framework to which they could stand to know which teaching strategies or evaluative activities to use. Thus, teachers were left without a guide to measure their performance or to articulate their planning with the non-existing guidelines from the institute. As teachers did not have a clear guide to follow, they tried to fill the voids with their own personal teaching theories based on their knowledge and beliefs, which was reflected in a predominance of the development of the students' linguistic competence. This led to propose an improvement plan to consider opening spaces for professional teaching development to optimize the development of sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills. Unfortunately, the institution had not had a stable institutional policy regarding teacher training, as well as not enough opportunities provided for teachers to engage in professional development programs. In addition, the few opportunities given were not related to the needs perceived in the context itself. Another major issue was the low attendance of teachers to these meetings due to the limited availability of teachers' time, as they all had busy schedules. Most of them worked in more than one institution, experiencing a really hard time to attend to these face-to-face encounters.

### **Related Studies**

Some studies as the one conducted by Valencia (2009), pointed out the necessity to conceptualize and promote reflection on the domains of teacher knowledge as an alternative for professional development. From the findings, Valencia concluded that teachers' knowledge is the result of a dialogic process among different experiences, people, and links between theory and practice that had an impact on the participants, demonstrating that teachers' knowledge base is the product of life experience and educational process which in turn is transformed into pedagogical actions. Valencia's study explains how teachers can be better informed when depicting their professional life by means of reflecting on the sources of their knowledge base

and thus be able to account for their decisions and producing changes in the teaching context. Furthermore, Ho (1995) used lesson plans as a means of reflection to bring about self-development in teaching. The findings of this study reveal that this reflective practice aid in the improvement of decision making “with regards to timing, ways of dealing with the students' problems, visual presentation, and the design of the activities” (p. 67). Ho’s study demonstrates that reflective processes within a cyclic theory of reflection work effectively so that professionals can learn from experience.

Research studies related especially to online reflective teacher communities are not frequently found in databases or the Internet. However, the study conducted by Tsiotakis and Jimoyiannis (2016), provided supportive evidence of the effectiveness of the design and the implementation of an online teacher community of learning to develop teachers' pedagogical knowledge and learning design skills. Moreover, a study on the use of computer-mediated reflective dialogue conducted by Hawkes and Romiszowski (2001) demonstrated that although computer-mediated communication is not as interactive as face-to-face discourse, computer-mediated discourse achieves a higher overall reflective level than reflections generated by teachers in face-to-face discourse. All the previous studies enlightened us over the importance of reflection in aiding professional teachers in giving account for their decision making, developing pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills and the value of computer-mediated communication as a tool to promote reflective discourse. However, few efforts have been made to bring about pedagogical strategies that integrate the benefits of computer-mediated communication tools with reflection embedded in collaboration among peers, and specifically focused on exploring underlying beliefs and knowledge behind teachers' planning decisions as an alternative for professional development.

**Setting**

The present study was conducted in the Institute of Foreign Languages ILEUSCO which is academically attached to the Foreign Languages Program of Surcolombiana University. It was built with the aim of complying with one of the missionary purposes of the Foreign Language Program oriented towards social projection, in order to consolidate and offer a service to the regional community to strengthen the learning of foreign languages, especially the English language. Currently, it operates in two locations: in the headquarters of the Universidad Surcolombiana where language courses are offered to the general public in different schedules and in the facilities of a public Educational Institution, where English courses are offered to children on Saturday morning. ILEUSCO mainly offers courses in English, French, Italian, Portuguese, German, and Chinese. ILEUSCO also supports the training for English teachers in the region and has supported and advised the Departmental and Municipal Bilingual Programs of Neiva and Pitalito in the south-east region of Colombia.

The English course consists of eleven levels of training adapted according to the Common European Framework guidelines and where the set of knowledge and skills that comprise the general and intercultural competences of the individual in sociocultural context are taking into account. The institute has a curriculum programming document that consists of the mission, vision, and objectives of the curriculum. It is made up of conceptual referents drawn from the Common European Framework document on approach adopted, the CEF ranges for languages, standards of abilities, and types of assessment. The document presents the programmatic contents of the levels one to eleven, for adults and children, and includes the level and the number of hours per course. Although there are programmatic contents for each level, these focuses only on the contents corresponding to the units of a textbook, therefore its



organization is given by the text, with the activities for each linguistic ability. The programmatic contents do not present the learning activities, specific or general objectives, or the evaluation activities.

### **Rationale**

The design and implementation of an online reflective teacher community in this context will allow teachers to inquire about the knowledge, assumptions, and beliefs that influence their planning, while they explore their practices from a reflective approach. This can be a valuable and interesting experience for them, as currently and based on the evidence collected in the needs analysis, there is a lack of spaces for them to meet and share their insights and experiences related to their professional practice. Moreover, it will set a precedent in our local context that would help change teachers' perceptions about collaborative work and reflective practices in EFL which also, would provide opportunities for teacher professional development. It might also contribute to enriching the current state of the art in the field by voicing teachers' actual planning practices and how these link to theory or how bottom-up theories may derive from actual teaching practices.

Additionally, this study is significant for the learning objectives of our particular context in relation to EFL, since nowadays, ILEUSCO has made great efforts to improve the English level among its population. Likewise, the implementation of an online reflective teacher community in an institute with great relevance in our region is a significant contribution to the community of teachers in this, and other regions, who are interested in the enhancement of their professional practice since it might work as a professional growth initiative. Finally, this research study is important for our professional growth as researchers. Conducting this research will allow

us to enhance our research and reflective skills, and to set alternative courses of action for professional development in our own communities of practice.

### **Research Question**

This research study, inquiries on the planning practices of ILEUSCO teachers and on the knowledge and beliefs underlying teachers' planning decisions. From this perspective, the question to be answered within the research problem is: What knowledge base and beliefs can be identified in teachers' planning decisions after the implementation of an online reflective teacher community at ILEUSCO Institute?

### **Research Objectives**

**General objective:** To identify the teacher knowledge base and beliefs that can be evidenced in teachers' planning decisions after the implementation of an online reflective teacher community at the ILEUSCO Institute.

**Specific objectives:** (a) To characterize teachers' planning decision making at ILEUSCO Institute; (b) To explore the knowledge and beliefs underlying teachers' planning decisions, and (c) To determine the role of an online reflective teacher community in the reflection processes of teachers at the ILEUSCO Institute.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter presents the theoretical foundations of this research study. First, the reader will find the concept and theory behind teacher cognition, followed by teacher knowledge base, later on teachers' beliefs, immediately after that planning, subsequently professional development, and finally reflection.

#### **Teacher Cognition**

Accounts of the development of teacher cognition began in the 1970s (Freeman, 2002; Borg, 2006). By the time, the study of teaching was led by a conceptual model of teaching based on a process-product approach (Freeman, 2002; Borg, 2005). Under this approach, teaching was perceived as a set of observable actions or behaviors while learning was alleged as a product of teaching where teaching effectiveness was directly linked by learners' outcomes (Borg, 2006). However, in the late 1970s alternatives to this view of teaching emerged due to different factors that routed the study of teaching to more interpretive accounts about the mental constructs and processes behind teachers' behaviors (Borg, 2006). The shift prompted in large part by developments in the field of cognitive psychology, embraced the idea that teacher acts were guided by teacher thinking, that is, that teachers were regarded as active decision-makers. From this perspective understanding teaching implied concentrating on the psychological processes through which teachers make sense of their work, that is, teachers' mental lives and research in the field of teacher thinking was concerned with teacher judgment, decision making, planning, and teachers' implicit theories (Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002). More precisely, in Borg's words (2003) teacher cognition is "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think" (p. 81). One important contribution from research under this approach

was that teachers' cognitions were an important factor in shaping classroom events at the same time that classroom events shaped subsequent cognitions (Shavelson & Stern, 1981). The decade of the 1980s marked a new route to viewing the study of teacher thinking into a more constructivist model, moving further away from a prescriptive model, where the descriptions and transmission of effective teaching were no longer the ends, but allow the understanding of teaching as it is (Shulman, 1986; Freeman, 2002), "in all its irreducible complexity and difficulty" (Clark, 1986, p. 14).

**Teacher knowledge base.** In the early 1980s, some scholars sought to understand teaching thinking by examining teachers' knowledge and how they use this knowledge to shape classroom practice (Elbaz, 1981; Clandinin, 1986). By using the term "practical knowledge", Elbaz asserts that much of what teachers know originates in practice and is used to make sense of and deal with teaching situations (p. 49). The author further states that teachers' feelings, values, needs, and beliefs nourish the notion of how teaching should be and combined with experience and theoretical knowledge these order the teacher's thinking, shape their instructional practice, and extend teacher's knowledge. From the mid-1980s onwards, the work of Shulman and colleagues at the Knowledge Growth in Teaching research programme made a highly influential contribution to the field of teacher cognition by pointing out on the need of integrating the content aspects of teaching to the elements of teaching process (Shulman & Elstein, 1975). Arguing that teachers possess theoretical, as well as, practical knowledge according to the specific content of their subject matter, Shulman (1986) stated that any representation of teacher knowledge should comprise "that set of understandings, conceptions, and orientations that constitutes the source of their comprehension of the subjects they teach" (p. 8). To understand how all these elements work together to build up the foundations of teacher knowledge base,

Shulman (1987) proposed and conceptualized a framework with the following teacher's knowledge base categories (see Table 1):

Table 1

*Shulman's Teacher Knowledge Base Categories*

Category	Description
Content knowledge	Extensive knowledge and appropriation of the content and constitution of the subject matter or field.
Curricular knowledge	Understanding of the curricular alternatives, instructional materials, educational goals, and content requirements.
Pedagogical content knowledge	Set of pedagogical tools, instructional strategies alternatives, and forms of representing knowledge of the subject matter that teachers use to help others convey meaning.
General pedagogical knowledge	Knowledge of the main principles of classroom organization, pedagogical strategies, methodological practices to meet educational needs.
Knowledge of learners	Knowledge about the cognitive, psychological, and affective characteristics of learners.
Knowledge of educational contexts	Comprehension of the dynamics among institutions, communities, and cultures.
Knowledge of educational ends	Awareness about the philosophical, historical, social, and cultural grounds of education.

It is worth mentioning that among these categories, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK hereafter) is of special interest for our study since it implies the transformation of teachers' content knowledge into forms of representing it that enable teaching and learning, and which generally takes the form of a plan. More precisely, in Shulman's words (1998), "it represents the

blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (p. 8).

In the 1990s, several scholars addressed the field of language teacher education by accounting the domains of teacher knowledge base. Roberts (1998) examined teacher knowledge as a system of knowledge bases. He proposed six types of language teacher knowledge: (a) content knowledge, (b) pedagogic content knowledge, (c) general pedagogic knowledge, (d) curricular knowledge, (e) contextual knowledge, and (f) process knowledge, which consist of a set of enabling skills for the development of a teacher. Likewise, Richards (1998, p. 1) proposed six domains of content that comprise the core knowledge base of second language teacher education: (a) theories of teaching, (b) teaching and communication skills, (c) subject matter knowledge, (d) pedagogical reasoning, (e) decision making, and (f) contextual knowledge.

Freeman and Johnson (1998) proposed a systemic view of the knowledge base. Their proposal claimed for a reconceptualization of teacher knowledge base in which the field of teacher education should consider the socio-cultural contexts in which teachers' learning takes place. According to the authors, descriptions of teachers' learning processes should include the complexities associated with social practices and the context. This framework focused on the activity of teaching itself and the role and nature of teachers' mental lives and comprises three interrelated domains: (a) the teacher-learner, (b) the social context, and (c) the pedagogical process. From the authors' point of view, the first domain implies seeing teachers as learners of language teaching and requires being acquainted with the complex factors, influences, and processes that teacher learning entails, that is, their prior knowledge and beliefs, knowledge development over time, the role of context, and the role of teacher education as a form of

intervention (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). The second domain recognizes the role of school and schooling as sociocultural and historical contexts in which are embedded the norms, values, relationships among home, community, and school expectations. The third domain, the pedagogical process, deals with the conceptions, questionings, perceptions, and beliefs about the activity of teaching as it is experienced by practitioners. In the same line of thought, Freeman and Johnson's (1998) view of knowledge base within the field of teacher education implies that learning to teach involves complex factors, influences, and processes that contribute to that learning. They also describe it as a lifelong process, socially constructed, and built upon the sum of several sources. In the following section, we compile the different sources of teacher knowledge base derived from the literature.

**Sources of teacher knowledge base.** It concerns the different sources, which become the foundations of teacher knowledge. They are originated from teacher's own experiences at school and university years, their experiences as researchers, from their teaching practice experience and their personal theories and beliefs of teaching.

***Teachers' learning experiences.*** Basically, this source of knowledge base relates to the understandings of teachers derived from their own learning experiences. Lortie (1975) uses the term "apprenticeship of observation" referring to the time period in which the student develops many of the first representations and conceptions about the nature of teaching by observing teachers' behaviors and performance throughout the school period until before entering vocational training programs. Interpretations derived from these experiences, in turn, lay the groundwork for subsequent theories and beliefs (Holt-Reynolds, 1992) about what constitutes good or bad teaching practices. These previous language learning experiences as stated in Borg (2003) "establish cognitions about learning and language learning which form the basis of their

initial conceptualisations of L2 teaching during teacher education, and which may continue to be influential throughout their professional lives” (p. 86).

***Professional training and teacher education.*** This source of teacher knowledge comes from all the specific content, theories and methodologies teachers learn while studying their teacher education programs. Most of the information they acquire in these programs has to do with specialized content on how to successfully convey meaning to their students (Macías, 2009). This source of teacher knowledge is closely related to teachers' pedagogical thinking and their teaching activity, the subject matter and content, and, finally, the language learning process. The interaction among these elements should permit the emergence of knowledge in order to deeply understand how language teachers teach and how students learn. (Freeman as cited in Valencia, 2009, p. 80).

***Teaching experience.*** This type of learning is also known as experiential learning (Kolb 1984), and some characterize the type of knowledge gained from such experiences as craft knowledge that comes with the wisdom of practice (Shulman 1987). In this source of teacher knowledge, teachers immerse themselves directly in real teaching contexts, where all the pedagogical and methodological elements they have learned during their professional training programs are put into practice. It is the space where all the specific content is confronted with real classroom situations in which teachers, as mentioned in Kolb (1984), experiment an experiential learning cycle consisting of four modes: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Where teachers basically put into practice what they have learned in their professional training programs during their teaching lessons, then reflect on the outcomes of the teaching experience, afterward elaborate their own theories based on those teaching experiences and adapt their upcoming lessons with this newly gained



knowledge. As can be seen is a repeating cycle that at the end shows that what teachers do in the classrooms is a recollection of thoughts or mental acts, which have been shaped by attitudes, values, knowledge, and beliefs assembled through years of teacher practice (Borg, 2003).

***Engagement in research.*** This source of teacher knowledge relies on teachers involvement in research studies, where teachers become investigators of their own teaching practice, thus they can help to solve the problems they encounter in their working contexts creating their own teaching theories as a result of the research process contributing this way to the body of knowledge in this area.

The empowerment of teachers as researchers of their own practice, acknowledges they are the first and one of the most reliable sources of knowledge of the different issues faced during teaching in real contexts, with research they can “become active users and producers of theory in their own right . . . and as appropriate for their own instructional contexts” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, as cited in Macías, 2009, p. 4).

**Teachers' beliefs.** A good definition of belief is given by Goodenough (1963) who stated they are thought of as psychologically-held understandings, premises or propositions about the world that are felt to be true "accepted as guides for assessing the future, are cited in support of decisions, or are referred to in passing judgment on the behavior of others" (p. 151).

Teachers' beliefs are strongly related to two types of sources of teacher knowledge base; the teacher's learning experience and the teacher's practicum experience, these are the foundations where teachers' beliefs originate. Teachers' beliefs have a higher affective and evaluative component than knowledge, teachers' beliefs are not directly associated with cognition as it is knowledge (Nespor, 1987). They are more inclined and determined by feelings, assumptions, mental representations, and values that teachers have acquired throughout the years

from their experiences as students and from their own teaching practice as pre-service and in-service teachers. Calderhead and Robson (1991) reported that preservice teachers have really lively images of teaching from their time as students, which will later influence their interpretations of courses and classroom practices, they also had a major role in determining how teachers translated and used the knowledge they gained in their own teaching practices. As stated in Pajares (1992) "Teachers often teach the content of a course according to the values held of the content itself. As with self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986), this combination of affect and evaluation can determine the energy that teachers will expend on an activity and how they will expend it" (p.310). Furthermore, teachers are likely to modify their pedagogical strategies based on their beliefs about how learners learn (Johnston & Goettsch, 2000).

**Functions of beliefs.** According to Resnick (1989) beliefs have two functions at the moment of learning how to teach. The first one correlates with the idea that the students who enter an education program are not blank slates, they bring with them a set of beliefs they have acquired during the time they were learners. These beliefs are related to constructivist theories that suggest they will have a strong influence upon what and how they learn. These theories have been shown to influence the way students approach teacher education and what they learn from it (Calderhead & Robson, 1991).

The second function is to be the focus of change in the process of education, viewing learning as an active and constructive process highly influenced by the entire set of preconceptions, beliefs and prior understandings of a person which play a major role in the students' learning process that translates in what students learn and how they learn it (Resnick, 1989).

These two functions of beliefs are vital to be taking into account in teacher education programs in which, as stated in Macías (2009)

As a result, historically, aspects that we know can have a positive impact on future teachers such as previous learning experiences, preservice teaching experience, and research have, in many cases, been overlooked as potential sources for how new teachers construct pedagogical knowledge in their professional education. (p. 3)

The importance of beliefs has to be taken into account in teacher education programs and to become one objective in their curriculum as a way to examine beliefs about teaching, learning and the curriculum and transform them into reasonable, or evidential beliefs (Richardson, 1996). The previous could be done by helping teachers to reflect, identify and evaluate their beliefs and their incidence during their teaching lessons, thus they will become more aware of the decisions they make for their instructions, ultimately leading them to make more informed ones.

**Features of beliefs.** Beliefs have special trades that make it possible to differentiate them from knowledge. One of the main features of beliefs is that they are held with varying degrees of conviction, as stated in Abelson (1979) “The believer can be passionately committed to a point of view, or at the other extreme could regard a state of as more probable than not. This dimension of variation is absent from knowledge systems” (p. 360)

Another distinctive feature of beliefs is that they are not an accepted truth for everyone, beliefs are arguable and debatable not as knowledge that on the other hand has been accepted as a general truth for a group of people. Beliefs may vary from one person to another and the believer is aware that not everybody holds their same belief system. As stated in Abelson (1979), “a common stance among philosophers is that disputability is associated with beliefs; truth or certainty is with knowledge” (p. 356).

**Belief systems.** Harvey's (1986) definition of a belief system as a "set of conceptual representations which signify to its holder a reality or given state of affairs of sufficient validity, truth and/or trustworthiness to warrant reliance upon it as a guide to personal thought and action" (p. 660). Teachers' beliefs system is a powerful tool in the process of understanding how teachers make decisions, they are not static, instead, they are constantly evolving. Teacher's beliefs system is correlated with teacher experience, and it takes new shapes accordingly to the new theories that emerged from teacher practical knowledge. As stated in Thompson (1992), "beliefs systems are dynamic, permeable mental structures, susceptible to change in light of experience. The research also strongly suggests that the relationship between beliefs and practice is a dialectic, not a simple cause-and-effect relationship" (p.140)

**Sources of beliefs.** Some of the most relevant sources of beliefs come from "personal experiences, experiences with schooling and instruction, and experiences with formal knowledge" (Richardson, 1996, p. 104). Beliefs about teaching start creating since teachers are students themselves and experience what Lortie (1975) has described the apprenticeship of observation, these early representations in the students' mind about learning and teaching processes are highly influential in later construction of theories and pedagogical decision making. At the time students get to professional training programs they already have a well-established beliefs system (Buchmann, 1987; Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1990; Wilson, 1990) which is confronted with all the new specific content and knowledge about language learning theories and methodologies that the education training programs offer to them.

Specifically referring to the source of beliefs related to formal knowledge, and the ones which concern the most to this research study are the beliefs ESL teachers hold about second language teaching and learning. In a research study conducted by Johnson (1992) it was found

that ESL teachers had three main approaches “ a skills-based approach (which focuses on the discrete skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing); a rule-based approach (which emphasizes the importance of grammatical rules and a conscious understanding of the language system); and a function-based approach (which focuses on interactive communication and cooperative learning, and the ability to function in "real" social situations)”. Also, from general education there have been identified four types of beliefs as follows; the first one is learner-focused which bases on the learner's personal construction of knowledge, the second one is content-focused with an emphasis on the learner’s conceptual understanding, the third one is content-focused with an emphasis on the learner’s performance, and finally a fourth one that is classroom-focused where teaching is based on knowledge about effective classrooms. (Kuh & Ball, as cited in Thompson, 1992)

### **Planning**

The importance of planning stands in its reference as one of the most fundamental elements for teachers to guide their decision-making process when thinking about the pedagogical actions and strategies to be carried out during a lesson. As stated in Jensen (2002) planning is "an extremely useful tool, that serves as a combination guide, resource, and historical document reflecting our teaching philosophy, student population, textbooks, and most importantly, our goals for our students." (p.403). Planning is a relevant component of effective teaching. In order for teachers to become effective in the classroom, they must make decisions on how to present the curriculum to the students in the most efficient and effective manner (Warren, 2000).

Planning is a complex combination of mental processes, where many physiological factors intervene to try to foresee the future outcomes of a lesson; to do so teachers prepare a

framework with all the instructions and pedagogical actions and strategies to be taken during a future lesson (Clark and Peterson, 1986). This framework acts as an informed guide that helps teachers as a relevant reference when it comes to making pedagogical decisions when planning a lesson. In Clark and Peterson's (1984) own words

Teacher planning includes the thought processes teachers engage in prior to classroom interaction but also includes the thought processes or reflections they engage in after classroom interaction that then guide their thinking and projections for future classroom interaction. For example, teacher planning includes the reflections the teacher has at the end of a given day that then cause the teacher to plan a certain activity for the class the next morning. (p. 16)

**Functions of planning.** Among all the functions planning cover, Clark and Yinger (1979) identified the following

(a) planning to meet immediate personal needs (e.g., to reduce uncertainty and anxiety, to find a sense of direction, confidence, and security); (b) planning as a means to the end of instruction (e.g., to learn the material, to collect and organize materials, to organize time and activity flow); and (c) planning to serve a direct function during instruction (e.g., to organize students, to get an activity started, as a memory aid, to provide a framework for instruction and evaluation). (Clark & Yinger, as cited in Clark & Peterson, 1984, p. 31)

**Influences on teacher planning.** Teacher planning is influenced by many factors, the most relevant as research study suggests is teaching experience; for pre-service teachers there is a great influence upon their teacher planning based on the instructions they received in their education courses, on the other hand, in-service teachers' planning is influenced by their own teaching practice, taking advantage of the successful aspects of lessons previously taught to

include them in future lessons plans. They also reflect on the issues that were not so successful to omit them. McCutcheon (1980) refers to this type of planning as "mental" and describes it as "reflecting on the past and envisioning what might occur in current and subsequent lessons" (p. 11).

School scheduling is another factor that influences teacher planning, it is perceived most of the time as a limitation that brings possible problems like time constraints. Issues that teachers have to face and find a way to solve them, as school scheduling is a requirement to fulfill determined by the administration, one they have to bear in mind when planning (McCutcheon, 1980). Other elements to take into account as influential factors for teacher planning are the instructional materials and the interests and abilities of students. The first one is related to the textbooks and lesson material guides oriented which as stated in Warren, (2000) "influence the sequence of material that teachers present and activities that teachers plan" (p. 40). The second one refers to the planning teachers do by including students' needs and interests as a relevant component to bear in mind when making decisions related to activities, material and pedagogical strategies to use (Warren, 2000).

**Forms of teacher planning.** Teachers have different approaches, perspectives, and styles at the moment of planning. There are various factors that may differ from one teacher planning to another. Among those factors we can find the extent to which teachers plan, in addition some teachers bear in mind the general objectives of the course to develop the class plan, a style of planning that is known as macro-planning. Others give major relevance to a more inclined day to day planning, which is based on the daily activities to be developed during each lesson but not so much on the overall goals of the course, this kind of planning is called micro-planning (Richards

& Lockhart, 1994). Research has found that the ideal planning should have a combination of both macro and micro-planning, as stated in Jensen (2001)

A good lesson plan is the result of both macro planning and micro planning. On the macro level, a lesson plan is a reflection of a philosophy of learning and teaching which is reflected in the methodology, the syllabus, the texts, and the other course materials and finally results in a specific lesson. In brief, an actual lesson plan is the end point of many other stages of planning that culminate in a daily lesson. (p. 404)

To help narrow the gap between the two approaches Larsen-Freeman (1983) suggested the use of reflective lesson plans from which at the micro perspective level teachers can reflect on their teaching skills while they make the necessary modifications to their lesson plans. On the other hand on the macro perspective level, while teachers are making notes and writing modifications on their lesson plans they can reflect on their beliefs and principles of teaching and learning.

