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Soweto Science Centre as a flagship community engagement initiative

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A flagship community engagement initiative is coordinated within the Faculty of Science at a South African university. This initiative takes the form of a strategic and innovative instructional intervention which makes provision for tutoring of learners in the Further Education and Training (FET) band by providing tuition through contact sessions on Fridays, Saturdays and during school recess. Learners are drawn from schools located within Soweto Township and the surrounding areas. Prior to the commencement of the mentoring intervention, learners' pre-entry characteristics in terms of the conceptual competence in various Physical Science knowledge areas covered at school were established through carefully structured knowledge, synthesis and application-type questions which formed an integral part of a diagnostic conceptual assessment instrument. In particular, the findings of this research revealed inadequacies in relation to the Physics content covered at schools as well as the competency of the FET teachers in the Physics conceptual knowledge areas investigated. Key findings that emerged from this investigation appear to be commensurate with documented research studies on Physical Science teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge within the broader South African educational context. Implications for the coherent infusion of strategic and innovative instructional interventions in various educational settings are discussed.

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