Refereed Articles

An Africentric Interpretive Model of Curriculum Orientations for Course Development in Graduate Programs in Adult Education

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Abstract

The curriculum orientations that the authors present place the discussion of African Ameripean/African American[1] adult education within a sociohistorical context. The authors, motivated by a quest for racial freedom in a racist society, have identified three paradigmatic curricular responses that have emerged within the African American/African Ameripean adult education tradition. These curricular orientations reflect various conceptualizations and interpretations of the concepts of freedom, education, and democracy. It is the authors' belief that the Guy-Colin (1994) Interpretive Model of Africentric Curriculum Orientations will assist adult educators in the exploration of the depth and breadth of curricular orientations relative to African Ameripean/African American adult education. Additionally, the authors contend that this model will assist adult educators in identifying and understanding the historical antecedents of African Ameripean/ African American adult education activities and the philosophical issues that confronted practitioners then and still do now.

Introduction

A historical analysis of the African Ameripean/African American quest for education reflects various philosophical orientations as to what sociocultural changes would occur if and when members of the race became educated. We have analyzed these philosophical orientations utilizing two primary categories: 1) educational goals and objectives and 2)

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sociocultural goals and objectives. These philosophical orientations are reflective of the sociohistorical context in which African Ameripean/African American individuals lived. The salient feature of this context, regardless of time period, was racism. Therefore, our model addresses sociocultural and educational goals in light of the African Ameripeans'/ African Americans' strivings against racism.

We have used the Swahili *Nguzo Saba*[2] as a normative framework for defining an Africentric[3] cultural perspective. Our reasons for this choice are three: 1) the *Nguzo Saba* is an indigenous and, therefore, legitimate African value system; 2) it has gained growing awareness and acceptance among African Ameripeans/African Americans in the United States through the ethnic celebration of Kwanzaa; and 3) it addresses the major elements of a cultural system by focusing on the essential elements of community and identity, aesthetics, economics, politics, philosophy, and religion (see Table 1). We have used the *Nguzo Saba* as a basis for analyzing and evaluating the degree to which each of the identified curriculum orientations incorporates or espouses an Africentric perspective (Nyerere, 1971, 1974).

Table 1

A comparative analysis of African Ameripean/African American Curriculum Orientations

The Swahili *Nguzo Saba*: Seven principles of an Africentric Worldview	Multicultural/ Societal Reconstruc- tionist	Selfethnic Liberatory and Empowerment	Accom- modation/ Subordinate
Umoja (unity)	Yes	Yes	No
Kujichagulia (self-determination)	Yes	Yes	No
Ujima (collective work and responsibility)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ujamaa (cooperative economics)	No	Yes	Yes
Nia (purpose)	Yes	Yes	No
Kuumba (creativity)	Yes	Yes	No
Imani (faith)	Yes	Yes	No

What emerges from this analysis are three distinct curricular orientations, which we have labeled 1) Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist, 2) Selfethnic Liberatory and Empowerment, and 3) Accommodation/Subordinate (See Table 2). An Africentric interpretive model has been used in order to clarify both the content and the implications of each orientation. Additionally, we discuss the conceptual grounding, principal advocates, and programmatic examples illustrative of each orientation. It should be noted that these are not presented in rank order.

Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist Orientation

This orientation is grounded in the philosophy of cultural pluralism, especially that version of it articulated by Locke (Guy, 1996) and the early writings and activities of W. E. B. Du Bois. Advocates of this philosophy believe that racial identity will remain intact via educational activities that adopt subject matter based on African Ameripean/African American culture. African Ameripean/African American culture is seen as an essential vehicle to sustaining a strong sense of positive racial and ethnic identity as well as producing or enhancing community solidarity. Beyond the need to maintain a strong African Ameripean/African American community, this orientation supposes the importance of re-educating the members of the larger society in order to reduce prejudice and institutional racism. Thus, they envisioned an improvement in race relations, whereby the subordinate status of the race would be transformed as a result of the positive impact of a strong African Ameripean/African American community on the larger society. Correcting bias and prejudice with new cultural knowledge was the key to overcoming racism (Du Bois, 1902). Indeed, a new set of social relations based on enlightened intercultural education and awareness would result from a strong, self-aware, and culturally grounded African Ameripean/African American community.

