

LIFELONG LEARNING THROUGH THE LENS OF FACULTY IN AZERBAIJAN

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## ABSTRACT

### LIFELONG LEARNING THROUGH THE LENS OF FACULTY IN AZERBAIJAN

BY

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Currently, in the field of education, lifelong learning is a crucial concept pointing at knowledge and skill upgrade through formal, informal and non-formal ways. In accordance with National Qualifications Framework of Azerbaijan, this concept is planned to be reinforced in various stages of education. Nevertheless, literature pointed at that there is a lack of awareness and involvement to certain forms of lifelong learning in Azerbaijan. Particularly in higher education stage, findings from studies point at lack of involvement of faculty members to both formal or non-formal learning options (such as, conducting research and participating at developmental programs). This qualitative study examined the way faculty understand and gain new knowledge and skills. The data collected through memoing, review of documents and interviews from 15 faculty members from diverse disciplines. Based on faculty perceptions, definitions of lifelong learning are outlined in three different directions. Findings suggested that in Azerbaijan, faculty members opt for informal learning opportunities due to its less structural and pliable features. Self-study builds up huge part of informal learning and certain personal and institutional level factors hinder faculty engagement with all types of lifelong learning. Only a group of faculties can involve non-formal learning opportunities via institutional support, however, formal learning is considered less productive owing to structural and stringent nature, specifically at local PhD programs.

Keywords: lifelong learning, adult learning, skill upgrade, professional development.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Fundamentally, learning is a tool helping human beings to survive in rapidly changing environment properly (Livingstone et al., 2012) and throughout many years in human history, scholars highlighted significance of learning in a continues manner (Ates & Alsas, 2012; Chanani & Wibowo, 2019, Jarvis, 2012;). John Dewey (1916) stated that graduation from formal educational institution ought not to signify end of learning (as cited in Jarvis, 2012). When learning is pursued regardless of time and location boundaries, it is perceived as a lifelong process (Kamil, 2007). The concept called lifelong learning which softens borders of formal, nonformal or informal education appeals itself with implicit and explicit justifications (e.g., strengthening economy, personal achievement) (Pendlebury & Enslin, 2001) both for society and individuals. By definition, lifelong learning is action of upgrading knowledge and skills for a lifetime in order to develop professionally (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Lifelong learning is a critical value and orientation specifically in the life of educators, as they are expected to update their knowledge, tools and methods to meet professional and education related needs in a relevant and accurate manner (Murugova et al., 2021). That being said, lifelong learning is categorized as: “formal, informal and non-formal” (Power& Maclean, 2013, p.30) and, this inquiry aims to cover all three forms of lifelong learning in the context of Azerbaijan.

### 1.1 Definition of key terms

**Lifelong learning-** this key term refers action of upgrading knowledge and skills for a lifetime in order to develop professionally (Cambridge University Press, n.d.).

**Formal learning** –is pre-planned type of learning which follows strict rules and procedure to be formally validated at the end of process (Adult learning dictionary, 2014; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2012).

**Non-formal learning** – is one the types of lifelong learning concept which is characteristically specified as pliable, less structural, short-term based learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2012).

**Informal learning** – this term entails learning depending on individuals' personal interest which can occur in any setting and time without any boundaries (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2012)

**Andragogy**- the term entails a theory which provides principles and patterns to follow while teaching adults (Cambridge University Press, n.d.)

**Professional development** – the term signifies the opportunities given people from various occupations with the aim of upskilling (Cambridge University Press, n.d.)

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Current international policies on education are quite vigilant to embrace lifelong learning as joint vision of 2050 by promoting and exploring social dimensions and promises of learning (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2020). Throughout the last decades Azerbaijani had undergone numerous changes to align with European Standards and further actions for the development of HEIs are to be continued (Suleymanov, 2020). On that ground the Azerbaijan National Qualifications Framework adopted in 2018 aims to ease the process of lifelong learning in various levels of education (National Qualifications Framework Azerbaijan, 2021; Republic of Azerbaijan Cabinet of Ministers, 2018). Specifically, Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area, opens a door for reorganization of national qualification to be compatible with international education institutions with respect to standards, efficacy, content and supply of educational opportunities among learners (Republic of Azerbaijan Cabinet of Ministers, 2018). One of the objectives of this framework is to support and ensure acknowledgement of lifelong learning competences (Republic of Azerbaijan Cabinet of Ministers, 2018), which according to

European Council involve skills regarding learning, science, language use, digitalization, socio-cultural matters and being exemplary citizen (European Union, 2018). However, European Training Foundation reports that lifelong learning as a concept is not well-defined in Azerbaijan and stands at informal level within organizations (World TVET Database, 2013).

Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Azerbaijan take heed of professional development of faculty to fulfil student' needs by improving teaching quality (Aghayeva, 2019). Educators' self-development recognized by local legislative source as well (Law on Education, Article. 33.3.8, 2009). The study exploring faculty motivation in Azerbaijan found that due to lack of institutional and financial support faculty members could not attend in different teaching concerned trainings (Aghayeva, 2019). This finding indicates that faculty members face difficulties in learning process which lead to less participation in developmental trainings. That leads to say that faculties' non-formal learning which is one of the ways of lifelong learning is restricted. Another recent study also highlights the need to increase the number of articles published in international journals, high quality scientific research done by faculty in HEIs of Azerbaijan to raise rating of HEIs in worldwide ranking system (Gurbanova, 2021). The study implied that in Azerbaijan, faculty's engagement in conducting research which is one of the types of formal education is relatively low. The findings of two studies (Aghayeva, 2019; Gurbanova, 2021) imply that faculty members cannot engage in learning in different settings, however, little is known about how lifelong learning is perceived in faculty perspective and how faculty currently acquire new knowledge and skills. Faculty members in HEIs have a power to set an example and inspire learners as an educator (Pushkar, 2015). Therefore, it is worth to explore lifelong learning through the lens of faculty in Azerbaijan to bring clarification on perspectives on lifelong learning and faculty's current involvement in lifelong learning in different settings.

### **1.3 Purpose and Significance of Study**

The purpose of the study is to conceptualize faculty's understanding of lifelong learning in HEIs of Azerbaijan and explore how faculty acquire new knowledge and skills in different learning settings. Understanding faculty's definition of the concept would give them a chance to share their reflective thinking on the role of the lifelong learning. The study will help to better understand if faculty members metacognitively experience any difference in their personal/professional life as a result of learning. Faculty members' sharing may raise awareness to understand how faculty in Azerbaijan update their knowledge and skills, and also, what socio-cultural, technical or personal factors play the role of barrier to pursue learning in academic field.

### **1.4 Research questions:**

This inquiry explores the phenomenon of interest via the research questions given below:

1. How do faculty members in HEIs of Azerbaijan understand lifelong learning?
2. How do faculty in HEIs of Azerbaijan acquire new knowledge and skills?

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of lifelong learning and its role in adult life is aimed to be better understood through the review of literature. In the initial section, I reviewed studies done in Western countries since studies exploring impact and the role of lifelong learning which mostly account for Western scholars. Also, in the first section, I compared findings of such studies with separate assumptions of adult learning theory, whereas in following section, I focused on studies exploring (mostly, in Turkiye, some Western countries as well) particularly perceptions of teachers, students and faculties on lifelong learning. In the second section of the review, I collected studies which have similar purpose, phenomenon of interest with both similar and different design regardless of the country the study conducted.

Firstly, the review of literature suggests that adult learning has utmost importance in the promotion of lifelong learning (European Commission 2012; Guglielman, 2012; Jogi et al., 2015; Kungu& Mactmes, 2009). Theory of adult learning or in another term Andragogy is developed by Malcolm Knowles in 1970s which contains six assumptions reflecting nature of adults and their learning styles (Kheang, 2019; Merriam, 2017). Andragogy shows characteristic of adult learners in learning process with the help of situation-dependant scenarios (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Characteristics of adults which are developed by Knowles are specified around topics such as, meaningfulness, being focused on certain goals, owing autonomy, motivational factors, being treated equally and respectfully while learning (Lieb, 1991). Merriam and Baumgartner (2020) stated that the theory has certain suggestions to be used and referred in the process of creation and design of adult involved activities.

According to Kungu and Machtmes (2009), adult learning by nature better integrates to the context of lifelong learning concept. Thereby, “theory of adult learning” (Knowles et al., 2005, p.44) is embedded in this inquiry as a theoretical framework, since target participants of the study are faculty members, thus, adults.

## **2.1 Assumptions of Adult Learning Theory**

As indicated by Knowles et al (2005), the first assumption of adult learning impels to consider the rationale behind to learn, therefore, adults who are supposed to pursue learning should understand the significance of lifelong learning. Thus, there should be reasons to motivate learning (London, 2011), or sometimes certain triggers may alert adult learning (Kungu& Machtmes, 2009). Literature on lifelong learning ranges its benefits in following categories: general adult well-being (Hyde & Phillipson, 2014; Manninen & Meriläinen, 2011) neurological aspects of learning continuously (Laal, 2012), increase in employability (Fleming 2011; Hyde & Phillipson, 2014) and impact on social interaction (Fleming 2011; Manninen & Meriläinen, 2011). Discussions on these categories are given below.

Many studies highlight positive effects of adult learning on physical health and well-being (Feinstein et al., 2003; John, 2009; Manninen & Meriläinen, 2011; Panitsides, 2014). Accordingly, Hammond (2004), explored positive influences of lifelong learning by interviewing 144 people with various characteristic and forms of learning experiences living in the rural areas of Essex, Nottingham and North London. Findings were grouped under the title of self-efficacy, confidence, effects on health and social inclusion which were closely related to general wellbeing and health (Hammond, 2004). It was highlighted learning has a capacity to open a door to perceive things more widely which eventually affects the way people grow, develop self-esteem, sustain purpose and hope to survive (Hammond, 2004).

Some scholars refer learning as neurobiological event because it visibly stimulates thinking critically, language learning, adoption of skills and knowledge to the level of

mastery (Keeling et al., 2011). Moreover, it is argued that based on many research findings, learning which is equal to change in the brain occurs regardless of the age (Guglielman, 2012) and it only needs plenty of incorporated engagements with different learning experiences (Keeling et al., 2011). To sustain skills and change in the brain, one needs to pursue learning otherwise it (knowledge, skills) will be reverse (The Royal Society, 2011; Guglielman, 2012). To be more precise, “ageing brain” is probably consequence of ceasing the process of learning in a stage of life (Guglielman, 2012, p.4). Results indicate that lifelong learning may contribute not only physical but also mental needs of adults.

