Sankofa: Go Back and Fetch It, Notes on Afrocentric Pedagogy

by

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Abstract

The unique historical realities of peoples of African descent have left them to navigate a formal education structure inextricably linked to a pedagogy that has forged the fallacy of an education system that do not necessarily need their needs. In contrast, this study attempts to measure the effectiveness of Afrocentric pedagogy via a case study of Ile Omode community school in Oakland, California by providing data that can marginalize standardized pedagogical other approaches, absent of culturally relevant methods. Thus, this presentation strives to introduce new studies on the effectiveness of Afrocentric pedagogy, and it found that Afrocentric pedagogy has a positive effect on the outcome of the learning experiences of students of African descent at Ile Omode.

Introduction

The problem for many African American children, the education system in the United States is not merely ineffective; it is all too often openly hostile and detrimental (Nobles, 1996). According to Afrocentric philosophy, African Americans in the United States can only be properly understood when both the African cultural and western hemispheric political realities are taken into account together (Nobles, 1996). Of all the problems confronting the African American community today, none are more critical to their future than those related to the education of African American children (Nobles, 1996). The education of African American children continues to be in a state of emergency in school districts across the nation (Shockley and Cleveland, 2011). More often than not Black students are overrepresented in special education classes and underrepresented in gifted classes (Belgrave & Allison, 2006). Today there are a number of Afrocentric community school models, but there has been an absence of research that speaks to the effectiveness of Afrocentric pedagogy. The anticipated outcome of this study is to provide empirical evaluative data about an Afrocentric pedagogical model.

This presentation helps address the misunderstandings that have been so ever present in the disparity of educational equity for peoples of African descent in the United States colonial context. For example, it has become common in the United States for African American students to be disproportionately suspended, expelled, and subject to be put in special education programs in the urban context. It highlights the need for an urgent response to address the quandary of cultural genocide that is waged on Black children. This exercise simultaneously hopes to expand the much-needed discussion of Afrocentric pedagogy to focus on the documentation of effectiveness. This investigation intends to explore the general unknown information about Afrocentric schools by way of in-class observations and semi-structured interviews.

The crisis in Black education is not only that Black children are failing to achieve comparable to White children. In actuality, the system is not designed to educate Black children (Nobles, 1995). Black youth are performing well in some isolated contexts (Christine, 2011; Ginwright, 2004; Holcomb, 2004). For example, the Imhotep Institute is based on rich historical traditions, as well as a spirit that embraces an exciting and promising future. An additional example of Imhotep would be the Ile Omode private school in Oakland, California. Ile Omode is grounded in academic and cultural principles that provide a foundation for the development of self-determined scholarship and leadership (Ile Omode.Org, 2012). According to Asante (1991), "Afrocentricity is a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person" (pg.171). This position is important because it allows African people to adhere to their own cultural historical narrative, which allows oneself to be connected historically and philosophically to a group experience.

Criticism of an Afrocentric curriculum most often claim that the Afrocentric curriculum undermines the opportunity for people of African descent to work with other ethnic groups to develop pedagogy (Morrow, 1995). Such criticism insists therefore that the Black child might hold biases and misunderstanding of other ethnic groups. Such critics charge that the Afrocentric curriculum holds more focus on discipline rather than academic excellence (Grant & Sleeter, 2003). Furthermore, critic's charge that knowledge of African American history does not help much with the SATs, and it leaves the regular school curriculum unreformed (Hilliard, 1995). History is rich for the African no matter where he or she may find themselves on the planet today. The African mind has a connection to a rich scholarly history combined with the wisdom accumulated in the present age; both must be willed so that both past and present are utilized to trail-blaze a healthy future. As the first people on the planet and the victims of countless continual genocide, people participating in the African experience must take a vested interest in "bootstrapping" (in a Black nationalistic context) and use those communal qualities of the African worldview in order to resurrect the African mind for a dynamic, diverse, yet Afrocentric future.

