

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

School for New Learning

Advanced Project

**An Empowering Curriculum
for the African American Student**



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FOREWORD

MY EXPERIENCE WITH THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

As an African American female and mother of ten children, ranging in ages 32 to 7, I have been distressed by the state of public education overall, but especially in reference to African American children, for a long time. I witness African American people suffering, especially in urban neighborhoods, where I have lived all of my life. While I had the financial means to keep my older children out of the public education system life circumstances forced me to place my younger children in public schools five years ago. I have one child in high school and four in elementary grades. In the last five years I have been actively involved in their educational process, serving on Local School Councils, Parent Advisory Councils, and initially as a member of Parents for School Choice, an organization founded by the Renaissance 2010 new schools movement.

The more I have become involved with the Chicago public school system, the more frustrated I have become. While most people agree that something should be done, the disagreement comes with what that something should be.

While I have always been passionate about education, the idea for this subject matter for my Advanced Project was prompted by two classes held at SNL. The first was a class that my husband took with instructor Jean Richine, titled “Exploring Education.” One of the required texts was *Democracy and Education* by John Dewey (1916). I was amazed at how relevant Dewey’s (1916) philosophy on education is to the current crisis in public education. As I read his view on the true purpose of education—that it should promote social progress, and how, particularly in a Democratic society, it should assure equal access to resources and a voice for all citizens—I immediately realized that these were the concepts that have been lost. The next class

that impacted me was “Psychology from an African-Centered Perspective” with Dr. Derise Tolliver, where I learned that traditional schools of thought were designed to promote Eurocentricity, which reflected the culture of those in power. These values conflict with African-centered ideas in many ways, leaving the cultural needs of an entire segment of the population unfulfilled and placing at a grave disadvantage those who do not relate to European concepts.

From the time I was in school, up to the schooling experiences of my children, rarely has there been any attempt to incorporate African centered concepts into the curriculums. Most of what has been available is the history of African Americans that begins with slavery and ends with the civil rights movement. And this is usually only presented in the month of February, which has been designated “Black History Month.” Rarely, if ever, is there any history, especially at the elementary level, of Africans prior to the transatlantic slave trade. The rich history of Africa, which would instill a much needed sense of self-esteem in urban youth, is omitted, whether accidentally or intentionally, the results are still the same. Additionally, the failure to acknowledge that Black children overall have different learning styles than those of their White counterparts, along with the failure to implement instructional practices that create an environment for these children to have the best opportunity for success, almost assures that they will continue to lag behind academically. The addition of the global aspect to the curriculum assures that African American students will be equipped to thrive in the new world economy.

Section 1: RESEARCH STRUCTURE

Rationale

In Chicago, three out of 100 Black boys earn a college degree by age 25. In 2008, 49% of Black males graduated from high school in Chicago, which was near the national average; 28% graduated in New York and 27% in Detroit (Individual, 2010). 67% of Black children in the United States cannot read at grade level by 4th grade compared to 29% of White children (Lowe, 2002).

In Chicago, 50% of all Black men between the ages of 16 and 64 are unemployed. And professionally, Blacks make up only 3.2% of lawyers, 3% of doctors, and less than 1% of architects (Lowe, 2002).

More Black children died in Chicago from gunfire in 2008 than Chicago soldiers died in Iraq. Murders of Black males between the ages of 14-17 rose by 40% between 2000 and 2007, while during the same period murders committed by Black males in the same age range rose by 38%. Blacks comprise only 12% of the U.S. population, but make up 44% of all prisoners in the United States (Fox & Swatt, 2008). In at least 15 states, Black men were sent to prison on drug charges at rates ranging from 20 to 57 times those of white men (Lowe, 2002).

These statistics are alarming. Through this compilation of literature I will attempt to make the connection between the inability of the United States public educational system to sufficiently satisfy the academic needs of the African American child and thereby reduce the aforementioned statistics. I will also offer solutions to this perplexing issue.