According to the second assumption of andragogy, participants of learning process want to be in control, direct the process independently (Knowles et al., 2005). Non-formal and informal learning give the learner autonomy and flexibility; thus, the content is determined by preference of learner (Moteshekga-Sebolai, 2003) which is the sign of learning focused, self-directed learning principles of theory of adult learning (Kungu & Mactmes, 2009). Adult learning gives the learner a chance to transfer from previously accustomed dependent learner to independent one (Knowles et al., 2005). In addition, self-directed learning is request of labour market as well, since workers are expected to evaluate their individual learning in professional life (Cremers et al., 2014).

That urges to recall third assumption of adult learning theory which embraces significance of adults’ previous experiences and its possible impact to participants’ learning process (Knowles et al., 2005). Regular and unexpected changes or triggers in adult life urge to learn more (Kungu & Mactmes, 2009). Therefore, preferences of activities, teaching methods in adult-teaching and learning should address their past and possible future experiences (Knowles et al., 2005). Interestingly, according to Gravani (2012), previous experiences of adults may have the role of barrier and also opportunity in learning process. Moreover, Pratt (1988) suggested as regard to the assumption on learners’ level of readiness

in the theory of adult learning that depending on situation, learner might need either emotional or technical reinforcement as well (as it cited in Knowles et al., 2005).

Lifelong learning is considered as a mechanism to overcome and adapt adjustments of economy (Kungu& Mactmes, 2009), Fleming (2011) supposes lifelong learning as a tool which holds continually and rapidly changing world as a whole. The last two assumptions of theory of adult learning covering learners' orientation and motivation urge to explore direct impact of lifelong learning on rate of employment and skill improvement (Babos et al., 2015; Knowles et al., 2015). Thus, contributions of learning are not visible only on personal but professional context as well which can motivate adults more (Babos et al., 2015).

Professional development events enhance learning quality (Asiyah et al., 2021), boosts productivity of employees (Ionela, 2012) and shapes career trajectory. Being part of learning activities affects network as well. One of the extensive studies conducted in 10 European countries, categorized social interacting and networking as preponderant categories as contributions of lifelong learning based on views of vast majority (Manninen & Meriläinen, 2011).

This section depicted how lifelong learning complements various facets of adult life with respect to assumptions of adult learning theory. Studies were mostly done in Western countries since in Azerbaijan little research covers lifelong learning as phenomenon of interest. Findings of above discussed studies on lifelong learning remain to be addressed in the context of Azerbaijan also. Therefore, this inquiry could take further step to compare adult learning features (e.g., needs, triggers, learning styles) and understand benefits of lifelong learning to adult life more profoundly.

## **2.2 Experiences and views on lifelong learning**

There are plenty of works discussing lifelong learning's definition, implications to human life in many regards (Duta and Rafaila, 2014; Hammond, 2004; Kungu& Mactmes,

2009; Manninen & Meriläinen, 2011). Studies focusing on faculty's views and interaction with lifelong learning practice are scarce (Buza et al., 2010; Haseski & Odabasi, 2016; Hammer et al., 2012; Konokman & Yelken, 2014; Köğçe et al., 2014). Research works having similar design and objective mostly done in HEIs of Turkiye, which has socio-culturally similar background with Azerbaijan and a few similar studies of Western countries were also touched upon for the purpose of comparison. Generally, regardless of the method employed, findings conclude on significance of lifelong learning.

Perceptions of faculty regarding lifelong learning concept are various, thus, while some perceiving concept as a continual process exceeding stages of formal education (Hammer et al., 2012), others defined lifelong learning as a learning action in the context of academic, individual and socio-cultural growth (Haseski & Odabasi, 2016). Understanding faculty members definition of lifelong learning in Azerbaijan, would clarify the outcomes of lifelong learning with their experience. Also, the study could help to understand the reasons why they engage in or dismiss lifelong learning opportunities.

Although a group of researchers are investigating perceptions with an interview, majority used lifelong learning competency scale. There are several scales measuring lifelong learning competences and attitudes. One of them consists of 14 items within certain categories related to attitudes to learning, use of proper knowledge, information and skill, attitude towards goal and self-evaluation (Cropley & Knapper, 2000) as it cited Kirby et al., 2010). This questionnaire is believed to be effective if the goal of the research is simply to learn general situation in terms of students' tendency towards lifelong learning in addition to clarifying strengths and shortcomings (Kirby et al., 2010). The scale is concise and potential factors as a part of conceptual framework affecting lifelong learning positively or negatively are not considered (Kirby et al., 2010). There are scales focusing on either teachers' individual approaches to the concept of lifelong learning (Hursen, 2016), or separately

measuring respondents' impression on lifelong learning competences regarding to various virtues of personal and professional life (Uzunboylu & Hursen, 2012). Interestingly, this study revealed that teachers in Cyprus, were aware of potential contributions of learning and their own abilities, however, they did not have enthusiasm to learn (Uzunboylu & Hursen, 2012). According to the interpretation of the researchers, age, gender and motivation of the participants might be reasons. This inquiry can help to see whether aforementioned factors are topic of discussion as inhibitors for Azerbaijani faculty or not.

Although, both scales (Hursen, 2016; Uzunboylu & Hursen, 2012) are found to be reliable, small sample size and possible impact of variables can keep the generalisability under question. Due to constructivist nature of lifelong learning, the studies with qualitative data instruments could reveal more sets of data on possible factors, tendencies and perceptions on the concept.

Factors hindering faculty's lifelong learning in the context of professional development are categorised as individual, technological, structural, institutional (Haseski & Odabasi, 2016), environmental and workload related (Moteshekga-Sebolai, 2003; Zhaohui & Anning, 2020). However, learning oriented culture within organization, collaboration in learning and management are found to be positively impacting faculty lifelong learning (Zhou & Tu, 2021). Findings show that faculty development trainings do change approaches to teaching (Lee et al., 2018) and boost knowledge and profession-related skills (particularly workshops) (Moteshekga-Sebolai, 2003), research techniques, instructional models (Zhaohui & Anning, 2020) and feelings on their work-related competencies (Rowbotham, 2015).

Study conducted in Germany exploring relation among informal and formal learning and faculty's employability concluded that learning in social informal way (e.g., feedback of co-worker, supervisor or external assistance) better affects faculty's employability (Gerken et al., 2016). Faculty appreciate learning environments where it is possible to reflect, spread the

word on examples of good practice and discourse collaboratively (Robson & Turner, 2017). Another study interviewed faculties who had been required by certain HEI (Higher Education Institutions) in the UK to participate in learning community (LC) to stimulate scholarly activities, indicated that LC contributed faculty members' academic practice, moreover, sense of belonging and professionalism (MacKenzie et al., 2010). The question whether faculty in the HEIs of Azerbaijan, prefer formal or informal and nonformal learning, their experience with such activities, perceptions on its contribution is understudied.

Also, most of researchers question the role of HEIs in promoting the lifelong learning (Marcinkiewicz, 2011; Mohammedimehr et al., 2011; Nesbit et al., 2007). One of the empirical data suggests that before requiring the faculty to attend in trainings, HEIs should consider consistency of institutions and trainees' goals, the trainings are suggested to be conduct after needs analysis (Motshekga-Sebolai, 2003).

### **2.3 Summary**

The review relied on the theory of adult learning as the foundational knowledge and made comparison of lifelong learning's characteristic with assumptions of andragogy. The first part of review, highlighted relation of lifelong learning with social, neurological, employability and well-being concerned aspects of adult life. Findings of studies discussed are mostly aligned with the possible needs, learning orientation, motivation of adults in learning process. The results confirm positive influence of lifelong learning on personal, professional growth, self-management, confidence of adults on individual level, self-efficacy, economy, sustainable development, organization management on society level.

The second part of review oversees studies exploring perceptions, views on lifelong learning concept. The studies are found to be in three directions: questioning the role of HEIs in the promotion of lifelong learning, measuring lifelong learners' characteristics/competences among faculty/teachers, identifying faculty's views on the concept. Results stressed medium

level positive significant relationships among motivation, self-efficacy and inclination to lifelong learning. Moreover, significant impacts of organizational, collaborative learning culture to faculty's lifelong learning as variables were found. In comparison, the numbers of research exploring faculty perceptions are significantly low. Although, factors affecting learning, frequency of lifelong learning activities and the way faculty define this concept had been discussed, views on which type of activities are most helpful to inspire lifelong learning, beliefs and expectations on promotion of concept or the strategies faculty use to pursue collaborative learning culture are not touched. There is a need for a study that explores all three settings of lifelong learning in one context. Particularly in Azerbaijan, little research attempts to identify forementioned aspects of lifelong learning, therefore, scrutinizing faculty understanding, and perspectives of the concept would enrich literature on this topic and would contribute to the improvement of professional development practices at various HEIs.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Paradigm and research design

One of the paradigms that is closely linked to inquires with qualitative design is constructivism (Adom et al., 2016). In academic discourse, social sciences are found to be relevant to constructivist approach which is opposite to “realistic” and “metaphysical” views, where knowledge is mostly reflection of “outer reality” (Hickman et al., 2009, p.40). Construction of knowledge is not deemed to refer realities or excellent ideas but moreover, meanings based on personal and social constructive ground with individually fabricated explanations (Hein, 1991). According to Beck and Kosnik (2006), new constructions are usually built on earlier knowledge and new insights cannot be obtained if there is no prior fundament to relate. In this study which strives to reveal understanding and experiences of faculty members in Azerbaijan, the participants’ subjective interpretation of lifelong learning is discussed in a constructivist spirit (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). I explored participants’ subjective approach, the way they interpret lifelong learning concept based on previous knowledge and how their preferences in learning activities are affected by their beliefs and understandings. According to Rodrigues et al (2018), the way individuals specify beliefs and opinions is affected by culture. Thereby, the perspective on lifelong learning may differ in Azerbaijan considering socio-cultural differences (Rodrigues et al, 2018), I assume we can see such differences with the help of insights the participants provide. Interpretation and analysis of participants’ perspective (experience) construct new and socio-culturally specific knowledge.

I referred qualitative design which allows to gain extensive knowledge on certain phenomenon of interest within specific settings (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). My purpose was to gain in-depth knowledge on Azerbaijani faculty members’ understanding and experiences

of lifelong learning phenomenon. Via qualitative research instruments faculty's meaning making and acquisition of knowledge and skills were profoundly explored through discourse of their lived experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the sections given below, I elaborated on further methodological features of this study.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

Qualitative research allows to employ multiple methods in incorporating manner (Saldana, 2011). In this study interview, memoing and document review were used as data instruments to explore understanding and experiences in different learning settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana, 2011). Data was collected around 5 weeks and analysed for roughly 2 weeks. The following sections given below introduce the methods and expanded details of data collection.