Literature Review

The literature presented highlights the theoretical effectiveness of Afrocentric pedagogy as well as the criticism of such pedagogy. The literature is organized into five subsections, which include: *Critiques of a Culturally Relevant Approach,* which consists of literary works that highlight critiques of culturally relevant approach. *Independent Community-based School Data,* consists of literary works that highlight the effectiveness of community-based schools as opposed to traditional standard schooling. *Racial Identity*, consists of scholarly works that illustrate the significance of race and identity in an educational domain space. *Educational Equity Gap,* consists of research that brings insight to the nuances in closing achievement gaps among Black youth with a culturally relevant curriculum. The final subsection *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy,* consists of literary works that illustrate the potential of success with the application of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Critiques of a Culturally Relevant Approach

Social theory and education by Raymond Allan Morrow (1995) takes a critical look at the idea of cultural relevance. Two obstacles to this process have been the widespread impression that reproduction models had been largely discredited and abandoned a process reinforced by postmodernist attacks on metanarratives and general theory. The second issue, a lack of awareness of more recent developments, which often employ somewhat different theoretical terminology and thus disguise the continuity of issues (Morrow, 1995). Despite the various criticisms and qualifications of the original "correspondence principle". For economically reductionist models the problematic of social and cultural reproduction continues to be central to critical pedagogy and critical sociologies of schooling.

Social theory encompasses metatheory, on the one hand, and the range of substantive questions entailed in the construction of the theories of society within which sociologies of education are elaborated. Metatheory, herein is relevant as a tool for the practical discussion on the foundations of Afrocentric pedagogy. In the context of the sociology of education as a "normal science", to be sure, such models of society can be directly appropriated from sociologists and applied within minor modifications to the study of education. Morrow (1995) suggests that in periods of crisis and change within both social life and sociological theory, however, educational sociology must become more self-reflective and reconsider its foundational point of departure: the theory of society within which it attempts to analyze the world of educational activities (pg. 6).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Allen and Boykin's (1992) work bring to light how African American students academically do better when the concepts and ideas relate to them culturally and racially. In contrast when the class was more traditional (in a European context) the African American students were far more disinterested and would not pay attention as well to the material. In addition, African American students were far more successful working in groups and with each other than individually. Boykin (1992) notes that in sum, the cultural integrity work such as Afrocentric pedagogy provides empirical evidence that cognitive functioning is fundamentally linked to cultural realities. A profound amount of African American children's learning experience may be greatly enhanced with the application of salient Afrocentric features. Much more research is needed to fully uncover the boundaries of this phenomenon; at the present more attention is necessary. Boykin's (1992) research clearly recognizes that African American children succeed in the classroom given their learning styles are taken into account as well as acknowledging their cultural differences that may enhance their learning.

Educator and author Gloria Ladson Billings (1995) explores the development of culturally relevant pedagogy. Billings (1995) challenges notions of the intersectionality in teaching and cultural pedagogy, primarily on microanalytic or macroanalytic perspectives. Rather, Billings' (1995) research builds on the work done in both of these areas and proposes a culturally relevant theory of education. Culturally relevant teaching is a term created by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) to describe a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Participating in culturally relevant teaching essentially means that teachers create a bridge between students' home and school lives, while still meeting the expectations of the district and state curricular requirements (Billings, 1995). These studies focus on cultural appropriateness, congruence, or compatibility conducted within small-scale committees with a group of eight teachers in a small predominantly African American, low-income elementary school district in northern California.

Ladson-Billings' (1995) work provides robust examples of the application of pedagogy. This was a three-year study of successful teachers of African American students, and the findings suggest that performed research reinforces the idea that the most vital information about classroom practices must be collected from the classroom and the lived experiences of teachers. Research must be conducted to know much more about the practice of successful teachers for African Americans. The limitations of the aforementioned work lie in the longitudinal collection of empirical data collection that affirm the success of culturally relevant teachers utilizing student's culture as a vehicle for learning.

Independent Community Based Schools

Sociologist Zimmer et al (2008) highlight the strong need to examine the effectiveness of Afrocentric pedagogy. The purpose of using this body of work is to highlight the shift and recognition of the effectiveness of culturally relevant charter schools. For years, poor student performance has pledged the school district of Philadelphia. Zimmer et al (2008) suggest that the community based charter schools are attracting students whose prior achievement levels when in traditional district schools are slightly below the district wide average, but higher than the average achievement levels of traditional public school life. Zimmer et al (2008) work illustrated the connection between the community charter model needs and experiences of students who have performed slightly below the average in the traditional school system.

