

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND THE NEW RUSSIA: BUSINESS EDUCATION PEDAGOGY FOR ORGANIZATION CONSULTATION

Dr. Kanata A. Jackson - Hampton University
Dr. Mark Whitaker - Hampton University

Abstract

The concept of operating in global marketplaces presents unique challenges to people having a recent history of living under oppressive government regimes. Comparatively the African American experience of surviving over two hundred years of legalized slavery offers direction to these groups. This paper introduces a pedagogy whereby the African American experience serves as a model for instructing students on the perspective necessary to consult with various groups on an international basis.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) ceased to exist on December 26, 1991. The social milieu of the new Russia and the 14 independent countries present unique opportunities for educators and business scholars. The climate for collaboration, transcontinental consultation, and research has not been an active area of inclusion in the business curriculum at traditional African American universities. The uniqueness of the African American experience offers valuable lessons that can be translated into an international pedagogy.

African American students and university professors can play a significant role in addressing the organizational conditions in the new Russia. The pedagogy includes problem solving and global consultation strategies. "Students will begin to acquire the international competencies needed to communicate effectively across borders, understand other perspectives and analyze increasingly fluid economic and political realities."(NSEP 1991) The pedagogy is one of capacity building in African American students and has implications for replication at colleges and universities worldwide.

The literature indicates a need for further study from the African American perspective. "In 1995, Civil Rights activists and leaders from the African-American and East-Central European Roma communities met in Szentendre, Hungary for three days of political discussions and cultural exchange. Nine African Americans and seven Roma (Gypsies) from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria and Macedonia attended meetings that afforded an unprecedented opportunity for an intensive dialogue on concrete political organizing, collective histories and personal experiences. Discussions ranged from culture and politics to the histories of the two communities, including the grassroots struggles with issues of racism, assimilation, housing, structural discrimination and sexism"(Feffer, 1995). Several examples of projects involving

sharing lessons learned from the African American experience to help address the social problems in Russia were: academic alliances (Ahern, 1999), cultural training exchanges involving youth (ProTV, 1997), financial, entrepreneurial and business relationships (Russian-American Chamber of Commerce, 1999).

Some issues identified for analysis and comparison with the Roma were: invisible barriers, i.e. the glass ceiling - preventing minorities and women from advancing in organizations (Crosby & Blanchard, 1989; Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987; DiTomaso, Thompson, & Blake, 1986); compensation discrimination against women (Terborg & Ilgen, 1975; Schwartz, 1989), promotion discrimination against women (Cox & Nkomo, 1986); racially motivated job treatment discrimination (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990); and hiring and promotion discrimination resulting in low minority representation in management (Killingsworth & Reimers, 1983). These studies depict the climate and culture that exists in most American organizations and the resulting impact on African Americans. The Roma will experience these and other issues to which African Americans can offer strategies for self-empowerment.

Michael Simmons, coordinator of the East-West Program observed... "one of the things that captured my attention was that some of the Roma contacts were interested in the struggles of the African-American people and were conscious of the movements that came out of those struggles". (AFSC 1986) The unique history of the African American experience has parallels to the social reform experiences of the Russian people. It was interesting "to help people understand that other people- even those from a far corner of the earth-are just like them in their hopes, hurts, dreams and integrity"(AFSC. 1997).

The exchange between African-American consultants and universities and Russian businesses and universities offers an economic opportunity for an exchange endeavor not traditionally addressed. This exchange provides the framework for understanding and sharing a variety of organizational, workplace and social issues from the African American perspective that the Russian people, specifically the Roma, will experience.

The value of a cross-cultural exchange creates an economic opportunity upon which African-Americans can capitalize on the collective experiences of dealing with the challenges of oppression. We have a perspective and competitive advantage that others do not share. The connectivity model presented offers the opportunity to translate our experiences from a historical context into economic opportunity. The relevancy of this model as a business pedagogy derives from the concept of competitive advantage. "Organizations that understand how to rightfully harness and manage resources, ... gain a sustained competitive advantage and survive" (Barney, 1991; Lado, Boyd, & Wright, 1992).

