

### Self-Discovery

Improving a child's development can change the outcome of his life. Improving many children's developments can change the outcome of an entire society. A child's development is influenced by many factors including school and parents. Some people claim that the best way for a child to develop is to strongly guide him through the early stages of development, while others argue that we should promote divergent thinking and creativity. Amy Chua is an advocate for vigorous parental guidance.

Amy Chua in "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother" claims that high parental involvement in a child's life contributes heavily to her success. She gives purposefully brutal anecdotes of her child with an accomplishment always at the end. She is implying that although her methods of strict parenting may seem harsh, they eventually lead to success for the child. She claims, "The Chinese believe that the best way to protect their children is by preparing them for the future, letting them see what they're capable of, and arming them with skills, work habits, and inner confidence that no one can ever take away." In other words, the author is claiming that the "Chinese way" to parenting will benefit their children in the future by promoting a work ethic and building confidence. Essentially, Chua is arguing that by forcing her children to take certain activities, constantly work hard at school, and disallow distractions—such as videogames and play dates—her child will succeed in the future.

Chua has many valid points concerning strict parenting that are strongly supported by numerous examples. For example, she brought up an example in which she harshly forced her daughter to master a difficult piece on the piano, and in the end she was able to accomplish it. However, the emotional damage that this approach could have on a child is devastating. Additionally, this approach may actually not build up independence but instead dependence. When a child has relied on their parents for help in everything (even making simple decisions), it is difficult for that child to function properly when taken away from their parents. Although Chua brings up a good point that it is important to teach a child to work hard, the parental strategy to pick activities without their children's input is actually detrimental to the child. Sir Ken Robinson actually claims the opposite and believes that we should let children be more creative and less drilled.

Sir Ken Robinson in "Changing Education Paradigms" argues that our basic educational system is faulty. He believes that it was conceived in a different time period designed to promote a "certain type of deductive reasoning and knowledge of the classics." He instead claims that our educational system should be promoting divergent thinking and collaboration. In his own words, "[Public education believes] there are two types of people, academic and non-academic, smart people and non-smart people, and the consequence of that is that many brilliant people think

they're not." In other words, the author is saying that the educational system inhibits many different types of talent because it does not fit the academic definition of intelligent.

Robinson's central point about reversing the direction our school systems are going in appears to be a very effective solution. It would promote individuality, creativity, and give hope to the numerous students who feel that they are unintelligent in our current academic system. However, unlike what Robinson mentioned, there are also several benefits of our current school system. It rewards hard work and basic logic skills such as deductive reasoning. Robinson implies that there are only two options: keep our current school system or throw it out and start anew. However, by altering aspects our school system and providing more freedom to children, we can effectively utilize the benefits of our current system. For example, if we were to lower the emphasis on grades or a rigorous curriculum, students wouldn't feel pressured to take certain classes, and instead they perhaps may take a class that interests them.

Chua would most likely respond to the idea of children picking their own courses by arguing that a child may not be old enough to decide what an efficient use of their time is. She would probably say that a child may not take a particular class because it could appear to be too hard, too much work, or too boring even if it could be useful in the long run. However, children will always search for what interests them despite the difficulty or work. When students find their passion, they will no longer view learning as work, and instead they will view it positively. Their motivation alters from simply attempting to please a parent to learning out of curiosity.

For example, as I was growing up, my family had a lot of computers in the house. My parents felt it was beneficial for me to use computers as much as possible. Video games became dominate section of my computer time. My parents started to worry that I was wasting my time on useless games and not learning anything; however, I soon had a desire to learn how to make video games. In a short amount of time, I was able to code my very own calculator program. By 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I had a large portfolio of projects that I had completed, ranging from websites to videogames, but I had an even larger portfolio of knowledge that I had picked up along the way. I could take apart and put together a computer, and I had built my very own. My parents never once helped me in my quest to learn the intricate workings of a computer, yet I still managed to figure it out. The reward was confidence, self accomplishment, and a growth in my problem solving skills. This sort of exploration is not promoted in many school settings.

The primary issue with schools is that this process of self discovery is lost. In math class often times children are told a formula, then years later they are shown the proof to the formula. Very rarely do students actually prove a formula by themselves. This causes many students to believe that the world is simply pre-defined and that solutions only have one answer. It also makes them lose the drive to find that answer themselves. By allowing children the ability to follow their interests, they are far more likely to figure things out by themselves, instead of simply memorizing something and then regurgitating it. There are primarily two changes that need to occur in the school system to make this happen. The first is that we need to allow

children the option of exploring subjects that interest them. Second, we have to change the mindset of educators and administrators from a “memorize for an assessment” model to an exploration model.

Once a child is allowed to discover things for himself, the benefits would be tremendous. His problem solving skills—as well as deductive reasoning and a work ethic—would grow. As the world is becoming far more technology oriented, those who are able to effectively solve problems creatively (divergent thinking) will succeed. The answers to the problems faced in most vocational environments are not simply black and white, yet our school system is built on that assumption. In school there is often only one right answer, and it teaches children to think in a linear way. Similar to what Robinson was claiming, as children become more educated they become less creative. It is necessary for schools to implement changes that address these issues.

The impact these changes will have could potentially influence everyone. Primarily, the students and teachers will be the first ones affected; however, as time progresses business and industry will be changed. The talent of college students—which many large companies hire—will increase and thus these companies will dramatically improve. Eventually our entire society could experience the benefits of an improved education.

The societal benefits would be tremendous by having more independent and creative citizens. These are often the citizens who are the innovators. The better development of technology and medicine is inevitable. Additionally, these individuals are likely to solve some of the big problems that endanger us. Problems such as global warming, global unrest, and a growing population can only be solved with creative and ingenious solutions. It is through reforming our educational system that we will be able to develop the innovative minds necessary for solving these issues.