While most of us would agree that the needs of all ethnic groups are equally important, according to the National Center for Education it is a consistent fact that as a composite group Black children in U.S. schools have and continue to experience major difficulties since being allowed to be educated in this country (Shockley, 2011). Additionally, scholars emphasize

despite the many innovative programs and projects implemented to improve the academic success of African American students, proof of the failure of these endeavors lie in the reality that Blacks are still undereducated and miseducated. Also affirming this truth is that as a race African Americans still have not acquired the means to produce, own, and control the resources within their own communities, not to mention their failure to be contributing members of the society at large (Darling-Hammond, Williamson, & Hyler, 2007, Durden, 2007, Shockley, 2007,2011, Shockley & Fredrick, 2010 & Woodson, 1990).

Problem Statement

The problem is that the current primary school curriculum is not educating the African American child to their fullest potential.

Hypothesis

This advanced project is based on the following hypotheses:

- Currently, African American children in U.S. public schools are not reaching academic grade level achievements.
- Successful Afrocentered/Global curricula exist in some U.S. schools.
- Current Afrocentered/Global curricula can be used as models for other schools.

Advanced Project Goals

In this advanced project, I will:

- Review existing literature on early childhood education of African American children in U.S. public schools.
- Review existing literature on African-centered education as a means of educating the inner city child.
- Review existing literature on including Global Education as a curriculum subject.

- Identify the obstacles to the implementation of the African-centered curriculum in the early childhood setting.
- Analyze the debate between schooling vs. education of the African American child.
- Design *Teacher Resources for an African-centered/Global Education Curriculum in Early Childhood Education*.

These resources are the final objective of this Advanced Project that I hope will equip teachers and administrators with a set of tools that will help them implement an African-centered/Global Education curriculum for the early childhood classes in their schools. These guidelines are designed to increase the learning outcomes of the African American student.

My decision to create resources for use for the Early Childhood educator was twofold. First, my career goal is to open an early childhood educational facility where I can implement many of the processes that I have learned from this review of current literature. Next, countless studies have shown that the foundational learning years are the most critical (Guernsey, 2010). I believe that a curriculum of empowerment beginning at the early childhood level would be the most effective in changing the academic status of the African American child.

Limitations of the Study

This advanced project will focus on analyzing current issues of education of African American children in inner city public schools in the United States. This project will not focus on the education of white children or African American children in U.S. suburban schools. It will not study early childhood education in private schools.

Research Methodology

This study is based on data collected through two research methods. The first body of information is collected through a literature review that consists of reviewing past and current literature on education of African Americans in U.S. public schools. The second source of information is my own experiences and personal reflections. Specifically, this data is based on the educational experiences of my five children in Chicago public schools.

SECTION 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Purpose of Education

In his timeless book, *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916) explains that when we speak of life at its most primary level, in the physical sense, a living being can be described as one that suppresses and controls conflicting energies that threaten its existence. It struggles incessantly, with the hopes that the return that it gets compensates for the energy expended. Its goal is to use the environment as a mechanism for self-renewal as it innately knows that if it cannot do so, it will cease to exist as a living being. Life continues with an organism's ability to continually adapt and readapt the environment to satisfy its needs for survival.

Dewey (1916) furthers his explanation by saying that on a more complex level, life denotes an entire range of experiences. It comprises customs, institutions, beliefs, victories and defeats, recreation, and occupations. According to Dewey (1916), man recreates ideals, hopes, happiness, misery, and practices. It is through this process of transmission that society exists. Communications of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling are transferred from the older to the younger, and education in its broadest sense is the process by which this takes place. Left to

chance the life of the group will not be reproduced. Deliberate effort and calculated thought is required (Dewey, 1916).

In Dewey's (1916) view, in undeveloped civilizations we find very little formal training and teaching, yet they manage to maintain their existence. He goes on to say that in the case of more complex societies, the gap between the capabilities of the young and the concerns of the adults widens. Formal or intentional education is the process by which the resources and achievements of a more complex society are communicated. There is a great difference in the results when an environment for education is designed for purpose opposed to relying upon chance to convey the necessary tools for advancement. Any environment is a chance environment if it is not deliberately regulated for its intended purpose (Dewey, 1916).

Dewey (1916) believes that the first responsibility of the school is to provide a simplified environment. Educators take fundamental principles and build upon them and this is the way that students progress. This system is easily understood and capable of being responded to by the young, giving them the insight necessary to master more complicated matters.

