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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Fodié TANDJIGORA, Boulaye KEITA, Aly TOUNKARA, LES MIGRATIONS FEMININES AU MALI VERS UN NOUVEAU PARADIGME MIGRATOIRE	pp. 01 – 12
Pither Medjo Mvé, Yolande Nzang-Bie, ESQUISSE PHONOLOGIQUE D'UN PARLER BANTU EN DANGER : LE MWESA (B22E) DU GABON.....	pp. 13 – 27
Djim Ousmane DRAME, CONTRIBUTION DES CENTRES D'ENSEIGNEMENT ARABO-ISLAMIQUE TRADITIONNELS A LA PRESERVATION, A L'ENRICHISSEMENT ET A LA VALORISATION DES LANGUES NATIONALES DU SENEGAL : L'EXEMPLE DU WOLOF	pp. 28 – 43
Abdoul Karim HAMADOU, ENSEIGNEMENT DES LANGUES AFRICAINES PAR LA POESIE DIDACTIQUE ARABE : ANALYSE D'UN MANUSCRIT AJAMI EN SONGHAY	pp. 44 – 55
Oumar HAROUNA, INCIDENCE DE L'ESCLAVAGE PAR ASCENDANCE SUR LA GESTION DES ECOLES EN MILIEU RURAL D'OUSSOUBIDIAGNA	pp. 56 – 66
Seydou COULIBALY, ETUDE FLORISTIQUE ET STRUCTURALE DE LA FORET CLASSEE DE M'PESSOBA, AU SUD DU MALI.....	67 – 85
Oumar S K DEMBELE, LA COMMUNICATION PAR SMS, NOUVELLE DYNAMIQUE DE COMMUNICATION CHEZ LES JEUNES MALIENS	pp. 86 – 98
Anoh Georges N'TA, Djézié Guénoilé Charlot BENE BI LE RAPT, UNE STRATÉGIE MATRIMONIALE TRANS-ÉTATIQUE ET TRANSHISTORIQUE : LE CAS DE LA FRANCE MÉDIÉVALE ET DU BURKINA FASO CONTEMPORAIN.....	pp. 99 – 113
Nouhoum Salif MOUNKORO, Youba NIMAGA, L'ETAT DE DROIT, LES COUPS DE FORCE ET LA SECURITE NATIONALE	pp. 114 – 130
Boureima TOURE, FACTEURS EXPLICATIFS DE LA CRISE SECURITAIRE AU CENTRE DU MALI	pp. 131 – 145
Sory DOUMBIA, Hassane TRAORÉ, THE SALIENCE OF VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS IN POST-SLAVERY AFRICAN AMERICAN SOCIETY AND ITS IMPACT ON BLACKS IN BOOKER T. WASHINGTON SELECTED WORKS	pp. 146 – 158
Kaba KEITA, THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF LIBERAL PHILOSOPHIES IN GREAT BRITAIN IN THE 17TH CENTURY	pp. 159 – 170
SOUARE Ndeye, READING KANE'S 4.48 PSYCHOSIS FROM THE LENS OF THE BIBLE: DILEMMA BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARKNESS	pp. 171 – 187

