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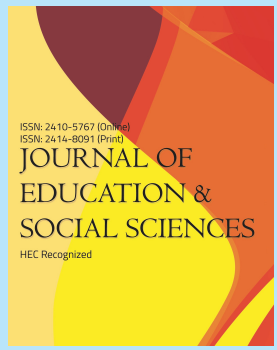

How Well can Education Foster Social Reform: Seeking Insights from the African American Experience

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How Well can Education Foster Social Reform: Seeking Insights from the African American Experience

David T. Culkin *

Abstract: *The purpose of this article is to investigate the nature of educational reform in American society through an historical case study illustrating a facet of the Black experience. Research questions helped scope the research to focus on significant aspects of this complex social phenomenon: (1) If education can promote social reform for improving the quality of life for society or a substantial section of a society's periphery, how can educational reform result in social reform? (2) What insights can an evaluation of historical cases provide educational policy makers and leaders regarding the complexities of contemporary society-particularly for marginalized citizens? This historical case study analyzed two instances of educational reform in the African American experience. The purpose was to understand how educational reform can lead to social reforms over time. While examining the education-centric activities of the Freedmen's Bureau (1867-1870) and the Rosenwald Schools (1914-1931), it became clear that local communities more than benefitted from the financial and infrastructural investment in accessible quality education. They were key partners. In this way, long-term success of these projects, often resisted by White-dominated institutions, would normally depend upon the level of local support they received.*

Keywords: Social history, history of education, Freedmen's Bureau, Rosenwald Schools, education reform, education policy, adult education.

Introduction

American educational reforms have sometimes led to significant social reforms at both micro and systemic levels (Cohen & Mehta, 2017). Such reforms have influenced and have been influenced by contemporary societal influences such as religious movements, reconstruction in the South after the Civil War, and Jim Crow policies that enforced the segregation of African American citizens . These past reforms continue to generate implications for contemporary society, evidenced by the continued presence of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU), end of segregated school systems after Brown (1954) , the advent of integrated school bus programs, and the discussion of Black Lives

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The terms African American and Black are used interchangeably throughout the manuscript and refer to formerly enslaved people of color and their descendants within the United States and its territories.

1954 U.S. Supreme Court unanimous decision that segregated schools were not equal or constitutional. See history.com/topics/black-hisotry/brown-v-board-of-education-of-topeka#.

Matter and similar movements in virtual and in-person classrooms (Maughan, S, 2020). This interface between public education reform and the African American social narrative has, until recently, begged attention from scholars, policy makers, and community activists (Cohen & Mehta, 2017; Harrison, 2007; Pinkney, 2016).

The purpose of this article is to investigate the nature of educational reform in American society through an historical case study illustrating a facet of the Black experience. Research questions helped scope the research to focus on significant aspects of this complex social phenomenon: (1) If education can promote social reform for improving the quality of life for society or a substantial section of a society's periphery (Vaughn, 2014), how can educational reform result in social reform? (2) What insights can an evaluation of historical cases, such as the post-Reconstruction Freedmen's Bureau and Jim Crow era Rosenwald Schools in the American rural South, provide educational policy makers and leaders regarding the complexities of contemporary society—particularly for marginalized citizens? Put another way, how can education serve as an effective vehicle for successful social reforms?

The story of Black public schools in the Reconstruction and Jim Crow South has only recently come to a fuller light, emerging from the misty obscuration of idealistic myths and omissions (Deutsch, 2011; Harrison, 2007). Furthermore, scholars are beginning to examine the clear linkage of quality civic education to quality political participation in the Black American experience (Pinkney, 2016). The contemporary American moment seems marked by social strife (e.g., white supremacism, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021), widespread loss of life regardless of race, class, or ideology (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021), and struggles to unify as a nation. In this strife-laden social context, lessons from the Black American educational experiences during the Reconstruction and Jim Crow South seem more prescient than ever.

To frame this historical inquiry within the context of social reform, several sections are presented: theoretical framework, methodology, individual cases (Freedmen's Bureau and Rosenwald Schools), cross-case comparative analysis, synthesized findings, and conclusion.