The Maroon Within Us by Asa G. Hilliard, is a most important work that captures the empirical insight by means of my observations in the field and ability to clarify the plight of issues facing the Black community. Hilliard (1995) discussed some time ago that he and Dr. Barbara Sizemore were asked to chair the National Association of Black School Educators (NABSE) Task Force on Black Academic and Cultural Excellence. The picture is not bright, whether looking at achievement test scores, dropout rates, suspension, expulsions, decline in the numbers of African American principals and teachers, and other school-related problems as it relates to African American education. Historian and master educator Asa G. Hilliard (1995) is quite clear in his illustration and notion that African Americans do not control the institutions that educate and socialize our children: the schools, the mass media, the law, does. A possible exception can be made for some of our churches and a few other organizations. These institutions are far and in-between.

Educational theorist Paulo Freire (1970) has defined culture as anything that human beings make. In essence, Freire (1970) advocated to make primary the distinction between what is nature and what is culture; between what is made by humans and what is not. This definition should leave the reader with a certain sense of the arbitrariness and the equivalence of the many things that many different people make. Freire (1970) note's that people choose to make things out of the elements available to them in their environment, in keeping with their motivation to do so with their historical frame of reference (Freire,1970). Any cultural characterization of a person or group is a statement about the results of human choice, not about natural properties, such as mental capacities. By measuring the effectiveness of a specific culturally relevant pedagogical model, such as Afrocentric Pedagogy, the discourse of Critical Race Pedagogy is conceptually grounded in the work of Paulo Friere.

The cultural dimension is important to an analysis of styles. Discussions of cultural matters in education suffer from a widespread tendency to confuse race and class with culture. These may be associated, but they are not synonymous (Hilliard, 1995). A Black person may or may not be closely identified with the mainstream of traditional culture in the Black community.

It is therefore widely assumed that the mere presence of learning styles requires a pedagogical response, especially at the point of applying specific teaching strategies (Hilliard, 1995). It is also widely believed that there already exists a well-articulated, appropriate teaching strategy that are differentiated from each other and that can also be characterized in stylistic terms and that good matches can be made between teaching and learning styles.

Race and Identity

Racial identity theory by Thompson and Carter (1993) is a classical work that contextualizes the relevance of cultural pedagogical approaches. Culturally relevant pedagogy is a pedagogy that recognizes the diverse cultural characteristics of students from different ethnic backgrounds and adjusts teaching methods to account for this diversity (Billings, 1995). In developing racial identity, people must undertake careful reflection on the extent to which racial indoctrination has influenced and continues to influence their lives. Thompson and Carter (1993) also suggests that people should be aware of the manner in which they relate to others who are racially similar or racially dissimilar to themselves. Helms (1995) expanded the theory of Black racial identity development to include all racial marginalized American populations, that is, people of color (pg. 19). One of the most significant contributions to racial identity theory is the formulation of how racial identity characteristics generalize to groups and organizations. The literature suggests that the racial climate is influenced within a group and organization by members' perception of power. An understanding of power perceptions among group members needs to be considered within the context of a society.

Asante (2003) brings a healthy discussion to the conversation of race identity as it relates to Afrocentric pedagogy in *Erasing Racism*. Asante (2003) asserts that what is often at stake in any discussion of race in the United States is the African American's sense of cultural self. There has been an historical effort on the part of White supremacy to destroy the culture of people of African ancestry. Asante (2003) holds that in dealing with the persistent nature of anti-Africans it is important that African people do not evade a discussion of the relentless way it insinuates itself into every field of art and science. Asante (2003) further argues that it is clear that racism is not just an urban American problem, but is actually a broader American problem. Asante (2003) points out the matter of the evidence supporting racial bias interpretation of data as well as in the data themselves indicate that Africans in America have had been treated unfairly. Asante's (2003) work brings the African problem into the 21st century while simultaneously expanding a contemporary discussion on the reality of race and what that means for people of African descent. And more recently, Asante (2017:17) has called for a revolutionary pedagogy via a philosophy of education that seeks to overturn ordinary thinking, methods, and practice of creating and delivering knowledge to children by employing Africological, Kemetological, and rhetorical techniques to reset the instructional focus for children.

Educational Equity Gap

Since the early 1970s, there has been a vast number of inquiries and scholarly analysis about how to improve the educational experience of underserved student populations (Durden, 1970). Durden's (1970) work, *African Centered Schooling: Facilitating Holistic Excellence for Black Children* is one such example. Durden (1970) excels in illustrating the need for a holistic approach when engaging and educating African populations. Durden's (1970) idea of a holistic approach includes but is not limited to, educators' ability to connect to students' home and schooling experience. Durden also suggests there is discontinuity between the experience of the teaching force and students they teach, and disconnect between students' home and schooling experiences. This pattern has left Black educational experience in dismal conditions and non-culturally responsive (Hilliard, 2006).

