Teachers' Perceptions, Knowledge, and Interactions with Scripted Curriculum

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Abstract

As shortages of teachers increase and student standardized test scores remain low and unchanged, there is a push for increasing instructional effectiveness using scripted curriculum and direct instruction. However, scripted curriculum is likely inconsistent with teachers' professional visions and needs, leading to conflicting goals for adopting scripted curriculum and teachers' professional goals. We determined the gaps in the literature support the need to collectively explore how teachers define and consider scripted curriculum, particularly the extent to which they think the curriculum is culturally responsive, motivates students to learn, are involved in adopting the curriculum, and their preferences for teaching with scripted curriculum. Using a cross-section survey design, we gathered quantitative and qualitative data from 292 K-12 teachers working in the south-central United States. We found teachers did not perceive scripted curriculum as culturally responsive, did not think the curriculum motivates students to learn, did not like teaching with the curriculum or preferred to use it as a resource, and tended to be marginally involved in selecting the curriculum. Our research empirically documents the narrative teachers tend to share about scripted curriculum. We conclude our report by discussing our results, implications for our findings, and recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Scripted curriculum teacher professionalism; Culturally responsive teaching; Motivation to read; Student engagement.
"What I hear, I forget. What I see, I remember. What I do, I understand." Xunzi (340 - 245 BC)

1. Introduction

Many efforts have been explored to enhance student learning achievement. Some efforts have been sustained (Kirschner et al., 2006); others have trended and faded away. One approach to improving student learning that has waxed and waned for many years is scripted curriculum (e.g., Slavin et al. (1996)). A scripted curriculum can be defined as a curriculum with specified instructional directions and specific content structured such that if teachers use a scripted curriculum, all students will experience similar levels of learning (Slavin et al., 1996). However, we recognize that education is more complex than simply delivering content. As shared in the words of wisdom of Xunzi, active engagement is critical to developing deep meaning. Reinforced by the work of Bloom (Krathwohl, 2002), developing deeper understanding through higher-order thinking skills requires a student-centered learning environment (Nadelson and Seifert, 2019; Pogrow, 2000).

Scripted curriculum acceptance and adoption in K-12 education have persisted (Timberlake et al., 2017), justifying continuing research perceptions and curriculum implementation. Teachers' perceptions, knowledge, and interactions with scripted curriculum interested us. As the development and adoption of scripted curriculum continue, so does the tension between scripted curriculum and what we know about how people learn (Ahmed, 2023; Bertram et al., 2021; Sassi, 2011; Stillman and Anderson, 2011), which justifies continuing to research teachers' perceptions, knowledge, and experiences with scripted curriculum. We focused our research on teachers since they are responsible for implementing the curriculum. There is also a gap in the literature in the holistic understanding of teachers' scripted curriculum perceptions, knowledge, decision-making, and use in teaching.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Framework

The framework we embraced for our research was professional motivation. We selected professional motivation based on the report from the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association, 2016), which indicates that when people feel valued at work, they tend to be healthier, and their performance and productivity increase. Formalizing teachers' professional value occurs when teachers are recognized for their professional contribution (Carson and Chase, 2009; Scallon *et al.*, 2021). When teachers are recognized as professionals, their motivation shifts from improving professionally to enhancing their students' learning success (Solheim, 2019). Teacher motivation is also positively associated with teacher autonomy (Pearson and Moomaw, 2005; Wu, 2015); thus, as teachers experience more latitude in their professional decision-making, they are more likely to be motivated to achieve higher levels of professional success. As Pearson and Moomaw (2005) detail, teachers tend to be motivated at a higher level by intrinsic factors (e.g., their students' success in learning) than extrinsic factors (e.g., merit pay). We wonder the impact scripted curriculum has on teacher motivation (Demko, 2010) and student learning. We question if scripted curriculum diminishes the recognition of teacher's professional preparation and hinders teacher motivation that impacts student learning.

We posit that scripted curriculum diminishes recognition of teachers' professional preparation, the knowledge they gain through their ongoing professional development, and their need for autonomy, which all lower their levels of teacher professional motivation (Daniels, 2017). If teachers perceive scripted curricula as a reflection of their limited professional capacity and a way to restrict their professional autonomy, they may feel underutilized and undervalued as professionals without the trust and freedom to exercise their professional abilities. Thus, we argue that framing the examination of teaching using scripted curriculum in K-12 education within teacher professional motivation is beneficial. When considering the body of research, it is highly likely that scripted curriculum threatens the perceived recognition of teachers' professional value and professional autonomy, resulting in lower levels of professional motivation.

2.2. Culturally Responsive Teaching

According to Vavrus (2008), culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is a pedagogy grounded in teacher's practice of understanding the cultural and academic needs of students. Culturally responsive teaching designed to increase classroom engagement disadvantaged students who historically have been unsuccessful in traditional classroom settings, provides a platform for teachers to practice their professional contributions. Culturally responsive teaching helps teachers respond to the students' assets and culture by incorporating students' cultural identities and lived experiences into the classroom as tools for effective instruction (Vavrus, 2008). As a result, all students, particularly students who have historically felt isolated, are empowered to become critical thinkers and experience school success. Wyatt (2014), claims when teachers can integrate culturally responsive materials into scripted curriculum, they are more likely to create conditions that have a high propensity to increase their students' learning.

One CRT strategy is to use curricular and instructional materials aligned with students' culture (Gay, 2015; Hsiao, 2015; Kieran and Anderson, 2019). Thus, we were interested in determining if teachers perceive scripted curricula to be aligned with their students' culture, and do they feel it allows for the necessary autotomy to respond and meet the various cultural needs of students. We were also seeking to understand what actions the teachers took to supplement the potential lack of culturally responsive integration within the scripted curriculum.

2.3. Teachers' Engagement in Deciding on Curriculum Adoption

When teachers have less autonomy in curricular decisions, they are less motivated and interested in the profession (Fitz and Nikolaidis, 2020; Han and Yin, 2016; Remillard, 2018). There are some positive outcomes when the curriculum is provided with the understanding that teachers can use their professional knowledge to decide to change the curriculum or supplement it to differentiate and respond to student needs. Siuty *et al.* (2018), found that a prescribed curriculum can "facilitate teachers' decision-making around individualized instruction and increased self-efficacy" (p. 39). In many cases, scripted curriculum is not structured to involve teacher decision-making and, at times, forces teachers to move forward with the curriculum despite students falling behind or needing individualized instruction (Fitz and Nikolaidis, 2020).

When implemented strictly and with fidelity, scripted curricula can limit teachers' ability to make crucial decisions in their classroom instruction (Beatty, 2011). At times, scripted curriculum programs require teachers to adapt to the curriculum, not adjust or change the curriculum to fit their learning context and students, ultimately limiting the teacher's autonomy (Fitz and Nikolaidis, 2020). Additionally, scripted curriculum frequently does not require advanced levels of teacher professional knowledge (Dresser, 2012; Hall, 2009). The impact scripted curriculum can have on teacher practice justifies examining how teachers are involved in the decision-making when adopting and implementing the curriculum.

2.4. Teachers' Knowledge and Scripted Curriculum

In many schools, teachers are expected to rely on predetermined, scripted curriculum resources to shape their instructional practices rather than on their professional judgment (Fitz and Nikolaidis, 2020; Milner IV, 2013; Stillman and Anderson, 2011). However, with adequate assistance, improvement, and training, teachers can develop and enact rational curricular and instructional decisions to enhance student learning (Fackler *et al.*, 2021; Fitz and Nikolaidis, 2020). Further, many teachers must prepare to make such decisions for various reasons (Vaughn, 2019).

For example, alternative, fast-track teacher "education" programs such as Teach For America (TFA) make it necessary for scripted curriculum because many of these teachers are not prepared to make rational, appropriate, and responsive curricular decisions in the classroom with students (McCarthey and Woodard, 2018). Teachers' inability to make decisions without a script is likely a consequence of their preparation (McCoy *et al.*, 2020) and their time in teaching (Muhammad, 2020). Additionally, traditional teacher education programs have not fared well in preparing teachers to teach and make curricular decisions for student learning in highly diverse urban environments, increasing the justification for adopting and implementing scripted and narrowed curricula (Schwabsky *et al.*, 2019).