Theoretical Framework

An interpretive theoretical perspective focusing on specific projects was optimal for this study. Interpretivism assumes there is more than one way to analyze a complex social phenomenon and that one way is not necessarily better than another. Indeed, interpretivists tend to collaborate with other sources and scholars to construct deeper meaning of their topics—to a level they likely could not achieve individually. To better understand the complex social phenomenon of educational reform for public schools in historically African American communities, an interpretivist framework enabled open-ended qualitative inquiry.

To anchor the investigation further to the substantive issues related to educational reform, Cohen and Mehta (2017)'s model of successful American educational reform was used as a micro-level theory to evaluate reforms associated within the two cases. This

model posits there are five characteristics of successful reforms in the American education experience: that the reforms (1) addressed practical needs, (2) solved unanticipated, significant problems, (3) satisfied vibrant social-political pressures, (4) provided tools and guidance to succeed, and (5) are generally consistent with the values of stakeholders. This substantive model was appropriate for this study because it provided enough space for an open-ended inquiry about educational reform while offering tools to consider systemic and niche-level change with long-term societal implications.

Methodology

The historical case study methodology for this research allowed the researcher to understand at a deeper level the social history of Black public schools in the rural South through a period of time. The purpose of this comparative, historical case study is to understand the implications of systemic educational reforms under the Freedmen's Bureau (1867-1870) and Rosenwald Schools (1917-1932) in the Jim Crow South using evaluation criteria from the Cohen and Mehta (2017) model .

The case study involved several steps following an inductive process grounded in lived experiences for each case. First, a document review of primary and secondary sources for both cases was conducted. This iterative and recursive review of contemporary accounts and newly released commentaries allowed for the definition of each case in terms of the Cohen and Mehta (2017) characteristics. Collecting data from people who lived during each case period and experienced the implications of the reforms was essential. Next, each case was examined separately in light of these criteria. A cross-case comparative analysis then elicited several patterns in the data that helped inform a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of educational reform within a broader social context . As a result of this methodology, long-term social implications emerged from individual experiences along with suggestions for further study.

Case of Federalized Assistance: The Freedmen's Bureau (1867-1870)

The Freedmen's Bureau was a federal agency authorized by Congress to aid newly freed citizens in the post-bellum South in the areas of job training/searching, legal support, business loans, employment, civil unions (e.g., marriage certificates), and education. This case study focuses on the latter function because it involved federally employed teachers who served marginalized communities of refugees and formerly enslaved persons . The

Bhattacharya (2017) describe how rich descriptions of phenomena from multiple sources and perspectives strengthen case studies' trustworthiness and support findings through reasoning by analogy. These two cases are programs/institutions in specific times (e.g., Freedmen's Bureau during post-Reconstruction and the Rosenwald Schools in the Jim Crow era).

See Bhattacharya (2017) for a description and example of cross-case comparative analysis and inductive analysis.

The Freedmen's Bureau Act 3-3 was enacted in December 1864 established the bureau and provided that the President could appoint bureau commissioners in states in insurrection. The Act of 1866 extended the bureau's work for two more years beyond its original expiration of one year after the end of the Civil War (U.S. Senate, 2020). See also (Harrison, 2007) .

Freedmen's Bureau was the federal government's agent in the role of "...integrating four million newly emancipated African Americans into the political life of the nation" (U.S. Senate). Its education division, the focus of this case study, was not part of the nascent bureau but grew as the educational needs of African American communities increased. By July 1865, an Inspector of Finances and Schools was appointed to organize the administration of the education programs in the former Confederate states (NARA, 1972). The division recruited mature teachers of both genders with over one-half coming from the South and almost one-quarter being White southerners (Butchart, 2010) . As a result, by 1870, the Freedmen's Bureau had spent $5 million on almost 250,000 children in 4,300 schools throughout the South (Harrison, 2007) . This case can be defined and evaluated further in terms of the Cohen and Mehta (2017) criteria.

