Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the most effective instrument to make citizens socially sensitive, responsible and forward looking. In a plural society, it is through broad secular education that values to promote national integration and harmony among all citizens and particularly, secular credentials can be fostered. It has been recognised that only through good education, people who will be committed to democratic consolidation and strengthening of unity and integrity of the country can be produced. Quality education will also provide the necessary momentum for economic progress and ensure better quality of life to people and to help bring about an acceptable level of social and economic equity in the country.

Education is one of the most important factors in a person’s life. Whatever be one’s background, with proper education, one can achieve many things that might not be possible otherwise.

According to the Secondary Education Commission (1953) “The present practice of mechanically applying the same methods to dull, average, as well as bright children is responsible for much of the ineffectiveness of the instructions given in schools”. According to Bloom (1971) “Each teacher begins a new term or course with the expectation that about a third of his students will adequately learn what he has to teach. He expects a third of his students to fail or just get by. Finally he expects another third to learn a good deal of what he has to teach but not enough to be regarded as good students. This set of expectations which fixes the academic goals of teacher and students, is the most wasteful and destructive
aspect of the present educational system. It reduces the aspiration of both the teachers and the students”.

It is realised that a progressive and comprehensive system of education is needed, in order to equip learners to face the challenges of the present day world. The values and perspectives that are envisioned by the constitution and which have also been identified at the national level like democracy, secularism and social equality remain significant components of the curriculum (Kerala Curriculum Framework, 2007). Cultivating values is possible through a wide range of experiences. The learner has to go through many experiences that give him/her a vision of social outlook.

In the light of this vision, Kerala has already started focussing its attention on quality education along with the effort of universalisation of education. The curriculum reform at the primary level and at the secondary level was initiated in Kerala in 2007 as part of quality education on the vision of education as a social process. The curriculum reform in Kerala has already reached the secondary level. As a result, the process of construction of knowledge has taken the centre stage. Kerala Curriculum Framework stressed on the need for inquiry-based learning. It was realised that learning should not be restricted to the classroom alone. Systematic planning and collective effort of teachers were recognised as an integral part of school culture. A continuous and comprehensive evaluation process was introduced. Also, it recognised the necessity of the collective effort of the society and its intervention in school activities. The Curriculum document stressed on an activity based, process oriented learning, and a liberal democratic learner-friendly approach and space for learners to engage in critical dialogue that would
lead to the overall development of the learner.

Here lies the importance of the teacher in the curriculum transaction process. The International Commission on Education for the 21st century stated that “improving the quality of education depends on first improving the recruitment, training, social status and conditions of work of teachers. They need the appropriate knowledge and skills, personal characteristics, professional prospects and motivation if they are to meet the expectation placed upon them (Delors et al. 1996).

Teachers are the main source of curriculum transaction and pedagogical aspects of curriculum. “Pedagogy can change people’s lives, it has a power to transform” (Leach and Moon, 2009). Pedagogy, it appears, is going to take centre stage in social and economic debates in the 21st century. Creating the conditions and means for successful and relevant learning is a prerequisite of freedom and democracy. Teachers should act as social engineers who set the learning issues in the right direction, by continuously inspiring the learners, asking questions and providing hints and explanations. Pedagogy is a collaborative, iterative process between teachers and learners and other members of the learning community. The involvement of parents and the community as a whole is vital in this knowledge economy. The ‘education for life’ that preoccupied the earlier generation is now being transformed into ‘education throughout life’, not just as a vague aspiration but as a social and economic necessity.

Any meaningful attempt to evolve a new strategy of learning – teaching will be of great help in promoting quality education. Constructivism and Critical
Pedagogy promotes higher order thinking skills, fosters self direction in learning and development of meta-cognitive skills, increases social and emotional skills and promotes collaborative interaction between students and teachers. The aims of education have to be in tune with the needs of the society. In the 21st century, society needs creative people, who take part actively in the production process. There is a dire need for social transformation towards achieving democracy. This can be achieved with the implementation of critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach in transacting curriculum in real classrooms.