When teachers are underprepared, a scripted curriculum is perceived as a solution to ensuring they know what to teach, when, and how to teach it Carl (2014). This line of thinking suggests that they need direction because teachers have yet to get it right or because they need more skill and knowledge to teach efficiently (Dudley-Marling, 2015; Valencia, 1997). Teaching guided by a scripted curriculum is seen as technical work. Teachers are not expected to study what their students know and need to know because the curriculum is predetermined and preassembled (Remillard, 2000). Unfortunately, schools serving high percentages of African American and Latino American students (Kauffman, 2005), those living in poverty (Kauffman, 2005), and those whose first language is not English—are heavily populated with underprepared teachers, such as those trained through Teach for America (Carl, 2014). Therefore, students in these environments experience scripted, narrowed curricula more often than in other sociocultural contexts, such as suburban schools (Vaughn *et al.*, 2021). In their policy analysis, Conrad *et al.* (2015) maintained that part of the motivation to narrow the curriculum was shaped by the need for teachers to focus on aspects of the curriculum that would most likely be tested in any given year (Ahmed, 2023). However, as Fitz and Nikolaidis (2020) argue, the standardization of instruction and curriculum threatens democracy.

Thus, we were interested in learning more about teachers' perceptions of scripted curriculum in relationship to their professional preparation and perceptions of their role in making curricular and instructional decisions. Gaining a deeper understanding of these relationships can be used to support the potential pitfalls or limitations when adopting and implementing scripted curriculum.

2.5. Influences on Students' Motivation for Independent Learning

The connection between teacher instructional motivational strategies and student motivation to learn has often been acknowledged (Han and Yin, 2016). However, the factors affecting teachers' motivation and self-determination toward their work also directly impact student motivation. Therefore, the levels of teachers' motivation to teach can significantly influence students' motivation and determination to learn (Han and Yin, 2016). Thus, when teachers convey low motivation for teaching or apathy toward curriculum, they may impact their students' motivation to learn.

High-impact teaching methods such as individualized instruction, differentiated instruction, and application of knowledge for higher-order thinking frequently do not align with scripted curriculum yet increase student motivation to learn. Scripted curriculum is prescriptive and test-driven instruction (Dresser, 2012; Erskine, 2014), which reduces student preparation for independent learning, which diminishes their learning motivation. Thus, when teachers shift from student-centered, individualized reading strategies for their students to using a scripted curriculum, their students become less engaged as independent readers and learners (Dresser, 2012). Carl (2014), argues for the importance of teaching using real-world problems to engage students, which increases teacher motivation for teaching, yet is ideology opposed to teaching using scripted curriculum. Carl (2014) maintains teachers should recognize the learning needs of their students as dynamic and should create learning opportunities that students find to be rich and significant, which is an approach that is not aligned with the implementation of scripted curriculum. Similarly, Schmidt and Lazar (2019) documented increased student motivation to learn when given choices, yet another condition antithetical to scripted curriculum.

Teaching using scripted curriculum has a high potential to negatively impact students' independent learning. In contrast, there is a high potential for alternative approaches to teaching to increase student motivation to learn. The impact of what and how students are taught on their motivation to learn independently justifies examining teachers' perceptions and experiences using scripted curriculum and the resulting impact on their students' motivation for independent learning.

2.6. Teachers Preferences for Teaching

Teacher preferences for their instructional approach vary, which can be associated with their role in the school (Knowles *et al.*, 2020), their teaching experience, and their perceptions of knowledge (Soleimani and Sadeghi, 2020). Teachers' instructional preferences influence how they consider and interact with scripted curriculum. Teachers tend to seek autonomy and expect support from the building and district-level administration (Rigell, 2022), provided with some level of academic freedom, and trusted to make choices that are in the best interest of their students. Similarly, teachers tend to resist the rigidity associated with expectations of fidelity in instruction that limit their teaching autonomy, such as the restrictions commonly associated with scripted curriculum.

Kelly *et al.* (2019), highlight teachers' perceptions of scripted curriculum as limiting their ability to teach what they perceived as higher priorities, thus preferring not to use the curriculum. Similarly, Kelly *et al.* (2019) documented teachers being disheartened by scripted curriculum that did not align with evidence-based practices. The teachers argued that reading a script does not inspire students to learn, echoing teachers' perceptions from the past (MacGillivray *et al.*, 2004), in which teachers claimed scripted teaching and learning materials did not meet the needs of the students. The teachers' experience with scripted curriculum not meeting the needs of their students led them to reject the curriculum and voicing contempt when faced with having to teach using the curriculum.

Cahn *et al.* (2018), convey teachers value instructional materials aligned with the state learning standards that are available and appropriate for their students and provide opportunities for differentiated instruction to meet student learning needs. However, the teachers were also skeptical of the quality of purchased materials (Cahn *et al.*, 2018). (Cahn *et al.* (2018)), found that teachers had little to no input in selecting instructional materials, which fostered teacher frustration. When teachers are an integral part of selecting and adopting curriculum they can experience "buy-in" and, in the process, develop a commitment to the chosen curricula (Cahn *et al.*, 2018). Thus, while some curricular choices may not be aligned with teacher preferences, there is more likely a chance for them to embrace the curricular decision if they are part of the adoption process. Thus, in researching teachers' perceptions of scripted curriculum, it is important to know their perceptions of the curriculum and their involvement in making curriculum selections.

3. Methods

For our cross-sectional investigation, we selected a survey research methodology. Thus, we developed a survey aligned with our research and distributed it to K-12 teachers working in the south-central region of the United States. We collected data for two weeks.

3.1. Research Question

The overarching research question for our research was, "What are teachers' perceptions, knowledge, and experience teaching scripted curriculum." To frame our research, we developed the following associated guiding research questions:

- What is teachers' knowledge of scripted curriculum?
- What are teachers' perceptions of how scripted curriculum is culturally responsive?
- What are teachers' involvement in deciding on adopting a scripted curriculum?
- What are teachers' perceptions of how scripted curriculum influences students' motivation for independent learning or reading?
- What are teachers' preferences for teaching with a scripted curriculum?

3.2. Participants

Our participants were K-12 public school teachers working in a region of the south-central United States. Our 293 participants were, on average, 44.5 years old (SD = 12.78) and had been teaching for an average of 14.88 years (SD = 10.48). Of the participants, 241 identified as female, 47 as male, and 5 indicated other or not share. Most participants identified as White non-Hispanic (N = 233), 20 identified as Native American, 22 identified as mixed ethnicity, eleven identified as Hispanic, nine as African American, two as Asian, four as Other, and three preferred not to answer. The distribution of teacher education level was bachelor's degree at 35.6%, a bachelor with some post-graduation course work being 17.8%, those with master's degrees composed 29.5% of the participants, with 9.2% indicating a master's degree with post-degree course work, 1.4% had an education specialist degree, 4.8% indicated they had a doctorate, and 1.7% indicating other as their highest degree.

The teacher's distribution of community structure was 43.5% rural, 31.8% suburban, 24.0% urban, and .70% online. We had the most significant percentage of teachers working at the secondary level (54.2%), followed by the elementary level (42.4%), with a small percentage working in K-8 schools (2.4%) and K-12 schools (1%). We had the most significant representation of teachers teaching all subjects (26.5), followed closely by those teaching STEM subjects (24.1%), with humanities teachers making up 10.3%, social science teachers were 2.5%, and general education teachers were 1.9% of our study participants.