- Apalo Lewisson Ulrich KONÉ, Yesonguiédjo YÉO,**
APPRENTISSAGE DES LANGUES ET ODD N° 4 : DE LA NÉCESSITÉ D'UNE ADAPTATION DE LA FORMATION AUX SPÉCIFICITÉS DES APPRENANTS pp. 188 – 202
- Maxime BOMBOH BOMBOH,**
PEUT-IL AVOIR UNE FONCTIONNALITE DU MESSAGE THEATRAL DEVANT LE PUBLIC DOUBLE DE L'AFRIQUE NOIRE FRANCOPHONE ? pp. 203 – 211
- Adama Samaké,**
THE KURUKAN FUGA CHARTER: AN INSTRUMENT OF SOCIAL STABILITY FOR THE MALI EMPIRE pp. 212 – 222
- Souleymane TOGOLA,**
PARENTS' PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF BAMANANKAN NATIONAL LANGUAGE IN MALI: A CASE STUDY OF THE DISTRICT OF BAGUINÉDA pp. 223 – 231
- David KODIO,**
MORPHOLOGICAL AND SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF BIRTH ORDER IN DOGON LANGUAGE: THE CASE OF TOROSO (SANGHA) pp. 232– 239
- Younassa SEIDOU,**
LE PHÉNOMÈNE DU TERRORISME INTERNATIONAL AU SAHEL ET SON RÔLE DANS L'AUGMENTATION DE L'IMMIGRATION ILLÉGALE..... pp. 240– 251
- Mohamed YANOQUÉ,**
LE MYTHE D'ORPHÉE DANS LA PORTE DES ENFERS DE LAURENT GAUD pp. 252– 266
- Kadiatou A. DIARRA,**
LA LANGUE MATERNELLE, MOYEN D'ENRICHISSEMENT DANS *MONNE, OUTRAGES ET DEFIS* D'AHMADOU KOUROUMA pp. 267– 275
- Daouda KONE,**
NATIONAL LANGUAGES DEVELOPMENT, SYMBOL OF THE SOCIETAL HERITAGE OF A PEOPLE: CASE OF MALL..... pp. 276– 284
- Aboubacar Abdoulwahidou MAIGA, Aminata TAMBOURA**
LA DERNIÈRE CONFIDENCE DU PROFESSEUR GAOUSSOU DIAWARA pp. 285– 311
- NOGBOU M'domou Eric, BLE HACYNTHE**
AUX ORIGINES DE L'ISLAM POLITIQUE DANS LA BOUCLE DU NIGER ENTRE RECONSTRUCTION DE L'ETAT ET RENOUVEAU RELIGIEUX (XV^{ème}-XVI^{ème} SIECLE)pp. 312– 325
- COULIBALY Zahana René**
LE REALISME SOCIAL DANS L'ACCUEIL DE L'IMMIGRE(E), UNE ETUDE SOCIOCRIQUE DE *FEARLESS* ET *MERCHANTS OF FLESH* DE IFEOMA CHINWUBA pp. 326– 334
- DIARRASSOUBA Abiba**
DU DISCOURS DE CONQUETE DU POUVOIR POLITIQUE ET DES STRATEGIES DE COMMUNICATION : QUELLE APPROCHE SEMIOTIQUE ? pp. 335– 346

THE SALIENCE OF VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS IN POST-SLAVERY AFRICAN AMERICAN SOCIETY AND ITS IMPACT ON BLACKS IN BOOKER T. WASHINGTON SELECTED WORKS

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Résumé

L'une des conditions les plus dangereuses auxquelles les esclaves étaient confrontés en Amérique était la privation d'éducation, qui était la clé principale pour les maintenir dans la dépendance et la domination totale. Lors de l'abolition de l'esclavage, les anciens esclaves et leurs descendants n'avaient pas immédiatement obtenu la possibilité de bénéficier des conditions décentes. Les portes d'une meilleure éducation leur étaient fermées. Il devenait obligatoire de trouver leur propre voie pour goûter à ce fruit précieux dont les autres citoyens bénéficiaient déjà. Dans cette quête, Booker T. Washington a ciblé le type d'éducation qui ne présentait pas assez de difficultés pour les Noirs puisque leurs anciens maîtres les rejetaient dans les écoles qu'ils fréquentaient. C'était la formation professionnelle qui pouvait les conduire directement à certains emplois. Cet article tente de mettre en lumière l'importance de cette éducation au début de l'émancipation des Noirs et son impact sur les générations actuelles et futures. Pour atteindre cet objectif, la méthodologie que nous avons utilisée consiste à lire des articles, des livres, des romans et d'autres documents traitant ce sujet. Ce qui indique que l'approche qualitative convient à notre étude puisque la technique d'analyse de contenu est utilisée pour collecter et interpréter les données d'études. En fin, les résultats de cette étude indiquent que l'accent mis sur la formation professionnelle est l'un des moyens les plus sûrs pour les Afro-Américains de réduire sérieusement le fossé laissé par les séquelles de l'esclavage.

Mots clés : Les Noirs, Education, Economie, Amélioration, Ecoles professionnelles.

Abstract

One of the most dangerous conditions slaves were confronted in America was the privation of education which was the main key to maintain them in total dependence and domination. When the abolition of slavery occurred, the former slaves and their descendants did not immediately benefit from the opportunity of receiving decent conditions. Doors to better education were closed to them. It became compulsory to find their own way in order to taste that precious fruit the other citizens were already benefiting from. In that quest, Booker T. Washington targeted the kind of education Blacks did not confront difficulty since their former masters rejected them out of the schools they attended. That was the professional training that could lead them straight to some jobs. This article is an attempt to shed light on the importance of that education at the outset of Blacks' emancipation and the impact on the current and future generations. To reach that goal, the methodology we used is to read articles, books, novels, and other documents that dealt with that issue. The foregoing indicates that the qualitative approach suits our study since the content analysis technique is used to collect and interpret the data of the study. And finally, the results of the study indicate that focus on vocational training is one of the surest ways for African Americans to narrow seriously the gap left by the after effects of slavery.

Key words : Blacks, education, economy, improvement, vocational schools.