Knowledge is not a finished product. It is a common good. It gets refined in every sharing. According to the Critical Pedagogy and Constructivist approach, Curriculum and Assessment are organised around the idea that a person in the habit of looking for answers to the following five questions, when presented with a novel situation will use his/her mind well.

1. How do you know what you know? (Evidence)
2. From whose point of view is this being presented? (Perspective)
3. How is this event or work connected to others? (Connections)
4. What if things were different? (Supposition)
5. Why is this important? (Relevance)

A person in the habit of asking these five questions is a thoughtful person (Apple and Beane, 2006).

Initiatives to make curriculum reforms and its implementation are highly essential at the higher secondary level, the terminal stage of school education.
Education at this level is diversified so as to form a foundation for those who go for higher studies and for those who opt for employment.

Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation factors and technological advancement have immensely influenced the field of commerce education. This has given a new dimension to this subject of study. E-commerce, E-finance, E-marketing, E-investment, E-banking, Paper less trading and E-governance has been gaining importance all over the world. Organisations are rethinking and re engineering their operations to tap the growing technological advancement. All these have necessitated a new set of skills, attitude, training and values to be imparted to the students to suit the requirements of the industry. Commerce education is considered as an umbrella for the development of areas such as Management, Accounting, Insurance, Banking, Business Law and Finance. The scope of the subject has been ever growing beyond the above mentioned avenues, since the opening of the economy.

To succeed and grow in this scenario of paradigm shift, the focus should be on the strategies to be adopted to meet the global challenges. To help live in knowledge economy and in imbibing the core values of life, a new methodology in teaching–learning system has to be adopted at the higher secondary level. This will assist commerce education to go beyond the horizon of the academics.

1.1 Criteria Behind the Selection of the Study

Education is the primary agent in the transformation towards sustainable development and in increasing the people’s capacities to transform their vision for society into reality. As part of universalising quality education, the Government
of India has launched prime policies and/or programmes from time to time. The National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) is one among them. A comprehensive appraisal of the existing educational scenario was made on the basis of a countrywide debate. NPE 1986 advocates the education for equality. Every child has a right to quality education.

The quality of education depends largely upon the quality of instruction provided in the classrooms. There should be a shift from ‘content’ to the ‘processes’ of learning. Teaching shall have to be geared to make students ‘learn how to learn’. Proper care should be taken to introduce new strategies and to evolve a technology of instruction which suits to the national needs. Instructional strategies that nourish the diversity of students and which help all students learn, should be ensured. Learning does not mean understanding. It implies change which forms the basic input for the construction of knowledge. Learning should relate to the child’s experiences of life which are directly linked to the problems faced by the society. The classrooms should provide spaces for discussions on the contradictions existing in society. They should act as places where such contradictions get re-created. There should be ample scope for the learners to reflect on the socially constructed knowledge from a critical perspective. Learning demands the development of higher order thinking skills, social skills and emotional skills. The study is based on the criterion that the perspective of critical pedagogy and constructivist approach provides for the natural development of the individual, connecting the individual to the society and ensuring the development of both the individual and the society. According to UNESCO (2002), constructivism has the following principles.
1. Learners build personal interpretation of the world based on experiences and interactions. Knowledge is embedded in the context in which it is used (authentic tasks in meaningful realistic settings).

2. Creating novel situation-specific understanding by assembling knowledge from diverse sources appropriate to the problems at hand (flexible use of knowledge).

3. Explicit curriculum on value education incorporating moral and spiritual values needs careful treatment at curriculum development stage as well as curriculum transaction stage.

These are important for the creation of a future society based on democratic values and social justice, a major objective of education.

1.2 Need and Significance of the Study

The advent of globalisation ensures only the survival of the fittest. The field of education is no exception to this. Education is a powerful tool for liberation. It enables liberation from one’s lethargy and from the prohibition imposed by traditions, superstitions and malpractices prevalent in the society. Even though globalisation has brought enormous development, it has thrown up serious issues in the field of education arising from the privatisation of education, the mushrooming of self finance institutions and the craze for market oriented courses. Globalisation has also exerted its influence on environment, health and resource management. Therefore, it is high time to equip the learners of today, to make a proper analysis of these issues and to critically reflect upon them, to make the learners capable of social commitment, and to enable them to be creative which would help in shaping a better tomorrow. It also deserves to equip the
learners to face the growing challenges in the complex world. This compels the learners, as well as teachers, to cope with the tremendous changes taking place in the realm of education. There is a dire need to redesign the learning strategies. The school should function as a social institution, which provides opportunities to parents and society, to interact easily. It should evolve as a resource centre of information and knowledge.