According to Yinger (1977) and Clark and Yinger (1979b) research studies which show that there are eight types of teacher planning determined by the span of time in which the planning took place. The names of these classifications of planning are: “weekly, daily, long range, short range, yearly, and term planning. The remaining two types (unit and lesson planning) describe a unit of content for which the teachers planned” (Yinger as cited in Clark & Peterson, 1984, p. 31). From the analysis of this planning typology, it can be concluded that teachers invest a great amount of time and energy in the organization, structure, and management of a lesson, doing so by means of planning, thus the process of instruction becomes more efficient.



Instead of using detailed written lesson plans, experienced teachers tend to rely on what Olsen (1982) called lesson images when preparing to teach. As Morine Dersheimer in Clark & Peterson (1984) stated "teachers' written plans seldom reflect the teachers' entire plan. Rather, the few details recorded on a written plan were nested within more comprehensive planning structures, called "lesson images" (p. 31) Most experienced teachers plan mentally, if they commit to writing a plan, most of the time is in the form of a simplified outline including essential aspects such as the topic to be taught during the lesson and the number of the textbook pages to be developed. The rest of the procedures and development of the class is organized in their minds using mental images of every stage and developing various teaching routines that they considered successful from their own teaching experience (Brown & Wendel, 1993).

**Format and elements of a lesson plan.** There are plenty of points of view related to which elements a lesson plan should include, historically the first elements were proposed by Ralph Tyler (1950), where the traditional planning model consisted of a sequence of four steps: first specify objectives; second select learning activities; third organize learning activities; and fourth identify evaluation procedures. This traditional model for planning has been around for all these years and it has been recommended for use at all levels of curriculum planning (Clark & Peterson, 1986).

When talking about more updated academic information related to the formulation of a lesson plan, many other factors have been considered. Specifically, twenty elements have been identified as necessary to be taken into account at the moment of planning, and they have been shared by Haynes (2010, p. 65) in a framework as follows:

1. Aims.
2. Objectives.

3. Assessment data.
4. Scope and content.
5. Pedagogical methods.
6. Teacher's expectations.
7. Learning activities.
8. Homework.
9. Differentiation of learning.
10. Progression in learning.
11. Other curricular links.
12. Time.
13. Space.
14. Resources.
15. Language.
16. Ancillary staff.
17. Risks.
18. Assessment.
19. Evaluation method(s).
20. Review procedure(s).

It certainly does not exist a definite consensus among the academic teacher community about the perfect formula to plan a lesson; however, it is important to consider the previous twenty elements when planning. It would certainly be useful and fruitful to think about what to include under the previous elements headings. Although the final result in the written part of the

lesson plan possibly omits one of them, at least in their mental process, teachers considered first if it was or not necessary to include it after a process of analysis, preparation and reflection.

**Planning decisions.** According to the authors, decisions here are focused on lesson objectives, activities to be performed by the students, time of learning activities, learning materials, teaching strategies, and possible problems. In relation to lesson objectives, some teachers may prefer to make use of the objectives to guide their lessons, while others, rather not to. Even though it is advisable to specify the lesson objectives in terms of the intended students' learning outcomes, some research studies (Brindley, 1984; Clark & Yinger, 1979; Freeman, 1992), identified that lesson objectives could be described in terms of teacher's role, descriptions of course and language content, quantity of learning content, learning materials, sequences of activities, teaching routines or focus on the needs of particular students (as cited in Richards and Lockhart, 1994).

The authors' observations confirm that planning decisions are diverse, and they are underpinned by teachers' beliefs. Regardless of teacher's choice, Neely (1986) asserts that "planning decisions are made after a process of reflection" (as cited in Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 82), and during which the teacher has to consider questions such as: "What do I want my students to learn from this lesson?, Why should I teach this lesson?, How well do I understand the content of the lesson?, What activities will be included in the lesson?, How will the lesson connect to what students already know?" and so forth. However, during a lesson, teachers confront different issues and situations, which may or not have been planned. Therefore, decisions related to students' response to teaching and to modify instruction in order to provide optimal support for learning take place, occur continuously while teachers and students are interacting. These decisions are called interactive decisions.

According to Richards and Lockhart (1994), the components of interactive decisions are: monitoring one's teaching and evaluating what is happening at a particular point in the lesson; recognizing that a number of different courses of action are possible; selecting a particular course of action; evaluating the consequences of the choice. At the same time interactive decisions might provide input to planning decisions since they are the result of constant interaction with the students and the context and teachers' pedagogical choices.

### **Professional Development**

Based on the fact that language teaching and learning is constantly changing, and that it is always under construction, teachers need to have constant opportunities to refresh and renew their professional knowledge. As stated in Diaz Maggioli (2003) "the true impact of professional development comes about when efforts are sustained over time, and when support structures exist that allow participants to receive modeling and advice from more experienced peers" (p. 5). In recent years there has been a renewed interest in teacher's professional development; there is a clear need for ongoing teacher education processes and professional growth opportunities. With the pass of time, language teaching communities have taken distance in the search for the perfect methods to follow; instead, they are focusing on action research and reflective practice processes.

In order to meet the roles that teachers are required to play within the complexities of this profession, an expanded recognition of teacher development must be addressed. We share Borko and Putnam's (1995) view when they state that teachers should have opportunities to examine their beliefs about teaching and learning and to construct their own knowledge in a supportive environment that encourages risk-taking and reflection. What is more, Bartlett (1987) considers that the best professional development practices should engage teachers in examining their

practice by exploring the relationship between individual teacher's thinking and acting.

Therefore, professional development should be addressed as something in which teachers play an active role in examining beliefs and knowledge and gain awareness about the skills and knowledge that are relevant to teaching practice and contexts (Riding, 2001).

Among the characteristics these professional development activities should hold, Riding (2001) draws attention to the following:

(a) be ongoing, (b) include opportunities for individual reflection and group inquiry into practice, (c) be school-based and embedded in teacher work, (d) be collaborative and allow teachers to interact with peers, (e) be rooted in the knowledge base of teaching, (f) be accessible and inclusive. (p. 283)

**Online communities and professional development.** In order to look for ways to provide the structures that support teacher development, Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) environments can become mediating tools to bridge cooperative learning among teachers. This kind of associative and collaborative approach is a typical feature of online communities, which are considered social structures that provide the members, opportunities to communicate and collaborate with peers who share similar interests. To establish an efficient community requires a set of rules, habits, strong ties and interaction among participants to be set, in order to achieve common goals (Wenger, 1998).

An online community promotes and enables communication and interaction among members who share common interests, they can associate and work collaboratively to deepen or learn new knowledge, they can work collectively towards a mutual goal, and they support each other's professional growth by peer or self-assessing the process. This is a beneficial, active, dynamic and permanent process for the entire community. Online communities have a lot of

advantages; they are very flexible virtual environments, with no time or distance restraints, they are supported by Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) that facilitates the creation of various activities according to the community specific needs (Tsiotakis, & Jimoyiannis, 2016).

Online communities constitute an innovative and promising idea of a new way to create spaces for teacher professional development since they offer enriching opportunities for their participants to work collaboratively to reach a higher and deeper level of knowledge construction by interacting with their peers, sharing and expressing their ideas using their critical and reflective thinking skills. (Booth, 2012; Hur & Brush, 2009; Luehmann & Tinelli, 2008). Additionally, Lord and Lomicka (2007, p. 527) found that reflection mediated by asynchronous CMC tools is relevant not only regarding the quantity but also the quality of reflective outcomes. Arnold and Ducate (2006) supporting the previous finding when they assert that “collaboration, the writing style and longer time for thinking contributed to participants’ reflections on their beliefs” (p. 57). Finally, according to Viáfara (2011) several studies have proven that “teachers are not indifferent towards technology; in fact, they show a positive attitude and appreciate the advantages it can provide them and their pupils” (p. 212).

***Online teacher communities.*** To create and support professional development along with collaborative work, many institutions have innovated and created their own VLEs where they offer and promote a space in which teachers can reflect, share ideas, opinions, and material. As they share a common interest, they can associate, and create an online teacher community, where they can actively participate and collaborate with each other professional development, in an ongoing and continuous process (Tsiotakis, & Jimoyiannis, 2016). These teacher communities provide the conditions in which the “collegiate, reflective, practice-based development can take

place, allowing teachers to share experience, information and good practice.” (Riding, 2001, p. 284). More precisely, in Lieberman’s (2000) words:

Although a few networks have existed for some time, their numbers and influence have increased dramatically in the last few years. Perhaps their loose structure and flexible organization are more in tune with the rapid technological and socioeconomic changes of this era, providing the kinds of knowledge and experience that teachers need to be successful with their students. By providing avenues for members to deal with real problems, work collaboratively, and to communicate more effectively with a diverse population, networks are uniquely suited to the development of learning communities that are both local and national. (p. 226)

The author further states that within these teacher communities, members are perceived and valued as partners and colleagues in a joint effort aimed at understanding better the learning own processes and of their students. For example, Viáfara (2011) suggests that by providing teachers not only the necessary materials but also training opportunities which reflect the models being studied is a first step towards better teacher education frameworks and should be bound up with opportunities for experimentation and practice (p. 213). Among additional benefits of this type of digital discussion spaces, is that they contribute to teachers voice their perspectives, provide leadership opportunities and the emergence of new teaching roles, and aid the development of problem-solving skills (Hawkes, 2001). Critical collegueship is the term used by Lord (19994) to refer to the dynamics in which informed debate, honest disagreement, and constructive conflict promote new insights that reforms teaching in the collaborative community.

What is more, collaborative reflective discourse is facilitated by computer-mediated communication. Authors as Hawkes (2001) have identified the main characteristics that

CMC provides for reflective discourse: a) the speed and b) the time and place independence in which messages are sent and retrieved by users; c) fosters interactions; d) the flexible time control that CMC provides for engaging in discourse; e) allows constructing, communicating, and refining ideas; f) enables participation on multiple conversational topics; g) the storage capacity allows users to retrieve previous discussions; h) allows challenging the accuracy of documented messages (p. 291). Furthermore, asynchronous interactive venues such as e-mails, electronic discussion boards, and bulletins promote interactive learning, which is one pillar of teachers' professional development. These new virtual spaces are ideal to foster reflective, and evaluative processes as well as the exchange of ideas to prompt or to solve problems in a collaborative manner, enriching their cognitive processes and social interactions (Bonk et al., 1996; DeWert et al., 2003; Kumari, 2001; Liou, 2001; Mitchell, 2003; Pawan et al., 2003).

### **Reflection**

Reflective teaching opportunities are vital for the long-term professional development of teachers, which ultimately are going to positively impact the outcomes of the learning processes of the institution's programs in which they work. The first scholar to draw a rationale for reflection was John Dewey (1933). The author defines reflection as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 7). Rodgers (2002) characterized Dewey's concept of reflection in four criteria:

1. Reflection is a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas. It is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible, and



ensures the progress of the individual and, ultimately, society. It is a means to essentially moral ends.

2. Reflection is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking, with its roots in scientific inquiry.

3. Reflection needs to happen in community, in interaction with others.

4. Reflection requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and of others. (p. 845)

We agree with Donald Schön's (1987) view of reflection when he asserts that reflection is a social-professional activity in which practitioners adapt knowledge to specific situations. Reflection in this sense is seen as a continuous process in which teachers articulate problems while considering alternative solutions. The raising of teachers' consciousness about the cognitive dimensions of teaching encourages what Schön (1983) described as "reflective practice" (p. 12). In the 1980s, this author coined two important concepts of reflective thinking: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Quesada, 2005). According to Schön (1983) reflection-in-action deals with any form of thinking when surprising affairs, from a determined situation arise and practitioners need to adjust their tacit knowledge and experience to develop strategies of action to achieve outcomes or to improve practice. Therefore, this thinking, which takes place within the action, questions the underlying premises of actions and gives teachers the opportunity to modify them. What is more, being aware of these reflective processes allows teachers to acquire greater skill in making rapid decisions to provide the necessary learning opportunities in the classroom. In relation to this, Ghaye (2011) mentions that reflection-in-action "is based on a rapid interpretation of the situation, where rapid decisions are required" (p. 25).

On the other hand, reflection-on-action could be understood as a way of thinking back on an action that took place in the past, and it includes thinking about the deliberations that led the action and the reflections made in the midst of the action. More precisely, Schön (1993) affirms that "through reflection, he [the practitioner] can surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice, and can make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness which he may allow himself to experience" (p. 61).

According to the above, this construct is the one which is closer to our concern in this research study, since reflecting-on-action provides teachers a retrospective look at their actions and decisions, allowing them to expand their view and understanding of their own professional practices as well as the learning process. This author further states that teachers may do this in "a mood of idle speculation, or in a deliberate effort to prepare themselves for future cases" (p. 61). In other words, this entails enforcing assiduous considerations and reflective analysis of routines to expand knowledge and generate new understandings from experience. This means that through reflection, teachers would be able to reconsider the relation between theory and practice and capitalize on their practical knowledge.

In regard to teaching practice, reflective thinking is a crucial component of teacher development. Some theorists also content that reflective thinking allows teachers to move from a level where they may be guided by impulse, intuition, or routine, to a level where their actions are guided by informed decisions and critical reflective thinking (Farrel, 2003; Howard, 2003; Loughran, 2002; Short & Rinehart, 1991). In the field of teacher education, reflection has as a central goal that teachers not only get engage in reflection as a means to learn new or better ideas but also is a means of sustained professional growth (Lee, 2005). Furthermore, reflection is a

means to improve learning processes and outcomes, to reconstruct teaching practice giving sense to change in order to achieve the teaching-learning goals. In that order, according to Tican and Taspinar (2015) when teachers systematically reflect on their instructional activities it is possible to critically evaluate them and realize possible inconsistencies, look for alternative ways of solving problems, and follow the innovations in the field of education. Moreover, reflection is useful to identify the sources of teachers' beliefs (Golombek, 1998). In this sense, through reflection and dialogue with him/herself and others, teachers can clarify and articulate the tensions or contradictions between their experiences and their professional discourse.

With regard to teachers, when they engage in reflection as a means of understanding the nature of teaching, personal values, and beliefs, this reflective thinking process can be carried out reflectively or unreflectively. Thus, reflection should not only be concerned about the progress when solving problems but also with the level of awareness about a specific situation. What is more, reflection can be addressed on different levels. One level of reflection is mainly concerned with the teachers' intention of mastering technical means for achieving given educational ends; at a second level of reflection, teachers can reach an interpretive understanding of their decisions and actions which in turn informs practice; and on a third level, teachers critically examine teaching as well as political, moral and ethical issues and thus reconstruct experience in the light of justice and equality (Lee, 2005).

On the other hand, the collaborative feature of reflection is the basis for teachers' development of new knowledge and understanding among peers. Feldman (1997) explains how this process takes place:

They [teachers] begin with a cooperative process in which one of the teachers starts to talk and the others listen. As they listen, they think about what is being said and relate it

to their own histories, their intentions, and their relations to others. Reflection occurs, and the ones who have listened, respond. The responses are answers to questions, related anecdotes or bits of narrative, or questions, which act in the evolution of the conversants' direction. (p. 11)

In synthesis, reflection comprises analyzing the actual conditions of an act or examining the true terms of an experience as a means to inquire into actions taking place, as well as to deliberate on the actions that took place, in order to reach new understandings, nurture knowledge and gain readiness for events that could be encountered in the future. In relation to the teaching practice, reflective thinking is intertwined with the state of affairs of this complex profession, where teachers subject their practice to a critical inquiry allowing them to implement practices flowing from their particular criteria addressed to improve students learning.

## Chapter III

### Methodological Design

This chapter presents and explains the components of the research study. First, it presents the research question, the main research objective, and the specific ones. Second, it portrays the type of research approach and the type of study according to theoretical foundations and authors. Third, it describes the participants, the data-gathering instruments, and data collection procedure. Finally, there is a complete description of the instructional design.

### Research Design

This research study looks into the need to explore the knowledge and beliefs behind teachers' planning decisions at the ILEUSCO institute, due to the absence of opportunities for teacher's professional development. The study seeks an answer to the following question: what knowledge base and beliefs can be identified in teachers' planning decisions after the implementation of an online reflective teacher community at ILEUSCO Institute? Based on evidence collected from multiple sources of data as institutional documents, interviews, questionnaires, and artifacts, this research study inquiries about the knowledge and beliefs that are evidenced in teachers' planning decisions after the implementation of an online reflective teacher community at ILEUSCO. The study also aims at a particular level (a) to characterize teacher's planning decision-making; (b) to explore the knowledge and beliefs underlying teachers' planning decisions, and (c) to determine the role of an online reflective teacher community in the reflection processes of teachers.

**Research approach and type of study.** Our research approach is qualitative, and it aims at describing and making interpretations of the meanings that individual teachers at the ILEUSCO Institute attribute to planning in their professional endeavor. Qualitative research is a

constant process or way to interpret reality or human behaviors in particular contexts (Burns, 1999). Hence, bearing in mind the importance of interpreting the complexity of the nature of the relationship between teachers' beliefs, teacher knowledge, and practice, this study is assumed as a way to interpret the corresponding attitudes of the teachers of ILEUSCO Institute in an online reflective teacher community around these issues.

In our study, the process of research involved emerging questions and procedures, data collected around the participant's setting, data analysis inductively built from particular to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2013). In the beginning, this research was addressed as a qualitative descriptive study aimed at describing the planning options that ILEUSCO teachers employ and making sense of the interactions resulting from these teachers' reflections after participating in an online reflective teacher community. However, due to the fact that only three of the participants completed all the tasks of the implementation stage of the pedagogical proposal we decided to adopt a collective case study methodology (Creswell, 2016). The cases of the three teachers researched in this study are bounded by the set of tasks developed in the online reflective community and researchers collected detailed information using a variety of data collection methods over a determined time frame (Yin, 2012).

Following these insights, we not only chose cases as a way to explore in-depth the reflection processes of teachers in order to identify the knowledge and beliefs underlying teachers' planning decisions, but also it will allow us to aid the present state of understanding of teachers planning practices, in this particular context, and which can be used is the area of continuing professional development of teachers (Elbaz, 1981). In our research study, this area specifically is reflected in determining the role of an online reflective teacher community on the

reflection processes of teachers. This study not only provides the setting to the professional development improvement of the researchers conducting this study but by implementing this pedagogical strategy, we are impacting the professional development of the study participants since they are the users of the pedagogical strategy. Their participation in the pedagogical strategy will allow teachers to explore their knowledge and beliefs behind their planning decisions, which will be reflected on learning opportunities for students, and also may contribute to bridging the gap between theory and practice (Burns, 1999). It will also allow teachers to redefine their role by giving them the means to set their own agendas for improvement. The collaborative model of reflective practice promoted in this study might help to enrich researchers' and participants' personal reflections on their praxis. Moreover, teachers could have valuable suggestions for their colleagues about the different ways to enhance their teaching practices (Riding, 2001).

**Participants.** The research participants for this study are the ILEUSCO teachers. The following characterization is based on the teachers who voluntarily answered our needs analysis survey. Seven female teachers and nine male teachers. Their age ranged from 18 to 30 years old representing an 81,3% of the teachers, followed by a 12,5% from 31 to 40 years old, finally, we have a 6,3% of teachers whose age ranged from 51 to 60 years old. The majority of the teachers with a 75% hold a bachelor's degree, followed by a 12,5 % for both specialist and master's degree. A 50% of the teachers have from 5 to 10 years of professional practice, followed by a 43,8% of teachers that have from 2 to 5 years of professional practice, finally we found a 6,3 % of teachers that have more than 20 years of professional practice. 100% of the teachers considered it is important to have a space to share their insights and reflections related to their

teaching professional practice with other members of their workplace. 87,5% of the teachers considered it is relevant and necessary to implement an online teacher community at ILEUSCO.

We made a projection of twenty-two teachers who expressed their intention to commit themselves to participate in the study (see Appendix A). However, during the diagnostic stage, only nine teachers answered the instruments for this stage. The total number of teachers who completed the activities in the implementation stage were three, two male teachers and one female teacher. Two of them range between 18 to 30 years old and one whose age range is from 41 to 50 years old. The three of them hold a bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching from Surcolombiana University. One of the teachers holds a master's degree. Two teachers have from 5 to 10 years of professional practice, and the other teacher has from 15 to 20 years of professional practice. They all reported having been members of an online teacher community. At the time the study was conducted, one of the teachers was in charge of teaching English to young learners on Saturday morning, one of them was in charge of a level three course and the other was in charge of a level five. The number of hours teachers devoted to their classes was no more than 10 hours per week. All of them considered it is important to have a space to share their insights and reflections related to their teaching professional practice with other members of their workplace and considered it is relevant and necessary to implement an online teacher community at ILEUSCO.

The researchers of this study are two English Teachers who currently are master candidates of the Master Program in English Didactics from Surcolombiana University. Being one of the researchers an English teacher at ILEUSCO institute at the time this research study was designed, it was possible to be in constant self-reflection about her role as collaborating peer



in the con-construction of knowledge and of a sense of collegiality by providing opportunities of professional development.

Bearing in mind ethical considerations, we considered informed consent, confidentiality, privacy and anonymity (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). All the participants of the study were informed as to the purpose of the study, of the questionnaires, and of the interviews and how the data would be used. All of them were asked to express whether they gave informed consent to use the information provided through an online questionnaire form (see Appendix B). In relation to the access to the official documents, the ILEUSCO Coordinator gave us permission to obtain a copy of the final report of the self-assessment process of the institute. He was also informed of the purposes of collecting and analyzing such documents and of the confidentiality issues.

Considering the significant difference between the number of teachers who expressed their intention to commit to the study with the number of teachers who actually completed the implementation stage, we consider that, time constraints might be one of the factors that could help diminish the opportunity for ILEUSCO teachers to take part in the study.

**Instruments and data collection procedure.** In this section, we will describe the data collection processes along with the instruments used in this study. The data collection process was divided into two main stages. Firstly, in order to determine ILEUSCO teachers' planning practices and how they approach lesson planning, we conducted an interview with the ILEUSCO Academic Coordinator and designed and applied three questionnaire surveys. As defined by Cannell and Kahn (1986) an interview is "a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation".

This involves the gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals. The interview instrument was a structured interview protocol, containing twelve questions (see Appendix C). Interview with the ILEUSCO Academic Coordinator was useful to obtain information about the context and it provided insights about ILEUSCO teacher's reflective skills and professional development needs. It also provided contextualized information regarding teachers' lesson planning practices at ILEUSCO Institute.

The three surveys applied to teachers were sent to their personal emails and were designed using Google forms. At the end of each survey, there was a section that included the consent for the use of the data. The surveys were sent on different dates, with one month apart and allowed us obtaining broad and rich information about the planning options ILEUSCO teachers employ in planning their lessons. Frechtling and Sharp (1997) state that "surveys are a very popular form of data collection, especially when gathering information from large groups, where standardization is important. Surveys can be constructed in many ways, but they always consist of two components: questions and responses" (p. 58). The first survey (see Appendix D) consisted of nine questions aimed at determining how teachers perceive lesson planning, that is, the importance they give to planning, the procedures or methods they employ when planning, the elements they include when planning a lesson, and possible problems that affect their planning. The second survey (see Appendix E) comprised three questions and had as an objective to determine the reasons to plan and factors that might influence teachers' planning options. The last of the three surveys applied to teachers (see Appendix F) had six questions and aimed at deepening in the rationale of teachers' planning decisions, that is to look into the reasons or a logical basis for their planning actions and beliefs.

For the second stage of the data collection process, we chose as the unit of analysis the three teachers that completed all the reflective tasks in the implementation stage. The second stage of the data collection process aimed at exploring the knowledge and beliefs underlying teachers' planning decisions and to determine the role of an online reflective teacher community in the reflection processes of teachers. The principal data collection technique for this stage was teachers' artifacts (e.g. teachers' products derived from online activities). Artifacts were used in this study because they allowed different kinds of instruments like e-journals, forum discussions, chat entries and reflection papers that teachers developed in the online reflective teacher community. This data collection technique allows the researcher to obtain the language and words of participants and "represents data that are thoughtful in that participants have given attention to compiling them" (Creswell, 2009, p.180). In our study, these artifacts included six samples of the tasks developed by the teachers in the online reflective teacher community, such as samples of their lesson plans, reflection journals, and entries on the discussion forums. Thus, teachers' artifacts were the main source of information about the reflection processes of teachers and allowed us to get insights into the beliefs and knowledge underlying teachers' planning decisions when planning a lesson. They also allowed us obtaining data related to the kind of decisions teachers make on planning their lessons as well as to explore the role of the online reflective teacher community along the pedagogical intervention.

