

Teachers' Perceptions and implementation of inquiry-based learning in rural schools

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Abstract

An inquiry approach is a student-centered approach that seeks to enhance learners' conceptual understanding of scientific concepts and acquisition of scientific process skills. This study explored how Chemistry teachers perceive and implement the inquiry approach in rural schools. Guided by the pragmatist philosophy, the study adopted the mixed-method approach and utilized the sequential explanatory design. Data were collected from 15 chemistry teachers in the Gweru district using questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The results of the study revealed that chemistry teachers have positive and favorable perceptions about the implementation of the inquiry approach however, its enactment in the classroom is limited extent due to a number of constraining contextual factors. In addition, chemistry teachers are still hesitant to shift from the transmissive paradigm of teaching toward a more learner-centered approach. Furthermore, the teachers were shown to have limited knowledge and skills in the practical implementation of inquiry instruction. The study recommends professional development training and support of chemistry teachers on the practical implementation of inquiry-based learning to enhance their pedagogical content knowledge and skills.

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