This paper presents an instructional model that expands the capacity of students to compete effectively in foreign cultures much different than their own. Problem solving skills will be developed with the Russian culture as the case study. The call is to involve African Americans in a market they have not traditionally considered as investors, researchers, and participants.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL CONSULTATION AND CONNECTIVITY MODEL FOR MARKETPLACE 2000

The self-definition model has been developed as a conceptual framework to systematically present 'lessons learned' from the African American experience. It has applications for teaching business theory, global management and educational consultation. African Americans must define, own and benefit from their unique experiences. The model is proactive providing a blue

print for self-definition and empowerment that may be used by ethnic groups globally. It has applications for consulting and business opportunities, social service issues and entrepreneurial endeavors. With the changes that are occurring globally, new market opportunities exist in which the expertise of African Americans, knowledgeable of our struggle as a people, applies. These opportunities avail in the arena, which we call Marketplace 2000.

The emergence of Marketplace 2000 offers an opportunity for ethnic minorities to reexamine the definition of the marketplace from consumption of goods to consumption of power. In defining the marketplace, researchers traditionally define it as the environment whereby goods and services flow from the producer to the consumer (Kotler, 1984). In order to capitalize on the potential that Marketplace 2000 holds for ethnic minorities, individually and collectively, we must redefine the concept of marketplace. First, we must realize that the current definition of "market place is limited." Researchers tend to view the marketplace as an arena in which commodities are bought and sold (Williams, 1982).

In analyzing the concept of commodities, our definition of commodity tends to be limited to and synonymous with goods and services. To expand our notion of the marketplace, economic empowerment needs to be included as a commodity of Marketplace 2000. This interpretation of the marketplace moves us beyond a model of consumption to a model of investment. Since the consumers of 2000 will also be the work force of 2000, it makes sense for these consumers to use their organizations of employment as a source of economic empowerment (Hellriegel, Slocum, & Woodman, 1995).

The Organizational Consultation and Connectivity Model provides a structure whereby the African-American experience of oppression in the United States can assist groups seeking to overcome oppressive regimes. The model consists of 5 major components: 1) the system of slavery in the United States; 2) analysis of the oppressed group; 3) post-slavery institutions established for liberation; 4) comparative analysis; and 5) consulting opportunities. The instructional pedagogy details the information relative to each component of the model. Case study exercises, cross cultural assignments and research are integrative course requirements.

Students conduct historical research and analysis of groups and organizations that have faced oppression sanctioned by government action as the first two components of the empowerment model. The involvement of the foreign governments in the oppression of these groups allows for some correlation with the government-sponsored oppression of African Americans. In analyzing the oppressed groups, several issues are examined such as the political culture of the country, the years of oppression, and the demographics of the oppressed group. The political culture of the country accounts for the type and system of government (i.e. democracy, dictatorship, communist, etc.). This information provides an idea as to the role of the government in the oppression. The form and system of government gives insight to the creation, proclamation, and perpetuation of laws and policies impacting the oppressed groups. Furthermore, the years of oppression provides information as to the extent and impact of the oppression on the group. The African American slave experience covers a period extending over 200 years. This prolonged period of oppression has present day implications in the areas of income, education, property ownership, business development and more. Some demographics of the oppressed group for examination and study are issues such as race, color, religion, sex, age, income, education, and physical location.

The third component of the model involves identifying post-slavery institutions established for the liberation of African Americans. These institutions are organizations created by and controlled by African Americans immediately following the abolishment of legalized slavery. Three entities that had major impact in this area were Black Churches, Black Businesses, and Black Educational

Institutions. As for Black Educational Institutions, historically black colleges and universities (HBCU's) continue to be the significant producer of black college graduates (Cross, 1997)

The fourth component of the model requires a comparative analysis of the slavery experience in the United States and the oppression faced by groups in foreign countries. By conducting the comparative analysis, this information allows for the model to have validity. The groups being compared to African American slavery must have experienced group oppression sanctioned by government action. Although the American government system is seen as a federal system of state and national governmental action, the foreign country being analyzed does not need to exhibit dual oppression. Rather, the oppression must be from a group or body with impact and influence on the laws or policies of the country.

The final stage of the model allows for the consulting opportunity. This stage is the concluding aspect of the model in that the economic opportunity for African American consultants is revealed. The unique experience of surviving slavery in America gives African Americans, involved in the liberation struggle, an opportunity to share the experience with others. In this sharing, African American consultants take ownership of the experience and tell the story giving voice to the experience from the victim perspective. Groups attempting to liberate themselves from foreign country oppression will find such advice valuable to their experience. The institutions established and maintained by African Americans serve as the model for foreign groups seeking liberation.

