



Analysis of questionnaires to assess the 'Motivational Learning Environment' (MoLE) of upper secondary level students in Ireland

A report by the UCC / ICASE partners for PROFILES WP7

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Executive Summary

The report presents extra data collected by 36 teachers from 556 students in Spring 2014.

The purpose of this study was to see what effect an inquiry-based taught module might have on students' attitudes to school science. In early 2014 five hundred and fifty six second level students (ca. 16 years of age) completed **two** questionnaires before the module was taught. Some weeks later, after the module was taught, they completed two identical questionnaires.

The first questionnaire asked students to describe their actual experience of school science. The second questionnaire asked them to indicate how they thought it should be. The 'reality', as they perceived it, was different from what they considered to be ideal.

After the module was completed the students' ideas of ideal science lessons had not changed significantly. However their perception of the reality had shifted significantly towards the ideal.

The pre-test and post-test indicated the following:

science lessons were more enjoyable (Q. 1)
the students felt happier (Q.2)
they felt they had more time to think about questions (Q.4)
topics were perceived as more important for themselves and for society (Qs.7 & 8)
they had more opportunity to make suggestions (Q.9)
they were making more of a personal effort to understand and participate (Q.12)
they felt that the class was cooperative and making more of an effort. (Q.11)

1 Introduction

This report outlines the findings of the **MoLE** questionnaires ('Motivational Learning Environment') that were administered by the UCC group in 2014. The questionnaire was developed by Claus Bolte, Department of Chemistry Education, Freie Universität Berlin – Germany in 2009, under Work Package 7 (WP7: Student Gains) of the **PROFILES** project ("Professional Reflection-Oriented Focus on Inquiry-based Learning and Education through Science").

The PROFILES steering committee agreed on using one specific instrument, i.e. the "Instrument for Analysing the 'Motivational Learning Environment' (MoLE)". The partners used this instrument into to collect pre-test and post-test data.

The full questionnaires are reproduced in Appendix 2.

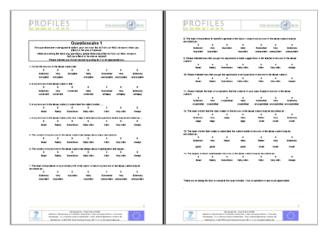


Figure 1: Layout of the questionnaires

2. Administration of the questionnaires

Thirty six different class groups (**556 students** in all) completed the questionnaires before and after a module was taught in accordance with the PROFILES requirements. The results were initially collected and analysed by the teachers involved. For this report all the data were later compiled and analysed.

In the pre-test two questionnaires, each with 14 questions, were given to each student. The same questionnaires were used in the post-test.

The fourteen questions in Questionnaire 1 related to the **reality** of students' experience of science education. Each of the fourteen questions in Questionnaire 2 corresponded with those in the first questionnaire but asked the students what they thought their experience of science education **should be**.

The fourteen questions might be roughly grouped as follows:

Questions 1 & 2	Enjoyableness, sense of contentment
Questions 3 & 4	Level of difficulty of the subject
Questions 5 & 6	Presentation of the subject
Questions 7 & 8	The importance of the subject
Questions 9 & 10	Teacher approachability
Questions 11 & 12	Class involvement
Questions 13 & 14	Personal involvement

Table 1: Rough grouping of questions

3. The sample population

Of the 556 students surveyed 109 were male and 297 were female. They were in the third, fourth and fifth years of second level education. Their ages ranged from 12 to 18. Most were sixteen years of age and nearing the end of their fourth year of second level education when the survey was completed.