Additionally, this research proposal used institutional documents. This data-gathering technique allows building a richer profile of the context and can also give insights into how theoretical and practical values connect in organizational and curricular concerns (Burns, 1999, p. 140). In order to devise a richer profile of the pedagogical practices at ILEUSCO Institute, we retrieved the document of the Final Report of the self-evaluation process of ILEUSCO Institute.

The data obtained from this document allowed us to determine the relevance of the implementation of the online reflective teacher community as an alternative for professional development and to have first-hand information about the pedagogical practices at the institute. This document also contemplates the role that research plays in the improvement of the teaching-learning process at the Institute and what are the strengths and difficulties that exist in this regard. We also collected the programmatic contents of the levels in which the teachers participating in this study were in charge of. These documents were useful in the sense that they provided the information in which teachers supported their lesson planning.

### **Instructional Design**

In this section, we present the instructional design of this research project, which consists of the pedagogical strategy, its general and specific objectives, the methodological approach supporting this pedagogical strategy, the implementation stages proposed, the design of the online reflective teacher community, and its implementation. All the above, with the purpose of exploring the knowledge and beliefs behind teachers' planning decisions after their involvement in an online reflective teacher community at ILEUSCO Institute.

**Pedagogical strategy.** In recent years there has been a renewed interest in teacher's professional development; there is a clear need for ongoing teacher education processes and professional growth opportunities. As stated in Diaz-Maggioli (2003) "the true impact of professional development comes about when efforts are sustained over time, and when support structures exist that allow participants to receive modeling and advice from more experienced peers" (p. 5). Reflective teaching opportunities are vital for the long-term professional development of teachers, which is going to positively impact the learning processes outcomes of the context in which they work. Due to the absence of opportunities for ILEUSCO teachers to

engage in systematic processes of critical reflection about their planning practices, our pedagogical strategy provides an opportunity for in-service teachers to continue their professional development where teachers play an active role in their own professional growth, and where the exchange of knowledge and experiences become a source of professional development. We consider that the development of this kind of strategies is vital for teachers to deal with the complexities of their profession.

The pedagogical strategy we proposed for this project was the design and creation of an online reflective teacher community for teachers at the ILEUSCO Institute (ILEOTEC). We view reflective practice as the process where teachers could achieve a better understanding of their teaching practices by reflecting on the nature and meaning of teaching experiences (Richards & Farrell, 2015). This view of teacher learning as reflective practice is the one that fits best our vision and our research proposal.

The process of critical examination of experiences could lead to a better understanding of teaching practices which in turn will lead teachers to provide better learning opportunities in the classroom. This view sees teacher's learning through reflective practice as a process of understanding teachers' perceptions of classroom practices but more importantly, a process of exploring the knowledge and beliefs behind the decisions that teachers make when planning a lesson. This process of reflection leads to a better understanding of the teacher's own teaching style, beliefs, language learning and teaching theories and principles underlying and supporting teacher's planning decisions. We agree with Richards and Lockhart (1994) on the assumption that teachers' actions are the result of teachers' beliefs and knowledge and that "teacher thinking provides the underlying framework or schema which guides the teacher's classroom actions" (p. 29). We also share these authors' views when they affirm that reflection practices allow teachers

to gain awareness of their teaching beliefs and practices, as well as to learn to take action to enhance the quality of learning opportunities we are able to provide in the classrooms. This online reflective teacher community serves the purpose of providing a space and support for teachers to meet, review and reflect on their teaching planning decisions. Additionally, it provides an all-embracing space where differences in teachers' teaching style, time and pace of learning are embraced (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Tsiotakis & Jimoyiannis, 2016). We wanted it to be school-based and embedded in teachers' work and be rooted in teachers' cognitive dimension. The strategy also provides time for ongoing collaborative review and feedback about the activities performed (Lim & Chai, 2008). We also decided to incorporate the five components proposed in Farrell's (1999) teacher development model: (a) a range of activities provided for teachers to reflect, (b) ground rules to the process and into each activity, (c) three types of time: individual, development, and period of reflection, (d) external input for enriched reflection, and (e) a low affective state.

In the design of the pedagogical strategy, we considered that reflective teaching usually is carried out as an individual endeavor of self-inquiry. That is why it was important to afford individual and collaborative discourse opportunities among teachers and ways for teachers to respond to each other's comments and ideas. In order to incorporate individual and collaborative elements, we decided to propose an alternative to reflective teaching practices by using technological elements. The online reflective teacher community is supported by the Schoology Platform which is a Virtual Learning Management System (VLMS) that supplies the necessary authoring tools to design and conduct the reflective activities. Furthermore, it serves as a repository of the entries and knowledge construction contribution of each member of the online community which according to Tsiotakis and Jimoyiannis (2016) is one of the components that

an online teacher community should provide. In this sense, asynchronous CMC and the tools it allows in the forms of discussions boards, web pages, electronic messages, e-journals, etc., promote individual and interactive collaboration where teachers experience the cognitive and social benefits of collaborating with their peers, and might allow the emergence of new insights by reflecting on every-day activities of teaching (Hawkes & Romiszowski, 2001). Another beneficial feature of the contributions made through different written forms of expression is that writing records of one's thinking is more powerful and intentional than is usually possible in spoken communication (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992). What is more, when communication is done through writing, it changes from an individual "performed task to one that promotes the use of the input and reflection of other students" (Arnold & Ducate, 2006, p. 43). Additionally, teachers can "engage in a process of critical inquiry as they read, reflect, and respond to each other" (Hawkes, 2001, p. 288). Among other advantages that collaborations bring to this type of teacher communities are the development of stronger teacher voices to represent their approaches (Jervis, 1996). On the other hand, teacher communities focus on the purposes and needs of teachers themselves, set the guidelines to co-construct knowledge, and members are valued as partners in a joint effort to enhance learning opportunities for themselves and their students (Lieberman, 2000).

For the purpose of the present study, we decided to implement Bartlett's (1994) reflective teaching development model as an alternative for teacher development which includes five elements or phases and offers a systematic approach to the process of reflective teaching. According to the author's proposal, each one the elements focuses on answering a particular question and they do not necessarily follow a linear sequence. What is more, the cycle of activity of reflection might comprise going through the cycle several times or may omit an element while

moving through it. The first element of this reflective process cycle is mapping. It answers the question: What do I do as a teacher? and it "involves the observation and the collection of evidence about our experiences in the classroom" (Bartlett, 1994, p. 209). The objective is to achieve an individual and detailed description of a particular aspect of teaching and to raise consciousness about it through any means that involves writing. Beliefs about teaching; views about teaching and learning; particular orientations or approaches to language teaching are some of the aspects that can be addressed in this phase.

The second element is informing. It deals with unearthing the principles behind teaching actions, as well as, the reasons underlying own theory of teaching. It can be accomplished individually, or it may involve shared discussion with others, which might aid to extend teacher's insights about him or herself and as an individual member of a larger community. It answers the questions: "What is the meaning of my teaching? What did I intend?" (p. 210).

The following element is contesting. Questions as how did I come to be this way? How was it possible for my present view of teaching to have emerged? can guide the teacher to reflect on possible inconsistencies behind teaching acts. It aims at teachers to approach "unquestioned" ideas about their teaching and try to search for contradictions between what is thought and how it is done.

Another element is appraisal. As a result of contesting teaching practice, teachers begin to contemplate alternatives consistent with new understandings. More precisely, in Bartlett's words (1994), "appraisal begins to link the thinking dimension of reflection with the search for teaching in ways consistent with our new understanding". The teacher then might start asking him/herself: How might I teach differently?



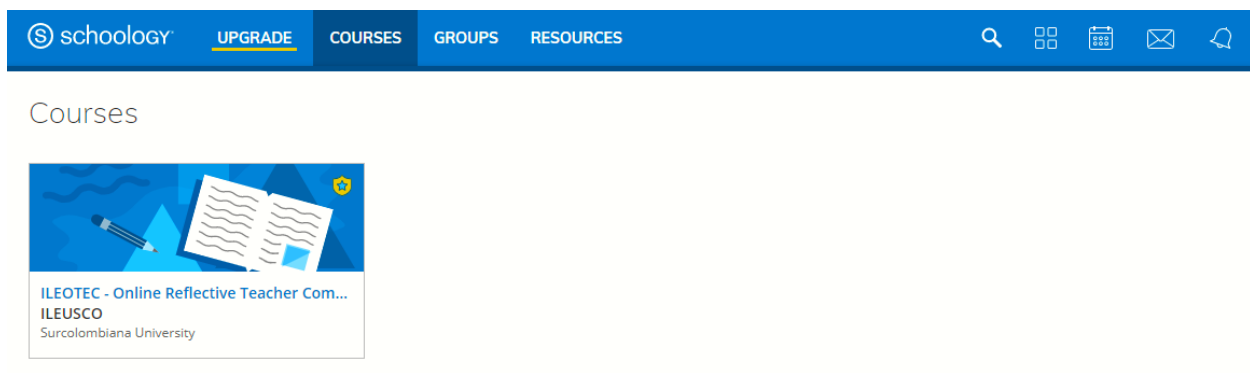
Finally, in acting the teacher wonders about what and how shall he/she now teach? It deals with implementing the new plans considered as a result of "rearranging" teaching practice after challenging it systematically.

The main goal of the pedagogical strategy is to teachers exchange their experiences and reflections about their teaching practices, especially those particularly concerned with their lesson planning decision making by participating in an online reflective teacher community. It involved five specific objectives: (a) to share a sample of a lesson plan and to voice the beliefs and knowledge behind planning decisions (Mapping), (b) to write a reflective journal about the assumptions, knowledge and beliefs behind the decisions you make when you plan a lesson (Informing), (c) to share your reflective journal and participate in a discussion and constructively challenge own beliefs and those of your colleagues about lesson planning decision making (Contesting), (d) to decide courses of action for future lesson planning and share them on the discussion board (Appraising), (e) to make a follow-up revision of planning decisions and share the evidence with the other member of the community. (Acting).

**Instructional stages.** Before the implementation of the pedagogical strategy, the researches decided to conduct two face-to-face meetings with ILEUSCO teachers at the headquarters of the Institute. The first meeting aimed at introducing the research project to teachers and to collect information about the number of teachers who would be interested in participating in the study. The second meeting was carried out one month later and was conducted as an awareness-raising workshop which served as an introductory stage to familiarize teachers with the reflective tasks. After the meeting a survey (see Appendix D) was applied to the participants via e-mail. The main objective of this instrument was to identify the expectations of the teachers regarding the implementation of the online reflective teacher community. It

helped the researchers to realize the different variables that needed to be particularly addressed in the ILEOTEC platform in order to adjust contents, material, and resources. Based on the comments obtained, two pieces of material were created trying to suit participants' knowledge and needs about decision making and planning decisions (see Appendix G). Afterward, a third document was elaborated in order to provide guidance on how to access the Schoology platform tasks (see Appendix H).

Finally, five reflective tasks were designed and posted on the Schoology platform along with the material created. These tasks included different activities such as participation in discussion boards which intended to give teachers the opportunity to involve in collaborative dialogue leading to reflection. Also, activities like e-journals not only allow teachers to interact with other colleagues with different levels of expertise but also is a practice where they can share their experiences and reflections about their teaching practice. On the other hand, reflection papers provide the opportunity to highlight the thinking process underlying decisions teachers make and how they relate to teaching practices. Figures 1, 2, and 3 show an overview of ILEOTEC in Schoology, its elements, and the organization of the reflective tasks within the VLMS.



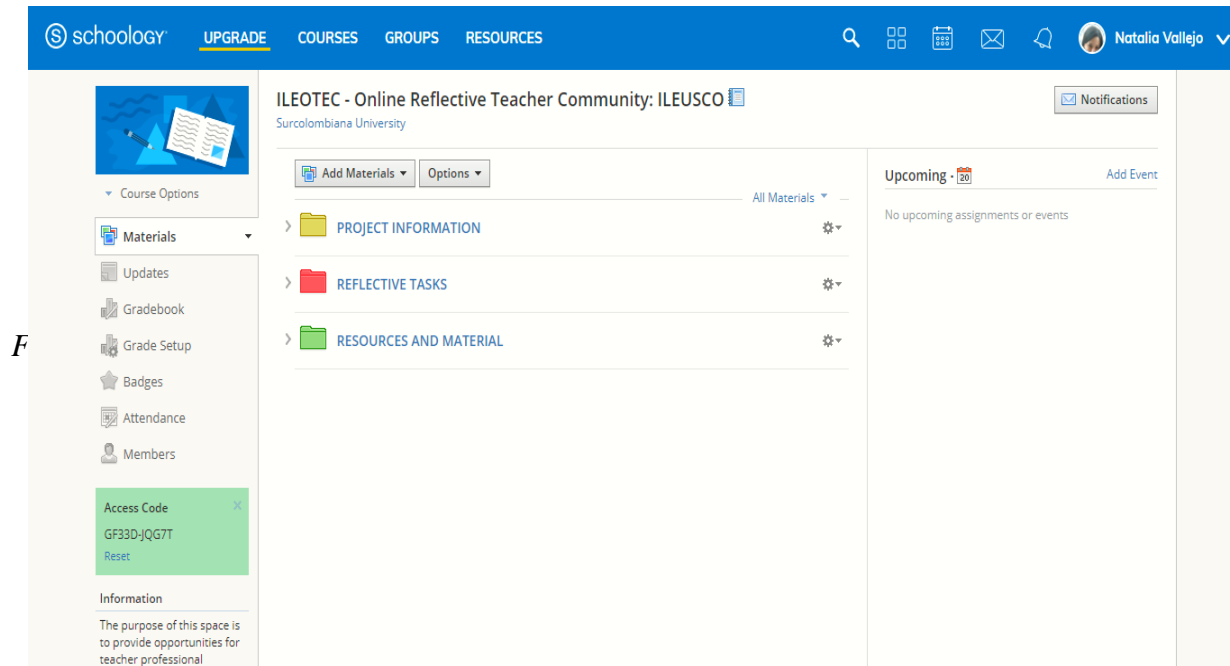


Figure 3. ILEOTEC's elements

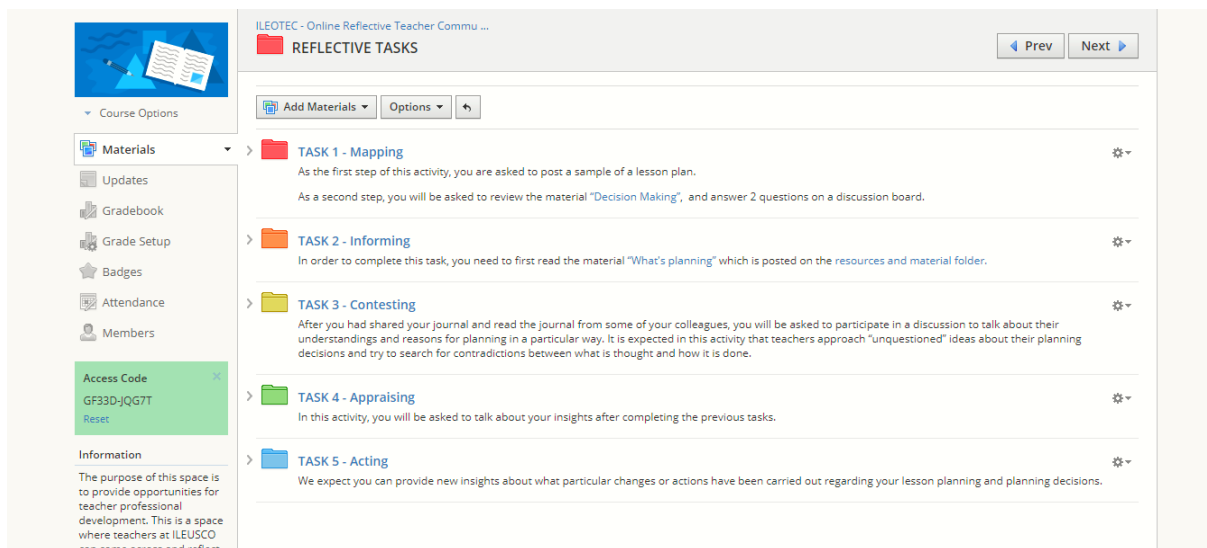


Figure 2. Reflective tasks in ILEOTEC

The options offered by this VLMS allowed the development of diverse types of activities and the use of different technological means. Table 2 describes the reflective tasks, their

pedagogical objective, the pedagogical product, and their relation to the research instruments and research data. The reflective tasks to be performed by the teachers were posted in the Schoology platform by the researchers in August 2017 and the development of the activities was carried out by the participants in different moments from August 2017 until February 2018. It is worth mentioning that according to the flexibility feature that asynchronous computer-mediated communication provides, and as it was expected in a reflective cycle, the participants did not carry out the activities in a linear sequence. Some participants developed the activities one after the other but in general they moved back and forth through the activities and reflections of the other members to enhance their entries in the discussion boards. In the following paragraphs we describe the activities teachers developed and the instruments used in each one of them.

Table 2

*ILEOTEC Reflective Tasks*

<b>Reflective tasks</b>	<b>Pedagogical objective</b>	<b>Pedagogical product - data</b>	<b>Research instrument</b>	<b>Research data</b>
Task 1 – Mapping	A. To upload a sample of a lesson plan. B. To participate in Discussion 1 and describe your lesson plan process.	A. Lesson plans B. Discussion entries	Teachers' artifacts.	Teachers' planning practices. Teachers' beliefs and knowledge underlying their planning decisions.
Task 2 - Informing	To write a reflective e-journal about the assumptions, knowledge, and beliefs behind the decisions you make when you plan a lesson	Reflective e-journal	Teachers' artifacts.	Teachers' beliefs and knowledge underlying their planning decisions.
Task 3 - Contesting	To share the reflective journal and participate in Discussion 2 by constructively challenging own beliefs and those of the colleagues about lesson planning decision making.	Discussion entries	Teachers' artifacts.	Reflection processes of teachers
Task 4 - Appraising	To consider alternative courses of action for future lesson planning and share them in Discussion 3.	Discussion entries	Teachers' artifacts.	Reflection processes of teachers
Task 5 - Acting	To make a follow-up revision of planning decisions and share the	Discussion entries	Teachers' artifacts.	Reflection processes of teachers

evidence with the other member of the community in Discussion 4.

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**Task 1. Mapping.** As the first step of this task, teachers were asked to post on the platform a sample of a lesson plan. As a second step, the teachers needed to review the uploaded material and answer two questions in a discussion board (see Appendix I).

**Task 2. Informing.** This task involved teachers to read the material which was posted on the platform. This reflective task required teachers to write and upload a reflective e-journal about the assumptions, knowledge, and beliefs behind the decisions they make when planning a lesson. In order to accomplish this task, some guiding questions were provided in order to help them develop the journal. Besides, a reflective journal template was delivered to complete journal assignment (see Appendix J).

**Task 3. Contesting.** After teachers shared their journals with some of their colleagues, they were asked to participate in the discussion 2 board (see Appendix K) to share with their other colleagues their understandings and their reasons for planning in a particular way. It was expected that in this activity teachers could approach “unquestioned” ideas about their planning decisions and try to search for contradictions between what is thought and how it is done.

**Task 4. Appraising.** In this activity, teachers were asked to record a video, an audio or write a reflection paper and share it with their colleagues in the discussion 3 board (see Appendix L) and where they talk about their insights by answering some statements and questions.

**Task 5. Acting.** We expected teachers can provide new insights into what particular changes or actions have been carried out regarding their lesson planning and planning decisions. The evidence could be collected through another lesson plan sample, a video recording of their experiences, or an entry in the discussion board.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Data Analysis and Findings**

This chapter covers firstly the entire procedure for the data analysis, immediately after that, the planning characterization by ILEUSCO faculty is found, followed by the identification of teachers' knowledge and beliefs underlying their planning decisions. Subsequently the detailed description of three cases is written as follows; case 1: Loraine, case 2: John, case 3: Mike. Finally, the ILEOTEC perceptions: strengths, limitations, possibilities of progress, or improvement are included.

#### **Procedure for Data Analysis**

In order to identify the knowledge and beliefs underlying teacher's planning decisions at the ILEUSCO Institute the process of data analysis was carried out by qualitative coding, which is the process of specifying what the data are about (Charmaz, 2006). Our focus was on how teachers experience lesson planning. The collection and data analysis also required capturing and considering multiple viewpoints of the same issue and was carried out by carrying out the following process.

First, we organized and prepared the data for analysis. This involved transcribing the interview to ILEUSCO Academic Coordinator, sorting and organizing the sources of data according to the stages in which they were obtained (diagnostic, introductory and implementation stages) and transcribing teachers' artifacts posted on the ILEOTEC platform. As a second step, we read and re-read all the data and rearranged it if necessary. This step allowed us to obtain a general sense of the information and an opportunity to reflect on its overall meaning. After organizing and reading extensively the data, we started to infer about the coding

units in the instruments in a systematic and objective way. This was done by hand-coding all the data. Coding means naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data (Charmaz, 2006). According to Silverman (1997), data analysis includes coding, grouping or summarizing the descriptions to show the dynamic interrelations of whats and hows. It was the first step in moving beyond concrete statements in the data to making sense and making analytic interpretations. Then, we aimed to make an interpretation in regard to the thematic analysis which was established according to the research question/objectives.

The first thematic analysis concerned the planning characterization of ILEUSCO faculty; the second was identifying teachers' knowledge and beliefs underlying their planning decisions, and the third was the role of the online reflective teacher community (ILEOTEC) in the reflection processes of teachers. The process was carried out by taking segments of data apart, naming them in concise terms, and identifying the theoretical categories that the data indicated (Creswell, 2013). As a fourth step we used the coding process to generate a detailed description of the planning options that ILEUSCO teachers employ, the knowledge and beliefs teachers behind the planning decisions reflected on their lesson plans and the reflection process carried out by participating in the ILEUSCO community. The descriptions of the second and third themes entailed the analysis for each one of the three teachers and were supported by direct references and specific evidence (Creswell, 2013). We decided to use narratives to present these descriptions along with figures and tables. As a final step we made an interpretation of the findings. These included the researchers' personal interpretations and those derived from comparing the results with information of other researchers' findings and theory. The data analysis and findings will be presented based on the thematic categories derived from the

research questions of this study. Firstly, we present the description of the planning options teacher at ILEUSCO Institute employ. Then, we portray the knowledge and beliefs behind the planning decisions of three ILEUSCO teachers. Finally, we address the analysis of the role that ILEOTEC played in the reflection process of these teachers.

**Planning characterization by ILEUSCO Faculty.** Initially, it is worth mentioning the diverse ways participants perceive “lesson planning” in general terms. One of them sees lesson planning as “the process of designing the activities one is going to carry out during a class” (Participant 4, Survey 3). Another participant contends that “It is a step-by-step action format where you can plan your lessons according to a propose (purpose)” (Participant 2, Survey 3) These perceptions converge with Clark and Dunn’s (1991) ideas when they define lesson planning as a “systematic development of instructional requirements, arrangement, conditions, and materials and activities, as well as testing and evaluation of teaching and learning.” (p. 54). This view of lesson planning also entails being aware of the learning needs and the forms of instruction delivery required to meet those needs.

Another response was issued in the sense that “the lesson planning for me (the English teacher) is a guide to know how to proceed during the class” (Participant 3, Survey 3), which correlates perfectly with Knezevich’s idea of lesson planning as an "intelligent cooperation with the inevitable" (As cited in Fielden, 1994, p. 50). In this sense the teacher conceives the lesson plan as an interactive instrument to support the planning decisions and the actions that take place during the class.

Moreover, another teacher claims that lesson planning guarantees the “success of the class” (Participant 1, Survey 3). This view of lesson planning implies the evaluation that the teacher does about the class in terms of what she considers to be good teaching, which in turn,



provides the input for subsequent planning decisions (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). In this regard, Richards, Ho, and Giblin, as cited in Richards and Lockhart (1994), assert that planning decisions are interconnected with interactive and evaluative decisions. That is, there should be an ongoing appraisal of the way a particular lesson plan is being conducted in the class so as to decide if she can keep going with the initial plan, or if she needs to make some required adjustments. At the end of the class, the teacher is also expected to reflect on the effectiveness of her teaching actions as well as the students' responses.

As to the importance of lesson planning, participants also have different standpoints. One of the teachers says that planning allows you to know exactly what to teach and avoid getting sidetracked. And this is what is implied by Warren (2000) when recognizing that "planning is an important part of effective teaching" (p.37). Additionally, some teachers think that planning helps them to arrange and organize class activities in order to keep the learning process going. Besides, planning is also regarded by them as leading to accomplish the objectives of the class.

According to Jensen (2002), a lesson plan is an extremely useful tool because it is a guide document that reflects the teacher's teaching philosophy and his or her awareness of the student population, the textbooks and the class goals. Getting involved in lesson planning implies teachers making a professional effort to delineate the path through which they can articulate their vision of teaching and learning with the students' individual and collective needs, as well as with the goals of the social and educational context in a coherent and effective manner. In the exercise of planning teachers need to make decisions among a wide range of options and determine how they will be organized and presented to meet the educational ends.