### **3.3 Research Site**

I recruited participants from five public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) located in Baku, as I had easy access to institutions located in Baku rather than other regions. One of the main criteria in selecting research sites was to choose institutions specializing in diverse academic disciplines which could make the data more comprehensive. Thereby, all the selected HEIs have expert practices in different branches of science. All the universities chosen were informed about purpose of the research and requested for permission to conduct research.

### **3.4 Sampling**

Sampling method for selection of participants were initially convenience and later snowball sampling where I relied on referral of interviewed respondents to find relevant

participants (Creswell, 2012). Snowball sampling allows to reach more people by requesting a hand from already existing participants via formal or informal communication (Creswell, 2012). In the initial selection stage, I contacted with my previous colleagues, acquaintances and current professors working in various HEIs in Baku to get recommendation on relevant participants. I reached the people they referenced through a phone call and sent the consent form explaining purpose, procedural rules and rights of participants. The first interviews were with those who accepted to participate after reading consent form. Purposefully selected faculty were requested to recommend possible candidates who could take part in this study and once new participant recruited, in the same manner he or she was also asked to spread information on need for participants among his/her existing circle. Initially expected sample size was around 15-20, I ceased at saturation point (Creswell, 2012) which was 15.

### 3.5 Participants

Participants of the study were faculty members who have at least three years' experience in working public HEIs. Faculty with three years' experience were expected to share more insights on phenomenon of interest rather than novice members considering years of experience in teaching and learning. Participants with different academic backgrounds and disciplines were preferred in order to bring more comprehensive data and years of experience were also varying (See Table 1). Apart from faculties professional at teaching humanitarian, social sciences, faculty teaching technical studies were also referred to explore their understanding of the concept. In addition, both male and female faculty members were involved with the aim of providing equal opportunity.

	Participant information
Ms. Burla	Experience of teaching: 11 years Specialisation: Mechanics

Ms. Adila	Experience of teaching: more than 10 years Specialisation: Urban planning
Ms. Banu	Experience of teaching; 34 years Specialisation: Economics
Ms. Sanjarli	Experience of teaching: 4 years Specialisation: International relations and history
Ms. Isazada	Experience of teaching: more than 10 years Specialisation: Electronics and Technology
Ms. Meryem	Experience of teaching: 26 years Specialisation: Automation and computing
Mr.Akhunzada	Experience of teaching: 23 years Specialisation: Linguistics
Mr. Safizada	Experience of teaching: more than 50 years Specialisation: Physics
Mr. Abbaszada	Experience of teaching: 16 Specialisation: Economics and management
Mr. Tahmasibli	Experience of teaching: more than 5 years Specialisation: Industrial Engineering
Mr. Sherifzada	Experience of teaching: 47 years Specialisation: British Literature
Ms. Halima	Experience of teaching: 18 years Specialisation: Academic Writing
Ms. Aliakbarli	Experience of teaching: 34 years Specialisation: Philosophy
Ms.Eminbayli	Experience of teaching: more than 10 years Specialisation: Electronics and physics
Mr. Geraybayli	Experience of teaching: 6 years Specialisation: International Relations

### 3.6 Data instruments

### **3.6.1 Interview**

Saldana (2011) expresses that interviews are one of the helpful types of data instruments in qualitative research that enable researchers to explore individual approaches, views, opinions, personal assumptions on surrounding world and experiences. Similarly, the purpose of this study is to explore faculty beliefs and experiences with lifelong learning concept. Therefore, interview was primary data collection instrument of this study. Interviews were individual, face-to-face and semi- structured where both predetermined and flexible questions were employed depending on the request of the topic (Creswell, 2012; Merriam& Tisdell, 2016). In semi-structured interview, interviewer manages scope of interview more easily, when new ideas emerge (Merriam& Tisdell, 2016). Most of the interviews last around 30-45 minutes and the interviewees' speeches were recorded via gadgets (Creswell, 2012) after getting permission of the respondent. Respondents were able to answer in their native language (Azerbaijani), quotes from transcripts were translated into target (English) language (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and only one participant preferred to speak in English. Interviews were conducted after each person accepted to participate and signed a consent form. The questions I asked throughout the interviews are presented in the interview protocol (see Appendix A). The protocol consists of roughly 13 questions and probe questions also emerged in various cases (Shenton, 2004). The initial questions helped to clarify participants background and definition of the terms discussed throughout the interview, following questions strived to gain in-depth knowledge on faculty experience and perceptions on the concept of lifelong learning. I piloted the protocol with one faculty member in the initial stage to see the intelligibility of the questions via respondent's inputs (Creswell, 2012) and accordingly, the questions were improved with the help of supervisor feedback.

### **3.6.2 Document review**

In addition to interview, second data source was document review. To support answers to second research question which focused on faculties' engagement with lifelong learning in different learning settings, participants were asked to share their certificates, documents confirming attendance in various activities. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), documents published for various purposes (such as, informative and illustrative items) can be reviewed. In this study certifications, documents proving attendance in different learning activities helped to gather data on faculty's engagement of lifelong learning opportunities. At the end of each interview, participants were asked if they could share certificates, documents showing their attendance in the trainings, workshop they had mentioned. The content of the shared documents was discussed in the findings section. Moreover, the content of the certificates could also provide information on what faculty members of HEIs of Azerbaijan strive to learn.

Additionally, I employed memoing as a methodological strategy which was a record of my reflective stance with respect to data collection process for the purpose of conservation and accurate dissemination of information (Birks et al., 2008). In the analysis, memos ease the work of investigator in terms of meaning making by providing compatible parts (Birks et al., 2008). While doing interviews I could take some notes both during the interviews and at the end of interview when I had a chance to reflect on what was received as raw data. Memos assisted me to employ proper probe questions throughout interviews, also, in data analysis process the notes gave guidance for theme development.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

After transcribing recorded interview, each transcript was marked to identify the date they belong to (Lacey & Luff, 2009). As the first step of analysis process, the transcripts were read several times to get familiar with existing raw data (Lacey & Luff, 2009). The analysis

was done manually, where I sequenced emerged codes and categories without use of any software (Creswell, 2012). Once the analysis started, meaningful patterns in the text were coded to combine overlapping ones under proper themes, whereas in the further stage not all but only meaningful themes were subject to major idea formation process (Creswell, 2012). Codes are basically symbolic pieces or fragments elicited from raw data to be used for deduction in analysis (Saldana, 2013). In the beginning stage I constructed roughly 175+ codes which were transferred to a separate codebook (Saldana, 2013). After several updates, I segmented those that had links to the explored phenomenon (Merriam& Tisdell, 2016) and developed 11 themes at first. In the following phase, several themes were grouped under one category. Overall, 6 separate categories were organized around indicated the research questions (Merriam& Tisdell, 2016). Also, number and content of documents reviewed were discussed in the analysis part while reflecting on frequencies of attending in learning activities and preferences in terms of content. Additionally, memoing (Birks et al., 2008) technique had guided analysis process as well since I had taken some notes of my thoughts and natural progress of the study throughout the process. Use of memos assisted mapping, drawing meaning to show what kind of perspectives, conceptualizations existed (Birks et al., 2008).

### **3.8 Trustworthiness**

“Trustworthiness refers to quality, authenticity, and truthfulness of the findings of qualitative research” (Cypress, 2017, p.254). Trustworthiness is one of the crucial mechanisms responsible for making the quality and communication of a study more scholarly (Nicholas et al., 2015). I had secured “authenticity and trustworthiness” (Merriam& Tisdell, 2016, p. 238) in my study by applying strategies given below.

#### **Triangulation**

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), triangulation is a step to secure internal validity of study. As it has already been stated above, phenomenon of interest (lifelong learning) was explored by relying on not only interviews but also checking certifications, artifacts supplied by respondents and my own memos written while the phenomenon was under study. Use of more than one method allowed to make comparisons and rate gathered data in terms of similarity and conformity (Merriam& Tisdell, 2016).

### **Peer review**

Another suited strategy that was employed for assuring credibility of this qualitative study was peer review (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that peer review aims at evaluating the extent of inquiry plausibility with respect to provided data. One of my current professors and committee members dealing with qualitative research were asked to implement peer review of this inquiry.

### **Thick description**

Shenton (2004) stated that for securing credibility, thick description is usually applied to show the real context of investigated phenomenon of interest. To enable readers to estimate how far the study comprise actual case (Shenton, 2004), each and every single important aspect of findings, results and participants were reported by me (Merriam& Tisdell, 2016).

### **Ethical considerations**

Regardless of the size and type of inquiry, consideration of ethical issues is primary expectation (Merriam& Tisdell, 2016). In this study, participation was on voluntary basis and the respondents were aware of provision of confidentiality via consent forms provided

(Wiles, 2013). Aim of the research and further use of data as well as rights to leave a question unanswered or withdraw were all pre-informed (Ciuk & Latusek, 2018). No information damaging individuals' privacy was shared and applied pseudonyms aimed at securing anonymity (Wiles, 2013). Both for data received in interviews and document reviews, I strived to protect and secure information of respondents and ensured each and single one of participants on that basis (Surmiak, 2018).

### **3.9 Limitations**

Regardless of the type of inquiry, weaknesses (regarding different aspects) of a study are usually indicated by the researcher to be taken account for future researches (Creswell, 2012). There are certain limitations regarding this study's research site. The study concentrates on HEIs located only in Baku and I selected only public HEIs without private ones. Due to time restriction, it was not possible to reach every single HEIs of Azerbaijan and the researcher did not have access to HEIs existing in different regions of Azerbaijan. Thereby, this study could not reach more comprehensible data by including faculty member working in HEIs in other regions and at the same time private HEIs of Baku could not be included.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### 4.1 Overview of findings

This inquiry which strives to explore faculty's understanding of lifelong learning and ways of acquiring knowledge and skills, I explored research questions given below: How do faculty members in HEIs of Azerbaijan understand lifelong learning? How do faculty in HEIs of Azerbaijan acquire new knowledge and skills? This qualitative study is aiming at exploring perspectives of faculty members working in HEIs of Azerbaijan on lifelong learning concept and study their experiences of learning in various settings. The data was gathered via face-to face interview, document review and memoing. As a result of data collection and analysis process, for each research question several categories emerged which I presented in separate sections. First, I start discussion of the first research question:

#### **Research Question 1: How do faculty members in HEIs of Azerbaijan understand lifelong learning?**

**Learning philosophy.** The participants were first and foremost asked to present their understanding of learning and present their learning philosophy prior to the discussion of lifelong learning concept. Some preferred to present their understanding learning by giving examples of how they learn such as, by writing, imagining, reading or listening. For these participants learning was just an action done in different ways depending on ease and convenience. That methodological approach which focuses on what ways of learning is effective in experience rather than doing deep reflection on its essence. Several respondents depicted learning as non-stop process which could never end. These respondents explained learning with the help of key terms, while Ms.Banu and Ms. Sanjarli seeing it as “dərinə getmək” [going deep], Mr.Geraybayli used an analogy:“Bilik bir dəryadır, yəni sənin öyrəndiklərinə bir damladır, yəni oxuduqca öyrəndikcə görürsən ki, bitmir” [Knowledge is

like a sea, and the thing you learn is a drop, as you learn you realize that it never ends.]. That point of view suggests that participants believe that learning is never ending process. The respondents were conscious of the need to pursue learning deeply and consistently.

