

December 2021

SKILLS FOR NAVIGATING A COMPLEX WORLD BY ANGELA M. KOHNEN AND E. WENDY SAUL

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Recommended Citation

Ajibona, O. (2021). SKILLS FOR NAVIGATING A COMPLEX WORLD BY ANGELA M. KOHNEN AND E. WENDY SAUL. *Journal of Media Literacy Education Pre-Prints*. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/jmle-preprints/25>

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A REVIEW OF *THINKING LIKE A GENERALIST: SKILLS FOR NAVIGATING A
COMPLEX WORLD* BY ANGELA M. KOHNEN AND E. WENDY SAUL

Thinking like a generalist represents the desire of its authors to make students do learning. Doing learning here means that students get the skills needed to successfully navigate the information landscape in school and the world in the classroom. According to the authors, schools have largely concerned themselves with preparing students for future careers while failing to see that the daily information needs of adults are not primarily related to academia or even career in nature. The authors in this book argue for the introduction of what they term as "generalist literacy" to the school curriculum to bridge this gap. This "generalist literacy" is not radically new in a way that it is something that we are not familiar with. Generalist literacy according to the authors is an "approach to real-world information *generalist literacy*, a term borrowed from Lewis Mumford's concept of the 'generalist' (1961)...Generalist literacy is what we use when working outside our specialist fields or areas of competence. For example, a chemist uses a generalist thinking when trying to understand geology or how to comfort her colicky baby". (Angela Kohnen et. al., 2020) From this definition, it is clear that generalist thinking is something we already do in our-day-day lives.

According to the authors, there are three attitudes generalist thinking brings to the classroom which is: Curiosity, Open-minded skepticism and Persistence. Curiosity is wondering about why things are the way they are intending to get understanding. Open-minded skepticism is the willingness to accept any conclusion that will be deduced from questioning the way things are. Persistence is the ability to endure the often painstaking process of for instance sourcing for information or getting a task done. These three attitudes are undeniably essential attitudes that are very much needed for navigating the complex world.

Generally, the book is written in an easy to read manner. The narrative in the book is clear, fluid and without unnecessary gilding which might impede the understanding of the arguments of the authors. At various points in the book, there are tips that can help the reader successfully understand how to teach generalist literacy in the classroom.

The book is broadly divided into three parts with each part containing a number of chapters. The first part of the book titled "The Case for Generalist Literacy" divided into three chapters gives a conceptual clarification of generalist literacy. The first chapter of the book

answers the questions of what is generalist thinking? Why do we even need generalist thinking? It is in chapter two the three attitudes generalist literacy brings to the classroom is discussed. According to the authors, these attitudes were deduced from their interaction and examination of the way generalist thinkers do their thinking. This part also highlights the read-aloud-think-aloud method as a way of making students learn better by demonstrating how active reading enables thinkers to connect with ideas. Chapter 3 introduces the three steps of generalist thinking which are orienting, sourcing, consolidating and synthesizing. Orienting is the stage where a learner examines what he or she knows about a topic of interest. According to the authors, it involves “getting the lay of the land before digging in deeply”.(p, 44) Sourcing is understanding where and how to find information related to targeted information-seeking needs. Consolidating is the "act of gathering information" while synthesising involves "putting information together and seeing the connection and contradictions that emerge". (p, 48)

After the conceptual clarification done in the first part of the book, the second part titled “A self-guided course” focuses on providing a guide on how teachers can become generalist thinkers themselves. This part covering chapters 4 to 9 prepares the teacher for teaching generalist literacy in the classroom. Specifically, the teacher is guided on how to pick a lesson topic and all the steps needed to prepare the topic for teaching in the classroom. Also, there is a clear demonstration of the steps of generalist thinking discussed in the second part of the book in this part of the book.

The third part of the book titled “Examples from the Classroom” contains only chapter ten of the book. Chapter ten contains instances of when generalist literacy was deployed in the classroom that can be used as a framework for planning generalist instruction activities in the classroom. Each of these examples is followed by an explanation of how to effectively use these frameworks in the classroom. The book also contains Appendixes that give more practical guidance on how to teach generalist thinking in the classroom.

Thinking like a Generalist is a book that will resonate with teachers concerned about how they will prepare their students for the ever-changing world because generalist literacy which the authors are arguing for is a solution to their worries.

REFERENCE

Angela M. Kohnen, E. Wendy Saul. 2020. *Thinking like a Generalist: Skills for Navigating a Complex World*, New Hampshire: Stenhouse Publishers.

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