Moreover, ILEOTEC enabled participants to deeply analyze the main reasons for planning a lesson by relying on the proposal made by Woodward (2001) where the author particularizes the following reasons to plan courses and lessons:

- Thinking things through before you teach helps to reduce feelings of uncertainty or panic and inspires you instead with a sense of confidence and clarity.
- It can inspire confidence in students who pick up a feeling of purpose, progression and coherence.
- It helps you to understand what research you need to do.
- It reminds you to marshal materials beforehand, and makes it easier for you to organise the time and activity flow in classes.
- If at least some of the planning is shared with students, they too will be able to gather their thoughts before class.
- Plans can be used in lessons to get things started, and prompt memory, and can help us to answer student questions.
- Working on planning after lessons, as well as before, ensures that the class you are teaching gets a balanced mixture of different kinds of materials, content and interaction types throughout the course.
- Course and lesson planning help you to develop a personal style since they involve sifting through all your information, resources and beliefs, and boiling them all down to a distillation for one particular group, time and place. This distillation, together with what happens in the classroom, represents a cross-section of the present state of your art! (p. 181)

In this respect, all the teachers claimed that planning fosters the proper organization of the class activities while reducing the chance that unexpected situations would take control of the class flow. Another reason mentioned by two out of three teachers was that planning might help teachers avoid the waste of time. These affirmations go in accordance with one of the reasons stated by Woodward (2001), in which she affirms that planning “reminds you to marshal materials beforehand, and makes it easier for you to organize the time and activity flow in classes”(p. 181). Furthermore, one of the teachers established a connection between planning to gain control over unexpected situations and the class flow with planning “to facilitate the conditions for our learners to make headway in their learning process” (Participant 2, Survey 4). This reason to plan a lesson is also considered by Woodward when she affirms that planning “...can inspire confidence in students who pick up a feeling of purpose, progression and coherence” (p. 181). Moreover, one of the teachers pointed out that “planning lessons beforehand allows teachers to be confident” (Participant 3, Survey 4). This is also found among the reasons to plan a lesson presented by Woodward when she states that planning “reduces feelings of uncertainty or panic and inspires you instead with a sense of confidence and clarity” (p. 181).

In addition to this, one of the teachers remarked that the preparation of courses and lessons gives you the opportunity to be creative and resourceful. This can be associated with Woodward’s ideas when she says that planning involves examining all the information, resources and beliefs a teacher holds at a particular time, and which in turn aids the development of own personal style. However, another teacher argued that teachers sometimes feel more comfortable teaching what is in their “private stock”, which could neglect taking advantage of

different resources, for instance, the ones offered by the publishing house and the textbook selected by the language institute.

Finally, one of the teachers declared to agree with all of the reasons stated by Woodward except the one related to “sharing the planning with students so they will be able to gather their thoughts before class” (p. 181), which was not referred to by any of the teachers either.

What is more, participants also identified the different factors that influence their planning process. In this respect, one of the teachers stated that “The topics and the students' English level have influenced me to plan my lessons” (Participant 3, Survey 4). Research findings show that students' abilities and interests influence planning in that teachers plan to meet students' needs (Warren, 2000).

Two participants declared that the need to include extra activities as energizers, role plays, games, videos, etc., as complements to the book, influence their planning. In a similar way, one of the participants mentioned that although they have to follow the textbook, this should only be a reference for the teacher. “Research also finds that instructional materials, such as textbooks, influence the sequence of material that teachers present and activities that teachers plan” (Warren, 2000, p. 40).

One participant affirmed the following: “Throughout my teaching experience, I have become aware of both, the need and obligation to plan a concrete [and] coherent set of steps, linguistic input description, and objectives for the class to be able to abide for” (Participant 2, Survey 4). In addition to this, the participant also indicated that planning is used “as a base to compare and reflect on the relation between what was planned and what actually took place in the class.”

The role of teaching experience as a shaping force for lesson planning has been widely recognized by several researchers and scholars. Warren (2000) points out that the most influential factor in planning is the actual experience of the teacher. "The more teaching experience teachers have, the more those teachers are able to reflect upon prior lessons and analyze what will be most effective for future lessons" (p. 40).

In the same line of reasoning, Brown (1988) states that lessons that have worked well in the past, have a great influence on their planning. Furthermore, other researchers such as Boroko and Niles (1982), Clark (1983), Clark and Elmore (1979), Clark and Peterson (1986), Kagan and Tippins (1992), McCutcheon (1980) and Yinger (1980) have suggested that when experienced teachers plan, they often reflect upon past lessons to determine how they can improve their teaching.

In relation to the extent to which participants develop their lesson plans, all the participants agree that they employ micro plans. This level of planning refers to the kind of planning carried out on a day-to-day basis without necessarily making regular reference to course goals or objectives (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). However, diverse perspectives are reflected in the way teachers approach micro plans. For example, one teacher claimed that:

*"I develop micro plans when planning my lessons to be more specific with the contents for each class. I think this kind of plan gives more organization to each of my classes and it is an [a] easier way to check if my students learn at the end of each lesson". (Participant 7, Survey 5)*

Other teachers stated: "it increases accuracy when designing a lesson as I am always aware of what my SS are supposed to learn and what I have prepared as well for every class" (Participant 6, Survey 5). Another teacher made reference to the advantages of designing a micro plan: "sometimes it works better bearing in mind that there are a lot of things going on in a

classroom... for example, students' attitude towards a certain activity, the learning difficulties when explaining a topic, indiscipline, and so on" (Participant 2, Survey 5). Another teacher stated: "Micro plans are more convenient and take into account changes in planning due to delays or classes taking longer to do scheduled activities" (Participant 4, Survey 5). Another teacher affirmed: "I prepare micro plans for my lessons because what I have in mind for a session may vary according to the development of the previous class" (Participant 8, Survey 5).

Less than half of the participants declared developing micro and macro plans. Macro plans represent the kind of planning based on overall goals for a course or a class (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Most of them agree on using macro plans to keep an account of the goals of a course. One of the teachers commented: "However there's certain macro plan when I plan and keep in mind the main aims of the course" (Participant 3, Survey 5). Likewise, another teacher stated: "Macro plannings help me to follow a determined goal that I pursue throughout the course" (Participant 5, Survey 5). Even though, one of the teachers declared: "In my personal case, I always have a macro plan for contents" (Participant 8, Survey 5). According to Jensen (2001), macro plans reflect the teachers' assumptions and beliefs about learning and teaching, and which are represented in the methodology, the syllabus, the texts, and other course materials used in a specific lesson and which take the form of a lesson plan. The author further states: "a good lesson plan is the result of both macro and micro planning" (p. 404). This idea is also shared by Ho (1995) who states that both planning approaches must be addressed. The author further asserts that reflection can play an important role in improving, from a micro perspective, teachers' skills; and from a macro perspective can help teachers to examine underlying principles and beliefs about teaching and learning.

Participants also reflected about the way they elaborate lesson plans. Most of the participants described the process of planning as a sequence of steps and activities to address during the class, while others keep track of the contents. For example, one of the teachers made the following remark: "I circle the activities I will do in the book and state clearly which activities I will not be doing" (Participant 4, Survey 5). This situation may reflect what was stated by Yinger (1979) when he asserts that all of the teachers' planning "could be characterized as decision making about the selection, organization, and sequencing of routines" (p. 165). The concept of routines as it is conceived by Yinger can be understood as a set of established procedures that teachers use to "regulate instructional activities and to simplify the planning process". Other teacher explained: "I feel better writing down my lesson plans because in this way I can keep in mind in a better way my students' needs, the time for each activity and the way each activity is going to be develop" (Participant 7, Survey 5). Researchers such as Yinger and Clark (1982) and Clark and Peterson (1986) agree on the fact that teachers often plan in circular and learner-centered ways. The excerpt above illustrates that usually, teachers do not plan focusing on lesson objectives, rather, they focus on the learners and specific classroom contexts, where teachers often depart from an initial idea of a learning activity, visualize the lesson, reconsider outcomes, and then adjust the initial idea developing a final plan. This process of planning goes against the 50's Tylerian traditional planning model, which "consists of a sequence of four steps: (a) specify objectives, (b) select learning activities, c) organize learning activities; and (d) identify evaluation procedures" (As cited in Gülten, 2013, p. 69)

Furthermore, the forms of planning that teachers develop also differ. Experienced teachers and those who are familiarized with the contents of the lesson prefer to rely on mental lesson plans. This reflects the point raised by Borko and Livingston (1989) in relation to the fact

that experienced teachers, in contrast to novice teachers, have a more general idea of their plans in their heads and anticipate learners' reactions and responses to their lessons being able to make adjustments. As an illustration, one of the teachers commented: "To be honest some years ago I felt more confident writing my lessons. Now after 20 years of teaching experience I find it easier to keep in mind the steps and activities of what I want to do in my lessons. Of course when I face new topics or subjects to teach I feel more comfortable when I write down my lessons plans" (Participant 3, Survey 5). Likewise, another teacher stated the following: "If I have not taught those contents before I prefer to write sth down as it is easier to remember and follow so I teach sth accurately. If I am familiar to the content, I just do it in my head. However, I always retake what I am going to cover so I don't improvise or just get sth much better than I had before" (Participant 6, Survey 5).

Some of the teachers who showed a preference for written lesson plans affirmed that writing helps them organize the activities following a coherent order: "Written one is better because you can organize a section and make it up in different time and to follow a coherent order"; "Writing definitely. It gives me more clarity and order" (Participant 1, Survey 5). Otherwise, some other teachers revealed that written plans help them remember the steps, objectives, or core ideas for the lesson: "Writing down my lesson plans works better for me because when I try to do it mentally, I usually forget some steps" (Participant 8, Survey 5). "I prefer to write it down, since sometimes it is difficult to remember all the goals and objectives you have planned"; "I normally write the core ideas I should never forget in the classes" (Participant 9, Survey 5).

Although a great number of the teachers admitted following a written plan, it is possible that these do not reflect the teachers' complete plan. In this respect, Morine Dersheimer (1979)



found that teachers usually include broader aspects of instruction and planning structures in what she called "lesson images" or "mental images" and that written plans do not reveal teachers' entire plan.

Concerning the format used for planning a lesson, only one of the participants declared not following any kind of template, while the other participants affirmed to follow their own format. Although ILEUSCO Institute does not make available for teachers a standardized format for short-term lesson plans, it is clear that most of the teachers prefer to follow a personal lesson plan format that guides their classes and which matches with their own system of beliefs, knowledge, and experience.

With respect to the aspects that teachers affirm to include in their lesson plan, it is usual to find to a larger extent, aspects such as class description, timing, anticipated problems and aims. Nonetheless, the most included aspect is the content. Although less mentioned, but usual, activities, students' expectations, procedures and types of interactions. The least included were teaching strategies, alternative possibilities, and materials. Only one of the teachers claims to include a space for reflection: "All the aspects related to the class itself, including the activities (step by step), anticipated problems, Ss level of english, aims, etc. and a space for reflection after it". According to Richards and Lockhart (1994), teachers make decisions around lesson objectives, activities to be performed by the students, time of learning activities, learning materials, teaching strategies, and possible problems. Only one of the teachers claims to include a space for reflection: "All the aspects related to the class itself, including the activities (step by step), anticipated problems, Ss level of english, aims, etc. and a space for reflection after it" (Participant 4, Survey 3). This is what was stated by Neely (as cited in Richards & Lockhart,

1994, p. 82) when this author affirms that "planning decisions are made after a process of reflection".

In view of what or how many elements should be included in the perfect lesson plan, as Haynes (2010) asserts, it would include the following: aims, objectives, assessment data, scope and content, pedagogical methods, teacher's expectations, learning activities, homework, differentiation of learning, progression in learning, other curricular links, time, space, resources, language, ancillary staff, risks, assessment, evaluation method(s), review procedure(s) (p. 65).

Most of the participants did not acknowledge the occurrence of any difficulties in their usual way of planning their lessons. Only one of them admitted having had problems with time management, specifically, spending longer than planned in an activity. Another participant contended that planning is part of the teacher's ethical formation, but because of his or her overloaded schedule, a teacher might not do it in a proper way.

There is great diversity in the way teachers at the ILEUSCO Institute approach lesson planning. This diversity is reflected in the different conceptions of planning, in the arguments presented regarding the importance of planning, the reasons why the plan, the factors that influence lesson planning, the process of the construction of lesson plans, the elements they take into account when building up their plan, and the problems that arise when planning. We see as positive the diversity expressed in teachers' voices and approaches since it not only unveils the pedagogic competences of teachers but also their capacity for being creative knowledge users. The exercise of reflecting on planning decisions can enrich teachers' understanding of their individual practices and particular approaches to learning and teaching. Although the results of exploring a common practice, such as lesson planning in a specific context, should not be

generalizable, they are useful to create meaning by interpreting local practices, to consider the consequences of these practices and thus improve educational practices.

**Identifying teachers' knowledge and beliefs underlying their planning decisions.**

This category is initially concerned with the mapping and informing elements of the reflective cycle tasks proposed on the ILEOTEC platform. First, we will address the description of the sample lesson plans participants posted on the first reflective task on the platform. Next, there is an analysis of the information collected on the second reflective task aimed at identifying the type of knowledge and beliefs which seem to be supporting those planning decisions. To this effect, each one of the cases is going to be expounded at a time.

*Case 1: Loraine.* As can be seen in Figure 4, Loraine's lesson plan was designed for a single class. She did not follow any format. The lesson plan was identified with the number and name of the unit of the textbook used for this class. Afterward, she included a list of the vocabulary items to be addressed in the lesson. She decided to include more items of vocabulary than those suggested by the book:

*"I always add more (way more) vocabulary... I think the book... is too basic for the students' level. In this case the book suggested only 8 words for "Favorite clothes", and they were all cold-weather clothes, so I decided to add many more words (all kind of weather clothes)".* (Description of lesson plan sample)

She supported this decision based on the knowledge she has about the learners: "I have been teaching these students since level 2, so I know they can learn more than only 8 or 10 words." (Description of lesson plan sample). This type of cognitive knowledge of learners (Turner-Bisset, 1999) is related to the kind knowledge acquired from the frequent or prolonged

contact with the students. Loraine's knowledge is context-bound and comprises the information and differentiation about what her students can do, know or understand.

Further on, she drafted a list of the materials and resources to be used. Finally, she enumerated a sequence of activities.

## UNIT 1: "Favorite Clothes"

Vocabulary - "Cold-weather clothes"

- Boots
- Coat
- Gloves
- Hat
- Raincoat
- Scarf
- Shoes
- Sweater

"Possessions"

- Lunchbox
- Stickers
- Bracelet
- Sunglasses
- Umbrella
- Key chain

Extra Vocabulary →

Jeans	- Headband	- Jacket	- Shirt
Pants	- Bow-tie	- Suit	- T-shirt
Shorts	- Tie	- Blouse	- Swimsuit
Dress	- Glasses	- High-heels	- Tank top
Sandals	- No-Hair	- Cap	- Flip-flops
Shoes	- Pyjamas	- Cardigan	
Hats	- Skirt	- Scarf	

### Class #01

Resources →

- Real clothes (women and men)
- Laptop (slides)
- Magazine
- Bored paper
- Cardboard (1/8)
- Scissors
- Colors, markers,

• Foam letters

- 1 The teacher will take real clothes out of a bag and will ask the students if they know (women or men) their names in English and if they would wear them in New York. If the answer is what they will be asked about the appropriate weather to wear them.
- 2 Once they have identified all the clothes they will be asked to classify them into four groups: seasons of the year. As they do this, the teacher will write the vocabulary on the board.
  - Summer
  - Fall
  - Winter
  - Spring

Next, students will be asked to add more words to the vocabulary on the board. They will play "Pass, Pass Stop!" to decide who will write the word on the board. Finally, they will be asked to write the vocabulary on their notebooks.

- 3 Students will work in groups of 3. They will be given bond paper and a popular ~~movie~~ the name of a city. They will have to draw a boy and a girl and "design" clothes for them according to the weather of the city. Once they've finished they will present their "designs" to their classmates and will describe what the boy and the girl are wearing.
- 4 Lottery: Students will make their own lottery boards. They will choose 16 words from the vocabulary they wrote on their notebooks and will draw the pictures of them on the paper. Once they've finished, the teacher will ask two students to take the words out of the bag so their classmates can cover the ones they hear. The winners will get a prize.
- 5 "Scrabble": To practice spelling, students will work in pairs and will be asked to take turns to build a big crossword with the words they have learned. They will use foam letters to do this.
- 6 Book → Happy Campers 4 (Unit 1) page 8 and 9 and page 1 (practice book). Students will be asked to identify the vocabulary on page 8 (Cold-weather clothes) and will listen to the song "Favorite clothes" to complete the text. Next they will solve the exercises on page 9 and page 1 on the practice book.

Figure 4. Loraine's lesson plan sample

Loraine also based her decisions on the material based on the knowledge she has about her students. She adapted the resources to be used in the lesson according to her students' needs:

*“Since I have been teaching these kids for a long a time, I know they love simple learning games and crafts. This is the reason why I ask them to bring to class material such as construction paper, cardboard, scissors, glue and colors to make their own board games and practice the vocabulary they learn in a more dynamical way”.* (Description of lesson plan sample)

This decision is also consistent with one of the beliefs about teaching that Loraine expressed in her reflective journal:

*“However, I think that one of the most important things to take into account when it comes to teach English to kids and young learners is to listen to them. To get to know them allow us to choose and plan the best activities that could work for them according to the class objectives. I always ask my students about what they would like to do in order to practice a specific topic”.* (Discussion 1)

Loraine's beliefs about teaching are consistent with her beliefs about self: “I like to think I am an easy going teacher in the way I like to negotiate with my students so they can feel and know how important they really are”. (Discussion 1)

Loraine's beliefs about learning and self are also interrelated with the decisions she made about the kinds of materials and resources used for the lesson. As a matter of fact, she asked her students to bring the materials required to make the board games to practice the vocabulary in a dynamic way:

*“Based on my experience, fear is one of the factors that hold learners from taking an active role in the learning process. In my opinion, giving them the chance to take part in the*

*decisions we make about how the class should be addressed is a good way to help them get rid of the fears and stress they experience when learning and practicing a second language”.*

(Discussion 1)

In this sense, Krieger (2005) asserts that materials and resources ought to be modified and adapted in order to fulfill the learners' language needs. Loraine also adapted her lesson according to her students' needs regardless of what is mandated by the textbook: “I always include games and collaborative activities in my lesson plans, and forget about the book for about an 80% of the class”. (Discussion 1)

Regarding Loraine's decisions about including a sequence of activities, she said: “I find it easier and as effective to plan my class just writing down the activities on a piece of paper” (Description of lesson plan sample). She stated these activities, some in terms of teacher routines and others in terms of the tasks that students would perform.

Despite not having specified the lesson goals or objectives in the lesson plan, it is evidenced that when Loraine describes the learning activities proposed, she is addressing to specific learning objectives. As an illustration, she planned the following activity: “To practice spelling, students will work in pairs and will be asked to take turns to build a big crossword with words they have learned. They will use the foam letters to do this” (Lesson plan sample). In this respect, Richard and Lockhart (1994) assert that teachers do not usually plan their lessons around the kinds of behavioral objectives that they are often instructed to use in teacher training programs.

The way Loraine planned the activities demonstrates “the prominence of pupils in the planning thoughts of experienced teachers” (John, 1991, p. 309). And this has a coherent relationship with what she contented in the discussion forum entry: “Besides, I have always

thought that English (or any other subject) needs to be taught placing the student in the most important place” (Discussion 1). Loraine is also aware of the role of the context in language teaching, and she believes that some conditions must be considered to build an appropriate atmosphere in her lessons:

*“I am aware that not all of them (the students) are taking the class because they want to, but because their parents made the decision for them. Also, I know it is hard for them to wake up early on Saturdays and go to a 4 hour class after a long week at school.”* (Discussion 1)

In the first activity Loraine planned, she also decided to check with the students' background knowledge about clothing vocabulary. This planning action is supported by her belief about learning in the following sense:

*“Although, I still take into account what we were taught about Ausubel and his meaningful learning theory. Even though his theory is not recent, I think he set strong bases to acquire a second language. This is the reason why I always start a class with a review from the previous one, and add more information related to it as the students show understanding”.*

(Reflective journal 1)

Loraine's view of learning goes in accordance with what Ausubel asserted in the sense that language learning is an innate ability that combines the intellectual understanding of language as an intricate system of grammatical structures with the desire to communicate within meaningful contexts. As a result, second-language learning is viewed as a process of rule-governed creativity, allows comprehension of the language ahead language production, and incorporates all the features of language learning. (Ausubel, 1968; Carroll, 1966)

Loraine valued her practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1981) as the basis in which she supports her teaching approaches: “I started teaching English 8 years ago, and definitely, it has been



through the years that I have realized that our classes cannot be so teacher, textbook or grammar centered” (Discussion 1). Moreover, she reported that participation in ILEOTEC enabled her to reflect on how this practical knowledge shapes her planning decisions:

*“Now that I am having the chance to reflect on why I make the decisions I make when planning my classes, I realize that these decisions are the result of successful and not very successful classes. It has been by making right and wrong decisions that I have got to learn what a successful class can depend on”.* (Discussion 1)

Regardless Loraine didn't specify in the lesson plan sample any element of assessment, she later reflected about how the role played by her own teachers from the time she was a language student, has an impact on the evaluation methods she uses for her lessons:

*“The way my lesson planning is influenced by my experience as an EFL student is also reflected in the kind of material I use to evaluate my students' performance. I still keep the rubrics my professors used to evaluate my oral performance and my written tasks, for example.”* (Reflective journal 1)

Hence, Loraine's own experiences as a second language learner set the basis of her pedagogical content knowledge and exert a significant influence on her planning decisions.


The main elements of Loraine's lesson plan were the language items and the activities, which in turn, worked as a guide for other components of the lesson plan. Here, much of her pedagogical content knowledge was revealed through the creation of the sequence of the activities. Loraine's planning decisions validate an informed personal teaching philosophy constructed through the years of teaching practice. It reflects participant's views of language learning and the nature of language teaching as a ruled-based approach. Most of her decisions show that planning deliberations about materials and learning activities are mainly integrated

around the knowledge she possesses about her students, particularly their needs and their abilities. Also, much of her decisions intend to foster students' active engagement within the learning process. Her planning decisions also depict her views about the teacher's role as a motivator and someone who promotes a supportive learning environment. Some of her beliefs and knowledge relate very much to her own experience as a language learner and have a great influence on her planning decisions.

*Case 2 John.*

**IMMERSION ROOM - SESSION PLAN BY JUAN TOVAR**

LEVEL: 3 WEEK: 1 UNIT: 6 SESSION 9 TOPIC: MY DAILY ROUTINE



AIM: By the end of the session students will be able to describe their daily routines using adverbs of frequency.



TIME	STAGE	AIM	PROCEDURE	INTER.	COMMENTS
15 min	Warm-up	Use previous learning and foster students' interest	<p>VIDEO: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laqjYGj9I4">www.youtube.com/watch?v=laqjYGj9I4</a></p>  <p>1. T starts the class by asking the students: Are you able to recognize this character? Call his name.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>T shows the students a short video: "Mr. Bean's Daily Routine". <b>The video has not dialogue, therefore it is not a listening exercise</b></li> <li>Students are asked to describe some of the actions that the protagonist is carrying out. T will write these actions on the board as a list that will be complemented with the aid of a hand-out. e.g. <b>Mr. bean brushes his teeth in the morning.</b></li> </ul> <p>In case the teacher do not have access to the video, they can show some pictures to led the students into the topic, for example some pictures of Mr. bean getting up, brushing his teeth, etc.</p>	S-S	Teacher can find more videos on you tube regarding the topic, e.g. <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laqjYGj9I4">www.youtube.com/watch?v=laqjYGj9I4</a>
40 min	Task Input	To introduce the topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher will hand out a worksheet (attachment 2.1.1) that contains some exercises about Mr. Bean's Daily Routine.</li> <li>Students in pairs must identify and relate the actions that Mr. Bean did or did not carry out in the video. For this, Students must remember the sequence of actions shown in the video. (exercise 1)</li> </ul> <p>At this point, the T will have the chance to trigger some questions in order to introduce the new vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to the video,</li> <li>Is Mr. Bean's routine alike yours? Explain why.</li> <li>What time do you wake up?</li> <li>How often do you read a book?</li> <li>Do you always brush your teeth?</li> <li>Do you play an instrument?</li> <li>Do you usually go to the dentist?</li> </ul> <p>Answers: I wake up at 7 o'clock</p> <p>I never go to the doctor</p> <p>I always brush my teeth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does Mr. Bean do something that you never do in your daily routine?</li> </ul>	S-S  T-S  S-S	Explain each section of the hand-out and time them up.
		Provide personalized and controlled practice	<p>While students are answering, teacher writes on the board the adverbs of frequency (always, never, rarely, usually and sometimes) and clarifies their meaning and use. Focusing also on the structure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on the new vocabulary students in the same pairs, must write 5 sentences from the pictures (Mr Bean's daily routine), using the five adverbs of frequency provided (exercise 2). E.g. <i>Mr. Bean usually wakes up at 6:30 am, He always plays the guitar etc.</i></li> <li>Teacher makes a quick round up of students sentences, providing accurate feedback</li> </ul>		
35 min	Post task Wrap up	Assessment and feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are given a piece of recycled paper or even a legal-sized paper, in which they have to write and illustrate 5 sentences of their daily routine, (exercise 3)</li> </ul> 	S-S  T-S	Students will be assessed by the time they describe their classmates' daily routines. They will be reminded of the use of key vocabulary and adverbs.
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every student will have only 10 minutes to draw themselves doing their daily routines. Then they will have to stick them onto the walls at random. The teacher will ask them to sit back down. Subsequently to that, the teacher will go round the classroom and will describe some drawings and students must guess who the T is talking about. Finally each student will do the same as the teacher did with someone's else poster until everybody guesses their classmates.</li> </ul>		

Figure 5. John's lesson plan sample

John shared a written lesson plan with a great degree of specificity. Figure 5 illustrates the way John used a format that included the following information to identify the lesson: room, course level, the number of the week, unit, number of the session, topic, and general aim. Additionally, the lesson plan included the following elements: (a) time, (b) stage, (c) enabling objectives under the label of aim, (d) procedure, (e) type of interaction, and (f) comments. John decided to divide the lesson into three main stages: (a) warm-up, (b) task input; and (c) post-task and wrap-up. The warm-up activity aimed at activating students' previous knowledge and engage them with the class and the topic. The task input stage, aimed at introducing the topic, providing input, boosting students' communicative skills, and providing personalized and controlled practice. The final stage intended to assess students' progress and provide feedback.

