

Self education

Literature



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Salman Schocken dropped out of high school at the age of 16. He built a chain of retail stores in Germany in the 1920's. With the money he made he surrounded himself with contemporary scholars of his era including Franz Kafka. He paid these scholars a monthly salary so that they could write in peace and share their ideas with him. Salman fled Germany in the late 1930's to avoid the coming war. He then turned his focus on developing art, literature and education.

He died at the age of 82 a wealthy man with a formidable intellect. (Schocken, 2012) " Thus is the power of self-learning. " quotes his grandson Shimon Schocken. (Schocken, 2012) Continuing self-education teaches critical thinking, research and individual responsibility. Contemporary education is only the first step in the pursuit of knowledge; it is up to us to continue the path. Critical thinking is perhaps the most important tool for evaluating facts.

Edward Glaser defines critical thinking as, "(1) an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experiences, (2) knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning, and (3) some skill in applying those methods. " (Glaser, 1941) Critical thinking is the process of scrutinizing information that is presented to you, and evaluating its source and validity. In order to think critically one must question information that is given and determine its accuracy without accepting it at face value.

Critical thinking is essential to good decision making. As Peter Facione states, "...failing to anticipate the consequences of one's decisions often leads to disastrous results not only for the decision maker, but for many other people as well (Facione, 2013). " Using critical thinking skills allows us

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the opportunity to learn for ourselves more about a subject or experience we encounter. By questioning and dissecting the facts around a statement or presumption we can gain insights into what the truth of the matter is.

Research plays an essential role in self-education. No one would think of designing a rocket to the moon or wiping out a widespread disease by relying on untested hunches; likewise, one cannot expect to improve education without research. " (Council, 2012) Research aids critical thinking in providing the ability to check facts with reputable sources. Research also allows you to build a body of knowledge about various subjects. The more knowledgeable about a subject you are the better capacity you will have to think critically and make informed decisions. Even the definition of research is put to incredible scrutiny and debate.

As Elizabeth St. Pierre elaborates in an article to *Adult Education Quarterly*, "... the very nature of science and scientific evidence and therefore the nature of knowledge itself is being contested by scholars and researchers who think and work from different epistemological, ontological, and methodological positions as well as by those postmodernists who challenge the metaphysical project." (St. Pierre, 2006) While academia and legislation are constantly gripped in the debate of what actually constitutes scientifically based research or SBR, most research is still conducted using evidence based research or EBR. (St. Pierre, 2006)

So long as whatever research you conduct on a subject is supported by documentable facts you can provide substance for any argumentation you present. It is your responsibility to select research that objectively proves the facts, and not research that is conducted to prove an assumed position on a

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subject. That leads us to the ethics portion of this paper, the role of individual responsibility in self-education. Personal responsibility has been defined as being accountable to oneself and to the needs and well-being of others (Ruyter, 2002).

The more you endeavor to educate yourself on topics of ethics and reason, the more you will be confronted by the role you personally play on the world's stage. Schools can only do their absolute best to make knowledge available to you. It is your responsibility to use that knowledge with good judgment. For example you could spend your time studying chemistry and arm yourself with an immense knowledge of the subject. Later you could take that knowledge and either invent a new material that can advance science by leaps and bounds, or you could use it to construct a bomb that could kill thousands and fit in your shirt pocket.

Chemistry is not to blame for the consequence of your decisions; ultimately you are the one responsible. As Fromm summarizes on ethics, " While reason shows man what he ought to do in order to be truly himself and thus teaches him what is good, the way to achieve virtue is through the active use man makes of his powers. (Fromm, 1947)" Individual responsibility is the keystone of applying research and critical thinking in an ethical way to learning and understanding truth over desire.

We could find specific documentation and lines of argumentation that back up our points in order to win an argument, but at the root of it our personal responsibility to the truth is what should convince us to argue towards learning the truth, and not just winning an argument. You should clearly be able to recognize that the pursuit of knowledge is an ongoing and endless

journey of discovery, both of the world around you and within your own mind.

Critical thinking requires you to question everything you are told and not to accept things at face value. Research allows you to verify your critical thought processes and draw informed conclusions. Individual responsibility is the temperance that allows you to judge what the best application of the knowledge you gain is. Academia can only open the doors to knowledge and discovery, but self-education is the vehicle that carries us through to understanding and mastery of our world.