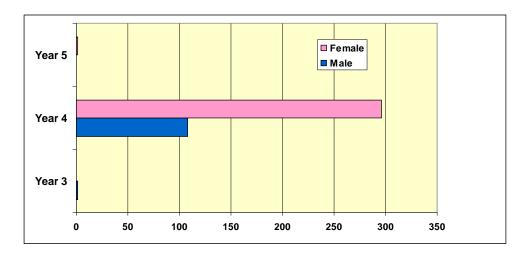


Figure 2: Gender profile of the students

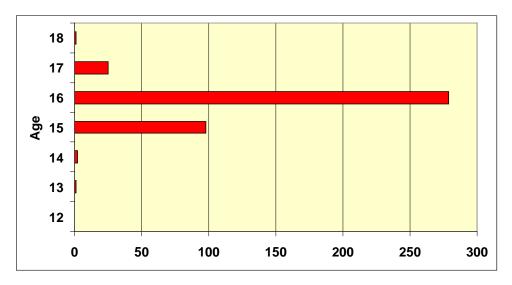


Figure 3: The age profile of the students

6. How would you rate your ability in the science subjects you are currently studying? (compared to your classmates)						
Weighting	-1	0	-1			
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
Biology	168	227	28			1
Chemistry	103	233	51			
Physics	88	193	89			
Science	136	265	49			

Figure 4: Students' assessment of their own ability in science subjects. (An arbitrary weighting was used to represent this graphically.)

All the students in the study were in second level schools and most of them (75%) were in senior classes.

Question 8 asked students to indicate what science subjects they were studying. If some were studying more than one then they did not indicate that in their response; the total number of responses to this question was 548.

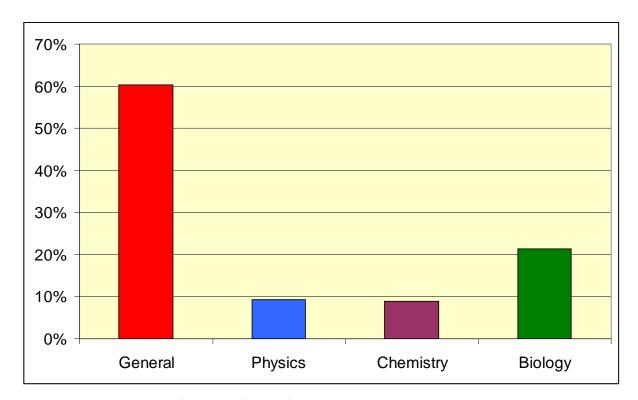


Figure 5: The percentage of students (n= 548) studying various science subjects.

4. Responses to the questionnaire 1

The frequencies of responses to all the items in the questionnaires are given in Appendix 1. Some of the more significant findings are presented in this section.

4.1 Questions 1 Enjoyableness of science lessons

The students' actual enjoyment of science lessons shows an improvement in the post-test questionnaires with higher percentages selecting 'more enjoyable' options.

Options	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. For me the lessons in the above subject are:	Extremely enjoyable	Very enjoyable	Enjoyable	Fairly enjoyable	Somewhat unenjoyable	Very unenjoyable	Extremely unenjoyable
Before	I						
n = 556	7%	18%	32%	29%	10%	2%	2%
After					I		
n = 556	15%	31%	29%	18%	6%	1%	1%

Table 2: Summary of responses to question 1 in Questionnaire 1. ('Before' and 'After')

4.2 Questions 1: Estimates of Change

By using a simple weighting (e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) to the 'Before' and 'After' percentages (for question 1) we can estimate the amount of change that occurred (see Table 3). In this case the change is **equivalent** to **58% of the students selecting the next lowest option** (which for this questions means moving towards the more 'Enjoyable' end of the spectrum).

Note: Using a weighting of -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3 would produce the same estimate of change.

Options	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Before	7%	36%	97%	116%	51%	12%	13%
After	15%	62%	86%	71%	29%	3%	5%

Sum	
331%	Change
272%	-58%

Table 3: Estimating the change in responses to question 1 in Questionnaire 1.

In what follows, this process will be used to estimate the extent of the changes that occurred in the responses to all the questions.

4.3 Summary of all responses to Questionnaire 1 (Before and After)

The size of the 'estimate of change' shown in the last column of Table 4 indicates the extent to which students' responses had changed. **Negative values** indicate swings towards the left side of the range of options and **positive values** indicate swings towards the right.

