A STUDY OF LIFE SPACE ENVIRONMENT OF STUDENTS IN THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Life space is the milieu where micro and macro system interact and create an environment which can make educational institutions conducive for emotional, social, intellectual and cultural development. In the present study, life space environment of students in the educational institutions of secondary, higher secondary and degree colleges in Mumbai were studied. Students from secondary, higher secondary and degree students were selected for this study.

Life Space Environment Scale was used for analysing and comparing the life space environment of students in educational institutions in Mumbai. The result of this study explicate that there was significant difference between the ratings of life space environment of educational institutions with respect to the level of education. The overall rating of life space environment in educational institutions was also significantly different by the age group of the students. The result of the study also indicates that, there was a significant difference between the ratings of student level practices in the educational institutions with respect to age group of the students. The Study reveals that there was a positive correlation between the rating of life space environment and student's level practices in the educational institutions.

Keywords: *Life space; Macro System; Micro System.*

Introduction:

As Marrow(1969)[i] puts it, "the life space is the total psychological environment which the person experiences subjectively". Life space includes all facts which have existence for the person and excludes those which do not. It embraces goals, unconscious influences, beliefs,

events of a political, economic and social nature, and anything else that might have direct effect on behaviour. Schools and colleges are no longer a place where students come for a particular period of time acquires certain knowledge and leave. It consists of life space environment where they are being moulded to be better human beings and build student proficiencies and skills needed for 21st century citizens. The skills of participatory decision making, creative and critical thinking, crisis management and developing communication skills is the need of the hour. Life space of the educational institution, micro and macro system interact and create an environment which can make educational institutions conducive for emotional, social, intellectual and cultural development.   Macro system refers to the overarching institutional patterns and values of the wider culture, whereas, micro system refers to the learner's immediate setting, such as a course or classroom activities. The life space where the macrosystem plans and implements its philosophy will have effect on how the microsystem operates and how the crisis situations are intervened and handled and how the classroom activities are being carried on. Thus, the life space environment determines student related policies adopted by the schools and colleges and students' responses to these policies and their life space.

The microsystem like respect for students' expectations, their personal space, freedom of expressions, transparency and accountability, non-discrimination and resolving conflicts would make the learning space conducive. As this reflects the policies adopted by the policy makers and decision makers of the macro system, the interaction between microsystem and macro system the life space differs from institution to institution.

Rationale of the Study

Studies have shown that the macrosystem and micro system both are in evolving process as they are interdependent. Research in this field has focussed historically on the psychosocial dimensions of the environment - those aspects of the environment that focus on human behaviour in origin or outcome (Boy & Pine 1988).

It has been noticed that students adapt themselves to meet the demands of the overall pattern and values of their institution. Moreover, the institute also tries to widen its policies to meet the changing face of its micro system. This dynamics of how an institution is perceived by its students and how the institution makes the environment and living space non-threatening and stress free to reach the goal of individual development is of interest to the researchers. Moreover, the comfort zone of the students and their adaptability to the established structure

of the macro system was also an important part of the favourable life space. The study focussed on the interplay of both these living systems and the results of their interaction. An understanding and perception of the macrosystem, its policies , patterns and systems make the individual acquire the objectives of joining the institution and the students' perception and expectations can give the institution an avenue for understanding its students' thoughts and practices. Thus, this study was taken up to understand how the life space can make or mar a students' prospect in an educational environment and how the institution makes itself more and more student friendly and tries to modify itself to the needs and demands of the student population.

Reflection of the Review of Literature

Educational environment has been a centre of research for past 4 decades. Teachers, researcher scholars, administrators, policy makers have been interested in studying the overall experiences and perceptions of learning environment. Accordingly, research in this field has focussed historically on the psychosocial dimensions of the environment, those aspects of the environment that focus on human behaviour in origin or outcome (Boy & Pine, 1988)[ii].Educational environment research has its roots in work done by social-psychologists. Lewin(1936)[iii] proposed field theory, mentioned that behaviour as function of person and his environment. Murray (1938)[iv], in his need-press theory stated that behaviour as interaction between environment and his psychological needs. Needs are important determinants of behaviour. Fraser(1986)[v]develops a theory in which the degree of person-environment congruence is related to student outcomes.Moos& Trickett (1987)[vi] studied psychosocial environment gave impetus to diverse range of environment. Mucherah (2003)[vii]investigated the environment in social science classrooms using technology. This study raised important issues concerning the inadequacy of training and support of teachers who attempted to integrate the use of computers in the curriculum. Recently, Dellar, Cavanagh and Romanoski (2006) [viii]reported associations between information and communication technology learning and classroom learning culture and Lu, Wan and Ma (2006) [ix]investigated the use of wireless laptops in college classrooms that purportedly had a constructivist learning environment.