The percentage of participants who rated their knowledge of scripted curriculum as "some knowledge" was 46.9%, followed by deep knowledge at 33.9%, with very little knowledge claimed by 8.9%, expert knowledge at 6.5%, and no knowledge at all by 3.8%. We had the most significant percentage of teachers indicating they never teach with scripted curriculum (27.7%), followed by using the curriculum very seldom (21.9%), then frequently teaching with the curriculum (20.2%), and using the curriculum somewhat (18.8%), with the lowest percentage of participants indicating they use the curriculum constantly (11.3%).

3.3. Research Design

We designed our investigation using a cross-sectional approach using a survey. Our goal was to gather from teachers their perceptions, knowledge, and experience with the scripted curriculum at a point in time. We used a survey to collect data from a large sample of K-12 teachers. The survey research allowed us to gather the evidence needed to document the scripted curriculum perspectives, knowledge, and experiences from a large diversity of K-12 teachers.

3.4. Survey Development

Given that we could not find any extant surveys explicitly aligned with our research question and focus, we determined we needed to develop a new survey. As a team, we took an iterative approach to the survey development. We started by discussing our guiding research questions and the context in which K-12 teachers may encounter scripted curricula. We then generated lists of qualitative (i.e., free response) and Likert scale or Likert-like scale (i.e., selected response) survey prompts for consideration. Once we developed a cache of items, we collectively reviewed each item for alignment with the specific research questions, relevancy to our overall research goal, and potential

redundancy with similar items. Following our collective review, we worked to limit our survey to no more than five selected response items and no more than one free response item per guiding research question.

Our final survey contained selected response items with Likert-scale prompts such as, "I have the freedom to adapt the curriculum to meet the demographics of my students." and "I have NOT been part of a curriculum adoption decision-making process." We also included Likert-like scale items such as "I teach with a scripted curriculum," which is answered on a five-point scale ranging from "Never" to "Constantly," and "Rate your knowledge of scripted curriculum" which is responded to on a five-point scale "No Knowledge" to "Expert Knowledge." We calculated our reliability to be a .83 Cronbach's Alpha, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency.

3.5. Recruiting Participants

We developed our sample by locating K-12 school websites and other depositories and gathering from the sites the email addresses of the teachers working in K-12 schools. We gathered a total of 20,806 teachers' email addresses.

3.6. Data Collection

We distributed an email to the teachers with a link to our survey, inviting them to participate in our research. The survey was developed and implemented from Qualtrics, which allowed us to monitor responses easily. We were hoping for a five percent response rate; however, our email invitations were filtered by school district and building-level servers, substantially limiting our ability to connect with potential participants. Thus, we are unsure how many potential participants received our invitation. However, 293 (1.4%) of our potential participants completed at least 95% of the survey.

3.7. Data Conditioning

Before analyzing our quantitative data, we took several steps to condition our data. First, we coded parties of our demographic data, such as subject areas and grade levels of teaching. We then replaced the rare missed selected-response item entry using the substitute with a series mean feature in SPSS (IBM Corp, 2020). After the condition, we were able to begin our analysis. We also reverse-coded the negatively stated items to calculate the average composite scores for each of our subsets of items.

To condition the qualitative data, we aggregated the responses for each research question for analysis. Thus, as we prepared the data for analysis, we created a unique document composed of the answers for each qualitative research item.

3.8. Analysis
3.8.1. Quantitative Data

We analyzed our data descriptively, calculating the means, standard deviations, medians, and data ranges. In addition, we calculated the correlations of the composite scores to determine relationships among the variables.

3.8.2. Qualitative Data

As a research team, we began our analysis by generating a set of priori codes. We then created pairs of researchers to code the responses to our qualitative questions. We approached our analysis deductively using our a priori codes and inductively developing emergent codes (see Table 2). We analyzed a subset of our data, randomly dividing the data into thirds, and then coded at least a third of the data. Note that some pairs of researchers choose to code more than a third of the data; thus, in reporting our results, we noted the subset size for each research question.

Table-2A. Priori and Emergent Codes by Theme

Theme	A Priori Codes	Emergent Codes
Culturally Responsive	Diversity, Representation, Reflection, Mirror, Not considered, Not relevant, No effort	Lacks relevant material, Time flexibility, Lacks curricular connections, Actively seeking representation, Instructional level match, Instructional decision-making, and Teacher input.
Perceptions of Using Scripted Curriculum	Limited, Useful, Consistent, Stifling, Easy, Hard, Insulting, Freedom, Bias	Does not recognize teacher professionalism. Not student aligned/ relevant (culturally, economic, etc.), Questionable origin/author, Lacks connections with other ideas, Helpful to extend teaching to make it better - resources, No impact on teaching; I prefer not to have a scripted curriculum, A guide for teaching, No knowledge.
Knowledge of Scripted Curriculum	Prepared/ prepackage, Canned, Published, Directions (scripted), Instruction/activities, Same for all, Not creative, Not flexible, Not individualized, Not culturally responsive,	Pre-defined, Scope and Sequence, Instructional Materials, Assessment Materials, Accommodations, Modifications, Assignments/ Homework, Not Organized/ Poorly Designed, Comprehensive, Fosters Student Dependence, Direct Instruction, Hate/ detest, Foundational, Research Based, Flexible

	Boring, Frustrative, Helpful, Consistent, Stagnant, Restrictive	
Motivation to Learn using scripted curriculum	Not engaged, Compliant, Increased motivation, Decreased motivation, Excited, Intrinsic, Increased achievement, Disengaged, Bored	Teachers influence student motivation, Individualizing instruction, Student relevance, and Student engagement; Teachers can change curricula.
Curriculum adoption roles	No involvement, Limited involvement, Extensive involvement, Leading adoption, Part of a team, Piloting	School level, Classroom level, Grade/ department/ subject level, Individualized, District level, Administrative decision, Teachers pick or create supplemental materials, Develop curriculum, Adaptability with other school resources, Advocacy - seeking permission, Parent involvement, Wished to have guidance, False involvement, Budget, No set curriculum.

3.9. Trustworthiness

We took multiple steps to establish the trustworthiness of our research. We engaged in our survey development as a team, bringing various perspectives and multiple years of experience in K-12 education, teacher preparation, and research production. We vetted our survey with several experts to determine if our items were aligned with the research questions and the context of scripted curriculum in schools. We developed our a priori codes as a team and then applied the codes as a team to ensure intercoder reliability. We reported both the a priori and emergent codes to allow others to replicate our study, further enhancing the trustworthiness of our research.

4. Results
## 4.1. Knowledge of Scripted Curriculum

Our first guided research question asked, What are teachers' knowledge of scripted curriculum? To answer this question, we examined the selected response items aligned with scripted curriculum knowledge (N =293). We found the participants were nearly neutral in the knowledge of scripted curriculum (see Table 3). The participants indicated a neutral to moderate agreement with being prepared to teach using their current curriculum and having school-based professional development focused on curriculum implementation. The participants disagreed with students having to all learn at the same level when implementing a scripted curriculum and lacking an understanding of how to teach a scripted curriculum. The participants were neutral toward thinking scripted curricula are developmentally appropriate for the grade level they teach.

Table-3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Medians for Knowledge of Scripted Curriculum Selected Response Prompts (N = 293)

Prompt	Mean	SD	Median
Rate your knowledge of scripted curriculum:	3.30	.87	3.0
I was prepared to teach using my current curriculum.	3.49	1.16	4.0
My school provides me with professional development in curriculum when I need it.	3.38	1.18	4.0
With scripted curricula, students should all learn at the same level.	2.04	1.01	2.0
There are scripted curricula that are developmentally appropriate for the grade level I teach.	3.10	1.10	3.0
I lack understanding of how to teach a scripted curriculum.	2.25	1.11	2.0

We next examined the frequency of our item's coded data subset (N = 103), asking the participants to define scripted curriculum (see Figure 1). We found a significant trend in our data, indicating that the participants tended to define scripted curriculum as prepackaged sets of directions with instruction and activity details lacking flexibility. Other definition trends were perceptions of lack of individualization, highly structured, and not culturally responsive. In contrast, the same number of participants indicated that the curriculum was helpful, consistent, flexible, and comprehensive. Overall, we found consistency in the definitions but a broader variation in the participant's feelings, which included positive and negative perceptions of scripted curriculum.

