

THE PROBLEM OF AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS: A HISTORICAL INQUIRY

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Abstract

The model of agricultural and industrial education for African Americans in the United States was created by Samuel Chapman Armstrong, founder of Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. Armstrong developed a paternal approach to educating African Americans and developed the Hampton Institute curriculum with moral education as its base. Booker T. Washington, a protégé of Armstrong, carried the Hampton Model to Tuskegee, Alabama, and made it the basis for the curriculum at the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. The Hampton Model applied the concepts of moral education and a “learning by doing” approach to instruction. Both Armstrong and Washington were successful in garnering public support and private financial assistance for their respective institutes. The Hampton Model was utilized by a number of schools that sprang up in years after the American Civil War. Hampton and Tuskegee often helped to raise the standard of living for African Americans in the years following the American Civil War, but these advances could not be sustained under the tremendous social pressures associated with race and ethnicity of the 20th century.

Introduction

In 2003, researchers conducted a study on career and technical education activities sponsored by the National FFA Organization. Of 2,145 completed survey instruments collected from students attending the National FFA Convention, none were from African Americans. If there were any African American students in the national career development events, it would seem that at least one or two would have completed the survey instrument. The implication is that African Americans continue to represent an underserved population in agricultural education specifically and career and technical education in general, and the profession should find better ways to “turn them on” to technical careers (Croom, Moore & Armbruster, 2005).

There are approximately 34.6 million African Americans living in the United States, and the majority of them reside in the southeastern United States. African Americans have their ancestral roots in the

race groups of Africa. The term “African American” is more specific than “black American,” which represents a larger race group in the United States and includes individuals of Hispanic origin. African Americans represent approximately 12.3% of the population of the United States (United States Census Bureau [USCB], 2001).

The federal census of 2000 reported approximately 118.9 million individuals in the American workforce. This number includes approximately 12 million African Americans between the ages of 20 and 64. These African Americans represent roughly 10% of the civilian workforce in the United States. Approximately 1.5 million African Americans are unemployed, the second highest unemployment rate (6.9%) of race groups in the country second only to Native American Indians (USCB, 2003b). When the African American civilian work force is expanded to include individuals in the 16 to 20 age group, the number employed increases to 13.0 million individuals. Thus, high school and college-age African

Americans comprise slightly less than 1% (0.08%) of the civilian work force, whereas their Caucasian counterparts represent 7% of the civilian workforce. African Americans tend to work more in the service occupations than other race groups and are less likely to

engage in managerial or professional occupations. Table 1 represents the occupations of African Americans as reported in the 2000 federal census (USCB, 2003a).

Table 1

Occupations of African Americans from the 2000 Census Compared with All Race Groups and with the Caucasian Workforce

Race groups	All race groups	Caucasians	African Americans
Employed population over the age of 16	129,721,512	102,324,962	13,001,795
Employed population between ages 16 and 20	10,824,337	8,797,079	958,938
	Percentage of engagement in occupational categories		
Management and professional occupations	33.6	35.6	25.2
Service	14.9	13.4	22.0
Sales	26.7	27.0	27.3
Farming, Forestry	0.7	0.6	0.4
Construction	9.4	9.8	6.5

Note: Data extracted from United States Census Bureau. (2003b). *Employment Status: 2000*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Commerce and United States Census Bureau. (2003c). *Occupations: 2000*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Commerce.

With regard to educational attainment, 72% of the 20 million African Americans over the age of 25 have high school diplomas. Fourteen percent of African Americans over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree or master's degree, and 4.8% have an advanced or doctoral degree (USCB, 2003a). The United States Census Bureau also collects data on enrollment in career and technical education courses and compares the data with data on full-time and part-time employment among youth. The employment rate for African American youth is approximately 19%, for Caucasian students is approximately 34%, and for all students is 31% (USCB, 2003e; USCB, 2004).

Why have African Americans failed to take hold of the opportunities available to them in career and technical education? Furthermore, has career and technical education failed to attract African American students, or does the problem involve broader issues related to the quality of education in the United States? African Americans lag behind other race groups in adult and youth employment in the civilian sector and rank below other race groups in educational attainment. Does this explain why one out of every four African Americans is living below the poverty level in the United States, compared with one out of 10 Caucasians in America living below the poverty level (USCB, 2003d)? It seems that African Americans as a whole race

group have not thrived in the workforce as well as other race groups in America. In order to understand how and why the aforementioned phenomena exist, perhaps a closer look at the beginnings of career and technical education for African Americans is necessary.