On the other hand, several respondents were prone to relate learning to students rather than themselves. Such definitions showed that the participants did not consider themselves as learners. For instance, Ms.Aliakberli mostly described how to make an audience learn than reflecting upon her own personal understanding of learning. She did not discuss her own way of learning as individual, but moreover focused on students' learning whom she lectured:

Birinci növbədə təbii ki, istək olmalıdır, əgər tələbənin istəyi yoxdursa onu bu istiqamətə yönəltmək üçün böyük səy göstərmək lazımdır.[Firstly, of course, there should be a desire to learn, if student does not have a desire, to direct him to that direction one must put a lot of effort.]

Such participants relate learning mostly to students rather teachers and see themselves as facilitator of students learning process. The reason of such attitude might be lack of awareness of informal, formal and non-formal learning that she as a teacher can engage throughout life. Majority described learning philosophy with broad and general statements. Instead of reflecting on the essence of learning, respondents were willing to quote slogans, compliments about learning which are presented below. Ms. Adila perceives “end of life once you finish learning”, both Mr. Abbaszada and Ms. Eminbayli preferred to describe their philosophy by expressing “öyrənmək hər şeydir” [learning is everything] which is quite broad as it captivates quite many things. Several respondents were specific while describing the way learning understood in their mind which shows result-based approach to learning. For instance, owning a skill was the sign of learning for Mr. Tahmasibli, “Heyvanlara bacarıq öyrədilən bir dünyada insana istənilən bir bacarıq öyrədilə bilər, mənim fəlsəfəm budur “[ my philosophy is if where you can teach a skill to animals, any skill can be taught to humans], additionally, similar approach stated by Mr.Sherifzada:

Mən gecə gündüz öyrənirəm, yəni mənim günüm, dəqiqəm, saniyəm nəyisə açıb baxmasam, mən onu özüm üçün elə bilki boş keçmiş vaxt sayıram, hər dəfə nəyisə bir hardasa proyektlər işləyirəm.[I learn day and night, if I do not open and look at something, I consider it as a waste of my time, every time I work on some projects somewhere.]

For Mr.Sherifzada learning is an indispensable part of life which he actively engages day and night. The way he described learning philosophy shows strong motivation to learn and similarly result-based approach since he considers working productively as a part of learning.

Participants learning philosophies were overall broad but lacked in detail. Majority were conscious of non-stop nature of learning. Generally, it is believed that learning is an action done in many different ways depending on individuals' preference. The reason, need and the role of learning were out of question in most definitions. Sometimes the participants associated learning to students rather than seeing themselves as part of it.

Throughout the rest of interviews, the respondents used the terms “learning” and “lifelong learning” interchangeably without differentiation.

**Understanding lifelong learning.** The second category belonging to the first research question presents respondents' view on lifelong learning concept. The concept of lifelong learning did not urge some participants to stop and reflect in depth since from their perspective it was as an obligation for academic career as their job require them to learn consistently, as in case of Ms.Isazada:“Elektronika də sürətlə inkişaf edən bir istiqamətdir, məcburuq ki zamanla ayaqlaşaq və daima öyrənək ki, öyrədək”[Electronics is rapidly developing direction, so we are obliged to keep up with the times and learn consistently to teach.] Mr.Gəraybəyli distinguishes teachers as knowledge workers who have to pursue learning as a part of profession:

Xüsusi ilə bizdə, Azərbaycanda da bəlli bir mərhələyə kimi öyrəndin vəssalam ondan sonra artıq iş həyatına daxil olursan amma bu belə deyil. Lifelong learning, xüsusilədə o knowledge workers yəni belə bir termin var o knowledge workers,yəni əsas kapitalı o

knowledge olan işçilərdir. Onlara aiddir tutaq ki, mühəndislərdir, müəllimlərdir, həkimlərdir yəni bu sahədə fəaliyyət göstərən işçilər üçün lifelong learning çox zəruridir.[Specially, in our country, in Azerbaijan, until certain point you learn and then you start your career, but it does not work in this way. Lifelong learning is specially ..there is a term knowledge worker whose main capital is knowledge. This includes engineers, teacher, doctors, for those who work in these spheres lifelong learning is requisite.]

Mr.Abbaszada had also supported idea of obligation while sharing his understanding of lifelong learning. Ms. Meryem, meanwhile, shared her challenges to explain how mandatory lifelong learning as a burden deprives her from engaging what she wants to do by stating:

Mən başa düşürəm ki, ömürboyu oxumaq məsəl üçün əgər təhsili götürürəmsə, mən onda bəzi şeylərdən geri qalırım. Məsələn, ürəyim istəyən şeylərdən, məsəlçün mən istəyirəm adi bir jurnal oxuyum, bu psixologiyaya aid bir kitab oxuyum, amma məcbur götürüb oxuyuram onu ki hansiki sabahları tələbənin qabağında məruzə hazırlamalıyam.[ What I see that if take lifelong learning in education, in that case I stay behind. For example, things I desire, for example, I simply want to read that magazine or that book on psychology but as a mandatory I study the things which I must lecture in front of the students. I am left behind; I cannot keep up with the time.]

Some faculty members defined it not as a burden but pleasure as well: “Ümumiyyətlə ömürboyu hansısa axtarışdayam” [Overall, I quest for something lifelong.], Mr.Sherizada added: “yəni evə gedəndə amma işləməyəndə həmin gün elə bilirəm ki mən nəyisə itirmişəm”[When I go to home without working (meant self-study), I feel like I have lost something.] Such participants perceive lifelong learning as pleasure opposite to those who consider it as burden.

“Learning from cradle to the grave” (Tachie-Donkor, 2019, p. 1) definition was the understanding of most such as, Ms.Burla, Ms.Adila and Ms.Halima, Mr.Safizada, Mr.Sherifzada. Conversely, a group of faculty members showed alternative way of understanding which considers lifelong learning a way of developing skills to pursue living. According to Mr.Akhundzada this concept is western tendency which is not relevant to Azerbaijan since life expectancy is not as long as Western countries:

Well, lifelong learning is a new, relatively new project, mostly popular in the Western countries. In the Western countries, you know, one of the reasons of lifelong learning is probably because of the ageing of the population in the Western countries.

Mr.Akhunzada defined lifelong learning as concept targeting only elderly people to make career transitions and did not relate lifelong learning concept to the case of Azerbaijan as well:

Basically, it is it is the case in the Western countries. As far as well in Azerbaijan, I think the problem, the challenge is not so acute as in the Western countries, because frankly, life expectancy is not as high as in Italy if I am not wrong 80 years.....80 years in Italy, in Norway. That's why it's not so challenging and there are actually some vacancies available even for elderly people.

On the other hand, Mr.Tahmasibli, focused on skill-based learning since he believes that one learns when he develops certain skills, and lifelong learning helps individuals to survive better:

Əmək haqqının xidməti nə qədər qalxdıqda, insanlar büdcələrinə qənaət etməyə məcbur olur, odur ki davamlı bacarıqlar qatmalı olur. Yəni sadəcə bu lifelong learningdə insanlar mənim fikrimcə anlamadığı və ya insanlara anladılmayan şey lifelong learning-i skill əlavə edilməsi kimi əlavə edə bilsə daha yaxşı olar. Çünki bir şeyi öyrənmək o demək deyil ki, sən onu öyrənmisən.O bacarığı əlavə etmək sən öyrənmisən deməkdir. Yəni mənim öz şəxsi fikrimə görə lifelong- lifelong skill development ola bilərdi məsələnin prinsipi.[As the payment for service increases, people are obliged to be economical with their budget, and they consistently must add new skills. The thing that people do not comprehend or the thing that is not spoken is to perceive lifelong learning as skill addition which is better. Since simply learning something does not mean you learn. If you have obtained that skill means learning. In my personal view, lifelong learning could be as a principle of the issue lifelong skill development.]

The findings given above present how faculty members in different HEIs of Azerbaijan understand lifelong learning. Definitions can be categorized under three themes: lifelong learning as a burden for certain profession, lifelong learning as pleasure and alternative perspectives on its role in people's life. While some perceiving it as a tool for career transition or skill development, for others it is a way of living life, whereas, for most it is obligation of certain occupations which require learning continuously to cope with changing technology and science.

**Benefits of lifelong learning.** Participants were asked to reflect on merits lifelong learning had brought their lives. Regardless of the setting learning had occurred, it was appreciated as something valuable and essential by all of the participants, but specific examples were rarely given to support. Several participants expressed general statements such as “I made progress”. Considering the broadness of the word “progress’, lack of examples and reflections puts the compliments said on lifelong learning under question. Generally, the most common contribution was “network” which was acknowledged by Ms.Isazada, Ms.Eminbayli, Ms.Burla, Mr.Safizada and Ms.Sanjarli. These faculty members referred to conferences, trainings, workshops which helped to meet new people. Mr.Safizada and Ms.Eminbayli mentioned travelling among benefits by remembering the conferences they participated. Participants believe that meeting new people is good opportunity for learning to see different perspectives. Ms.Eminbayli also stressed reputation and respect she gained. For Mr.Abbaszada and Ms.Isazada it is the reason to be employed. Lifelong learning can affect state of mind as well, both Ms.Halima and Ms.Isazada acknowledges positive impact of learning to their confidence. Ms. Halima in addition stated:

Artıq özümə güvən əminlik, rahatlıq var. Hansısa situasiyaya girəndə çətinlik çəkmirəm bilirəm ki burada çıxı bilərəm bu situasiyanı həll edə bilərəm. Təkcə təhsil mənə təhsil vermir həm də insan olmağı, inamlı olmağı şəxsiyyət kimi formalaşmağı, özümü tanımağı öyrədib.[ Now I have self-confidence, belief, comfort. I am not facing with difficulty already when I get into situation, I know I can get out of it, handle that situation. Education does not provide education only, but it also teaches being individual, being confident, shaping personality, knowing yourself.]

As stated above, having strong background affects character shaping and confidence, moreover, makes a person more resilient to survive. Overall, except a few examples, benefits of learning are not contemplated enough among faculty members. Yet lifelong learning is valued a lot by all.

