# Investigating Qualitative Aspect of Life Long Learning: Comparing In-Service Teachers by Demographic Variables

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## Abstract

Prior studies about in-service teachers have examined their beliefs in context of pedagogy and interaction. Furthermore, studies comparing the Quality of Life Long Learning of in-service teachers on the basis of gender and faculty are almost non-existent. Comparing the Quality of Life Long Learning of in-service teachers is important because it affect the teaching- learning process and quality of education. The undertaken study compared 300 in-service teachers with respect to gender and faculty to examine their views about QLLL on the identified indicators viz; adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility. Survey data was analyzed by using the statistics (e.g. mean, median, standard deviation, t-ratios and ANOVA). Results indicated highly comparable factorial structure of indicators for the adaptability where male in-service teachers scored significantly higher on adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility as compared to female in-service teachers. Birenbaum and Rosenau (2006) assumed that this is because in-service teachers have more learning opportunities than pre-service teachers. Although, the differences viewed were not as great by the in-service teachers belonging to the faculty of humanities and languages on adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility whereas, in-service science teachers felt significantly high on adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility.

KEYWORDS: Life Long learning, quality, in-service teachers, adaptability, continuous improvement, flexibility, gender, faculty

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Quality of learning is an ultimate goal of education. There are many factors which influence QLLL such as; attitude of the teacher towards lifelong learning, his/her flexibility, adaptability, continuous updating and renewing his/her knowledge in accordance to subject expertise, gender, age, reading interest and marital status. All these have bearing to the teachers' professionalism. According to Nikwanga (1992); educational institutions to excel, must focus on the quality, competence, knowledge and commitment of the teachers. This led us to believe that quality of LLL is a must for teachers if they want to contribute effectively and efficiently towards their profession. This suggests that for a teacher to stay active in the teaching -learning profession and become receptive to changes on going in the teaching-learning process, learn new things by learning on the job through observations in social settings and out of curiosity. This opportunity to continue learning helps the teacher to expand his horizon and avoid being stagnant.

According to Duffy and Anderson's (1982); in-service teachers are regarded as practicing teachers' whose responses and inconsistencies have been influenced by their actual experiences in the classroom. Whereas, Yours' Dictionary (2011) highlighted in-service teachers as those teachers who are full time employees and they have to perform many roles as teachers.

All this demands renovation and updation of knowledge on behalf of teachers 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. Involvement of teachers in these activities makes him active and qualitative member in all the strategies involved in the teaching –learning process. This in fact, is 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 knowledge and skills to real life issues and situations. To make this knowledge interesting and relevant teacher has to be a continuous learner himself and empowered in every aspect of present scenario.

## 2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The conceptual framework of the study proposes QLLL as a means of adhering to access wider world with efficiencies and equity and contributing to the sustainable economic and social development which in turn depicts the qualitative aspect Life Long Learning. This allows teachers to be creative and innovative, flexible, side by side adaptive by nature by being and side by side improving, updating and renovating their knowledge in relation to current changes going in society because of knowledge explosion, modernization and globalization.

For the undertaken study, teachers' qualitative aspect of LLL is looked in terms of indicators viz; adaptability, continuous improvement and updation 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 faculty to which he belongs because capacities and performance of the males differ from females (Kanter 1977, 1993). On the other hand, Sadkar and Sadkar (1995) considered that experiences of male are profoundly are different from females because of their motivation and engagement levels of learning. Going by the differences among in-service teachers on the basis of faculty, it is assumed that the specialization of the teachers in accordance to the subject they teach can make difference on the basis of adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility.

## 3.1 OPERATIONAL MEANING AND DEFINITION OF THE QUALITATIVE ASPECT OF LIFELONG LEARNING

The British Standard Institution (1991) assumed quality of learning with significant characteristics associated to dynamic idea; positive concept; continuous journey and focused approach towards improvement consisting of planning and implementation.

Green and Harrey (1993) perceived quality as an exceptional feature for the fitness of purpose which brings total transformation.

Lomax (1996) viewed quality in lifelong learning as a vehicle for the improvement involving everyone through a collaborative process.

Griffen(1999), Aspin and Chapmen(2000), Field(2001) conceptualized quality of lifelong learning as an improvement in his knowledge, skills and competence in a particular field supported by personal, societal or employment related motives.

Europa (2003) identified lifelong learning as acquiring and updating of all kinds of abilities, interest, knowledge and qualifications from pre-school years to post retirement. It further narrated that in practice, lifelong learning provides each citizen, the individual learning path way, suitable to the needs and interest of an individual at all stages of life.

