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Understanding science curriculum and research in rural Kwa-Zulu Natal

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Abstract

In this study I explore concepts of relevant science, curriculum and development through participation and engagement with two schools and their community in the rural area of Chibini in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

During a three-year involvement a research team, students, teachers, parents and farmers, supported by traditional leaders and NGO[1]s, developed a community-based science curriculum. Amongst urgent concerns for health care, employment, traditional values – even survival, profound lessons in understandings of appropriate science, practical skills-development and *ubuntu* emerged. Western conventions of frameworks, protocols, goals, identity, even ways of researching are challenged through engaged transformation. Relevant science has parallels with relevant research in its purposes and processes of contributing to both knowledge and community well-being.

The research drew upon interdisciplinary pedagogy as well as interdisciplinary methodological paradigms, moving from learner-centred education to community-centred education and from the research paradigm of mindful inquiry to *ubuntu.*

Rural communities can benefit from community-centred, project-based learning which contributes to immediate needs, draws on community strengths and is centred in *ubuntu*. Rural communities, in turn, have valuable contributions to make to science education transformation.

This study formed part of a collaborative project: 'Human Rights, Democracy, and Social Justice: Science and Mathematics Literacy in Disadvantaged Communities' led from the Centre for Educational Research, Evaluation and Policy, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Durban, South Africa.

[1] Non-Government Organisations