Examples of the Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist Orientation are the educational activities of African Ameripean/African American institutional urban churches, especially at the turn of the century (Franklin, 1990); selected social service agencies such as the YMCA and YWCA; and fraternal organizations (Williams, 1990), as well as the experiments in Negro adult education sponsored by the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE) in Harlem, New York, and Atlanta, Georgia, during the 1930s (Guy, 1993, 1994). Paramount in each of these examples was the commitment to building and sustaining a viable

Table 2

Interpretive Model of Africentric Curriculm Orientations to Adult Edu-
cation

	Orientation		
	Multicultural Social Reconstructionist	Selfethnic Liberatory and Empowerment	Accommo-dation/ Subordinate
Educa-tional Aims	Cultural education; eradicate psychological impact of racism; know-ledge of self and race; race pride and sense of community based on cultural heritage.	Knowledge of self and race; eradicate psychological impact of racism; self-ethnic pride and unity.	Vocational/ technical education; skill development for the trades and practical arts.
Social Aims	Reconstruct American society to inlcude an African American Community with a strong sense of African American cultural heritage.	Create a liber-ated and empowered selfethnic reliant community.	Agricultural and economic development.
Ex-ample	Model for a National Program for Negro Adult Education (AAA); AME and CME churches.	School of African Philosphy.	Tuskeegee/ Hampton model.
Propo-nents	Locke; early DuBois.	Garvey; late DuBois (1940+).	Washington; Moon.

African Ameripean/African American community and improving the sta-
tus and position of the community within the larger society.

Selfethnic Liberatory and Empowerment Orientation

This orientation is grounded in the philosophy of selfethnic reliance articulated by Northrup, Gay, and Penn, 1896; Miller, 1914; Woodson, 1938; Du Bois, 1940, and most notably by Garvey, 1917 (Colin, 1988, 1989, 1994). Advocates of this orientation view the development of selfethnic pride and unity as the means to an end, selfethnic liberation, and empowerment. They believe that a highly developed sense of selfethnic consciousness will result in political and economic success. It is also believed that due to the racist nature of American society, adult education programs must be culturally grounded in that they must reflect those educational activities, formal and informal, that are designed and implemented by individuals and organizations that have their roots in the community (racially, ethnically, and geographically) and the programmatic goals are reflective of the sociocultural realities and life experiences that are indigenous to that group. Conversely, it is believed that programs must be developed by culturally grounded stakeholders who are individuals, groups, organizations, and/or institutions whose interests in the success of a program are not based solely on occupational (educational institutions, government or social service agency, etc.) and/or economic (business and industry) interests, but whose primary interest is based on racial or ethnic group membership (Colin, 1992). This position is predicated on the belief that members of the racial or ethnic group are the ones who acknowledge the existence of racism and understand the sociocultural and sociopsychological impacts on the race. This position reflects the firm belief that members of the race are quite capable of assuming leadership roles in their own liberation: psychologically, educationally, and socially.

This orientation can be viewed as programmatic goals, participation motivators, and a source relative to curricular content. It must be clearly understood that the educational activities occur outside the dominant (Eurocentric) sociocultural and ideological frameworks and the programmatic purpose and structure are designed to counteract the sociocultural and the socio-psychological effects of racism. It is clear to the advocates of this orientation that liberation and empowerment will not result in the conceptualization, good intentions, or educational activities designed and implemented by members of the dominant culture.

The African Ameripean/African American adult education activities discussed are examples of the Selfethnic Liberatory and Empowerment Orientation and are based upon the Theory of Selfethnic Reflectors (Colin, 1989) and the activities of the Universal Negro Improvement Association-African Communities League, and the African Methodist Episcopal and Christian Methodist Episcopal religious denominations. These activities must be viewed as a proactive approach to adult education for it is felt that a selfethnically conscious people would be less likely to permit themselves to be subjugated to social and psychological abuse. The designers and providers of programs reflective of the selfethnic liberatory orientation clearly understood the basic sociocultural and psychosocial needs of the African Ameripean/African American community to survive in a racist society.