Figure-1. Codes and Frequencies for Responses to Knowledge of Scripted Curriculum Data Subset (N = 103)
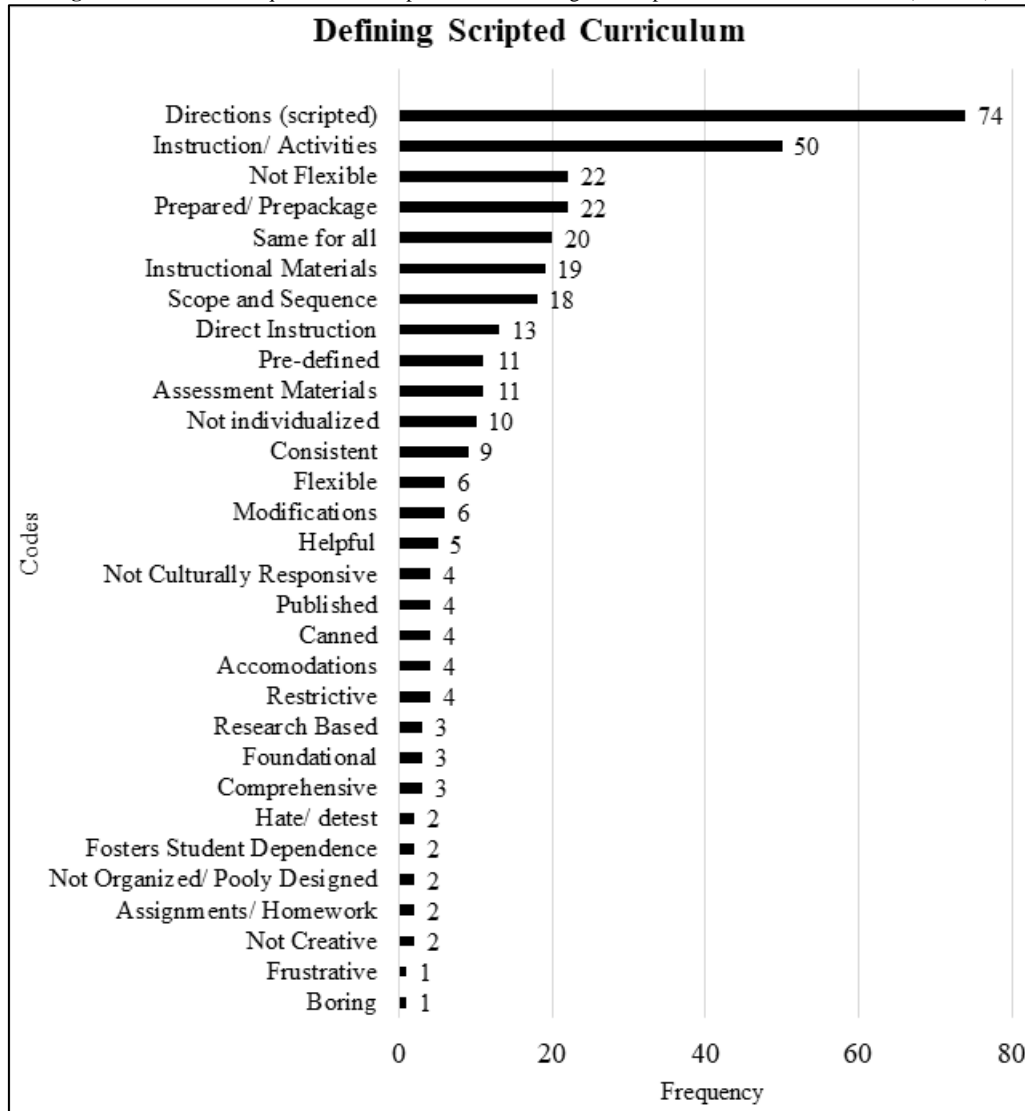
We finalized our analysis by examining the representative responses to our five most frequent codes (see Table 4). The responses reflect the participant's perceptions of directed content and instruction, continuity in instruction and activities, curriculum being prepared and not flexible, and being the same for all.

Table-4. Coding, Frequency, and Representative Responses of a Data Subset (N = 103)

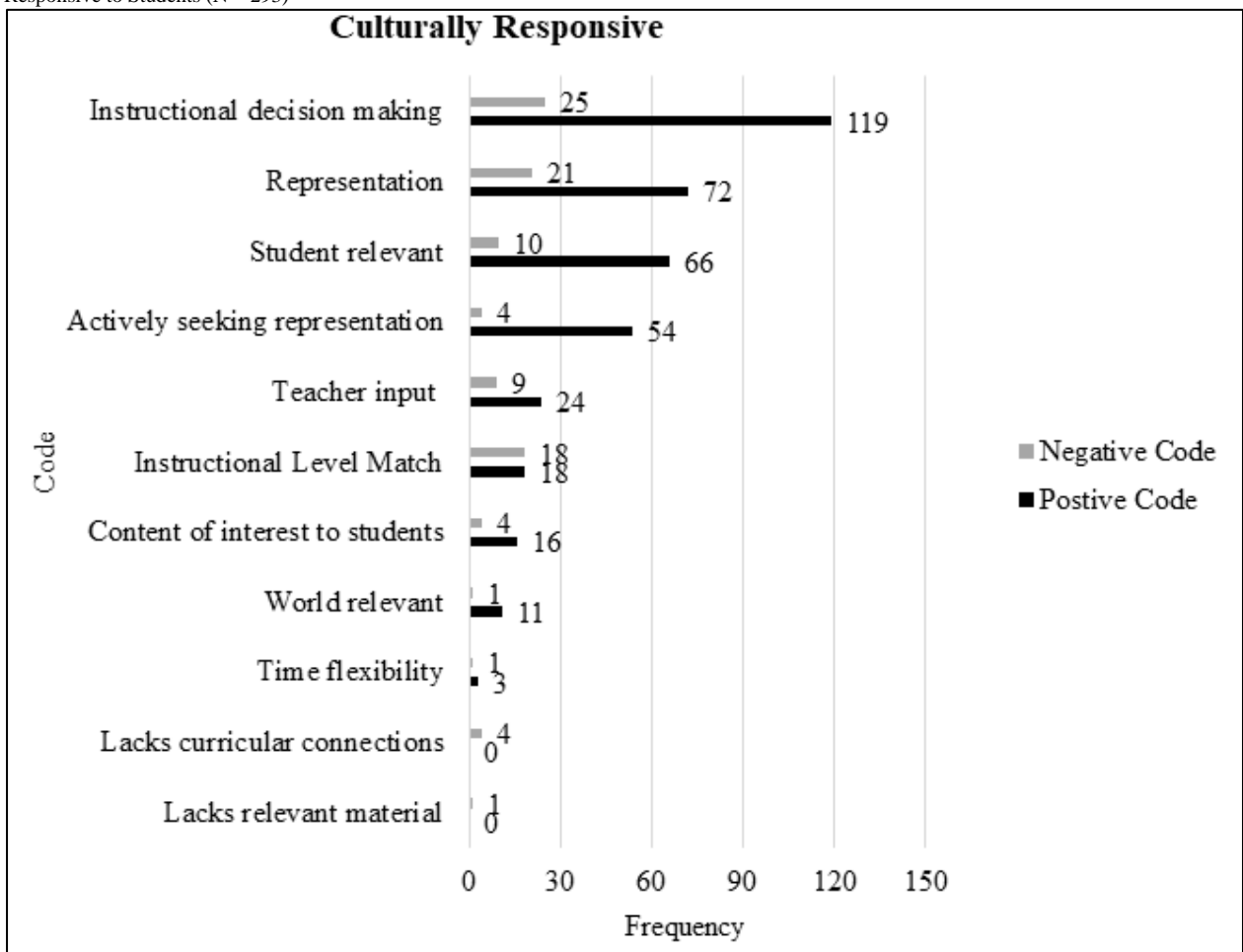| Code	N	Representative Response
Directions (scripted)	74	A scripted curriculum indicates what teachers say and what activities they prepare….
Instruction/ Activities	50	All teachers teaching a subject teach the same lesson on the same day...
Prepared/ Prepackage	22	A package of materials that script out instruction
Not Flexible	22	... requires the rigid use of specific strategies and mandates uniform instruction in all classrooms and sessions.
Same for all	20	It assumes that each student in a classroom is at the same learning point.