Purpose

To provide a contextual basis for understanding why African Americans have not become engaged in career and technical education, this study examined the historical events associated with the establishment of career and technical education for African Americans in the United States. The specific objective of this project was to describe the origin of formal career and technical education for African Americans.

Research Method

This is a historical research study. A preliminary bibliographical source was created consisting of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of information included but were not limited to the personal correspondence, published manuscripts and speeches of Booker T. Washington, and photographs and demographic data from Tuskegee University. Secondary sources included but were not limited to data from refereed journal articles and historical information available from established institutions. Secondary sources were compared with selected primary sources to ascertain their accuracy.

This study conforms to the guidelines of the American Psychological Association [APA] regarding the terms used to describe ethnic groups (APA, 2001). Sources of information were subjected to internal criticism for accuracy and external criticism for authenticity. The most recent editions of publications authored by individuals mentioned in this study were used in the literature review. This accounts for the modern dates on some publications in the reference list.

Theoretical Framework

Hirsch's Cultural Literacy Model (1988) is the theoretical model for this study.

Hirsch's model is based on the premise that the ability of agricultural educators to function successfully in their professional environment is determined by how literate they are about agricultural education. To be literate in agricultural education depends upon our understanding of the foundational knowledge that underpins the public discourse about the profession. According to Hirsch's model, literacy goes beyond the ability to read (decode) and write (encode). Instead, literacy means an active understanding of what is communicated. Reading the scientific and popular literature in the agricultural education profession is a complex skill that requires a specific knowledge of the range of subjects that influence the profession. Cultural literacy encourages professionals to continue to learn and deepen their knowledge of the profession. Hirsch's Cultural Literacy Model implies that educators could find deeper meaning in issues related to African American involvement in career and technical education by understanding the context by which African Americans entered formal education in agricultural education. An additional support for this study can be found in the concept of *inclusion*. Inclusion seeks to —establish collaborative, supportive, and nurturing communities of learners that are based on giving all students the services and accommodations they need to learn, as well as respecting and learning from each other's individual differences" (Salend, 2001, p. 5). Inclusion is built upon four major principles: diversity, individual needs, reflective practice, and collaboration.

Diversity improves the educational systems for all students by placing students in general education environments regardless of race, ability, gender, economic status, gender, learning styles, ethnicity, cultural background, religion, family structure, linguistic ability, and sexual orientation. In relation to this study, Samuel Chapman Armstrong recognized the need for African Americans to obtain an education, thus adding to the diversity of America's educational landscape at that particular time in history. Individual needs involve sensitivity to and acceptance of individual needs and differences. The model of agricultural and industrial education for

African Americans espoused by Samuel Chapman Armstrong and Booker T. Washington was an attempt to address the moral and educational needs of African Americans of the time. Reflective practice insists that educators reflect upon their professional practice. During the development of the agricultural and industrial education model for African Americans, Washington engaged in constant reflection and made revisions to the model as needed. Collaboration involves groups of professional educators, parents, students, families, and community agencies working together to build effective learning environments (Salend, 2001). To develop the agricultural and industrial education model for African Americans discussed in this study, much collaboration was required by many groups familiar with Armstrong and Washington's collective educational vision.

Findings

Schooling for former slaves in the American South did not arrive with the Federal Army during the American Civil War. It was already in place in some locations. Many slaves were literate. When Northern missionaries began working in the Southern states in the last years of the American Civil War, they found that a rudimentary system of public education for slaves existed. Although reconstruction after the civil war led to the widespread development of schools for former slaves, there were many literate slaves in the South prior to and during the civil war (Fraser, 2001). One example was the Penn School for freed slaves that was established at St. Helena Island in 1862 after the area came under the control of federal troops (Penn Center, 2004). In spite of rigorous measures to keep slaves from the schooling process, there were a number of instances in which slaves experienced semiformal education, usually acquired secretly from sympathetic Whites. The widespread desire for education among African Americans at the close of the Civil War was so strong that W.E.B. Dubois was prompted to conclude that "Public education for all at public expense was, in

the South, a Negro idea." (Dubois, 1935, pp.168-69).

