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INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES OF LEARNING COMMERCE AT HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL IN INDIA: MODALITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

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Abstract

The existing system of instructional practices especially the curriculum transaction of vocational orientation in our country is largely unrelated to the real life situations of students and also it operates at the lowest fling of efficiency. The investigator being a commerce teacher educator, who is familiar with the present instructional practices of commerce curriculum prevalent in different spheres, felt the need for identifying prevailing instructional practices and the practical difficulties encountered by commerce teachers for effective transaction of the curriculum. The study concluded that it is inevitable to construct a vibrant learning environment to enable the learners to discern their potentials, comprehend their physical and intellectual capabilities. Most of the practitioners aware about the major tenets of different instructional strategies but they face constraints when they put in to practice in their instructional space. The selected sample of commerce teachers and experts (98%) viewed that reification is needed in the prevailing modes of curriculum transaction in the discipline of commerce by creating innovative instructional strategies for emphasizing skill of problem solving, developing self- regulated learning skills, anchoring instruction to involve diverse life contexts, encouraging students to learn from collaborative settings etc.

Keywords: *Instructional practices, commerce education, curriculum transaction*

1. Introduction

The fast growing changes in the arena of information and communication technology create a new educational framework for learning that go beyond the standard teaching paradigm (Joshi & Chabra, 2011). In this paradigm, teachers have to face the greatest confront of adapting education for generating a competent young generation. To address these aspects instructional strategies and approaches are to be experienced in the learning circle for creating interest, assimilating knowledge and challenging the thoughts of the students. This leads the modern society become a challenged one and information becoming available in fingertips that prompts the users to constantly rethink for switching in a new directions to create innovative instructional strategies and approaches for coping the challenges.

Today's young world is living in a cyber-tech environment where paper and pencil often have minimum effect in the learning process, because new generation differs in many ways. So the practitioners have to take initiative in satisfy the demands of these diverse learners, while ensuring the integrity of quality targeted standards, knowing the when, why and how of the methods of teaching especially a vocational discipline like commerce. Modern instructional practices are based on global patterns, which embedded students to process information in its operational terms

generated from their classroom experiences. It is obligatory on the part of the educational system to equip the child with generalized intellectual and other generic skills, which will enable him to cope effectively with whatever state of the world he will practice later in life. But it is noted that the existing system of education especially the trend of vocational orientation in our country is largely unrelated to the real life situations of students and also it operates at the lowest fling of efficiency. Much of these drawbacks can be attributed to an incomplete understanding of students on the one hand, and the wrong instructional practices and strategies followed by the institutions on the other hand. However, the modern curriculum standards now place less emphasis on facts or procedures to be learned by heart and more emphasis on instructional strategies for learning and doing (Vanita, 2010).

In this context, the present technologically driven educational scenario demands instructional strategies and approaches suited to develop learner centered instructive paradigm which involves inquiry, problem solving, discourses and collaboration in conceptualizing ideas, performing understanding, intellectual initiatives and inculcating vocational spirit among future generation. There has to be a fundamental shift from teacher directed instruction to student centered instruction where pupil learn by exploring, predicting, reflecting, problem solving and investigating concepts (Dwivedi, 2010).

For the triumph of learner oriented self-reflective accentuation, the instructional manager must provide real world problematic situation, complex learning environment and anchoring learning tasks in meaningful, authentic and highly visual situations that facilitates negotiation and construe a strong knowledge base.

Commerce discipline enable students with meeting needs, taking challenges, solving problems and creating products and services that help to enrich the quality of life. Business studies and accountancy clearly demonstrate how a diversity of areas of study can be pooled in prolific activity that affects the lives of millions of people. Courses in this discipline provide knowledge and skills that can help students make a successful transition to higher education, training programs, and the professional field. Our country has been experiencing substantial rise in commerce and business activities since the process of liberalization and globalization initiated a decade ago; resulting proportionate rise in job opportunities in the areas of business and commerce which consequently has enhanced the demand of competent personnel equipped with adequate training and skill in the field (Mehar et al., 2006).

The present higher secondary commerce curriculum provides openings to prepare students to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world challenges, experiences and opportunities to lead better prospects in their lives. These experiences reinforce theoretical learning and at the same time provide authentic contexts in which students can apply what they have learned. This unique discipline provides pathways to specific apprenticeship and workplace destinations that grant students with valuable information and connections to explore potential work and business opportunities.

The fundamental purpose of a good commerce curriculum provides students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to achieve success in daily life. These goals can be achieved in a concrete and practical context through real-world learning activities that combine the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills. Towards the learning sphere of commerce expected to develop various concepts in the nature, structure and functions of business, trading activities and their procedures, management-its functions and structures, accounting principles, rules, treatment, computerized accounting and the like should be attained among commerce students at the level of higher secondary education with an intention of excelling Academic Achievement and promoting Vocational Competency. But the prevailing curriculum transaction modes becoming less effective in engaging students for constructing knowledge and motivating them to achieve objectives of learning in this technologically advanced era (Paul, 2012)

The investigator being a commerce teacher educator, who is familiar with the present instructional practices of commerce curriculum prevalent in different spheres, felt the need for identifying prevailing instructional practices and the practical difficulties encountered by

commerce teachers for effective transaction of the curriculum. It is noted that there are still scanty and negligible studies reported in the discipline of commerce education by considering these focal aspects, hence this investigation assume significant.