Longworth (2003) looked quality of lifelong learning as continuously upgrading personal skills and competencies, cherishing the habit of learning and contributing to the learning of others.

EFA Global Monitoring Report (2004) equated quality of learning as a tool which prompts social change, analyze social power relations in a way in which formal knowledge can be reproduced and transmitted by the teacher to the learner by active participation.

Wolf, Jenkins, Vignoles (2006) purposed the quality of lifelong learning as a human capital accumulated after the cessation of an individual's first period of continuous education. This means individuals have to regularly update their skills following entering into the labour market.

Going by the above definitions, it is evident that the survival of a professional in the present scenario constituting globalization, transformation and explosion in education has posed a demand on professional to be qualitative. For this, every professional must update and renew his/her knowledge to become efficient and adaptable. Besides this, to accept o the current needs, demands and challenges of the society, he has to become flexible in his knowledge, attitudes and skills by continuously updating his knowledge.

## 4.1 INDICATORS DETERMINING QUALITY OF LIFELONG LEARNING

On the basis of research studies conducted by Deming (1986); Lengrand (1986); Mortimore and Stone (1990); The British Standard Institution (1991); Green and Harrey (1993); Lomax (1996); Cheng and Tam (1997); Livingstone (1998); Griffen(1999), Aspin and Chapmen(2000), Field(2001); Delmore and Shaker (2002); European Commission (2002); The Barcelona European Council (2002); Europa (2003); Glastra, Hake and Schedler (2004); Fleming and Walker-Gibbs (2004); Simens (2005); Goe (2007); Lessing and De Witt (2007); Adegbile and Adeyemi (2008); Braimoh (2008); Kasetwar (2008); Mukhopadhyay (2008); Taylor (2009); Craig (2010); Australian National Professional Standards for Teachers (2011); we can safely say that quality of lifelong learning among in-service teachers can be determined by knowing their;

- ➤ Adaptability
- ➤ Continuous Improvement
- ➤ Flexibility

## 4.1 a) ADAPTABILITY

In literal sense adaptability is perceived as a learning process which includes; reality testing, application of one's judgment and abilities in action, feedback for environment and adjusting in accordance to it.

Lopes (2002) revealed adaptation as a process which is dynamic and continuous by nature and it helps an individual to negotiate between wishes, opportunities and constraints.

Braimoh (2008) purposed adaptability as an engagement in learning process in order to learn new ideas and gain valuable knowledge while at the same time learning to unlearn old and unprofitable habits, which may not only be injurious to the learner him/herself alone, but also detrimental to the developmental growth of the society in which he/she lives.

4.1 b) CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Continuous improvement of one's knowledge is governed by one's attitude towards working continuously to update one's knowledge. In this regard, the teacher has to update his knowledge by attending training programs, refresher courses, participating and presenting of papers in seminars, conferences (international, national, regional and local) and workshops and reading of educational journals and so on.

Stark (1998) revealed continuous improvement as heart of quality improvement. He further regarded continuous improvement as a base for satisfaction and development.

Gibbons (2008) presented continuation of learning as; mastering new jobs, handling life crisis, finding new interests, handling changes in society, mastering new roles, opening new dimensions for ourselves and our relationships and making worthy contributions towards enhancing one's capacities.

Mungekar (2008) visualized continuation of learning as not only upgrading of skills and knowledge but keeping abreast with the changing frontiers of knowledge.

All the above reviews draw our attention towards a challenge in which teachers have to update their own knowledge according to the subject they teach and side by side, they have to re-construct their believes and knowledge in consonance with the new vision of the present era or challenges of education faced by the present era.

4.1 c) FLEXIBILITY

The present study looks flexibility as an approach by which a task can be handled in different ways by using different strategies.

Hossiep and Paschen (1998) observed flexibility as openness to experience, new things and new ideas and so on.

Selwyn, Gorard and Williams (2001) cited use of ICT's such as computers and internet by which teachers' can easily engage in educational learning opportunities.
Hattangdi and Ghosh (2008) underlined flexibility as a delivery which prepares an individual to improve the quality of learning by contributing towards it.
Australian National Professional Standards for Teachers (2011) regarded flexibility as a demand on behalf of teachers to prepare them for the next generations of teachers or for a future.

This led us to conclude the fact that only a flexible teacher with experience and expertise can improve his quality of learning by developing various abilities.

5.1 DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

### 5.1.1. (a) Gender

Gender refers to the characteristics commonly associated with males or females.