But the fact that learning has become a burden and stress on children is an evidence of a deep deterioration in educational aim and quality (NCF, 2005). This calls for a drastic shift throughout the nation, from the conventional approach to the learner centred approach through the principles of constructivism and critical pedagogy. Children grow up in their own social worlds. The social construction of knowledge has been an important principle in the sociocultural theory. In the constructivist setting, the learners have autonomy in their own learning, opportunities for peer collaboration and support, occasion for learner generated problems that drive the curriculum, time for self observation and evaluation and outlets for reflection. Autonomy encourages learners to construct their own knowledge and gain new perspectives through hand-on-experiences rather than follow prescribed information. This perspective recognises the teacher as primarily a facilitator of learning. The teacher tends to act as a guide, providing resources to the learner and enabling him/her to decide how to learn and why to learn.

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1. Connecting knowledge to life outside the school

2. Ensuring that learning shifts away from rote methods

3. Enriching the curriculum so that it goes beyond the textbook

4. Making examinations more flexible and interpreting them with classroom life

5. Nurturing an overriding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country.

Besides, while putting the child at the front seat, the National Curriculum Framework 2005 has recommended a constructivist approach in teaching and learning (for the construction of knowledge and fostering creativity, connecting knowledge across disciplinary boundaries for insightful construction of knowledge), providing learning experiences for developing critical perspectives on social issues (critical pedagogy), plurality of text books and other materials incorporating local knowledge mediated through constitutional values, scientific temper and principles. It also emphasises on group learning strategies and states that examination needs to be non-threatening, flexible and integrated with everyday classroom life. It also recommended a shift from content based testing to problem solving and competency based assessment, examination of shorter duration, flexible time limit, evaluation by peer and maintaining portfolio. Apple (1990) has highlighted how class, race, and gender inequalities work through schools in the content and organisation of the curriculum.

The National Curriculum Framework 2000 has made initial efforts to incorporate the theoretical approach of constructivism. The Constructivist approach provides the learners an opportunity to make a critical analysis of the
various concepts or experiences they gain from the Curriculum. The constructivist teacher follows no rigid prescription for successful teaching. He acts as a facilitator of meaning-making rather than a leader of all levels, adapts to a variety of contexts affecting schooling and is deeply involved in the processes related to the purpose of education.

An effort for the formulation of a comprehensive Curriculum focussing on the process of learning was initiated in Kerala from 1997 onwards and it reached only up to class X. As part of the introduction of grading system up to the higher secondary level, the Government implemented an activity based approach up to the higher secondary level. Only the pedagogy according to this approach has been fitted into the existing curriculum at the higher secondary level. There exist the following issues.

1. Curriculum has not been revised according to this approach.
2. Teachers were not convinced about this approach in its true sense
3. Examination based teaching, content load and time constraint

