Pre-Service Teachers' Tendencies and Perceptions towards Lifelong Learning

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Abstract

Lifelong learning is very important for teachers to revise their responsibilities and roles for teaching. The foundation of lifelong learning relies on one's personal desire to improve themselves and their learning skills. Lifelong learning is infinite and there are no boundaries for lifelong learning. There are couple of concepts for lifelong learning which helps people to organize their self-learning and lifelong learning skills. Some of these concepts include self-determination on what to learn and evaluate the validity of the information that is determined for learning, a viable method on how to successfully learn and finally the assessment of the progress in learning. The aim of this research study is to investigate the pre-service teachers` tendencies and competencies on the qualifications for lifelong learning. It also tries to find out whether these tendencies and competencies differ between various departments and gender. As a research approach, a survey method is administrated to the 2nd year students studying in various departments at the Faculty of Education in Girne American University in the fall semester of 2016-2017 academic year. The research data is obtained from "Lifelong Learning Tendency Scale" and "Lifelong Learning Competence Scale" which will be analysed with respect to various departments and gender. The results will provide comprehensive understanding of the pre-service teachers` lifelong learning skills. Based on the analysed results, proper recommendations will be provided to the pre-service teachers to refine deficiencies in this field which will hopefully help to illuminate the future of lifelong learners and their learning skills.

Keywords: Lifelong learning, student teachers, pre-service teachers, lifelong learning tendency, lifelong learning competency.

1. Introduction

Taking into account changes in information technology and higher education, traditional campus education has to innovate and develop innovative knowledge and skills for students. From this social perspective, lifelong learning is highly recommended for educators, for their tasks and for rethinking contemporary schools and educational functions. The learning of how to learn is an important prerequisite for lifelong learning. In addition, the development of lifelong learning skills can be crucial to the regulation of people's careers and their social lives. Besides the basic concepts and facts in learning, a number of transferable cognitive and meta-cognitive skills that will allow students to take responsibilities for managing their own learning and be successful in their career, construct the backbone the lifelong learning.

In the context of teacher training programs, the goals of embedding lifelong learning skills into programs has two functions. First, teachers as a lifelong learner contribute to their professional education as well as their own life processes. Secondly, by organizing specific learning strategies for different learning tasks, teachers become role model for students. Thus,

students are being encouraged to do self-analysis and reflective thinking on their learning process. And this process, which raising students' awareness, allows the transmission of self-learning skills to the learning process. Lifelong learning is not a new concept. In fact, there are various research studies that were conducted with different sources which were written in many different areas. Unfortunately, despite of the various applications in higher education institutions, it is a concept still remains very limited. The knowledge of lifelong learning can be applied to life skills, values and understandings that make individuals` life meaningful and long-lasting, and more importantly there are many evidences that it is available in daily life routines.

Lifelong learning is a concept seen as a point solution for the elimination of all human life problems created by newly-needed technologies on the world, discussed in the fields of education. The European Union defined lifelong learning as "information, all of the training activities carried out for a certain period in order to develop the skills and competencies". According to the ILO, "lifelong learning ensures that the individual"s skills and competencies are maintained and improved as work, technology and skill requirements change, ensures the personal and career development of workers; results in increases in aggregate productivity and income; and improves social equity" (ILO 2000a, para. 5). The life-long learning competences can be listed as below as it is determined by the European Union Education and Culture Commission; a) Communication abilities in native language, b) Communication abilities in foreign languages, c) Mathematics, Science and Technology competency, d) Digital competency, e) Learning to learn, f) Social competency, g) Entrepreneurship, h) Cultural awareness (Figel, 2006). In the most comprehensive definitions in the literature for lifelong learning is, change and development of qualification on the basis of "lifelong, voluntary and specific" personal or professional reasons. The concept of "lifelong learning" is not an educational process, but rather it is a process that is spontaneous and for everyone. Everyone is constantly learning as a result of interactions with nature and people throughout their lives (Ünal, Tural and Aksoy, 2006: 144-145). Meeting the needs of learners and society, creating motivation for learners to learn, self-actualization of learners, introducing ways for creation and construction of knowledge, and developing learning skills of learners are five main features of lifelong learning which create learning opportunities for the whole life process.

A rapid change in science and technology has led the information to be out of date in many areas. The concepts of "strong people" or "strong society" are associated with the competencies of accessing, configuring and producing of information. Therefore there is a need for self-improver and lifelong learner individuals. Without doubt, to construct a society composed of lifelong learners would be only possible by revising education system.