Thus the aims here are to illustrate the tremendous need to research Afrocentric pedagogy, particularly the independent community based schools in order to observe the effectiveness of methodology to reinforce and foster critical consciousness racial and cultural identity in Black youth. Independent community based school was chosen due to the growing potential it provides as a space of agency for culturally relevant pedagogy, while addressing the educational equity gaps when compared to traditional standard public schools. Independent community based schools are emergent spaces of agency due to theoretical approach of positioning students as the object of the learning experience (Hilliard, 2006). Students are much more likely to engage in a learning condition that reflects their reality. In the midst of discussions about improving education, teacher education, equity, and diversity, little has been done to make the effectiveness of pedagogy a central area of investigation (Hilliard, 2006).

Shockley's and Cleveland's (2011) work highlights the fact that many scholars have pointed out that Black children are consistently found at the bottom of virtually all data reported about student academic performance (Shockley and Cleveland, 2011 pg. 54-75). Shockley and Cleveland (2011) found that overlooked is the fact that if Black children miraculously appeared at the top of those tiers, we would still have a major problem, and perhaps an even bigger problem than currently. Afrocentric educators and scholars advance the notion that Black children are, in fact, Africans, and since they are Africans, they should be taught from a cultural perspective that is Pan-African. Pan-Africanism is a movement that seeks to unify African people, into "one African community" (Shockley and Cleveland, 2011, pg. 25). Differing types of Pan-Africanism seek different levels of economic, racial, social, or political unity. Afrocentric scholars distinguish between education, which is a transformative process that leads toward skill mastery and knowledge of oneself, and training, which is a process of learning how to get along in a system (Asante, 1998).

For example, at Ile Omode, the children are well versed and have a fundamental understanding of the seven virtues of *Ma'at*, i.e., truth, justice, harmony, balance, order, reciprocity, propriety (Karenga 2006). The students also understand how those seven virtues inform the conditions of *Maafa*, a Kiswahili term for terrible occurrence or great disaster referenced here to describe the capture and enslavement of African people (Ani 1994), which affect all African people due to the disharmony of *Ma'atin* values. For example, in social-science class, the children are given reading assignments where they look for the presents of one of the seven virtues in select text. The aforementioned example is one of many examples found at Ile Omode because it calls into play the students' cultural ethnic experience historically and contemporary, which is a fundamental approach in Afrocentric models.

Overall the presented literature was very helpful as an amalgamation of literary works that brought forth a complex subject matter. Afrocentric pedagogy is a viable means of improving the performance gap between White and Black children, and further study of the effectiveness of Afrocentric pedagogy is pivotal. Some of the most visible patterns in most of the research presented were the lack of quantitative and empirical data to support theoretical framework (Shujaa, 1994; Smith, 1999; Yosef Ben-Jochannan, 1972; Carreno, 2006). The gap between empirical data collected and qualitative affirmation can become problematic. Thus, the focus here is on contemporary Black identity and reaffirming new perceptions of history through contemporary interpretations of antiquity. With the methodological approach of engagement with the information, or participatory observation, attendance, critical thinking, and the quality of project work complete. The research question is: *What are the effects of Afrocentric pedagogy on critical community awareness and cultural identity of Black youth ages 11-13 at Ile Omode School in Oakland?*

Ile Omode is an African-centered private school located in Oakland, California. Members of Wo'se, a spiritual community of the scared African way, founded Ile Omode in 1986. The school serves children preschool through eighth-grade, and have the fundamental belief that all children have a right to a quality education. Ile Omode is grounded in academic and cultural principles, which provide a foundation for the development of self-determined scholarship and leadership. The methodologies will be largely driven by the exploration of methods that have been historically used in order to understand the effectiveness of Afrocentric pedagogy. In addition, this study seeks to expands and affirm existing practices.

Methodology

The participant population of students in this exercise is 8th graders ranging in age from 11-13 years old. The eighteen interviewed students are African American males and females. The principal investigator also interviewed two eight-grade teachers at the Ile Omode school: the math teacher and the social science teacher.