John's lesson plan decisions evidenced both a micro-level and a macro-level approach to planning. He reports the reason why he designed his lesson plan in the following passage: "In my point of view, I consider that the lesson plan should be designed in a macro level, taking into account academic and behavioral goals and specific objectives. (Discussion 1). According to Jensen (2001) a good lesson plan is the endpoint of many different stages where a teacher's philosophy of learning and teaching is reflected (macro-level), and which comprises the methodology, the syllabus, the texts, materials and other elements (micro-level) (p. 404). What is more, John not only bases his decision on approaching lesson planning from a macro-level on his pedagogical content knowledge, but also on his belief that this level of planning prevents him from wandering off task and to develop the class accordingly to the learning objectives: "The macro level gives you the right map not to wander off". (Discussion 1). The passages reveal that John relies heavily on course goals and objectives to guide his planning. Nunan (1988) points out that making course or lesson objectives explicit in this way achieves the following: (a) learners

have an idea of what can be achieved in a course, (b) enables seeing learning as a gradual buildup of achieved goals, (c) students become aware of their role as language learners and what it is to be a learner, (d) self-evaluation becomes more feasible, (e) classroom activities relate to learners' real-life needs, (f) the development of skills can be seen as a gradual process” (As cited in Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 80)

John further expanded on the processes and on his routines to plan a lesson. He believes that it is crucial to know student's context and background in order to make the right decisions at the moment of planning and setting learning objectives: “Before planning, I try to know the context my students come from, by knowing all this, I start macro planning and setting up goals and academic objectives”. (Reflective journal 1). John establishes learning objectives bearing in mind not only the knowledge he has about his students, but also on his knowledge about the materials, the spaces, and resources the institute provides: “Apart from knowing students' background it is also crucial to know the different environments the school provides, in this way any teacher can take decisions about where, how and when to carry out certain activity or lesson”. (Reflective journal 1)

John believes that it is important to have a well-established step by step plan to develop the lesson accordingly to the learning objectives so that he can focus on student achievement. This way he makes sure to make the most of the time for the students to get as much meaningful learning and information during each lesson:

*“Planning is a good way to decide which step comes in a sequence of linked activities, therefore it is necessary to be ready and sure to go. Not planning means to enter the improvisation world where any decision can be taken without thinking about real consequences*

*within the classrooms. Students are fairly affected by our improvised acts and unmeaningful learning would be promoted along the way.*" (Reflective journal 1)

John's views, assumptions, and knowledge about language learning are reflected in the kind of activities John decided to include in the lesson plan. John organized the sequence of the lesson around some general principles of ESL methodology. He planned simple activities before complex ones; the activities involving receptive skills preceded those involving productive skills; students were given the opportunity to study a grammar item before trying to use it; accuracy-focused activities preceded fluency-focused ones, and there was a progression from mechanical activities to meaningful activities. (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Within the activities John designed it is clear to distinguish pre-communicative and communicative activities and which reveal John's approach to Communicative Language Teaching.

As can be observed in figure 5, in the procedure section of the lesson plan besides specifying step by step all the activities to be carried out during the lesson, John included all the details about the resources, the materials, and even the links to the videos to be used. In addition, he provided an alternative plan in case electronic devices were not available; he provided a plan B to continue with the class topic going: "In case the teacher do not have access to the video, they can show some pictures to led the students into the topic, for example some pictures of Mr. bean getting up, brushing his teeth, etc." (Lesson plan sample). Furthermore, in the comments section of the lesson plan, John added extra information about more materials like video links for additional practice (Lesson plan sample).

Decisions about planning at a macro-level do not prevent John from allowing flexibility in his teaching decisions and/or actions. What is more, he believes it is important to modify his plan if necessary by making "spot decisions" which he considers relevant at the moment of

revitalizing the class or responding to students' attitudes, likes, motivation towards the topic, response to the previously planned activities, or to reinforce any element of the lesson topic. The following entry exemplifies the former:

*“Although, Sometimes the macro plan is made in advanced, this might cause some gaps while the class is being carried out as when we planned we did not know some factors such as: students` attitudes, likes, strengths and weaknesses among many others. It is necessary to identify these factors in order to take spot decisions as well, as it might complement the macro plan stated above. In some way, I consider that previous class planning is necessary but spot decisions are also crucial in order to make class more dynamic and enriching.”* (Discussion 1)

According to Richards and Lockhart (1994) making appropriate “on-the-spot” or “interactive” decisions “is an essential teaching skill, since they enable teachers to assess students' response to teaching and to modify their instruction in order to provide optimal support for learning” (p. 84). The authors further state that a teacher who is guided only by the lesson plan and who ignores the interactional dynamics of the teaching-learning process is hence less likely to be able to respond to students' needs (p. 84). John is not only aware of how interactive decisions make possible support students learning, he is also aware of the circumstances that might influence the dynamics of the teaching-learning process and how interactive decisions inform planning decisions:

*“Well, Spot decision might arise regarding different circumstances, imaging there is not electricity or there is someone drilling a wall next to your classroom, you might think fast and move the students to another classroom, even you might teach outdoors... these are just some example that might occur. Spot decision are spontaneous in my point of view; if you mention the spot decisions in a future lesson plan that might be included in the foreseeable problems and*

*then make a plan B, however some spot decisions just came to my mind to be triggered right away to change the dynamism of my classes. Spot decision are strongly related to the change of an activity, keeping the planned topic but explained or taught in a different way compared to the former one.*" (Discussion 1)

Shavelson and Stern (1981) have pointed out the importance of relating planning and interactive decisions. They suggest that "planning also takes place during classroom instruction when improvised decisions are made" (p. 477)

Additionally, John elaborates on the values that guide his decisions. He emphasizes how planned activities aimed at providing students learning are above his personal comfort. He also mentions the recurring context factors that might affect a lesson plan, and which makes him consider an alternative course of action during the lesson:

*"Sometimes teachers tend to change the order of a sequence of events in the classroom due to the comfort it might bring to them, however this events have been planned, by event I mean: "activities"; I usually change the order of activities due to factors like time, space, lack of ICTs among other issues."* (Reflective journal 1)

John believes that his practical knowledge is one of the main sources upon which his planning and interactive decisions are based. *"It is certain that studies do not offer you all the tools to succeed in any operation. It is the teaching experience or praxis which gives the most solid tricks to teach "properly".* (Reflective journal 1). This goes in accordance with what was stated by Elbaz (1981) when she says that "much of what teachers know originates in practice and which shape their instructional practice and extend teacher's knowledge" (p. 49)

In his reflective journal, John elaborates on how he came to realize that his previous knowledge of the English language was not enough to be a well-prepared teacher. He



acknowledges how at the beginning he mirrored his professors' styles and methodologies, but as he progressed in his university studies he felt much more comfortable and confident of doing a better job as a teacher with the methodologies and approaches knowledge he gained, helping him to build his on teacher persona:

*“Before enrolling at USCO, I already knew how to speak English in an intermediate level. I used to teach some private classes with no formal teaching experience, however I tried to look for the topics I was going to explain and what I did was to imitate my English teachers and copy their methodologies without comprehending all the theory and practice behind that fact”.*

(Reflective journal 1)

John is also well aware of his strengths and limitations as a teacher. He sees himself as a continuous learner of his profession, always thrilled to enrich his pedagogical content knowledge and to gain more academic foundations.

*“After my academic preparation I realized I had a quite long way to go before teaching English. I got solid foundations about methodologies and approaches and I also reflected on how irresponsible I was when I taught English with no academic background”.* (Reflective journal 1)

One of the areas he considers he has not had the opportunity to explore and deepen is lesson planning research and group planning; recurrent topics that he got the opportunity to reflect on while participating in the space provided by the ILEOTEC online community: “little experience I have had in team or group planning, same as little experience in researching for planning better”. (Reflective journal 1)

John's reflections unveil his views about teaching and learning being of great importance the role of students within the teaching-learning process. He sees planning and structuring of

learning activities as fundamental to success in teaching and learning. His role is concerned with managing the classroom environment to provide appropriate learning opportunities according to the students' needs and background knowledge. John is highly aware of the educational context where his teaching takes place and the factors that influence his planning decisions. At the same time, his planning decisions are aligned with his underlying beliefs and knowledge about learning and teaching. He also made evident how he correlates planning and interactive decisions and how these inform each other.

**Case 3: Mike.**

LESSON PLAN

Week	Learning objectives	Process	Unit(s)
1	Students will participate in communicative activities where they will use the present perfect, past simple, comparatives and superlatives.	Percentage to notes, Family activities, Easter, Easter & the world's friendliest city.	AC-BC-10
2	Students will participate in communicative activities where they will use the comparatives and superlatives. (Extension: practice), practical English, describing where you live & the house and check of unit 6.	Easter, Easter & the world's friendliest city, last in San Francisco, describing where you live (writing) & what do you remember/what can you do? (Review and Check)	4B-4C-4D
3	Students will participate in a great preparation for first examination (Unit 4 Clustering, reading, reading and writing).	From legs to notes, Family activities, Easter, Easter & the world's friendliest city & last in San Francisco	All unit 4
4	Students will participate in communicative activities where they will use the comparatives or superlatives of a department store & a formal e-mail (writing).	Are you a party animal, what makes you feel good? - How much can you learn in a month? & the name of game.	5A-5B-5C-5D
5	Students will participate in communicative activities where they will use the practical English while at a department store, a formal e-mail (writing) & the review and check. They will also review the workshop activities in unit 5 and some preparation for the evaluation of this unit.	At a department store, a formal e-mail (writing), review and check (What can you do?) And feedback on workshop activities of unit 5 (Are you a party animal, what makes you feel good? How much can you learn in a month? & the name of game & of a department store.	Unit(s) At a department store, A formal e-mail (writing), Review and Check.
6	Evaluation of Unit 5 (Clustering, speaking, reading and writing). Beginning of unit 6. Students will participate in communicative activities where they will use the final conditional, and second conditional.	If something bad can happen, it will & never smile at a possible.	6A & 6B
7	Students will participate in communicative activities where they will use the should/shouldn't, an writing to a friend, what should I do, all the primary, writing to a friend & Review and Check (What do you remember? / What can you do?)	Students, decisions, what should I do, all the primary, writing to a friend & Review and Check (What do you remember? / What can you do?)	7C-7D
8	on unit 6 and some preparation for the evaluation of this unit.		
9	Evaluation of Unit 6 (Clustering, speaking, reading and writing).	Unit 6 topic: If something bad can happen, it will & never smile at a possible, decisions, what should I do, all the primary, writing to a friend & Review and Check (What do you remember? / What can you do?)	All unit 6
10			

Figure 6. Mike's lesson plan sample

Mike's lesson plan was identified with the teacher's name and the course level. The format of the lesson plan consisted of a table of four columns with headings for the following elements: week number, learning objectives, topic(s), and text unit number.

Regarding learning objectives, these were stated in terms of behavioral objectives. Despite not specifying learning activities, Mike seems to make use of these objectives to guide his lessons, which reflects his predilection to follow macro-plans or overall goals for a course or a class and which according to Richards and Lockhart (1994) these "help teachers to develop the plans they use on a day-to-day basis" (p. 78).

Mike's lesson plan was designed as a medium-term plan (Haynes, 2010) which covered an eight weeks sequence of lessons. In this sense, Clark and Yinger (as cited in Clark & Peterson, 1984, p. 31) determined that teachers' planning may take eight "different forms according to the time span for which the planning takes place: daily, weekly, long range, short range, yearly, and term planning". Mike's decision about developing a term planning is based on his belief about how the relationship between the language curriculum and the textbook contents affects negatively his planning decisions as he asserted in the discussion forum: "Additionally, another problem I admit to have is that I feel that we are chained to the book and it rules during most the class because we are responsible to cover the units for the level" (Discussion 1). In the same way, Mike believes that the relationship between the language curriculum and the textbook also affects students' learning process and do not match students' language needs: "I contend that we apply a book that contains each exercise that we are compelled to teach and there is really little time to put some remedial work that can be beneficial to the students" (Discussion 1). Aforecited, reveals the tension that, as indicated by Larenas and Navarrete (2015) "teachers face

when it comes to deciding what to follow when they lesson plan: the language curriculum or their students' real language needs" (p. 179).

Mike uses the textbook-based curriculum as the basis to conduct his lesson planning. However, Mike's curriculum-based approach to planning goes against his beliefs about teaching. The following excerpt reflects that his beliefs about teaching involve promoting interactional patterns among students that suit their knowledge, experiences, and interests: "I think that I use an interactional approach by having students interact among themselves and personalizing everything they do, as a way to raise their motivation" (Discussion 1). Moreover, Mike's planning decisions are incompatible with his pedagogic principles and this can influence the way he perceives the learners, learning process, and the role of the program:

*"I recognize that the major problem I face is the fact that some students do not have the level to be classified as they are. Some students fall behind the knowledge and skills of the other members of the class".* (Discussion 1)

Mike's beliefs about students' limited skills and the role of the program in supporting placement processes have an impact on his expectations for students' learning and on his classroom practices. However, Mike is aware of the current misalignment between his classroom practices and his theoretical beliefs, that is why he decided to get engaged in professional development activities involving research, as a way to enrich his pedagogical knowledge.

*"I also feel that sometimes I practice teacher-centered instruction and this is why I decided to take part of a collaborative action research with IResearch and the opportunity provided by [the researchers] to pitch in their research work because it is an enriching academic experience for my professional development."* (Discussion 1).

According to Farrell (2013) “the systematic reflection of the alignment between beliefs and practices can help teachers develop an understanding of both what they want to do in their classrooms and the changes they want to implement to their approaches to teaching and learning” (p. 14).

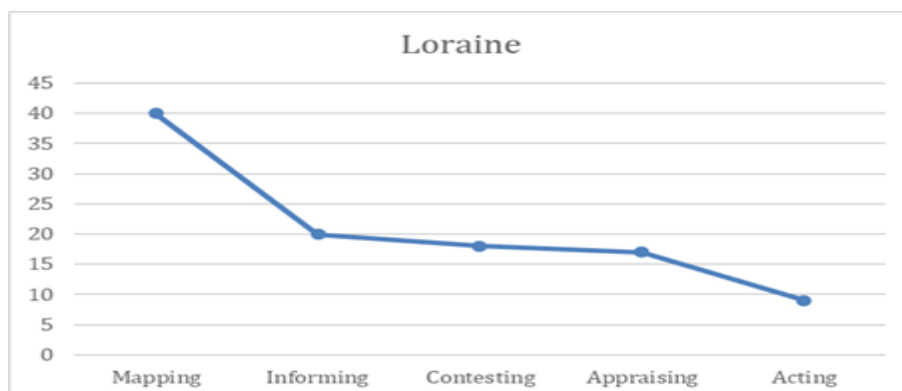
As the examples referenced above, there is a great diversity in the decisions that teachers at ILEUSCO Institute make when planning a lesson due to several contextual factors. Teachers have the autonomy to plan their lessons within a macro curriculum framework. However, teachers' planning decisions are concerned with more than simply issues of curriculum content. When they plan their lessons, they unveil their personal views of teaching and learning, and of how learning takes place. The diversity of knowledge and beliefs that support planning decisions are evidenced in the way teachers approach lesson planning, the level of planning the employ, the way they state objectives for their lessons, organize the linguistic input, the contents, the material for the lessons, the set of activities proposed, and how these elements interact among each other.

Findings around this issue are consistent with what was found by Richards (1996), who affirms that “teachers possess rational orientations toward teaching as well as personal beliefs about what constitutes good teaching and these lead them to try to create specific conditions in their classrooms” (p. 285). Although teachers do not allude to the knowledge and beliefs that according to the theory should be, they believe and know: that a supportive learning environment is necessary for learning to take place; that teaching needs to be carried out by placing the student in the most important place; that teaching can be ruled-based, function-based or curriculum-based; that the role of the teacher on the classroom is the one of motivator and facilitator; that the role of the students should be active; that teaching components must be

adapted in order to fulfill the learners' language needs; that some conditions must be considered to build an appropriate atmosphere in the lessons; that there is not a proper placement process for students in the courses; that course level do not match some students' skills and knowledge; that the textbook is too basic for the students' level; that the relationship with between the language curriculum and the coursebook contents affects negatively their planning decisions and affects students' learning process; that the textbook does not match students' language needs; that knowledge of own experiences as second language learner exert a significant influence on their planning decisions; that their knowledge about students is context-bounded; that students have different levels of skills and knowledge; that planning decisions are the result of successful and not very successful classes; and that research is an opportunity to professional development.

**The role of the online reflective teacher community (ILEOTEC) in the reflection processes of teachers.** This category addresses the reflectivity development of the participants at the contesting, appraising and acting levels of the reflective cycle proposed on the ILEOTEC platform. To the effect, each one of the three cases is elaborated on at a time. In the end, the participants' perceptions about the strengths, limitations and improvement possibilities of the ILEOTEC platform are also highlighted.

***Case 1: Loraine.***



*Figure 7.* Frequency of Loraine's reflective traits

It was by virtue of ILEOTEC that Loraine was given the opportunity to strengthen her reflectivity development. As a matter of fact, she was able to keep being consistently reflective throughout all the ILEOTEC tasks. Even though she evidenced a higher performance at the level of mapping (40 entries) in comparison to the informing (20 entries), contesting (18 entries), appraising (17 entries) and the acting one (9 entries), she could articulate her critical standpoints about planning with her new insights into educational context, institutional requirements, her theories and beliefs about teaching and learning, her pedagogical knowledge, time management constraints, resources, self-development, and alternative to solve problems.

Throughout Loraine's involvement in ILEOTEC, she not only assumed a critical stance on the relationships between her thoughts and her actions but also reflected on the relationships between her as individual teacher and the institutional structures in which her work is embedded. She critically reflected on different issues such as the existence of "inadequate" institutional requirements, lack of resources, classroom management, time management, lack of professional skills to face the different classroom ongoing situations and lack of time to reflect.

Loraine inquired about the institutional requirements that she considers can be an obstacle to improve her teaching:

*"I am aware of the obstacles we find when we want to improve our teaching. Sadly, when we work for private schools, institutional requirements come in first place. It happened to me that I felt frustrated due to the way English teaching was being directed based on textbooks that had not been designed according to the students' environment and needs."* (Discussion 2)

In this sense, Loraine reflects on how a textbook-based curriculum is not aligned with her knowledge about her students, the context and her pedagogical knowledge. This concurs with the findings of the ILEUSCO self-evaluation process in which was stated that:

The curriculum lacks the necessary components, such as general and/or specific objectives, pedagogical strategies, complementary materials, evaluation activities, and values to become a curricular application tool. Due to this fact, teachers are guided only by the units of the book. The absence of these components does not allow teachers to have a guide for their performance, nor to know how each part is articulated. (ILEUSCO, 2012, p. 53)

Loraine considers it contradictory not to feel free to express her views or opinions because she is subject to institutional requirements: “Another contradiction is the one about having to stick to the institutional requirements. I understand it is not easy to express or state our opinion” (Discussion 3). On the other hand, according to the institute's self-assessment report, teachers do not participate in academic functioning and there is ignorance of some important aspects of the institute. Thus, Loraine is aware of the disarticulation between institutional policies and the teacher's role in the development and change of the curriculum. She further stated: “Some schools do not understand this and end up choosing textbooks that are not appropriate for the students' level, or meaningful to them.” (Discussion 3). According to Carr and Kemmis (1986) the professionalism of teachers “should be expanded to include the opportunity to participate in the decisions made about the broader educational context in which they operate” (p. 9).

As can be evidenced with the analysis of the following reference, through the development of the reflective tasks proposed in the ILEOTEC platform, Loraine not only adopted a contesting attitude, but she also appraised some alternatives to solving what she considered institutional contradictions:



*“However, I think we have to take an active role when discussing the institutional requirements with the coordinators/directors/principals. It is important that we help them notice how important it is to develop some skills (Listening and Speaking), before we aim to develop other skills such as Reading and Writing”.* (Discussion 3)

Loraine not only was able to reflect on the institutional requirements she found contradictory. She moved on to inquire about how the lack of availability of resources constraints involving ICTs in her planning. Consequently, she advanced through the appraising stage and finally she was able to share with the ILEOTEC community the solution that she undertook to solve this problem. In this specific topic, Loraine became aware of the contesting situation, considered a solution and moved on to act upon it. This was equally evident to one of the issues that Loraine considered as one her biggest planning problems. Throughout the different reflective tasks, it became evident to Loraine her difficulties related to time management: “To be honest, I have problems with this aspect. :( Sometimes the students are having so much fun, that I do not care about the exact time I was supposed to use for that part of the class.” (Discussion 3). Along Loraine’s entries in the discussion forums it was recurrent the numerous effects that this aspect of her planning had on her teaching practices, and students learning: “terminaba corriendo porque no había cubierto todas las lecturas para esa unidad.” (Discussion 3). Later she found how her actions were contradictory to her teaching principles:

*“Of course I have found myself in trouble due to this situation. I have had to postpone many other activities that are crucial to the understanding of the topic, or ask my students to develop some book activities at home, which is not correct as some of them need to be teacher guided.”* (Discussion 3)

What is more, she noticeably was able to critically reflect about the underlying assumptions behind this problem:

*“This reflecting process has made me understand that I do not base my classes on the time I have to develop them, because I place in a more important place the activities (communicative, interactive...) that I am going to carry out in order to get them engaged and interested in the class.”* (Discussion 3)

She then moved forward and started to consider alternative solutions. Finally, after this systematic process of reflection Loraine was committed to the changes she considered necessary to adjust her planning decisions and improve her teaching practices:

*“Me acuerdo que mientras estaba en eso pues sí caí en cuenta y entonces empecé a poner... osea a usar temporizador... Con el temporizador entonces ahí como que he manejado mejor el tiempo y lo que hice fue empezar a dar turnos... por lo tanto iba a asignar turnos en los que a lo largo de la clase todos van a participar, pero en diferentes actividades y que íbamos a tener un tiempo específico en aras de cubrir todo el lesson plan. También empecé a escribir. Y a escribir como que primero el listening tantos minutos, lo que siguiera, no sé, posters tantos y así iba también organizando. Otra cosa que simplemente llevar como una agenda, pero por escrito en la que hacía una lista de las actividades que iba a desarrollar en esa clase y obviamente... digamos si ponía 10 minutos de pronto me tomaba 13, 15 pero empecé a controlar mucho mejor y sí fui como cubriendo más los objetivos de la clase o al menos el tema que tenía que cubrir en la clase.”* (Discussion 4)

Despite time management was of great importance to Loraine, the involvement in ILEOTEC allowed her to consider alternatives to solve the other conflicting topics that emerged

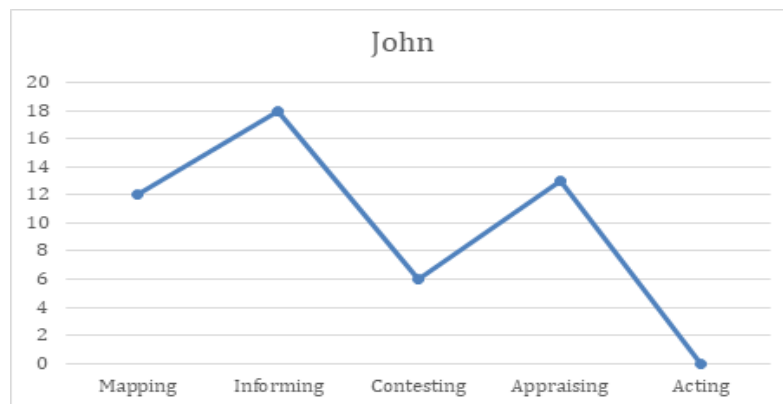
during the discussions with their colleagues. She articulated these as a list of hints or suggestions:

*“However, after reflecting on my planning decision-making process and my colleagues’, there are a couple things I would like to keep in mind next time I plan a class: [a] Time management. It is possible that the amount of activities for each unit has to be reduced; [b] To be ready to make as many spot decisions as necessary; [c] To have a plan B in case things do not turn out as planned. (Technology issues, for instance); [d] Class participation. I let them all participate in every activity. However, this extends the activity and increase the classroom noise as some students feel bored after ten on twelve classmates carrying out the same activity; [e] Try to use more technology. (At least twice a month) The fact that we do not have as many resources at Colegio Departamental, holds me back from planning classes where I can use a video beam, for example; [f] To ask for advice to our colleagues and professors. Sometimes their experience can be really useful to cope with daily school issues.” (Discussion 3)*

In the following excerpts, it is also possible to conclude that Loraine managed to acquire new understandings, knowledge, and beliefs as a result of the reflective process in ILEOTEC: “The success of the class depends on a high level on how we prepare for it.” (Discussion 3); “Reflecting on the decisions I make when I plan my lessons has helped me understand (and remember) that teaching is an extremely complex process in which many factors play an important role.” (Discussion 3); “Now, I am aware that most of the decisions I make are influenced by the characteristics of the students I am teaching, rather than the contents I have to teach.” (Discussion 3); “And I am also aware of the big amount of spot decisions I make due to the fact that I am not very good at time management! (I had not noticed I do not take time into account that much).” (Discussion 3)

Loraine also reflected on how this reflection process helped her to be aware of the many things that due to routine she forgets to revise and how systematic reflection can aid planning processes. Likewise, the reflection process accomplished was useful not only for the ILEUSCO context but also transcended to other contexts in which Loraine worked later. There is evidence that the experiences of reflection in ILEOTEC influenced the professional development of this participant.