Next, he insists that the school should eliminate the worthless and otherwise harmful elements of the environment, preventing their negative influence upon those who should be receiving enlightenment. Dewey (1916) says that as a society becomes more advanced, not only should it pass on and preserve the existing achievements, but it bears the responsibility of creating a better society.

The school is the social agency that maintains equilibrium between the various groups in the social environment, assuring that each individual has equal opportunity for advancement, enabling one to escape the limitations of the social group into which they are born and come into contact with a more expansive environment (Dewey, 1916).

In 1949, W.E.B. Du Bois argued for an empowering education; he said true education would encourage critical thinking and creates students who are not only masters of their own destinies but leaders of their people (Darling-Hammond, Williamson, & Hyler, 2007). Proper education would provide a path toward the uplift of the group and social justice, while inadequate education maintains the current social order (Shockely, 2007). Focho (2011) concurs and makes a case for the importance of critical thinking. He says that critical thinking encourages truth seeking, requires self-examination and self-criticism, and provides an avenue for a systematic approach for the processing of information. He also adds that children who are educated to have an open mind have better judgment, which enables them to analyze, interpret, and evaluate information. Critical thinking produces students who have the desire to protect and improve on the present without jeopardizing the future. Finally, embracing critical thinking produces lifelong learners with a passion for excellence.

Through their Ten Point Platform, Oakland's Black Panther Party offered their belief in what education should do; the educational system should give an individual knowledge of self and his position in society and the world (Darling-Hammond, Williamson, & Hyler, 2007).

While the first order of education is knowledge of self, education is about life and the world around us, especially today, as we are living in a global society. It is imperative that students be taught that what happens in one part of the world impacts the lives of all. Simply put, their actions affect the lives of others, and vice versa. This type of education helps individuals reach their full potential while becoming productive members of their communities as well as responsible world citizens.

Education versus Schooling

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916) reminds us that the general function of education is to direct, control, and guide. This control is often misconstrued as a physical force that coerces or compels one to do what another might have them do. According to Dewey, the role of the teacher is to redirect natural impulses to a specific end. In other words, an effective teacher draws out the natural proclivities of his or her students and shows them how to use these innate abilities to accomplish their desired goals. According to Covington and Johnstone (2011), pedagogical practices have lost focus and become an “authoritative banking system (p.116)” in which teachers have become depositors and students are depositories.

Focho (2011) concurs, adding that education should endeavor to enhance the language of critical thinking, promote truth seeking, self-criticism, and a logical approach to the processing of information. That said, she offers a compelling challenge to educators in “Language as Tool for a Global Education: Bridging the Gap between Traditional and Global Tradition.” In Focho’s (2011) opinion

students should be educated to have an open mind and sound judgment in order to analyze, interpret, and evaluate information. They should be able to draw inferences and transfer information to different contexts. A critical thinker will think of the future and want to protect or improve on the present. One who thinks critically is more creative and resourceful and has strong skills in language, math, and science. He also develops love for lifelong learning and a drive for excellence (p. 144).

Suh and Samuel (2011) also offer a more expansive view and say that education is about us and the world around us. Not only should the educational system equip individuals with the tools to realize their full potential at home and become productive members of their communities, but they should also be endowed with the skills to contribute nationally as well as to become responsible global citizens.

When this subject matter is used to refer more specifically to African Americans, Darling, Williamson, & Hyler (2007) remind us of the type of education that W.E.B. Du Bois called for in 1949. Du Bois made a case for an education of empowerment, one that would enable students to think critically and control their own course of learning. True education would empower one to determine their own destiny and become leaders of their people. In Du Bois' view, this type of education would not only secure access to schooling but to a curriculum for full citizenship.

Carter G. Woodson (1990) continually questioned the motives of the American educational system in respect to Black students. He saw what he referred to as the "so called school" as a means of crippling the Black child as it was taught that his Black face was a curse, destroying any hope of his ability to change his condition. According to Woodson (1990), this killed ones aspirations and doomed him to a life of vagrancy and crime. In his view, this was where the real lynching began-in the classroom. He also adds that even those who are able to earn an honest living from what they have been taught never become beneficial forces in the advancement of their race.