Statement of the Problem

"A Study of Life Space Environment of Students in the Educational Institutions"

Operational Definitions

- *Life space environment:* In this study life space environment is the overall life experiences and practices that satisfy the psychological and sociological need of a student.
- *Educational Institutions:* In this study, Educational institutions are the entities that provide student participation level services to students or education-related services to students in Mumbai.

Aim of the Study

The aim is to study the overall life space environment of students in secondary, higher secondary and degree colleges in Mumbai. The study covered various dimensions of life space environment of students as well as the student level practices in educational institutions. The dimensions of life space environment include Macrosystem, Microsystem, Crisis intervention and Social Skill Instruction. Student level practices include individual accountability, practices and areas of student level practices.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the rating towards the life space environment of students in the educational institutions with respect to the following dimensions;
   a. Macrosystem,
   b. Microsystem,
   c. Crisis intervention,
   d. Social Skill Instruction.

2. To study the rating towards the student level practices of educational institutions with respect to the following dimensions;
   a. Individual Accountability,
   b. Student level practices,
   c. Areas of Student Level Practices.

3. To study and compare the overall rating towards the life space environment of students and its dimensions in the educational institutions with respect to;
   a. Level of education,
   b. Age,
   c. Gender.

4. To study and compare the overall rating towards student level practices and its dimensions of the institutions with respect to;

a. Level of education,

b. Age,

c. Gender.

5. To study the relationship between rating of overall life space environment of students and student level practices in the educational institutions.

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference between overall rating of Life space environment and Student Level practices of educational institutions with respect to Level of education.

2. There is no significant difference between overall rating of Life space environment and Student Level practices of educational institutions with respect to Age groups of students.

3. There is no significant difference between overall rating of Life space environment and Student Level practices of educational institutions with respect to Gender.

4. There is no significant correlation between overall rating of Life space environment and Student Level practices of educational institutions.

Scope and Delimitations

The study was conducted in Mumbai district of Maharashtra. The sample included individuals consisting of students of secondary, higher secondary and degree colleges. This study was delimited to secondary and higher secondary students from Class VIII to Class XII and students of degree colleges in Mumbai. It did not include Primary; Post graduates students and other levels of education.

Limitations of the Study

Due to limited time and manpower of this research, the primary research target of this study was limited to secondary, higher secondary and degree college students of educational institutions situated at Mumbai. As a result, it cannot take into consideration the special needs of other students.

Methodology

Design of the Study

The Quantitative paradigm was used for the present study. Descriptive causal comparative method is used for this study.

Sample

The questionnaire targeted the population of students in the Mumbai district of Maharashtra. Questionnaires were distributed to the students of secondary, Higher secondary

and degree students. A sample of 124secondary, 100 higher secondary and 64 degree students were selected for this study by giving due representation to the personal details of the respondents**.**

Research Tool

Life Space Environment Rating Scale (LSRS) was used for analysing and comparing the life space environment of students in educational institutions in Mumbai. Content validity is done by experts. The internal consistency reliability of the Life Space Environment Rating Scale by using Cronbach's alpha and split half method was found to be 0.71 and 0.69 respectively. LSERS was divided into two major sessions. The two major sessions are

1. Life Space Environment Scale
2. Life Space Environment for Student Level Practices

Life Space Environment Scale includes the following dimensions:

- Macrosystem : refers to the overarching institutional patterns and values of the wider culture
- Microsystem : refers to the learner's immediate setting, such as a course or classroom activities
- Crisis Intervention : Crisis Management of an institutions
- Social Skill Instruction : Strategies used for teaching social skills

Life Space Environment for Student Level Practices includes the following dimensions:

- Individual Accountability
- Student Level Practices
- Areas of Student Level Practices

Data Collection and Analysis

The school and college students in Mumbai were approached for collaborating the research. Participants responded to the questionnaire using a four-point scale of always, often, rarely, and never. Data from the questionnaires were edited and saved for analysis. Firstly, the statistical assumptions were examined; descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were employed using SPSS for windows version 10.2v.

Analysis and Discussion

Analysis of data included descriptive and inferential analysis. Data was analyzed for any statistically significant difference in the scores with respect to gender, age and level of education. The results of the study carried out are presented here in the following sections:

Major findings

The study has attempted to analyse the Life space environment of students in schools and colleges and student level practices of educational institutions in Mumbai.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between overall rating of Life space environment and Student Level practices of educational institutions with respect to Level of education.