When conducting the investigation, the principal investigator also observed two eighth grade classes with the permission of the students, the students' parents, the teachers, and the school director. The data collected from interviews and observations provided indicators of how their experience with Ile Omode's Afrocentric pedagogy affects their attitudes about themselves, African Americans and their immediate community. Classroom observations provided indications of how the Afrocentric pedagogy is conducted in the classroom environment.

The presented theories are designed to enhance culturally relevant pedagogy and recognize the positive and complementary relationship between education and schooling. These theories will also help the principal investigator recognize the effectiveness of such pedagogy and the interdependent nature of the relationship between education and schooling for African American youth. The presented methods and data collection technique were chosen to allow thestudents and teachers an opportunity to speak freely with little interference from the principal investigator. The principal investigator employs semi-structured interviews along with observation data collection in order to provide an understanding of the students' and teachers' experience with the Afrocentric pedagogy that is utilized at Ile Omode.

Theoretical Framework and Instruments

To conduct this exploration, I utilized the Afrocentric pedagogy theoretical framework of Shockley and Cleveland (2011) and the educational theory of Shujaa, (1994). The aforementioned theories were utilized due to their applications to culturally relevant pedagogy, and recognition of relationships between Black education and schooling in the historical colonial context. The selected theoretical frameworks also allow the subject matter to be placed in an Afrocentric context. The goal of this investigation is to gather evidence on the effectiveness of an Afrocentric pedagogy. The theories are designed to enhance culturally relevant pedagogy and recognize the positive and complementary relationship between education and schooling.

The principal investigator utilized qualitative semi-structured interviews and observation to conduct the investigation. The interviewing process gave the students and teachers an opportunity to speak freely with little interference from me. For interviews, the principal investigator formulated open-ended questions that were left up to the interpretation of the individual in order to have a comfortable honest conversation. The questions for these interviews were developed towards gaining a sense of the students' class experience, their attitudes and perceptions about the school, themselves, and their respective Social Science and Math classes. In addition, the principal investigator asked the students about their relationships with their teacher and the ways in which it affects their overall school experience.

The collected data was transcribed and recorded. All interviews were separated for common themes into different categories according to their interview group (8th graders). Latent coding was utilized to organizes and categorize the most common themes.

Content analysis of each theme has been created based on the data collected from the interviews and observations. Created themes were developed by the dominant responses gathered from the collected data. In addition, I utilized field notes from the in class observations.

From this process, I looked for commonalities and developed an analysis of the data from there. The observation aspect here is of most importance to observe the visual confirmation of folk expression among the studied populace. Folk expressions bring to light the fact that African descended peoples in the United States have long understood that schooling can both serve as well as betray their interest (Shujaa, 1994). The purpose of the methodology of this research is to recognize the similarities and differences between being schooled and being educated. The present study looked for interactions between the teachers and students, student participation, delivery of information, student attendance, and level of student engagement.

From this method I compared and contrast two classrooms and developed an assessment from the collected observations. The code sheet used at the end of each 30-minute interval informed latent coding. Also all observed interactions between the teachers and students, student participation, delivery of information, student attendance, and level of student engagement was categorized and documented by placing a check-mark in the appropriate column, also recording a field-note of the observed interaction. The principal investigator also made brief notes to help identify the antecedents, consequences, or perceived reason for observed behavior of the populace in this investigation.

The teachers in the research project were observed Monday--Friday for an entire school year (January 21-14-May 22, 2013) in their respective math, and social studies classes. In addition, I interviewed them for 30-minutes each one time. The students were interviewed once on their lunch break or after class according to their preference after the midpoint of the school year. The interviews were voice-recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting statements. All participants, students and teachers, experienced classroom observations by the principal investigator. My in-class observations did not interfere with students during class. In conducting analysis, the principal investigator took 25 minutes after each interview to reflect and take notes on the information received. Each note was categorized and compared to the observation data.

The first set of interviews started on January 7-28, 2013. The principal investigator reviewed all the notes, made groupings of common themes and created analysis, as well as looked for patterns after each set of interviews. The principal investigator took two weeks to review, transcribe and analyze the data after each set. The principle investigator conducted the analysis and looked for commonalities and patterns within the research presented. For this process, the principal investigator took six weeks to look for patterns and come to some form of a conclusion or official analysis.

