Abstract

Climate change education, at both primary and secondary school levels, has been recognised as a key approach through which to enhance the knowledge and understanding of climate change among learners. The success of climate change education is largely dependent on the resources through which learners acquire knowledge of climate change, namely teachers and textbooks. This two dimensional study investigates FET geography teachers’ knowledge and perceptions of climate change, and provides a critique of the geography textbooks used most frequently by these teachers in climate change education. To investigate teachers’ understandings of climate change, the study employed a qualitative non-experimental research design, which encompassed semi-structured interviews conducted with 32 geography teachers in Gauteng province, South Africa. A number of key inconsistencies, misconceptions and gaps were found to exist in teachers’ knowledge and perceptions of climate change. The value of the nine FET level geography textbooks for climate change education was assessed, and critiqued using a classification process based on criteria developed by the researcher. This assessment revealed a number of shortfalls in the textbooks’ provision of relevant, accessible and accurate information on climate change. It is important that these flaws and shortfalls in both teachers’ knowledge and textbooks representations of climate change are rectified as they are likely to have implications for the ultimate success of climate change education in schools.