4.2. Culturally Responsive Teaching

Our second guiding research question asked, What are teachers' perceptions of how scripted curriculum is culturally responsive? We started answering this question by examining the selected response items aligned with the teachers' perceptions of the alignment between curriculum and culturally responsive teaching. We found the participants indicated they used "some" texts (median = 3) authored by Black, Indigenous, or people of color (Note, "some" = 3.0, with the scale ranging from "no texts" = 1 to "all texts" = 5). We also found that The participants tended to be neutral toward the texts in their curriculum reflecting the identity of their students (median = 3). The participants agreed (median = 4) that the text in their curriculum reflected different cultures and that they were free to adapt a curriculum that met the needs of their students (median = 4).

Table-5. Means, Standard Deviations, and Medians for Curriculum being Culturally Responsive Selected Response Prompts (N = 293)

Prompt	Mean	SD	Median
How many texts authored by Black, Indigenous, or people of color are in your curriculum?	2.84	1.06	3.0
The texts in my curriculum reflect the identities of my students.	3.26	1.02	3.0
The texts in my curriculum reflect diverse cultures and experiences.	3.50	1.02	4.0
I have the freedom to adapt the curriculum to meet the demographics of my students.	3.82	1.13	4.0

We progressed in answering the question by examining the positive and negative frequencies of the participants' responses in their description of efforts they might take to adapt a scripted curriculum to meet the demographics of their students (see Figure 2). We found that participants tended to engage in decision-making to provide culturally relevant content for their students and actively sought representation to make the curriculum relevant. We found that teachers supplementing the curriculum with culturally responsive materials depended on the school district they work in, as some districts' policies allowed freedom to supplement, and others did not permit supplementing. Overall, we found that teachers provided substantially more positive responses, reflecting their tenacity and motivation to make the curriculum culturally relevant for their students.

Figure-2. Codes and Frequencies for Positive and Negative Responses to Description of Efforts to Make Scripted Curriculum Culturally Responsive to Students (N = 293)

We concluded by answering the question about providing culturally relevant materials for students by examining representative responses for our five more frequent codes (see Table 6). Overall, the teachers indicated that the scripted curriculum did not address cultural differences, so they added additional content to make it culturally relevant for their students. Again, the teachers sought to add culturally responsive content for various reasons, with the majority feeling optimistic about the process. However, there were also several responses in which adding the material was not an option or a waste of time.

Table-6. Codes, Frequencies for Positive and Negative Representative Responses of the Full Data Set (N = 293)

Code	N (Pos)	Positive Representative Response	N (Neg)	Negative Representative Response
Instructional Decision Making	119	I add and substitute the leveled readers to meet the needs and abilities of my students. I also add more diverse books that relate to the subject being taught.	25	No adaptation allowed. Read the script.
Representation	72	Working at a predominantly black school, we supplement pictures and stories whenever approved by the administration to provide a more diverse demographic that is representative of the population at our school. I create slide decks of pictures or even replace names in the scripted curriculum with that of my scholars to provide more culturally responsive examples.	21	I attempt to bring in books and extra resources that might help my students connect to the curriculum. However, in my district, they only let us teach what is approved, which makes it all the more difficult to do this.
Student Relevant	66	I require students to do independent reading, so I think that's their opportunity to choose books that appeal to their culture, ethnicity, gender, etc.	10	We have noticed that many of our students feel disconnected from the content because the political landscape has changed so much. There are also some philosophies and messages that are dated and lack strong Black voices.
Actively seeking representation	54	We are currently searching for novels that will benefit students in terms of cultural competence, as well as catch their interest and feel relevant to their time and place.	4	I wouldn't. Unless someone is prepared to learn Cherokee and create curriculum, this is not relevant to my field of study or subject area.
Teacher input	24	I adjust/change/scrap assignments based off of how much time in class we have available. I interject my own personality into my teaching.	9	Honestly, it would end up in the trash.

## 4.3. Teachers' Involvement in Deciding on Curriculum Adoption

Our third guiding research question was, What are teachers' involvement in deciding on the adoption of scripted curriculum? To answer this question, we examined the selected response items aligned with the teachers' involvement in selecting scripted curriculum (see Table 7). We found that the participants tended to agree they were engaged in the decision-making process (median = 4), and they agreed there were expectations that they were involved in the process (median = 4). The teachers tended to disagree with the scripted curriculum, allowing them to make in-the-moment instructional decisions (median = 2).

Table-7. Means, Standard Deviations, and Medians for Teachers' Involvement in Deciding on Curriculum Adoption (N = 293)

Prompt	Mean	SD	Median
I have NOT been part of a curriculum adoption decision-making process.	2.78	1.47	2.0
My principal expects teachers to be involved in the curriculum decision process.	3.61	1.11	4.0
A scripted curriculum would allow me to make in-the-moment instructional decisions.	2.42	1.15	2.0
Teachers take part in the curriculum decision process.	3.45	1.18	4.0

Our examination of the coding and frequency (see Figure 3) revealed that many participants worked in teams when making curricular choices (N = 33) and are engaged at the school level in making the decisions (N = 28). Collaboration was not an option for all teachers in the sample. Some participants indicated limited or no involvement in the scripted curriculum decision but were asked to use it in their classrooms. On the other hand, some participants (N = 13) led or had extensive involvement (N = 13) in scripted curriculum adoption efforts. Several participants had the autonomy (N = 15) to select their curriculum. Shared at a very low frequency were other factors such as piloting, parent involvement, and making decisions at the classroom level.