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Introduction

Slavery in the context of America was not only an abusive deprivation of human right, but also a constitutionally hypocrisy which relegated some individuals as chattel slaves. In fact, Blacks, from the very beginning of this horrible practice of slavery, were considered as goods, materials, possessions or full properties by their owners. The system endured for about two and half centuries causing traumatic consequences on the victims, the Blacks. By referring to the narratives of Booker T Washington (1901), we can perceive that the years following the Civil War in America, the Emancipation Proclamation has given freedom to the slaves, now considered as former slaves. The ecstasy was overwhelmingly uncontrollable. The new freed men and women breathed new air: FREEDOM.

However, being free conveys not only liberty but also responsibilities. In that way, one becomes one's own master, independent. Indeed, an independent person is someone who cares for his own life and his life matters. That means for the newly freed men and women that the advent of freedom would forcibly be attached to the confrontation with new challenges. These challenges included integrating and competing in a society full of stereotypes, prejudices, and negative views against Blacks, knowing that the ante-bellum period did not authorize education for slaves. As a quick and efficient solution to solve this inadequacy, Booker T Washington (1901) suggested a kind of training which would provide skillfulness and qualification for former slaves to easily earn their living. To support this ideology, Maureen S. Stocker said it in her analysis of Booker T. Washington's educational theory that we would like to explain according to our understanding. Blacks longed for education but they did not have means to make that easy. With emancipation all of them wanted to have material satisfaction; however, the possibility to reach that goal was hard to get. To solve all those problems, he believed in industrial training as the main method to go through the obstacles which blocked the former slaves in their new situation. In the same token, D. Martin Reiser (1971) in his article entitled *Biographical Highlights of Booker T. Washington* said that the road to success for Blacks was through achieving economic stability through education (mainly, vocational training). In so doing, Booker T initiated the Tuskegee Institute and committed himself to offer vocational education to Blacks, men and women, in a segregated and discriminatory post-slavery society, torn with the horror of racial injustice.

Booker T Washington did not intend to maintain Blacks in a perpetual and perennial under-educated position, (compared to their white counterparts), but he rather aimed at helping his people to find solid and stable feet in the construction of their social and economic status in an unjust and segregated society. His philosophy was criticized by some of his counterparts such as W.E DuBois for wanting his race to be maintained in an everlasting position of "labor class" citizens. This simply stands as a mere critique of DuBois, but not an expression of voracious enmity between the two outstanding figures from African Americans movement for emancipation.

The institution of vocational schools in post-slavery American society was a historical necessity for newly freed African Americans. That should permit them to cope with the challenges of their time. In addition, it would be a reliable and efficient alternative for individual to be skilled with basic and relevant qualifications to face the day-to-day realities of life matters. This approach by Washington can be regarded as antidotes to the problematic of the Blacks' economic troubles and the whirlwind of racism in the post-room slavery in the Americas. In fact, professional trainings most often help end lots of problems including joblessness, juvenile derisions, economic chaos, etc.

In this situation, we think that vocational schools were crucial and relevant for Blacks in the post-bellum period. So, knowing that qualification is so pertinent in people's life, we can affirm that this strategy sounds, all the same relevant for developing countries as in Africa in general and especially in Mali. Thus, this topic is developed because it may yield inspiration for people of our country to give credits to professional trainings as alternatives to joblessness and underdevelopment. Besides, fewer studies are concerned with such topic.

The overall purpose of the study is to explore the works of Booker T. Washington by exposing his initiative to ensure a better education for African Americans. In fact, it should be known that Booker T was not only an audacious self-made African American, but also a path clearer who devoted his life for self-betterment and community development. In short, the specific objective of this study is to show the pertinence of vocational education as a solution to under development and joblessness.

To attain the above objective of the study, the qualitative approach has been used to collect, analyze and interpret the research's data. Structurally, the study is divided into three parts. The first part accounts for the Multidimensional Impacts of Vocational Training on the American Black communities. The second one deals with Opposing Critics' thoughts to Booker T. Washington. The study ends with showing the relevance of Booker T. Washington's conception of vocational education in our local area.

1-The Multidimensional Impacts of Vocational Training on the Black Folks

In the monumental narrative of Booker T Washington, he conferred great importance to the effectiveness of professional trainings of black folks in the American societies as opposed to those who were engaged in fighting for political positions and highly intellectual pursuit of studies. He thought that Blacks should accept to start their emersion from "the bottom to the top", but not the opposite, as evidenced in his legendary Address during the Atlanta Exposition. In so doing, we can critically delve in the book by observing and interpreting the multidimensional impacts of vocational education on the colored people in the following sections.