The ability to create effective learning-teaching environments in schools is closely linked to the fact that teachers are equipped with lifelong learning skills. Lifelong learning skills are the most important competence area associated with both the quality of the teacher and the quality of the education system. The training of prospective teachers as lifelong learners will enable them to be lifelong learners and professionals (Selvi, 2011). The development of information technology, the new approaches and methods being applied in the learning-teaching process have led to the view that lifelong learning skills are the most important competence area for teachers.

In the field of education, plenty research studies on life-long learning have been conducted but there are limited research studies were carried out to determine the perceptions of prospective teachers about lifelong learning. For instance, the results of Diker Coşkun (2009) study indicated a low level of lifelong learning attitudes of university students. Although, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the students according to class level, the scale scores of university students differ according to gender of the students. The average score of female students was higher than that of men. On the other hand, the research conducted by Demirel and Akkoyunlu (2010), life expectancy trends of teacher candidates were found high. Similarly, Şahin, Akbaşlı and Yanpar Yelken (2010) aimed to determine the level of key competencies of life-long learning of the prospective teachers. As a result of the research, there was no effect of gender on the prospective teachers' opinions on key competences in life-long learning. Showing tendency for lifelong learning is important requirement for individuals to keep pace develpments in society, information technologies, and their professional

lifes. For instance, in some research (Oguz and Ataseven, 2016) lifelong learning tendency of pre-service teachers is positively related with information literacy self-efficacy.

As it can be seen the previous studies, the teacher is the most important element of the education system and teachers who have the learning skills have significant contribution for life-long learning processes is demonstrated in some studies. These results indicate that scarping these skills during pre-service teaching is more important than later. Gaining of life-long learning skills in the early years should not ignore the possibility that this allows them to use their skills more effectively and efficiently. In this context, necessity of having the learning skills of the teacher candidates has been raised.

1.1 Purpose of the study

In this study, it is aimed to find out the pre-service teachers' tendencies and comptencies on the qualifications for life-long learning. Additionally, this study intended to investigate if these tendencies and competencies differ between various departments and gender.

1.2 Research Questions

Under the main purpose of this study, the following research questions are listed

- What is the level of the pre-service teachers` lifelong learning tendencies?
- What is the level of the pre-service teachers` competencies on the qualifications for life-long learning?
- Is there a statistically significant relationship between the pre-service teachers` lifelong learning tendencies and competencies on the qualifications for life-long learning?
- Do the pre-service teachers` lifelong learning tendencies differ in terms of department and gender?
- Do the pre-service teachers' competencies on the qualifications for life-long learning differ in terms of department and gender?

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

In this study, it is designed related to basic quantitative research methods. Survey method was carried out by aiming to find out out the pre-service teachers' lifelong learning tendencies and competencies on the qualifications for life-long learning. The survey method is a research approach that aims to describe the situation as it exists (Karasar, 2005: 77)

2.2 Participants

Conventient sampling was used to determine the participants of the study which composed by the 2nd year students studying at the Faculty of Education in Girne American University in the fall semester of 2016-17 academic year. Therefore, the study group of this research study is consisted of 250 preservice teachers from the various departments from the Faculty of Education in North Cyprus. When the study group is determined, it is aimed to reach the preservice teachers in different departments as much as possible. Research has been applied to 2nd year students with the thought that the professional and personal views of the students towards lifelong learning can be shaped and improved till their graduation based on the analyzed results. Only the volunteer preservice teachers are randomly selected in order to ensure reliable results. The distrubition of study group in terms of gender and department is given in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic profile of the study group

Department	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
	N	N	
Pre-school Teaching (Pre-ST)	12	57	69
Psychological Counseling and Guidance (PCG)	32	44	76

Primary School Teaching (PST)	5	12	17
English Language Teaching (ELT)	16	19	35
Special Education Teaching (SET)	3	4	7
Turkish Teaching (TT)	16	16	32
Computer and Instructional Technology Teaching (CITE)	8	1	9
Music Teaching (MT)	5	0	5

2.3 Data Collection Instruments

Lifelong Learning Competence Scale (LLCS) developed by Uzunboylu and Hürsen (2011) and Lifelong Learning Tendency Scale (LLTS) developed by Diker Coşkun and Demirel (2010) were used as a data collection instrument. The LLCS consisted of 51 likert type items and six sub-dimensions of LLCS are categorized as self-management competencies (13 items), competencies of learning how to learn (12 items), competencies of initiative and entrepreneurship (10 items), competencies on acquiring information (6 items), digital competencies (6 items), and competencies of decision-taking (4 items).The minimum score of LLCS is 51 and the maximum score is 255. The reliability coefficient was found by Uzunboylu and Hürsen (2011) as .95 and internal consistencies of the scales as .93, .91, .89, .83, .85, .75 for the self-management competencies, competencies of learning how to learn, competencies of initiative and entrepreneurship, competencies on acquiring information, digital competencies, and competencies of decision-taking respectively. The LLTS consisted of 27 likert type items and four sub-dimensions are specified as motivation (6 ıtems), perseverance (6 items), lack of regulatıng learnıng (6 items), and lack of curiosity (9 items). The minimum score of LLCS is calculated 27, mid score is 94.5, and the maximum score is 162. The Cronbach alpha internal consistency was calculated by Diker Coşkun and Demirel (2010) as .89. The first part of the scales includes demographic questions about gender and grade level where the second part of the scales comprises items of LLCS and LLTS. In the current study, the reliability cofecient is calculated as .95 for the LLCS and .90 for the LLTC.