Kanter (1977; 1993) revealed disparities among men, women and minorities in different professions exist because of their working.

Rogers (2006) conceived gender as an element which affects quality of lifelong learning because of women responsibilities towards their families.

Desjardins, Rubenson and Milana (2006) examined on gender differences among learners. Their study revealed that women tend to have lower level of formal education than men and they are less likely to participate in the learning.

Moen, Kelly and Magennis (2009) conducted research study among men and women in Taiwan. The results of their study revealed that women in comparison to men had greater lifelong learning engagement.

Findings of the study conducted by Chang, Wu, Lin (2012) revealed that men and women engage in learning activities very differently. The results of the study further revealed that men do not engage much in LLL as compared to women.

Mishra and Yadav (2012) experimented on male and female pre-service teachers and found that female teachers are comparatively better than male on the dimension of aesthetic, own idea, job related own idea.

### 5.1.2. (b) Faculty

According to Dictionary of Collective Noun and Group Terms (2008); faculty constitute members of a particular profession regarding as a body, a group of persons entrusted with the government and tuition in a college or university.

According to Free Dictionary (2008); faculty is a division or comprehensive branches of learning at a college or university.

Wikipedia (2013) stated faculty as a division within a university comprising one's subject area or a number of related subject area referring to academic staff.

Teferra and Altback (2004) conducted a research study of female representation in various disciplines and found that female ratio is low in the natural sciences.

Woolhouse and Cochrane (2009) examined on science teachers and found that teachers began to recognize their integration into professional leaning community and saw the course as an opportunity for self development.

Clayton et al (2010) worked on 20 experienced service-learning faculty members and found that their relationships with each other differ on the basis of transactional and transformational qualities, with different characteristics, capacities, goals and outcomes.

PROFILES Consortium (2010); European Research Project identified that that science teachers explain the real life situations in a better way to students so that they can

improve their way of dealing to real life situations by reading of science became more familiar and effective.

Lamb (2011) highlighted that in pursuit of learning, interest varies from faculty to faculty. He further highlighted that sometimes subject matter experts delimitize the teaching experience and LLL. He further stressed that quality faces a challenge to go beyond making room for discussion.

## 6.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research was unique as it explored the QLLL of in-service teachers on the basis of adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility. The research provided the teachers, educators, administrators and policy makers with information to help them how to enhance their quality of lifelong learning. It also asserted that for teachers' necessity of knowledge upgradation will make them real professionals. It further highlighted that their continuous engagement with learning will act an important and necessary step to measure the quality of learning (Manges, 2000). The benefits of continuous engagement with learning were highlighted by Riddle, Wilson and Baron (2001) who stressed that people who invested in their lifelong learning they indirectly enhance their position in the labour market by making them more knowledgeable and adaptable. Whereas, Fleming and Walker-Gibbs (2004) illustrated that teachers must follow educational innovations to enhance their flexibility and satisfaction. But, all this demands teachers' to be truly empowered and aware. Further, it is assumed that this research will be beneficial to the educationists, teachers whether would be or in-service teachers to make them truly knowledgeable and empowered so that, they are flexible enough to adapt in accordance to the changes on going in the society.

## 7.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research study was to investigate potential differences among in-service teachers on the basis of identified indicators of QLLL viz; adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility. This study included the completion of a survey that was disbursed to 300 in-service teachers. The survey was used to gain further knowledge about this population of gender of participants and faculty to which they belong.

## 8.1 OBJECTIVES

The following objectives have been put forward for the present study

1)      To investigate gender wise differences among in-service teachers in colleges of education of Punjab on selected indicators of quality of lifelong learning.

2)      To work out faculty wise differences among in-service teachers on selected indicators of quality of lifelong learning.

## 9.1 SAMPLE

 The sample population constituted of in-service teachers (N=300) which were drawn randomly from the colleges of education situated in Punjab (India). The in-service teachers were also drawn randomly from the faculties of humanities, languages and sciences and in very same way genderwise wise allocation was done.

## 10.1 DATA COLLECTING TOOL

A self made questionnaire on quality of lifelong learning was developed by the researchers which consisted of 15 questions under various indicators viz; adaptability; continuous improvement and flexibility. The responses on the measurement tool were collected on a 5- level Likert type scale ranging from 1- (St. Disagree) to 5- (St. Agree). Reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.891. Content and face validity was also established.

