

Zulu Primary School Learners' Conceptions of the Roles and Functions of the Liver

Sitwala Namwinji Imenda

*University of Zululand, Department of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education,
KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa 3886
Telephone: +27828883606, +27359026349, E-mail: ImendaS@unizulu.ac.za*

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ABSTRACT Formal schooling in many developing countries has tended to propagate a Western view of mainstream school science, almost oblivious to the worldviews learners bring to the classrooms. The objective of this study was to document grade 6 learners' conception of the role and functions of the liver. This was a survey involving 197 grade 6 learners from Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. Data was collected with the use of a paper-pencil instrument consisting of one open-ended task to tap into the respondents' home knowledge about the roles and functions of a liver in the human body. The study revealed that learners held various notions, including a number of misconceptions, about the role and function of a liver in a living human body, many of which were not aligned with scientific notions espoused by the school curriculum. The implications of these findings for classroom practice are discussed.