1-1- Professional Impacts

Being born into slavery, Washington summed up his experiences from the blatant realities he lived in the African American society. He forcibly made a way for his own literacy. For that reason, he immediately found out that the prior concerns for the newly freed colored people

did not reside in the mere book learning and the prototype of a highly educated man who has deep mastery of the language and its grammar. Whether they learn Latin or Greek, the basic competences in professional domains and other qualifications were the most important. After completing a kind of training based on the book learning, Washington was called by General Armstrong to start the Institute of Tuskegee in the years 1881. In fact, he (1901) states:

“In May, 1881, near the close of my first year in teaching the night school, in a way that I had not dared expect, the opportunity opened for me to begin my lifework. One night in the chapel, after the usual chapel exercises were over, General Armstrong referred to the fact that he had received a letter from some gentlemen in Alabama asking him to recommend someone to take charge of what was to be a normal school for the colored people in the little town of Tuskegee in that state”, (p.55).

Factually, this call was the providential beginning of the sacerdotal task now conferred to Washington. With desolation, he started the school which was not actually prepared in advance for the matter. He courageously started the school and designed a more adapted plan for the education of the colored people in cohabitation with the white people and the former slave owners. The mentality of Washington can equate with a transcendental thought asserted by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1841) in defending the iron mindset of self-reliance. Indeed, he says: “Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm”. Indeed, Emerson (1841) confirms this moral attitude by saying: “Man is his own star; the soul that can render an honest and a perfect man; commands all light, all influence, all fate...”, (Self-Reliance, P.1). In fact, Emersonian philosophy highlights self-confidence, self-reliance, enthusiasm, audacity, hard work and so on. Washington seems to embody such philosophy in carrying out his project at Tuskegee’s institute. Actually, he enthusiastically did it with priesthood commitment and abnegation. In the process of reaching out such goal, we can say that Washington has been inspired by Emerson when he says: “Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles”, (Self-Reliance, p.21).

As he started the Institute, he had a specific plan for the type of education proper for the colored people in confronting the professional and social challenges in the post slavery American societies. Indeed, this plan was dedicated to the professional education of the students to help facilitate the acquisition of vocational skills. It must be mentioned that both blacks and whites attended that Tuskegee Institute.

At the very beginning, he (1901) says:

“The students who came first seemed to be fond of memorizing long and complicated “rules” in grammar and mathematics, but had little thought or knowledge of applying these rules to the everyday affairs of their life. One subject which they liked to talk about, and tell me that they had mastered, in arithmetic, was “banking and discount,” but I soon found out that neither they nor almost anyone in the neighborhood in which they lived had ever had a bank account”, (p.64).

This seems both hilarious and pathetic, because what is the use of a kind of knowledge which cannot help you feed yourself or help you arrange your life matters? For sure, no impact of such kind of learning, it can even be considered as futile as dissuasive, for it is nothing but loss of time. That is why Washington thoughtfully and persuasively planned vocational

training alongside with book learning in Tuskegee school. In addition, Washington judged it so critical to adjust the moral attitude of the participants and optimize their motivation regarding the salience of vocational training at the school. In this excerpt, he (1901) vows:

“Notwithstanding what I have said about them in these respects, I have never seen a more earnest and willing company of young men and women than these students were. They were all willing to learn the right thing as soon as it was shown them what was right. I was determined to start them off on a solid and thorough foundation, so far as their books were concerned. I soon learned that most of them had the merest smattering of the high-sounding things that they had studied. While they could locate the Desert of Sahara or the capital of China on an artificial globe, I found out that the girls could not locate the proper places for the knives and forks on an actual dinner-table, or the places on which the bread and meat should be set”, (p.63).

This assumption implies that the students were theoretically dense in exotic knowledge, but merely worthless in the day-to-day life situations of activities. Hence fore, Washington prior aim was to teach them these basic skills and therefore, help raise the pragmatic competences within each individual participant. That is to say that the students were not only taught books and other theoretical knowledge, but they were also trained in other competences besides mere book teaching. However, he says that students came from homes where they had no opportunities for lessons which would teach them how to care for their bodies, with few exceptions for sure. Nevertheless, he (1901) states:

“We wanted to teach the students how to bathe; how to care for their teeth and clothing. We wanted to teach them what to eat, and how to eat it properly, and how to care for their rooms. Aside from this, we wanted to give them such a practical knowledge of some one industry, together with the spirit of industry, thrift, and economy, that they would be sure of knowing how to make a living after they had left us. We wanted to teach them to study actual things instead of mere books alone”. (p.65)