Criterion #1—Practical Needs

Cohen and Mehta (2017) suggest that successful school reforms provide solutions to problems educators know about and have sought to solve. The Freedmen's Bureau was an agency established for a very practical purpose: to provide newly freed and migrant citizens opportunities to improve their ability to become better citizens through education. Contemporary lawmakers and government officials at all levels considered education as a means and not an end, assuming that Black persons were not inherently capable of being good citizens without their charitable assistance (Pinkney, 2016) . By establishing over 4,000 schools and providing over 11,600 teachers (Butchart, 2013) from around the country, the Freedmen's Bureau seemed to satisfy the first criterion of addressing identified practical needs.

Criterion #2—Significant Problems

The second criterion of successful educational reforms is that they offer solutions that highlight the root problem of which educators were not aware or could not solve but advocate once they see how effective they are (Cohen & Mehta, 2017) . The practical mission in Criterion #1 overlaps with the solving unanticipated, significant problems related to the almost immediate release of millions of citizens from enslavement and penal status at the conclusion of the Civil War . The bureau's education efforts involved a public-private collaboration to recruit and hire teachers from throughout the country. Contrary to previous scholarship, contemporary researchers have discovered greater granularity of those who taught in public schools for Blacks in the Reconstruction South, often dispelling the myth

This counters more traditional historiography which recounts most teachers being White female abolitionists from New England. That said, almost 20 percent of teachers did come from New England.

Du Bois (1901/2017) estimated 150,000 students.

The assumption that Black citizens needed help to participate in democracy reinforced contemporary racist attitudes in the social-cultural environment of the United States during the Jim Crow era.

Butchart compiled a database of over 11,600 persons who taught in Black schools in the South between 1861 and 1876

The authors discuss these five criteria on p. 646.

While the Emancipation Proclamation (1863) freed enslaved African Americans in Confederate states, it took almost two years for the word to reach enslaved populations in Texas on June 19th, 1865 (i.e., Juneteenth).

of idealistic Northerners who sought to improve the lives of Black citizens (Butchart, 2010; Pinkney, 2016). Pinkney (2016) asserts, "Though often well intentioned, however, intervention from northern White teachers, funding agencies, and government institutions diluted Black citizens' original purpose for schools" (p. 79). While its education efforts were perhaps not as impactful as more immediate services (e.g., loans, marriage licenses, etc.), the bureau's schools were unexpectedly successful in some instances. While much of the education received was inconsistent in quality and unequal with White schools, several alumni moved on to elected positions: 600 Black Republicans were elected to state legislatures, and 16 joined the national legislature (14 members of the House of Representatives and two members of the Senate). The school network generated an army of teachers and relatively smoothly forged the transition to the state public school system in former Confederate states (Vaughn, 2014).

Criterion #3—Social Pressures

The third criterion of successful educational reforms entails the fulfillment of strong social pressures from educational or political organizations and environments to achieve certain educational objectives (Cohen & Mehta, 2017). The Freedmen's Bureau educational programs responded to vibrant social-political pressures emerging in Black and non-Black communities. Black citizens, who had literally and figuratively lived on the institutional peripheries of society, suddenly had a need to gain resources to gain and maintain newfound freedoms and rights. The federal government's empty promise of '40 acres and a mule' in reparations after General Sherman's 1865 March to the Sea epitomized these short-term gains. White citizens, regardless of ideology or political proclivities, sought for a seamless transition to the post-war nation by rapidly invigorating the economy through social development programs that fed off the electorate's political will (Butchart, 2010).

Criterion #4—Tools to Succeed

Fourth, successful educational reforms either provide educators with the tools, resources, and authorities to implement them or help educators use existing tools and resources to their advantage (Cohen & Mehta, 2017). The Freedmen's Bureau established a network of schools in the rural post-bellum South that provided tools and structure for newly freed and migrant citizens to improve their own conditions. Bureau schools were unexpectedly successful by generating a force of teachers who increased literacy rates in rural areas and (given challenging circumstances) thereby provided a foundation for the eventual establishment of southern state public school systems (Vaughn, 2014).