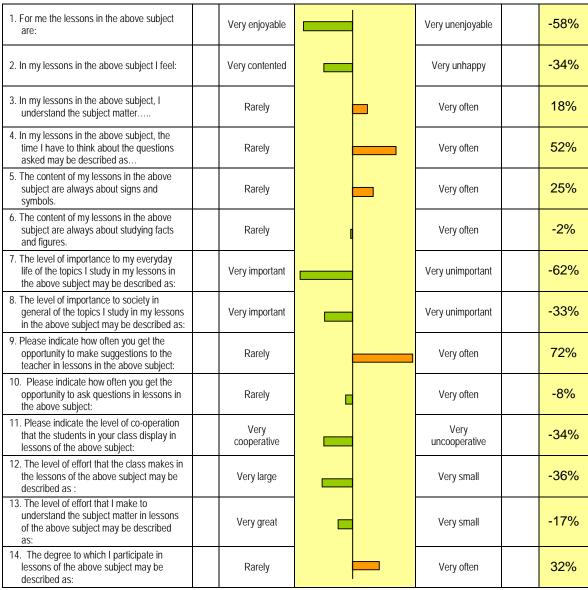


Table 4: Summary of responses to all questions in Questionnaire 1. The 'estimate of change', shown as a percentage and an arrow, indicates the extent of the difference between the 'Before' and 'After' responses. (For clarity, only two of the seven options are displayed.)

The responses to questions 6 and 10 did not show much change. The responses to questions 1 and 7 show changes equivalent to between 58% and 62% of students selecting the next 'lowest' option (i.e. towards the left side of the range of options. These are desirable outcomes.

The responses to questions 4 and 9 show changes equivalent to between 52% and 72% of students selecting the next 'highest 'option (i.e. towards the right side of the range of options). These are also desirable outcomes.

5. Responses to questionnaire 2 (Before and After)

Questionnaire 2 addressed the same fourteen areas as Questionnaire 1 but asked students what how things 'should be' rather than how they were in reality. It was administered before and after an inquiry-based module was taught. The extent of the change in the students' opinions is was estimated as described earlier (in and is summarised in Table 5.

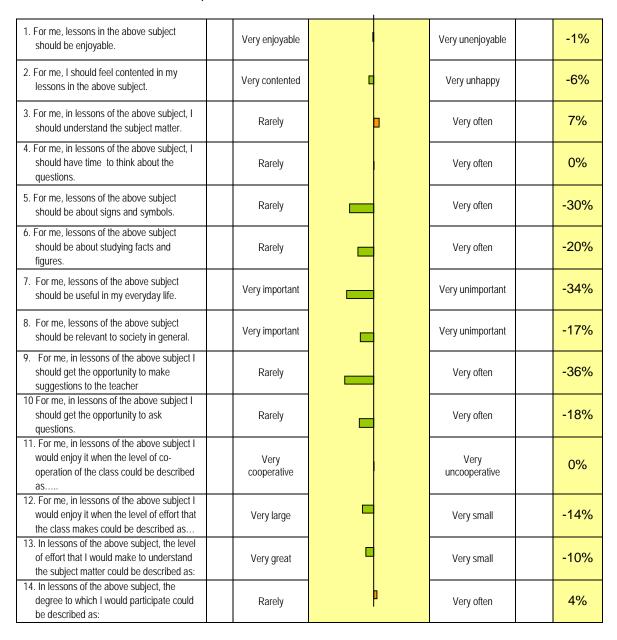


Table 5: Summary of responses to Questionnaire 2. The 'estimate of change', shown as a percentage and an arrow, indicates the extent of the difference between the 'Before' and 'After' responses. (For clarity, only two of the seven options are displayed.)

It is clear that in most cases there was relatively little change in students' opinions of ideal science lessons after the module had been taught.