The American model of industrial education was created by Samuel Chapman Armstrong, a former brevet general in the United States Army, Freedmen's agent, and the principal of the Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute in Hampton, Virginia. Samuel Chapman Armstrong was the son of Presbyterian missionaries whose devotion to the Christian faith carried them to Hawaii to minister to the native people. Armstrong's earliest memories were of the serving of the spiritual and social needs of the Hawaiian natives, and these early experiences instilled in Armstrong a sense of purposeful service to others from different backgrounds.

Upon his return to the United States, Armstrong began his studies in higher education at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Contrary to how other institutions of higher learning operated in that day, Williams College was intended primarily as a secular institution for instruction in the "practical arts" (Engs, 1999). Armstrong's letters home during his study at Williams College suggest a shift in his thinking toward a more mature philosophy of living. As a pupil of Mark Hopkins at Williams College, Armstrong began to develop a deeper moral conviction and a more ambitious plan for himself in the future (Talbot, 1969). The American Civil War of 1861-1865 interrupted Armstrong's career aspirations. Upon his graduation from Williams College, Armstrong volunteered and began to raise a company of United States troops. His leadership ability served him well as a Union officer, and he eventually rose to the rank of brevet brigadier general and commanded African American troops. Upon his discharge from the Army, he served as the Freedmen's Bureau agent in Hampton, Virginia. Armstrong was responsible for the schools in that district and began a campaign to build industrial schools in the region. His acquaintances in the American Missionary Association of New York provided assistance in the raising of funds to build these schools. (Talbot).

The Hampton Normal Agricultural Institute
Armstrong understood that the real task

before the nation was not the freeing of slaves from their masters, but freeing slaves from the poverty of ignorance. His two years of work in the Freedmen's Bureau were an important influence in Armstrong's desire to build an agricultural and industrial school in Hampton, Virginia. In an official report to the Freedmen's Bureau, Armstrong wrote, "The North generally thinks that the great thing is to free the Negro from his former owners, the real thing is to save him from himself." (Talbot, 1969, p. 150). Armstrong's goals for the Hampton school were to develop and refine the moral character of African Americans, to prepare students to be teachers and leaders through their own scholarship, and to teach students a manual or industrial trade so that they be self-supporting and good examples of industry to the people of their own race (Talbot, Armstrong, 1884).

When the Hampton Normal Agricultural Institute opened its doors for the first time in 1868, it represented one of the best hopes to date for educating African Americans whose emancipation from slavery had occurred only recently. In April 1868, citizenship in the United States was only weeks away for former slaves, and the right to vote would be extended to African American men within the next four years (Wells, 2003). Samuel Chapman Armstrong founded the Hampton Institute for the purpose of providing agricultural and industrial education to these newly minted citizens and subsequently to Native Americans. Prior to industrial schools, vocational experience for former slaves was severely limited to basic manual farm labor. Chapman's idea was to provide African Americans with a sound basic education coupled with vocational training. As a student at Hampton, Booker T. Washington believed that the education he earned served him better than the leading educational institutions of the day, because Hampton extolled the virtues of self-improvement and racial harmony through agricultural and industrial education (Harlan, 1972).

The Hampton Institute required students to work for their food, lodging, and school supplies. The Hampton experience built character in the students by teaching them the value of important things (Harlan, 1972).

If you did not work at Hampton, you did not eat. If you did not study, you were sent home. The 1874–75 Hampton Institute catalog informed prospective students that labor was an essential requirement for both personal discipline and academic instruction. (Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, 1875). Almost every facet of a student's life at Hampton was controlled by some rule or procedure. Students were expected to work at least one hour per day in the school's industries, attend chapel services regularly, be immaculate in their dress and appearance, avoid the use of alcohol, and refrain from immoral behavior.

