

Developing Flexibility with Continuous Professional Improvement: An Evidence from Research

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to gain an understanding and assess the flexibility of teachers in relation to their continuous professional improvement activities. A quantitative research design called the factorial design used to conduct the research. Three hundred teachers working in different Colleges of Education of Punjab formed the sample for the study. A self-prepared questionnaire with 40 statements under various aspects of; teacher flexibility and continuous professional improvement used to elicit information from the teachers. The purpose of the study was to provide an overview of literature that embeds flexibility of the teacher by acquiring, remoulding and adapting the knowledge domain of the 21st century by taking continuous professional activities that predict changes over the career, work engagement and professional responsibilities by attending seminars, workshops, writing research papers, books and so on. The primary purpose of the article was to visualize gender and faculty differences among teachers created to mark the differences among them. The research findings explored those female teachers were subject to change with respect to skills related to instructional practices, expertise, interpersonal communication, and group discussion by changing their

teaching, learning, and classroom practices by considering aspects that made them flexible to adapt to the acquire changes of 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

Growing knowledge, technology explosion, information society, and new work order has significantly changed the outlook of teaching and related to its professional improvement of teachers. This professional improvement envelops the ongoing changes, on account of the value system, norms, beliefs, and perception of individuals. The literature review has also addressed the differences induced by these. This paper aims to contribute to the research work conducted to analyze these changes. Analyzing the multitude of views, Gunduz (2005) supported constant engagement with learning as a necessity to help individuals to develop flexibility, adaptability, and be enriched by opportunities that help them to learn new skills in accordance to the changing demands of the profession. He further advocated that this updating of knowledge depends on the personal nature of an individual, whether his level of satisfaction from teaching and learning is extraordinarily high, stable, or have a dominant style of teaching. In this case, continuous professional improvement creates divergent views by creating an impact on teacher knowledge by improving his learning and teaching by being flexible. This requires the transformation of teachers for changing technology and knowledge explosion. This gave a call to teachers to restructure their learning in a way to grasp and grab the constant transformation of knowledge and information following their personal and professional needs by being flexible and adaptable. These views were also strengthened by Rana (2012), who recognized learning as continuous, collaborative, self- directed, active and broad in domain and covers all aspects of life that have emerged as a global educational challenge. These views were also advocated by The British Standard Institution (1991), who associated learning with the dynamic idea, positive concept, continuous journey, and focused approach towards improvements that need constant modification towards practices

and attributions of increased learning as a precursor to sustainable change. Recognizing these aspects, teachers viewed that their teaching career has to be entailed with improved continuous professional improvement as a motivational force, which inspires them to upgrade their knowledge by being flexible. Seeking their importance requires connections to be drawn. The present study is an effort to study the links between continuous professional improvement and flexibility by being an integral component of each other. The investigators undertook the present study to compare the continuous professional development and adaptability of teachers working in Colleges of Education based on gender and faculty.

OBJECTIVES

1. The extent to which gender and faculty influence continuous professional improvement outcomes of the teachers.
2. The extent to which gender and faculty influence the flexibility of degree college teachers.

VARIABLES

Dependent Variables

- Continuous Professional Improvement- It is an up-gradation of knowledge and is affected by work-related achievement and work experience.
- Flexibility- It is the capacity of a teacher, which makes one open to change by assimilating new experiences, which depends on the ability of a teacher to be responsive and flexible with feedback, advice, and information. On the other hand, adopting different strategies that took place from group discussions, freedom in thinking and combining past, present, and future forms of work to improve performance and efficiency. This in turn provides

him with inner potentialities, diversity, and radical professional transition of a teacher.

Independent Variables

- Gender- It is a characteristic associated with males and females.

Faculty- It's conceived as a division or comprehensive branch of learning available at colleges of education. Three faculties in colleges of education are available viz; Humanities (social studies, history, political science, economics, commerce, physical

- Education, home science, music, and fine arts); Languages and Science.

RATIONALE

Going by the research works of [Harland and Kinder (1997), Malte (2002), Cordingley et al. (2003), Villegas- Remiers (2003), Smith (2007), Houston, McCune and Osborne (2012) and Hanife (2018)] a research work planned to access the continuous professional improvement and flexibility of teachers working in Colleges of Education of Punjab.

For the present study, continuous professional improvement and flexibility studied as dependent variables, which can lead towards a variation on account of gender and faculty of teachers to which they belong. The study aimed to explore continuous professional improvement and flexibility as a way to develop, adapt and achieve excellence as better professionals as a teacher, communicator, builder of relationships, practices, leaders, and so on.