6. Conclusions

There was a clear difference between the students' experience of science lessons before and after the inquiry-based module was taught. Questionnaire 1 (pre- and post-test) indicated the following:

science lessons were more enjoyable (Q. 1)
the students felt happier (Q.2)
they felt they had more time to think about questions (Q.4)
topics were perceived as more important for themselves and for society (Qs.7 & 8)
they had more opportunity to make suggestions (Q.9)
they were making more of a personal effort to understand and participate (Q.12)
they felt that the class was cooperative and making more of an effort. (Q.11)

The 'before' and 'after' reponses to Questionnaire 2 showed relatively less change in the students' ideas of what science lessons should be like. This may indicate that their original responses were well considered and were confirmed by the inquiry-based module.

Appendix 1: Tabulated totals

		Options			No. of response to the options										
Question	1	2	3	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	n
Please write down the name of the class in which you are a student in your school.	text														
Please write down your class level (First year, second year, Transition year, etc)	1st	2nd	3rd	4 TY	5th	6th		131	1	1	414	1	1	1	550
3. What is your date of birth?	dob														556
4. Are you male or female?	male	fem ale						174	372						546
5. Please write down the first letter of the name of the street in which you live and the house number, e.g. B/54 or L/25	text														
6. How would you rate your ability in the science subjects you are currently studying? (High, Average or low compared to your classmates)															
Biology	High	Med ium	Low					168	227	28					423
Chemistry	High	Med ium	Low					103	233	51					387
Physics	High	Med ium	Low					88	193	89					370
Science	High	Med ium	Low					136	265	49					450
7. Please indicate the type of school that you are attending.	Prim ary	Jun. sec.	Sen. sec					0	148	408					556
8. Please indicate the type of science course that you are studying:	Gen eral	Phy sics	Che mist ry	Biol ogy				331	51	49	117				548

Totals (Questionnaire 1, pre-test)

Options								
Questionnaire 1 (Before)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	n
1. For me the lessons in the above subject are:	38	99	180	160	56	11	10	554
2. In my lessons in the above subject I feel:	32	94	217	170	32	5	4	554
3. In my lessons in the above subject, I understand the subject matter	3	20	89	72	155	176	39	554
4. In my lessons in the above subject, the time I have to think about the questions asked may be described as	5	32	179	132	129	55	20	552
The content of my lessons in the above subject are always about signs and symbols.	21	133	235	93	57	12	1	552
The content of my lessons in the above subject are always about studying facts and figures.	16	76	187	90	102	71	11	553
7. The level of importance to my everyday life of the topics I study in my lessons in the above subject may be described as:	27	79	148	163	93	31	13	554
8. The level of importance to society in general of the topics I study in my lessons in the above subject may be described as:	51	90	145	168	62	27	10	553
9. Please indicate how often you get the opportunity to make suggestions to the teacher in lessons in the above subject:	22	98	126	81	104	64	57	552
10. Please indicate how often you get the opportunity to ask questions in lessons in the above subject:	7	24	62	63	110	112	176	554
11. Please indicate the level of co-operation that the students in your class display in lessons of the above subject:	46	125	177	120	54	23	8	553
12. The level of effort that the class makes in the lessons of the above subject may be described as:	41	88	158	212	27	8	17	551
13. The level of effort that I make to understand the subject matter in lessons of the above subject may be described as:	71	142	151	143	35	7	4	553
14. The degree to which I participate in lessons of the above subject may be described as:	7	17	75	86	129	129	109	552

Totals (Questionnaire 2, pre-test)