Accommodation/Subordinate Orientation

This orientation is grounded in the philosophy of "self help with help" and assisted economic development. There were many advocates of this perspective, but the most notable include Booker T. Washington, along with his successor at Tuskeegee, Robert Russa Moton. The educational goals were the development of practical skills primarily for agricultural development. Indeed, economic development based on farming and agriculture were seen as the ultimate goal. The belief was that market economics would provide the African Ameripean/African American entrepreneur with the opportunity to function on an economically equal level with European American entrepreneurs. A strong economic base on agriculture was seen as the vehicle to the development of strong African Ameripean/African American communities. This orientation was, in effect, a capitulation to the racist caste system in which most African Ameripeans/African Americans lived, in both the north and the south, at the beginning of this century.

The most prominent example of this form of education was the Hampton-Tuskeegee model of education. Practical and industrial education characterized this approach to the exclusion of higher forms of education. Historians have debated the Hampton-Tuskeegee model and the role of Booker T. Washington in particular. Some have argued that this model (or curricular orientation as we have termed it) was the only practical choice in the South. We have characterized it as the accommodation/subordinate approach because of its capitulation to the racist interests of the south as well as the north (Anderson, 1988; Aptheker,1970;

Denton, 1993; Harlan, 1972-1984; Washington, 1904).

The similarities and differences among the three curricular orienta-tions become more vivid when the normative framework of the *Nguzo Saba* is used to evaluate each orientation. Perhaps the first point that draws the reader's attention in reviewing Table II is the degree of simi-larity between the Multicultural/Societal Reconstruction approach and the Selfethnic Liberatory approach. These two orientations are similar except on the points of cooperative economics. Additionally, the Selfethnic Liberatory Empowerment approach only allows for partici-pation by persons who are members of the race. It is interesting to note that the Accommodation/Subordinate curriculum approach incorporates two elements of the framework, Ujima and Ujamaa. This is understand-able given the predominance of the self-help theme of this approach. However, the absence of community-oriented political and social com-mitments to the African Ameripean/African American community in the approach is what distinguishes it from the other two approaches.

Implications

The initial intent in the development of this interpretive model was to lay the foundation for the development of a graduate level course in African Ameripean/African American adult education. In our reflec-tions on this we have come to the conclusion that our fundamental con-cern should be to present and preserve the intellectual and philosophical traditions in African Ameripean/African American history and culture. Having struck upon this framework, we now present it as a step to con-sidering its relevance to curriculum and course development in adult education.

We believe that it can provide a way to refocus adult education graduate curricula to incorporate African Ameripean/African American perspectives on adult education. The incorporation of multiple ethnic and cultural perspectives is addressed by James Banks in his model of multicultural content integration (Banks, 1990). Step one, the contri-butions approach, involves minimal change in which isolated instances of "heroes, holiday, or discrete cultural elements" of a ethnic minority group are included in the curriculum. The second level, the additive level, involves incorporating content, concepts, themes, and perspec-tives without changing the basic structure of the curriculum. The third level, the transformation approach, involves a change in the structure of the curriculum, to "enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and

themes from the perspectives of diverse ethnic, [sic] and cultural groups"
(Banks, 1993, p. 233). Level four, the social action approach, includes
the critical components of the transformation approach but emphasizes
that students take social action. It is in the transformation approach that
we see the utilization of this interpretive framework.

The establishment of a criterion for discussing educational issues
and problems from an Africentric perspective is essential to reaching this
level of integration relative to African Ameripean/African American cul-
ture. In an earlier paper, Banks (1976) suggests that there are three goals
for multicultural curriculum reform. These include helping individuals
1) to better understand their own cultural identity; 2) to develop a sensi-
tivity to and understanding of other cultural groups, especially
marginalized groups, and to function effectively within them; and 3) to
develop the ability to make reflective decisions on social issues and to
take effective actions to resolve social problems. It has been observed
that most graduate programs in adult education are Eurocentric in their
curricula (Hayes & Colin, 1994). The de-centering of a Eurocentric
curriculum so that it becomes more inclusive from an African Ameripean/
African American perspective means that course and curriculum devel-
opment should explicitly address the value framework that underlies the
intellectual, philosophical, and political dimension of African Ameripean/
African American knowledge.