Criterion #5—Stakeholder Values

The fifth criterion of successful educational reform in locally controlled school systems involves a general alignment with the values of the students, educators, administrators,

Sherman issued Special Field Order #15 to protect and provide an opportunity for the economic development of formerly enslaved refugees.

and parents (Kazimi & Kazmi, 2018). While the Bureau was popular in some sectors, many held its policies and leadership as corrupt and inconsistent with greater social values of stakeholders, perhaps leading to its four-year life span. General Oliver Howard, the founding commissioner, helped craft the vision of a socially conscious institution designed to elevate less fortunate citizens to become productive members of society (Howard, 1865). Howard (1865) peremptory announcement of his new appointment of the bureau in the New York Times indicated two structural assumptions: 1) that the War Department shepherded federal reconstruction efforts and 2) newly freed Blacks would not be allowed to succumb to 'idleness'. Indeed, there was buy in by Blacks in the development of their educational and therefore political voice. African American teachers from the north, for instance, "participated in the education of their race at a rate twelve to fifteen times greater than northern whites" with over one-third of teachers in southern Black schools between 1861 and 1876 were Black (Butchart, 2010). Despite this support, the bureau's nascent education division was riddled with corrupt agents in counties throughout the South, and the resulting political backlash eventually led to Oliver's impeachment in 1870 and the expiration of the bureau's charter and budget (U.S. Congress, 1870). Complicating matters were pressures from former Confederate officials who concocted myths to limit social-educational achievements by African Americans in order to implement the Reconstruction on southern terms (Butchart, 1975; Pinkney, 2016).

Abolitionism, popular in some northern salons for its promised ideals, in the end had little to do with the progress made by bureau schools. Butchart (2010) explains:

> Abolition was as much about antebellum economics and politics as about black America. After slavery's end, the issue for America was the reconstruction of the South—and the North—to create greater equality, greater opportunity, greater community, a goal that continues to elude the nation in the twenty-first century. (p. xiv)

In other words, abolitionism was an idealist platform that also had a practical side that motivated individuals to improve the lot of most Americans. Such clear-eyed analysis has offered a fresher image of teachers in this time and place, seemingly unleashed from idealist fetters and motivated by solving the problem posed by the newly freed peoples—not the society that enslaved them (Butchart, 2010). As a result, The Freedmen's Bureau provided needy citizens with much-needed education infrastructure during the Reconstruction. Contrary to myths that implied Blacks did not value education, recent scholarship indicates Black Americans clearly understood the connection between education to their freedom and surged to build and attend schools in the post-bellum South, regardless of age or ability (Pinkney, 2016). The establishment of a network of schools using federal resources—including personnel, funding, facilities, and supplies—constituted a particularly effective systemic educational reform by filling a gap left by the ghosts of slavery and war. While this infrastructure set a path for a public school system in the post-Reconstruction South, a legacy of corruption and myth grounded in White supremacy seemed to stymie short-term gains by newly freed Black citizens.

Case of Private Subsidization: Rosenwald Schools (1914-1931)

In 1913, Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck, and Company, and Booker T. Washington, principal of Alabama's Tuskegee Institute, collaborated to assist citizens in predominantly rural, African American communities in the South build their own schools and thereby invest in educational opportunities. The two visionaries developed the matching grant program to build schoolhouses for rural southern black schoolchildren.... [The initiative]...sought to address inarguably substandard educational resources by partly funding the construction of almost 5,000 schools in predominantly rural towns across 14 southern states over the next two decades. (Aaronson & Mazumder, 2011). The program introduced improved facilities (e.g., lighting, ventilation, and space), equipment (e.g., desks, blackboards, texts), and teacher development; by 1926, this included high-school curricula, rare for southern African American students (Aaronson, Mazumder, Sanders, & Taylor, 2021). This case can be defined and evaluated further in terms of the Cohen and Mehta (2017) criteria.

