

Research Article

**LEARNING EXPERIENCES: NECESSITY TO EFFECTIVE LEARNING OF
COMMERCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABIA STATE OF NIGERIA.****Owuamanam, Catherine Nkechinyere Ph.D**School of Education,
National Institute for Nigerian Languages,
Aba, Abia State, Nigeria
nyerekate@yahoo.com**Abstract**

This study examined the necessity of learning experiences in the effective learning of commerce in secondary schools in Abia State of Nigeria. The sample of the study constituted one hundred (100) commerce teachers drawn through stratified simple random sampling technique. A-17 item questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The instruments were validated by two Educational technologists and a measurement and evaluation expert. The instrument yielded 0.85 using Cronbach Alpha Method. The results were analyzed using mean scores. The findings indicated that learning experiences allow learners to apply concept beyond the classroom, help learners understand and appreciate new information, spur learners interactivity, encourage social-based learning, awaken learners high-order thinking, promote learners self-assessment, increase learners concentration and attention and strengthen learning and development. The findings of the study also showed that the challenges of learning experiences to the effective learning of commerce in Abia State include: Inadequate skills and knowledge of the teaching of commerce on the part of the teachers, not considering the goals, predilections, interest, needs, values, motives and abilities of the learners before selecting learning experiences by some commerce teachers, inability to create lessons that are relevant and logical to learners in a well organized and efficient pattern by some commerce teachers, inability to provide the needed requirements to achieve the stated objectives of commerce lessons by some teachers and inadequate funding for the procurement of the needed instructional materials by the Government and school authority. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that increasing the awareness and necessity of learning experiences in instructional process by frequently organizing seminars and workshop could increase the effectiveness of learning commerce in secondary schools in Abia State.

Key Words: Learning, Effective learning, Learning experiences, commerce, teaching.

Introduction

Commerce is a very important sphere of learning which greatly influence the level, nature and scope as well as the direction of development of any nation's economy. Commerce is concerned with the exchange of goods and services. It includes all those activities which directly or indirectly facilitate that exchange (Akrani, 2011). Generally, commerce refers to the exchange of goods, services or something of value between

business or entities (Chen, 2019). It refers to all transactions related to the purchase and sale of items in an economy.

From abroad perspective, nations are concerned with managing commerce in a way that it enhances the standard of living of citizens, generates employment opportunities, satisfies human wants, increase national income and wealth, help in growth of industrial development and encourages international trade (Stephenson,

2011). These laudable goals of the nations can be achieved effectively through the application of appropriate learning experiences in learning of commerce in our secondary schools. Commerce is an important subject that must be credited by students before gaining admission into any tertiary institution especially the university to study relevant courses like insurance, business administration and accountancy. The necessity and technicality of this subject make it necessary that appropriate learning experience be used in learning it.

Learning involves the acquiring of new skills, knowledge, ideas, values and experiences which enable the individual to modify or alter his action. It is a process not of gathering information but of seeing meanings (Onwuka, 1996). Human learning depends upon three pre-conditions: a functioning biological organism, an on-going social environment and an opportunity for a biological being to interact with his social environment and thereby to learn from it. According to (BBC English dictionary, 1992, P.398), experience is “something that happens to you or something you do”. Therefore, learning experience refers to the contextual or co-created conditions within which learners experience the learning environment, including physical or virtual surroundings, instructor, course design and the institutions, emotional and cognitive cultures (Anthony, 2020). In other words, the learning experience is the interaction (traditional or modern), programme, course or any other experience in which learning occurs. Essentially, the learning experience highlights the purpose of learning rather than how or where it is delivered (Akpabio and Ogiriki, 2017; Owuamanam, 2021).

To develop and increase learners' engagement and retention in commerce learning, learners must be provided with appropriate learning experiences. This is because, it is what the learners does that he learns. A good learning experience focuses on being authentic, interactive and collaborative to enhance engagement and improve knowledge retention. Besides, it adds

value to the learner, encourages social learning, promote learner self-assessment and is inquiry-based (Anthony, 2020).

