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Folktales as Pedagogy: Exploring Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions of African Indigenous Storytelling in English Classrooms

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Abstract

One of the principles underpinning the South African curriculum is the valuing of indigenous knowledge and indigenous knowledge systems. Folktales, as long-standing oral traditions, have been indispensable conduits of this indigeneity throughout history. This qualitative study explores teachers' and learners' perceptions of African indigenous folktales as a pedagogical resource in the English Home Language classroom. Through interviews, classroom observations and an art-based activity involving five English teachers and their classes across two schools, the study investigates the perceived challenges and benefits of incorporating African indigenous folktales into the English curriculum. Underpinned by social constructivism and multimodality, the study highlights how culturally embedded knowledge, learner experiences, and multiple modes of meaning-making influence the perceptions and pedagogical potential of African indigenous folktales in the English classroom. Findings reveal that both teachers' and learners' perceptions are shaped by their experiences as well as broader systemic factors. Notably, the limited incorporation of folktales in classroom practice results in their marginalisation, despite their educational and cultural value.

Keywords: Curriculum; Decolonisation; Indigeneity; Indigenous Knowledge Systems; Oral Tradition