In their Ten Point Platform, Oakland's Black Party called for a more radical proposition for the education of Black Youth. They believed that education should expose the true nature of a society that they viewed as decadent and saw American society's only aim as to assimilate African American students for their own selfish purposes (Darling, Williamson, & Hyler, 2007). Shockley (2007) concurs and adds that the education that African Americans were receiving only served to oppress them. Instead of uplifting them, its purpose was to relegate them to the position of world consumer to maintain the present social order (p. 104).

Data retrieved from the National Center of Education Statistics (2004), which states that between 1986 and 2003, the population of Black, and other groups grew from 29.7% to 39.5% gives additional credence to the claims of the aforementioned scholars (Shockley, 2007 p. 103). While the number of African Americans in the public school system continues to increase, the benefits become less and less evident when we look at the condition of the African American community. Blacks continue to be incarcerated disproportionately, while their communities continue to become more disenfranchised and dysfunctional. As a race, Blacks continue to lag behind their White counterparts academically, and even those schools that produce Black students with high test scores and grade point averages have failed to produce a substantial number of Blacks with the desire to improve the condition of their people.

Shockley (2007) maintains that Blacks must redefine what it means to be successful and educated. The African American community will not progress until a new type of thinking takes root, one that understands that true educational attainment is measured by one's ability to use the knowledge acquired to effect change in one's community and the world at large.

Brief History of Education for African Americans in the United States

Before the Civil War, only a few Blacks in the North and South attended school, while the majority of the race was enslaved, illiterate and prohibited by law from being taught to read. Consequently, basic literacy was the initial goal for the freed slave, but the educated Blacks and White abolitionists who designed schools for the African American population held a vision of an empowering education (Darling-Hammond, Williamson, & Hyler, 2007).

However, as Woodson (1990) points out, despite their sincerity, those who maintained schools for the education of Blacks both before and especially after the Civil War were more enthusiastic than they were knowledgeable. They did not understand the magnitude of the task

before them. The effort was more toward social uplift than actual education (Woodson, 1990). They had not taken into account the opposition that they would get from Whites in Northern cities, who mostly viewed schools for Blacks as a privilege rather than a right. In the One Best System, Tyack (1974) asserts that they did not consider the Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation, and even the 14th and 15th amendments failed to secure educational rights for Blacks (Tyack, 1974). Consequently, there was no thought of a curriculum specifically designed to develop the Black race. Instead, the conventional curricula of the times were used, which only condemned or pitied Blacks (Woodson, 1990). These factors along with the information that Whites in both the North and South were still fighting to restrict educational access as well as to control the curriculum that Blacks were exposed to made the educational process an uphill battle for African Americans (Darling-Hammond, Williamson, & Hyler, 2007).

According to Tyack, when Blacks arrived in northern cities, they did so in large numbers, but also at a time when centralization undermined ward politics and educators were increasingly empowered to classify students according their idea of what was best for the child. Moreover, when the results of racially biased tests were customarily accepted as proof of native ability, the role of school became to sort and train students to fit the existing order, and in much of the writing in education and social science Blacks were portrayed as a social problem (Tyack, 1974).

The primary debate became whether education for Blacks would parallel the English classical liberal arts curriculum or whether it would be the more conservative vocational training promoted by industrial philanthropists. The desire to create a work force to fill low skilled, low paying jobs put pressure on liberal arts educators to alter their curriculum to one that was more conservative. While the industrialists were victorious for a while, this movement came under heavy attack in the 1920's. Blacks, coming home from World War I after fighting alongside

Whites for democracy demanded access to a college education. Black college student enrollment increased from 2, 132 in 1917 to 13, 580 by 1927 (Darling-Hammond, Williamson, & Hyler, 2007).

Although pure manual training ended in the 1920's, Blacks still continued to receive an inadequate education. Between 1920 and 1930 the proportion of Black students between the ages of 5 and 20 rose from 54% to 60% but very few graduated from high school. During this era the battle became two-fold; not only was the fight for a curriculum of quality, but a struggle against the racialized curriculum that existed to be replaced by one that was Black-centered (Darling-Hammond, Williamson, & Hyler, 2007). According to Woodson (1990), even Black students in college learned that Blacks had contributed nothing to the progress of human history, and Black professors prided themselves in knowing “nothing of the Negro” (p. 1).

