

The Training of a Science Teacher in an Open and Distance Learning Context: Student Teachers' Perception

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ABSTRACT The Report of the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement shows that teachers are not well trained in respect of the subjects they are supposed to teach. Most of the teachers in South Africa are trained through open and distance learning (ODL) mode – learning is provided and organized around the geographical, social, and time constraints of the learner and teaching is conducted by someone removed in space or time from the learner. This article attempts to investigate the perceptions in-service student teachers have about a science module presented at one of the ODL institutions in the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Student teachers' perception about the focus the science module has on subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge is investigated. A mixed method research design was utilised in this study. A quantitative phase was followed by a qualitative phase with the aim of articulating the convergence the two phases have towards capturing the same phenomenon. The study indicated that primary school science teachers' limited knowledge of science restricted them from effectively teaching content knowledge in natural science classes. In-service teachers also feel that the science module offered in an ODL mode does not adequately address the practical component of science teaching. The study suggests that ODL institutions should work towards providing science students with adequate pedagogical content knowledge which is critical in science teaching.