The way commerce is being taught in most schools and colleges leaves much to be desired. Also, there has been high rate of failure in commerce examinations in both internal and external examinations. It is against this background that the researcher attempts to examine the necessity of learning experiences in the effective learning of commerce in secondary schools in Abia State of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Stakeholders in education in Nigeria and Abia state in particular have done so much and put in so much effort at finding a remedy to high rate of failure in commerce examination both internal and external, yet the problem persists. This failure could mean that the learning of commerce is devoid of using appropriate learning experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the necessity of learning experiences in effective learning of commerce in secondary schools in Abia state of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the necessity of learning experiences in effective learning of commerce in Abia state.
2. Find out the challenges of learning experience to the effective learning of commerce in Abia state.

Research Questions

The following research questions were asked to guide the study:

- i. What is the necessity of learning experiences in the effective learning of commerce in Abia state?
- ii. What are the challenges of learning experiences to the effective learning of commerce in Abia state?

Review of related literatures

Effective Learning

Learning is basically a process of adapting to and improving the environment. What is learned can be measured either by those things that we observe in the behaviour of the individual or those that can be inferred. There is continuity in learning and it builds on experience and practice. Learning is seen as the process by which we acquire and retain attitudes, knowledge, understanding, skills and capabilities that cannot be attributed to inherited behaviour patterns or physical growth (Owuamanam, 2016).

Learning by its nature requires reasoning and co-ordination; as a process, learning progresses in stages. Skinner (1960) experimented with this ideas and discovered that when the content or the material to be learnt is effectively planned or designed (i.e., broken down into very small steps and arranged in carefully designed sequences which leads from the known to the unknown and presented to students), meaningful and pleasurable learning take place.

Effective learning is the off-shoot of teaching and instruction as conceptualized in modern education and the major objective of education. According to Onwuka (as cited in Owuamanam, 2016, P.89), effective learning is “adaptive change in behaviour as a result of experience, conditioning, training, acquiring of motor skills, effective and cognitive learning”. As a process, learning involves the acquiring of new knowledge, ideas, skills, values and experiences which enable the individual modify or alter his action or to realize his goals. Learning is the conceptualization of meaningful experience. This means that whatever is said to have been learned is clearly perceived, retained, built overtime, can be put to work, enhances survival and effects behavior more or less permanently (Onwuka, 1996)

Learning Experiences

Learning experience refers to the contextual or co-created conditions within which learners experience the learning environment, including physical or virtual surroundings, instructor, course design and the institution’s emotional and cognitive cultures (Anthony, 2020). Learning experience is the interaction (traditional or modern), programme, course or any other experience in which learning occurs. Essentially, the learning experience highlights the purpose of learning rather than how or where it is delivered. Great learning experience is not an end goal but a vehicle for improving learner engagement. It is a vital ingredient, which, when coupled with sustained learner’s self-efficacy, leads to improve engagement.

Learner engagement is the degree of a learner’s interaction and cooperation with the instructor, other learners and learning materials. It underscores the quality and quantity of learner’s participation, commitment and motivation, not just to reach the set milestones but also to acquire relevant knowledge (Anthony, 2020). Learner engagement is the perceptual value achieved when learning experience interplays with a learner’s self-efficacy. Intrinsically engaged learners are active in learning, process information more deeply and frequently seek clarification on concepts that elude them. Moreover, they are eager to participate in discussions, prefer challenging tasks and are confident about their competence.

According to Tyler (as cited in Onwuka, 1996, P.19), learning experiences mean the various interactions between the learner and the environment to which he reacts. The purpose of all the learning experiences generally is to enable people to make necessary changes or improve upon their pattern of life. A single learning experience which a student undergoes may have very little or no effect on him. For a student to learn and internalize a new behaviour he must be put through a number of experiences which

support and reinforce each other. Hence, learning experience need to be organized in such a way as to produce major changes in the learners in the direction of stated instructional outcome. Failure to organize properly leads to compartmentalization of learning. In such a situation, there is no appreciable connection between learning experiences which, often, contradict or nullify one another. Learning activities must be unified around one central purpose so that all of the learners would be directed toward the central purpose (Onwuka, 1996). The central purpose of all the learning experiences is to bring some changes in the individual.

A good learning experience focuses on being authentic, interactive and collaborative to enhance engagement and improve knowledge retention. Besides, it adds value to the learner, encourages social learning, promotes learner self-assessment and is inquiry-based. A good learning experience strengthens learning and development and ultimately, helps improve learners' performance and productivity (Anthony, 2020).