According to Darling-Hammond, Williamson, & Hyler (2007), following World War II, the implementation of the G.I. Bill tremendously increased access to education for Black veterans. The benefits could be used at the pre-college or college level, and because only 17% of African Americans compared to 41% of Whites had graduated from high school, these servicemen used the benefits at a much higher rate than their White counterparts nationwide. Most Black veterans used their benefits to complete high school or vocational training. Only 12% went to institutions of higher education compared to 28% of White veterans. Nonetheless, this was still a much larger influx of African Americans into college than ever before. It was also at this time that the United Negro College Fund, founded the same year as the enactment of the G.I. Bill, sought to improve the quality of education for Blacks at the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Enrollment in Black colleges increased from 43,000 to 77,000 between 1940 and 1950 and many students were refused admission due to lack of space.

Consequently, and because the G.I. Bill's benefits were available to be used nationally, many veterans opted for schools outside of the south, changing the curriculum dispute to include access to predominately White institutions.

To restrict the courses and vocations available to Blacks was now more difficult, but many Whites still continued to fight against equity. Also up for debate was the poor quality of segregated schools available to Blacks at the elementary and secondary level. In Mississippi in 1952, only 2.3% of Blacks finished high school. And while the state spent \$122.93 per White child, only \$32.55 was spent per Black child. Lawsuits challenging these conditions culminated in the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision in the early 1950s (Darling-Hammond, Williamson, & Hyler, 2007). "Brown established that education was imperative for society in its connection to citizenship, cultural values, and jobs, and suggested that even if tangible features of schools appeared equal, segregation made them unequal"(p. 287) Despite the victory of *Brown*, progress was still slow and continued to meet great White resistance. The Whites who had deliberately structured segregated schools to maintain the existing racial order now implemented a White-washed curriculum leaving African American students with feelings of color inferiority and ignorant of their cultural and linguistic histories. Tracking systems were implemented, recreating segregation and control of curriculum, relegating Blacks to menial vocational courses and off of the pathway to college.

Black activists, tired of the opposition that they continually encountered from Whites, decided upon another course of action. In their view, desegregated institutions ignored questions of power for African Americans and also worked to deprive Blacks of the skills and energies required become productive members of society. They did not see integration as the answer to Black American's problems, and opted for programs that included ethnic studies, multicultural

education, Afrocentric institutions and curriculum, and other racially based educational programs instead at all levels of schooling (Darling-Hammond, Williamson, & Tyler, 2007).

African Centered Education

Blacks have innately known that the cultural needs of their children were different from those of the majority population, and as far back as the 1700's they created independent schools designed to address those needs (Covington-Clarkson & Johnstone, 2011). Woodson (1990) believed that independent schools were necessary for African American children to reach their full potential because European schools separated them from African culture and traditions and glorified European culture. Nevertheless, by the end of the 19th century, most of these academic institutions had been replaced by public schools, thus beginning the socialization of African American children into European culture and thought (Covington-Clarkson & Johnstone, 2011).

As Black children were encompassed into the public educational system, no thought was given of the impact that chattel slavery might have had on this entire race of people. Nor were there any major investigations conducted to attempt to become more familiar with the learning styles of these children. Blacks were expected to perform in a system that gave no credence to who they were as cultural beings (Shockley & Fredrick, 2010). Additionally, the educational resources provided were inferior in comparison to those of their White counterparts. Not only were they mandated to dilapidated and hazardous buildings, they received poor educational instruction as well (Durden, 2007).

This negligence resulted in the disproportionate failure of Black children in America's public schools, making necessary new discourse and inquiries that surfaced in the early 1970's when scholars, educators, and parents sought a means to protect Black children from the inequitable experience of American schooling and guide them toward academic excellence

(Covinton-Clarkson & Johnstone, 2011, Durden, 2007). African-centered educators believed that African-centered education was the way that this would be done. This movement, reminiscent of the independent schools movement of the 1700's became known as the African-centered School Movement (Durden, 2007).