Out of the excerpt cited above, we can deduce that the authentic plan of Washington strongly focuses on the practical training of newly freed people who were, according to him, “Not fully prepared to fight for full emancipation with the white people”. However, the acquisition of professional skills would certainly permit the colored people to be qualified with job matters; and consequently, their skills and qualifications would help their social and professional integration, along with a strong economic impact on their daily life situations. In the same dynamic, Washington did not forget about the adaptability of this kind of training with the socio-cultural realities in the local area, mainly in Tuskegee. In fact, he tried to teach them values and wits that will help understand that agricultural activities are as important as intellectual ones. Successfully, this plan worked out very well, because the outgoing students from the Institute of Tuskegee abundantly grew from thirty at the beginning to thousand students some years later. These students were taught real skills for both working for themselves and serving their societies. For instance, brickmaking skills will help the students to make bricks for themselves (to build their own buildings first) and to sell quality bricks for commercial purposes as well. Farming skills will help improve their agricultural incomes. As a result of this tremendous endeavor, Washington (1901) admits:

“Hundreds of men are now scattered throughout the South who received their knowledge of mechanics while being taught how to erect these buildings. Skill and knowledge are now handed down from one set of students to another in this way, until at the present time a building of any description or size can be constructed wholly by our instructors and students,

from the drawing of the plans to the putting in of the electric fixtures without going off the grounds for a single workman”, (pp.76-77).

This intends to demonstrate the impacts of professional education on the colored people. Professional qualifications would call for job within the societies and eventually, jobs contracts would guarantee economic prosperity for the Black folks within the community. Such training would certainly ensure both the intellectual and professional qualification of the colored people. In so doing, it would guarantee their mastery of language through book learning, and add skills for their vocational operations. Therefore, this situation would soften prejudices against Blacks and enhance the collaboration between the two races. From the above elements, one may certify vocational education as the perfect means by which Washington leant to uplift his students, fellow citizens, and country out of the racial and economic squalor at the turn of the century.

1-2- Social Impacts

The Institute of Tuskegee was socially integrated; in fact, the school was constituted of not only boys and girls, but also blacks and whites. However, the Tuskegee school experience serves as a pertinent model of racial emancipation and social integration. Washington as the principal of the school, made use of his old days’ experiences to design a strong and effective architecture for the edification of a kind of society based on inter-racial interdependence and adapting complementarity. Indeed, the achievement of Tuskegee school would not be real without the providential supports of both white and black people in the vicinity and elsewhere. The professional trainings and book learning at the Institute provided the students with highly incorporated knowledge useful for the community with no regard to racial belonging. In fact, blacks and whites cohabitated in the close neighborhood with sympathy and respect. That is not to affirm that racism, discrimination and segregation were not going on regarding the colored people in the post-room American societies. Indeed, Washington expounded the salience of professional qualification as far as the social integration between the races was concerned. He explained that brickmaking taught him an important lesson in regard to the relations between the two races in the South. In fact, he says that many white people who had had no contact with the school, and perhaps no sympathy with it, came to them to buy bricks because they found out that their bricks were good ones. These people, as he says, discovered that they were supplying a real want in the community. For instance, he (1901) states:

“The making of these bricks caused many of the white residents of the neighborhood to begin to feel that the education of the Negro was not making him worthless, but that in educating our students we were adding something to the wealth and comfort of the community. As the people of the neighborhood came to us to buy bricks, we got acquainted with them; they traded with us and we with them. Our business interests became intermingled. We had something which they wanted; they had something which we wanted. This, in a large measure, helped to lay the foundation for the pleasant relations that have continued to exist between us and the white people in that section, and which now extend throughout the South”, (p.78).

In the philosophy of Washington, efficient acquisition of vocational skills and competences will open the doors of opportunities for social acceptance and eventually jobs accessibility for Blacks in their communities. So, the more active the colored people became, the wealthier

they would be. Thus, making money will forcibly lead to the economic sufficiency for the colored people amidst racial injustice dominated societies.

1-3- Economic Impacts

The original ideal of implementing vocational education in Tuskegee school emerged from Washington's will to the former slaves "to start from the bottom to the top", but not the opposite. The reason was that racial emancipation should range from a certain process in such a discriminated society where stereotypes and prejudices overwhelmingly dominated the mentality of the former slave owners. Gradually, the society would emerge itself in full racial emancipation as the skills would impose this as a law. Fortunately, this policy was efficient and helped many qualified colored people gain respect and fame in the post-slavery American societies. This is evidenced by the address of Mr. Washington during the Atlanta Exposition. His speech was seen as heroic and surprisingly palpating in the mainstream of the white dominated community. In this Address, he advised both races to "cast down the bucket where they are", (p.112). The real reflection of such mindset stems from the teaching of skills like brickmaking, farming techniques, trade, cooking, masonry, carpentry... in addition to the values as hygiene, sanitation, self-organization and self-arrangement ... Those qualities were seen as those of civilized people. Any of these skills would lead African Americans to get an economic stand up. That would permit them to rely on themselves and assure the economic freedom they had been dreaming of from the outset of the Emancipation Proclamation. Despite that, the racial tensions would subsequently decrease. The philosophy which claims: "Cast down your bucket where you are", denotes from the mentality of resilience and intelligence. As a blatant result, the Institute evolved in this way:

"From thirty students the number has grown to fourteen hundred, coming from twenty-seven states and territories, from Africa, Cuba, Porto Rico, Jamaica, and other foreign countries. In our departments there are one hundred and ten officers and instructors; and if we add the families of our instructors, we have a constant population upon our grounds of not far from seventeen hundred people", (Booker T. 1901, p.159).

This assertion above attests the multidimensional impacts of the Institute inside and outside the Americas. Not only that, there is also the creation of employment to lessen the difficulties they went through for centuries.

2- Opposing Critics to Booker T. Washington

The philosophy developed by Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee Institute was soundly adequate for African Americans according to the understanding of Washington, himself. Nevertheless, this position was severely contested by certain peers from his Black fellows in the African American communities. These opposing critics included W. E. Dubois. In fact, according to certain sources, the Tuskegee Institute, established by Washington, was the first institution of higher learning for African Americans. Nevertheless, his teaching plan was strongly contested, because, he seemed to de-emphasize racism, racial violence against Blacks, and discrimination.

Indeed, his education philosophy was based on the following asset, as it has been previously developed. Pragmatically, the Tuskegee's program provided students with both academic and vocational training. Under Washington's direction, the students built their own buildings, produced their own food, and provided for most of their own basic necessities. The Tuskegee Institute used each of these activities to teach the students basic skills that they could share with African American communities throughout the South. It must be stated that Washington was educated in the South and he proved to be an exemplary student, and over the years, a highly respectable teacher and speaker.

In his famous and controversial Address, delivered during the Atlanta Exposition, in 1895 he spoke about the black struggle and their quest for equality, stating "in all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress", (p.113).

In that process for some critics, Washington's visions were diametrically opposed to that of the more radical beliefs held by Frederick Douglass and William Edward Burghardt DuBois. Those two men and other critics of Washington were disappointed that he had de-emphasized racism, racial violence against Blacks, and discrimination, and he was later rebuked for being an accommodationist. In the same speech, Washington declared: "African Americans must take responsibility for their own advancement, and urged vocational training over academic studies, believing that the masses would earn a living by using their hands" p.112).

Contrarily, William Edward Burghardt DuBois being born in 1868, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, he attended Fisk University, and then became the first black person to receive a Ph.D. in the social sciences from Harvard. His profound beliefs in vigorously promoting and uplifting African Americans into American society radically differed from that of his elder colleague, Booker T. Washington. In this dynamic, according to Darlene Clark Hine et al (2008), DuBois challenged Washington by calling his ideologies "too passive and accommodating, and voiced concern that a move toward industrial and vocational education as way in which Blacks could become self-supporting was misguided", (African American Odyssey). Instead, DuBois "favored a strategy of ceaseless agitation and insistent demand for equality", (African American Odyssey). In fact, Darlene Clark Hine et al (2008) admit that DuBois "pressed for immediate social and political integration and higher education for a "Talented Tenth" of the Black population. So, this segment of the black "intelligentsia", according to him, would then return to their communities and become leaders for other Blacks", (African American Odyssey). Factually, DuBois severely opposed to the policy advocated by Washington.

According to Hine et al (2008), DuBois and other black intellectuals including two women, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell, formed the Niagara Movement in 1905 to reject Washington's ideals. In fact, the objective of this organization was to call for "full citizenship rights for Blacks and public recognition of their contributions to America's stability and progress", (African American Odyssey). Later on, the Niagara Movement became known as the National Negro Committee, which later became the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

That opposition of WEDB to Booker T. was emphasized by *Norman Coombs in 2004*. He supported the idea that Washington was an accommodationist through this statement:

Mr. Washington distinctly asks that black people give up, at least for the present, three things, --First, political power; second, insistence on civil rights; Third, higher education of Negro youth,--and concentrate their energies on industrial education, the accumulation of wealth, and the conciliation of the South.... As a result of this tender of the palm-branch, what has been the return? In these years there have occurred: 1. The disenfranchisement of the Negro. 2. The legal creation of a distinct status of civil inferiority for the Negro. 3. The steady withdrawal of aid from institutions for the higher training of the Negro.