Results

I collected the following data results during the course of the investigation. It should be noted, for the reader's convenience the most compelling student responses are illustrated below. The interview data was collected from 15 out of 18, 8th grade students at Ile Omode. Fifteen 8th graders turned in all approval forms and agreed to participate in the 30-minute interview process. The following themes were gathered utilizing latent coding which allowed the primary investigator to categorize each interview response accordingly. Each theme was developed based on the commonality of the student interview response as it related to the observational data.

Theme #1: Food enriches the learning experience:

Claim: 10 out of 15 interviewed students indicated that the lunches and fresh food made readily daily at Ile Omode helps them focus on the learning experience. The students expressed that there is a fundamental importance of the access of health food. Students expressed that a good lunch benefits them by giving them the energy to remain alert during class time. The following quotes represent the kinds of responses that some students gave.

> **Interviewee # 1 "age: 13" 8th grade female** stated: Yes, I do like going to Ile Omode. The schoolwork is difficult, but it's always a good feeling to know that
>
> you're academically ahead of others my age. And the lunches are amazing!

Theme #2: Community, we stick to gather in umoja:

All 15 interviewees indicated that the community aspect of the learning experience at Ile Omode has helped them advance academically while simultaneously contextualizing their reality. Several of the students expressed that they felt confident and comfortable at school when part of a family and part of the community as well. Several of the students expressed the importance of being giving the opportunity to hold one another accountable for their learning experience. The community group learning experience undermines the idea that Black students are less capable of high achievement in classroom setting particularly in math than non-Black students. The following quotes represent the kinds of responses that some students gave.

> **Interviewee: # 2 "age: 13" 8th grade female** stated: Yes, I learned about my community at Ile Omode. I learn how to care and things not to do. There are things that help me learn better because if you don't understand anything you can ask one of your classmates. Things that I don't understand I ask one of my friends.

Theme #3: The importance of the practice of cultural productions

Claim: 10 out of 15 interviewed students indicated that the expression and practice of cultural productions has had a positive influence on their self-development. Several students also expressed the importance of the information they learned in school reflects the ethnic and cultural practices of the students' ethnic group. Several students acknowledged that a culturally relevant learning experience makes the information for Black students more relatable and personal, allowing for an organic learning experience. The following quotes represent the kinds of responses that some students gave.

Interviewee: # 15 male "age: 15" 8th grade stated: I do like going to school at Ile Omode because the experience here is a lot different and better than the Oakland public school. I came from a public school and I came here to Ile Omode to straighten up my behavior and my grades and it really helped. I like the size of the school also I can get a lot of help and attention from the teachers.

Theme #4: Responsibility to be intelligent:

Claim: 12 out of 15 interviewed students indicated that they have the responsibility to be intelligent. Several of the students expressed that intelligence is not seen as an individual goal, but as a collective responsibility. The following quote represent the kinds of responses that some students gave.

Interviewee: # 2 "age: 13" 8th grade female stated: We have the responsibility to be intelligent African leaders of the future because we are the sisters of tomorrow. It makes me feel important and proud to be myself because people have marched for us and fought through slavery and segregation. We wouldn't be in the position we are in right now.

Theme #5: Responsibility Knowledge of self

Claim: 12out of 15 interviewed students indicated that they have the responsibility to be intelligent future African leaders. Several of the students expressed that they have the responsibility to look out for one another. Several students indicated that self-knowledge is linked to the cognitive self in that its motives guide our search to gain greater clarity and assurance that our own self-concept is an accurate representation of our true self; for this reason, the cognitive self is also referred to as the known self. Students indicated that acquiring a knowledge of self and the collective understanding of the African community, indeed enhances' the level of self-esteem and confidence for Black children. The following quotes represent the kinds of responses that some students gave.

Interviewee: # 2 "age: 13" 8ᵗʰ grade female stated: I do enjoy learning at Ile Omode. I enjoy learning about our health and history. Honestly at my old school I wouldn't know anything about how history was back then. The classes aren't even boring compared to the ones at my old school. At my old school I hated history because it was boring.

Interviewee: # 5 "age 13" 8ᵗʰ grade female stated: What I learn about Black people makes me feel if we want a change we can achieve all that comes forth. My ancestors achieved their goals so I can too.