In "Constructs and Dimensions of Afrocentric Education," Shockley and Fredrick (2010) define Afrocentric education as "the adoption of Afrocentric ideology and culture relevancy for use within classrooms (p. 1212). They further explain that Afrocentricity literally means "placing African ideas at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior (p.1216)" and Afocentric instructors attempt to offer methods, concepts, and ideas best suited to reaching children of African descent.

Covington-Clarkson and Johnstone (2011) expound on the definition given by Shockley and Fredrick and add that Afrocentricism is "a paradigm in which the peoples of Africa, the African Diaspora, and their worldviews are central to the schooling process (p. 109)." To address the disproportionate failure of Black students in urban schools, educators employ teaching methods using African cultural principles, processes, laws, and experiences, making curricula more relevant and meaningful to students' everyday lived experiences. Merry and New (2008) concur, adding that African-centered pedagogy's aim is to nurture a positive and productive culturally based identity for Black children, with schools that place their history, culture, and life experiences at the center of everything they do.

African-centered schooling focuses on the holistic development of students. Instruction is provided that is in harmony with the learning styles of Black children. Instructors acknowledge that African American children are highly visual, audible, and fashion-oriented and expose them to a high degree of stimuli at an early age, which includes expressiveness, dance, and rhythm

(Durden, 2007). Lapoint, Ellison, & Boykin (2006) concur and add that an education based in Afrocentricity provides a means for educating the whole child (EWC). In “Educating the Whole Child: The Talent Quest Model for Educational Policy and Practice,” the authors present conclusions drawn from a study done by the Capstone Institute which determined that Black children thrive “when they are within their natural developmental frame of reference as well as their historical and existing, functional cultural context (p. 374).”

Debbie Diller (1999), a white teacher of African American students attests to how this helped her to connect with her students in “Opening the Dialogue: Using Culture as a Tool in Teaching Young African American Children.” She gives an account of the difficulties she encountered when she transitioned from a small, suburban setting to one that was larger, urban and mostly African American. After realizing the difficulties that she was having reaching her students with the curriculum and the stories she selected, she enlisted the aid of friends, colleagues, and the scholarly writings of African American educators like Lisa Delpritt and became acquainted with the theory of cultural discontinuity, or the mismatch of the cultures of home and school. Afrocentric scholars see this cultural mismatch as the reason behind many of the problems faced by Black students (Shockley, 2007). Diller (1999) discovered that as she began to view the world through the eyes of her students, she was able to create a style of teaching that spoke to who they were and therefore was able to reach them. As she herself put it “When I put my heart and mind in their place, I began to see and understand. When I touched the rhythms of their lives, they began to respect me and respond” (p. 820).

The philosophy of Afrocentric curriculum gets its basis from the seven principles of Kwanzaa, also known as the Nguzo Saba. These ideologies are the foundation for students’ academic, social, and moral development. The principles include kujichagulia (self-

determination), umoja (unity), nia (purpose), imani (faith), ujamaa (cooperative economics), kuumba (creativity), and ujima (collective work and responsibility). The Nguzo Saba provides the standard for the Afrocentric teaching and learning paradigm (Covington-Clarkson & Johnstone, 2011), and has proven to work to promote both academic achievement and social competence in Black children, especially for those from low-income families (Lapoint, Ellison, & Boykin, 2006).

African-centered curriculum is an avenue by which truth is restored to the curriculum. It not only creates an avenue to develop cultural equality, but is also needed to provide leadership in educational reform (Durdan, 2007). Nevertheless, it is not without criticism. The African-centered Schools Movement threatens the present status quo. Proponents of African-centered education believe that with this type of instruction the Black community will develop the strong cultural base necessary to uplift their families and communities in spite of the existence of institutionalized racism and adverse economic conditions. In Afrocentrist's view, blame, no matter where it is placed, is not the solution, and only serves to erode the sense of national pride necessary to develop Black consciousness. Blacks must find a way to control their own direction and purpose. This school of thought, viewed as radical because of its diversion from the present suggestion that Blacks need whites in order to have a quality education, not only brings a level of discomfort to those who endeavor to keep Blacks disenfranchised, but too many fellow African Americans and liberal Whites as well (Merry & New, 2008).