These movements are not, to be sure, direct results of Mr. Washington's teachings; but his propaganda has, without a shadow of a doubt, helped their speedier accomplishment. The question then comes: Is it possible, and probable, that nine millions of men can make effective progress in economic lines if they are deprived of political rights, made a servile caste, and allowed only the most meager chance for developing their exceptional men? If history and reason give any distinct answer to these questions, it is an emphatic No. (p.205)

Furthermore, Hine et al (2008) indicates that DuBois continued to actively promote and protest discrimination on behalf of all African Americans. Therefore, he was finally accused and acquitted of being an unregistered foreign agent because of his activism against using atomic bombs and his involvement with other peace time initiatives, therefore, he moved to Ghana in 1961 where he died in 1963 on the eve of the historic “March on Washington”, initiated by Martin Luther King Jr.

3-The Relevance of Vocational Education in our Local Arena

The relevance of vocational education in our local arena is very vividly needy, because the education system of ours seems so incongruent and disconnected with practical realities in the country. That is why, when we closely consider the school system of our countries, we can observe that there is a blatant discrepancy between the theoretical knowledge bequeathed to learners at schools and the skills and qualifications needed in their practical day-to-day life situations of activities. A striking example of this is that a large number of students graduate from our faculties like FLSL, FDPRI, FST, etc. but end by being shop tenants in our markets, resellers of telephone cards, mine workers... The sole reason is that what they learnt at school is not what is needed in the job market. This argument is relatively endorsed by Moussa Konaté (2010), in his book entitled: “L’Afrique Noire est- elle Maudite?”. In fact, he literally defends that the ongoing utilization of foreign languages as major medium of teaching and learning in our schools constitutes a huge hindrance to our local development. His reasons include the inadequacy of the school curricula and the distance between theory and practice in the learning process. Konaté is not against the use of foreign languages in our schools, nevertheless, he thinks that “Our languages should cohabit with foreign languages at schools in so far where an additional language means enrichment”, (p.146). Anyway, Konaté thinks that the training at schools should not be accomplished without our indigenous languages.

On the other hand, those who skill at the professional schools like ECICA, IFP, CFP and others can create their business, take care of themselves, their parents and even their siblings.

Otherwise, the type of learning based on the formalistic and theoretical dispatching of knowledge can hardly drive a nation to concrete and palpable achievements of progress, no matter what the form. The logical reasons include the prevalence of abstract teaching to the learners with curricula not adapted to the real and authentic socio-cultural and economic needs of the communities.

Hence, education in its wide consideration and exercise should be both a medium to satisfy the social and environmental needs and a support to uplift the professional and economic status. In this process, the content of any education action should be constructed on the genuine analysis of the multidimensional contexts of that action. However, if the profound context of Booker T Washington's motive for professional school was to help the African Americans find alternatives to their social, professional and economic crises in discriminated and segregated Americas, the salience of professional education in our local arena should be motivated by the cruel pandemic of unemployment and poverty in most parts of our African communities. De jure, residents on the continent of Africa did not suffer the same tragedy as did their brothers and sisters brought to America through slave trade, nevertheless, the people of the continent suffered from what is called imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. This situation lasted for about two centuries and was concomitantly carried out along with plundering, thefts, and exploitations of our natural resources and other indigenous potentials (wealth). That is to say that Africa got paralyzed several times in its historical existence. So, being subjugated for centuries and being deprived from the authentic know-how and know-what, the Africans were given schools deeply designed for serving the oppressors, (the colonizers). Thus, schools were started in Africa; however, they were void of knowledge but concentrated on the mastery of languages, languages which were but links between the colonizers and the colonized.

Thus, after the acquisition of the so-called independencies in the 1960's, African countries still erode in the vast ocean of intellectual hibernation. Despite the Addis Ababa's conference on education in 1961, the school system in African remained exotic-based curricula, because most often, the African countries learnt and taught in foreign languages; yet, skills like practical knowledges and competencies acquisition were postponed due to the school system. In Mali, however, reforms were initiated. In fact, Seydou Loua (2017), in his article about "The Major Reforms of Malian school from 1962 to 2016", outlines the different steps launched by Malian authorities to adapt the school system to the local realities. These endeavors include: "The education reforms of 1962, The new basic school (NEF), The Ten-Year Education Development Program (PRODEC), The basic education curriculum, The competency-based approach, The Bachelor-Master-Doctorate (LMD) reform", Seydou Loua (2017). Yet, much is to be done again, because school system still remains disconnected with local realities.

As a result of this chaos, Africans are able to read and write and excellently manipulate foreign languages, yet, few are able to carry out ingenious creativities for the benefit of African adapted emergence and prosperity.