Villegas- Remiers (2003) cited that the continuous professional improvement of teachers is rarely assessed because it is based on self-reports given by them as an experience rather than the outcome. Therefore, evaluation is needed to differentiate between the different purposes of continuous professional improvement and take into account the intended results as feedback in terms of openness to change,

working creatively, and innovatively in classroom practices, communication, and interpersonal relationships. Recognizing its importance, the undertaken research planned to access the continuous professional improvement of the teachers in flexibility as an outcome. The data used to conduct the research was quantitative in nature, where teachers asked whether their continuous professional improvement encouraged them to change their practice or have created a desire to change their method. These views were also reflected in the research works of Smith (2007) who found that greater awareness of continuous professional improvement can increase teacher enthusiasm to become more involved in the endless professional improvement activities by emphasizing opportunities which develop a casual relationship between change in practice and change in pupil attainment by participation to change their method by working on the same grounds.

Schettini (2017) highlighted that the knowledge gained by continuous professional improvement could be consumed in many ways, which is to be tailored according to the needs of the individual. This reflects the flexibility aspect of the teachers as a consumer because one has to decide what to learn at what place and through what medium. This means continuous professional improvement has the capability to transform an individual by updating his knowledge and skill and investing in them.

These views were better suggested by Harland and Kinder (1997) who suggested outcomes of continuous professional improvement as; material and resources, information outcomes, new awareness, value congruence, affective outcomes in terms of negative and positive outcomes, motivation and attitude, knowledge and skills, institutional outcomes and impact of practice. Hanife (2018) considered the flexibility of teachers in terms of interpersonal communication skills, which make teacher as a significant contributor of knowledge and culture domain. Going by the above reviews, it can be justified easily that continuous professional improvement of teachers is affected by the extent to which they are flexible and also for those

who do not co-relate with gender, faculty, status, experience, and so on. Thus, the undertaken research presumed that continuous professional improvement and flexibility would encourage teachers to see themselves in this perspective so that they become significant influencers of change. Further, it would help the teachers to notice the effect of gender and faculty on dependent variables as notable influencers and changers which have not been studied so far by the researchers.

The justification for undertaking the present research rests on the following counts;

- Exploring and studying continuous professional improvement and flexibility together will provide teachers with new insights to improve their performance and efficiency by opting for changes based on feedback, advice, and information gathered by them during group discussion, training programs, workshops, seminars, conferences and so on.
- The study aims to explore inter-correlation between continuous professional improvement and flexibility of teachers, which would present a wholesome picture to the teachers, administrators, and educational planners.
- The undertaken research will enrich the quality of continuous professional improvement of teachers by laying thrust on views given by Pan (1997), who clarified continuous professional improvement in the mode of behavior that help people to continue to learn by responding intelligently to exponent increasing knowledge of the rapidly changing world.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The present study employed a quantitative survey method to analyze the effect of gender and faculty on continuous professional improvement and flexibility of learning. A self-made questionnaire with 40 statements; 20 for continuous professional improvement and 20 for flexibility were framed under 5 point Likert Scale to conduct the study. The reliability of the tool was determined by employing the Cronbach Alpha method and was found to be 0.86. The validity of the tool was

also determined. As per the requirements of 2x2 factorial design, the independent variables studied singly as well as taken together in different combinations to determine the interaction effects.

SAMPLE

Multistage random sampling technique was adopted to select a sample of 300 teachers serving in 32 Colleges of Education situated in the state of Punjab. These were stratified based on gender (150 males and 150 females) and faculty (100 teachers each from humanities, languages, and sciences).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table-1

Summary table of ANOVA for the Main Effects of S and F on Continuous Professional Improvement

Symbols for Sources of Variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Level of Sig.
S	46.253	1	46.253	17.985	0.01
F	37.040	2	18.520	0.714	-

**** Significant at 0.01 Level of Confidence**

The above table reveals that F-value for gender was significant at 0.01 level whereas F-value for faculty was not significant even at 0.01 level. This led us to conclude that continuous professional improvement as new dimension of teachers' role has posed a challenge on teachers to focus on continuous professional improvement as constructivist based facilitators. The research findings are not in line with the research work of Baysal (2015) who found that redesign and rethinking of faculty roles must be given high priority and weight age to teachers' professional development because when faculty move away from their role as content delivers then they must act as facilitators and constructivist.

Table-2
t-ratio for Variable of Gender (S)

Symbol	N	Mean	SD	SEm	Treatment Level	t-ratio	Level of Sig.
S1	152	15.55	5.094	0.416	S1-S2	4.227**	0.01
S2	140	18.08	5.122	0.418			

**** Significant at 0.01 Level of Confidence**

Observation of means for different levels of gender shows that mean of males (18.08) was higher than the mean of females (15.55). Further the significant t-ratio for the differences between the means reveals that male teachers have scored significantly higher on continuous professional improvement than female teachers. The reasons attributed to this can be different career plans and career trajectories. The study in hand match with the results of the study conducted by Scott, Swortzel and Taylor (2005) who found that perception of males is different from females because of their cultural and social conditioning effect of gender roles.