Appropriate learning experiences should have the following characteristics:

- It should be closely related to the desired objectives. The most meaningful question that can be asked about a learning experience is "does it result in changed behaviour with respect to the objective? If the answer is a positive one, then the experience is valid.
- Learning experience must be such that the student obtains satisfaction from carrying on the kind of behaviour specified in the objectives. A learner derives maximum satisfaction from a learning experience having a relation to real life situations in and out of school. The perception results in positive motivation which enables the learner to understand and appreciate the possible consequences of the activity. Such motivation fosters independent

work and carries the student through the more difficult aspects of the learning experience.

- The greater the variety of experiences presented, the more likely the child is to find satisfying activities which will enable him to progress towards the required learning.
- Learning experiences should be appropriate to the student's present attainments. This is another way of saying that the teacher should begin where the learner is.
- All the learning experiences have to be continuous. The learner's reading, listening, thinking and practicing have to go on simultaneously in an experiential continuum. The important feature is that each experience undergone by the learner was based on experiences which had preceded it and each experiences affects succeeding experiences.
- A well-planned set of learning experiences will be made up of experiences that are useful in attaining several objectives simultaneously (Onyike, 1996).

Concept of Commerce

Commerce is a branch of business. It is concerned with the exchange of goods and services. It includes all those activities which directly or indirectly facilitate that exchange (Akrani, 2011). Commerce looks after the distribution aspect of the business, whatever is produced must be consumed. To facilitate this consumption, there must be a proper distribution channel. Here comes the need for commerce which is concerned with the smooth buying and selling of goods and services (Chen, 2019). Commerce is an organized system for the exchange of goods between the members of the industrial world. It is also the conduct of trade among economic agents (Stephenson, 2011).

Commerce normally refers to the macro-economic purchase and sale of goods and services by large organizations at scale. The sale or purchase of a single item by a consumer is defined as a transaction while commerce refers to all transactions related to the purchase and sale of that item in an economy (Chen, 2019). When properly managed, commercial activities can quickly enhance the standard of living in a nation and increase its standing in the world.

Commerce relates to the exchange of goods and services especially on a large scale. It includes legal, economic, political, social, cultural and technological system that operate in a country or in international trade (Wikipedia, 2019). Commerce is a very important sphere of learning which greatly influence the level, nature and scope as well as the direction of development of any nation's economy. Commerce is taught as a subject in our secondary schools.

Commerce has the following qualities:

- It tries to satisfy increasing human wants: Human wants are never-ending. It has distribution and movement of goods possible from one part of the world to the other. Today, we can buy anything produced anywhere in the world.
- It helps to increase our standard of living: Standard of living refers to the quality of life enjoyed by the members of society. When man consumes more products his standard of living improves.
- It links producers and consumers: Production is meant for ultimate consumption. Commerce makes possible to link producers and consumers through retailers and wholesalers and also through the aids to trade.
- It generates employment opportunities: The growth of commerce, industry and trade bring about the growth of agencies of trade. These agencies need people to look after their functioning. Increase in production results in increasing demand

which further results in boosting employment opportunities.

- It increases national income and wealth: When production increases, the national income also increases. Commerce helps to earn foreign exchange by way of exports and duties levied on imports.
- It helps in expansion of aids to trade: With the growth in trade and commerce, there is a growth need for expansion and modernization of aids to trade. Aids to trade are expanded and modernized for the smooth conduct of commerce.
- It helps in the growth of industrial development: Commerce looks after the smooth distribution of goods and services made available by the industry. It helps to increase demand for goods on one hand and on the other hand, it helps industries by getting then the necessary raw materials and other services.
- It encourages international trade: Through commerce, we can secure a fair and equitable distribution of goods throughout the world (Stephenson, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical base of this work stems from social learning theory. Bandura and Waters were frequently cited as foundational influences on the development of this perspective. Social learning posits that learning is a cognitive process that is placed in a social context and occurs purely through observation or direct instruction, even in the absence of motor reproduction or direct reinforcement. In addition to the observation of behaviour, learning also occurs through the observation of rewards and punishment, a process known as vicarious reinforcement (Wikipedia, 2016).

