

DOES DEMOGRAPHICS MATTER IN LIFELONG LEARNING? A RESEARCH CONTEXT OF VIETNAM

LE THAI PHONG¹, NGUYEN THU THUY², NGUYEN THI HANH³, DAU BAO NGOC⁴,

¹Lecturer, Faculty of Business Administration, Foreign Trade University, Vietnam. T., ^{2,3}Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam.,

⁴Student of Advance Program, K57, ID: 1812280063, Faculty of Business Administration, Foreign Trade University.

Email: lethai phong@ftu.edu.vn

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Lifelong learning (LLL) has lately attracted significant attention from the society in general, universities and corporations in particular. For the case of Vietnam, the Government has pledged to create a Lifelong Learning Society. A number of initiatives have been launched to help achieve this goal, including the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Centre for Lifelong Learning (SEAMEO CELLL) and "Book Day", a day dedicated to encouraging reading and raising awareness of its importance in the development of knowledge and skills. Lifelong learning (LLL) programs are also being adopted at libraries, museums, cultural centers, and clubs in Vietnam. In addition to the effort done by the Vietnamese government, a number of non-governmental, non-profit organizations and educational institutions have started to take action to encourage literacy and lifelong learning. It can be said that education and educational reforms are always the top concern of each country. This study is to investigate about lifelong learning of community with 4 aspects: (1) Learning Competencies; (2) Learning Contexts; (3) Learning Contents and (4) Learning Goals as well as examining the differences in the opinion about lifelong learning between categorical variables. The second purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between an individual's perspective on lifelong learning and their actual learning capacity, as well as learning motive.

Methods: The paper deploys primary data collecting from 270 people in different sectors and different occupations. Standard statistical techniques such as mean analysis, OLS multivariable analysis are used to find the answer for proposed hypotheses.

Results: Using a sample of 270 respondents varying in age, gender, and employment status, the authors found that there are differences on the attitudes towards lifelong learning, the motivations and skills needed for this "journey".

Conclusion: From the findings, researchers proposed recommendations to promoting and fostering lifelong learning of community with the case of Vietnam.

Keywords: Lifelong learning, learning society, lifelong learning of community, Vietnam.

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INTRODUCTION

The knowledge-based economy, new technologies, the increasing speed of technological development, and globalization all have an impact on the population's need to upgrade their skills and competencies. As our societies progress toward becoming "knowledge societies," there is an increasing demand for people who are well-prepared for lifelong learning (LLL). For example, European Union member states agreed that developing and implementing coherent and comprehensive LLL strategies is a key educational aim [1]. Lifelong learning is an extensive educational approach receiving much attention not only by European Union but also by the rest of the world.

Effective educational possibilities for lifelong learning must be promoted in the multiple learning environments, including home, school, employment, and the greater political community. Insights obtained from these unique situations must be transformed into wide and successful learning theories, creative and intelligent systems, practices, and evaluations in a variety of professional fields. A lifelong learning strategy allows the finest aspects of school, community, home, and career learning to be combined. In addition, increasing levels of education have been identified as a crucial driver of long-term economic growth in conventional economic research. Individually, employees become more productive as a result of the information and skills they gain via education and training. Education of high quality can increase a population's knowledge and

skills beyond what conventional or informal institutions can achieve. For business, educated and highly trained people promote productivity increases and technical development by innovating or imitating procedures created elsewhere. At the societal level, education expansion contributes to the development of social and institutional capital, which has a significant impact on the investment climate and growth; it also contributes to the development of participatory societies, the strengthening of the rule of law, and the promotion of good governance.

