

Qualitative Aspect of Lifelong Learning: A Study of Pre-Service Teachers in Colleges of Education of Punjab (India)



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Abstract

This is a quantitative study focusing on pre-service teachers (n=298). The study is based on determining the effect of gender and marital status on three indicators of Quality of Life Long Learning (QLLL) viz; adaptation, continuous professional improvement and flexibility. Pre-service teachers are the teacher students prepared in Colleges of Education of Punjab. Data was collected by using self-made questionnaire and analyzed by using statistical tools like; Mean, Standard Deviation, t-ratios and Analysis of Variance. The results highlighted that pre-service teachers differed significantly because of gender on flexibility indicator whereas marital status was only able to effect adaptation. No significant difference was observed for continuous professional improvement with respect to gender and marital status for pre-service teachers.

Keywords: Adaptation, Continuous professional improvement, Flexibility, Gender, Marital Status, Pre-service, Quality of Life Long Learning.

Introduction

Teachers act as key factors for the teaching-learning process and help us to reform and update our knowledge, so as to make us better transmitters of knowledge by setting new challenges like; updating and acquiring competencies. New challenges should be undertaken due to the rapid development of educational technologies, socio-economic growth and modernization demand innovativeness, creation, dissemination and application of new knowledge. In this 21st century, teachers require training and gather best knowledge so that we can stand apart from the rest. Marcia (1983) identified lifelong learning as a foundation for job performance and learning in the work role. She added that it is only through lifelong learning one seeks self-confidence, self-worth and an interest in personal growth. This aspect of learning demands continuity which constantly gets in move when supported by interest in education. This means teacher to function effectively and qualitatively needs continuity in education as lifelong learning. The need for the teacher to renovate his knowledge according to the present scenario has aroused because the role of teacher in the classroom has shifted from the primary role of information giver to that of facilitator, guide and learner. To perform these roles teacher often has to act as a co-learner and co-investigator with the students. This is because one learns best when they are engaged in a variety of ways of learning like; discussing issues, solving problems, participating in business simulations, conducting research, thinking critically, working cooperatively and making business decisions. All these activities involve the teacher to become an active and qualitative member in all the strategies involved in the teaching –learning process. This calls for qualitative aspect of LLL because here the teacher has to use the retained knowledge mingled with new knowledge and develop the meaningful knowledge which will enable him and his students to apply this knowledge and skills to real life issues and situations.

Operational Meaning and Definitions of the Terms Used

Gender

It is a characteristic associated to males or females.

Pre-Service Teachers

Teachers as students studying in colleges of education in order to become professionals.

Marital Status

It is considered whether the person is married or unmarried.

Qualitative Aspect of Lifelong Learning

Delmore and Shaker (2002) defined quality as the degree of excellence of entire educational experience.

Krashen (2004) characterized qualitative aspect of lifelong learning as dynamic idea with positive concept, continuous and focused approach towards improvement and performance.

According to Adegbile and Adeyemi (2008) quality can be defined in terms of competence to monitor and assess whether the school, group and individual members have achieved stated goals, given standards or specifications.

Hung et al (2009) referred quality of lifelong learning as social practice which strengthens the craft for 21st century.

Lamb (2011) described lifelong learning as a habit of mind which provides openness to new ideas and willingness to rethink old ones, flexibility in dealing with complex problems by learning, relearning and unlearning as a condition for change and insight.

Lekoko and Medise (2011) visualized lifelong learning as a torch for education which is relevant, appropriate and appreciated as learning by actions and interactions and is valued by events that constitute it

Rana (2012) recognized lifelong learning as that learning which is continuous, collaborative, self-directed, active and broad in domain and covers all aspects of life that have emerged as a global educational challenge.

Khany and Boghayeri (2014) focused on teachers and found that effective teachers are creative and with these creative capacities they possess high quality of lifelong learning.