Social learning theory integrated behavioural and cognitive theories of learning in order to provide a comprehensive model that could account for the wide range of learning

experiences that occur in the real world. Key tenets of social learning are:

- Learning is not purely behavioural rather it is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context.
- Learning can occur by observing the consequences of the behaviour (vicarious reinforcement).
- Learning involves observation, extraction of information from those observations and making decision about the performance of the behaviour (observational learning or modeling). Thus, learning occur without an observable change in behaviour.
- Reinforcement plays a role in learning but is not entirely responsible for learning.
- The learner is not a passive recipient of information, cognition, environment and behaviour but all mutually influence each other (reciprocal determinism).

Social Learning Theory draws heavily on the concept of modeling or learning by observing a behaviour. Baudura outlined three types of modeling stimuli as:

- Live Model: in which an actual person is demonstrating the desired behaviour.
- Verbal Instruction: in which an individual describes the desired behaviour in details and instructs the participant on how to engage in the behaviour.
- Symbolic: in which modeling occurs by means of the media, including movies, television, internet, literature and radio. Stimuli can be either real or frictional characters (Snelbecker. 1985).

An important factor in social learning theory is the concept of reciprocal determinism. This notion states that just as individual's behaviour is influenced by the environment, the environment is also influenced by the individual's behaviour. This theory is relevant to this study because learning experience refers to the

contextual or co-created conditions within which learners experience the learning environment, including physical or virtual surroundings, instructor, course design and the institution's emotional and cognitive cultures.

Methods and materials

The design adopted for this study was descriptive survey which was used to obtain information from the respondents. The design is chosen because the study seeks to collect data on the particular features of a given population in a systematic manner such that the findings are expected to be generalized to the entire population (Nworgu, 2006). The area of study was Abia state of Nigeria. The sample of the study constituted 100 commerce teachers drawn through stratified simple random sampling techniques. A-17 item questionnaire was used to collect data on the respondents. Item 1-10 were based on the necessity of learning experiences in the effective learning of commerce in Abia state, while item 11-17 were based on the challenges of learning of commerce in Abia state.

The instrument was structured on a 4-point likert scale on which the respondents acted on. The items in the questionnaire were weighted as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) – 4 points, Agree (A) – 3 points, Disagree (D) - 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1 point. The criterion mean was 2.50. The instrument was face validated by two experts in Educational Technology and a Measurement and Evaluation specialist. The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient Method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument; it yielded a co-efficient of 0.84 with overall reliability of 0.85. A total of 100 copies of the instrument were administered and retrieved. The data was analyzed using mean scores. Any item with a rating of 2.50 and above was accepted value while item with a mean rating below 2.50 was rejected.

Analysis and Results

The results of the data collected from the study are presented in table 1 and 2 according to the research questions.

Research Question One: What is the necessity of learning experiences in effective learning of commerce in secondary schools in Abia State?

Table 1: Means Ratings of Commerce Teachers on the necessity of learning experiences in the effective learning of commerce.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	DECISION
		4	3	2	1	$\bar{X}$	
1	Learning experiences allow learners to apply concept beyond the classroom.	160	90	40	10	3.00	Accepted
2	They help learners understand and appreciate new information.	120	90	40	20	2.70	Accepted
3	They spur learner interactivity.	80	120	50	15	2.65	Accepted
4	They encourage learners to work collaboratively.	40	200	50	15	3.05	Accepted
5	They encourage social-based learning.	80	120	50	15	2.65	Accepted
6	They promote learner self-assessment.	40	135	60	15	2.50	Accepted
7	They increase learners concentration and attention.	80	120	70	05	2.75	Accepted
8	They awaken learners' high order thinking.	160	90	40	10	3.00	Accepted
9	They improve learners' knowledge and retention.	160	90	40	10	3.00	Accepted
10	They strengthen learning and development.	80	20	70	05	2.75	Accepted
Grand Mean						2.80	Accepted

Table 1 show that the respondents agreed that all these items are the necessity of learning experiences in the learning of commerce. All the items have mean scores of 2.50 and above which is the criterion mean of acceptance. The grand mean is 2.80.

Research Question Two: What are the challenges of learning experiences to the effective learning of commerce in Abia State?

Table 2 revealed that all the respondents agreed that all the above are the challenges of learning experiences to the effective learning of commerce in Abia State. Hence, the grand mean of 3.06 is greater than criterion mean of 2.50.