Who will the consultants be? In the African American community, individuals with a wealth of knowledge from the areas of Black Churches, Black Businesses, and Black Educational Institutions exist. Leaders and ministers in the black churches serve as ideal individuals who can share how the Black church has been pivotal in uplifting oppressed people. African American entrepreneurs and businesspersons possess the skills, knowledge, and experience to aid in business development. As for the black colleges and universities, the Presidents, faculty and staff of these institutions have positioned these schools to be major players in the educational arena. The task for implementing an effective consultation pedagogy is one of collaboration, coordination and instruction.

The talent lies within the African American communities. Our challenge is to produce a structure to maximize this talent in a means that will produce economic opportunity. This specific pedagogy provides a structured approach to teaching African American students how to maximize lessons learned from our collective experiences and how to use those lessons in a global arena. Worldwide groups emerging from oppressive governments need models that will allow them to meet the challenges of their post-oppressive existence. The Organizational Consultation and Connectivity Model for Marketplace 2000 addresses this on-going need.

III. REFERENCES

Ahern, Kathleen (1999). "African-American Literary Ties to Russia in the Twentieth Century".
UNCG

<http://www.uncg.edu/gar/courses/ahern/syllabus.htm>

Frontline: Pushkin Genealogy: The Blurred Racial Lines of Famous Families. *New Content Copyright* 1998 PBS and WGBH/Frontline.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/secret/famous/pushkingenealogy.html>

Barney, J. (1991). Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17, 99-120.

- Cox, T. H. & Nkomo, S. (1986). *Differential Performance Appraisal Criteria*. *Group and Organization Studies*, 11, 101-119.
- Crosby, F. J. & Blanchard, F. A. (1989) Introduction: Affirmative Action and the Question of Standards. In F. A. Blanchard & F. J. Crosby (Eds.), *Affirmative Action in Perspective*. 37-46, New York: Springer-Verlag.
- DiTomaso, N., Thompson, D. E., & Blake, D. H. (1986). "Corporate Perspectives on Minority Advancement in Management". Paper presented at the 4th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Chicago.
- Feffer, John. (1995) "Out of the Margins: African American/Roma Exchange". Peace Education Division
<http://www.afsc.org/afsc-1~2.htm>
- Greenhaus, J. H., Parasuraman, S., & Wormley, W. M. (1990). "Effects of Race on Organizational Experiences, Job Performance Evaluations, and Career Outcomes". *Academy of Management Journal*, 33, 64-86.
- Killingsworth, M. R. & Reimers, C. W. (1983). "Race, Ranking, Promotions and Pay at a Federal Facility: A Logical Analysis". *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 37, 92-107
- Kotler, P. (1984). *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, and Control*. 5th Ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Lado, A. A., Boyd, N. G., & Wright, P. (1992). A Competency-Based Model of Sustained Competitive Advantage: Toward a Conceptual Integration. *Journal of Management*, 18, 77-91.
- Morrison, A. M., White, R. P., Van Velsor, E. (1987). *Braking the Glass Ceiling*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Palmieri, Deborah A. (1999) *The Russian-American Chamber of Commerce – Promoting Business and Trade*. <http://www.rmi.net/racc/>. Aurora, Colorado.
- Plaks, Livia B., Lyudmila Atanasova, Warren R. Haffar and Robert A. Feldmesser. (1998) "The Roma in Bulgaria: collaborative efforts between local authorities and nongovernmental organizations". Lom, Bulgaria. Princeton, New Jersey.
- Rossman, M. L. (1994). *Multicultural Marketing: Selling To A Diverse America*. New York: American Management Association.
- Schwartz, F. (1989). "Management Women and the New Facts of Life". *Harvard Business Review*, 67(1), 65-76.
- Terborg, J. R., Ilgen, D. R., (1975). "A Theoretical Approach to Sex Discrimination in Traditional Masculine Occupations". *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 13, 352-376.
- The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) <http://www.afsc.org/> Philadelphia, PA
- Williams, T. G. (1982). *Consumer Behavior: Fundamentals & Strategies*. St. Paul: West Publishing Company.