Indicators Determining Quality of Lifelong Learning

On the basis of research studies conducted by Rogoff (1990); Grossman (1991); Pajares (1992); Astin (1993); Boulton-Lewis, Wilss and Mutch (1996); Livingstone (1998); Duxbury, Dyke and Lam (1999); Johnston (1999); Larrivee (2000); Riddell, Alastair and (2001); Uhlenbeck, Verloop and Beijaard (2002); Schellenkens, Pass, Jerong and Merrienborg (2003); Glastra, Hake and Schedler (2004); Chitpin and Evers (2005); Birenbaum and Rosenau (2006); Jarvis (2006); Lessing and De Witt (2007); Williams and Baumann (2008); Ab. Hadi, Yunos and Kaprawi (2009); Gimeno, Seiz, de Siqueira and Martinez (2010); Al-Shalabi (2011); Meerah et al (2011); Eliasa (2012); Goel and Goel (2012); Chugunova and Voronchenko (2013); Lee, Zhang, Song and Huang (2013); Daronkolae, Esmaeili and Nikaeen (2014); Vaughn (2014); Saribas (2015); we can safely say that quality of lifelong learning among pre-service teachers can be determined by knowing their;

1. Adaptation
2. Continuous Professional Improvement
3. Flexibility

Adaptation

A process for an individual, learning to adjust with changes by keeping various factors in mind like; improvement, renovation, openness and sharing of possibilities and constraints associated to them.

Field (2001) focused on daily lives of individuals and interpreted that individuals learn to adapt to various changes in the context of individual values, social relationships and living patterns.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2001) reported that attitudes towards knowledge has changed from 'know-what' to 'know-why' and 'know-how' to 'know-who'. The organization laid stress on knowledge management and adaptation as it has become very important for teacher & his teaching due to knowledge transmission and knowledge acquisition.

Braimoh (2008) considered adaptation as learning of new ideas and gaining valuable knowledge.

Duffy, Miller, Kear, Parsons, Davis and Williams (2008) defined adaptation as instructional decision in response to unanticipated student interaction outside the pre-planned lesson plan.

Gosper et al (2010) advocated adaptation as competence to adjust with learning which helps the learner to adjust according to one's learning pace.

Varmecky (2012) conceived adaptation as a situation to deal with real life problems and this phase is grounded by effective learning, real life learning, critical thinking, self-directed learning and metacognition.

Lee, Zhang, Song and Huang (2013) perceived that adaptation of knowledge and its acquisition has direct or indirect influence on capacities of teachers' teaching and learning.

Continuous Professional Improvement

It is regarded as updating the knowledge in such a way to give satisfaction and encouragement to the teachers so as such activities are undertaken which helps in bringing improvement in their profession.

Burnard and Chapman (1990) regarded continuous improvement as a notion to acquire further knowledge.

Garrison (1997) professed continuous professional improvement as a mean to achieve greater awareness of the subject matter.

Pan (1997) noted that continuous learning is a habit which helps us to learn continuously throughout our life by making it our mode of behavior, if they have the ability to learn and respond intelligently to exponent increasing knowledge in a rapidly changing world.

Reid and Barrington (1997) suggested continuous professional development as ongoing process achieved by management of learning.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (2000) perceived continuous improvement of teachers for their professional development which helps them to learn new knowledge and practices in the field of education.

Smith and Sela (2005) advocated novice teachers as members of professional communities who can contribute effectively to career long professional development by engaging themselves in self-study, sharing of ideas and resources and their perusal towards individual development and so on.

National Council of Educational Research and Training (2005) under National Curriculum Framework advocated continuous professional improvement as vision of education for teachers' to renew their knowledge and skills.

Mungekar (2008) translated continuation of learning as a driving force for upgrading of skills and knowledge according to the fast changing frontiers of knowledge in this upcoming century.

Verna (2014) revealed that level of teacher quality depends on wealth of experiences and competencies one has and this can be only achieved through continuous improvement and innovation.

With the above facts & discussion, help us to conclude that with continuous professional improvement it helps the teacher to acquire knowledge regarding the subject matter to a greater extent and improving knowledge according to the current trends.

Flexibility

Flexibility means learning with mutual consent and depends upon context and purpose. It is an ability to perceive a task from different points of view, different approaches or different strategies. Hossiep and Paschen (1998) defined flexibility as openness to experience and learning new things.

Chen (2003) defined flexibility as students with flexible access to learning experiences w.r.t; time, place, pace, learning style, content assessment and pathways.

Singham (2005) demonstrated that 21st century context teacher requires sophisticated knowledge to upgrade their knowledge by having positive attitude towards reading interest and lifelong learning skills.

Australian National Professional Standards for Teachers (2011) highlighted that flexibility on behalf of teachers' demands them to prepare themselves for the next generations of teachers for the coming future.

Houston, McCune and Osborne (2012) conceived flexibility as widening of participation which helps students to have access to education by keeping in mind, locations and modes and at time help individuals to choose institutions as well as degree of individuals.

