



Home Education and Freedom of Choice

Written in reply to an email from the USA voicing concern that home education may lead to restriction of choice and freedom for children.

Few parents I have met who home educate do so to restrict their children's choices. It may be that we in the UK home educate in a different way or that home education is different in character in the UK to that practiced elsewhere, but I feel strongly that home education is about choices.

Additionally, to say that children in school have choice whereas home educated children do not seems perverse. School is all about restricting choice.

In addition to the restrictions inherent in school attendance including truancy punishments there are further restrictions concerning what should be studied, how it should be studied and that in the UK parents are encouraged to sign "Home School Agreements" where the parent promises to restrict their child's choices dramatically in terms of bed times, TV viewing, meals, dress, personal hygiene, hair styles, reading materials and many other issues, all in their child's best interests.

Also to say that a child will meet with people from a diverse background in school is also incorrect. Schools (at least in the UK) have catchment areas. These tend to be based upon social backgrounds. Schools therefore have fairly homogenous student populations.

As to abuse in school, in the UK, 2 children a week commit suicide as a result of school stress. This figure rises year on year, this year is a record year. In addition to this a growing number of children are refusing to go to school, its known as school phobia but when I last checked a dictionary a phobia was an irrational fear!

Incidentally of the 90 thousand or so children home educated in the UK not one suicide has been recorded - ever.

The response to school phobia by the authorities in the UK is to threaten children (yes the children) with their parents imprisonment and themselves with care orders. This is IMO abusive. Despite this the rates of school phobia are still rising dramatically. Children simply cannot be forced into school any more and despite the best efforts by educational psychologists (may they rot in hell) to blame parents its becoming clear to everyone that this problem is one of school stress. Even the DfES guidelines to LA's states that parents should be told about their right to home educate, however from evidence I have received many LA's consistently refuse to do this and one LA recently admitted in its internal policy guidance notes to EWO's to actively hide this right from Traveler families.

The regularity of exams (SAT's), principally designed to assess the teachers ability has forced those teachers to pass on the stress to the kids to "pass" these exams so that their own careers are undamaged by their pupils failure. It's intolerable and abusive.



I would also like to ask what sort of measure one would apply to ensure that children meet with a wide range of people and come into contact with a wide range of positively presented alternative lifestyles and ideologies - that would also be used to measure school performance.

In the European Union parents have the right in law to bring up their children in any philosophical framework they believe in. This is just as well as I feel that were it not so then TCS would itself be grounds for removing a child from the home.

Best Wishes,
Mike F-W