Lifelong learning is an ambiguous concept, used in a variety of ways and has a complex history within the field of education [2]. Dunn (2003) revealed that lifelong learning (LLL) includes the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that people develop as a result of their daily lives [3]. European Communities (2000) defined lifelong learning as "all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence" [1]. Similarly, OECD (1996) states that "lifelong learning is far broader than the provision of second-chance education and training for adults. It is based on the view that everyone should be able, motivated, and actively encouraged to learn throughout life. This view of learning embraces individual and social development of all kinds and in all settings: formally, in schools, vocational, tertiary and adult education institutions; and non-formally, at home, at work and in the community" [4]. Or to put

it simply: "LLL is a development after formal education: the continuing development of knowledge and skills that people experience after formal education and throughout their lives" [5]. All in all, despite different ways LLL has been conceptualized, they mostly share a basic notion, which is people's participation in deliberate learning throughout their lives for personal and professional fulfillment, as well as to enhance their life quality.

It not only enhances social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development, but also self-sustainability as well as competitiveness and employability [6]. To relate this definition to concepts of educational and psychological science, core determinants for LLL were defined in accordance with the relevant literature [7], [8], [9]]. These determinants are independent of specific contextual features (e.g., specific academic subjects, age brackets): (1) the enduring motivation and appreciation for education and learning and (2) the competences for self-regulated learning (SRL). Furthermore, (3) social and (4) cognitive competences were identified as accompanying determinants [10]. Thus, when seeking to improve LLL, these four determinants should be systematically addressed.

LLL also assists individuals in achieving other objectives, such as being more involved in civic life, living a more sustainable lifestyle, and improving their health and well-being. It is also beneficial to society since it reduces crime and promotes communal activities [3]. As a result of the globalization and the growth of the fast-changing knowledge economy, people must upgrade their skills throughout their adult lives to cope with modern living, both at work and at private lives. In recent years, there is an increasingly important basic skill in ever-changing technological universe: ability to learn and adapt to the needed new skills and training [11].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

As not much data is available about the correlation between an individual's perception of lifelong learning and their learning capacity, we conducted an exploratory study using a short online questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part contains questions about people's basic information and their educational background. Questions in the second part address quite directly people's opinion on LLL, their learning habits, where knowledge is obtained, and skills supplement needed.

The sample consists of 270 people from under 18 to over 55 years old living in Vietnam. Respondents were selected by using stratified random sampling techniques. The questionnaire was distributed via various channels: email, google form, and paper-based interview (in case the respondents have little knowledge on ICT).

In this article, we use stratified random sampling, then divide the population (all respondents) into groups according to the criteria of demographic factors such as age, gender, working experience, nature of work, highest degree. Sample size estimated n= 270. The questionnaire uses a 5-level Likert scale developed by Rensis Likert in 1932, with measuring convention being: "1: Totally disagree; 2: disagree; 3: Neutral; 4: Agree; 5: Strongly agree." We interpret the content and encode the scale of the variables as follows: QD1 represents the extent to which a respondent recognizes the necessity of LLL. The variables are borrowed from European Commission (2003) [12]:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics was employed to describe the researched variables.

Respondents' backgrounds

The survey was conducted in Vietnam with respondents from diverse educational backgrounds. Undergraduate students accounted for the largest proportion with 102 survey samples, accounting for 37.8%. The lowest rate was PhD students with merely 3%. High school students also accounted for a large proportion of 24.8%, followed by college and master students with 14.8% and 13% respectively (Table 2).

Table 1: Variable development

NH: When knowledge is obtained		Source
NH1	When I am at home	European Commission, 2003
NH2	When I am with somebody else	
NH3	When I am having fun	
NH4	When I am working	
NH5	When I am at the local library/ information center	
NH6	When I am abroad	
NH7	When I am participating in corporate or political affairs	
NH8	When I attend training courses which are not organized by my company	
NH9	When I am at university/ institution	
NH10	When my company cooperates with a university	
MT: Purpose of LLL		
MT1	To maintain and improve current work	
MT2	To lead better life	
MT3	To get promotion	
MT4	To learn a new language	
MT5	To start-up my own company	
MT6	To get more knowledge based on interests	
MT7	To open the door for other career opportunities	
MT8	To get a certificate	
MT9	To get a raise	
MT10	To prepare for retirement	
MT11	To gain new knowledge in a certain field	
MT12	To return to labor market	
NL: Learning abilities		
NL1	I like to create my own study plan	
NL2	TI think a problem can have many solutions	
NL3	I can detect and fix problems as they arise	
NL4	I feel uncomfortable in a volatile environment	
NL5	I can see positivity when others don't	
NL6	I often think about learning and how to improve it	
NL7	I feel I can take the initiative in learning	
NL8	I think I can assess my learning	
NL9	I am a person who loves to learn	
NL10	I always try to connect knowledge with practice	
NL11	I know where to find information when I need it	
NL12	It is my responsibility to put what I have learned into practice	
NL13	When I learn something new, I always try to see the big picture instead of the minor details	

