

Children's songs and human factor development: A comparative analysis of Shona children's songs and imported English nursery rhymes

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Abstract

The article juxtaposes Shona children's songs and English nursery rhymes in order to unravel the contesting human factor values and epistemological codes and modes of socialisation. It largely approaches the songs as cultural texts that are quintessentially an expression of the ethos and culture of a people. These cultural texts embody a set of values that underpin consciousness and performance. Anchoring the discussion on the fundamentals of the human factor approach, and within the broader matrix of Afrocentricity, the article contends that in neocolonial Africa, children's socialisation is a contested site. The exposure of children to cultural texts from disparate cultural zones creates a fundamental human crisis. This is precisely the case because the two categories of songs advance diametrically variant and irreconcilable codes of cognitive enrichment. For instance, English nursery rhymes are part of the discursive infrastructure for solidifying European hegemony. They impose a foreign and alien memory which potentially dislocates children's consciousness. This is manifest in the manner in which 'London' and other symbols of the Western order are canonised. On the other hand, indigenous Shona children's songs provide a functional and value-laden curriculum of life and instruction. The symbolism is drawn from the Shona people's lived and livable experiences.