

Challenges Encountered in the Teaching and Learning of Natural Sciences in Rural Schools in South Africa*

Nomxolisi Mtsi and Cosmas Maphosa

University of Fort Hare, South Africa

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ABSTRACT The study sought to establish challenges encountered by teachers in teaching science in rural junior secondary schools in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Located in the interpretivist paradigm and following a qualitative approach, the study adopted a case study design. A purposive sample of three school principals, three Natural Sciences teachers and eighteen Natural Sciences learners participated in the study. Data were collected through individual interviews with principals and teachers, focus group interviews with learners and lesson observation. Data were analysed for content. The study found that there were numerous challenges related to lack of required infrastructure and resources for science teaching. There were also challenges related to learners' background, language of instruction and lack of parental support. The study concludes that the teaching and learning of Natural Sciences in rural junior secondary schools is negatively affected by the existence of challenges which should be addressed. It is only after such challenges are addressed that Natural Science can be meaningfully taught and learnt in schools.