

Private lessons in chemistry – 12th grade students' perceptions

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1. Objective

The aim of this study was to investigate why students make use of private lessons during their school years. The aspects investigated aimed to determine: the age at which students began to attend to private lessons and the reasons they did so; if these lessons were useful and how they differ from their lessons at school.

2. Sample

Eighteen 12th grade students who had private lessons while studying chemistry in school.

3. Methodology

Students were interviewed individually.

4. Conclusions

The results suggest that students looked for private lessons to improve their marks, and the majority of them succeeded.

Students pointed out some aspects that distinguished, in their opinion, the private lessons from their chemistry classes at school:

Private lessons

- Students correct homework, assigned by the their tutor but also given in chemistry classes at school
- Students clarify their doubts
- Students review contents taught in chemistry classes
- Students sometimes study new contents (which have not yet been taught in school)
- The teaching pace is slower
- The teaching is more individualized
- There are less students
- There is less noise
- Students pay more attention than in school
- Students feel more at ease to ask questions
- The tutor gives each student more attention
- The tutor main concern is the student's success

Chemistry classes at school

- Teaching pace is too fast
- The teacher doesn't normally clarify doubts
- Sometimes the students only copy what the teacher has written on the board without understanding what they have copied
- The teacher is more concerned to teach all that is in the syllabus than the student's effective learning

Is it possible to change the way we teach chemistry in schools or private lessons are almost inevitable to obtain success?