2.4. Data Analysis

Quantitative techniques were used in the analysis of data generated by LLCS and LLTS. In presenting the mean scores and standard deviations, descriptive statistics and t-scores were used to determine whether there is statistically significant difference between gender and department beliefs about the competencies and tendencies towards lifelong learning. Data were analysed by using the SPSS 23.0 statistics programme and presented in tables.

3. Findings and Results

In this section, findings of the research are presented according to the sub-problems and the related interpretations are given accordingly.

3.1 Findings of first research question

The first research question is “What is the level of the pre-service teachers` tendencies on the qualifications for life-long learning?”. Preservice teachers’ tendencies on the qualifications for lifelong learning mean score was calculated and presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive statstics of pre-service teachers’ lifelong learning tendency

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Lifelong Learning Tendency	250	60	160	121.4	22.4

The study found that the lowest and highest attained scores for the lifelong learning tendency of preservice teachers on the LLTS are 60 and 160, respectively. The mean and standard deviation of the LLTS scores are *M* = 121.4, and *SD* =22.4. It is determined that the range between the lowest and highest score is 100. The mean lifelong learning tendency score on the scale falls in the high range, so it can be said that peservice teachers have a high level of lifelong learning tendency.

3.2 Findings of second research question

The second research question is "What is the level of the pre-service teachers` competencies on the qualifications for life-long learning?" . Preservice teachers' comptencies on the qualifications for lifelong learning mean score was calculated and presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of the pre-service teachers' lifelong learning competency.

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Lifelong Learning Competency	250	102	247	192.2	27.9

The study found that the lowest and highest attained scores for the lifelong learning competency of preservice teachers on the LLCS are 102 and 247, respectively. It is also determined that the range between the lowest and highest score is 145. The mean lifelong learning competency score on the scale falls in the high range, so it can be said that peservice teachers have a high level of lifelong learning competency on the qualifications for lifelong learning.

3.3 Findings related to third research question

The third research question is "Is there a statistically significant relationship between the pre-service teachers` tendencies and competencies on the qualifications for life-long learning?". The Pearson correlation coffecient is calculated to determine the relationship between pre-service teachers' lifelong learning tendencies mean score and their lifelong learning competencies mean score.

Table 4

The relationship beetween the lifelong learning tendency and lifelong learning competency.

	Lifelong Learning Tendency	Lifelong Learning Competency
Lifelong Learning Tendency	1	.471*
Lifelong Learning Competency	.471*	1

*p < .001

As seen in Table 4, a significant positive correlation is found between LLTS scores (M = 191.2, SD = 121.4) and LLCS scores (M = 121.4, SD = 22.4) [r = 0.471, p < .001].

3.4 Findings related to fourth research question

The fourth research question set out as "Do the pre-service teachers` lifelong learning tendencies differ in terms of department and gender?". Pre-service teachers' lifelong learning tendency in terms of gender is compared by the use of t test at the level of 0.05 as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Results of independent *t*-test related to gender.

Variables		*N*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*p*
Gender	Female	153	121.8	22.2	248	-.408	.772
	Male	97	120.6	22.8			

*p > .05

According to the results, it can stated that there is no significant difference between female pre-service teachers' lifelong learning tendencies mean score and male pre-service teachers' lifelong learning tendencies mean score.

A one-way ANOVA is used to determine if there is a significant difference in the lifelong learning tendency scores of the pre-service teachers in terms of the department that they are studying. Tukey's HSD test is conducted as a post-hoc analysis for multiple comparisons.

