

Jacques Colomb

“Didactiques des Disciplines” Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique

How Students of Technology view General Instruction

Two studies conducted at the request of the high school and junior high school administration, were done in using representative samples from the seniors at different establishments which concentrated on the following subjects: English, art, physical education, French, history-geography (scientific disciplines were not considered among these as general instruction given their “applied” nature).

Description of the Population

The ensemble of the population comprised 1490 students of technology and 825 professional students. Among the latter, only the 5 largest groups of students enrolled were retained for the study: Mechanical-Electricity (11%), Electricity-Electronics (8%), Business-Sales (21%), Accounting-Management (28%), Secretarial-Office Automation (33%).

Analysis of several Responses

Three questions sought to identify how students viewed the various disciplines in their respective areas with regard to usefulness, attractiveness, and their expectations.

A large consensus (98%, 93%, 95%) on usefulness, attractiveness and expectations, respectively, in relation to the technological disciplines, confirms the deliberate choice of these sections. The other subjects, in order of their usefulness, tie in with their social representation and above all with their weight in the evaluation, as one might expect. On the other hand, attractiveness in relation to these subjects finds EPS in first place (67%) and math in last place (27%). The response to students’ expectations was overall very positive (around 70% for all the subjects).

The ensemble of these responses appears to translate into a good (indeed a very good) integration on the part of students of these sections within the education system.

One question asked students to situate, in relation to a certain number of activities, whether they liked them or not. If the order of activities can be considered to correspond to an “expected order” which highly favors “manipulative” activities, it should be highlighted that activities such as “debating”, “analyzing”, or “writing” gathered percentages between 60 and 70%, and the weakest scores were for “exposing” and “synthesizing” which were somewhere around 40%.

To conclude generally, the student populations questioned can be characterized by:

- an affirmative, deliberate choice of these orientations,
- a good (indeed, very good) integration within the present education system with regard to general instruction,
- finally, a very coherent image of the subjects which comes from the overall analysis of the responses.