ABSTRACT

Increasing enrolment, the heterogeneity of background and personality characteristics of the vast body of entering students, obsolescence of the existing disciplines of learning have all led to an increasing restlessness in the student body and a general dissatisfaction with the college routine. The proposed changes in the existing educational infrastructure have been made with little alteration paid to the understanding of the vital issue of student institution fit and the question pertaining to the students 'consumer rights' in education.

On the basis of an exploratory study, the present study was undertaken to find out patterns of variations in the expressed educational orientations of students, and the factors affecting their academic achievement and satisfaction. This included an assessment of the discrepancies arising out of a mismatch between the expressed educational orientations and the perceived environment of students and its effect on student performance/satisfaction. An attempt was also made to study the effect of background/antecedent and personality disposition variables on Orientations and perceptions.

The sample consisted of 1100 students from a number of colleges affiliated to one of the Indian Universities—Bangalore University. Only the students from the final year B.A. and B.Sc. Courses were chosen as orientation:
were expected to have stabilized after 2 years at college. To assess the educational orientations of students and their perceptions of the Academic environment, and to get at the same time, an index of discrepancy, a double-headed questionnaire, the student orientation-perception Questionnaire was developed by the author on the basis of the findings of the exploratory study. Background data and personality disposition variables were assessed using a background information sheet and a short form of Watkins Embedded figures test (Jackson 1956), respectively. On the basis of a questionnaire developed by Morstain (1977), an academic satisfaction scale was developed to get an index of students satisfaction with their academic experience.

The results of the study indicated that district variations existed in the patterns of educational orientations expressed by the students. These varied from a highly preparatory orientation i.e., ranging from students who endorsed a preference for a highly structured environment to those who endorsed an unstructured environment. In perceiving their academic environment, although variations did exist, the range was not the same as that which showed up in orientations. This indicated that, to a certain extent, students were objective in assessing their environment. The smaller variations were due more to differences in background/personality factors. An examination of the effect of background/antecedent factors revealed that students coming from a higher
SES background tend to express an exploratory orientation towards education. Personality dispositions, especially deeper rooted cognitive styles also affect student orientations. Field dependent students were seen to express a more preparatory orientation when compared to field independent students.

The different patterns of variation in the expressed orientations and perceived environment resulted in groups of students who had discrepancies ranging from a high to low, and positive to negative discrepancies.

The discrepancy between orientations and perceptions were found to affect performance/satisfaction adversely when it was present to a high degree, irrespective of the direction of discrepancy. A low level of discrepancy on the other hand, was found to facilitate performance. Only on the dimension 'purpose' referring to the acquisition of 'a priori goals', a high degree of discrepancy resulted in high achievement, but also resulted in low satisfaction. This indicated that achievement per se was considered more important than satisfaction of needs. This was probably due to the effect of socialising factors.

A number of suggestions for curricular reforms in keeping with student needs and fostering a sense of involvement in the educational experience were proposed. These changes are with particular reference to the content of
education on dimensions such as the purpose of education, methods of teaching/learning, participation in development of programmes and provision for extra curricular and peer group activities in keeping with expressed student needs.