Going by the above views of researchers we can conclude that, flexibility is the aspect which requires teachers to cope up with new trends of knowledge and knowledge explosion for the betterment of their knowledge & students.

Review Related To Present Study

Boulton-Lewis, Wilss and Mutch (1996) conducted a research study on teachers as students and found that the informal and formal knowledge of learning process is the reflection of the students learning. They further highlighted that if the teachers

as students are better informed about learning in their own disciplines and in other disciplines then they can easily organize their knowledge into an over-arching structure that could be easily applied selectively to different aspects of learning and teaching.

Aspin, Chapman (2001) undertook a study related to lifelong learning: concepts, theories and values and found that this approach of learning is concerned with promoting skills and competitiveness necessary for developing capacities and performances of individuals in work situations.

Fleming and Walker-Gibbs (2004) worked on the teacher lifelong learning. Their study revealed that perceptions on the cutting edge of educational innovation provide flexibility, satisfaction and retention to the teachers.

Barkhuizen and Feryok (2006) conducted research on 15 student teachers enrolled in a postgraduate diploma in education at a Hong- Kong University. The findings of the study revealed that learning experiences depends upon the expectations and experiences of the learners because of what we learn are the articulated reflection of these experiences.

Lessing and De Witt (2007) conducted a research study on teachers and found that formally and systematically planned and presented learning focuses on enhancement of personal and professional growth by broadening knowledge, skills and positive attitudes.

Moen, Kelly and Magennis (2009); Wu (2010) conducted research in Taiwan to study participation of lifelong learning among men and women. The results of the study revealed that women in comparison to men had greater lifelong learning engagement. The study further highlighted that though the opportunities to access lifelong learning for both the gender groups are not equal; but as women are entering the job market, they have to shoulder the responsibility for raising children and maintaining their households.

Carter (2010) undertook research on 471 black and white students to determine their academic and cultural flexibility and found that there are strong connections between students and school behaviors as they pertain to willingness of both students and educators'. He further stated that males have the ability to become flexible in order to realize their visions regarding teaching profession in accordance to latest changes and growing knowledge of the society.

Brante (2010) and Beach (2011) perceived that scientifically developed knowledge about teaching as a profession is necessary and desirable for the continuous improvement of professional knowledge of teacher.

Quintini (2011) conducted research to determine differences among women. The results of his study inferred that gender differences are clearly visible in the sector to access lifelong learning which includes education, learning and training.

Gencel (2013) examined the perceptions of teachers' to study their lifelong learning competences.

The findings of the study revealed that teachers' perceptions about quality of lifelong learning, competencies vary gender.

Kadı and Beytekin (2014) conducted study on 343 teachers' residing in Turkey to examine their opinions towards scientific changes in learning. The findings of the study disclosed that female teachers' resist the value of change because their frightening nature with respect to skepticism, increased burden, chaos and also their awareness process.

Saribas (2015) conducted research study on pre-service teachers' to investigate the relationship between environment knowledge, attitude, uses and concerns. The findings of the study revealed an interdisciplinary approach is needed among teachers to regulate their learning to stimulate their motivation to learn, foster curiosity and creativity to influence their lifelong learning tendencies, so as to make suitable decisions. The study further highlighted that in the knowledge and information laden 21st century society, it has become crucial for teachers to direct and regulate their own learning for evaluating an idea to encounter new ways to solve problems.

Stringer, Saqr and Tennant (2015) conducted research on married pre-service teachers residing at United Arab Emirates. The findings of the study revealed that marital status influence pre-service teachers' to cope with challenges and continuation of their studies by affecting their outlook and commitment. They further clarified that this may be due to the reasons such as; imbalance in role adjustment due to their increase family responsibilities and personal distress.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the present study proposes Qualitative aspect of Lifelong learning as a means of access to world with efficiencies, equity and contributing to sustainable economic and social development which in turn depicts the qualitative aspect of Life Long Learning. This will help teachers to be flexible, adaptive by nature which will help them to improve, update and renovate their knowledge according to the current changes happening in this 21st century due to knowledge explosion, modernization and globalization. For this particular study, teachers' qualitative aspect of LLL is looked in terms of indicators viz; adaptability, continuous

professional improvement and updating of knowledge and flexibility, these in turn, are affected by the demographic variables. For the undertaken study, it is assumed that teachers' QLLL is affected by his/her gender and marital status to which he/she belongs. Going by the differences among pre-service teachers on the basis of gender and marital status, it is assumed that male or female and married or unmarried status can make difference on the basis of adaptability, continuous professional improvement and flexibility.