***Case 2: John.***



*Figure 8.* Frequency of John's reflective traits

John's involvement in ILEOTEC allowed determining the different processes of reflection he was involved in. Along the different reflective tasks, he displayed a higher performance at the level of informing (18 entries) followed in a lower frequency the appraising (13 entries) and mapping (12 entries) stages and contesting (6 entries) being the less frequent.

John was often concerned with issues related to resources and material, institutional requirements, learning activities, planning process, and planning elements. He often reflected on the reasons that might bring forth problems and the concrete alternatives to solve them. He also tried to contribute from his experience and provide strategies to succeed in planning.

For example, John questions about how the lack of availability of laboratories disregards the inclusion of ICTs tools in his lesson plans. He also contests that although he is required to plan his lessons based on the textbook, he still is free to decide about how he conducts his teaching:

*"We plan based on the book content Ilesco provides us. So, our planning is too attached to the institution requirement concerning to the English topics, despite this they do not force us to teach our own way... We are free to teach them (pupils) the way we think we are right. [...] Activities might come in any shape and nobody would contradict them"* (Discussion 2)

Later, as an alternative, John considered the following course of action:

*"The best way to succeed in our lesson plan and teaching process is to follow the institution requirements and elaborating our own material to be applied bearing in mind some obstacles that might arise, in this way we should include foreseeable problem solutions and as last resource spot decisions."* (Discussion 2)

John not only reflected about the relationship that visible institutional requirements have with his planning decisions, and with students learning but also recognizes his teacher planning decisions like the ones which have a direct impact on students learning and which agenda is to provide appropriate opportunities for students to learn.

John's involvement in the discussions proposed in the ILEOTEC community also allowed him to contest on the difficulties he sometimes has with relation to teach certain topics and to articulate his beliefs about it:

*"[...] sometimes we do not know how to cope with certain topics or activities. I completely agree with [Lorraine] when she stated "I try to keep in touch with my professors, so I can ask them for advice when I cannot find an appropriate way to teach a specific topic", This is*

*something that I forgot to mention in my journal reflection but I believe this strategy is powerfully fruitful” (Discussion 2).*

Moreover, he appraised this strategy as an alternative solution according to his own experience:

*“[...] listening to the wise men (experienced professors) we can get to succeed in our planning and proper English teaching performance. I little do this but when I have done so, I have untangled big mental knots that blocked my particular way of teaching a class.”*

(Discussion 2)

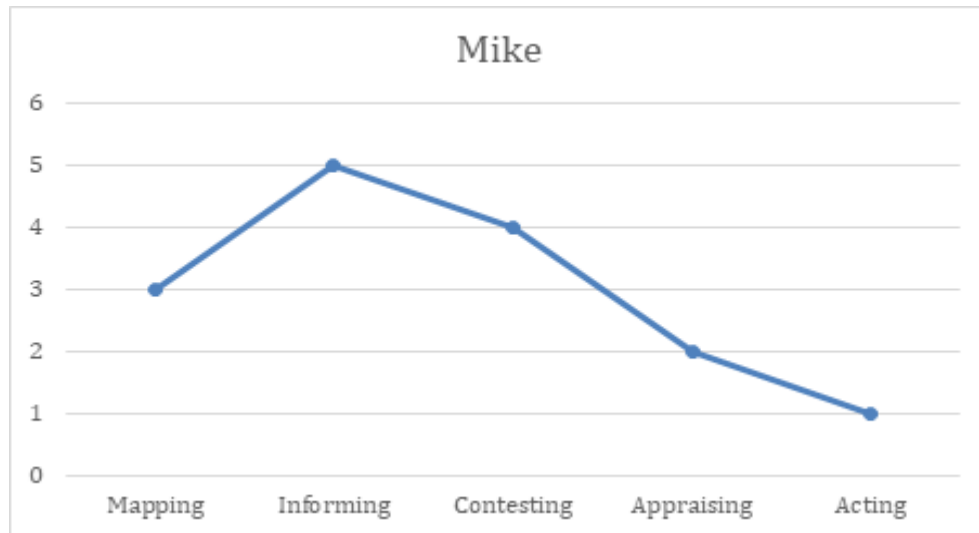
Finally, the way John linked his reflections to new understandings on successful planning was proposed as a list of principles that he shared with the other participants through the discussion forum.

*“To succeed in lesson planning we must incorporate the following issues: [a] to have searched in different sources to go deeper in our target topic; [b] the right timing for each activity; [c] advice from experienced professor when we are doubtful on any issue; [d] set foreseeable problem solutions; [e] to take spot decision if necessary; [f] to make our own back-up material and do not rely too much on technology; [g] to set clear and doable goals; [h] to select the best exercises or activities from the textbook and discard boring or meaningless one; [i] to be more communicative and realistic than grammatical and traditional; [j] to think twice before planning so as to fulfill students' needs and provide them with tools to solve real life activities. (Discussion 3)*

Through the different stages of reflection John got involved in, he was able to revise his planning approach, articulate some of the theories of learning that support his approach to

planning, examine the beliefs and assumptions underlying his planning decisions, and use this information as a basis to critically reflect on them and to provide alternative future actions.

**Case 3: Mike.**



*Figure 9.* Frequency of Mike's reflective traits

As can be observed in figure 9, Mike exhibited a higher number of traits at the informing level (5 entries) in comparison to contesting (4), mapping (3 entries), appraising (2 entries) and acting (1 entry). Mike's reflections were related essentially with institutional requirements, planning process, and students' skills and proficiency level. He was often concerned with contextual factors outside the classroom that affect his planning decisions. To some extent, he was able to propose possible solutions to problems but without direct reference to students' benefit.

Among the institutional requirements, he contested that planning in too much detail where a teacher must devote a lot of time can be counterproductive. He exposed this as a nonsensical practice since implementations of this kind could be the result in an empty exercise: "I remember, when using the long forms sponsored by the British Council, the planning of

lessons became a burden and little by little it became a smart activity cursorily implemented by copying and pasting data to comply with it.” (Discussion 3)

Additionally, Mike’s reflections about his misalignments revealed at the mapping and informing stages were addressed by contesting the relationship between institutional requirements and students learning needs:

*“To my mind, we should follow the institutional requirements first and then provided there is some time for extensional practice, we should include some activities that the students might like but adapted to the topics and skills that we need them to develop their actual English level.”* (Discussion 2)

As he went through the reflexive tasks, this contradiction became evident to Mike and this way he could delve into and commit to the following solution (see Figure 10):

*“One relevant adjustment to my lesson plan will be to include a section in its layout (format) for reflection where I can find the way to look for new ways/strategies, so that future classes could be positively upgraded to cope with the specific needs of the class”.* (Discussion 4)

LESSON PLAN

Teachers' name:  
Level: V

Week	Learning objective	Topic(s)	Unit(s)
1	Students will participate in communicative activities where they will use the present perfect, past simple comparatives and superlatives	From rags to riches, Family conflicts; Faster, faster & the world's friendliest city. <u>Reflection:</u>	4A-4B-4C
2	Students will participate in communicative activities where they will use the comparatives and superlatives (Extension practice), practical English, describing where you live & the review and check of unit 4.	Faster, faster & the world's friendliest city, lost in San Francisco, describing where you live (writing) & what do you remember/what can you do? (Review and Check) <u>Reflection:</u>	4B-4C-4D

Figure 10. Mike’s Lesson plan sample (Acting stage)



Although Mike was able to reflect consistently on the institutional requirements which affect his planning decisions and the effects this might have on students learning, he didn't critically reflect on the rationale behind his planning decisions, nor his theories of learning or how these are reflected in his approaches to planning. His entries related to self-awareness were carried out at a descriptive level. He was often problem-focused and didn't appraised many alternatives to solving these problems.

### **ILEOTEC perceptions: strengths, limitations, possibilities of progress, or**



*Figure 11.* Participants' perceptions of the advantages of ILEOTEC

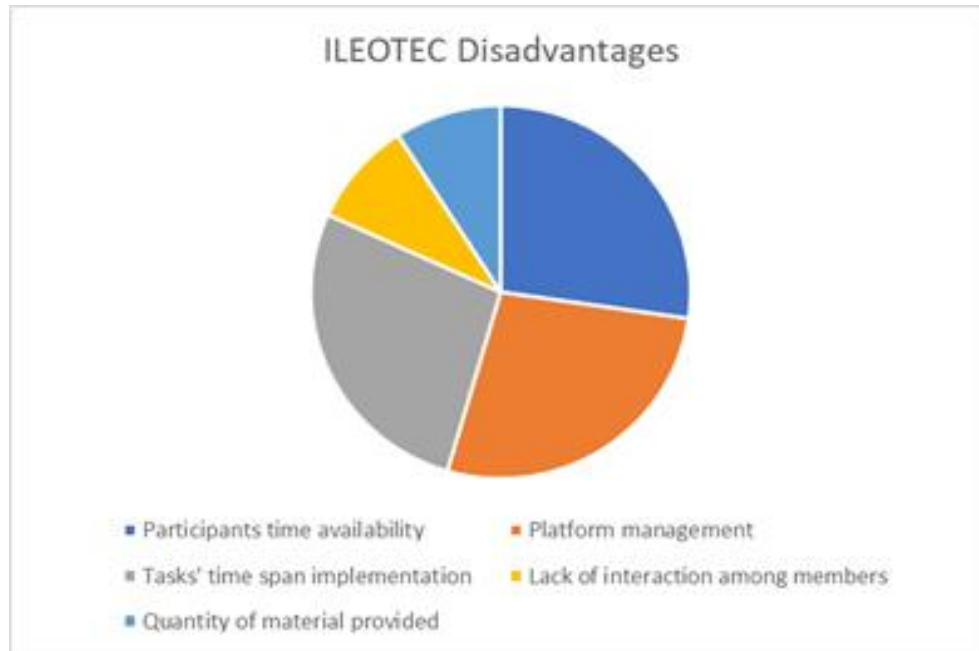
### **improvement.**

The role of ILEOTEC was also assessed according to the perceptions of the participants. Figure 11 shows the features that participants considered as advantages of this online community. The numbers indicate the total of references that the participants made of each one of them. One of the characteristics that participants appreciate the most was the material posted

and which guided the reflective tasks (6 references) which they regarded as useful and interesting. Secondly, the opportunity to have access to the comments and information posted by the other members of the community (4 references). In third place was the interaction among members (3 references). To a lesser extent the platform schedule flexibility (2 references) and ultimately not feeling judged (1 reference).

Among the reasons that participants considered to value as a strength the fact of having access to their colleagues' comments and reflections, is that it contributed to their professional development. According to Arnold and Ducate (2006), discussions in the form of written participations are more powerful and intentional than are usually possible in spoken communication (p. 44). Thus, the asynchronous quality of ILEOTEC allowed participants to read other members' input and reflections in the forms of entries and contributions without the need of bringing them together at the same time. Moreover, social interaction took place and promoted a dynamic exchange of ideas when participants read others' comments, reflections, and experiences. Likewise, being exposed to different perspectives helped participants to broaden their knowledge and deepen their understanding.

Amongst other principles that served ILEOTEC to be a tool for the professional development of the participants of the study was that it "promoted opportunities for individual critical reflection, be school-based and rooted in participants' knowledge base, beliefs, and actual practices, and being inclusive" (Riding, 2001, p. 283)



*Figure 12.* Participants' perceptions of the disadvantages of ILEOTEC

Among the limitations that participants found and that might have discouraged the continuity of the development of the reflective tasks were the participants' time availability (3 references), difficulties to manage the platform (3 references), and the time-lapse between activities implemented (3 references). To a lesser extent were lack of interaction among members (1 reference) and the quantity of the material provided to guide and/or complement the reflective tasks (1 reference). One of the participants recommended to the researchers offer a means through which technical support can be provided to help manage the platform efficiently.

On the whole, it is worth mentioning that although the ILEOTEC reflective tasks were mainly focused on planning decisions, participants addressed from different perspectives different issues such as their theories and beliefs about teaching and learning, self-awareness, the relationship between institutional requirements and students learning, the role of reflection in their professional development, their practical and pedagogical knowledge, and other educational contexts beyond ILEUSCO institute. There were also differences in relation to the content and

depth of the reflective processes. However, there were a few common tendencies regarding the problems which affect lesson planning. For example, institutional requirements that do not fit students' learning needs. By and large, Bartlett's reflective cycle was accomplished in two interrelated categories, namely, identifying teachers' knowledge and beliefs underlying their planning decisions and determining the role of ILEOTEC in the reflection processes of teachers. ILEOTEC allowed the participants to make transitions at different levels of reflection which were evidenced throughout the development of the reflective tasks. A close relationship between the amount of the participants' reflective contributions, their reflectivity depth level and the number of actions undertaken could also be perceived. Furthermore, the participants' involvement in ILEOTEC allowed them to transcend their reflectivity to other contexts out of ILEUSCO Institute.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusions**

In this chapter a number of conclusions, in response to the research question, are initially drawn. Next, we refer to the main implications of this study for both the researchers' and participants' professional development. At the end, some limitations of the study as well as some suggestions for further research are included.

This study had the main objective of identifying the knowledge and beliefs underlying teachers' planning decisions after implementing an online reflective teacher community at the ILEUSCO Institute. By providing teachers with an alternative to systematically reflect on their actual planning practices, we could provide the teachers with the opportunity and the means to share, identify, challenge, value and rebuild their underlying knowledge and beliefs and their relationship with the decisions they make when planning their lessons, and this is viewed by the researchers as professional development.

In general terms, it was possible to identify that the participants' main knowledge base underlying their planning decisions was concerned with their knowledge of themselves as language learners, their knowledge of the students, and their experiential or practical teaching knowledge. A wide diversity of beliefs about learning, teaching, self-image, teacher role, student role, materials and resources, EFL activities, learning aims, contents, teaching methodologies, role of context, the role of the program and curriculum, the relationship between the language curriculum and the textbook could also be identified as the main rationale for their planning decisions.

The findings also suggest that by incorporating the elements of professional collaboration and interaction among peers by means of computer-mediated reflective dialogue (Hawkes &

Romiszwski, 2001) in the design of the reflective tasks, teachers are able (a) to explore and critically reflect on their own teaching theories and beliefs, (b) to generate new beliefs, (c) to enhance their level of awareness about the multiple sources of teachers' knowledge and (d) to check their assumptions on what good teaching represents. Moreover, the written communication benefits derived from CMC, and which were applied in different ways (i.e., reflective journal, discussion forums, lesson plan sample, reference materials and others) in the pedagogical strategy, are linked to the different levels of reflection accomplished by participants in the development of the different reflective tasks. As a matter of fact, it was found that there is a close relationship between the amount of the participants' reflective contributions, their reflectivity depth level, their actions, and their reflective transcendence to other educational contexts.

The findings also suggest that teachers perceived their participation in the ILEOTEC community as constructive to their professional growth purposes. This was made possible by promoting opportunities for individual critical reflection, being school-based and rooted in participants' knowledge base, beliefs, and actual practices.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

ILEOTEC has been a collaborative learning experience which provided not only the participating teachers but also the researchers with the opportunity to enhance our professional development by becoming critically aware of the knowledge base and the beliefs underlying the teachers' planning decisions. To this effect, these teachers underwent a series of individual and collective reflective dynamics which implied making a map of how they actually planned their lessons, making a conceptual sense of these maps by unearthing their reasons to do so, contesting or challenging those reasons, appraising alternative ways of planning and making new planning actions.

In the context of ILEOTEC it was possible to witness diverse dialectical interactions such as the one happening between the individual teacher's decisions and actions, the one among the teachers themselves as members of an academic community, and another between the researchers and the community of teachers. Therefore, it takes individual engagement and collaborative discussions to build a reflective professional community which sustains the teachers' reflectivity development and transformation of their teaching practices.

The asynchronous nature of CMC provides the independence and flexibility that allowed teachers to overcome constraints regarding time and agenda limitations. Participants benefited from this so that they could dedicate enough time to read and reread other members' contributions, consult the material and recommended bibliography, investigate related information, and therefore, optimize the construction of knowledge. It was of special interest and recognized by the participants to be able to have access to the material created by the researchers to support the development of the reflective tasks. The material used in the face-to-face workshop and the one that was posted on the platform to familiarize teachers with the topic around the pedagogical strategy was of great value for the teachers. Thus, even if teachers are knowledgeable regarding planning theories, there is a need to address the topic and the creation of the material under the principles of reflective teaching.

It was also important for the researchers/managers of the VLSM to be acquainted with participants' digital competencies to handle computers and experience with VLSM systems. Even though the participants were considered to be acknowledged users of VLSM systems and declared being members of teachers' communities in the past, one of them found it difficult going to specific links on the Schoology platform, specifically when accessing the reflective journal template, the didactic material shared by the researchers or the right link to share their

lesson plan samples and reflective journals. Researchers/managers of the platform were able to send emails with specific directions where access to the material and activities was described in detail. This aided the communication where the members of the community established direct and fast communication with the researchers/managers of the platform in order to solve any situation as fast as possible and not interfere with the pace development of the reflective tasks.

Additionally, this research study strengthens the mission of the ILEUSCO institute as it serves as a setting for conducting research in the field of teaching and learning foreign languages. Since its creation, ILEUSCO was conceived not only as a teaching center but also as a space for research; that is why several master's projects have been developed, as well as, several studies from the ILESEARCH research group have already been published.

### **Limitations**

A limitation found in our study was the time lapse between reflective tasks. Due to time constraints, some of the participants claimed that it was difficult to advance continuously in the development of the activities, and since the design of the pedagogical strategy involved building and reflecting on the participation of the other members, this could have diminished the quality of the reflections or even their depth. The size sample is also a limitation since the withdrawal of a great number of participants who projected to commit to the study reduced to only three of them. If we aim to build an online reflective teacher community to aid at the professional development of teachers, it is necessary to have more participants that nourish the discussions and provide the necessary input for the reflective tasks. Despite the asynchronous feature that CMC allows, there were, however, limitations related to teachers' time constraints. Most of the participants have a great workload, and some of them were enrolled in post-degree studies or



other research projects. We value the time these teachers dedicated to the active participation of our research study since it required being able to use the little spare time available.

### **Further Research**

More research is needed to investigate the changes that this reflective process had in the actual teaching practices of teachers. For example, observing in situ the development of a lesson and assessing the congruence between it with the lesson plan. The question of teacher participation in reflective discourses should also be addressed in later studies to measure whether these promote the recognition of the role and nature of teachers' mental lives and how they influence the decisions that teachers make in different teaching scenarios. In addition, studies focused on reflection on-action that consider other methods or tasks could be addressed to encourage teachers to voice their understandings and views of teaching.

ILEOTEC strategy can also be addressed around different topics and issues. For example, ILEOTEC focused on the issues of planning decisions. However, this pedagogical strategy can explore in the future interactive and evaluative decisions or can address topics related to methodology, material development, or ICTs skills. It is also possible to develop this strategy so that it include elements of critical reflection framed in terms of critical theory where teachers raise questions about the role of schools in a democratic society and to address issues of equity and power to promote social transformation in the community of practice.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Projection of Teachers to Commit to Research Project

#### UNIVERSIDAD SURCOLOMBIANA FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTITUTE - ILEUSCO

Participation commitment projection to the research proposal: Developing In-service Language Teachers' Reflective Decision-Making Skills through the use of Technology Mediated Communities.

	Name	E-mail	Phone	Are you interested in becoming a participant?	
				YES ?	NO
1	German Bermúdez A.	gerber943@gmail.com	3184042662	YES ?	
2	Luz Iviera	luziviera@gmail.com	3173820479	X	
3	Claudia Ramos	claomego@yahoo.co.uk	3118598122	X	
4	Ingrid Melisa Amaya García	ingrid.melissa.amaya@hotmail.com	3164953705	X	
5	Lina Marcela Trujillo Torres	trujillatorreslina@gmail.com	3162668820	X	
6	Mauricio Gutiérrez M.	Colombian delphin@gmail.com	3157814986	X	
7	Carlos A. Sánchez H.	carlos37426@hotmail.com	317309349	X	
8	Ever Armando Vargas	vargasadameseverarmando@gmail.com	3153441275	X	
9	Édith Murcia Hinoj	ileuscoinstitute@gmail.com	3204123779	✓	
10	Gabriel Solórzano	Colombians123@gmail.com	3125147607	✓	
11	Alexander Aranda	Alex25_06@hotmail.com	3136797061	✓	
12	Nadya Aranda M.	nyam121@hotmail.com	3209227193	✓	
13	Juan Camilo Tovar	JuanK2321991@hotmail.com	3203731137	X	
14	Johanna Diaz H.	johannadiazh@gmail.com	3112702263	X	
15	Shirley Villavej	shirg18@hotmail.com	3144074886	X	
16	María Estrella Guzmán	Mar222@hotmail.com	3138302046	X	
17	Doris Casado Casas	doris.casas@hotmail.com	3103006993	X	
18	Jenny Muñoz Espino	jenny.sita.m18@hotmail.com	3213368717	✓	
19	Natalia Corredor Tarr	naticapink21@hotmail.com	3177616187	✓	
20	Mary Lorena Rojas	mar.posam1ma@gmail.com	3163284156	yes	
21	Catalina Marcheta Trujillo	caspalina6@hotmail.com	3185935520	✓	
22	Natalia Álvarez	naticahermosa@gmail.com	3046794800	✓	
23					
24					



*Appendix B*

## Consent for the Use of the Data

## Needs Analysis on Teacher Communities

### Consent for the use of the data.

Please use one of the two options below to express yourself about if you give or not informed consent to use the information you have provided in the needs analysis survey in academic products as papers and articles. Likewise, you confirm that you have been informed that the real names of the participants in this survey will not be used in these academic products and participants can have access to them in case of request.

- I have been informed and give consent.
- I have been informed, but I refuse consent.
- Otros: \_\_\_\_\_

[ATRÁS](#)[ENVIAR](#)

Nunca envíes contraseñas a través de Formularios de Google.

*Appendix C*

## Interview to the ILEUSCO Academic Coordinator

## (Transcript)

Researcher (R): Dear Professor Insuasty, this interview is intended to collect important data related to ILEUSCO teacher's reflective decision-making skills, as an opportunity for teacher's professional development. Thus, we would appreciate your cooperation in answering the following questions. The information you provide will be used only for research purposes. Thank you very much for your time and we appreciate your collaboration. How long have you been the Academic Coordinator at ILEUSCO Institute?

ILEUSCO Academic Coordinator (IAC): I have been the coordinator of ILEUSCO for three years

(R): How often teachers' meetings are arranged in every academic term, to discuss aspects related to the English language teaching at ILEUSCO?

(IAC): Once in every academic term

(R): What topics are discussed at these meetings?

(IAC): Management issues and general guidelines about communicative teaching, learning and assessment processes.

(R): Do you think it is relevant that teachers reflect on their professional practice as a means of professional development?

