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INTRODUCTION

“Knowledge gained through experience is far superior and many times more useful than bookish knowledge”

Mahatma Gandhi

1.1 Background of the study

The twenty first century has witnessed many changes in its entire aspects due to the impact of globalisation, liberalisation and commercialisation. Education as a wide ranging faculty of knowledge is also undergoing tremendous changes with respect to the teaching-learning process. The whole aims and objectives of education are being altered in accordance with this digital age. The role of a teacher has been transformed to that of a mentor. The learner is trying hard to keep in pace with the complexities of the world. In this emerging scenario of teaching-learning process, purposeful and goal oriented activities along with deep rooted studies must be conducted to make the teaching learning process more effective and meaningful. Teachers must provide better inputs for learning in a systematic as well as scientific manner.

Educational psychologists usually define learning as a desirable change in the individual caused by better experiences. Experiences act as the most powerful and valuable tool for making envitable changes in the
minds of the learners. The judicious, systematic and effective use of meaningful experiences will create great impact on the whole teaching-learning process. Experiential learning which gives importance to experiences, with its wide range of perspectives can play a vital role in the entire aspects of education. Experimentation of such better inputs can make better quality based outcomes.

1.2 Commerce education

Commerce is a subject which is very close to society. The prosperity of a nation depends on its economic stability and commercial supremacy. As a branch of knowledge, Commerce imparts experiences of business world at large in all its manifestations. It prepares the learners for personally fruitful and socially desirable carriers in the field of business also. Majority of the skills acquired by learning commerce have harmonious relationship with the life skills of the individuals. So acquiring competence in the skills of commerce provides mastery in life skills.

Chessman (1904) defined commerce education as “that form of instruction that both directly and indirectly prepared the businessman in his calling”. It has emerged as one of the most potential pursuits in the wake of industrialisation. Most of the education commissions constituted in the post independence India to explore higher education have undoubtedly held that the commerce education is primarily meant for providing students, in-
depth knowledge of different functional areas of business so as to prepare them required by the community for the purpose of trade, commerce and industry. To make a person economically sufficient and commercially vigilant is another major component of learning commerce. In these circumstances the quality of commerce education must be improved to a greater level. It demands more care, extra attention and better adaptation of learning activities for achieving the targeted goals of commerce education.

1.3 Experiential learning

Personal experience gives life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts. At the same time it also provides a concrete, publicly shared reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process (Kolb, 1984). Experience alone is not, however, a sufficient condition for learning. Experiences also need to be processed consciously by reflecting on them. Experiential learning is a learning process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). It is learning through reflection or doing. It is a theory that defines the cognitive processes of learning and it asserts the importance of critical reflection in learning. “Experiential learning is participative, interactive and applied. It allows contact with environment, and exposure to processes that are highly variable and uncertain. It involves the whole-person; learning takes place on the affective and
behavioural dimensions as well as the cognitive dimension” (Gentry, 1991,).

Experiential learning suggests a renewed look at the way teaching and learning get organised in the classrooms. It suggests that the learner must occupy the centre stages of classroom activity and not the teacher. It engages students in inter-disciplinary exploration, collaborative activity, field based opportunities, reflection and self-examination. The Experiential learning cycle is especially useful for skill training because most of its techniques are designed to involve the learners in practising the skill. The experiential model helps pupil assume responsibility for their own learning because it asks them to reflect on their experience, draw conclusions, and identify applications.

In this type of learning, learners ground the lessons in their actual environment by considering the question of what can or should be done differently as a result of the learning experience. Through experiential learning every learner in the class should get proper attention and care and there is enough provision for better involvement of everyone in the class. Moreover, the selection and gradation of better experiences will strengthen the co-operative and collaborative aspects of learning.
1.4 Leadership quality

Leadership is a behaviour that involves working with others and on tasks. This is based on the perspective that a leader is a person who is able to communicate well, engage in critical thinking, lead groups in problem solving and planning, and able to structure goals and objectives for the group (Feldhausen & Pleiss, 1994). Majority of the traditional learning methods at higher secondary level are not providing provisions for training leadership quality among students. To some extent, many students will have the experience of having a leadership role in their daily lives through interactions with families, peers, and community organisations. A teacher can effectively provide systematic training in leadership quality by making students interact with their peers in a miniature society like school through the implementation of effective teaching-learning strategies.