Criterion #1—Practical Needs

For both men, who came from marginalized communities, the joint venture had a practical aim with personal motivations . The aim was to make education more accessible to Black Americans, who had been socially and politically silenced under Jim Crow laws. The motivations stemmed from their own personal stories of experiencing arbitrary limitations imposed on their communities. Washington would normally respond to questions about the most significant issues facing Blacks by saying they needed education, especially as many sought better qualities of life north during the Great Migration (Deutsch, 2011; Aaronson et al., 2021) . Born a slave, he understood the long-term implications of the social-political oppression of a community and how ignorance of both the oppressors and oppressed only led to further civic stagnation (Washington, 1901/2012; see also Deutsch, 2011). This intensified Washington's commitment to education as a means for social, economic, and political advancement. His establishment and leadership of the Tuskegee Institute illustrated this vision of education as a gateway to civic voice. Julius Rosenwald was a self-made entrepreneur and autodidact whose own experience as a religious minority facilitated his sympathy for the oppression suffered by Black citizens in the rural South (Deutsch, 2011). Both men, having developed their own caches of resources and influence, chose to provide the opportunity of education within their own interpretations of social equality and development.

Criterion #2—Significant Problems

As the Freedmen's Bureau experience illustrates, many Reconstruction-era reforms did not survive, culminating in a resurgence of white supremacist laws and institutions through-

Rosenwald was an American Jewish business magnate who supported refugees from pogroms and other anti-Semitic violence in Europe and the United States. Washington was born into slavery as an African American.

Deutsch (2011) describes in great detail the personal motivations of these reformers.

out the post-Reconstruction South (Butchart, 2010; Pinkney, 2016). This had a negative impact on the quality of education available to Black citizens. Recent studies have found that "Blacks born in the South between 1880 and 1910 completed three fewer years of schooling than their White counterparts. While both groups made absolute gains, Blacks experienced no relative progress over this thirty year period" (Aaronson & Mazumder, 2011). Given the lack of a social-political voice in White-dominated institutions, Black citizens had little access to quality education, further entrenching the systemic oppression they confronted.

Criterion #3—Social Pressures

The Rosenwald Schools helped address key contemporary social pressures incubated by the post-Reconstruction and Jim Crow South. During this period, thousands of Black citizens chose to migrate north in search of better jobs and opportunities for their families. This Great Migration, among other events, signified an increasing social demand for better quality of life and mobility for all citizens—not just the privileged. This prevailing pressure would clash with that of countervailing entrenched White supremacist nationalism. Traditional White institutions certainly continued to restrict voting rights, political representation, and legal recourse for Black (and other non-White) Americans. While the Ku Klux Klan, local governments, and legal defense systems exercised their influence in such areas, the demographic shifts in the South coupled with the Great Depression (1929-1939) led growing numbers of Americans to prioritize future economic development over the preservation of obsolete political-economic systems grounded in White supremacy (Deutsch, 2011; Pinkney, 2016). Public education for all was one way to ensure citizens had the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be productive members of such a growing economy.

Criterion #4—Tools to Succeed

The vision of the Rosenwald Schools provided a key tool for success: improved access to education. The premise was that improved access to quality education would improve the civic achievements of Black Americans, thereby supporting social development across the nation. Recent economic analysis has concluded that, "...investment in human capital is a primary vehicle for economic development," and improving the quality of accessible education has been a cornerstone initiative to increase living standards. For this reason, Washington and Rosenwald deliberately offered a down payment (without paying the full cost) while providing local communities the opportunity and motivation to build and staff their own schools (Deutsch, 2011).

Criterion #5—Stakeholder Values

The Rosenwald Schools emerged during a time of tremendous social change in response to the pressures levied by numerous stakeholders. The notable stakeholders were Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald, both of whom had a shared vision of social-political

equality for an oppressed sector of American citizenry, African Americans in the rural South. Concurrent with World War I, the Great Depression, and women's suffragism, Washington and Rosenwald perceived the time was long overdue to press for de facto equality of those long oppressed by social-political institutions. To be sure, Black citizens with limited rights enforced by entrenched White institutions (from the legal system to public schools to state constitutions) were not only beneficiaries of but also primary participants in the Rosenwald Schools. It was their communities who built the buildings, provided teachers and students, and sourced remainder funding for almost 5,000 schools throughout the rural South.