(IAC): I think it is not only relevant but necessary. Every teacher should reflect on his or her teaching practice to identify his or her strengths and possible aspects worth being improved.

(R): Do teachers in Neiva have enough opportunities to develop professionally?

(IAC): Nowadays English teachers can have access to diverse opportunities of professional development. Among these we can mention the English language teacher education program Licenciatura en Inglés, the Master's program in English language teaching and ASOHPI

(R): Do teachers currently have spaces to share their reflections and insights on their teaching practice?

(IAC): At Universidad Surcolombiana English teachers can share their reflections in the symposium of foreign language research which is held annually. ASOHPI also organizes an annual conference.

(R): What kind of reflective skills do you think teachers need to improve?

(IAC): Reflection-in-action skills, reflection-on-action skills, and reflection-for-action skills

(R): Is there a teachers' academic community at ILEUSCO? Why?

(IAC): No, there isn't any organized teacher's academic community due to different reasons such as lack of time, lack of willingness and lack of institutional policies and actions which encourage teachers to establish an academic community.

(R): Do teachers at ILEUSCO follow a given lesson plan format to plan their lessons?

(IAC): No, there isn't any fixed template they have to follow. What they are provided with at the beginning of the academic term is the course syllabus. Then, they have freedom of choice to make their lesson planning process.

(R): What aspects do they consider in making their lesson plans?

(IAC): They are expected to consider factors such as the learner's age, the learner's level of proficiency, the learner's individual and social needs and expectations as well as the institutional policies and goals.

(R): Do you know any online teacher community? If so, which one?

(IAC): No, I don't know any online teacher community.

(R): What do you think about possibility implementing an online teacher community at ILEUSCO?

(IAC): It seems to be a very good initiative in order for the English teachers to strengthen their own professional development and to contribute to improving the quality of education in the region.

## Appendix D

### Characterization Survey on Planning Decision-Making (S3)

#### Characterization Survey on Planning decision-making

Dear colleague,

This questionnaire is intended to collect important data to characterize teacher's planning decision making skills at ILEUSCO Institute. Please answer completely the following questionnaire. The information you provide will be confidential and will be used only for research purposes. Thank you very much for your collaboration.

\*Obligatorio

#### An Approach to Lesson Planning

Dear colleagues: We would like to know how do you approach lesson planning. According to the information provided in the presentation, answer the following questions.

\*Obligatorio

#### Reasons to plan a lesson.



6. 6. Which aspects do you take into consideration when planning your classes? Please explain. \*

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7. 7. Do you follow any kind of format to plan your classes? Why? \*

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8. 8. Do you plan your classes even if you have to follow a textbook? Why? \*

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9. 9. Have you experienced difficulties in your usual way of planning? Which ones? \*

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### Consent for the use of the data.

Please use one of the two options below to express yourself about if you give or not informed consent to use the information you have provided in the needs analysis survey in academic products as papers and articles. Likewise, you confirm that you have been informed that the real names of the participants in this survey will not be used in these academic products and participants can have access to them in case of request.

10. \*

*Marca solo un óvalo.*

- I have been informed and give consent.
- I have been informed, but I refuse consent.

---

Con la tecnología de  
 Google Forms

*Appendix E*

Approach to Lesson Planning Survey (S4)

1. Review the reasons to plan a lesson listed in this presentation. Do you agree with these reasons? What reasons do you hold about the process of lesson planning? \*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What situations or experiences (with the institution, students, textbook, material, etc.) have influenced the way you approach lesson planning? \*

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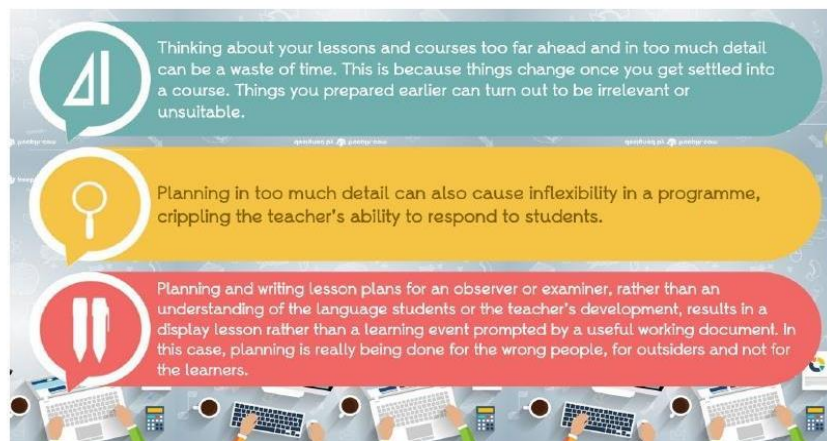
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**Reasons why would we not want to plan courses and lessons.**



3. Review the reasons why would we not want to plan courses and lessons. Do you agree with these reasons? What of these reasons have you found likely to be part of your experience as a teacher? \*

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*Appendix F*

## Teachers' Planning Decisions Survey (S5)

**Teacher's planning decisions**\*Obligatorio

1. Dirección de correo electrónico \*

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2. Do you agree with the following expression? "The planning options a teacher employs reflect the teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning" Please explain. \*

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3. Do you develop macro or micro plans when planning your lessons? Please explain the reasons why is it more convenient for your class preparation. \*

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4. What aspects do you take into account when planning a lesson? \*

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5. Reflect on your practice and think which are the aspects to which you give more relevance at the moment of planning. Please explain. \*

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6. What aspects do you consider when stating course goals or objectives? \*

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7. Do you feel more comfortable writing down your lesson plans, or working with mental lesson plans in which every step is in your head with no need to write down your thoughts? Please explain in either way how the process is. \*

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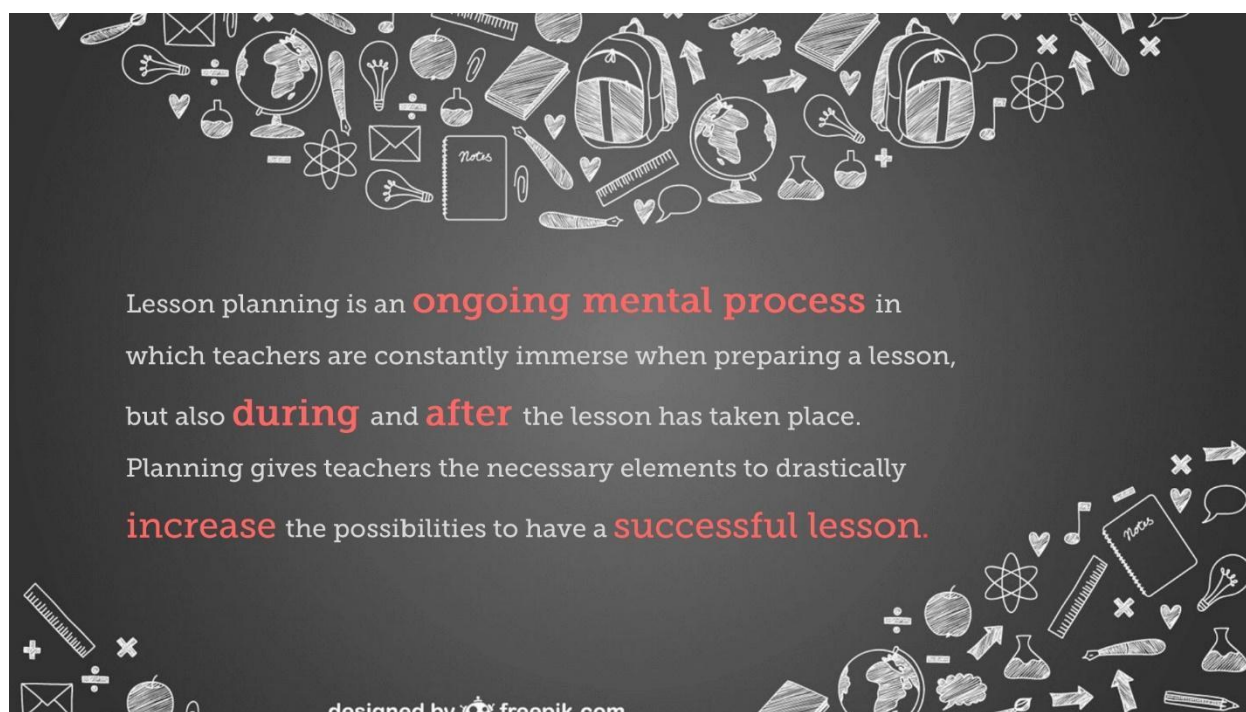
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 Google Forms

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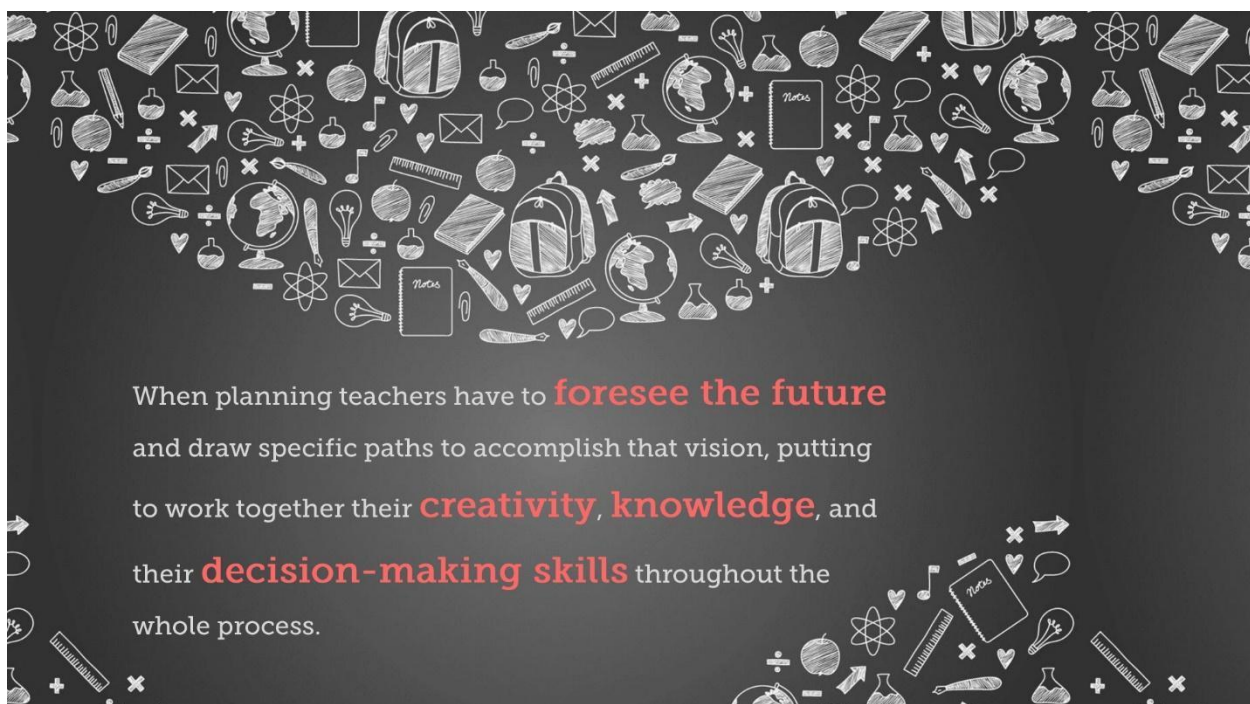
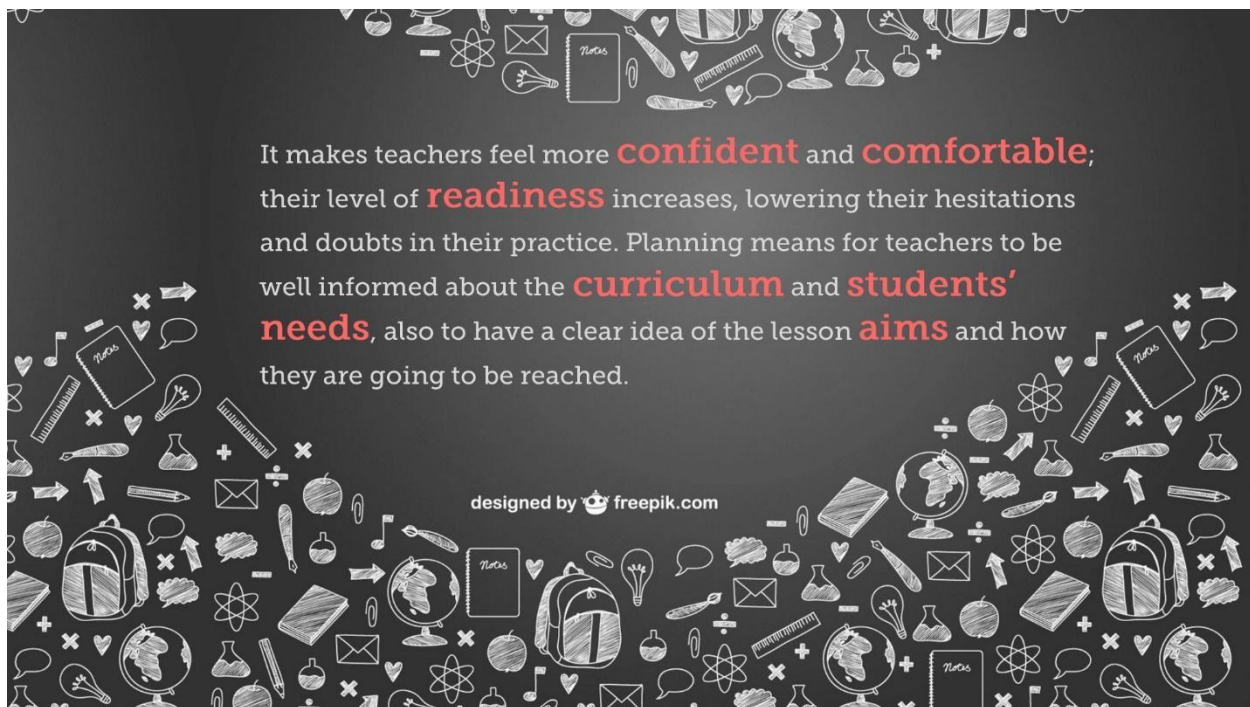
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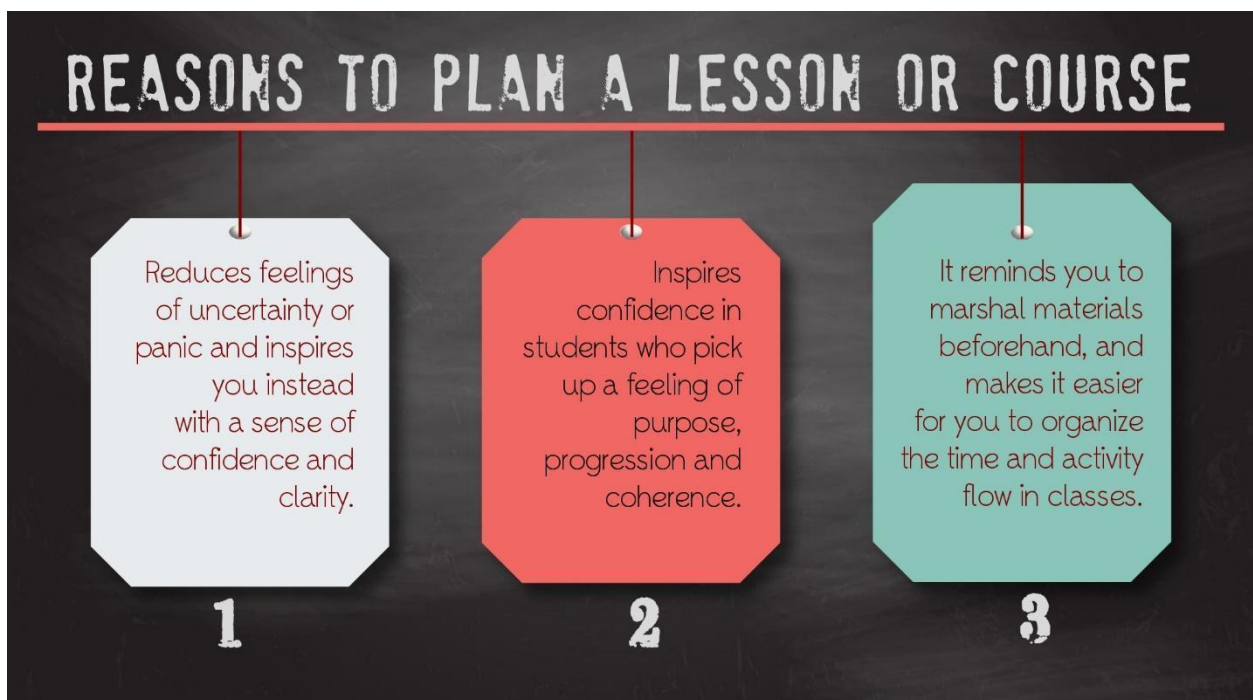
*Appendix G*

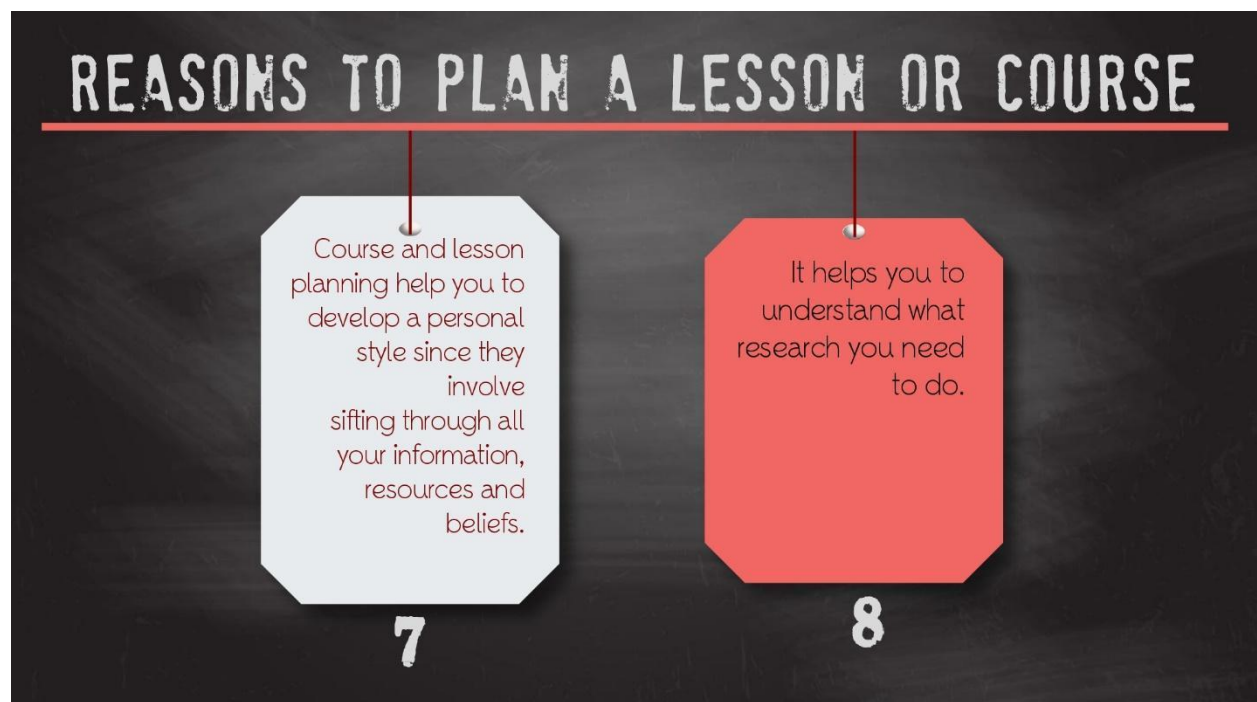
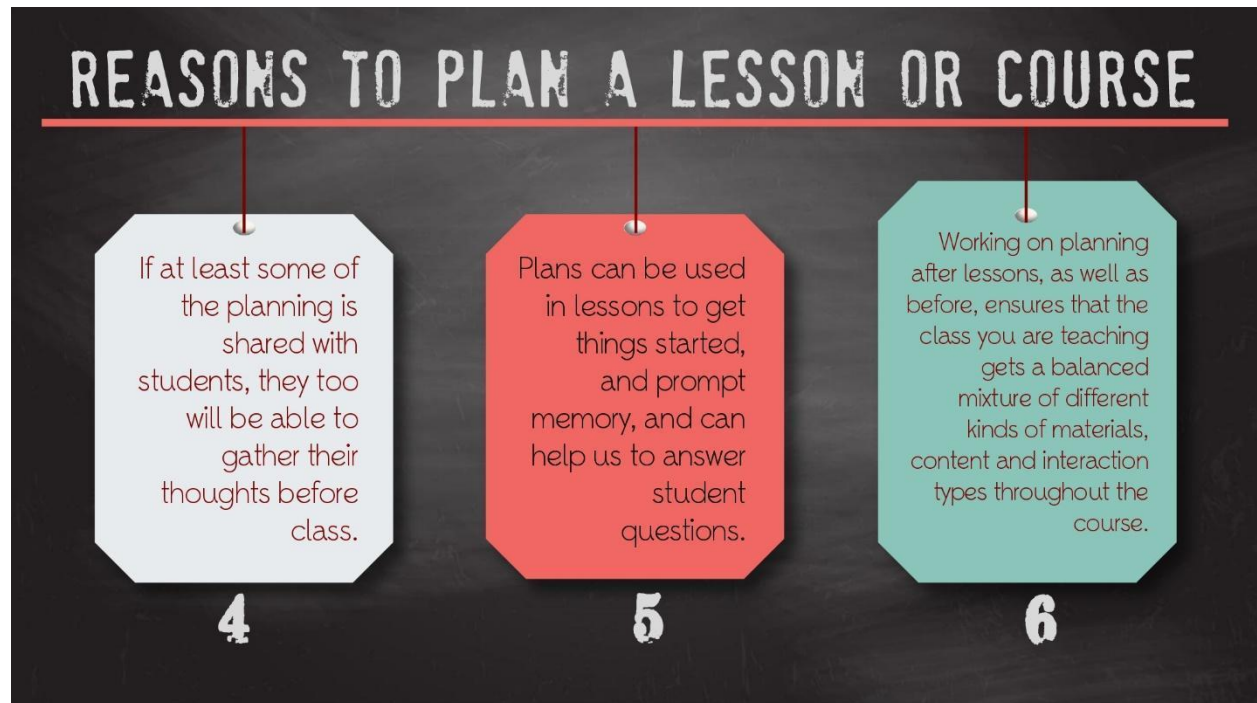
## Didactic Material for ILEOTEC













**AI** Thinking about your lessons and courses too far ahead and in too much detail can be a waste of time. This is because things change once you get settled into a course. Things you prepared earlier can turn out to be irrelevant or unsuitable.

**Magnifying Glass** Planning in too much detail can also cause inflexibility in a programme, crippling the teacher's ability to respond to students.

**Two Pens** Planning and writing lesson plans for an observer or examiner, rather than an understanding of the language students or the teacher's development, results in a display lesson rather than a learning event prompted by a useful working document. In this case, planning is really being done for the wrong people, for outsiders and not for the learners.



1. Review the reasons to **plan a lesson** listed in this presentation. Do you **agree** with these reasons? What reasons do you hold about the process of lesson planning?



*Appendix H*

## Emails Messages Content and Guide to Access to Schoology

Dear colleagues:

You are cordially invited to join the ILEUSCO Online Teacher Community - ILEOTEC. In the file attached, you will find the instructions to register in the virtual platform Schoology where this online community will take place.

This Online Teacher Community is part of a research study conducted by students from the Master's Programme in English Didactics from Universidad Surcolombiana. This initiative can provide ILEUSCO teachers enhanced opportunities to communicate and collaborate with peers who share the same interests; as well as support learning and professional development of the members.

Feel free to explore this Online Teacher Community, its contents, its resources and activities. We hope you to have an enjoyable experience and become an active member.