Table 2: Degree distribution of the sample

Highest degree	Frequency	Percent
High school	67	24.8
Vocational	18	6.7
College	40	14.8
University	102	37.8
Master	35	13.0
PhD	8	3.0
Total	270	100.0

Table 3 shows that the age of the respondents in the present study covered from under 18 to over 55 years old with mean value of 3.19 and standard deviation of 1,539. The most common age group was 18 to 25 years old, accounting for 33% of the total sample collected. Majority of the respondents were 45 to 55 years old (25.2%) and 38.5% of them were students. Employees working under enterprises contract accounted for a lower rate of 21.9%, followed by the unemployed and government employees with the lowest proportions (13% and 12.6%).

Table 3: Age distribution of the sample

Age (years old)	Frequency	Percent
<18	37	13,7
18-25	89	33
25-35	19	7
35-45	47	17,4
45-55	68	25,2
>55	10	3,7
Total	270	100.0

Pupils and students are the most interviewed subjects with 104 answers, accounting for 38.5%. Followed by members of enterprises with 59 votes, equivalent to 21.9%. Government related, farmer and unemployed had similar votes in 12-14% of the total sample (Table 4).

Table 4: Professionals distribution of the sample

Nature of work	Frequency	Percent
Pupil, student	104	38,5
Government – related	34	12,6
Business organization	59	21,9
Farmer	38	14,1
Unemployed	25	13
Total	270	100.0

Lifelong learning related variables

Table 5 illustrates the perception of people about the importance of lifelong learning. As can be seen, LLL is significant and extremely important in roughly 62% of the data using descriptive statistics. The number of people holding a neutral opinion towards LLL is 65, accounting for 24.1% of all responses. Meanwhile, only 14% believe LLL is unimportant.

The purpose of the LLL is summarized in the following table, along with descriptive statistics. Particularly, MT3, MT5, MT10, and MT12 are less identified as LLL objectives when the mean values of the variables are all less than 3. Maintaining and improving current

work (MT1) is identified as a goal of LLL with a mean of 3.96 (Table 6).

Table 5: People perception on the importance of lifelong learning

QD1	Frequency	Percent
1	16	5,9
2	22	8,1
3	65	24,1
4	98	36,3
5	69	25,6
Total	270	100.0

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of the variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std, Deviation
MT1	270	2	5	3,96	0,844
MT2	269	2	5	3,78	0,975
MT3	270	1	4	2,66	1,06
MT4	270	1	5	3,2	1,071
MT5	270	1	5	2,54	0,729
MT6	270	1	5	3,72	0,893
MT7	270	2	5	2,8	0,923
MT8	270	1	5	3,73	1,02
MT9	270	1	5	3,29	1,162
MT10	270	1	4	2,64	0,952
MT11	270	1	5	3,86	1,024
MT12	270	1	5	2,57	1,094
Valid N (list wise)	269				

Correlations between variables

For further analysis, we use Pearson correlation analysis to examine the association among the variables.