## **Research question 2: How do faculty in HEIs of Azerbaijan acquire new knowledge and skills?**

Data points out information on faculty's involvement in lifelong learning, perspectives on the role of learning in different settings and barriers to learning. This section provides information on sources of learning faculty employed, faculty perceptions on learning in different settings and what kind of barriers hinder lifelong learning. All themes will be discussed comprehensively in the sections below.

**Self-study - informal learning.** Most of the participants expressed importance of being updated and informed about new things on the subject they teach, while giving examples on their self-study they only referred the process of preparation for the classes as the huge part of their lifelong learning. Self-study meant preparation and getting ready to teach the content presented in their syllabus. Learning to gain new skills, perspective on multi-disciplinary topics was not discussed in most cases. Participants attitude towards self-study resembled sense of obligation which was expressed in their definition as well. They were mostly seemed to learn for the sake of doing job rather than making meaning of it. Lack of meaning making showed itself in the other sections discussed above (see benefits of lifelong learning).

Class preparation is a stable part of participants' daily routine which takes long time and sometimes affects negatively to learn something else. Ms.Meryem expressed the reason why she could not learn things she wants to learn in the following way:

Mən istəyirəm amma vaxtım çatmır, bir də mən sizə bir söz deyim, o ki biz belə təzə fənnlər olur, biz xüsusi ixtisaslarıq, biz fundamental fənnlər deyilik ki məsələn fizikadır, riyaziyyatdır, kimya... Biz elektornika, elektronika inkişaf edir. Biz ona çatana qədər, nano-texnologiyanı mən dərs deyirdim...elektronikanın özü inkişafdadır da.Mən onu təzə informasiya, mən köhnə informasiya, məsəl üçün köhnə neçə ildən qalmış informasiya istifadə etmirəm. Əsası götürürəm amma inkişaf üçün mən gərək çoxlu materiallar araşdıram. Ona görə mən heç ürəyim istəyən şeyləri oxuya bilmirəm sözün açığı.[I want but I cannot catch up, one more thing, when there are new courses, it is distinctive speciality, it is not like fundamental subjects such as physics,

mathematics, chemistry. It is electronics, electronics is developing. By the time we catch up..I had also taught nanotechnology. Electronics is itself developing. I use up to date information, I do not use the information which is out of date. I use the core idea, but I have to search for a lot of readings. That is why, honestly, I cannot study things I wish.]

Having limited self-study process stems from lack of time and motivation. Faculty need certain supervision or authority to make them learn, otherwise, intrinsic motivation lacks.

Ms.Isazada attributed it to one's character: “ Yəni məcbur olanda nəyi isə oxuyuruq, məcbur edirik özümüzü amma belə başqa iş tapırıq onunla məşğul oluruq”[When we are obliged, we force ourselves, but in other cases we find something else to be engage with.] Mr.Sherifzada views lack of time and financial shortages factors as excuses:

Bizim mütəxəssislər eləbil ki, guya vaxtları yoxdur, maddi məsələlər ..bir növ adamın içindən gəlir, mən nəsə etməliyəm, bunlar Azərbaycanda mən istədiyim qədər deyil.[Our specialists blame lack of time or financial issues, it is something coming from deep inside like” I have to do something” these are not that much in Azerbaijan.]

Those who engage informal learning for job related purposes use some alternative ways to learn. Ms.Halima and Ms.Burla referred the online platforms which help to learn better methodology to teach. Others (namely, Ms.Aliakberli, Ms.Eminbayli, Mr.Safizada) mentioned engagement in different institutional research as a supervisor. Exceptionally, only a few participants, referred additional reasons to do self-study. Mr.Sherifzada expressed that he feels the duty of filling literature gap in Azerbaijan that is why he constantly keeps releasing book, content which do not exist in Azerbaijani language. Unlike other participants, Mr.Sherifzada indicated that his desire to create and study is not an institutional requirement or obligation of teaching profession but personal interest. He stated:

Şəxsi motivasiya yəni mən görürəm bizim tələbələrımızdə nəsə çatışmır, dərs vəsaiti çatışmır mən çalışıram ki, mən yaradıcı adamam, yaradıcılıq məni sövq edir ki yox bu işi mən görməliyəm. Mən görməsəm eləbil ki yaşamıram.[Personal motivation, I observe that our students have shortages of course books, I try, I am a creative person, creativity stimulates me with the feeling “I should do it”. If I do not do, I will not feel as if I live.]

Mr.Akhunzada mentioned learning Latin language as part of his self-study. Ms.Banu expressed her experience of learning Neuroscience, on the other hand Mr.Abbaszada noted that he receives classes on econometrics which is related to his major.

Regarding to other informal learning examples, respondents spoke very highly of assistance, supervision received from colleagues at HEIs except Ms.Adila and Ms.Halima. However, both had alternative solutions to such problems, for example, Ms.Adila referred to online sources and Ms.Halima stated “xarici professorlar” [foreign professors] are more helpful when asked for assistance. Mr.Sherifzada considered only specific but rare type of faculty members helpful to learn something from, those who are “yaradıcı olasan və müəllim olasan” [creative teacher]. Several participants mentioned conferences, workshops where they had also learned from peers and colleagues. Learning from colleagues informally is a common practice among nearly all HEIs chosen for this study: those who do not have such convenience search for other alternatives consequently.

Almost all of the respondents acknowledge the role of teaching in their lifelong learning. Learning as a part of teaching does not start in the class but moreover when faculty members explore new readings, prepare lecture and presentations and further at class. Some used key terms helping to understand how the process develops: Ms.Aliakberli mentions “fikir mübadiləsi”[idea exchange], Mr.Geraybeyli refers motivational side: “stimul yaradır” [creates stimulus], Ms.Sanjarli provides examples such as, “daha çox təhlil edərək öyrənirik” [we learn by making analysis]. When the audience present perspectives, discuss and swap ideas, analyse point of views, the class becomes productive to faculty members as well. Difference in generation can also be good opportunity to learn. Mr.Isazada explained how generation difference benefits her learning as follows:

Tədris edə-edə özüm də paralel öyrənirəm. Tələbələrə də həmişə deyirəm ki, yalnız mən sizi öyrətmirəm də elə nüanslar var ki, indi onlar cavandılar texnologiyalar ilə tanışdılar

onlar da mənə öyrədir sözün düzü, paralel olaraq nəşə öyrənirik və çalışırıq nəşə edək. [ While teaching in parallel I am also learning. I tell all the time to students that I am not only teaching there are some aspects, currently they are young, acquainted with technology, they also teach me, to tell the truth. We learn something and try to do something in parallel.]

Mr.Akhunzada, Ms.Eminbayli and Ms.Halima had also supported the same view with their personal experience which allows to say that faculty appreciate learning in the process of teaching. Mr.Sherifzada and Mr.Abbaszada differentiates active and passive audiences in terms of impact on their learning and preparation:

Auditoriyadan auditoriyaya dəyişir, elə auditoriya varki müəllimlərin məşhur bir sözü var da auditoriya yaxşı olduğu zaman müəllim özünü yeni şeylər öyrənməyə məcbur hiss edir. [It changes from audience to audience, there is a famous teacher saying: when the audience is good the teacher feels obliged to learn new things.]

Mr.Sherifzada states how students stimulate his thinking which stimulates learning process as well:

Bizim bəzi gruplarımızda biraz tənbellik var amma elə gruplar var ki onlar doğurdan da çox çevikdirlər. Məsələn elə nüanslar tapırlar ki, artıq o məni düşündürür və mən onun cavabını çalışıram ki növbəti dərslərdən birində daha geniş şəkildə onlara çatdırım.[There is laziness in some groups, but there are certain groups which are indeed very quick. For instance, they find certain aspects which make me think and I try to give the answer in an expanded form in one of following classes.]

Data suggest that students' motivation to learn can stimulate faculty to work and involve in lifelong learning more. However, passive attitude towards classes may affect faculty's desire to learn as well.

Overall, informal learning specifically, self-study is a popular phenomenon since faculty spend most of their time by searching for right information for lecture and presentation and it restricts the content they study. Self-study is duty of job more than being preference at times. However, those who have strong intrinsic motivation and time, learn things different from their speciality. Teaching itself is good opportunity to learn by interacting students, seeing analysis from various point of view and questions drawn forces to

learn more. Also, many faculty members have benefitted assistance of colleagues as informal learning, yet some searches for other sources when such help lacks.

**Barriers to learning.** Study also explored the participants' experiences with lifelong leanings. This includes a discussion of possible barriers to learning. This section is the longest part as participants shared a lot of factors inhibiting faculty members involvement in learning. Such factors range from personal to institutional related factors. Certain barriers are unique to specific individuals or HEIs, however, the rest of inhibiting factors are common among most of the participants.

*Figure 1. Factors inhibiting faculty's learning*

<b><i>Factors inhibiting faculty's learning</i></b>
- <i>Age</i>
- <i>Physical endurance</i>
- <i>Lack of time</i>
- <i>Lack of financial support</i>
- <i>Lack of institutional support</i>
- <i>Lack of intrinsic motivation</i>
- <i>Lack of technical resource</i>
- <i>Workload</i>
- <i>Trust</i>
- <i>Criticism</i>

One of the common barriers is workload of faculty members where being overloaded or general schedule of the instructor does not allow any further time to engage in professional development trainings. Ms.Meryem expresses her strong desire to learn a foreign language which may contribute her further development; however, workload and schedule does not allow to acquire it:

Mən ömürboyu istəmişəm dil öyrənirəm. Bəli, ingilis dili öyrənmək istəyirəm, ancaq mən onu əldə edə bilmirəm. Çünki bu mənim iş elə qurulub ki də məsəl üçün bu semestr mən haçan gedə bilərdim o kursa? Hər gün yeddinin yarısından mən burda olmalıyam, 10-a 20 dəqiqə işləmişəm qədər. Hər gün, 6-bazar istisna. Həmin o dərsləri tədris etmək üçün mən hər gün onları hazırlamalıyam da, tələbənin qabağına çıxıram mən. Ona görə ümumiyyətlə mən o kurslara da gedə bilmirdim. [I have always wanted to learn a foreign language. Yeah, I want to learn English language, but I cannot acquire it.

Because of structure of my work, for instance, how could I attend at that course? I have to be here from 6:70 am until 10:20 pm every day. Except Saturday and Sunday. I must prepare those classes to be able to teach, I am in front of the students So, because of that, I could not go those sessions.]