Another criticism leveled at proponents of Afrocentric education is that it singles out and focuses attention on Black children. And while other ethnic groups have not received such criticism, for example Catholics engage in Catholic-centered education, and Jewish-centered schools teach their children to participate in the larger society, but are taught that their first

allegiance is to Jewish needs and causes (Shockley, 2007), the African-centered Schools Movement has been accused of disuniting America (Shockley, 2010). It has also been charged with abandoning the democratic purposes of the civil rights movement and minimizing its successes (Merry and New, 2008).

Still others claim that Afrocentric education teaches myths as facts and instills a sense of false pride in Black children (Shockley, 2010). This is in part due to the fact that the true nature of African history has been intentionally excluded from the standard curriculum, reducing most mainstream discourse concerning African American history to begin in slavery, negating the rich history of Africa that is tens of thousands years old.

More recently, African-centered schooling has been given more serious consideration. The 21st century brought in a new era focused on accountability and high stakes testing in an attempt to raise academic achievement in Eurocentric schools that have come under scrutiny due to their low performance nationwide. Comprehensive reform has become the order of the day, and the Afrocentric method of instruction, which focuses on the holistic development of students, has been viewed as a potential solution (Durden, 2007). This has created an avenue for the rapid growth of African-centered schools across the country, many by way of charter and voucher school movements (Merry and New, 2008). The time has come for African-centered instruction to be considered as a viable solution to educating the African American child.

Beyond Afrocentricity: Global Education

Because education is about life and the world around us, we must acknowledge that today we are living in a global village, and what happens in one place on the globe impacts all of us. Technological advances have made it possible for events and ideas from all over the world to be digitized and circulated with lightning speed. Educating students with a global perspective is

imperative if they are to become productive members of their communities, contributing citizens to their nation, and responsible citizens of the world (Suh, 2011).

Students educated with a global perspective will be made conscious of global issues critical to the preservation of the planet, unlike much of the teaching of the past that focused on one country or region. They will be given the understanding of how the world works; how their actions affect others far away and vice versa, and also given insight into the interrelatedness between global and local issues and be able to relate global issues to local contexts (Focho, 2011).

In “Distinguishing between Multicultural and Global Education (GE): The Challenge of Conceptualizing and Addressing the Two Fields”, Lucas (2010) offers a definition for GE, or global education. Lucas (2010) says that GE is the study of human beliefs and values, global systems, global issues and problems, global history, cross-cultural understanding/interaction, awareness of human choices, the development of analytical and evaluative skills, and strategies for participation and involvement. GE requires students to develop appropriate thinking and communication skills as well as the knowledge and attitudes for living in a culturally diverse and globally interrelated world (p. 212). Focho (2011) concurs, adding that features of global curriculum like cross cultural- awareness, global issues, universal values, critical thinking, and experiential learning are minimized in traditional curriculum, and she summarizes the objective of global curriculum as one that molds global citizens with shared values and a global responsibility to bring global solutions to the world’s problems (p. 140).

If people are to coexist, it is imperative that they learn to accept and respect the cultures of others. Students must develop empathic understanding for those of other cultures, as well as concern for what is happening in the world. Global education encourages experiential learning,

i.e., learning through personal experiences, and is based on the premise that through self-knowledge one gains a better understanding of others. GE offers students the opportunity to examine their own values and attitudes and develop the skills and knowledge to fight injustice and discrimination, and to actively participate in a global community at both local and international levels (Focho, 2011).

The public school classroom, with its diverse make up of people, is an ideal arena to promote cultural awareness (Moses-Snopes, 2005). In “The Effects of African Culture on African American Students’ Achievement on Selected Geometry Topics in the Elementary Math Classroom,” Moses-Snopes offers the example of the contributions of Africans to mathematics being introduced into the classroom as a means of not only increasing self-esteem in Black students but also as a means of informing other students that numerous peoples have made contributions to the field of mathematics. However, because global education encompasses so many facets (Stearns, 2010), many teachers have a limited view of what it is. According to Lucas (2010), multicultural education (ME) is directly related to GE, but oftentimes educators think they are synonymous. She defines MCE as a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and societies and affirms pluralism. It is not a subject being taught in school but rather a philosophy of education (p. 212). Despite its direct correlation to GE, Lucas (2010) believes that because it is a philosophy and does not offer the specifics that global education does, teachers need to be able to make the distinction between the two, or the risk exists for global issues to end up being taught from a Western perspective.