QD1 is significantly correlated with MT1, MT3, MT4, MT5, MT6, MT7, MT10 and MT12. According to the Pearson correlation test results, people who value LLL use it to maintain and improve their current job (rMT1=0.26); to get promoted (rMT3=0.201); to learn a new foreign language (rMT4=0.134); to gain more knowledge based on their interests (rMT6=0,183); and to prepare for retirement (rMT12=0.187). Meanwhile, starting up one's own company; opening up other career opportunities and preparing for retirement do not serve LLL's purpose as data of MT5, MT7 and MT10 are negatively correlated with QD1.

Table 7: Relationship between importance of LLL and people's motivation

QD1	pearson correlation	,260**	,-054	,201**	,134*	-,354**	,183**	-,437**	,026	,115	,187**	,113	-,302**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,376	,001	,028	,000	,003	,000	,675	,058	,002	,063	,000	
N		270	269	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270

** .Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) * .Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Learning competence is also correlated with attitudes towards lifelong learning. Specifically, through the Pearson test, QD1 correlates with most types of learning ability, except NL5, NL9, NL10, and NL12 at 5% significance level. The results show that all

types of competencies are positively correlated with QD1, which proves that the more a person thinks lifelong learning is important, the better he or she will have a good learning capacity.

Table 8: Regression between the importance of LLL and people's motivation

		QD	NL												
		1	NL1	NL2	NL3	NL4	NL5	NL6	NL7	NL8	NL9	NL10	NL11	NL12	NL13
QD	pearson correlation	1	,308*	,238*	,206*	,189*	-	,270*	,284*	,312*	-	-	,239*		
1	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,001	,002	,710	,000	,000	,000	,947	,063	,000	,569	,000
	N	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270

The respondents' university - business cooperation status has a positive relationship with LLL since the regression result between

the dependent variable QD1 and the independent variable NH10 (knowledge obtained from the university - business linkage) as

follows: Alpha < 0.05 shows that the regression results are statistically significant. Beta = 0.417 shows that for each unit of knowledge the participants gain from the relationship between university and company

(NH10), the importance of LLL (QD1) will increase by 0.417 units. This also supports the university-company cooperation positively affects the LLL of people hypothesis.

Table 9: University-industry linkages and LLL learning

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (constant)	2,189	,207		10,560	,000
NH10	,392	,052	,417	7,510	,000

Demographic factors are also closely related to attitudes about LLL. Factors such as highest degree, age, working experience, gender, nature of work have been proved to affect LLL (NGUYEN, L., LUU, P. & HO, H., 2020). However, in this study, regression results show that only age and gender are statistically significant in the association with LLL. Specifically, participants of lower age group (Beta = -0.504) and female participants (Beta = -0.138) tend to value LLL more than other groups.

The difference among various groups

First, the authors perform test to justify that three observed variables are reliable to measure the construct "Point of view about the important of lifelong learning". The result from IBM SPSS show that the variables meet reliability criteria for measuring the construct with Cronbach's alpha > 0.5 (0.668). Then, the researchers performed ANOVA to compare the means of the construct between demographic categories, below are some notable results:

Between gender

Table 10: Group Statistics

QD	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	male	132	3.9975	.69614	.06082
	female	138	3.5193	1.04328	.08881

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances						
QD	Equal variances assumed	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
		48.059	.000	4.398	267	.000	.47813	.10873

The result from Table 10 suggests that there is a difference in point of view considering the importance of lifelong learning between male and female with a confidence level of 99%. Specifically, the analysis show that male considered lifelong learning is an important aspect while female also feel that it is important but not as much as male (supported by the mean value of male is greater than mean value of female by 0.47

Between age groups

The analysis reveals that the younger the respondent, the more they acknowledged the importance of lifelong learning in one's life. In specific, the group age consists of under 18 years old respondent consider lifelong learning is much more important than the other groups. Meanwhile, the group of people above 55 years old do not find too much importance in lifelong learning.

Between occupation (nature of the respondent's work)

Inspecting the differences between people with different working nature, the authors realized that among the five surveyed occupations, farmer and unemployed people do not recognize lifelong learning as an important aspect of their life. It is supported by the below analysis result.

The mean value of "lifelong learning importance" construct of the farmer and the unemployed are much lower than the pupil, student group as well as government-related group and business organization group.