Hectic work schedule is a barrier to comprehend a foreign language which is part of multilingualism competence in lifelong learning concept. Mr.Tahmasib indicated how he also suffered from the problem of being overloaded and appealed for institutional support to deal with this barrier:

Biz universitet müəllimiyiksə, universitet konkret yəni müəllimin dərs yükünü düşünməlidir. Bir müəllimin davamlı olaraq düzdü çabalayırsa məsəlçün, bu o demək deyil ki biz 1000 dənə işi həll etməliyik. Düşünün ki, qaçırım hansısa treyninqləri götürməliyəm, tələbəni düşünməliyəm, qiymətlər düşünməliyəm..nəyi düşünməliyəm? Bu əlbəttə sosial həyat da var işin digər faktoru. [If we are faculty members, university should think of workload of the faculty members. If we keep trying to get everything right, it does not imply that we should figure out 1000 things. Suppose I am in rush to take certain trainings, think about students, grades...what else do I have to think about? Of course, social life is the other aspect.]

Apart from workload, Ms.Eminbayli and Ms.Maryam had also stated lack of time as one of the barriers of learning for faculty members. When the whole time is dedicated to preparation and teaching, less time is left to engage in professional development according to these participants. Ms.Isazada mentioned the role of psychological endurance, financial support and time as inhibiting factors altogether: “Məndə biraz çətinlik vaxt baxımından sonra biraz yoruluram fiziki çatdırmaq olmur belə”[ In my case the barrier is in terms of time, and I get tired a little, it is not possible to stand physically in this way.] Being overwhelmed by workload affects lifelong learning of faculty negatively, as they physically and mentally cannot endure. According to Mr.Akhunzada, who relates lifelong learning mostly to elderly people, age is also another barrier due to decline in cognition and physical condition:

I am not a specialist in this field, but probably your learning skills are getting worse and worse. Right? It's much more difficult for you in terms of cognition, in terms of perception. You wear eyeglasses, everything is not so comfortable to learn when you are getting older and older but of course, if you have motivation we can do.

Despite of challenging factors Mr.Akhunzda mentioned power of motivation to pursue lifelong learning in elderly people. On the other hand, lack of financial support and technical resources are among common inhibiting factors as well. Ms.Burla, Ms.Burla, Ms.Isazda and Mr.Safizda indicated that in terms of technical resource the university they work is not well-developed, it affects quality of research and classes negatively. Ms.Burla explains how necessary a laboratory for her research is:

Mənim ixtisasım sırf laboratoriya şəraitində olmalıdır. Biz bir çox prosesləri demək olar ki beynimizdə imagination ilə ...burda bunu bunun üstünə tokduk, burdan bunu aldıq..internetdən hazır baxırıq ki, məsələn bu məhsulun bu məhsul ilə qarşımı bizə hansı nəticələr verə bilər. [My speciality must be explored specially in a laboratory. We do this process only in our brains with imagination. Like we added this substance to that substance and got that... or look at results of mixtures on internet to predict.]

Mr.Safizada indicated impact of good technical support for learning and such shortages concern him as well:

Inkişaf etmək üçün özünüz bilirsiniz ki yaxşı şərait olmalıdır, yaxşı avadanlıq olmalıdır. Düzdü indi komputerlər meydana gəlib o şərait biraz, o komputerlər bizə çox kömək olur. Amma yaxşı olar ki məsələn yeni icad olunan cihazlar olsun, qurğular olsun. O biraz bizim universitetdə zəifdir. Məsələn, neçə illər bundan qabaq elektron mikroskoplar icad olunub, hələ bu il indi bizim universitetə bunlardan biri gəlib çıxmaq ərafəsindədir. [For improvement, you know, good condition and good equipment is a must. It is true that nowadays computers have emerged, computers assist us a lot. But it would be good to have newly invented devices, equipment. Our university is a little weak on that side. For example, microscope was invented many years ago, but we are going to receive one of them to our university now.]

In terms of up-to-date infrastructure opportunities are quite restricted for faculty to engage in research and learn. Furthermore, certain conferences and trainings are not affordable for faculty members since the price is too high, therefore, when the institution do not support faculty financially their involvement in lifelong learning in such settings decreases. Ms.Halima made note of institutional support to deal with financial difficulties of faculty:

Bəzən özüm öz xərclərim ibiraz qısıltlayıb etmişəm yəni düşünürəm ki təhsildə mütləq müəllimin inkişafı üçün əlavə xərc də verilməlidir. Məsələn, ancaq bilinməlidir ki hara xərclənir bu, onun inkişafı üçün...Məsələn mənə deyirlər ki, müəllimə IELTS var? uşaqlar sual verir...IELTS-i mən iki illik vaxtı var, bir illik, onu mən 300-400-600 manatı verməliyəm ki alım, təki o tələbə məndən soruşanda deyim var. Əgər univeristet mənim

üçün bu şəraiti yaratsa, 600 manat ödəsə, mən gedib onu da verərəm, yəni qorxu ondan deyil. [ Sometimes I was economical to my expenses to be able to do, so I think there should definitely be additional investment on faculty development in education. However, it should be known where this investment is paid for...for the sake of improvement. For instance, I am asked “Have you got IELTS?” by students. Duration of IELTS is one to two years, I should pay 300-400-600 manats to get it, only if to say yes when a student asks. If the university device such condition and pay 600 manats, I would take it, the reason is not that I am afraid.]

Apart from personal attempt to cut down expenses, institutional support would ease their access to sources to acquire up-to date knowledge and skills. Referring to financial difficulties Ms.Sanjarli stated that taking financial responsibility alone demotivates faculty to engage in lifelong learning opportunities:

Mən bir müəllim olaraq bir konfrsanda iştirak etmək istəyirəmsə bunun maliyyə tərəfini ya özüm təşkil etməliyəm yadaki hansısa bir müəssisəyə özüm müraciət etməliyəm..onun da razılığı hansı əsasla olacaq sual altındadır. Mən bunun maliyyə tərəfini fikirləşirəm birinci olaraq. [ As a teacher, if I want to conduct a conference, I should organize its financial side myself or should apply some institution...to get the approval on what ground is under question. I am thinking of its financial aspect initially.]

Ms.Aliakbarli and Mr.Tahmasibli had also referred to the crucial role of institution in handling with such barriers. While saying institutional support, it does not cover financial, but provision of more opportunities is also meant. Ms.Sanjarli considers centralized support stronger since it can assure quality of professional development precisely:

Elmi müəssisələrdə, universitetlərdə, ali təhsil müəssisələrində müəllimlərin təkmilləşmə kurslarına çox ehtiyacı var. Amma təəssüflər olsun ki, bu həyata keçirilmir. Bir müəllimin özünü təkmilləşdirməsi fərdidir dediyim kimi bu dövlətin həyata keçirdiyi programlardan çox çox zəif qalır. [Generally, educational institutions, HEIs, there is a strong need for the professional development of faculty members. Nevertheless, unfortunately, it is not conducted. Self-development of a faculty stands at individual level; it is too weak compared to programs arranged by state.]

Existence of certain quality control bodies would encourage faculty to attend professional development opportunities more. Ms.Sanjarli also suggested rewarding, grading and increase in salary as stimulators to engage faculty members to pursue lifelong learning. On the other hand, based on my own notes and observation several individuals were satisfied with the institutional support. Both Ms.Isazada and Ms.Adila supported the role of their HEIs in

persuading to attend in different trainings. Institutional policy overweighs intrinsic motivation of faculty as well, as in case of Ms.Adile who gives such example: “Bəlkə də özümdən asılı olsaydı heç qoşulmazdım, amma bu bizim universitetin bir siyasətidir”[Maybe, if it was not up to me, I would not attend but it is our institutional policy.]

The data suggests that faculty members face many different barriers in learning process. The exemplified inhibiting factors occur in different learning settings including trainings, seminars, conferences and self-study. Workload, being overloaded, physical endurance are among the most argued factors which causes lack of time. Apart from certain personal factors, many of barriers are believed to be solved with the help of financial, technical and institutional support.

**Views on formal and non-formal learning.** I grouped participants experience with lifelong learning based on nature of learning settings. In this section discussion of formal learning settings meant educational institutions where participants had acquired “adult basic education programs” in different levels of higher education (e.g., degrees) (Merriam& Bierma, 2014, p.16) and non-formal learning discussions covered "all workplace training and educational programs” which are “short-term” and “voluntary” (Merriam& Bierma, 2014, p.17).

Participants were asked questions on the role of formal and non-formal learning in their lives and impact on personal-professional development. Perceptions on the role of formal and non-formal learning were varying, depending on age and previous experience some opted for learning in non-formal settings while a group of respondents appreciated formal, structured learning. Depending on personal preference sometimes a faculty member consider self-study (informal learning) as the only productive way. For Mr.Sherifzada writing a book is much more fruitful rather than all forementioned learning examples: “Yazıb, kitab şəklində paylaşmaq daha üstündür nəinki o treyninqlər”[Writing and releasing as a book is superior to

those trainings.] Depending on content and organization of the training that view may change.

Discussion of formal learning process mostly covered concerns on how the procedure in formal education affects learning of faculty. According to Ms.Sanjarli the time allocated to formal education in master's and PhD degree should be reduced since it causes further problems and affects negatively to faculty perceptions:

Əgər doğurdan da bilik səviyyəsini ölçmək istəyiriksə onu iki səviyyədə də bakalavr və magistr ...magistr daha da təkmilləşdirərək elmi dərəcəni tətbiq etmək olar nəinki belə uzun illər, insanın ömrü gedir. Baxırsan ki, gəlir 60-70 yaşına bu insan çalışır ki elmlər doktoru olsun, sonra professor. Ona da böyük şərtlər qoyurlar...bəzən suni maneələr də qoyurlar heç elmə aid olmayan əngəllər qoyurlar, yaxud uzun növbələrdə gözləməlidir. Mən bunun tərəfdarı deyiləm, bu prosesin. [If we really want to measure level of knowledge, we can do on two levels: bachelors and masters.. By advancing master's level, it is possible to apply a scientific degree than such lengthy periods, life depletes. You see someone reaches the age of 60-70 but still strives to be doctor then professor. Very big requirements are set ...sometimes feigned barriers, obstacles that are not relate to science are assigned or you have to wait for turn for a long time. I am not supporter of this procedure.]

Prolonged formal education period causes wasting time on unnecessary barriers rather than being productive. Mr.Tahmasib had also found duration of formal education lengthy and suggests reduction:

Bakalavrın o qədər olmaması lazımdır, 3 il edilməsi, 2 il 2 il yarım edilməsi lazımdır ki tələbə bunu öyrənsin. [ Bachelor's degree must not be that long, for students to learn it, it has to be 3 years, or 2 years or 2 years and a half.]