## 11.1 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data collected in this study were quantitative in nature and survey responses were structured. The survey was divided into two sections; a) dealing with demographic variables and b) three indicators viz; adaptability; continuous improvement and flexibility. Further, to analyze the data tabulation and frequency distribution; mean, median and standard deviation; t-ratios and F-ratios were used.

## 12.1 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### TABLE-1

t- Ratio of In-service Teachers for the different Indicators of Quality of Lifelong Learning

| INDICATOR | STATUS | N | MEAN | Std. Deviation | t-value | p value/ Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adaptability | Female | 150 | 16.19 | 5.309 | **-3.247\*\*** | 0.001 |
| | Males | 150 | **18.09** | **5.777** | | |
| Continuous Improvement | Females | 150 | 15.55 | 5.094 | **-4.227\*\*** | 0.000 |
| | Males | 150 | **18.05** | **5.122** | | |
| Flexibility | Females | 150 | 15.32 | 4.894 | **-5.516\*\*** | 0.000 |
| | Males | 150 | **18.33** | **5.540** | | |

\*\* Significant at 0.01 Level of Confidence

Table-1 shows that the mean scores of in-service female and male teachers on the indicators adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility on the dependent variable quality of lifelong learning. The values of mean scores were (M=16.19) and (M=**18.09**); (M=15.55) and (M=**18.05**); (M=15.32) and (**18.33**) respectively. It inferred that the mean values of in-service female teachers on all the three indicators of quality of lifelong learning are slightly less than that of in-service males' teachers. The value of standard deviation for the same was 5.309 and **5.777**; 5.094 and **5.122;** 4.894 and **5.540** respectively. The value of t-ratio for adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility came out to be **-3.247\*\*, -4.227\*\***and **-5.516\*\*** respectively which are significant at 0.01 level of confidence. It indicated a significant difference between females and males in-service teachers on the indicators adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility of quality of lifelong learning.

TABLE-2

ANOVA for Quality of Lifelong Learning (Faculty-Wise) of In-Service Teachers

| INDICATOR | STREAM | N | MEAN | Standard Deviation | F-Value | p value/ Remarks |
|-----------|--------|---|------|--------------------|---------|------------------|
| Adaptability | Humanities | 100 | 15.49 | 4.789 | 1.984 | 0.139 |
| | Languages | 100 | 14.76 | 4.845 | | |
| | Sciences | 100 | **16.07** | 4.667 | | |
| Continuous Improvement | Humanities | 100 | 14.88 | 4.774 | 0.670 | 0.512 |
| | Languages | 100 | 14.54 | 4.900 | | |
| | Sciences | 100 | **14.90** | 4.477 | | |
| Flexibility | Humanities | 100 | 14.81 | 4.741 | 2.225 | 0.110 |
| | Languages | 100 | 13.95 | 4.717 | | |
| | Sciences | 100 | **15.20** | 4.682 | | |

Table-2 shows that the mean value of in-service teachers of humanities, languages and sciences on the indicators adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility of quality of lifelong learning were 15.49; 14.76 and **16.07**; 14.88; 14.54; and **14.90**; 14.81; 13.95 and **15.20** respectively. It indicated that the mean scores of **sciences** teachers were the highest among the mean scores of two other faculties of teachers for the all indicators. Further, the F-value of the indicators adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility came out to be1.984; 0.670 and 2.225 respectively which indicated that for all the indicators the value were not found to be significant even at 0.05 level of confidence.

## 13.1 CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

This research sought to answer to research questions. The first research questions whether gender is associated to the indicators of quality of lifelong learning. The findings from the research indicated that gender was positively associated with all the three indicators identified for the present study viz; adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility. The results further claimed that male in-service teachers' have high scores on adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility as compare to females. This result was supported by the research of Desjardins, Rubenson and Milana (2006) who revealed that women tend to have lower level of formal education than men and they are less likely to participate in the learning. Also, Sloep et al (2008) highlighted that intensity and acceleration of knowledge is related to the way learning is related to working. This means it is essential that employs develops competencies that enables them to design their own learning trajectories and thus safe guard and enhance their employability. Further, it could also be said that in India males are considered as main gender of the labour market. So, they invest more of their time in training and learning. Further, in India their role in family is majorly of a bread earner. So, they design their LLL which enhance their employability characteristics. The three indicators taken as a measure of QLLL also enhance the employability skills through formal and non-formal learning.

The second research questions whether faculty is associated to the three indicators of quality of lifelong learning. The findings of the study indicated that science in-service

teachers felt significantly high on adaptability, continuous improvement and flexibility as compare to humanities and language teachers.

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