The relation between the point of view about the skills' importance and the need to improve it.

The result suggests that 86.61% of the respondent agree that skills related to computer, Internet and digital technologies are the most important in the society. In association with the previous figure, about 4.46% of the people wanted to improve their capabilities at that field which indicates that Vietnamese people acknowledge the

important of those ability in digital era and already equipped themselves with the appropriate knowledge.

The two next skills that is viewed important by Vietnamese people are (1) skills related to learning with 84.39% agree that it is important and (2) problem detecting and solving skill with 82.16% people agreed about its importance.

Learning context

The top three context where respondents learn new knowledge or improve their understanding are (1) classes/courses conducted at college/academy/university, (2) participation in work related to the Union at work, and (3) participation in group learning. In addition, each of the demographic groups have different preferable learning context.

Learning competencies

According to the findings, the top three competencies that respondents choosing are self-direction, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study implied that people's attitude towards LLL have a significant correlation with their learning competence as well as their age and gender. Moreover, a positive trend is also witnessed in the link between opinion on LLL and university – business learning opportunity. Based on those results, we came up with a few methods to foster LLL in Vietnam community. One of them is enhancing the motive leading to LLL, in this case is maintaining and improving current work. Businesses may want to consider creating continuous training programs as a way to encourage their employees to become adaptive lifelong learners. In addition, promoting the relationship between businesses and universities is essential as it is a potential learning opportunity for most employees.

It is necessary that the state, government and ministries and related institutions create a suitable environment to promote university-business cooperation by implementing policies that regulate university-business cooperation, such as: promote the socialization of higher education; encourage companies to invest in technological research and development collaboration with universities; create a special mechanism for highly specialized training disciplines in order to strengthen the role of companies in training when collaborating with universities.

For universities, it is crucial to develop clear guidelines and regulations on the mechanism of cooperation with companies. Schools should also facilitate and encourage scientists to actively participate in research, development and technology transfer related to social needs. Involve good company executives and scientists in the university's training and research activities, while ensuring that a team of professors with an entrepreneurial spirit are encouraged to participate in collaborations with enterprises.

Last but not least, corporate executives need to be aware of the importance of selecting and hiring the right human resources, which is very important for the future of companies. You will see partnering with universities as strategic in order to generate business opportunities and serve the long-term development goals of the company itself. Therefore, companies should establish internal guidelines to promote and build a creative culture, and to encourage R&D activities. There are mechanisms and guidelines to support startups and encourage university researchers to participate in projects and share academic knowledge with companies, etc.

Technology should be incorporated into and used to augment the teaching process at the teaching process at universities, colleges and other educational institutions. Teaching resources, including videos, handouts, and other materials, should be available digitally. Lecturers can help educate and facilitate students on effective and useful ways to improve their digital literacy competency through self-regulated learning strategies. In addition, the authorities should invest more money in building educational and training institutions to create the best and most diverse context for the community to learn.

Coordination among authorities, governments, education and training institutions, and business organizations should be strengthened to support and create conditions for people to study. Dialogues with businesses to give the task of improving the education and skills of employees into the labor agreement should be organized, whereby businesses create specific conditions in terms of time and money, and at the same time encourage employees to participate study and improve skills. Enterprises need to have activities to select and award scholarships (partial or full) to employees achieve high achievements. In addition, government, schools and corporates academic support scholarships should also be awarded to high-achieving or disadvantaged students in order to motivate them for lifelong learning.

The organization of propaganda activities to create motivation for the community, raising their awareness about the benefits of lifelong learning, specially emphasis on 3 key points: lifelong learning helps maintain and better the current job, lifelong learning makes personal life better, and lifelong learning brings great achievements. For each individual in society, it is necessary to equip themselves with the necessary skills and competencies for effective lifelong learning. The ability to develop your own study plan is believed to be the most important for effective learning. Problem-solving is also considered as the factor of paramount importance in lifelong learning.

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