The curricular orientations we have identified—Multicultural/Soci-
etal Reconstructionist, Selfethnic Liberatory and Empowerment, and
Accommodationist/Subordinate—highlight the basic themes and visions
contained in African Ameripean/African American adult educational his-
tory and philosophy. Taken as individual orientations to the curriculum,
one can begin to distinguish the varying perspectives and accompanying
points of agreement and disagreement within the African Ameripean/
African American experience. The *Nguzo Saba* as a system of African
cultural values helps to understand the similarities and differences in the
context of traditional African values. Using this framework, the reader's
attention is focused on community, interdependence, and collective ac-
tion. This differs significantly from traditional Eurocentric perspectives
of individualism, competition, and hierarchical forms of authority and
decision-making (Katz, 1985). As such, the framework helps to estab-
lish a historically-grounded normative basis for refocusing curriculum
from an Africentric perspective.

Central to this process of inclusion is the critique of the norms that
undergird Eurocentric exclusive curricula. Within the context of women's

studies, Butler (1997) has described the concept of "transformation" as an essential step in the process of including women of color in the curriculum. For Butler, mainstreaming or balancing women's content with male content "impl[ies] adding women to an established, accepted, and unchangeable body of knowledge. The experience of White, middle-class women has provided a norm" for curriculum development. In contrast to mainstreaming or integration, Butler says that "transformation" does "away with the dominance of norms" (pp. 177-178). Similarly, we propose that adopting an Africentric perspective means that curriculum infusion from an African Ameripean/African American perspective must account for the ways in which African Ameripeans/African Americans have attempted to justify, rationalize, and promote their interests. From an adult educational standpoint, this means that the selection, discussion and critique of African Ameripean/African American content must not occur based on using standards or criteria arising from traditional Eurocentric perspectives. Rather, selection of content about African Ameripean/African American adult education is made based on an Africentric perspective. We propose this model as a means of selecting, discussing, and critiquing African Ameripean/African American content.

Notes

[1]*African Ameripean*: The term *African Ameripean* is used here because of Colin's belief that such terms as colored, black, Negro, Afro–American and African American are culturally inappropriate and historically incorrect. Any term that identifies a race of people also identifies a land of origin and should be genetically, socioculturally, and historically correct. *African Ameripean* describes any person of African descent born in America. The use of *African* denotes the primary genetic roots and land of origin (there is no "Afrocan" continent). *Ameri-* reflects the voluntary assimilation with various native American tribal societies (particularly Cherokee and Seminole) and *-pean* reflects the forced assimilation with various European ethnic groups, particularly the British, French, and Irish, during the period of slavery in the United States. The phrasing *African Ameripean/African American* is used in this article because the authors do not disagree on the conceptual validity of the construction African Ameripean, but Guy prefers the term African American as a more recognizable term within the American context that identifies the cultural and historical experience of African Americans as rooted in the ethnic groups of Africa, especially West and Central Africa, as areas from which the

majority of people were captured and brought to North America as slaves.

[2]The *Nguzo Saba* (Swahili for the seven principles). 1)*Umoja (unity)*: to strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race. 2) *Kujichagulia (self-determination)*: to define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves, instead of being defined, named, created for, and spoken for by others. 3) *Ujima (collective work and responsibility)*: to build and maintain our community together, to share each other's problems, and to solve them together. 4) *Ujamaa (co-operative economics)*: to build and equip our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together. 5) *Nia (purpose)*: to make our collective vocation the building and developing of our communities more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited. 6) *Kuumba (creativity)*: to always do as much as we can in order to leave our communities more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited them. 7) *Imani (faith)*: to believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness of our struggle, which eventually will be won.

[3]*Africentric (Africentrism)*: The terms *Africentric* and *Africentricism* are intentionally used by the authors rather than the more common *Afrocentric* and *Afrocentricism*. Africentricism is a sociocultural and philosophical perspective that reflects the intellectual traditions of both a culture and a continent. It is grounded in the seven basic values embodied in the Swahili *Nguzo Saba* (see note two above). It asserts that adult educational policies, practices, experiences, philosophies, ethical issues, theories, and concepts must be considered and evaluated on the basis of the perspective and experience of African Ameripeans/African Americans.

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