African school systems should be thoughtfully revised and properly adapted to the practical needs of the society. More important attention should be conferred to the vocational trainings and industrial competencies in order to encourage creativity and entrepreneurship, which are guarantees for massive employments and economic progress. It is said that Mali is an Agro-sylvo-pastoral country, so, Malian education systems should normally be concentrated on the entrepreneurial development in agriculture, cattle breeding, and forestry along with the skills in new technologies, machinery, and architecture. That is to say that mere book learning is not enough to uplift the economic lever of a nation or a community.

Conclusion

Vocational education as perceived by Booker T Washington is not only a solution to racial discrepancies for the two races in the American societies, but also a lever for economic prosperity for the masses within the Black communities. What is more, Washington believes deeply in the importance of education for the development of young people. He, therefore, suggests that African Americans were “crippled” when they were freed by the federal government but had no means by which to educate themselves. He attributes this lack of education to the failures of the Reconstruction, (that is the official attempts to repair the damages provoked during the American Civil War).

Hence, after the war, many black people emerged into the political and economic spheres. However, during Reconstruction, they ultimately failed to advance due to racist state policies. In fact, these failures were caused by factor-like lack of political protection, and, according to Washington, severe lack of capabilities. Therefore, Washington dedicated his life to educating African Americans, resulting ultimately in the development and institution of Tuskegee institute. Indeed, Washington’s ideal education does not consist of “mere book learning,” as he felt that many poor Blacks attempted to get an education to avoid lifelong physical labor. Rather, his curriculum at the Institute consists of equal parts book learning and vocational practices. During their training, students spend most time learning such practical skills as blacksmithing, brickmaking, or carpentry, likewise other industrial businesses. As a result, Washington hopes to produce students with “practical skills” which they can use to serve and ultimately better their communities.

Booker T. Washington was vigorously against what he calls “mere book learning”, because he believes that this type of education can’t massively contribute to the betterment of the race. In his narrative, he earnestly expresses a clear objection to the African Americans who attempt to avoid labor by getting an education, saying that “No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem”, (p.112). He suggests that prolonged study without vocational training is ultimately useless to a race that needs to focus on lifting itself out of the depths of slavery and into mainstream American society.

Washington believes that vocational training is not only important for attendees at Tuskegee, but it is also the best means by which to propel their development as students and citizens. In the “Atlanta Exposition Address,” Washington pushes vocational training to the top priority of his educational philosophy. For instance, he (1901) states, “The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an

opera-house”, (p.114). This is to say that access to and training in the arts is of less importance than the opportunity to labor and earn one’s own money. Indeed, Washington considers racial uplift to be a gradual process.

Since his view of vocational learning did not challenge America’s racial hierarchy as it is developed in his narrative, Washington thinks that vocational learning can help African Americans find values in the complex racial relations of the time. According to him, “racial protests, political agitation, and pushes toward full equality were foolish because African Americans of the time were not prepared for full equality”, (p.114). In fact, he believed that the newly freed slaves had not been prepared for emancipation, for they had no formal education, social training, or sense of propriety. Eventually, he sees vocational learning as the solution to the problems related to racial issues, as it may help Black Americans to find economic value “where they were” without creating racial scandals. As a result, whites were not threatened by Washington’s ideology, so, it largely reinforced the notion that African Americans have the responsibility to economically contribute to and support their communities.

Yet, Washington intended to implement vocational education because he thought that it was the perfect means by which to uplift his students, fellow citizens, and country out of the racial and economic trauma. He committed to train students to learn that it is not a disgrace to labor, and eventually, he willed to train them to love labor, not alone for its financial value, but for labor’s own sake and for the mindset of independence and self-reliance with the ability to do something for oneself and for the community. The impact of such philosophy could be observed in Seattle when the residents, organized in a community coalition, created Seattle Opportunity Industrial Center (SOIC), in the years 1960s-1970s. This center, according to Phillips Pamela, (2022), provided General Educational Diplomas (GED) and Pre-vocational and Job Readiness Training. The program, according to Phillips, offered vocational training and job placement services. In fact, this center was an opportunity for resident African Americans in Seattle to challenge discrimination and segregation in their community and eventually find a way for their economic and professional stability in the society.

Hence fore, this training model seems both paramount and indispensable for Africans in this era of the so-called globalization. In fact, such hot issues as unemployment, poverty and so on, could be easily settled if theoretical teachings and learning were equally achieved along with practically relevant skills, competencies and quality qualifications. If such parameters were taken into account, our local learners would immediately thrive in the spheres of entrepreneurship, business, and industries. Therefore, the crises related to unemployment, poverty, juvenile delinquency, illegal uses of children by terrorist groups and rebellious armed groups, etc. would automatically be an ugly old souvenir in Africa, especially in our lovely country, Mali.

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