The pedagogy of teaching has been changed only at the higher secondary classes. So the teachers are not confident of using learner-oriented strategies for instruction. Teachers feel that the pedagogy implemented cannot be carried out without reducing the content. Therefore the outcome, which the curriculum makers expected, has only been partially achieved. The teachers are of the opinion that only the theoretical and ideological aspect of the approach has been incorporated. Training given by SCERT focussed only on the theoretical part. They need a try-out of the units to materialise the effectiveness of the pedagogy (SCERT, 2008).
At higher secondary classes training have yet to address the practicability of the new pedagogy. The activity-based approach was practised in the real classroom setting in such a way that the teacher dominated the classes with little group work among the learners. Teachers focus on transmission of textbook content instead of transaction of curriculum. Connecting knowledge to learners’ immediate environment or their active engagement in the process of learning is rarely visible. The assessment has no connection with the development of process skills. NCF 2005 has put forward a critical pedagogy together with constructivism for the purpose of achieving the needs of the present generation. The curriculum makers and researchers use a constructivist approach together with a critical pedagogy to learning in order to meet the present and future needs of the society. The relevance of this study lies here. The Investigator is confident that it can be effectively implemented with the same content load and existing time limit through effective classroom transaction of some units. The Investigator feels that a constructivist approach when combined with critical pedagogy is one of the best approaches which make learning effective. Constructivism promotes discovery learning, experiential learning, learning through problem solving, collaborative learning, learning through social interactions and so on. Critical pedagogy provides the learners opportunity to enhance critical thinking skills, critical consciousness, critical questioning and curiosity; integrating personal development with knowledge acquisition to create new ways of being and interacting with society and the world and to act as an agent of social change. Both should go hand in hand so that knowledge can be constructed through jointly conducted reflexive and dialogical practices among students, teachers, the subject matter and so on.
We live in a highly complex, polarised and unequal world. The quality of life depends purely on the kind of education provided. The Investigator feels that, the application of critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach in learning can definitely equip students to a certain extent to face the enormous challenges taking place. The study concentrates on this approach which recognises the diverse groups of learners with diverse needs. It includes the pedagogical processes which encourage the processes of critical self reflection, thinking, questioning, exploring, interacting, creating, connecting and discovering. Such processes are directly linked to the notion of empowerment in which an individual learns to create, appropriate and share knowledge, tools and techniques in order to change and improve the quality of his/her life. These processes are needed to be used for empowering communities so that learning communities can be established. The link between the local, the national and the global would need to be constantly made so that the local realities can be perceived and understood in the light of changes taking place at the national and international level.

The Investigator has therefore decided to study the effectiveness of critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach in learning commerce in real classroom situations at the higher secondary level. The study will definitely help the curriculum makers while revising the curriculum of the higher secondary classes. It will benefit the teachers in developing confidence to attempt a variety of learning strategies which in turn would help the pupils to develop critical thinking and construct knowledge by themselves. The study will contribute suggestions for improving quality of education and to make the learners social beings. Hence the present study.
1.3 Statement of the Problem

The State of Kerala has adopted an activity based approach at the higher secondary level as part of the reforms in the National Curriculum Framework 2000. This approach is being followed in a didactic manner with little effort of group working strategies at the higher secondary level. Curriculum internalisation, its transaction, evaluation and similar processes as part of classroom practices need to be fine-tuned in accordance with the constructivist learning approach and critical pedagogy. This study is an attempt to explore the maximum possibilities for the effective implementation of critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach in the subject area in full-fledged manner. Therefore the study is entitled as ‘Effectiveness of Critical Pedagogy Combined with Constructivist Approach in Learning Commerce at the Higher Secondary Level’.

1.4 Definition of the Key Terms

Effectiveness

Effectiveness means the effect of an experimental factor under controlled conditions, that is, with other factors held constant. It is the change, result or outcome produced by an action (Good, 1973).

Operational Definition

In the present study, by the word effectiveness, the Investigator means that the intended result of the application of critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach in learning commerce at higher secondary level.
**Critical Pedagogy**

Critical pedagogy is a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and social and material relationships of the wider community, society and nation state (McLaren, 1998).

**Operational Definition**

In this study, by the term critical pedagogy the Investigator means that it is a dialogic exchange between teachers and students, where teachers’ role is to provide pedagogic space by using their personal passion, knowledge and expertise to pose problems in order to help learners analyse their own experiences and thus arrive at a critical understanding of their reality. It deals with the ‘why’ aspect of learning.

**Constructivist Approach**

Constructivist approach is an approach which provides an insight into how the pedagogical world operates. This approach maintains that nothing represents a neutral perspective; nothing exists before consciousness shapes it into something perceptible (Kinchenoe, 2005).

**Operational Definition**

In this study, by the term constructivist approach the Investigator means that it is an approach through which transaction of curriculum take place so that the learners’ immediate environment is easily connected to the knowledge that is to be constructed. It deals with the ‘how’ aspect of learning.
Critical Pedagogy Combined with Constructivist Approach

Operational Definition

In this study, by the term critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach the Investigator means that it is an approach whereby the features of both constructivism and critical pedagogy were applied together for making meaningful learning. Both should go hand in hand in such a way that constructivism helps promote discovery learning, experiential learning, collaborative learning, co-operative learning and learning through problem solving and critical pedagogy helps to enhance critical thinking, critical questioning and helps the learners to act as social change agents.

