

Primary School Learners' Conceptions of the Role and Function of the Brain

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ABSTRACT In many developing countries formal schooling has tended to propagate a Western view of mainstream school science (MSS), almost oblivious to the worldviews learners bring to the classroom. This study reports grade six Zulu children's conceptions of the role and functions of the brain. The survey involved 197 girls and boys from KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Data was collected using a paper-pencil instrument consisting of one open-ended task given to the children as homework to enable them to tap into their parents' understanding of the topic being investigated. The study revealed that context was a very strong frame of reference for the children in the way they answered the question. They interpreted the question entirely within the intrigues of their own life worlds-a world dominated by Zulu traditions and culture. The findings reported in this study have far-reaching implications, including triggering national-wide curriculum revisions and reorientations.