

Keynote Address

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Unplugged in South Africa

To be unplugged is to be set free, to depend on your own resources – free to be, to become, to know and to do. But it means also a severing of support systems, of relationships on which we depend. Metaphors include the Rock Band unplugged from its amplifiers, the student from her computer, the child from its mother, the bird from its nest. I will argue that science education needs to be plugged and unplugged at once, allowing each condition to draw strength from the other. I develop the theme in five domains, from my experiences in South Africa, especially with rural and township children. The domains are psychological, social, cultural, knowledge (including science in relation to other knowledges) and learning. I will underpin the theme with conceptions of freedom, and the African concept of *ubuntu*, whereby all things are connected.