	Opti	ons						
Questionnaire 2 (Before)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	n
For me, lessons in the above subject should be enjoyable.	180	199	109	55	3	5	2	553
2. For me, I should feel contented in my lessons in the above subject.	147	195	139	62	7	2	1	553
3. For me, in lessons of the above subject, I should understand the subject matter.	254	160	74	33	7	14	11	553
 For me, in lessons of the above subject, I should have time to think about the questions. 	93	152	193	87	8	17	3	553
For me, lessons of the above subject should be about signs and symbols.	10	30	114	213	127	37	21	552
For me, lessons of the above subject should be about studying facts and figures.	22	62	139	188	90	38	14	553
7. For me, lessons of the above subject should be useful in my everyday life.	88	140	163	106	40	12	4	553
8. For me, lessons of the above subject should be relevant to society in general.	86	104	191	111	44	10	6	552
For me, in lessons of the above subject I should get the opportunity to make suggestions to the teacher	82	117	190	103	32	16	12	552
10 For me, in lessons of the above subject I should get the opportunity to ask questions.	155	158	128	63	25	13	9	551
11. For me, in lessons of the above subject I would enjoy it when the level of cooperation of the class could be described as	113	210	176	42	7	3	1	552
12. For me, in lessons of the above subject I would enjoy it when the level of effort that the class makes could be described as	93	199	175	72	8	4	1	552
13. In lessons of the above subject, the level of effort that I would make to understand the subject matter could be described as:	131	163	138	96	20	2	1	551
14. In lessons of the above subject, the degree to which I would participate could be described as:	3	18	55	69	104	152	150	551

Totals (Questionnaire 1, post-test)

	Opt	ions						
Questionnaire 1 (After)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	n
1. For me the lessons in the above subject are:	84	172	159	98	32	3	4	552
2. In my lessons in the above subject I feel:	47	157	216	101	23	7	1	552
3. In my lessons in the above subject, I understand the subject matter	5	23	61	80	125	191	67	552
4. In my lessons in the above subject, the time I have to think about the questions asked may be described as	5	27	95	130	147	97	51	552
5. The content of my lessons in the above subject are always about signs and symbols.	27	123	190	84	84	35	8	551
6. The content of my lessons in the above subject are always about studying facts and figures.	20	56	194	111	111	43	16	551
7. The level of importance to my everyday life of the topics I study in my lessons in the above subject may be described as:	74	135	155	101	63	16	7	551
8. The level of importance to society in general of the topics I study in my lessons in the above subject may be described as:	69	118	181	108	52	15	9	552
9. Please indicate how often you get the opportunity to make suggestions to the teacher in lessons in the above subject:	4	44	85	100	115	127	77	552
10. Please indicate how often you get the opportunity to ask questions in lessons in the above subject:	8	30	57	57	117	136	145	550
11. Please indicate the level of co-operation that the students in your class display in lessons of the above subject:	80	145	185	89	31	11	11	552
12. The level of effort that the class makes in the lessons of the above subject may be described as:	59	126	184	147	27	4	5	552
13. The level of effort that I make to understand the subject matter in lessons of the above subject may be described as:	63	173	181	104	26	2	2	551
14. The degree to which I participate in lessons of the above subject may be described as:	3	16	53	72	118	131	158	551

Totals (Questionnaire 2, post-test)

	Opti	ons						
Questionnaire 2 (After)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	n
1. For me, lessons in the above subject should be enjoyable.	209	170	98	52	12	7	3	551
For me, I should feel contented in my lessons in the above subject.	179	173	128	55	10	3	3	551
For me, in lessons of the above subject, I should understand the subject matter.	254	126	94	47	9	6	14	550
 For me, in lessons of the above subject, I should have time to think about the questions. 	106	161	158	83	17	18	8	551
5. For me, lessons of the above subject should be about signs and symbols.	36	66	103	181	109	38	17	550
For me, lessons of the above subject should be about studying facts and figures.	39	66	137	193	84	21	10	550
7. For me, lessons of the above subject should be useful in my everyday life.	132	152	156	81	19	8	2	550
8. For me, lessons of the above subject should be relevant to society in general.	90	135	190	91	31	10	4	551
For me, in lessons of the above subject I should get the opportunity to make suggestions to the teacher	122	171	139	80	16	8	15	551
10 For me, in lessons of the above subject I should get the opportunity to ask questions.	186	163	103	70	7	12	9	550
11. For me, in lessons of the above subject I would enjoy it when the level of cooperation of the class could be described as	120	218	145	51	9	3	4	550
12. For me, in lessons of the above subject I would enjoy it when the level of effort that the class makes could be described as	124	202	151	62	8	3	1	551
13. In lessons of the above subject, the level of effort that I would make to understand the subject matter could be described as:	139	170	148	73	19	0	1	550
14. In lessons of the above subject, the degree to which I would participate could be described as:	11	27	38	66	91	137	179	549