TABLE 1

Overall rating of Life space environment and Student Level practices of educational institutions with respect to Level of education

Dimensions	Secondary		Higher Secondary		Degree		ANOVA	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Macro system	34.25	4.61	39.70	3.77	39.19	2.28	64.091	P<0.01
Crisis Intervention	12.54	3.29	14.60	1.46	14.16	1.64	21.516	P<0.01
Social Skill Instruction	20.73	5.30	28.06	3.81	27.58	4.38	84.349	P<0.01
Overall Life space Environment	67.52	9.20	82.36	7.81	80.92	6.02	110.029	P<0.01
Microsystem	24.91	3.52	28.70	3.27	28.39	1.99	47.918	P<0.01
Student Level practices	8.85	2.62	14.49	1.67	14.08	1.38	244.149	P<0.01
Overall Student Level Practices	33.77	4.24	43.19	4.38	42.47	2.54	186.726	P<0.01

The result of this study explicate that there was significant difference between the ratings of life space environment of educational institutions with respect to the level of education i.e. secondary, higher secondary and degree. The overall ratings with respect to life space environment in the educational institutions are 67.52 for secondary students, 82.3 for higher secondary students and 80.92 for degree level students respectively. The analysis showed that secondary school students rated less (67.52) as compared to higher secondary (82.3) and degree level students (80.92) in the life space environment in their educational institutions. F-ratio is calculated for the overall rating of life space environment and its dimensions with respect to the levels of education, which revealed that student studying in secondary, higher secondary and degree differed significantly among themselves at 0.01 levels. (F value = 110.02).

The result of the study also indicates that, there was a significant difference between the ratings of student level practices in the educational institutions with respect to level of education. The analysis showed that secondary school students rated less (33.77) the student level practices in their educational institutions as compared to higher secondary (43.19) and

degree level students (42.47). F-ratio is calculated for the overall rating of student level practices with respect to the levels of education, revealed that students studying in secondary, higher secondary and degree differed significantly among themselves at 0.01 levels. (F value = 186.72).

Further analysis of difference between the individual groups tested through Hochberg revealed that secondary students significantly differed from other students of higher secondary and degree where, secondary students rated less towards the life space environment and student level practices in their educational institutions.

Discussion

The analyses in the present study show that there is significant difference between secondary, higher secondary and degree college students towards their rating of the overall life space. This could be because the higher secondary students and college students are more mature and treated as adults by the macro system, their participation and decisions are respected and the students as they are evolving have wider horizons and broad outlook towards the policies and vision of the schools and colleges, They become more aware and realize that the policies and planning done is conducive for the microsystem. The secondary students are still being treated as children and they may not realize that the policies are made for overall good and not just for some students. Burke, 2011[x] revealed that the secondary students, especially higher grades students, feel the stress of school even more than a student with lower grades and college students. The life space may be seen by higher secondary students as a little restrictive and an identity crisis could be felt as is common with early adolescent stage. Thus, the difference is significant as the perspective of the students of different sections, their involvement in the overall college activities, their participation in the committees and administrative decisions make them look at the life space from a different angle.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between overall rating of Life space environment and Student Level practices of educational institutions with respect to Age groups of students.

TABLE 2

Overall rating of Life space environment and Student Level practices of educational institutions with respect to Age groups of students

Dimensions	Below 15 years		Above 15 years		t-value	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Macrosystem	34.54	4.76	39.28	3.45	9.388	P<0.01
Crisis Intervention	12.78	3.38	14.24	1.60	4.452	P<0.01
Social Skill Instruction	20.32	4.93	28.18	3.80	14.754	P<0.01
Overall Life space Environment	67.65	9.32	81.71	7.25	13.918	P<0.01
Microsystem	24.90	3.38	28.59	2.96	9.649	P<0.01
Student Level practices	10.32	3.07	13.22	3.14	7.847	P<0.01
Overall Student Level Practices	35.23	5.50	41.80	4.74	10.658	P<0.01

The overall rating of life space environment in educational institutions was also significantly different by the age group of the students. The rating of students belonging to the age group above 15 years towards life space environment was 81.71 and below 15 was67.65. The rating of students belonging to the age group above 15 years towards life space environment was high (81.71) and the same was low (67.65) for students belonging to the age group of below 15. t- test calculated for the overall life space environment of students and its dimensions with respect to the age group revealed that students differed significantly at 0.01 levels.(t value= 13.91)

The result of the study also indicates that, there was a significant difference between the ratings of student level practices in the educational institutions with respect to age group of the students. The analysis showed that the age group below 15 years rated less the student level practices (35.23) in their educational institutions as compared to above 15 years students (41.80). T-test calculated for the overall rating of student level practices with respect to the age group of the students, revealed that student of different age groups differed significantly among themselves at 0.01 levels. (t value = 10.65).