Some participants compare PhD degree requirements with HEIs of foreign countries and weighs good and bad sides. These participants were prone to touch the factors which caused problem to graduate. According to Mr.Tahmasib a foreign language requirement should not be a must in Azerbaijan since it is not practiced in abroad:

Əlavə olaraq da başqa bir şey, phd ilə bağlı...phd əslində bizdə yaxşı cəhəti dərs olmamasıdır.Amma pis cəhəti çoxlu fərqli imtahanları olmasıdır deyilənə görə hələ qarşılaşmamışam. Birdə universitetlə birbaşa sorğu ilə phd-yə qəbul edə bilsələr özləri lazımı; namizədi çox rahatlıqla qəbul edə bilərlər. İngilis Azərbaycna dilini bilmirsə phd-dən məzun ola bilmir ki? Bilir əlbəttə. Azərbaycanlı da ingilis dili bilmədən phd-dən məzun olmağı bacarmalıdır. [ In addition, one thing regarding to PhD...one of the good sides of PhD in our country is that sessions do not exist. However, downside is,

well, it is said I have not faced yet, there are lots of examinations. One more thing, if universities independently could admit for PhD via questioning, they would so easily receive relevant candidates. Cannot a British student graduate from PhD without knowing Azerbaijani? Of course, he can. So, an Azerbaijani also has to be graduate of PhD without knowing the English language.]

The role of degrees gained in formal education is symbolic and while giving examples of helpful sources, participants tend to mention self-study or other learning opportunities they attended. Ms.Halima stated that in her experience trainings, workshops she attended taught more knowledge rather than formal education degrees:

Mənə görə belə də yalnız universitetdə hansısa bir mövqe tutmaq üçün lazımlı bir şeydir. Ümumiyyətlə belə mənim üçün əgər öyrənən adam varsa ...məsələn mən dosentlik almışam, mən dosentlik aldığımdan mənə belə deyim sadəcə dərəcə verib. Mən dərəcə almadığım daha başqa şeylər etmişəm, məsələn kurslara qoşulmuşam və s. mənə daha çox şey öyrədib. Eee..o dərəcələr də lazımdır hardasa müəyyən dərəcədə də seçilməyin üçün filan üçün formallıqdır. Bir var yerində sayırsan bir də var hansısa bir pilləni keçməlisən. Əgər şansın varsa, savadın varsa yol açıqdır keçməyində heç bir nöqsan görmürəm. [ In my view, it is necessary only for holding some positions at university. Overall, for me if there is a learner...for example, I obtained associate professor degree however, it has given me solely a degree. But I have done many other things which did not give me degree for instance, enrolling courses but they taught me more things. Degrees are needed formally to make a difference or for other things to some extent. Either you make progress or stay in the same level. The way is open, if you have opportunity, knowledge I do not see anything wrong with it.]

For those who are in growth mindset, degrees are helpful but not the only source of knowledge. It is believed that if faculty want to explore and learn they can acquire knowledge regardless of the diploma they hold. Mr.Sherifzada does not see formal education diplomas necessary to learn and develop but just formality:

Bu eləbil ki bir dekorasiyadır, bir bəzəkdir. Yəni deyirlər ki bu doktorant..mən doktor olmasaydım yəni PhD-im olmasaydım kimsə yuxardan aşağı baxa bilərdi ki bu heç doktor deyil. Amma yox əslində, mənə elə gəlir ki, özünüz yaxşı bilirsiniz ki o yazılan əsərə görə professorluq verilir elə deyilmi? Yəqin ki heç doktorluğa da ehtiyac yoxdur. Bu bizdə mənə elə gəlir ki artıqdır, bu vaxt itkisidir. [It is like a decoration, adornment. It is said doctors...if I were not PhD someone would look down on me, like 'he is not even a doctor'. But actually not. It seems to me, as you know, you are given professorship for your written works, are not you? Perhaps, there is no need for being doctor. For me it is excess, waste of time.]

Mr.Tahmasib, Mr.Geraybayli, Ms.Burla and Ms.Halima were highly appreciating non-formal education, several participants mentioned their active attendance in trainings,

exchange programs with the support of HEIs. For these faculties, training, workshops play crucial role to learn and advance knowledge and skills. Several participants who were very satisfied with the content and benefits of less structural learning shared their certificates for appreciation or certificates for attendance, one of the participants shared faculty scholar medal given for demonstrated excellence throughout academic career. Certificates were given from local authorities mostly, yet there were some documents acknowledged attendance in exchange programs in abroad Contributions of local and international trainings, programs were highlighted. Mr.Geraybayli mentions that less structural environment, flexibility of setting as motivating factor:

Əlavə motivasiya verir də yəni biri var formal dərs mühitində məcbursan qayıb yazılır bəs, ama informal odur ki, sən rahat şəkildə gəlirsən və ya gecikirsən. Sual verə də bilərsən, verməyə də bilərsən heç kim səni orda qiymət yazmır bir şey eləmir. [It gives additional motivation, in formal education you have to attend, there is an absence mark but in non-formal you can come easily or be late. You may ask a question or not, no one puts mark or do something.]

However, others showed a little sceptic view on such learning type compared to formal education. Formal education cannot be ignored in all situations, Mr.Akhunzada considers underestimation of formal education diplomas as bad example:

So, it is ..it is absolutely must. Yes, yeah, I know that there is strong trend in the West, again, West, that people don't need to get high education. People don't go to universities in the West. It's a serious trend. It's a bad example. Coming from Steve Jobs, late Steve Jobs and from current not Elon Musk, Microsoft founder, one of the founders, Bill Gates, yes.

For Mr.Akhunzada, exceptional cases should not be a reason to question the role of formal education. Ms.Sanjarli had also differentiated formal education to other learning settings due to personal preference:

Qeyri-formal treyninq, seminar, kurslar, konfransları 2-ci dərəcəli hesab edirəm. Mən elə düşünürəm, yəni onlar olar əlbəttə ki amma 1-ci dərəcəli deyil mənim üçün daha çox formal olaraq biliklərə yiyələnmək, əldə etmək daha vacibdir. Əlbəttə ki, əgər zaman, fiziki olaraq insan bunu çatdıra bilirsə, imkan varsa kurslarla treyninqlərlərlə bunları daha da genişləndirə bilər. [I consider non-formal trainings, seminars, courses, conferences as secondary. Well, it is possible of course, but for me it is not primary source...for me acquiring knowledge through structural ways is more important. Of

course, if time, physical condition allows, if they can catch up, trainings, courses could also expand these.]

Specifically, for those who aims to be a faculty member receiving formal education and required degree is crucial. Ms.Banu, Mr.Geraybayli and Ms.Sanjarli exemplified research they conducted as a part of their formal learning. Mr.Abbaszada highlighted the role of formal education diploma specifically in academic career, and Mr.Safizada considered formal education diplomas as factor motivating and stimulating to be more responsible.

Generally, faculty members are not satisfied with features formal education, particularly PhD degree in HEIs of Azerbaijan and expects certain changes to ease the process. Most of the concerns is connected the length and structural nature of formal education which make learning process time consuming. Therefore, although participants had gone through formal education procedure formally which is a must for employment, participants are in favour of short workshops, trainings, exchange programs or other informal learning processes.

## **4.2 Summary**

The given data presented perspectives on lifelong learning concept in many respects. Initially faculties understanding of learning and afterwards lifelong learning was provided. Definition of lifelong learning are categorised under several themes; a) lifelong learning as duty of academicians b) pleasure due to personal interest and c) concept devised to learn skills and make career change. All of the respondents are conscious of the significance of lifelong learning yet benefits and role of learning in personal and professional life could not be fully justified with evidence. Overall, teaching process takes up huge part of faculty's learning since analysis, discussions within classes broaden faculty's horizons. Data suggested that participants spend most of the time to get ready the sessions they teach which sometimes deprives them to learn new skills and information. Informal learning is the most preferred

type of learning among faculty since while learning in other settings (formal or non-formal) financial, physical, technical, institutional shortages hinder faculty lifelong learning. Additionally, lengthy and structural nature of formal education make it less desirable way for faculty to be up to date, though some argue about it due to its importance in academic career. Faculty members in HEIs of Azerbaijan expect institutional support for faculty development.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This inquiry aims to explore lifelong learning in Azerbaijan through faculty's understanding of the concept and faculty's experience with learning in different settings. The findings section presented above provides relevant data upon faculty perspectives on lifelong learning concept in several respects. Emerged findings overlapped with existing knowledge on lifelong learning discussed in the literature review, yet there were certain culturally specific factors that differ. Owing to the first research question, faculty members' understanding of lifelong learning can be developed under three themes. Study showed that most of the faculty members in Azerbaijan perceive concept of lifelong learning as mandatory part of academic life which ties well with previous study results (Konakman & Yelken, 2014). In accordance with other studies (Haseski & Odabasi, 2016; Laal, 2011) for some lifelong learning is a lifestyle which springs from desire to learn and create all the lifelong, whereas for small minority lifelong learning is basically acquisition of proper skills for survival. Individuals acknowledge the necessity of learning in a continuing way (Haseski & Odabasi, 2016; Jarvis, 2004), so do faculty members of HEIs of Azerbaijan regardless of the gender, age and experience.

The data suggests that informal learning specifically, doing self –study is a widespread phenomenon among faculty members of Azerbaijan. The motive for such preference is connected with self-direction concept of adult learning where learners do not endure intervention of others in learning process (Goode, 2007; Knowles et al., 2005). It is interesting to note that class preparation and creating presentation accounts for most of self-study process among many faculty members in Azerbaijan and it is not a common theme in literature. Learning for such restricted purposes can exclude meaning making. As adult learning theory suggests, learners should be conscious of what the process of learning can

bring to their lives in terms of progress and fulfilment of needs (Hammond, 2004; Knowles et al., 2005).

Unlike the other studies, participants did not comprehensively cover positive outcomes of lifelong learning in personal and professional lives, except mention of confidence (Karakoc, 2021), employment, network (Babos et al., 2015; Hammond, 2004; Smith, 2019), and travelling.

Faculty members interaction of learning in less structural environments consists of attendance in exchange programs, trainings and conferences as well. Provision of such opportunities to enable faculty development has been proved to be fruitful practice (Alkarzon, 2016; Silverman, 2022) in literature, some of the respondents in this study shared similar view with examples. Previous studies report that mutual informal exchange of ideas among faculty members outweighs workshops that faculty attended (Smith, 2019) and similar patterns are found in this inquiry. According to Johnson and Majewska (2022), the reason behind that attitude is non-formal education's proneness to be structural to some extent.

Findings suggested that only several participants (faculty) had intrinsic motivation to learn without request of institution. Scholars indicated that motivation positively impacts engaging participants lifelong learning voluntarily (Ayvaz-Tuncel, 2018). Certain barriers discussed below can also be reason why motivation lacks.

Regardless of the setting, there are constant barriers negatively influencing faculty involvement in learning. Inhibiting factors found in this inquiry including, lack of time, workload, financial deficiency and institutional support are consistent with existing literature (Aghayeva, 2019; Ayvaz-Tuncel, 2018, Hursen, 2013).