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study.

1. Critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach is more effective than activity based approach in enhancing the achievement of learners of commerce at the higher secondary level.

2. Critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach is more effective than activity based approach in enhancing the retention level of learners of commerce at the higher secondary level.

3. Critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach is more effective than activity based approach in enhancing the social and emotional skills of learners of commerce at the higher secondary level.

4. Critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach is more effective than activity based approach in enhancing the achievement of learners of commerce at the higher secondary level in all sub-samples taken by gender and locale.
Critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach is more effective than activity based approach in enhancing the retention level of learners of commerce at the higher secondary level in all sub-samples taken by gender and locale.

Critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach is more effective than activity based approach in enhancing the social and emotional skills of learners of commerce at the higher secondary level in all sub-samples taken by gender and locale.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

1. To compare the effect of critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach with that of activity based approach in enhancing the achievement of learners of commerce at the higher secondary level.

2. To compare the effect of critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach with that of activity based approach in enhancing the retention level of learners of commerce at the higher secondary level.

3. To compare the effect of critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach with that of activity based approach in enhancing the social and emotional skills of learners of commerce at the higher secondary level.

4. To compare the effect of critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach with that of activity based approach in enhancing the achievement of learners of commerce at the higher secondary level in all sub-samples taken by gender and locale.

5. To compare the effect of critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach with that of activity based approach in enhancing the retention level of learners of commerce at the higher secondary level in all sub-samples taken by gender and locale.
To compare the effect of critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach with that of activity based approach in enhancing the social and emotional skills of learners of commerce at the higher secondary level in all sub-samples taken by gender and locale.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The present study covers the learning of commerce at the higher secondary level in the state of Kerala. The study has been designed with the objective to compare the effectiveness of critical pedagogy combined with constructivist learning approach with that of activity based approach in learning commerce at the higher secondary level. The learning strategies used for critical pedagogy combined with constructivist approach will open up new perspectives of education which suits the need of 21st century and help the learners to foster learner autonomy, creativity, inquiry based learning, critical thinking, problem solving and to enhance social and emotional skills. It also provides enough chances to the learners to take up global challenges.

The scope of the use of local language and culture of learners ensured in this approach enhances learner involvement and learner motivation in learning process. Provision of experiential learning envisaged in this approach helps the learners to understand and evaluate the problems of concerned areas of subjects in different perspectives and to take decision accordingly. The scope for promoting collaborative work of learners and co-operative nature of learning expected in this approach satisfies the diverse needs of learners. It enables the learners to solve real life problems and to develop life skills. The assessment procedure according to this approach allows learners to use higher order thinking skills as they collaborate with teachers in the assessment of learning-teaching process.
1.8 Limitations of the Study

Due to lack of time, the study is confined to class XII students at the higher secondary level. Only some topics of a single subject such as Business Studies are considered. The Investigator has selected only two schools, a government school and an aided school of Thiruvananthapuram district, and covered only 156 students due to practical difficulties in conducting an experimental study of an experimental group - control group pre-test post-test design.

1.9 Organisation of the Report

The study is presented in six chapters which is given below:

Chapter 1 - Introduction

This chapter contains a general introduction and the relevant details about the problem under study.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical Overview

This chapter describes the theoretical aspects of the present study.

Chapter 3 - Review of Related Studies

This chapter explains the related studies pertaining to the topic under investigation.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

This chapter gives a description of the method of investigation, the sample selected, the tools and techniques adopted for conducting the study, the procedure employed for collecting data and statistical techniques.
**Chapter 5 - Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

This chapter presents how the data was analysed and interpreted and also state the findings of the study.

**Chapter 6 - Summary, Conclusions and Suggestions**

This chapter describes the details of summary of the study, its major findings, conclusions and suggestions for further research.

It is followed by a large exhaustive Bibliography and a series of Appendices pertaining to the study.