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Commerce Teachers on the challenges of learning Experiences to the effective learning of commerce in Abia State.

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	MEAN $\bar{X}$	DECISION
11	Some teachers do not possess adequate skills and knowledge for teaching commerce.	160	90	40	10	3.00	Accepted
12	Some teachers do not consider the goals, predictions, interest, needs, values, motives and abilities of their learners before selecting their learning experiences.	120	90	40	20	2.70	Accepted
13	Some teachers do not create lessons that are relevant and logical to their learners in a well organized and efficient pattern.	80	120	70	05	2.75	Accepted
14	Some teachers are lazy and as such could not provide the needed requirements to achieve the stated objectives of the commerce lessons.	160	90	40	10	3.00	Accepted
15	Inadequate finding by the school authority for the procurement of relevant instructional materials for the learning of commerce.	160	90	40	10	3.00	Accepted
16	Inadequate involvements of the use of communication tools to relay feedback to the learners by some commerce teachers.	160	90	40	10	3.00	Accepted
17	Classrooms in secondary schools in Abia State are not conducive for learning of commerce.	400	0	0	0	4.00	Accepted
Grand Mean						3.06	Accepted

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study on the necessity of learning experiences in the effective learning of commerce in Abia State showed that learning experiences allow learners to apply concept beyond the classroom, help learners understand and appreciate new information, spur learners interactivity, encourage social- based learning, awaken learners high-order thinking, promote learners self-assessment, increase learners concentration and attention, improve learners knowledge retention and strengthen learning and development.

Agreeing with the above findings, Anthony (2020) in his study observed that a good

learning experience focuses on being authentic, interactive and collaborative to enhance engagement and improve knowledge retention.

Onyike (1996) also observed that great learning experience is not an end goal but a vehicle for improving learner engagement and that it is a vital ingredient which when couple with sustained learner's self-efficacy leads to improved engagement.

The findings of the study also revealed that the following are the challenges of learning experiences to the effective learning of commerce: some teachers do not possess adequate skills and knowledge for teaching commerce, some teachers do not consider the goals,

predilections, interest, needs, values, motives and abilities of their learners before the selection of learning experiences, some teachers do not create lessons that are relevant and logical to their learners in a well organized an efficient pattern, some teachers are lazy and as such could not provide the needed requirements to achieve the stated objectives of the commerce lessons, inadequate finding by the school authority for the procurement of instructional materials and inadequate involvements of the use of communication tools to relay feedback to the learners by some commerce teachers. Based on the above responses from the commerce teachers, it can be inferred that the use of learning experiences in the learning of commerce in Abia State has been stalled by these challenges.

In line with the above findings, Jimoh (2009) pointed out that poor teaching experience; inadequate infrastructural facilities and dilapidated buildings are likely to cause some physical and emotional discomfort for the students and are therefore bound to influence their academic achievement. Similarly, Onwuka (1996) asserted that failure to organize learning experiences properly leads to compartmentalization of learning. In such a situation, there is no appreciable connection between learning experiences which, often, contradict or mollify one another.

Conclusion and recommendations

The necessity of learning experiences in effective learning of commerce in secondary schools in Abia State of Nigeria is a welcome development. This is because they will allow learners to apply concept beyond the classroom, help learners understand and appreciate new information, spur learners' interactivity, encourage learners to work collaboratively, encourage social-based learning, promote learner

self-assessment and increase learners concentration and attention.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. Seminars and workshops should be organized periodically so as to increase the awareness and necessity of learning experiences in instructional process. If the commerce teachers acquire the needed skills and competences irrespective of their gender and qualifications, more progress will be recorded in commerce learning.
2. In the learning experience development process, commerce teachers should construct the overall strategy upon measurable goals. Teachers should understand the goals and needs of their learners and the nation as well.
3. When developing lessons in commerce, teachers should adopt an organized and effective instructional structure that will empower them to create lessons that are relevant and logical to their learners.
4. In the learning experience development process, commerce teachers should establish the functional and content requirements needed to achieve the set objectives. This will help the teachers to define the key topics, logistics, methods and activities they need to create great learning experiences.
5. In the learning experience development process, the teachers should endeavour to define how learners will access and engage with content, skills and knowledge.

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