Leadership is both an outcome of and an action on behaviour, but the major influence on leadership is from personal experiences and self-evaluations. Both of these are used by individuals to achieve new levels of personal leadership (Boccia & Ackerman, 1997; Feldhausen & Pleiss, 1994). At present the teaching of commerce at Higher Secondary level is merely transaction of the lessons. Students are not getting enough experience to develop their leadership quality. They should get
opportunity to experience and self evaluate so as to enhance their leadership quality. Adopting strategies based on Experiential learning in classrooms will provide a wide variety of learning experiences and opportunities for self evaluation to the learners and thereby boost their leadership quality.

The higher secondary stage is crucial in many ways. While the students in this age-group are passing through a critical phase of their lives – transition from adolescence to youth, they have to take important decisions concerning their future career by choosing suitable courses. Normally, only a small percentage of student population reaches this level. It is from amongst these that the eventual leadership emerges. The quality of these people depends on the foundation laid in early years especially at the higher secondary stage, the products of which provide the second or intermediate level of leadership in every walk of life (NCF, 2005). So an effort is made by the investigator to study the leadership quality among students.

1.5 Business interest

In this modern era, a developing country like India needs entrepreneurs who can contribute to GDP growth, capital formation and employment generation. Instead of opting white collar jobs one should be interested to start new business projects that can contribute to the welfare
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of the country. Business has significant effect on the standard of living and quality of life of people, and on the environment in which they live and which future generations will inherit (Ekanem, 2008). For that business interest must be developed in students from the higher secondary stage itself as at this stage they build up professional interests. It can be developed in them by giving them adequate experiences and opportunities through learning. Experiential learning is a way of learning with a wide range of scope. Unlimited possibilities exist in the way of Experiential learning. Hence a modest attempt is made to study the business interest of commerce students at higher secondary level.

1.6 Need and significance of the study

Indian marketing scenario is undergoing a phenomenal change over the last few years by the influence of globalisation as well as liberalisation policies. This is positively affecting the Indian economy also. To compliment this, human resources must be augmented. The future generation must be equipped to become more efficient global leaders, business men’s, economists, etc. for the economic welfare of a developing country like India.

There has been tremendous progress in the field of commerce education during the last years. Many innovative practices have taken place in this field. If commerce is not taught and learnt properly, it will
create a generation of misfits in today’s world. Though the curriculum faces frequent changes in its implementation, it is not so fruitful at times. The curriculum is enriched with different methods and approaches to impart knowledge but its productive utilisation is very limited. It is only because of the lack of prudence in its effectiveness. It can be overcome only through proper study and development of new strategies. The students must be provided with direct experience in learning which will enable them to make their learning more clear and understandable. Moreover the selection and gradation of better experiences can strengthen the co-operative and collaborative aspects of learning.

The participation of all learners in learning activities is a striking feature of a democratic classroom. Through Experiential learning, every child in the class should get proper attention and care and there is enough provision for better involvement of the last one in the class. Co-operative and Collaborative mood should be implemented in all progressive teaching learning endeavours. Such a way can develop better learning habits. In Experiential learning the selection and gradation of better experiences can strengthen the Co-operative and Collaborative aspects of learning. Experiential learning is really a brilliant attempt for knowledge construction. Social Constructivist Theories of Learning focuses group activities as a better technique for acquiring life skills. Hence the
investigator decided to adopt Experiential learning as a strategy to promote better experiences for commerce students.

Research studies show that experiential learning can create effective changes among learners also. Experiential learning is really a brilliant attempt for knowledge construction. It places the experience at the centre of the learning process and is based on the work of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2002). It is helpful for making better decisions and developing co-operation among the learners; decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, communication, interpersonal skills, self awareness, empathy and coping with stress. So the impact of Experiential learning in transacting the curriculum of commerce at higher secondary level is very relevant today.