Table 6. Results of lifelong learning tendency and department

Variables		*N*	*M*	*SD*
Department	PST	69	123.7	23.8
	PCG	76	119.5	21.3
	PST	17	124.9	21.0
	ELT	35	119.3	26.5
	SET	7	127.6	18.7
	TT	32	118.6	21.0
	CITE	9	125.8	17.0
	MT	5	122.2	23.0

As seen in Table 6, the mean scores

Variables	*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Between Groups	1712.86	7	244.69	.47	.85
Within Groups	123591.28	242	510.70		
Total	125304.14	249			

*p > .05

As seen in Table 6, results of the ANOVA revealed that there is no significant difference among the LLTS scores of preservice teachers in terms of their departments [F (7, 242) = 510.70, p > .05]

3.5 Findings related to fifth research question

The fifth research question set out as "Do the pre-service teachers' competencies on the qualifications for life-long learning differ in terms of department and gender? Pre-service teachers' lifelong learning competency on the qualifications for lifelong learning in terms of gender and department is compared by the use of *t* test at the level of 0.05 as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of independent *t*-test related lifelong learning competency and gender .

Variables		*N*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*p*
Gender	Female	153	188.80	25.08	248	1.618	.027
	Male	97	194.80	31.61			

*p < .05

According to the results, it can stated that there is a significant difference between female pre-service teachers' lifelong learning tendencies mean score (M = 194.80) and male pre-service teachers' lifelong learning tendencies mean score (188.80) in favour of male pre-service teachers.

Variables		*N*	*M*	*SD*
Department	Pre-ST	69	196.7	24.3
	PCG	76	188.3	21.3
	PST	17	196.0	24.0
	ELT	35	183.5	29.1
	SET	7	206.4	27.1
	TT	32	188.4	31.8
	CITE	9	208.8	23.6
	MT	5	167.4	51.7

A one-way ANOVA is used to determine if there was a significant difference in the competency scores of the pre-service teachers in terms of the department that they are studying. Tukey's HSD test is conducted as a post-hoc analysis for multiple comparisons.

Table 7. Results of lifelong learning competency and department.

Variables	*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*	*Sources of Differences*
Between Groups	11683.66	7	1669.09	2.22	.033	1-2, 1-3, 1-6
Within Groups	181884.88	242	751.59			2-4, 2-5
Total	193568.54	249				3-4, 3-5

*p < .05 Categories: (1) CITE, (2) ELT, (3) MT, (4) PST, (5) SET, (6) PCG

ANOVA is performed to show difference between the mean scores of pre-service teachers' competencies on the qualifications for life-long learning in terms of their department. As seen in Table 7, results of the ANOVA revealed that there is significant difference among the LLCS scores of preservice teachers in terms of their departments.

Conclusion

The current research study examined the pre-service teachers' lifelong learning tendencies and their competencies on the qualifications for lifelong learning. According to the results, pre-service teachers have high lifelong learning tendencies and their lifelong learning competencies on the qualifications for lifelong learning can be said to be high as well. In addition, an intermediate positive relationship (r = .47) is found between lifelong learning tendencies and lifelong competencies on the qualifications for lifelong learning. This means, preservice teachers' lifelong learning tendencies and their lifelong learning competencies are related each others. Since the preservice teachers' have high level of lifelong learning competencies, this indicates they are ready to acquire the skills of being self-learner and they are gaing the knowledge and skills on lifelong learning.

This study also showed that there is no significant difference in the lifelong learning tendencies in terms of gender and department, but a significant difference is found in the lifelong learning competency skills in terms of gender and department. Similarly Oral and Yazar (2015) and Ayaz (2016) found that preservice teachers` lifelong learning tendencies differed nonsignificantly in terms of gender. However, the nonsignificant difference among gender and department for the lifelong learning tendencies is not parallel of some research studies. For instance, Demirel and Akkoyunlu (2017) found female preservice teachers have higher lifelong learning tendencies. The male preservice lifelong learning competency skills are higher than females. This finding is not parallel to some research studies since many research studies (Evin-

Gencel, 2013; Demirel & Akkoyunlu, 2010; Diker Coskun & Demirel, 2010) found that female preservice teachers` lifelong learning competency skills higher than male preservice teachers . Furthermore, when preservice teachers` lifelong learning competency skills are analysed according to the departments a significant difference found in favour of Computer and Instructional Technology Education, English Laguage Teaching and Music Teaching. These results are similar to studies of Oguz and Ataseven (2016), Tunca, Sahin-Alkin, and Aydin (2015), Evin-Gencel (2013).

Although this research study indicated that preservice teachers` lifelong learning tendencies and lifelong learning competencies are above the suffiecient, there is a need to train preservice teachers about lifelong learning competencies. Having a successful professional life should be the main aim for all teachers since they are responsible of education of future generations. Like other professions teachers need to have some characteristics such as being a self-directed learner which is quite close to lifelong learning. If preservice teachers could gain these skills and competencies while they are following courses on education faculties, then they would be ready for their professional life with up to date knowledge, modernized pedagogical ideas, and latest information and educational technologies.

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