Statement of the Problem

The title for this particular problem is jotted down by keeping all the factors in mind; Qualitative Aspect of Lifelong Learning: A Study of Pre-Service Teachers in Colleges of Education of Punjab (India)

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the gender differences on three indicators of QLLL viz; adaptation, continuous professional improvement and flexibility among pre-service teachers.
2. To study differences on the basis of marital status depending upon three indicators of QLLL viz; adaptation, continuous professional improvement and flexibility among pre-service teachers.

Hypotheses

1. No significant differences observed among male and female pre-service teachers on three indicators of QLLL viz; adaptation, continuous professional improvement and flexibility
2. No significant differences visualized between married and unmarried pre-service teachers on three indicators of QLLL viz; adaptation, continuous professional improvement and flexibility

Design of the Study

The current study was conducted on the basis of requirement of factorial design in which the effect of gender and marital status of pre-service teachers acted as independent variables. It varies at two different levels (S1-Female and S2-Male) and (M-Married and U-Unmarried) which were studied on dependent variable; three indicators of Quality of Life Long Learning viz; adaptation, continuous professional improvement and flexibility. Data was collected from 12 colleges of education of Punjab given under table-1.

Table-1

Sample Description for Pre-Service Teachers Belonging to Various Colleges of Education (Punjab)

Name of the Colleges of Education	No. of Pre-Service Teachers
Rayat College of Education, Railmajra, SBS Nagar	29
Chandigarh College of Education, Landran, Mohali	17
Doaba College of Education, Kharar	18
B.C.M. College of Education, Ludhiana	36
Guru Nanak Dev College of Education, Majatri, Tehsil Kharar, Distt. Mohali	24
Indo Global College of Education, Abhipur, Ropar	29
Mehar Chand College of Education, Bhanupali, Nangal, Ropar	30
Shivalik Hills College of Education, Patti (Nangal)	38
M.B.B.G.D.R.G.C. College of Education for Girls, Mansowal, Distt. Hoshiarpur	11
D.A.N College of Education, Nawanshahar	19
Khalsa College of Education, Mahilpur	30
Pine Grove College of Education, Fatehgarh Sahib, BassiPathana	17
TOTAL	298

Periodic Research

Statistical Techniques Used

For the testing of hypotheses various statistical tools were implemented to get the best results like; t-ratios and Analysis of Variance.

Questionnaire as a Tool

For measuring Quality of Life Long Learning of teachers, self-made questionnaire was drafted which consisted of two sections namely; Section-A is pertained to Background Variables which includes name, gender (male or female), address, educational qualification and marital status (married or unmarried) whereas; section-B consist of fifteen statements concentrating on; updating of one's knowledge, adopting different strategies such as; group discussion, freedom in thinking, combination of past, present and future forms of work, diversity and radical professional transition, capacities and skills by gaining self-confidence, meaningful participation at work and decision making process. Initially, there were 24 statements and the responses on the measurement tool were collected on a 5- level Likert type scale ranging from 1- (St. Disagree), 2-(Disagree), 3-(Undecided), 4-(Agree) to 5- (St. Agree). Reliability coefficient of the scale was measured by Cronbach

Alpha and its value came out to be 0.891. Content validity was checked by five experts. Finally, 15 statements (5 for adaptation, 5 for continuous professional improvement and 5 for flexibility) were selected.

Methodology and Results

The statistical analysis pertaining to the main effects of S (Gender) and M.S (Marital Status) for adaptation are given below:

Table-2 Summary Table of ANOVA for the Main Effects of S and M.S on Adaptation

Symbol	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Level of Sig.
S	3.034	1	3.034	0.134	-
M.S	133.805	1	133.805	5.904	0.01

The table-2 reveals that main effect of marital status is significant at 0.01 level whereas those of S is not significant even at 0.05 level. This means that adaptation of pre-service teachers differ significantly from each other on the basis of marital status; married or unmarried. Thus, it was considered necessary to apply t-test only for variable marital status.

Table-3 t-ratio for Variable of Marital Status (M.S)

Group	N	Mean	SD	SE _M	Treatment Group	t-ratio	Level of Sig.
M	146	16.00	4.424	0.507	M- U	1.985*	0.05
U	152	14.68	5.134	0.597			

* Significant at 0.05 Level of Confidence

The observation of means for the two levels of marital status shows that mean of married pre-service teachers (M=16.00) is significantly higher than the mean of unmarried teachers (M=14.68). This is further confirmed by finding t-ratio for the differences

between the means of treatment level M-U, which is significant at 0.05 level. Thus, it can be inferred that married teachers have scored significantly higher on adaptation than unmarried pre-service teachers.