2. Objectives

The general objective of the study is to analyze the prevailing modes of transacting higher secondary commerce curriculum. Side by side, the specific objectives are to locate constraints experienced, if any, by practitioners in the effective implementation of innovative strategies in the present set up and to suggest alternative modes used for effective transaction of curriculum in commerce at higher secondary level.

3. Methodology

The investigator had an attempt to study the prevailing instructional practices followed in Higher secondary schools in Kerala, by following descriptive method for this investigation. For collecting the relevant data a semi structured interview that spread out with school practitioners in commerce at higher secondary level, experts in the field of commerce and teacher educators at B.Ed and M.Ed levels (N=75). The reactions and grading of teachers were sorted and analyzed with percentage computation.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Analysis of practitioner's perspectives regarding prevailing modes of transacting higher secondary commerce curriculum

The opening segment of the interview reflected on the practitioner's perspective regarding the feasibility of implementing instructional strategies for the effectual transaction of curriculum in commerce at higher secondary level. The reactions of teachers of items 1 to 3 of the interview schedule were analyzed in this aspect.

Item No-1 of the interview schedule enquired about the various curriculum transaction attributes expect to develop in students while adopting different instructional strategies. The high-flying fundamentals attributed to develop effective curriculum transaction strategies as observed by the select samples are listed below.

They are the ability of:

a. Facilitating cognitive processing through social interactions
b. Focusing on stimulating higher order thinking skills to choose, develop and defend positions in a self-critical way.
c. Devising contextualized discourses that scaffolds shared responsibility to optimize meaningful learning.
d. Augmenting social negotiation among students to accomplish complex conceptual and unrestrained goals.
e. Constructing a vibrant learning environment to enable the learners to discern their potentials, comprehend their physical and intellectual capabilities.
f. Developing character and enviable social, human and vocational values to functions as responsible citizens.
g. Embracing and practice problem solving modes and convey meaning explicitly.
h. Partaking in a multiplicity of cognitively exigent tasks to develop professional competence.

Item no-2 of the interview schedule investigated the frequently implemented strategies in commerce classes for conceptualizing the ingredient aspects of expertise in commerce discipline. The reflections of this item showed that a good number of the practitioners (96%) are following in large group instruction and lecturing in their classrooms while a handful teachers (3%) reported that they are practicing certain strategies like co-operative learning, computer based learning and small group instructions in regular intervals and even though moderate number of teachers is only aware of these innovative instructional strategies but not practicing still now. This occurrence may be due to the routine approaches of the mainstream practitioners to face constraints in choosing

cognitively strengthening tasks and strategies for designing instructional manuals by extending competencies and potentials among learners. Even so, very few teachers with high academic credentials and experiences may have the unambiguous competency in inter-connecting contextual issues and mechanisms to curtail the unsympathetic consequences and inflict shrewd inclination and efficacy to meet those challenges.

As far as the appraisal of the essential qualities to be achieved by students while implementing certain specified strategies in the learning environment for curriculum transaction (item No.3), the expectations of teachers in respect of qualities attained by students through the interaction effect of the specified strategies are rated in Table-1.

Table-1: Analysis of practitioner's perspectives of prevailing modes of curriculum transaction

Strategies	**Outcome Expected**	**Percentage of Opinions**
Lecturing	1. General construction	96%
Seminar/debate	2. Critical thinking 3. Self regulated learning 4. Better communication skills	93%
Discussion	1. Critical thinking 2. Social interaction 3. Better communication skills 4. Enhances motivation	89%
Large group instruction	1. Better communication skills 2. Social interactions 3. Better decision making	90%
Small group instruction	1. Mental scaffolding 2. Enhances motivation 3. Divergent thinking 4. Individual accountability	94%
Co-operative learning	1. Problem solving ability 2. Effective concept acquisition 3. Social interaction 4. Mental scaffolding 5. Divergent thinking 6. Building effective leaders	93%
Computer based learning	1. Inquiry training 2. Enhances motivation 3. Critical thinking	91%
Concept Mapping	1. Effective concept acquisition 2. Knowledge acquisition 3. Enhances motivation 4. Mental scaffolding 5. Critical thinking	95%
Collaborative learning	1. Effective concept acquisition 2. Social interaction 3. Mental scaffolding 4. Divergent thinking 5. Building effective leaders	96%
Team teaching	1. Divergent thinking 2. Enhances motivation 3. Knowledge acquisition	86%

The above table clearly concluded teachers' opinion regarding various essential qualities developed by concerned target group towards the effective implementation of specified instructional strategies. This can be summed up that most of the practitioners aware about the major tenets of different instructional strategies but they face constraints when they put in to practice in their instructional space. This can be discussed in the coming section.

4.2. The Constraints experienced by practitioners at higher secondary level by the effective implementation of innovative strategies for commerce discipline.