Figure-3. Codes and Frequencies of a Data Subset for Responses to Involvement in Adopting Scripted Curriculum (N=103)
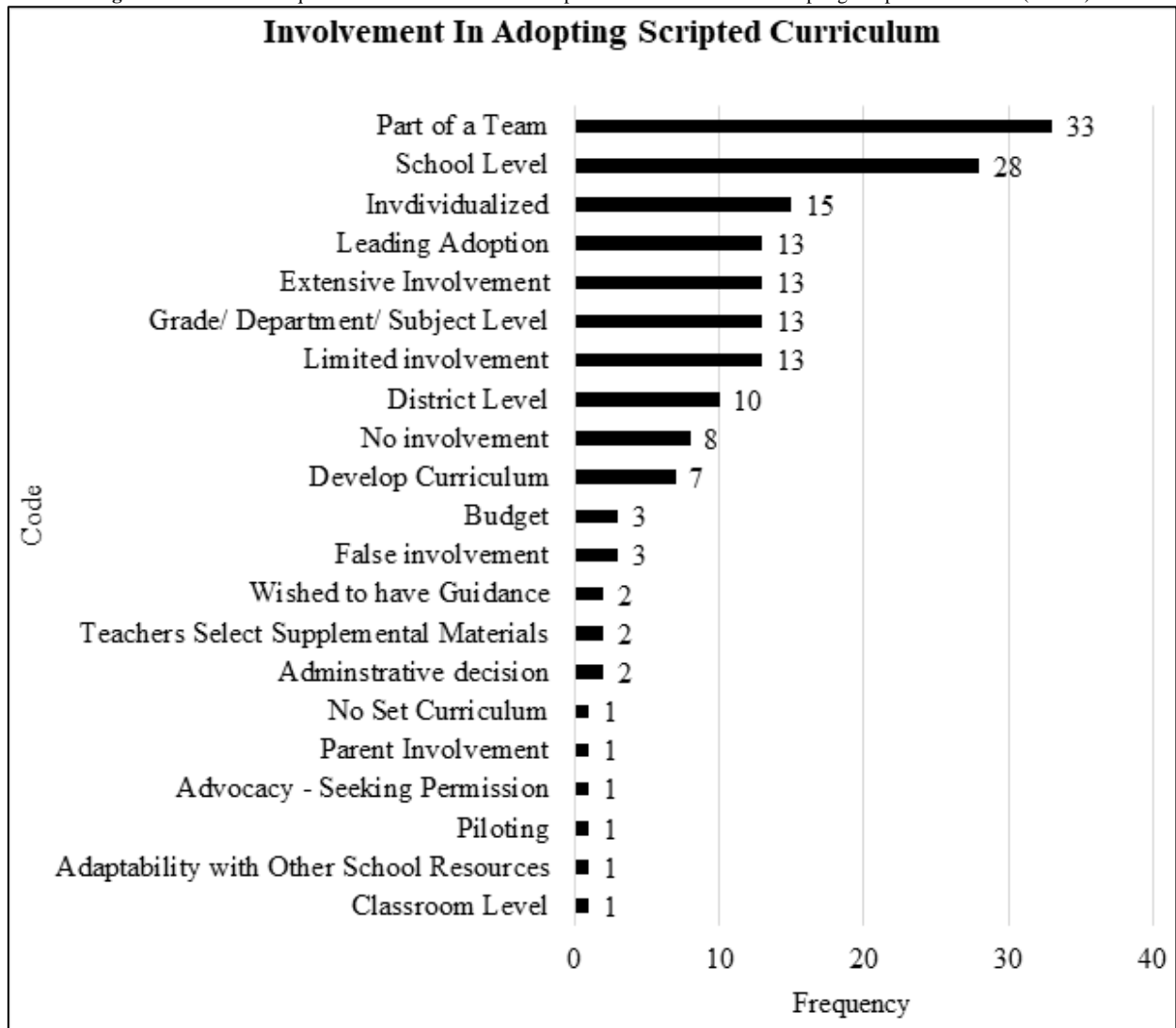
We concluded answering our research question by reviewing the representative responses associated with our item's five most frequent codes, asking the participants to share their experience with selecting a scripted curriculum (see Table 8). Our participants shared a broad diversity of ways they made curricular decisions, particularly the extent to which their preferences and thoughts about choosing a curriculum were included and considered.

Table-8. Coding, Frequency, and Representative Responses of a Data Subset (N=103)

Code	N	Representative Response
Part of a Team	33	I, along with my PLC, have been involved with meetings with my principal and the district math coach. My opinions and the opinions of my colleagues were heard...
School Level	28	...we had a meeting to discuss as a group the pros and cons of different options and which we as a school would purchase.
Individualized	15	...each teacher gets to pick their own curriculum.
Limited Involvement	13	We respond to surveys and look at the curriculum, but then the administration makes a decision.
Grade/ Department/ Subject Level	13	Department groups score each textbook up for adoption and make a selection from the state-approved texts. Supplemental materials need to be vetted and approved...
Extensive Involvement	13	I was part of the curriculum adoption committee... I then took the information and samples back to the teachers at my school to present to them and discuss which one we thought would work best.
Leading Adoption	13	I am leading the textbook adoption committee for this year, but this is the first time we've gotten new textbooks in 10+ years.

4.4. Perceptions of How Scripted Curriculum Motivates Students To Learn

Our fourth guiding research question asked, What are teachers' perceptions of how scripted curriculum influences students' motivation for independent learning or reading? We examined the selected response items aligned with the teachers' perceptions of how scripted curriculum influences students' motivation for independent

learning or reading (see Table 9). We found the participants disagreed (median = 2) with scripted curriculum inspiring their students to learn and motivating them to read. The participants were neutral (median = 3) toward scripted curriculum not allowing their students to be creative and leading them to be less interested in reading. Overall, the data indicate the participants were neutral or disagreed that scripted curriculum motivate student learning and reading.

Table-9. Means, Standard Deviations, and Medians for t=Teachers Perceptions of Student Learning Motivation and Scripted Curriculum (N = 293)

Prompt	Mean	SD	Median
A scripted curriculum would inspire my students to learn.	2.32	1.01	2.0
A scripted curriculum does not allow students to be creative learners.	3.32	1.18	3.0
Scripted curriculum motivates students to read.	2.41	.98	2.0
Scripted curriculum makes students less interested in reading.	3.22	1.03	3.0

We also reviewed the coded data of the responses to the free-response item, asking the participants to share their perceptions of how scripted curriculum influences students' passion for independent learning or reading (see Figure 4). We found teachers were skeptical about the potential for scripted curriculum to motivate and engage students in reading and learning. The participants recognized the role of teachers as learning motivators. While some shared the possibility to modify and adapting scripted curriculum, other participants recognized the standardization of the curriculum as limiting student learning motivation and engagement.

Figure-4. Codes and Frequencies for Positive and Negative Responses to Motivation for Students to Learn Using Scripted Curriculum (N = 262)
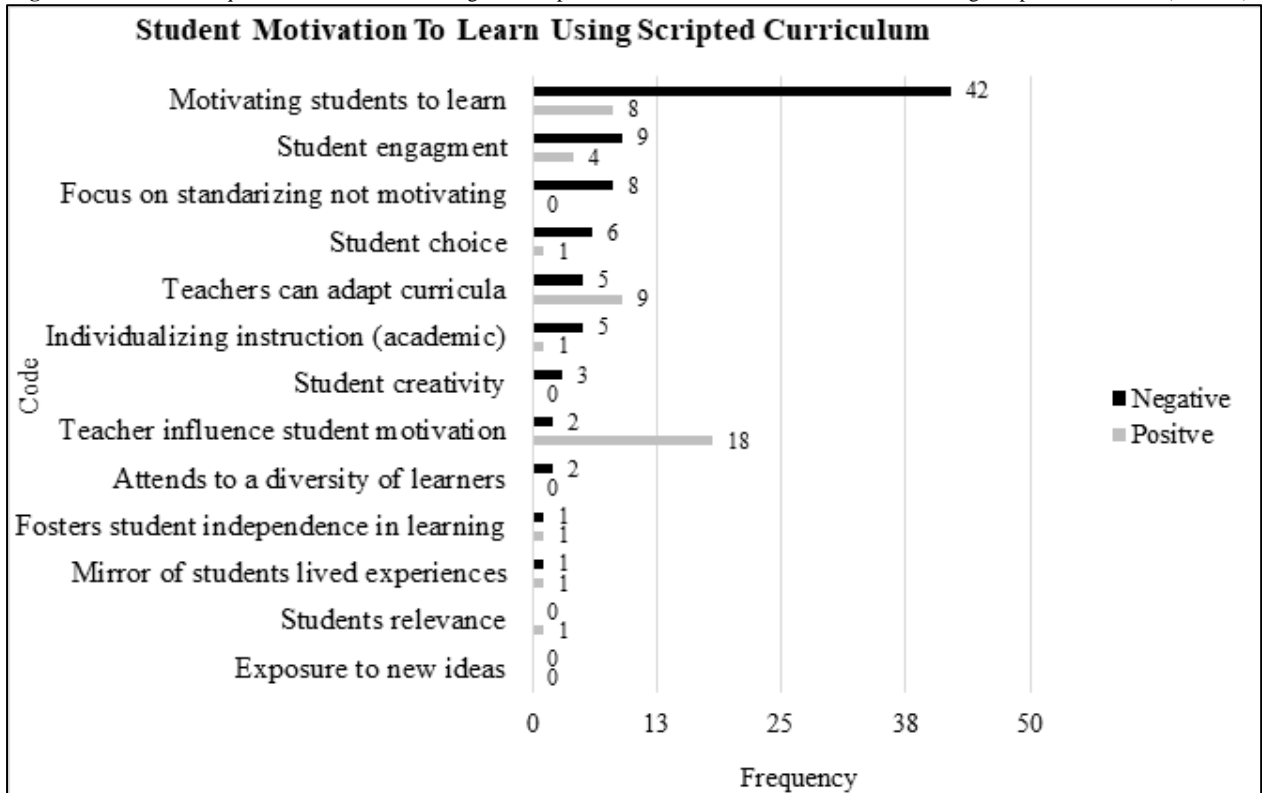
We concluded answering our research question by examining a subset of representative responses associated with the five more frequent codes (see Table 10). Many participants shared that it was not the scripted curriculum that motivated their students to learn but rather the teachers who instilled this motivated. The teachers claimed the students found the scripted curriculum boring and stifling. One teacher shared that a scripted reading curriculum did not motivate students because "it expects all students to come from the same backgrounds and cultures. It also expects them to all learn at the rates which does not happen, ever, for a multitude of reasons." Many teachers voiced that no matter what curriculum, whether scripted or not, it comes back to the teacher's influence as the student's motivation.