Table- 4 Summary Table of ANOVA for Main Effects of S and M.S on Continuous Professional Improvement

Symbol	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-value	Level of Sig.
S	37.427	1	37.427	1.693	-
M.S	12.906	1	12.906	0.584	-

The above table reveals that main effects of S and M.S are statistically insignificant for continuous professional improvement. This means variance of gender and marital status are not significant even at

0.05 level. It further indicates that these variables have come from the sample means which do not differ from one another.

Table-5 Summary Table of ANOVA for the Main effects of S and M S on Flexibility

Sources of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Level of Sig.
S	46.611	1	46.611	2.164	0.01
M.S	34.627	1	34.627	1.608	-

The above table reveals that main effects of M.S are not significant even at 0.05 level of confidence whereas main effect of S is significant at

0.01 level. Since F-value for S is significant, it is considered necessary to analyze it further by finding out t-ratios.

Table- 6 T-ratio for Variable of Gender (S)

Symbol	N	Mean	S D	SE _M	Treatment Level	t-ratio	Level of Sig.
S1	154	14.92	5.135	0.419	S1-S2	1.972*	0.05
S2	144	14.12	4.233	0.346			

* Significant at 0.05 Level of Confidence

The observation of means for the gender levels given in table-5 shows that mean of S1 (14.92) is higher than the mean of S2 (14.12). t-ratio for the difference between the means of (S1-S2) is also found to be significant at 0.05 level. Thus, it can be inferred that female teachers have scored significantly

higher on the indicator flexibility than male pre-service teachers.

Conclusion

In the present study the researcher attempt to focus on indicators related with different aspects which shape pre-service teachers response

associated to the quality aspect of lifelong learning. This particular study, reports that there is a significant gender differences in flexibility aspect of learning which help us to conclude that quality of lifelong learning is interpreted differently by both male and female teachers whereas on basis of marital status they differ only on adaptation factor. No significant difference was found on continuous professional improvement with respect to gender and marital status for pre-service teachers. The findings of the present study are in agreement with findings of Johnsrud (1995); who found that women accept their responsibilities and do not change their dutiful, subservient roles. Thus they have to balance their work and family responsibilities in order to maintain social harmony. That is why; they are flexible to adjust with their new roles. These findings are in agreement with research findings of Antikainen (2001) who conducted research in Finland and found that participation in learning varies with marital status and type of family and differences in marital status may be due to uneven participation of married and unmarried people in learning activities. The findings of the study at hand are not in agreement with those of Ferret and Smith (2010); who found that with increased awareness and understanding, pre-service teachers become more confident in their practices and this encourage them to improve their level of performance and learning. These results are in contrast with the research findings of Thomas, Raynor and Al-Marzooqi (2012) who conducted research in United Arab Emirates to determine effect of marital status and gender on undergraduate learning performance and revealed that marital status did not attribute towards the quality of learning performance and reading but it help spouses to assume additional responsibilities by being focused and propelling towards time management skill. Taken together, the findings strongly highlight the need of regular assessment of gender and marital status of teachers in relation to quality of lifelong indicators and design effective strategies and improvement methodologies for them.

Discussion and Suggestions

1. The present study has investigated quality of lifelong learning of pre-service teachers studying in different colleges of education of Punjab. The study throws light on three indicators of quality of lifelong learning of teachers viz; adaptation, continuous professional improvement and flexibility. With the knowledge and concepts of these indicators, teachers can re-mould and reshape themselves as better teachers who are enlightened enough, to cope with change in knowledge, which is growing at a very fast pace.
2. It is hoped that pre-service teachers would be able to develop their qualitative aspect of lifelong learning in such a way that their knowledge automatically gets improved by upgrading their skills which enhance their capabilities and capacities, as an important skills, most needed for 21st century to become better adapters and professionals.

3. The institutions preparing teachers for tomorrow, in the light of these research findings can ensure better linkages, better interaction and better atmosphere in their colleges and institutions, so as to create conducive atmosphere in them.
4. The results of the study will pave a long way to help pre-service teachers to gain insight of quality of lifelong learning which will bring changes and gradually lead towards improvement.

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