One of the main benefits of global education is cross cultural awareness and sensitivity to others. Students are made aware of similarities and specificities of other cultures, including

traditions, religions, and beliefs that are different from their own. They should be taught that other cultures are not inferior or superior, just different. Global education brings awareness and understanding of issues and events that may affect or have the potential to affect not only ones own life but the lives of others across the globe (Focho, 2011).

Another benefit of global education is that it addresses the importance of technology education. Only within the last decade has technology begun to be recognized as a serious academic discipline. The discussion over which is more important, liberal or technical education, is more than two thousand years old. A liberal education has historically referred to the arts, humanities, and the sciences, whereas technical education encompasses trades, such as carpentry and blacksmithing, and more recently cosmetology, auto mechanics, drafting, and electronics (Bevins, 2012).

According to Bevins, (2012), the resource most vital to a country's success has always been and continues to be labor, and while the focus has shifted from the physical aspect of labor to more emphasis on human capital, i.e., the knowledge and skills possessed by the individual, the importance of labor has not diminished. As technology advances, corresponding changes must be made to prepare the workforce of the future.

Each major advancement in technology prompts the development of not only that device or service, but an entire array of other products and services as well. Technology feeds on itself; progress in one area brings about advancement in other areas. Many states have enacted legislation to push STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) educational programs as an avenue to economic growth and development. The mission of the global agenda is to destroy the antithesis between technical and liberal education. "There is no adequate technical which is not liberal and no liberal education which is not technical" (Bevins, 2012, p.

12). If students are to become viable global citizens, global education must be included in the educational curriculum.

SECTION 3: CONCLUSION: RECOMMENDATIONS

I have determined that what the African American community needs is what Woodson (1990) called for in *The Miseducation of the Negro*, more than ten years ago, a curriculum of empowerment, one that will make African Americans contributors to their own advancement, and ultimately contributors to the American society, and the world at large. Following is a list of recommendations garnered from the literature review:

- *Responsive Curriculum*: African Americans must continue to fight for a challenging, intellectually empowering, and culturally responsive curriculum; this battle will require collaboration between educators, parents, and advocates, who are relentless in demanding courses that require higher-order thinking and performance skills, and are willing to consistently confront the mechanisms in place that deny access to these types of learning opportunities to Black students.
- *Funding*: Acquiring this goal calls for an equitable base in funding that takes into account the needs of the student, improvement in the quality of instruction, and changes in curriculum that support progress for African Americans toward their quest for educational achievement. Additionally, students must be given the foundation in their early childhood education for modern learning and the technological skill to be able to solve real world problems.
- *African-centered Education and Global Education*: These two curriculums have proven to be viable solutions to improving early childhood educational outcomes for

African American students and should be seriously considered when implementing educational reform. Prior measures have been falsely promoted as agents of change when by definition reform means improve, and they have obviously failed in that endeavor.

- *Global Citizens:* The one size fits all education model cannot meet the needs of all children in a diverse society and global economy. In order for African American children to successfully compete on the new global world stage, their education must be “revolutionarily re-conceptualized” (Shockley, 2007, p.104). Students must become educated to become global citizens—citizens with awareness of global issues, who possess universal values, critical thinking skills, and gain knowledge through experiential learning. This begins with the African-centered Education and Global Education curriculums in early childhood.
- *Equal Learning Opportunities:* America must acknowledge that what is being done is not working. While she has moved into the 21st century, she has still failed to fulfill her promise of liberty, justice, and equality for all citizens. The discussion must change from focusing on test scores to equalizing learning opportunities. The United States was founded on the principle of challenging its own truths and presenting alternative possibilities. As a democratic society, the educational system should produce a citizenship with the habit of mind to secure social changes without introducing disorder (Dewey, 1916).

All races must join forces to discuss their different cultures and educational curriculums that benefit all. The future of America depends on the dialogue continuing.

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