A detailed investigation and analysis about the existing methods and strategies followed by commerce education revealed that studies utilising the benefits of experiential learning for enhancing leadership quality, business interest and achievement in commerce have not been reported so far especially in Kerala. So the researcher decided to develop a strategy based on the theoretical constructs of Experiential learning for promoting Leadership quality, Business interest and Achievement in commerce and to find out the effectiveness of the same. Hence a study is envisaged to develop a strategy based on Experiential learning for
enhancing the Leadership quality, Business interest and Achievement in commerce of students at Higher Secondary Level.

1.7 Statement of the problem

Learning is a process of changing the behaviour of a learner by providing suitable inputs. By receiving the inputs, a learner can achieve better changes in his attitudes and achievements. It is purely a mental process and the pace of this mental process is to be decided by the key factor ‘experience’. Thus Experiential learning strategy becomes one of the most important strategies for achieving better behavioural outcomes.

The present study has been undertaken with the objective of developing a strategy based on Experiential learning for enhancing the leadership quality, business interest and achievement in commerce of students at Higher Secondary Level. Hence the study is entitled “DEVELOPING A STRATEGY BASED ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING FOR ENHANCING LEADERSHIP QUALITIY, BUSINESS INTEREST AND ACHIEVEMENT IN COMMERCE OF STUDENTS AT HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL".
1.8 Operational definitions of the key terms

Developing

Developing means “grower larger or more advanced”. In this study the word “developing” means “preparing a strategy based on Experiential Learning for higher secondary commerce students”.

Strategies

Strategies are an inter-connected set of teaching behaviors designed to accomplish specific goals (Donald and Paul 1993).

Experiential Learning

It is a type of learning that can be described as practicing in a real situation, modeling appropriate behaviours and procedures, receiving appropriate feedback and reinforcement, and providing a means to apply knowledge in new situations (Cheek, Carter, & Randell, 1994).

Leadership Quality

Leadership quality is the ability by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organisation in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. Davies (1994) defines educational leadership as “that quality which evokes from co-workers their voluntary, active participation in assuming responsibilities which contribute to growth in relationships, attitudes and activities of the group.”
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Business Interest

“Business is an institution which produces goods and services demanded by people” Brown (1976). It means business is an institution that produces goods and services needed by society. If the demand is increased, the producer also will increase production. Business is a dynamic process that brings together technology, natural resources and human initiative in a constantly changing global environment. In this study, business interest can be defined as a sense of concern and curiosity about business.

Achievement in Commerce

“Academic achievement means, Knowledge attained or skills developed in the school subjects usually designed by test scores or by marks assigned by teachers or by both” (Good, 1973). For the present study, achievement in commerce is conceived as the total score that will be obtained by an individual in the test constructed and standardised by the investigator from four units of business studies (a topic in Commerce) of the selected unit.

Higher Secondary Level

This is the tertiary phase of formal system of education coming after the level of secondary education which belongs to standards XI and XII in the educational system which is recognised by Kerala state for providing
instruction and following the state curriculum now in force. In this study, the level of higher secondary education refers to standard XII commerce students following Kerala state syllabus.

1.9 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To develop a strategy based on Experiential learning for enhancing Leadership quality, Business interest and Achievement in Commerce of students at Higher Secondary Level.

2. To find out the leadership quality (total and component wise) of students taught through the developed strategy based on Experiential learning and the existing Activity oriented method.

3. To compare the Leadership quality (total and component wise) of students taught through the strategy based on Experiential learning and the existing Activity oriented method.

4. To find out the Business interest (total and component wise) of students taught through the developed strategy based on Experiential learning and the existing Activity oriented method.

5. To compare the Business interest (total and component wise) of students taught through the developed strategy based on Experiential learning and the existing Activity oriented method.
6. To find out the Achievement (total and objective wise) in Commerce of students taught through the developed strategy based on Experiential learning and the existing Activity oriented method.

7. To compare the Achievement (total and objective wise) in Commerce of students taught through the developed strategy based on Experiential learning and the existing Activity oriented method.

