

A PERSPECTIVE ON HOME EDUCATION

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I said it HOME SCHOOL learner — that's it lets stop reading and assume that this is an article written by my mother while I am sitting at home helping her with the house chores.

Home schooling in South Africa has had a particular stigma about it since whenever. I presume and acknowledge that some of these “notions” are correct just as much as the “teacher’s pet” and various other stigmas that plague the conventional schooling system are relevant in today’s society.

Let’s indulge ourselves in the idea of normality for a bit. Normality, according to the English dictionary, is “the condition of being normal; the state of being usual, typical, or expected.” Now most of us can appreciate the fact that the idea of normality is referenced against one’s own experiences and view of the world. Normality to an individual might be subject to culture, religion, reference of money, education, etc.

We all probably know the feeling of rocking up at a friend’s house and sitting down around the dinner table (or in some/most cases on the couch/bedroom) with wide eyes, staring at a meal that is so different to what we are used to. Battling with each bite to understand the flavors of food that we have probably eaten before, yet, it's so “different.” It might be the way it was prepared/presented/marinated/it could be the temperature. Bottom line, it is not our reference of normal.

Now you might be thinking that I have completely lost the plot and confused home schooling with food. Maybe if I had a better (or may I say a more structured) education I might be able to stay on point. Lets start from the top and try and get a grip on the idea of homeschooling in the context of South Africa. I would like to play around with the ideas and stigmas that homeschooling has in South Africa and, assuming that you have read thus far, I am comfortable that it will speak to the correct “audience”.



Is home schooling an option in a country that has one of the highest illiteracy percentages in the world, is home schooling a new idea in Africa or is it a western idea?

I could get into detail but I would like to raise my own opinion in this regard. African culture teaches us that information was passed on from generation to generation. If we look at music and culture we will find that a lot of ideas / beliefs were passed on like this for generations.

This leaves us with the understanding that each generation had a social responsibility to pass on knowledge, but further than that, each family had a responsibility to pass on knowledge. Whether it was beliefs/ideas/traditions, it was schooling.

Formal schooling in Africa is a new concept if we consider the demographic and historical value of South Africa. My viewpoint on this isn't based on some research I've done, it's based on my experience. I used to teach drums at a private school for a couple of years and I used to get asked to teach students tribal patterns. The reason for this varied but the root was the same "I would like my child to play/sing the tribal patterns/songs that I was taught."

So now that I have briefly touched on the social aspect, I would like to emphasize the fact that every person living in society has a responsibility to society. I am not in any way against traditional schooling neither am I against structure. Home schooling should not be about personal edification, race, religion or enrichment.

It should all be about education and freedom. The matter of freedom; freedom can be a subject that is sometimes confused. I find that freedom is sometimes a scapegoat for disrespect, lawlessness, self-righteousness and ignorance. Freedom is explained as "the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint."



The first problem is that most people read/ interpret freedom as “I can do what I want, how I want” however freedom is a concept that is not exclusive to one person; it is only freedom if it applies to all. I can then say that freedom allows people to accept one another; it allows people to embrace each other.

The second problem is that it speaks about intent and that is where I believe we sometimes miss the boat. If my intent is to respect the government, to respect the elderly, to respect education then I can have the freedom to express myself — it doesn't mean that I need to agree — it simply means that I have the freedom to explore my feelings and perceptions.

Freedom gives us choice. It's actually quite simple. I would like to use the following analogy; say for example you want to travel to Rome and you have all the freedom in the world to do so. You would still have to decide on the route/method you want to take and once you have made that decision you will be subject to the conditions thereof — for example if you decide to fly; you will have to subject yourself to the airlines' rules. Freedom gives me the ability to rise above the opinions of others but it doesn't relate to lawlessness, disrespect or self-righteousness.

Now that I have given my viewpoint of freedom and social responsibility I would like to address my views on home schooling.

Home-Schooling should have the intent to educate and therefore it should be in the framework of social responsibilities i.e.; it should respect the government, it should respect the education system, it should respect social integration, it should respect the child, it should respect the demographic.

Home Schooling should not disregard the government, social responsibility, the education system, and the right of a child, the conventional schooling system. Now I might sound like I really lost the plot but, a parent should bring up his/her child in a manner that creates freedom and is at all times in the best interest of the child and society. Let's face it, a child is born into a family and the parents have the responsibility to educate, care-for, nurture and love him/her up until adulthood so that the child can succeed/operate in “society.” I am not talking about uniformity, as there isn't anyone that is the same. I am talking about respect, understanding and value



Life is meant to be about learning and a recognized acceptable education falls in this category. Learning was not meant to be about building castles for oneself at the cost of other. Education has become an industry that is driven by money but if we forget that education is about learning and if we don't create the correct platforms of learning as parents, we will be stuck to oppose wisdom and understanding.

Home schooling — this concept has had so many interpretations, In my opinion it is not:

A school in a house where learners are asked to pay an unqualified teacher.

It is not a platform to “protect” your child from society.

It is not a platform for racism, lawlessness, or rebellion.

Social illiteracy

Home schooling — this concept has had so many interpretations, In my opinion it is

A platform to encourage learning.

A platform to educate in an acceptable manner respecting the society.

A structured approach to learning that is acceptable and complies with societal standards.

It creates social literacy.

I hope my perspective and experience added value to a subject that has become messy at times.