Table-10. Coding, Frequency, and Representative Responses of a Data Subset (N = 262)

Code	P	N	Representative Response
Motivating students to learn	8	42	...eliminates the opportunity for each student to be creative in both understanding the material they are learning, as well as their motivation to learn.
Teacher influence student motivation	18	2	... It is the manner of the delivery and the influence of the teacher that motivates the students to learn.
Student engagement	4	9	Scripted curricula (like that used at my previous school) make students feel disengaged from learning. They feel all their choices have been made for them by a system that doesn't value their voice.
Teachers can adapt curricula	5	9	...if the curriculum is dry and boring and not adaptable to local needs, it may be more challenging to do so.
Focus on standardizing, not motivating	0	10	...generally scripted curriculum for instruction guides teachers and ensures students are being taught similar content among grade level regardless of teacher.

## 4.5. Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching with Scripted Curriculum

Our final guiding research question asked, What are teachers' preferences for teaching with a scripted curriculum? To answer this question, we examined the selected response items aligned with the teachers' preferences for teaching with a scripted curriculum (see Table 11). We found the teachers tended to disagree with choosing to teach with scripted curriculum (median = 2), preferring to teach with scripted curriculum in order not to have to attend to learning standards (median = 2) and scripted curriculum, making them better teachers (median = 2). The participants were neutral toward the opportunity to teach using a scripted curriculum (median = 3) and agreed with having the flexibility in making curricular choices (median = 4).

Table-11. Means and Standard Deviations for Teachers Preferences for Teaching with a Scripted Curriculum (N = 293)

Prompt	Mean	SD	Median
I would like the opportunity to teach using a scripted curriculum.	2.51	1.20	3.0
Given the option, I would choose to teach using a scripted curriculum.	2.37	1.21	2.0
I prefer having the flexibility to make curricular choices based on learning standards.	4.29	.81	4.0
I prefer a scripted curriculum because I don't have to worry about meeting learning standards.	2.22	1.15	2.0
Scripted curriculum makes me a better teacher.	2.33	1.11	2.0

We continued to answer our research question by exploring the codes and associated frequencies resulting from our data analysis (see Figure 5). We found that the participants perceived scripted curriculum as a simple guide for teaching, while others shared that a scripted curriculum was restrictive. The participants frequently shared that the content was not relevant, they preferred not to teach using scripted curriculum, and the curriculum did not recognize teacher professionalism. Many teachers recognized the curriculum as a resource that made teaching easier; however, an array of responses reflected negative thoughts about the curriculum, such as insulting, not creative, tedious, frustrating, and lacking connections to other ideas. Overall, the participants coded responses suggested that the teachers held a lack of preference for teaching with a scripted curriculum.

Figure-5. Codes and Frequencies for Responses to Teacher Preferences for Teaching with Scripted Curriculum (N = 100)
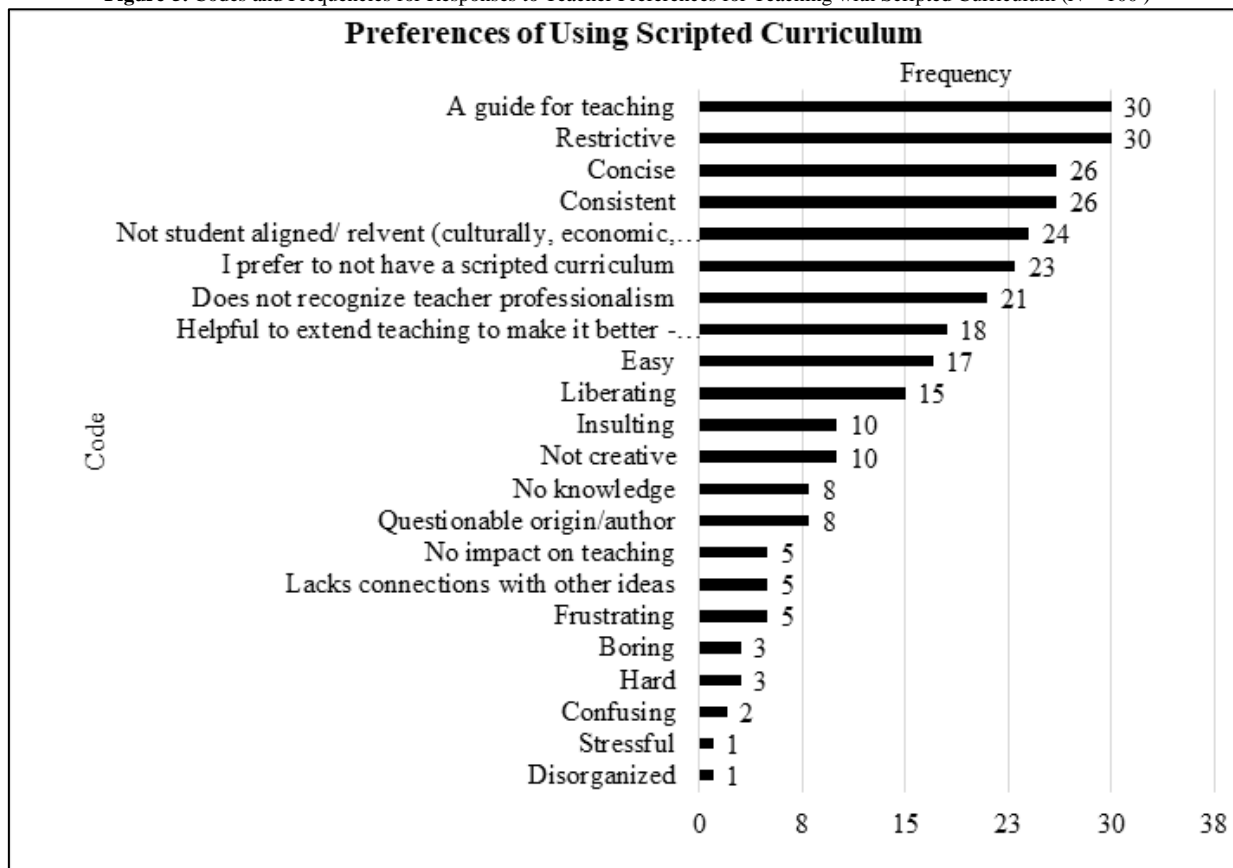
We concluded our result reporting by focusing on teachers' preference for teaching with scripted curriculum by sharing representative responses to the five more frequent codes (see Table 12). The participants commented that scripted curriculum is was a valuable source of materials and ideas they adapted and adopted as they built their lessons (N = 30). At the same frequency, many participants recognized scripted curriculum as restrictive (N = 30). Many participants recognized scripted curriculum as a resource for prepared instructional materials (N = 26) and a guide to ensuring comprehensive coverage at an appropriate pace (N = 26). However, many teachers recognized the lack of relevance to students in the curriculum (N = 24). Overall, the data again indicates indicated? that the teachers are were tentative about teaching with scripted curriculum and perceived multiple limitations with the curriculum but recognized the curriculum was a helpful course on instructional materials. Thus, the results suggested that teachers preferred to use the curriculum based on their professional decisions, picking and choosing from the curriculum elements that they perceived as useful for enhancing their teaching and student learning.

