

Science teachers' practices and the use of resource materials in teaching science in year eight classes in Samoa.

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Education in Samoa requires good quality teachers to increase students' knowledge, skills and understanding of the world in which they live in. The most common way for assessing students' proficiency is through formal examinations. In Samoa, the results of national examinations are used to select teachers for promotion, certification and placement. One major concern of teachers as well as parents in primary schools is that the results of the Year 8 National Examinations in Samoa have shown a need for improvements in teaching and learning of science in the primary classes. If the science examination results are to improve, information is first needed about what is happening in the classrooms when teachers are teaching science. This research describes the current situation and focuses on the challenges that are encountered by teachers in their preparation and planning of their daily classroom teaching. The research project also evaluates how the Primary Educational Materials Project (PEMP) have been utilised as these materials emphasise the use of student-centred approaches to learning and can potentially help in the preparation of both pre-service and in-service teachers. The purpose of this research study was to assess the use of PEMP books and resources that are used by teachers teaching science in Year 8 classes. Three science teachers' classes were observed, administered with questionnaires and then interviewed on how they plan using the PEMP books to teach science. Discussions and interviews with the teachers provide insights about their assumptions and beliefs in teaching science. Responses revealed that subject matter knowledge is crucial for good teaching and student understanding. Participants expressed the need for more professional training in order to develop skills like questioning, critical thinking and creating curiosity and interest in students. This study suggested that both pre-service and in-service trainees should be trained in a way which emphasizes the importance of developing these skills.

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