Theme #6: Say it loud it makes me feel proud: History has changed me
        Claim: 11 out of 15 interviewed students indicated that when the material presented in class is related to them, they had a meaningful learning experience. Several of the students expressed that the African centered learning experience at Ile Omode enhances the comprehension of self-determination and processing of information that contributes to a students' confidences to learn--as opposed to when history lessons are less culturally reflective of the student body. The following quotes represent the kinds of responses that some students gave.

Interviewee: # 9 "age: 13" 8ᵗʰ grade male stated: I enjoy learning at Ili Omode. I enjoy learning science and history. Yes, there is because the school focuses on the African way, and I learn about myself.

Interviewee: # 11 "age: 12" 8ᵗʰ grade male stated: Yes, history because Baba goes in detail about the history book and how it relates to Black people.

Theme #7: Environmental cultural reinforcement, "Yo, Sale I don't see know Black faces on the wall"
        Claim: 15 out of the 15 interviewed students indicated that the aesthetic location of where students study is crucial to the learning experience. Several students also expressed that the teachers' interaction within the classroom (students, textbooks, chalkboard) as a whole is important in the learning experience at Ile Omode. The students expressed that they enjoyed the reinforcement of cultural values that instills the idea of excellence as an expectation. The following quotes represent the kinds of responses that some students gave.

Interviewee: # 8 "age: 13" grade male stated: They draw notes on the white board like pictures that show examples of things. There are more seats and desk in the front, majority of the classes that we have are small. So it is easier to learn.

Interviewee: # 10 "age: 13" 8th grade male stated: I think the people in the school are special because the teachers here kind treat you like their children. The teacher makes you learn better, because they teach you in a more free and relaxed style. So you can get away from the textbooks. Baba Abubakar breaks away from the textbooks.

Discussion

The findings suggest that many of the interviewed students attending Ile Omode enjoy the learning experience and feel encouraged. The students accept responsibility for the outcome of their learning experience. The teachers provide the student with real-time examples and the opportunity for students to engage in critical thinking. Meany students express that they benefited from positive student teacher interactions. The findings confirm the research of Billings (1995), Hilliard (1995), and Shujaa (1994), whose discussion and scholarship suggest that African American children do well when their cultural, socioeconomic, communities are taken into consideration. Furthermore, the study confirms Hilliard's notion that the ability and models that support culturally relevant pedagogy already exists.

This finding coincides with the assumption of the theoretical framework of Afrocentricity. The findings confirm that children of African ancestry tend to have a better learning experience that develops the students' sense of awareness of themselves, of Black people, and of their community. For example, students tended to have a richer learning experience when teaching moments used current events in the student's immediate community as it compared to events abroad and historically. African American students tend to be hyper-aware of undermining issues that plague the Black community, as gathered from empirical observation. Additionally, the findings confirm that the African-centered learning experience at Ile Omode enhances the comprehension of self-determination and processing of information that contributes to the students' confidence to learn.

The findings also negated some critiques of Afrocentric pedagogy. Some critiques were negated more commonly than others. One such critique is that Afrocentric pedagogy models tend to have over focus on discipline rather than students' learning experience (Grant & Sleeter, 1995). The findings indicate that intelligence is not seen as an individual goal, but as a collective responsibility as seen in the examples of interviewees 3, 5, 9, etc. In addition, 10 out of 15 interviewed students indicated that the expression and practice of cultural productions has had a positive influence on their self-development.

The finding also coincides with the literary work of Boykin (1992). Boykin's work is affirmed in the study and collected empirical evidence demonstrating cognitive functioning is fundamentally linked to cultural context.

African American children tend to have an enhanced learning experience with the incorporation of salient features of the Afrocentric experience into a learning context. The presented data strongly affirms Boykin's theoretical framework. The observations and the presented results section affirm each aspect of Boykin's theoretical framework. Additionally, the findings support Murrell (2002) theory of Afrocentric pedagogy. The study found it profound and fundamental to center the student's ethnic, cultural, history, and contemporary experience at the center of the pedagogical model.

Afrocentric pedagogy must meet three main criteria for it to be effective (Murrell, 2002). The pedagogy must address the students at the center of the students' learning experience. The pedagogy must address the historical realities for people of African ancestry and interactions with other ethnic groups: the individual has responsibility to the self and community both local and abroad (Murrell, 2002). The environment where instruction takes place must coincide with the pedagogical outcomes and expectations. Instructors of Afrocentric pedagogy must meet three criteria: the ability to develop students academically: the instructors' willingness to nurture and support cultural competence: the instructors influence on the development of a political and critical consciousness (Murrell, 2002). If both the environment is consistent with the aforementioned aspects of the teachers' operational role and that of pedagogy, the outcome will be to the benefit of the students' learning experience (Murrell, 2002).