Table-12. Coding, Frequency, and Representative Responses of a Data Subset for Teachers Preferences for Teaching with Scripted Curriculum (N = 100)

Code	N	Representative Response
A Guide for Teaching	30	A scripted curriculum gives me a base or foundation to build my lessons around. It usually provides resources that will enhance the lessons.
Restrictive	30	I think starting out scripted is better, but as you learn your scholars needs and motivations as well as the necessity to teach to standards instead of blindly following curriculum, you should be able to move outside of the curriculum as long as you use it as a guide/tool that you as an educator make informed decisions while also teaching the basic concepts within the scripted curriculum.
Consistent	26	Saves time from gleaning teaching activities, covering standards, spiral review inbuilt, and already research-based.
Concise	26	My scripted curriculum helps me make sure I don't forget little things and also helps me keep from rushing through too fast.
Not Student Aligned/Relevant (culturally, economic, etc.)	24	….I do not believe that most scripted curriculums are designed for the diverse student populations that I serve…

5. Discussion and Implications

The goal of our exploratory research project was to explore k-12 teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and practices using scripted curriculum. We found an array of positive and negative responses from the participants, indicating a variation in their thoughts and knowledge of the scripted curriculum. Our findings may be potentially explained by multiple explanations and have substantial implications for practice and directions for future research.

5.1. Knowledge of Scripted Curriculum

We found that the teachers indicated they were knowledgeable and understood the scripted curriculum yet voiced multiple negative attitudes and attributes in their definitions. We speculate that teachers' passions for exercising their professional autonomy and preparation likely influence how they think about and define scripted curriculum. Further, there is an array of scripted curriculum materials and methods for implementation that likely influence how they define the curriculum. Thus, it is potentially critical for teachers to understand how scripted curriculum will be defined and considered in their context. Further, teachers may view scripted curriculum through a different lens than researchers, developers, and vendors, which may result in a disconnect between teacher expectations and needs for the curriculum and those who may be developing and selling the curriculum. The range of definitions may influence engagement with the curriculum and their expectations, which is likely to influence their implementation fidelity. Regardless, the conflation of defining the curriculum with their feelings about teaching using the curriculum reflects the potential that implementation is likely inextricably linked to teacher knowledge and attitudes toward scripted curriculum. Further research is needed to explore how teachers' feelings toward scripted curriculum influences how they define the curriculum and the association with their teaching using the curriculum.

5.2. Culturally Responsive Teaching

We found the teachers recognized scripted curriculum as lacking in alignment with their students' culture and irrelevant to their students' lifestyles. However, a larger percentage of the participants indicated they overcame this material limitation by supplementing with other sources to make their teaching relevant to their students. The implications of supplementing with additional materials are the potential for a lack of fidelity of implementation of curriculum as intended and disparity in implementation as some teachers may perceive or are granted the flexibility in using the curriculum. In contrast, others are expected or required to teach directly from the provided curriculum, which may substantially limit the potential for them to integrate culturally relevant content. Being able to supplement with additional materials likely dilutes the scripted curriculum as the primary source of knowledge but may also result in higher student interest and engagement in learning. Our finding suggests that scripted curriculum publishers need to attend to and increase emphasis on making their curriculum relevant and aligned with their students' culture. An interesting direction for future research is a direct comparison of scripted curriculum designed to be culturally responsive to students impacts student learning compared to scripted curriculum that is culturally neutral or void of culture.

5.3. Teachers' Engagement in Deciding on Curriculum Adoption

We found that most of the teachers tended to be engaged at some level in the decision-making process when adopting scripted curriculum. The level of involvement suggests the potential for a range of recommendations and adoption outcomes. We speculate that the greater the level of involvement, the more likely the teachers would find value in the curriculum, which is an excellent direction for future research. The level of involvement likely suggests the wide range of recognition of teachers' professionalism. It is possible that the more teachers are involved in the curriculum process, the more they are likely to select a curriculum that meets the needs of their students, which is another potentially fruitful direction for future research.

5.4. Perceptions of How Scripted Curriculum Motivates Students To Learn

We found that a large majority of the participant's responses indicated their students were not motivated to learn using a scripted curriculum, and the curriculum was structured in ways that limited the ability of teachers to use motivational approaches such as choice, personal engagement, and creativity. The results suggest that the curriculum is structured in ways that are focused on specific content and are not designed to attend to other critical aspects of learning, such as choice (Mehalik *et al.*, 2008), opportunities to creatively apply knowledge (Olivant, 2015), and active engagement (Mahzoon-Hagheghi, 2021). The findings imply that a scripted curriculum is unlikely to increase student learning beyond rote knowledge. Thus, the learning is likely to occur at the lowest levels of Bloom's taxonomy and not likely to foster students' higher-order thinking skills. An important direction for future research is empirically documenting how teachers compensate for the lack of student motivators in scripted curriculum.

5.5. Teachers' Preferences for Teaching with Scripted Curriculum

We found that many teachers embraced scripted curriculum for its concise, consistent ease of use. However, they also found the curricula to be detrimental to making learning relevant to students and placed limits on teacher creativity. We speculate that teachers' perceptions of teaching with scripted curriculum are likely impacted by how they can implement it. For example, teachers may be more likely to accept a scripted curriculum if they can modify or adjust the use of the curriculum as a resource to meet their students' needs. However, we also found evidence that indicates teachers perceive scripted curricula to be a threat to their autonomy and professionalism. Thus, there is a need to consider the relationship between teacher autonomy and their preferences for teaching with a scripted

curriculum, which is also an essential direction for future research. Additional research could also be conducted on the similarities and differences in preferences for teaching using scripted curriculum between early-career teachers and mid or late-career teachers.

6. Limitations and Delimitations

The first limitation of our research was the level of participation of the teachers we invited to complete our survey. While we hoped for at least a 5% level of participation, we could not achieve that goal, as many of those we invited did not choose to participate. However, we do believe that our sample size was sufficient to draw meaningful conclusions about the teacher's knowledge, perceptions, and interactions with a scripted curriculum.

Our second limitation is the potential wide variation in knowledge of the scripted curriculum, and the structure of the curriculum may be related to the participants' responses. However, we could not verify the participants' self-reported levels of knowledge and experience. Thus, there are likely multiple perceptions about the scripted curriculum by those who claim to have the same level of knowledge, but those levels may differ. In future research, additional efforts should be taken to assess levels of knowledge and experience in ways that will allow for higher levels of continuity in the participants' perceptions.

Our first delimitation is the inability to consider the variations in the structure and content of published scripted curriculum. While certain structures are associated with scripted curriculum, there are also differences. The structures of this curriculum can also vary by subject area and grade level. Thus, we examined the teacher's knowledge, perceptions, and interactions with scripted curriculum, with the accepted limitation that not all scripted curriculum are the same.

Our second delimitation is that the wide range of school cultures will likely influence how teachers interact with and teach using scripted curriculum. We recognized these differences and accepted the limitation with the assumption of the potential of regression to the mean, such that outliers were likely to have minimal impact on our findings.

Our third delimitation is that we collected the data from a relatively small region in the south-central United States. It is possible that teachers in other regions have different perceptions of and experiences with scripted curriculum. Future research is needed to determine if our findings are consistent with the larger teacher populations intheUnited States.

7. Conclusion

Our research goal addressed a gap in the research by assessing teachers' knowledge, perceptions and, interactions with scripted curriculum. Our findings have multiple implications for the design of the curriculum and how the curriculum is likely to most effectively be used to engage students and increase their motivation for learning. Further, our research has revealed that attention needs to be paid to aspects of teacher professionalism and autonomy to increase the potential for teachers to get the maximum use of scripted curricula. We have offered multiple directions for future research to build on our findings. We hope others will find our research of value and will build out a foundational study to close the gap in the research and expand our empirically based understanding of teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and interactions with scripted curricula.

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