Appendix 2: The questionnaires

Dear students,

Are science lessons interesting? We would like to find out what science lessons should be like according to your opinion.

On the following sheets you will find two questionnaires. Please remember that that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions asked in the questionnaires. We are interested in your <u>personal opinion!</u>

In addition to the two questionnaires, on the first page we ask for some background information about yourself. All information you provide will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and your help!

1.	Please write down the student in your school	e name of the class in wh ol.	ich you are a			
2.	Please write down yo Transition year, etc.)	ur class level (First year,	second year,			
3.	What is your date of b	oirth?				
4.	Are you male or fema	ale?		† female	†	male
5.	What is your national	ity?	†			
6.		first letter of the name of se number, e.g. B/54 or L				
7		our ability in the science	Biology			
		High, Average or low con	npared to your	Chemistry		
	classmates)			Physics		
				Science		
				(ignore those	which do	not apply)
Ple	ease indicate the type	of school that you are atte	ending.			
	Junior School	Middle School	High School			
	(Primary)	(Junior second level)	(Upper second leve	l)		
Ple	ease indicate the type	of science course that yo				
	General Science*	Physics	Biolog	У		

^{*}This included any type of general science course (integrated, co-ordinated, etc.).





Questionnaire 1

This questionnaire is designed to obtain your views on the ACTUAL or REAL lessons which you attend in the area of science.

When answering the following questions, please think about the ACTUAL or REAL lessons that you attend in the above subject.

Please indicate your chosen answer by putting an **X** in the appropriate box.

1. Fo	or me the lessons	s in the above	subject are:				
	Extremely	Very	Enjoyable	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
	enjoyable	enjoyable		enjoyable	unenjoyable	unenjoyable	unenjoyable
2. In	my lessons in th	e above subje	ect I feel:				
	Extremely	Very	Contented	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
	contented	contented		contented	unhappy	unhappy	unhappy
3. In	my lessons in th	e above subje	ect, I understand	I the subject mat	ter		
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly often	Often	Very often	Always
4 In	my lessons in th	ie above subje	ect the time I ha	ve to think about	the guestions a	sked may be de	escribed as
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly often	Often	Very often	Always
5. Th	e content of my	lessons in the	above subject	are always about	signs and symb	ools.	
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly often	Often	Very often	Always
6. Th	e content of my	lessons in the	above subject	are always about	studving facts a	and figures.	
• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •					□ □		
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly often	Often	Very often	Always
7. Th	e level of import	ance to my e v	/eryday life of t	he topics I study	in my lessons in	the above sub	ject may be
	ribed as:	-		•			-
	Extremely	Very	Important	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
	important	important		important	unimportant	unimportant	unimportant