Table-3
Summary table of ANOVA for the Interaction Effects of S and F on
Continuous Professional Improvement

Symbols for Sources of Variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Level of Sig.
SXF	142.107	2	71.053	2.741	-

The above table noted insignificant F-value for the two way interaction of SXF indicating that gender fails to lead and become visible while interacting with faculty. Thus, it was not necessary to compute t-ratio for SXF interaction.

Table-4

Summary table of ANOVA for the Main Effects of S and F on Flexibility

Symbols for Sources of Variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Level of Sig.
S	678.003	1	678.003	30.300	0.01
F	108.047	2	54.023	2.414	-

The above table confirms differences among male and female teachers regarding their perceptions on flexibility aspects. The significant F-value for S was significant, so it was necessary to analyze them further. This led us to infer that gender in many ways reflects flexibility among teachers in deciding what to learn, at what pace and through what medium. This in turn, depends upon their capability to transform themselves by investing their time, energy and skills as instructional practices and responsibilities assumed by them as teachers.

Table-5

t-ratio for Variable of Gender (S)

Symbol	N	Mean	SD	SEm	Treatment Level	t-ratio	Level of Sig.
S1	152	15.32	4.894	0.400	S1-S2	5.516**	0.01
S2	140	18.33	4.540	0.371			

**** Significant at 0.01 Level of Confidence**

The observation of the means for the gender level given vide table- 2 reflects that mean of S1 (14.92) was higher than the mean of S2 (14.12). t-ratio for the difference between the means reflects that female teachers have scored significantly higher on flexibility than male teachers. The reason attributed to this

is that women experience gender challenges by making efforts that is; by being flexible and opting for options available to them occupation and career [Blackhurst (2000) andMavin (2000)].

Table-6

Summary table of ANOVA for the Interaction Effects of S and F on Flexibility

Symbols for Sources of Variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Level of Sig.
S XF	40.447	2	20.223	0.904	-

**** Significant at 0.01 Level of Confidence**

The above table illustrates insignificant F-value for the two way interaction of SXF indicating that gender fails to lead and become visible while interacting with faculty. Thus, it was not necessary to compute t-ratio for SXF interaction.

FINDINGS

1. Gender act as a significant variable to study continuous professional improvement activities of the teachers. The outcomes of continuous professional improvement of the teachers were not short-lived. Still, it increased the confidence level of teachers by helping them to frame their self-concepts for participation in future continuous professional improvement activities. Further, the majority of female teachers have had exposure to continuous professional improvement, which motivated them to change their beliefs as teachers and also their teaching practices. Further, by employing the t-ratio for the variable of gender, it was observed that males scored significantly higher on continuous professional improvement

activities for finding more options in teaching as a career by being mentors, extension workers, and committed workers, and so on.

2. Insignificant faculty differences on continuous professional improvement and flexibility led us to conclude that teachers of different faculties viz; science, humanities, and languages do not differ in their level of engagement with pedagogical responsibilities, faculty practices, and level of commitment to the profession. The study at hand was not supported by the research work of Bettinger and Long (2005), who found that continuous professional improvement activities enrich the learning experience of science teachers more by enriching their level of interaction by scientific research and by collaborative efforts.
3. Analysis related to flexibility aspect of teachers on the elements of teaching practice, interpersonal relationships, communication, role assumptions as mentors, extension workers predicts that female teachers opt more for flexibility options in their teaching when compared with men. The research attributed to this may be that females are influenced more by their inbuilt sense of responsibility and their professional role; to meet the needs and demands of a profession that they adapt quickly to environmental changes very easily by making themselves more flexible.

CONCLUSION

The present study focused on gender and faculty to study flexibility and continuous professional improvement of teachers working in different Colleges of Education of Punjab. Going by the analysis, it observed that for constant professional improvement males, improve their knowledge by increased participation in activities like; attending seminars, conferences, training programs, publications, and so on. But they were not keen to cope with changing knowledge and instructional practices by being flexible. The reason attributed to this may be the barrier encountered by them because of their limited access and opportunities

available for career advancement in teaching as a profession. Further, their knowledge and information gathered from attending of continuous professional improvement activities can be put effectively into use if they become open to change by assimilating new experiences, new problems of the current scenario and solving them creatively and innovatively by improving their performance, communication and interpersonal skills and so on. Besides this, they were accommodating and receiving feedback from peers, colleagues, the expertise of training programs, and participants of conferences and seminars to change their plans to cultivate the skill, which is the actual demand of 21st-century teachers. On the other hand, it observed that females were more flexible to adapt to the new knowledge and skills because they feel that being flexible offer them solutions to take up divergent roles as teachers, mentors, extension workers, and administrators by maintaining a professional identity by being active and interacting with current environment (Arsenijevic and Malijkovic,2016).

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