**The access code is 934PS-ZWXWZ.**

Dear colleagues:

Here you will find the instructions to register in the virtual platform Schoology and be part of the ILEUSCO Online Teacher Community - ILEOTEC



1. Go to: <https://www.schoology.com/>

1. Go to: <https://www.schoology.com/>

← → ↻ 🌐 <https://www.schoology.com> ☆ 🔍 📄 📱 📧 📧 📧 ☰

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**AMP up personalized learning**  
with our new Assessment Management Platform (AMP)

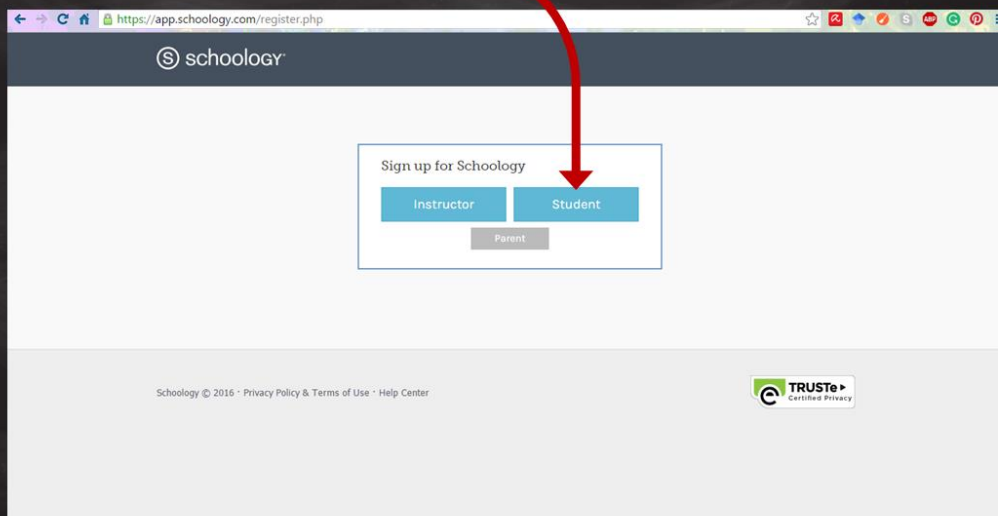
Schoology /skoo-luh-jee/  
The only learning management system (LMS) that connects all the people,  
content, and systems that fuel education.



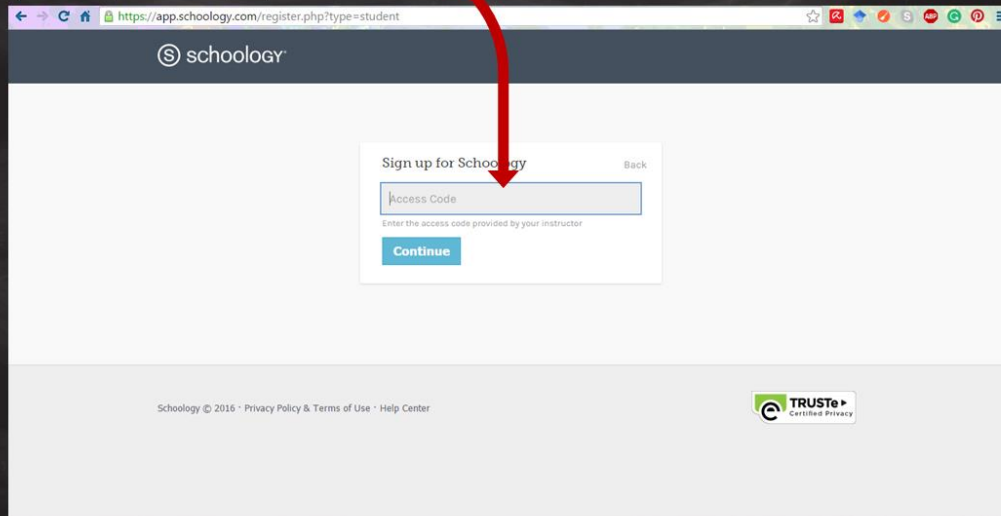
2. Click **Sign Up**



3. Click **Student**

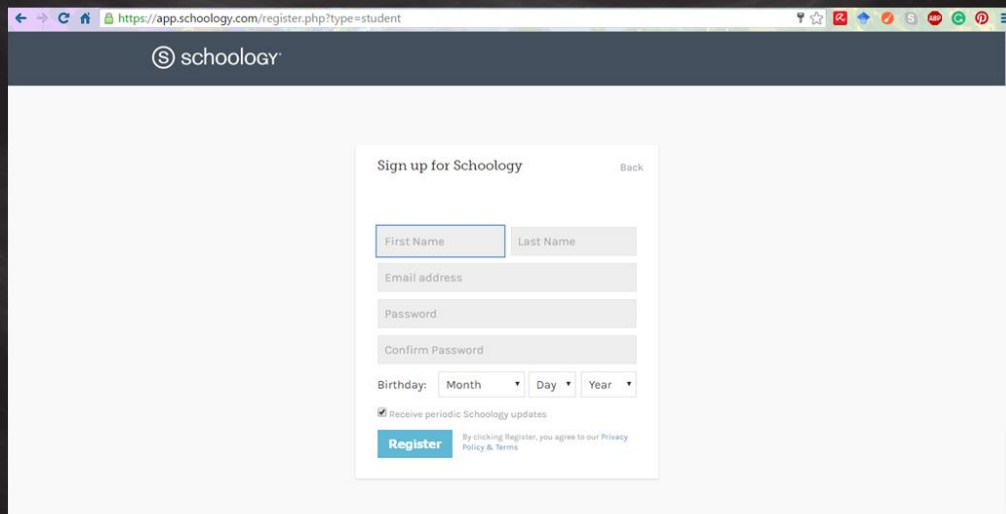


4. Enter the **Access code**  
(the one that you received by mail)



A screenshot of a web browser showing the Schoology registration page. The URL in the address bar is <https://app.schoology.com/register.php?type=student>. The page features the Schoology logo at the top left. The main content area is titled "Sign up for Schoology" with a "Back" link. Below the title is a text input field labeled "Access Code" with a placeholder text "Enter the access code provided by your instructor". A blue "Continue" button is positioned below the input field. A red arrow points from the "Access code" text in the instruction above to the "Access Code" input field. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with "Schoology © 2016 · Privacy Policy & Terms of Use · Help Center" and a "TRUSTe" logo.

5. Enter your login details and click **Register**



A screenshot of the same Schoology registration page, but at a later stage. The "Sign up for Schoology" form is now expanded to include several fields: "First Name" and "Last Name" (two separate input boxes), "Email address", "Password", and "Confirm Password". Below these fields is a "Birthday" section with dropdown menus for "Month", "Day", and "Year". There is a checked checkbox for "Receive periodic Schoology updates". At the bottom of the form is a blue "Register" button. A small note below the button reads: "By clicking Register, you agree to our Privacy Policy & Terms". The rest of the page layout, including the header and footer, remains the same as in the previous screenshot.

Hello dear colleagues. We really appreciate the time you are taking to participate in our online reflective community which main goal is to provide ILEUSCO teachers with opportunities to exchange their experiences and reflections about their teaching practices, especially those particularly concerned with their lesson planning decision making.


Specifically, we are going to develop 5 different activities:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Date</b>
Mapping	Posting sample lesson plans	To design a virtual space in which participating teachers post sample lesson plans and describe the beliefs they hold about teaching and learning, and which may be reflected in their lesson plans.	Aug 21 - Aug 24
Informing	Reflective Journal writing	To encourage teachers to voice their beliefs about their planning decision making and to identify the sources of the knowledge behind their teaching practices.	Aug 21 - Aug 24
Contesting	Discussion forum	To prompt teachers to constructively challenge their own beliefs and those of their colleagues about planning decision making.	Aug 25 - Aug 30
Appraising	Video	To decide courses of action for future lesson planning.	Aug 31 - Sep 5
Acting	Follow-up	To have teachers make a follow-up revision of their planning decisions.	Sep 6 - Sep 8

Appendix I

ILEOTEC's Discussion 1 Board

[UPGRADE](#)   [COURSES](#)   [GROUPS](#)   [RESOURCES](#)

 Natalia Vallejo

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ILEOTEC - Online Reflective Teacher Commu ...   REFLECTIVE TASKS

**TASK 1 - Mapping**

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**Discussion 1 - Description of lesson planning**

On the presentation, it was stated that the planning options a teacher employs reflect the teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning. We want to discuss a little further about this... please, answer the following questions.


1. What beliefs, views or knowledge about language teaching and learning do you hold?
2. Which of those beliefs, views or knowledge are reflected in your lesson plan?

Posted Tue Aug 22, 2017 at 3:10 pm


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 Write a comment

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 Highlight User ▾   12 Posts

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 **juan tovar** Fri Sep 1, 2017 at 10:42 am

1) In my point of view, I consider that the lesson plan should be designed in a macro level, taking into account academic and behavioral goals and specific objectives. The macro level gives you the right map not to wander off. Although, Sometimes the macro plan is made in advanced, this might cause some gaps while the class is being carried out as when we planned we did not know some factors such as: students' attitudes, likes, strengths and weaknesses among many others. It is necessary to identify these factors in order to take spot decisions as well, as it might complement the macro plan stated above. In some way, I consider that previous class planning is necessary but spot decisions are also crucial in order to make class more dynamic and enriching.


2) The macro level is reflected on my lesson plan; however i usually take a lot of spot decisions not to make the class boring and more dynamical.

Show Less

Unlike   2 · Reply

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Hide All 3 Replies

 **Natalia Vallejo** Mon Sep 11, 2017 at 11:12 pm

I found your description very interesting Camilo. Reading your entry I can understand what you mean regarding the "spot decisions" you make when the class is being carried out. Now, I wonder what could be the role of these "spot" decisions when you plan your future classes?

Like   1 · Reply

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 **juan tovar** Sun Oct 1, 2017 at 10:53 pm

Well, Spot decision might arise reagarding different circumstances, Imaging there is not electricity or there is someone drilling a wall next yo your classroom, you might think fast and move the students to another classroom, even you might teach outdoors... these are just some example that might occur. Spot decision are spontaneous in my point of view; if you mention the spot decisions in a future lesson plan that might be included in the foreseeable problems and then make a plan B, however some spot decisions just came to my mind to be triggered right away to change the dynamism of my classes. Spot decision are strongly related to the change of an activity, keeping the planned topic but explained or taught in a different way compared to the former one.

Show Less

Unlike   1 · Reply


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 **Natalia Vallejo** Thu Oct 5, 2017 at 7:01 pm

Thank you, Camilo!

Like · Reply

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 **LINA TRUJILLO** Edited · Sun Sep 3, 2017 at 1:25 pm

Hi, there!

1. Well, as an ESL teacher there are many beliefs and views I hold. However, I think that one of the most important things to take into account when it comes to teach English to kids and young learners is to listen to them. To get to know them allow us to choose and plan the best activities that could work for them according to the class objectives. I always ask my students about what they would like to do in order to practice a specific topic. Of course there are many things we cannot do because of the lack of resources and time, but most of the cases they come up with very simple ideas that help them to have fun while learning. I have found this very enriching for my career.

I like to think I am an easy going teacher in the way I like to negotiate with my students so they can feel and know how important they really are. I am

aware that not all of them are taking the class because they want to, but because their parents made the decision for them. Also, I know it is hard for them to wake up early on Saturdays and go to a 4 hour class after a long week at school. This is the reason why I always include games and collaborative activities in my lesson plans, and forget about the book for about an 80% of the class. In fact, I only ask them to open their books once we have finished learning and practicing the vocabulary and grammar in a dynamic way. I try to use the book to end the class as it has simple and fun exercises for the students to get more practice.

2. Trying to not stick to the book, or depend on it for a class, is reflected on my lesson plan. Taking into account the students' interests and English level is also reflected on it. In my opinion, the book we are using for level 4 (Happy Campers), is too basic for my students' level. This is the reason why I always add more vocabulary to the one suggested by the book. However, there are class situations that escape to our lesson plans, such as students' attitude or problems with the material we needed. When this happens it is necessary to make interactive decisions, I try to come up with a way to adjust the activities to the new circumstances. For example, sometimes I have had to let them work individually or in bigger groups to share the material. In other cases, we have had to stop the development of the lessons as some students need to reinforce their knowledge on a specific topic in order to carry out an activity. I think this is not as negative as we may think. Actually, thanks to the on-the-spot decisions we have to make, we are able to design a better lesson plan for the next class!

Have a good day!

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Unlike 2 · Reply

Hide All 3 Replies



**Natalia Vallejo** Mon Sep 11, 2017 at 11:33 pm

Hi Lina. You addressed a lot of important and interesting issues in your description. I can observe that you certainly give an important weight to the role of student motivation in your classes. What I wonder is if this decision is based primarily on your own experience as a teacher, on your view of language learning or perhaps on the way you think motivation played an important role when you were a language learner?

Show Less

Like · Reply



**LINA TRUJILLO** Tue Sep 12, 2017 at 12:31 am

Hi, Natalia.

I think this decision is both based on my view of language learning and of course on my experience as an English teacher. I started teaching English 8 years ago, and definitely, it has been through the years that I have realized that our classes cannot be so teacher, textbook or grammar centered.

Now that I am having the chance to reflect on why I make the decisions I make when planning my classes, I realize that these decisions are the result of successful and not very successful classes. It has been by making right and wrong decisions that I have got to learn what a successful class can depend on. Besides, I have always thought that English (or any other subject) needs to be taught placing the student in the most important place; and to do so, it is necessary that we as teachers put ourselves in the students' shoes and reflect on how they would like to learn.

Finally, I find extremely important to free my class from fear. Based on my experience, fear is one of the factors that hold learners from taking an active role in the learning process. In my opinion, giving them the chance to take part in the decisions we make about how the class should be addressed is a good way to help them get rid of the fears and stress they experience when learning and practicing a second language.

Show Less

Unlike 2 · Reply



**Natalia Vallejo** Wed Sep 13, 2017 at 12:21 am

Hi Lina. Giving students the chance to take part of the decisions I make when planning my lessons is certainly an issue I have not addressed before. Thanks a lot for sharing your insights with us...

Like 2 · Reply



**Mr. M. Mr M.** Sun Sep 10, 2017 at 10:10 pm

I think that I use an interactional approach by having students interact among themselves and personalizing everything they do, as a way to raise their motivation. However, I recognize that the major problem I face is the fact that some students do not have the level to be classified as they are. Some students fall behind the knowledge and skills of the other members of the class.

Additionally, another problem I admit to have is that I feel that we are chained to the book and it rules during most of the class because we are responsible to cover the units for the level. I contend that we apply a book that contains each exercise that we are compelled to teach and there is really little time to put some remedial work that can be beneficial to the students. I also feel that sometimes I practice teacher-centered instruction and this is why I decided to take part of a collaborative action research with research and the opportunity provided by Ines and her teammates to pitch in their research work because it is an enriching academic experience for my professional development.

Show Less

Unlike 2 · Reply

Hide 1 reply



**Natalia Vallejo** Wed Sep 13, 2017 at 12:53 am

Hi Mr. M. No doubt teachers have to face different challenges when making decisions about following our own view of teaching or following institutional requirements, especially if they are incompatible, and that this issue is one of greater importance in our field. I share the idea that research can be a

great tool to address precisely those issues that concern us in our daily practice and are part of the reality that we face as professionals. Additionally, research is definitely an excellent alternative that contributes to the professionalization of our field.

Another issue that caught my attention is the one regarding working with heterogeneous groups. This is a challenging factor when you're planning a lesson. I wonder about what foundations, beliefs or knowledge do you rely on when making decisions when planning a lesson for heterogeneous groups?

Show Less

Like 1 · Reply



**Arthur Tovar** Sun Sep 10, 2017 at 11:00 pm

Hello colleagues!

1. From my perspective, teachers need to play two different roles inside the classroom. One of the roles that teachers are related to is the **learning facilitator**. As the name speaks by itself, the teacher needs to facilitate learning to the students by using the methodologies that are considered to be the most appropriate for the students' needs. This takes the teacher to study each student and realise that each of them is different with their own personal life difficulties, which, make students have a particular learning style. Besides that, teachers also have to be aware of the students' level of English in each targeted skill so that they can use activities, worksheets, videos, books and others that can suit students' level of language knowledge. The second role that teachers need to play is the **classroom supporter**. That means that the teacher needs to continuously observe their students when they are doing in-classroom activities or in any other classroom duty. Therefore, the teacher needs to provide new ideas if students are stuck in their learning or give feedback when it is necessary. Over time, students will start to feel a friendship bond with the teacher and may express more confidential information related to their learning issues that they might be embarrassed to tell at first.

2. Both of the roles previously explained are reflected in my classes. Therefore, different 'stages' of the lesson and activities are planned. I consider myself to be a teacher that looks for the best option that can fit in the students' needs taking into account the learning styles that my students may feel better with. Actually I do not follow any specific or strict methodology because all my students will not learn in the same way. Then, a variety of sources need to be used in the classroom. I see myself as a reflective practitioner who is all the time thinking what went wrong during my lesson, how my students felt and what can be improved for future sessions. That way of thinking makes me have different activities using different methodologies to teach and to practice the content that I am teaching.

Best regards!

Show Less

Unlike 2 · Reply

Hide 1 reply



**Natalia Vallejo** Wed Sep 13, 2017 at 1:45 am

Hello, Arthur! I can see that you have accurately shared your own view of teaching and the role that you as a teacher intend to play in the learning process of your students. I found it interesting when you describe yourself as a reflective practitioner. I wonder about how you developed this view of yourself and/or under what basis you built this idea.

Like 1 · Reply

*Appendix J*

## Reflective Journal Template

**REFLECTIVE JOURNAL N. 1**

*We would like to know about the factors and beliefs behind the decisions you make when you plan a lesson. The sources of teacher knowledge can be of different kind. Let's think a little bit about your experience as an English language learner, the knowledge acquired in the EFL teacher education program, the experience you may have gained through working with other teachers, etc. Where do you think the knowledge you have about lesson planning comes from? Here are some questions that we would like you to answer, in order to have a deeper and broader understanding about this issue. As you may note there are several factors discussed in the questions, but if you identify another factor that has influenced the way you plan your lessons, please let us know.*


1. Do you think that your lesson planning is influenced in any way by your own experience as an English language learner? If so, in what ways?
2. How has your teaching experience shaped the decisions you make when planning a lesson?
3. Have you had the opportunity of sharing with other teachers the way you or they plan their lessons? Has this experience influenced the way you plan your lessons? How?
4. Have you had the opportunity to do any research related to lesson planning?
5. What role does the knowledge you acquired in the EFL teacher education program play in the decisions you make when planning a lesson?
6. Do you reflect about the decisions you make when planning a lesson? If so, let us know more about it.
7. Have you ever wondered about why do you make certain decisions when planning a lesson?

Please, answer here.....

Appendix K

ILEOTEC's Discussion 2 Board

[UPGRADE](#)   [COURSES](#)   [GROUPS](#)   [RESOURCES](#)

 Natalia Vallejo

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ILEOTEC - Online Reflective Teacher Commu... REFLECTIVE TASKS  
**TASK 3 - Contesting**


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**Discussion 2 - Contesting our Ideas about Lesson Planning**


After you had shared your journal and read the journal from some of your colleagues, we invite you to participate in a discussion to talk about your and their understandings and reasons for planning in a particular way. It is expected in this activity that teachers approach "unquestioned" ideas about their planning decisions and try to search for "contradictions" between what is thought and how it is actually done. The following quote might give you an idea about what we refer to as contradiction.

*"A contradiction exists when our reasons for an action or the premises on which a course of teaching action is founded cannot all be realized simultaneously... Contradictions may be quite visible while others may be less visible. For example, our wish to improve our teaching may be distorted by visible institutional requirements or an example of a less visible contradiction may be when our teaching may appear to be in the best interests of students when in fact it is ourselves or the institution which has most gain."*

Posted Wed Sep 13, 2017 at 2:15 am


 Write a comment

 Highlight User   4 Posts

 **Mr. M. Mr M.** Sun Sep 10, 2017 at 10:28 pm

- To my mind, we should follow the institutional requirements first and then provided there is some time for extensional practice, we should include some activities that the students might like but adapted to the topics and skills that we need them to develop their actual English level.

Unlike   2 · Reply


 **LINA TRUJILLO** Edited · Mon Sep 11, 2017 at 1:27 am

One of the things I love the most about ILEUSCO is the freedom teachers have when it comes to plan their classes. Even though we are required to follow (and complete) a textbook, we are free to decide how we teach the topics. In my case I have had the chance to go beyond the suggested vocabulary and grammar as I think the book is too basic. However, I am aware of the obstacles we find when we want to improve our teaching. Sadly, when we work for private schools, institutional requirements come in first place. It happened to me that I felt frustrated due to the way English teaching was being directed based on textbooks that had not been designed according to the students' environment and needs. In my opinion, what we can do when this happens is to take a deep look of the material we are required to follow; choose specific activities that fulfill the institutional requirements, and make a great effort to find the time and the way to adapt them to what the students really need. I think all we can do is to try to find the closest to a perfect balance in order to achieve the objectives students should teach according to their level, needs and circumstances.

On the other hand, when I reflect on my own lesson plans and some of my colleagues', I realize that we tend to incorporate ICTs in our classes, and that is perfect! However, experience has taught us that we cannot rely on technology as we do not always have the resources we need. Institutional requirements demand from us that we plan attractive and more dynamic classes. Unfortunately, the institutions do not take into account that the resources are limited. I have tried to solve this situation by making my own teaching material with the students' help, and taking my laptop to class in order to show them interesting pictures and videos. Nevertheless, sometimes it is not enough due the class size and some other factors.

Show Less


Unlike   2 · Reply

 **juan tovar** Sun Oct 1, 2017 at 11:13 pm

We plan based on the book content Ileusco provides us. So, our planning is too attached to the institution requirement concerning to the english topics, despite this they do not force us to teach our own way. We are free to teach them (pupils) the way we think we are right. This is an advantage and gives us the chance to feel at ease when it comes to flexible planning terms. Activities might come in any shape and nobody would contradict them. We wish to have access to labs and incorporate ICTs tools in the lesson plan but we constantly disregard this possibility as labs are not free on Saturday classes. The best way to succeed in our lesson plan and teaching process is to follow the institution requirements and elaborating our own material to be applied bearing in mind some obstacles that might arise, in this way we should include foreseeable problem solutions and as last resource spot decisions.

Show Less

Unlike   2 · Reply

 **juan tovar** Sun Oct 1, 2017 at 11:36 pm

I completely agree with lina when she stated "I try to keep in touch with my professors, so I can ask them for advice when I cannot find an appropriate way to teach a specific topic". This is something that I forgot to mention in my journal reflection but I believe this strategy is powerfully fruitful, sometimes we do not know how to cope with certain topics or activities but listening to the wise men (experienced professors) we can get to succeed in our planning and proper english teaching performance. I little do this but when I have done so, I have untangled big mental knots that blocked my particular way of teaching a class. To wrap up I quote this: **"Don't teach your grandmother how to suck eggs." it seems funny but it literally applies to what lina said.**

Show Less


Unlike   2 · Reply



Appendix L

ILEOTEC's Discussion 3 Board

[UPGRADE](#)   [COURSES](#)   [GROUPS](#)   [RESOURCES](#)

 Natalia Vallejo

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ILEOTEC - Online Reflective Teacher Commu ...   REFLECTIVE TASKS

**TASK 4 - Appraising**

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**Discussion 3: Talking about your new insights**




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In this activity, you will be asked to record a video, an audio or write a text regarding the following:

- Let us know about your insights after reflecting on the beliefs and assumptions behind your lesson planning decisions and perhaps possible contradictions in your teaching actions.
- Based on your new (renovated) or deeper understanding of your planning decision-making process, which propositions can you formulate from your own personal informal theories?


Posted Tue Aug 22, 2017 at 10:39 pm

**Comments**


 **juan tovar**  
to succeed in lesson planning we must incorporate the following issues:

- to have searched in different sources to go deeper in our target topic
- the right timing for each activity
- advice from experienced professor when we are doubtful on any issue.
- set foreseeable problem solutions.
- to take spot decision if necessary.
- to make our own back-up material and do not rely too much on technology
- to set clear and doable goals
- to select the best exercises or activities from the textbook and discard boring or meaningless one.
- to be more communicative and realistic than grammatical and traditional.
- to think twice before planning so as to fulfill students' needs and provide them with tools to solve real life activities.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#)   1 · [Delete](#) · Sun Oct 1, 2017 at 11:57 pm

 **LINA TRUJILLO**  
The right timing for each activity!! To be honest, I have problems with this aspect. :( Sometimes the students are having so much fun, that I do not care about the exact time I was supposed to use for that part of the class. Of course I have found myself in trouble due to this situation. I have had to postpone many other activities that are crucial to the understanding of the topic, or ask my students to develop some book activities at home, which is not correct as some of them need to be teacher guided. So, I strongly agree with you when you say Time Management is key in order to succeed in lesson planning and so the class.

[Like](#) · [Delete](#) · Fri Oct 6, 2017 at 8:33 am


 **Mr. M. Mr M.**  
One of the biggest pitfalls when planning lessons is the mistake of choosing a very detailed or long form/format where the teacher has to devote a lot of time to plan a single lesson. In my experience as a teacher in the private sector, I've learned that the lesson plans should be concrete and very relevant to allow time for the teacher to elaborate on reflexion upon the teaching experience.

I remember, when using the long forms sponsored by the British Council, the planning of lessons became a burden and little by little it became a smart activity cursorily implemented by copying and pasting data to comply with it.

Ironically, the coordinator was really pleased when doing the follow-up of this nonsensical verbiage that was just a jaundiced farce perfect on the paper.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Delete](#) · Sat Feb 24, 2018 at 6:20 pm

**Submissions**   Received (1/4)

 **TRUJILLO, LINA**

Write a comment