Discussion

The findings could be again because the students under the age of 15years are still considered as children and decisions of the schools are given to them, subjected on them rather asked for their opinions or views. It could be that the students below the age of 15 years do not realize and are aware that their policy makers are democratic and open to their participation an involvement. They maybe be still shy and more under authority.

Whereas, the students above the age of 15 years are mentally prepared and feel responsible to make decisions regarding the equity, inclusion and facilities and resources available in the life space. They are ready to voice themselves and even take the risk of sharing their grievance as well be proactive in bringing about innovations and changes in the life space. At their age, they find themselves as co-partners rather than subordinates, moreover as they have been a part of the life space for a longer period a sense of belonging and accountability is also felt.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between overall rating of Life space environment and Student Level practices of educational institutions with respect to Gender.

TABLE 3

Overall rating of Life space environment and Student Level practices of educational institutions with respect to Gender

Dimensions	Boys		Girls		t-value	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Macrosystem	36.95	4.87	37.48	4.53	0.957	P>0.05
Crisis Intervention	13.38	2.05	13.80	3.01	1.401	P>0.05
Social Skill Instruction	24.55	5.73	25.01	5.89	0.706	P>0.05
Overall Life space Environment	74.88	11.07	76.29	10.49	1.105	P>0.05
Microsystem	26.95	3.73	27.04	3.57	0.194	P>0.05
Student Level practices	12.15	3.28	11.83	3.54	0.788	P>0.05
Overall Student Level Practices	39.10	5.77	38.87	6.26	0.328	P>0.05

By considering the analysis independent t-test, it is shown that there was no statistic variation between boys and girls towards their rating of life space environment in their educational institutions. The overall mean rating score of boys and girls towards life space environment is 74.88 and 76.29 respectively. t- test calculated for the rating of overall life space environment and its dimensions with respect to the gender revealed that students were not significantly differed among themselves.

Discussion

This could be as in today's age and time atleast in educational sectors girls and boys are equally treated and respected and expectations and role playing is almost on the equal basis. The question of being a girl or a boy does not arise in understanding that the college is taking care of their basic rights of providing amenities, facilities and resources as both have equal right on the life space. Moreover, any kind of crisis intervention policy and making the life space safe and secure is experienced and appreciated by both girls and boys. The soft skills

and life skills are also equally given opportunity to express. The results also in the recent exams have also shown that the girls are feeling more at home in their life spaces and performing better than boys, thus, the gender difference is not felt in today's century which is a positive and favourable sign.

Hypothesis

There is no significant correlation between overall rating of Life space environment and Student Level practices of educational institutions.

TABLE 4

Correlation between Overall rating of Life space environment and Student Level practices of educational institutions

		Overall Life space environment	Overall Student practices
Overall Life space environment	Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.759**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	288	288
Overall Student level practices	Pearson Correlation	0.759**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	288	288

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Study reveals that there was a positive correlation between life space environment of students and student's level practices in the educational institutions. The Correlation of life space environment of students with student's level practices was 0.759. An overall, the correlation was positively significant at 0.01 levels.

Discussion

This finding could be because the macro system is an umbrella term and ant elements like the micro system or student practices will be included under it. Thus, any movement of the broader concept or policy will result in corresponding change in the micro system, the students trust and involvement will depend upon what type of life space is provided to them. The values and the culture of the life space macrosystem will be shadowed by the attitude and perception of the microsystem who even unconsciously absorb their philosophy and way of life.

In the chapter on student practices and their impact on learning spaces, Lomas and Oblinger[xi] emphasises that learning spaces impart a feeling of the campus culture to students. Thus, life space involves the learning and becoming culture of an educational institution. Studies in Life

Space Crisis Intervention has also stated that were also higher rates of student attendance and involvement of students.

Major Recommendations

1. School administrators have to orient the staff and the students about their rights, policies and practices from time to time.

2. Student focused cells like grievance cell, anti-ragging cell, women cell, counseling centers, mentoring facilities, help lines etc can be set up in educational institutions.

3. SWOT analysis of the institution and feedback from students has to be done at regular intervals.

4. Co-curricular and curricular activities have to involve more and more students as co-partners in decision making.

5. School administrators need to be more sensitized towards the needs of students below 15 years and organize sessions on coping with stress, yoga and mentoring, inspirational talks and also hold more activities so as to discover their latent talents.

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