8. To assess the retention of Achievement in commerce, Leadership quality and Business interest of students taught through the developed strategy based on Experiential learning and existing Activity oriented method.

1.10 Hypotheses of the study

The following hypotheses were formulated for this study.

1. The Leadership quality (total and component wise) of students taught through the developed strategy based on Experiential learning is significantly higher than that of those taught through the existing Activity oriented method.

2. The Business Interest (total and component wise) of students taught through the developed strategy based on Experiential learning is significantly higher than that of those taught through the existing Activity oriented method.
3. The Achievement (total and objective wise) in commerce of students at Higher Secondary level taught through the developed strategy based on Experiential learning is significantly higher than that of those taught through the existing Activity oriented method.

4. The retention of Achievement in commerce, Leadership quality and Business interest of students taught through developed strategy based on Experiential learning is significantly higher than that of those taught through the existing Activity oriented method.

1.11 Methodology in brief

The present study was intended to develop a strategy based on Experiential learning for enhancing leadership quality, business interest and achievement in commerce of students at higher secondary level. Before developing the strategy the investigator analysed the present status of teaching commerce at higher secondary school level. For this, the investigator adopted Normative survey method. In order to find out the effect of the developed strategy, the investigator adopted Experimental method. The design selected was pre-test post-test non-equivalent group design (Best & Kahn, 2007).

The tools used were,

1. Questionnaire on the Present Status of teaching Commerce

2. Raven’s Standard Progressive Matrices
3. Lesson transcripts based on the Developed strategy based on Experiential Learning - Prepared by the investigator

4. Lesson transcripts based on existing Activity oriented method-Prepared by the investigator

5. Leadership Quality Scale - Prepared by the investigator

6. Business Interest Inventory - Prepared by the investigator

7. Achievement Test in Commerce - Prepared by the investigator

1.11.1 Sample selected for the Survey

For analysing the present status of teaching commerce, the investigator selected 100 Higher Secondary commerce teachers from four districts of Kerala selected through Random sampling method.

1.11.2 Sample selected for the Experiment

As business studies topics are included in the standard XII of Kerala state Higher Secondary Commerce Syllabus, the investigator selected the students of XII as the population of the study. From this, the investigator selected the sample through Stratified Random Sampling Method. The study was conducted on a final sample of 240 students in four divisions of standard XII of Govt. Boys H.S.S, Adoor, and S.N.V.H.S.S, Angadickal, Pathanamthitta District (two divisions from each school).
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From each school, one division was taught with lesson transcripts based on the developed strategy based on Experiential Learning and another division was taught with lesson transcripts based on the existing Activity oriented method.

Variables of the study

In the present study, Leadership quality, Business interest and Achievement in Commerce were the dependent variables. The independent variables of this study are, developed strategy based on Experiential learning and existing Activity oriented method.

Procedure Adopted for the Study

In the present study, the investigator conducted a preliminary survey to find out the present status of teaching Commerce at Secondary school level among 100 Commerce teachers at Higher Secondary level.

After comparing the previous Achievement in Commerce and General Mental Ability of students belonging to Standard XII, one division in each school was considered as experimental group and the other as control group. Before starting the experimental treatment, the investigator administered Leadership quality scale, Business interest inventory and Achievement test in Commerce as Pre-tests for both groups. Then the Experimental group was taught through the Developed strategy based on Experiential learning and the Control group through the existing Activity
oriented method. Lesson transcripts based on the selected units in Commerce were prepared and used for teaching in the two groups. The duration of each lesson was 40 minutes.

After the experimental treatment, the investigator administered the same Leadership quality scale, Business interest inventory and Achievement test in Commerce as Post-Tests for both groups. In order to understand the effect of the strategy in getting more retention on achievement, the same Achievement test in Commerce was again administered to both groups (delayed Post-test) about one month after the administration of the Post tests. The investigator tried to maintain similar conditions with regard to the time allotted, instructions given during the test etc. for all the groups. The response sheets were collected back and scored.

**Statistical Techniques used**

The scores obtained by the students in the Pre-test and Post-test were collected, tabulated and subjected to appropriate statistical techniques. The major statistical techniques used are ‘t’ test, ANOVA and ANCOVA.