The initial daily schedule at the Hampton Institute generally involved farm work and chores in the morning hours and classes and study in the afternoon and evening hours. This proved to be an inefficient system because the school farm needed attention at all hours of the working day, not just the mornings. One flaw in the agricultural and industrial school concept was the inability of some schools to make their student-run industries profitable or at least cover their expenses. Instead of devoting funds much needed for improving school facilities and instruction, school used these funds to keep school farms and industries afloat (Engs, 1999). Compounding the problem at Hampton was the limited knowledge of the students in agricultural sciences and industrial subjects. Armstrong revised the system of instruction at the Hampton Institute by creating a night school program for tradesmen and farm workers. The new course of study included more emphasized instruction in agriculture and mechanics, and the daily schedule was amended so that students could work on the school farm both mornings and afternoons.

This new schedule was more flexible and brought to the school a new group of students with at least some basic knowledge of agriculture and industrial workmanship. These students were able to operate the school farms and factories with at least a minimum degree of expertise, thus contributing to the financial solvency of the institution. In this new schedule, Armstrong had discovered the solution to making agricultural and industrial education

successful (Engs, 1999). Armstrong believed that it was absolutely within the best interests of African Americans to make the agricultural and industrial education movement work. In an official report to the Freedmen's Bureau in 1866, Samuel Chapman Armstrong wrote, "The education of the freedmen is the great work of the day; it is their only hope, the only power that can lift them up as a people, every encouragement should be given to schools established for their benefit." (Talbot, 1969, p. 148). One Hampton student who learned that lesson very well was Booker T. Washington.

Booker Washington and the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial School

Booker Washington graduated from Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute in 1875 and was awarded a license to teach graded school in Virginia. (Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute, 1875; Whipple & Armstrong, 1875). As a young school teacher, he learned the value of experiential education and the importance of tying abstract concepts to real-life experience for the rural school children. Washington applied the concepts of practical and moral education in his rural Virginia schoolhouse (Washington, 1911). Writing about his teaching experiences years later while principal of Tuskegee, he recalled,

I have lost no opportunity to impress upon our teachers the importance of training their students to study, analyze, and compare actual things, and to use what they have learned in the school room and in the text-book, to enable them to observe, think about, and deal with the objects and situations of actual life. (Washington, 1911, p. 134)

In 1879, Washington joined the faculty as the dean of Native American students (Harlan, 1972). In 1881, the Alabama State Legislature appropriated funds for the purpose of establishing a normal school for African Americans in Tuskegee, Alabama. The commissioners appointed to establish the school wrote to General Armstrong seeking a white teacher for the new school.

On May 31, 1881, General Armstrong responded, "The only man I can suggest is one Mr. Booker T. Washington." (Armstrong, 1881, p 110).

The Hampton Institute pioneered the concept of agricultural and industrial education, and Booker T. Washington was soon able to apply this concept to a new school in the village of Tuskegee Alabama in 1881 (Leloudis, 1996). In a letter to J.F.B. Marshall, Treasurer of Hampton Institute, Washington described Tuskegee as "a healthy and pleasant location – high and hilly – I think I shall like it." (Washington, 1881. In the long run, Washington realized that significant measures must be taken to build the school and make it a permanent institution. After careful thought, he adopted the Hampton Institute method that placed students on a labor system for their room and board (Washington, 1881. Washington hoped to build the school, feed the students, and provide practical experience in the industrial arts, because the time had come for "the Negro to learn the difference between being worked and working..." (Washington, 1903).

Washington introduced manual labor by having students clear woodland for the planting of crops. The students reluctantly performed this and subsequent other laborious tasks. To establish student support for the labor system moving, Washington would lead the students out to the forest to chop timber. (Gregory, 1915). As Tuskegee grew, new buildings were constructed primarily from student labor to accommodate an increasing student enrollment (Washington, Davidson, & Cardwell, 1882). From Washington's perspective, the strength of Tuskegee's curriculum rested in the agricultural and industrial education program instead of the academic program. Teachers of academic programs were required to reduce the students' work load in English, mathematics, history, and related subjects (Washington, 1904, Harlan, 1983).