In this section of the interview, the investigator made an attempt to estimating the impediments and constraints actuated by the practitioners in the effectual pedagogical transaction of commerce for inspiring and strengthening obvious cognitive processing of students at higher secondary level. The details of opinions of item No 4 for this purpose are depicted in Table-2.

Table 2: Constraints experienced by the implementation of innovative strategies

SL	Constraints Experienced	Opinion (in %)
1.	Time factor	92%
2.	Infrastructure	68%
3.	Motivational techniques	88%
4	Learning resources	90%
5	Exposure to the method	96%
6	Appropriate instructional design	99%
7.	Level of confidence for implementation	94%
8	Networking with resource person	86%
9	Lack of experts	94%
10	Classroom management tactics	95%
11	Appropriate training	93%
12	Lack of learner friendly curriculum	85%

The results of Table-2 point towards the opinions of select teachers with regard to the different strata of the challenges and constraints confronted by them in their commerce classes. About a lion share of the practitioners viewed that lack of awareness in practicing appropriate instructional strategies and their corresponding upshot as absence of exposure and level of confidence, are articulated them with this kind of strategies as noted as their another major constraints in their learning circle. 95% of the stakeholders opined that classroom management tactics and lack of competent experts (94%) as another constraints, which is followed by lack of appropriate training as a struggle they were faced. They also added that the lack of networking with resource person (86%), lack of leaner friendly curriculum as a problem they were faced for effective pedagogic practices. In addition to this they put a place in their time constraints and insufficient learning resources as their major curtails.

4.3. Alternative modes worn for influential pedagogical transaction of curriculum in commerce at higher secondary level.

While responding the last item concerning the alternative modes or approach influenced for transacting commerce curriculum at higher secondary level, the teachers retorted with outstanding suggestions. A considerable integer of practitioners in commerce (around 65%) who were undergoing regular cluster meeting and in-service courses expressed their views in practicing innovative instructional strategies as a way to ensuring academic viability, critical thinking, problem solving and effective integration of concept and ideas to a greater extent and thereby heightening learning process of commerce subjects. The rests (35%) who exhibited legitimate interest in charting new vistas in the pedagogical landscape of commerce by recommending alternative approach instead of the prevailing modes as web based approach, IT enabled instruction, scaffolding strategies, investigative strategies, cognitive strategies etc. for curriculum transaction in commerce.

Thus the selected sample of commerce teachers and experts (98%) viewed that reification is needed in the prevailing modes of curriculum transaction in the discipline of commerce by creating innovative instructional strategies to put emphasis on:

a. The skills of problem solving
b. Developing self- regulated learning skills
c. Anchoring instruction to involve diverse life contexts
d. Encouraging students to learn from collaborative settings
e. Establishing meaningful linkage of concepts and ideas
f. Creating conceptual and mental models
g. Stimulating interdependence among students and learning groups
h. Incorporating authentic assessment mechanism etc.

As a teacher educator in commerce having about twelve years experience, the investigator himself picked out certain shortcomings in the instructional mechanisms being experienced in higher secondary schools and colleges which in turn consolidates in the low academic performance of learners. Even though there are ample opportunities for commerce students in the job markets especially for accounting and management sections, but the investigator felt certain bridging gap in the present system of education by moulding competitive young generation with the deficit of learner initiated instructional strategies. Hence, the investigator himself considers proper curriculum transaction mechanisms for the emergence of instructional strategies having strategic competence, self discovery and professional excellence.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

The examination of the reactions of semi- structured interview performed with select sample of experts and practitioners in commerce radiate the following conclusions. The expanse of effectual curriculum transaction modes in the present context is inappropriate in internalizing Vocational Competency among commerce students at higher secondary level. New-fangled instructional strategies triumph over the constraints and difficulties experienced in the prevailing curriculum transaction modes of commerce and thereby accelerate their academic enrichment. Outstanding magnitude of novel curriculum transaction strategies generates an interactive learning space for constructing creative and divergent knowledge schemes in commerce. Instructional attributes inserted in the alternative instructional strategies equip the practitioners for successful realization of goals and aspirations of commerce curriculum. Thus, the analysis confirmed the necessity for reifying the prevailing curriculum transaction strands by developing learner based instructional strategies to build up Vocational Competency and Academic Merits of commerce students at higher secondary level.

Hence it is recommended that a successful instructional strategy based on the stipulated self directed paradigm endow the establishment and orientation of practitioners with a deep perceptive of their subjects and present a strengthened pedagogical stand stimulate for executing them effectively in the learning space by realizing the dimensionalities of curriculum transaction. This will fortify the managerial and procedural scaffolds and initiate the development of professional excellence at all facets of instructive process. Prevailing modalities of curriculum transaction in commerce education if blended with the developed instructional strategies move forward the students to systematic and active involvement in solving authentic or real world problems. Commerce is a discipline structured with the bridging and inter-locking of concepts, ideas and principles that demands instructional strategies aimed to concentrate on conceptual learning. The findings of the study revealed that in order to create a learning environment under this perspective, practitioners and policy makers must identify and develop content structure and instructional strategies which is sufficient to attain the core outcome of commerce education.

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