Cross-case Comparative Analysis

Both cases from the Freedmen's Bureau and Rosenwald Schools examined the social-political issues affecting Black Americans during specific times. Each case represented merely a snapshot of these experiences related to public education. By analyzing these historic experiences with the focused lens of (Cohen & Mehta, 2017) model of successful educational reform, we can better understand how well educational reforms can influence the social-political lives of Black Americans. In this section, a cross-case analysis of both cases was conducted by each model criterion.

Criterion #1—Practical Needs

Both cases clearly present an immediate need for Black Americans to have improved access to quality education within their communities. In the first case of the Freedmen's Bureau, stakeholders appeared to be motivated by a prevailing assumption within White-controlled institutions that Black citizens required external assistance to participate in the democratic process. This assumption seems to be less so in the second case of Rosenwald Schools in which Mr. Washington, as a primary stakeholder, clearly saw access to education (for both Black and White citizens) as the way for communities to improve their own lots (Deutsch, 2011). Nonetheless, access to education was a primary motivator in both cases.

Criterion #2—Significant Problems

In both cases, education served as a vehicle to provide marginalized segments of the population with agency. Black Americans, who had suffered generations as enslaved and then as indentured people with restricted voices, now had access—albeit limited—to quality education. This access to quality education had a direct influence on their quality of life and ability to contribute to a democratic society (Aaronson & Mazumder, 2011; Aaronson et al., 2021; Button, 1983). By making Black citizens in the rural South primary stakeholders, both the Freedmen's Bureau and Rosenwald Schools provided them a safe space to develop agency: empowerment to develop on their own terms in their own ways. For example, both cases involved a significant recruitment of local teachers, especially from the communities served. As a result, the problems in these cases were significant because

they were rooted in the lack of voice-agency, and the organizations in both directly targeted those educational needs. These organized approaches to problem solving by both the educational organizations and local communities would ultimately lay the groundwork for the establishment of a modern public school system in the rural South.

Criterion #3—Social Pressures

Both cases exemplify a developing desire among Black Americans to acquire more agency in their economic and political lives. Communities of refugees in the post-bellum South had an immediate need to procure economic resources to which they previously had no legal access. This social pressure for economic development only grew, so that by the 1930s, southern Blacks saw the linkage between economic prosperity of their local communities and access to quality education, resulting in greater demands for a better quality of life (Aaronson & Mazumder, 2011). In this way, community leaders working with Rosenwald and Booker built off the Freedmen's Bureau foundation of providing access to quality public education that would allow Black citizens to participate more in the democratic process.

Criterion #4—Tools to Succeed

The experiences of the Freedmen's Bureau and Rosenwald Schools suggest that investment in public education for local communities can help improve the quality of life for their members. Each case presents a different approach to that investment. The bureau was a federal entity that imposed structure and resources on fluid post-bellum circumstances while the Rosenwald-Washington approach provided a basic infrastructure upon which local communities could invest their own resources to build their own schools and programs. For both cases, a result was a network of public schools that provided greater access to education for multiple generations in southern Black communities . Consequently, more citizens had access to quality education at the points of need, promoting increased living standards and civic participation.

Criterion #5—Stakeholder Values

Stakeholders play a key role in educational reforms that span societies. In these two cases, stakeholders valued some things that promoted the reforms and others that resisted them. Many in the South and North perceived a need for creating education infrastructure for Black Americans in the rural South during both periods. The key was for local communities to vet those educational investments; without their support, the reforms would largely fail. The local communities, then, became not beneficiaries as much as active partners in building, manning, and maintaining these schools—even after the host institutions went away. Those in power in traditionally White-controlled institutions tended to resist any reforms that threatened their hold on Black communities. Consequently, local Black

At least the foundation, to varying degrees, of a public school system.

communities held a healthy suspicion of handouts from actors outside their trusted circle—regardless of the source (i.e., federal or private). Despite the social-political obstacles, the agents of change in both cases shared common goals with the beneficiaries, forging powerful relationships that produced lasting education reforms. To the extent that these relationships were flawed and interrupted by obstacles, some of these challenges remain in American society.