Conclusions

The model of industrial education for African Americans in the United States was created by Samuel Chapman Armstrong,

founder of Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. Armstrong's belief system with regard to the education of African Americans is derived from his experiences as the son a Hawaiian missionary. Armstrong developed a paternal approach to educating African Americans, and developed Hampton's curriculum with moral education as its base. Booker T. Washington, a protégé of Armstrong, carried the Hampton Model to Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute and made it the basis for the curriculum.

The Hampton Model combined the concepts of moral education with work ethics largely through an applied "learning by doing" approach to instruction. Both Armstrong and Washington were highly successful in garnering public support and private financial assistance for their respective institutes. The Hampton Model was utilized by a number of schools that sprang up in years after the American Civil War, largely through the efforts of Armstrong and Washington to encourage support for industrial education.

One has only to look at the events of the early twentieth century to understand that the concept of industrial education for blacks eventually failed. Hampton and Tuskegee Universities are no longer high school institutes, but a liberal arts institution (Hampton) and land grant institution of higher education (Tuskegee) – something that both Armstrong and Washington fought vigorously during their principalships (Healy, 1995).

Hampton's manual labor routine was designed to provide instruction in work habits, practical skill attainment and Christian morals. Anderson (1988) contended that an overarching purpose was to create a subservient role for blacks in the new economy after the American Civil War. Armstrong often assigned students to work in local industries for a wage and frequently advertised them as cheap labor (Anderson). Armstrong never questioned that African Americans were intelligent, but he did have reservations as to their moral character. Hampton Institute focused more heavily on moral character and manual labor than on academics and often shortchanged students by downplaying the significance of

academic instruction. The primary goal of both Hampton and Tuskegee was to prepare teachers, but the industrial program carried significant weight on both campuses with often discouraging results. On December 11, 1889, superintendent of schools for Greene County Alabama, David D. Sanderson, wrote to Booker Washington to complain that a recent graduate of Tuskegee could not pass a simple grammar test during his interview of a teaching job. Sanderson wrote that,

Your institution has some reputation, I understand: but how it could issue a diploma to a student so utterly incompetent to teach the elementary studies of the third grade in the public schools in the state, seems very strange.... Of course, no faculty can give a pupil brains – but it certainly has an option as to the conferring of Diplomas. (Sanderson, 1889)

African Americans made significant social strides in education and other areas following the American Civil War. Unfortunately, the end of reconstruction brought about the passage of Jim Crow laws designed to pry citizenship from African Americans. One major setback for industrial education was in the displacement of black workers in American industry. Anderson (1988) contends that African American workers were displaced by equally skilled white workers in the early part of the 20th century. How could the sponsors of industrial education continue to tout its successes when the individuals it was supposed to serve could not find or retain jobs?

At the same time that industrial schools were fending off political and social attacks from white supremacists, they were also engaged in defending their policies among the African American intellectual elite. W. Dubois (2004) disagreed with this in *The Souls of Black Folk* by asserting that the work of industrial schools perverted the educational process because skilled artisans could not acquire and keep jobs without the basic rights afforded to white workers. Dubois (2004) believed that Washington had squandered the opportunity to improve the

self-worth of African Americans by accommodating white supremacy. Washington and Armstrong needed college-educated African Americans to operate their institutions (Dubois, 2004).

In 1926, 50 years after the end of the American Civil War, African Americans comprised approximately one-third of the total workforce of the United States and 41% of the total workforce in American agriculture (Sargent, 1926). The Federal Board of Vocational Education in that year described the difficulties of African Americans in becoming established in agricultural occupations, and how African Americans were perceived in that time period.

As a rule, the Negro standard of living is too low. He is too easily satisfied with his present conditions, poor though they may be. A shelter which keeps out the rain and cold is all that he cares for or expects in a house, although it may have no proper means of ventilation or screens to keep out mosquitoes and flies. If he gets plenty of pork and corn bread, he feels that he has sufficient and proper food for both himself and family regardless of their real needs the inclusion of vegetables and milk in their diet. In practically all cases he could provide himself with improved living facilities at little cost other than his own labor. (Sargent, 1926, p. 9)

The work of institutions such as Hampton and Tuskegee often helped to raise the standard of living for African Americans in the years following the American Civil War and through the first years of the Hampton Model for industrial education. Unfortunately, these advances could not be sustained under the tremendous social pressures associated with race and ethnicity of the 20th century.

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