8. The level of described as	•	ance to socie	ty in general of	the topics I stud	y in my lessons ii	n the above sul	bject may be
Ext	remely	Very	Important	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
imp	ortant	important	·	important	unimportant	unimportant	unimportant
9. Please ind subject:	licate hov	w often you ge	et the opportunit	y to make sugge	estions to the tead	cher in lessons	in the above
•							
N	ever	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly often	Often	Very often	Always
10. Please in	dicate h	ow often you g	jet the opportun	ity to ask questi	ons in lessons in	the above subj	ect:
N	ever	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly often	Often	Very often	Always
11. Please in subject:	dicate th	e level of co-c	peration that th	e students in yo	ur class display ir	n lessons of the	e above
·							
Ext	remely	Very	Cooperative	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
coop	erative	cooperative		cooperative	uncooperative	uncooperative	uncooperative
12. The level	of effort	that the class	makes in the le	ssons of the abo	ove subject may l	be described a	s:
Ext	remely	Very	Large	Fairly	Rather	Very	Extremely
L	arge	large		large	small	small	small
13. The level described as		that I make to	understand the	e subject matter	in lessons of the	above subject	may be
Ext	remely	Very	Great	Fairly	Rather	Very	Extremely
g	reat	great	great	small	small	small	small
14. The degr	ee to wh	ich I participat	e in lessons of	the above subject	ct may be describ	ed as:	
N	lever	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly often	Often	Very often	Always
Thank you fo	r taking t	he time to cor	mplete this ques	stionnaire. Your	co-operation is ve	ery much appre	eciated
_							









Questionnaire 2

This questionnaire is designed to obtain your views on the IDEAL lessons which you would like to attend in the area of science, i.e. what you think lessons SHOULD be like.

When answering the following questions, please think about the IDEAL lessons that you would like to attend in the above subject, i.e. what you think the lessons should be like.

Please indicate your chosen answer by putting an X in the appropriate box.

1. Fo	r me, lessons in	the above sub	ject should be	enjoyable.			
	Extremely	Very	Important	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
	important	important		important	unimportant	unimportant	unimportant
2. Fo	r me, I should fe	el contented in	n my lessons in	the above subje	ct.		
	Extremely	Very	Important	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
	important	important		important	unimportant	unimportant	unimportant
3. Fo	r me, in lessons	of the above s	subject, I should	I understand the	subject matter.		
	Extremely	Very	Important	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
	important	important		important	unimportant	unimportant	unimportant
4. Fo					nk about the que		_
	Extremely	Very	Important	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
	important	important		important	unimportant	unimportant	unimportant
5. Fo	r me, lessons of	the above sub	oject should be	about signs and	symbols.		
	Extremely	Very	Important	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
	important	important		important	unimportant	unimportant	unimportant
6. Fo	r me, lessons of	the above sub	oject should be	about studying fa	acts and figures.		
	Extremely	Very	Important	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
	important	important	·	important	unimportant	-	unimportant
7. Fo	r me. lessons of	the above sub	piect should be	useful in my eve	ervdav life.		
	Extremely	Very	Important	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
	important	important	portant	important	unimportant	unimportant	unimportant









8. For me, lessons of						
Extremely	Very	Important	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
important	important		important	unimportant	unimportant	unimportant
9.For me, in lessons	of the above	subject I should	get the opportu	unity to make sugg	estions to the te	eacher
Extremely	Very	Important	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
important	important		important	unimportant	unimportant	unimportant
10 For me, in lessons	s of the above	subject I shoul	d get the oppor	tunity to ask quest	ions.	
Extremely	Very	Important	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
important	important		important	unimportant	unimportant	unimportant
11. For me, in lesson described as	s of the above	e subject I woul	d enjoy it when	the level of co-ope	eration of the cla	ass could be
Extremely	Very	Cooperative	Fairly	Somewhat	Very	Extremely
cooperative	cooperative		cooperative	uncooperative	uncooperative	uncooperative
12. For me, in lesson described as	s of the above	e subject I woul	d enjoy it when	the level of effort	that the class m	akes could be
Extremely	Very	Large	Fairly	Rather	Very	Extremely
Large	large		large	small	small	small
13. In lessons of the described as:	above subjec	t, the level of ef	fort that I would	make to understa	nd the subject r	matter could be
Extremely	Very	Large	Fairly	Rather	Very	Extremely
Large	large		large	small	small	small
14. In lessons of the	above subjec	t, the degree to	which I would p	participate could be	e described as:	
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly often	Often	Very often	Always

SEVENTH FRAMEWORK



Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your co-operation is very much appreciated.