Synthesized Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand how public education can serve as a way to advance effective social reform. The research questions focused on this purpose within the context of two cases pertaining to the African American community: (1) If education can promote social reform for improving the quality of life for society or a substantial section of a society's periphery, how can educational reform result in social reform? (2) What insights can an evaluation of historical cases, such as the post-Reconstruction Freedmen's Bureau and Jim Crow era Rosenwald Schools in the American rural South, provide educational policy makers and leaders regarding the complexities of contemporary society-especially for marginalized communities? After examining each case separately using evaluation criteria grounded in the theoretical lens of Cohen and Mehta (2017), a cross-case comparative analysis induced several patterns in the collected data. The table below links the evaluation criteria to the findings from the preceding cross-case analysis and then to the individual research questions.

As a result of the inductive cross-case comparative analysis, several patterns emerged that addressed the research questions. The enclosed table summarizes these patterns. In terms of the first research question, educational reform at the grassroots levels can promote social reform at the systemic levels. This was evident in both cases through the network and infrastructure of school facilities, faculty, and curricula supported by local communities. Regarding the second research question, public or private investment in local communities could overcome much social-institutional resistance over the long term for multiple generations. As a result, a salient factor in the educational reforms examined in both case studies was the value of buy in by local communities to build and maintain the educational opportunities presented them.

Conclusion

This historical case study analyzed two instances of educational reform in the African American experience. The purpose was to understand how educational reform can lead to social reforms over time. While examining the education-centric activities of the Freedmen's Bureau (1867-1870) and the Rosenwald Schools (1914-1931), it became clear that local Black communities more than benefitted from the financial and infrastructural investment in accessible quality education. They were key partners. In this way, long-term success of these projects, often resisted by White-dominated institutions, would normally depend upon the level of local support they received.

Table
Synthesized Findings Aligned with Evaluation Criteria and Research Questions

Criterion	Cross-case Patterns	Research Questions (RQ) Addressed with Justification
1—Practical Needs	· Prevailing assumption by White institutions that Black citizens required assistance to participate in democratic process · Practical aim: make education more accessible to Black Americans	· RQ1—increased access to quality education · RQ2—long-held assumptions can influence institutional behavior
2—Significant Problems	· Gave marginalized segments of population a voice and agency by providing increased access to quality education · Identified Black citizens in rural South as primary stakeholders · Recruitment of teachers from local areas was key · Reinforced public school network in South	· RQ1—local empowerment through voice, recruitment, and participation · RQ2—value of local networks to establish public school system
3—Social Pressures	· Desire for economic development in local communities · Demands for better quality of life when given the chance · Education seen as a way to participate more in democracy as citizens	· RQ1—economic development linked to quality of life; education a key element of development · RQ2—participation in quality education programs can lead to quality civic participation in democratic processes
4—Tools to Succeed	· Network of public schools provided greater access to education for multiple generations · Investment in education at local levels helped increase living standards	· RQ1—network of schools promoted long-term access to quality education · RQ2—investment in education, whether public or private, can help develop local communities
5—Stakeholder Values	· Resistance from those in power or with entrenched institutions · Need for education infrastructure at local levels · Communities willing to step up, regardless of obstacles · The agents of change, for the most part, shared common goals with beneficiaries · Suspicion of handouts from sources outside local communities-regardless if sources were federal or private	· RQ1—local access to education can overcome institutional resistance by fostering agency and voice; common goals help consolidate resources at grassroots levels · RQ2—past behaviors by stakeholders can influence contemporary attitudes toward proposed reforms

Future studies could examine other historical and contemporary cases in which educational reforms have affected the social conditions for Black and other communities of color. Centrally imposed educational policies such as No Child Left Behind in the United States, where there is a localized management of public school systems, could offer investigators an opportunity to apply models of reform to understand the tensions between the systemic benefits of education and community-level control. Researchers could also focus on the future mission of HBCUs, roles of Black educators, and social voice in marginalized communities. More recent public health issues instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021 and natural disasters stemming from climate change provide a fertile ground for inquiry into educational reforms and their effects on social development. Studying the linkage between educational systems and the societies they serve will continue to be an area of significance.

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