As regard to formal education, apart from the barriers discussed above respondents shared certain factors such as, length, requirements and structure negatively influence faculty perceptions on formal learning, specifically in local PhD degree programs. Some of suggested concerns (such as, time related and structural factors) on particularly PhD requirements in Azerbaijan overlaps findings of one study done in Texas (Hwang et al., 2015). However, a local literature reporting similar findings had not been found. Participants' responses imply that certain formalities in the process of acquiring degrees (formal education) limits learning (Johnson & Majewska, 2022). According to Mcguire and Gubbins (2010), old-fashioned design of formal learning led it to recession. Furthermore, faculty belonging to technical disciplinary background indicated that lack of basic devices affected conducted research's quality. Similar concerns on infrastructure shortages were found in studies conducted in Brazil (Souza et al., 2020), Iran (Tabatabaei, 2022) and Nigeria (Shinkafi, 2020). It has been scholarly validated that provision of high-quality coaching, trainings on inquiry and supervisions can advance PhD completion (Spronken-Smith et al., 2017).

## **5.1 Conclusion**

The analysis defined three directions of faculty 's understanding of lifelong learning: obligation, way of living life and skill development for various purposes. The data showed that faculty in most cases learn while getting prepared for the classes they teach, yet some can advance skill and knowledge through other ways. Audience and colleagues also account for certain part of informal learning as a source. Generally, certain factors such as, formalities and strict rules of structural learning make faculty reluctant to participate actively. The respondents shared merits of lifelong learning such as, network, workplace, confidence and travelling. Barriers connected to time, lack of infrastructure and duties of profession restrict faculty engagement to lifelong learning in other settings. However, faculty perceive HEIs of

Azerbaijan as powerful source to vanish mentioned deficiencies and advance faculty's experience with lifelong learning.

## CHAPTER 6: IMPLICATIONS

### **6.1 Implications for research**

Considering limitations of this study (presented above) analysis leaves a door for further investigation of lifelong learning in the context of Azerbaijan. I suggest that to gain more comprehensive data, in the further stage lifelong learning competences of faculty in HEIs in Azerbaijan are researched with the help of quantitative study design. In the initial stage, competences on learning, use of digital tools and foreign language can be prioritized to see how well these skills are helpful for personal and professional development of faculty. This study outlines faculty's overall learning experience and understanding of the phenomenon, however quality of learning can better be analysed with the help of aforementioned study above.

Based on participants shared concerns on PhD degree procedure and requirements (in the discussion of formal learning) in Azerbaijan, further qualitative study can better focus on PhD candidates' challenges and perceptions to acquire in-depth knowledge.

### **6.2 Implications for practice**

Almost for every barrier discussed above faculty expect support of institution which is proved to be effective to achieve learning culture within HEIs (Konokman & Yelken, 2014; Haseski & Odabasi, 2016; Haseski & Odabasi, 2017). Therefore, most of the actions suggested in this section can be taken on behalf of HEIs in Azerbaijan. Based on views of faculty members, use of financial incentives by HEIs would be quite helpful to engage participants self and professional development. The experience of faculty members can go beyond class preparation if they are supported financially. Apart from that, faculty members can be provided with assistants to cope with overwhelming workload, which could enable faculty to invest time learning in different settings. According to Jarvis (2004), getting used

to long working hours caused individuals fail to manage leisure time productively; nevertheless, proper use and management of technological advances and policies can assist. Training on time management and productive working should be primary content provided by HEIs to support faculty.

HEIs of Azerbaijan also need to raise awareness of the concept of lifelong learning and its various promises for the advantage of personal and professional development via seminars. Being informed on the concept and its benefits can affect the view which sees lifelong learning as an obligation of teaching profession. Finally, an internal policy within HEIs can strengthen the engagement with learning and numbers of opportunities for the use of faculty.

## APPENDIX A

### **Interview protocol**

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Afag Ismayilzada

Interviewee: Ms. Interviewee /Mr. Interviewee

Position of Interviewee:

I am a second-year masters' student at ADA University who conducts research in HEIs of Azerbaijan. The purpose of study is to explore Azerbaijani faculty members' experience and understanding of lifelong learning concept. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be given a consent form which assures confidentiality of insights shared by you. Participation will be on voluntarily basis; you will not be forced to share anything unless you are willing to. Names of participants will be replaced with pseudonyms determined by researcher. Interview will take about 60 minutes and will be recorded with your permission.

The interviewee reads and signs the consent form.

The audio-recorder starts to record.

#### **Questions:**

- Could you please talk about your academic background?
- Why did you want to be the field of education? Why did you want to work in HEI?
- How do you understand learning? What is your learning philosophy?
- What is the role of teaching in your learning?
- I am exploring lifelong learning in Azerbaijan. How do you understand lifelong learning?
- What is the role of lifelong learning in your personal/professional development?
- What are your plans for learning? (e.g., research, new skills, knowledge)
- What examples of formal learning do you know?
- What is the role of formal learning in your personal/professional development?

- What is your experience with learning in non-formal and informal settings?
- What is the role of non-formal and informal education in your personal/professional development?
- What sort of barriers did you encounter while searching, enrolling different learning opportunities?
- Could please describe learning opportunities (e.g., personal/professional development trainings) existing in the HEIs you work
- Do you have any question or request on the topic of discussion?

**The researcher thanked the respondent for accepting invitation and participations**

### **Müsahibə protokolu**

#### **Suallar:**

- Zəhmət olmasa akademik keçmişiniz barədə danışa bilərsiniz?
- Niyə təhsil sahəsində olmaq istəyirdiniz? Niyə ali təhsil müəssisəsində işləmək istədiniz?
- Sizin anlayışınızda öyrənmə nədir? Öyrənmə fəlsəfəniz var?
- Dərs tədris etməyin sizin öyrənmənizdəki rolu nədir?
- Mən Azərbaycanda ömürboyu öyrənmə konsepsiyasını araşdırıram. Ömürboyu öyrənməni necə başa düşürsünüz?
- Şəxsi/peşəkar həyatınızda ömürboyu öyrənmənin rolu nədir?
- Nələri öyrənməyi planlaşdırırsınız? (tədqiqat, yeni bacarıq, bilik)
- Hansı formal (öyrənmə) nümunələrini bilirsiniz?
- Sizin inkişafınızda formal öyrənmənin rolu nə idi?
- Qeyri-formal və informal şəraitlərdə öyrənmə təcrübəniz necədir?
- Şəxsi/peşəkar həyatınızda qeyri-formal və informal öyrənmənin rolu nə olub?
- Öyrənmə zamanı hansı tipli çətinliklərlə (əngəllərlə) qarşılaşmısınız?
- Zəhmət olmasa hazırda işlədiyiniz ali təhsil müəssisəsində mövcud öyrənmə (məsələn, şəxsi/peşəkar özünü inkişaf treyninqləri) təsvir edin
- Müzakirə mövzusu ilə bağlı əlavə sualınız var?

Tədqiqatçı dəvəti qəbul etdiyinə və iştirak etdiyinə görə respondentə təşəkkür edir.

## APPENDIX B

### Consent Form

Lifelong Learning through the lens of faculty

Dear interviewee,

I am Afaq Ismayilzada and I am second year student of Education Management program in ADA University. My topic of study is called “Lifelong learning through the lens of faculty” which aims to explore faculty members experience and understanding of lifelong learning. Your participation in this study will help to acquire knowledge on faculty perceptions and experience with lifelong learning in the context of Azerbaijan. The interview will last around 60 minutes and you will be asked to share some documents at the end of the interview. This consent form is presented to make you sure about certain conditions and rights you hold throughout the interview.

Please be informed that your participation in this interview is completely on voluntarily basis. Topic of study does not cause any harm or risk to participants. However, in case of any change in your decision, you may withdraw from interview. Additionally, if you do not feel convenient, you may reject to answer any question. To enable privacy of the interviewee, your names will be altered with pseudonyms and your identity will only be known by the researcher. The results of the study will not be attributed to the names of participants by any means. You may raise any question before and during the interview and get acquainted with the results of the study.

Thank you for participation!

By signing this document, you agree with the terms given above and allow record of your answers with audio recorder for research purposes.

Name/surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Müsahibədə iştirak üçün razılıq sənədi

Fakultənin obyektivində ömürboyu öyrənmə

Hörmətli müsahib,

Mən-Afaq İsmayilzadə ADA Universitetnin Təhsilin İdarə Edilməsi fakultəsinin ikinci kurs tələbəsiyəm. Tədqiqat mövzüm universitet müəllimlərini ömürboyu öyrənmə ilə bağlı anlayışlarını və təcrübəsini araşdırmaq məqsədi daşıyan “Fakultə obyektivində ömürboyu öyrənmə” adlanır. Sizin bu tədqiqat işində iştirakınız Azərbaycan kontekstində ömürboyu öyrənmə mövzusunda universitet müəllimlərinin fikirlərini və təcrübəsini əldə etməyə kömək olacaq. Müsahibə təxminən 60 dəqiqə davam edəcək və müsahibənin sonunda sizdən bəzi sənədləri paylaşmağınız xahiş olunacaq. Bu razılıq forması müsahibə prosesi boyunca sahib olduğunuz müəyyən şərtlər və hüquqlar üzrə sizi təmin etmək üçün təqdim edilmişdir.

Nəzərinizə çatdıraq ki, bu tədqiqatda iştirakınız tamamilə könüllüdür. Tədqiqat mövzusu iştirakçıları hər hansı bir risk və ya narahatlığa məruz qoymur. Lakin, qərarınızda hər hansı dəyişiklik olarsa, müsahibədən imtina edə bilərsiniz. Bundan əlavə, özünüzü rahat hiss etmədiyiniz təqdirdə, istənilən suala cavab verməkdən imtina edə bilərsiniz. Müsahibin məxfiliyini təmin etmək üçün adınız təxəllüslərlə dəyişdiriləcək və şəxsiyyətinizi yalnız tədqiqatçı biləcək. Tədqiqatın nəticələri heç bir formada iştirakçıların adı ilə əlaqələndirilməyəcək. Müsahibədən əvvəl və ya müsahibə zamanı istənilən sualı yönləndirə və tədqiqatın nəticələri ilə tanış ola bilərsiniz.

İştirakınız üçün təşəkkür edirik!

Bu sənədi imzalayaraq siz yuxarıda göstərilən şərtlərlə razılırsınız və cavablarınızın tədqiqat məqsədi ilə audiyozu ilə yazılmasına icazə verirsiniz.

Ad soyad:

Tarix:

İmza: \_\_\_\_\_

Tədqiqatçının adı: Afaq İsmayilzadə, ADA Universitetinin magistr tələbəsi

İmza: \_\_\_\_\_

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