The research may provide the case study school (Ile Omode) with information that help address their limitations and more effectively accomplish their pedagogical objectives. A healthy African future means African control of the production of healthy African minds that value an Afrocentric approach to African issues when helpful. Education then should be recognized as a key medium that enables a healthy future. People of African descent have arrived in the 21st century in an opportune position to change the tide of hegemonic stratification for all by way of consciousness. So it must be clear to all African/Black peoples of the globe that knowledge is power and the cultural production of such knowledge is even more powerful, ashe!

Implications

The fact that Afrocentric pedagogy has the ability to provide students of African ancestry a holistic education makes the model a sound tool to address the educational equity gap that plagues Black students in schools all across the nation. Afrocentric learning models provide students of African ancestry with the opportunity to be introduced to real world issues, as well as the typical information students should be learning in any particular grade level. In the case of Ile Omode, the students are all taught a level above the students' current grade level. This is important because it speaks to critics of Afrocentric schools regarding the importance of discipline as a primary focus. Contrary to the criticism, discipline is maintained and established by respect for one another. In addition, scholarship and community are a primary area of focus of Ile Omode.

Afrocentric pedagogy can lead to new understandings and is a very diverse model to educate Black students. Even though there are criteria of Afrocentric pedagogy there should be space for each instructor to bring his or her own individual presence to the instruction of the Afrocentric learning model. This model aims to affirm the individual effort by personal contribution to the progressive development of the community. Afrocentric pedagogy has the power to liberate the minds of Black students all across the nation. A solid education is the model captured in the collected data. The Afrocentric pedagogy will be the means to move people of African ancestry into the next phase of mental liberation. This liberation embraces Blackness as a standard to which all mankind is equal to and aspire to harmonize with. Psychology, history, social political discourse, economics, and spirituality are all subjects that are consistently addressed at Ile Omode which make for an optimistic African future.

Limitations

The limitations of this exercise were few but seemed to be relevant if able to be accommodated in future research. Longitudinal data was not able to be collected from every class the student participants engaged in. Data collection could be extended to the entire school year. Researchers should also be encouraged to attend any staff meeting were data is being collected if plausible. The implantation of observed longitudinal studies will provide researchers with rich and robust data in which to extract valuable information that informs the practice and maintenance of a progressive learning experience. Longitudinal data collection seeking the effectiveness of Afrocentric pedagogy is very important towards building an augment that affirms the practice of culturally relevant pedagogy. The longitudinal collection of data allows for further contextualization of the implantation salient futures of Afrocentric pedagogy. Future studies should include and address the aforementioned limitations in order to advance the understanding of contextualization and practice of Afrocentric pedagogy.

Conclusion

Due to Afrocentricity incorporating the direct ability to address students through a cultural grounded lens, it is pivotal that the educators of Black students seek to understand the fundamentals of Black students' educational needs. This means instructors are strongly familiar with their students' communities, histories, and learning experience and take that into account. Culturally relevant pedagogy practices recognizing and respect the everyday realities and cultural background of the students. Aspects of the students' daily experience must be injected into the context of the learning experience. Effective pedagogy can inspire students to far excel in their learning experience. For this reason, Afrocentric pedagogy must be given the opportunity to save the learning experience of African American children. This could impact the students' self-esteem and confidence levels.

Afrocentric pedagogy at Ile Omode is to some degree unique, but still similar to the collected data to other Afrocentric schools. Ile Omode as a case study provides ample empirical data to support that Afrocentric pedagogy does have a strong effectiveness on the learning experience of Black students. Ile Omode with the accordance of Afrocentricity pushes each student to achieve self and academic excellence. Afrocentric models give African American students a strong feeling of umoja. Black students must be given the opportunity to be excellent and Afrocentric pedagogy is a perfect means to do so. Assisting Black students in closing the educational equity gap is of the up-most importance. The instructor, student, and environment must all be taken into account when engaging in Afrocentric pedagogy. Afrocentric pedagogy has the capability to rescue and restore Black students' cultural integrity, when at times Black children can suffer from the standard public school learning experience.

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