**1.12 Scope of the study**

The study facilitates enhancing Leadership quality, Business interest and Achievement in Commerce students at higher secondary level. This
strategy helps to make commerce an interesting subject and develop Leadership quality and arouse Business interest in commerce. By using this strategy, teachers will be able to develop various skills among students. This strategy will help the teachers to give concrete, meaningful experiences to students for learning commerce. It is expected that the findings of the study will inspire teachers to adopt new innovative learning strategies in their classroom. The findings of the study will help curriculum planners, experts and school administers to introduce these types of innovative strategies for commerce learning. It is hoped that this strategy will be helpful for all those who are concerned with the field of commerce education. The present study aims at facilitating academic achievement in commerce, Leadership quality and Business interest of students at higher secondary level through the Experiential learning strategy. The same approach can be used at other levels-lower primary and secondary to assist sciences and language students. The study will throw light on learning difficulties of students taught through conventional activity oriented method. The Experiential learning strategy will improve the educational backwardness of those children. The findings of the study can bring light to the uses of organising orientation programes for teachers of commerce education. It will also provide useful information to experts, administrators and those who are concerned and interested in commerce education. This
result may act as an eye-opener which focuses on development of leadership and business interest through Experiential learning strategy.

It is hoped that the present study would highlight various problems and difficulties that are likely to be experienced by teachers in regular class rooms. The findings of the study help the teachers concerned to commerce education to develop a positive attitude towards Experiential learning. The findings of the study help to increase awareness of the strategy which needs joint attention of educators and curriculum planners of the country to develop the same. The findings of the study would be useful in providing guidelines to academicians and administrators to the existing traditional education and also to gear the training programmes to suit the requirements of commerce students in general classrooms. Designing materials based on Experiential learning is a complicated and time consuming process; but if prepared in a pedagogically sound way, it is able to offer quickly accessible information to commerce students in an interesting way. This will help to properly structure their schematic and conceptual knowledge that allow them to become better learners as well as problem solvers, within the confines set by the experimental design. All possible precautions have been taken to attain the highest degree of accuracy in the findings.
1.13 Limitations and Delimitations of the study

The important limitations and delimitations faced by the investigator during the study are:

1. Due to non-availability of adequate time, the study was confined to only two schools and the sample was reduced to students of four divisions of Standard XII.

2. The sample size and the duration of the study pose an important constraint for the study.

3. The content selected to the study is limited to four units of plus two Business Studies only.

4. The study was delimited to a sample of 240 higher secondary students from one district of Kerala.

5. Availability of two batches of students in commerce group is limited in government and aided higher secondary school.

6. Recognised institutions (Aided and Govt) affiliated to state syllabuses were selected for the study.

7. The study involves teaching through Experiential learning strategy and Activity oriented method, of students’ achievement, leadership quality and business interest, which need a lot of time and energy. Hence the investigator could not take more number of students for the study.
While acknowledging the above limitations and delimitations, it is expected that, the study would yield valid findings and substantial suggestions for educational improvement.

1.14 Organisation of the report

The report of the study is arranged in six chapters.

Chapter I

It presents an introduction of the study, need and significance of the study, statement of the problem, definition of key terms, objectives of the study and hypotheses of the study, methodology in brief, scope and limitation of the study.

Chapter II

This chapter presents the theoretical background of Experiential learning, Leadership quality and Business interest.

Chapter III

This chapter describes survey of related literature and studies pertaining to the area of the present study.

Chapter IV

This chapter describes the methodology of the study in detail, variables of the study, tools used, samples selected, procedure adopted in the experimentation, scoring and statistical techniques used for the study.
Chapter V

This chapter contains details of the statistical analysis and interpretation of data collected.

Chapter VI

This chapter gives a summary of procedures adopted, major findings of the study, the tenability of hypotheses followed by conclusions based on findings, educational implications of the study and suggestions for further research in this area.

The report is followed by a fairly exhaustive bibliography. The bibliography is followed by a series of Appendices pertaining to the study.