

FI ĠNIEN F'BELT BHALL-OHRAJN,
IT-TFAL KOLLHA QED IHARSU 'L FUQ.
QED JARAW XI HAĠA WISQ SABIHA,
WISQ KBIRA, WISQ WISQ.
IMMA X'INHI?
X'QED JARAW?
U INT,

Ara Sara. X'qed tara Sara?

Anki Bob u l-kejb Pip. X'qed jaraw?

X'QED TARA?

new books  merlin www.merlinpublishers.com

free-range education versus conventional schooling

By Dini Martinez

For much of history, enlisting professional teachers was an option available only to the elite. Until relatively recently, the vast majority of children were educated by their family. Only since the mid-19th century has the formal schooling in a classroom setting become the most common means of education throughout most of the world. Yet over the past few years, several countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the US have observed an exponential increase in home-schooled pupils, the latter now counting for three per cent.»

“There is no school equal to a decent home and no teacher equal to a virtuous parent.” – Mahatma Gandhi

At the peak of home-schooling opposition is Germany's High Court decision stating that children belong to the state, thus parents have no right to interfere with the way they are educated. Several German parents have been criminally convicted, threatened with loss of custody or denied the right of free movement due to their home-schooling decisions. On this basis, some have been granted asylum in the US, where the Supreme Court affirms that children are free individuals under the care and tutelage of their parents.

History

In the 1960s the first research was carried out into the effects of institutionalised schooling on children's physical, mental and psychological development. Many American educational professionals such as Rushdoony, Holt and the Moores claimed that formalised education before the age of eight was harming children academically, socially, mentally and physiologically. According to their studies, increasingly earlier enrolment in childcare centres and schools was related to problems such as juvenile frustration, hyperactivity, delinquency and near-sightedness later in life. This is partially due to cutting short the bonds and emotional development made with parents during these early formative years.

Today's approaches

Nowadays, approaches to home-schooling range from formalised distance education, to freestyle home-schooling and all the way to radical un-schooling. The latter is a curriculum-free education whereby the child's interest spontaneously drives their pursuit of knowledge through natural life. Many parents are also influenced by alternative educational philosophies backed by the likes of Mason, Montessori and Steiner.

Why

Parents have different reasons for opting out of conventional school systems. The main ones include dissatisfaction with local schools, the quality of academic instruction, the curriculum and the avoidance of negative peer influences. Moreover, some parents show an interest in increased involvement with their children's learning and development. They may desire to support their child's special abilities (such as in athletics or music), be driven by religious reasons or simply wish to take advantage of the efficiency of one-to-one instruction. Still others simply live in too remote an area to access formalised institutions.

Many find that learning through movement and action instead of sitting still for hours on end is more in-line with a child's natural urge to learn. This argument is supported by numerous behavioural psychologists and cognitive scientists, as well the evolution of humankind itself. Back in the Stone Age, for instance, young boys went out with their fathers to learn how to hunt. In those days, a child's natural tendency to move and explore was not diagnosed as ADD and the like, but was considered a positive and admirable requirement to prepare them for life.

The critics

Despite numerous studies showing the opposite, opponents doubt the academic quality, social ability and societal aptness of home-schooled pupils. According to research, however, many home-schooled pupils enrol in elite universities, are more active in their communities and civic affairs, vote in higher percentages and report that they are very happy with life. There are many successful people with a partial or complete home-schooling background. To name but a few, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Edison and Julian Assange.

Who is responsible for children's education?

Mike Donnelly, Home School Legal Defense Association (HSDL) lawyer, agrees that for any court to rule that the state has an interest equal to that of the parents in raising children is obvious nonsense. In his view, a pluralistic democracy must accept families who have different ideas about how to educate their children.

Around the world

Many countries, including most Commonwealth states, offer the option of home education to varying extents. Australia, for instance, has a well-established distance learning programme which was initiated for children growing up on remote farms. Today, many travelling Australian families take advantage of the programme. The UK and US also both offer renowned home-schooling packages like Calvert, Keystone, the American School of Correspondence and many others. Some of these are rough guidelines, whereas others include very detailed schedules curricula.

In Malta

Whilst school attendance in Malta is compulsory, there has been increasing amount of discussion on other options. Parents are in dialogue with the Education Ministry regarding the provision for home-schooling under the law. While the Education Act refers to compulsory school attendance, the Constitution of Malta states that education, not school attendance, is compulsory. The Education Act further states: "It is the right of every parent of a minor to give his decision with regard to any matter concerning the education which the minor is to receive."

Real life

In reality, many parents simply cannot afford to home-school. Apart from the mental space and emotional capacity, financial circumstances often oblige both parents to work. Nevertheless, many of the ideas and approaches can also be included partially and in parallel with more institutionalised learning, thus harvesting the benefits of various approaches. ■

Every day, in a hundred small ways, our children ask: "Do you see me? Do you hear me? Do I matter?" Their behaviour often reflects our responses.

Put your mind at rest this winter



Berger Flexible Roof Compound is a flexible waterproof coating, which stretches twice that of its original size, covers fine cracks, has a long life with a clean decorative finish. The product does not soften in hot weather conditions and is easy to keep clean and re-coat. Berger Flexible Roof Compound is ideal for all types of roofs, and comes in Light Grey, Magnolia, White, Green, Tile Red and Clear.



BERGER
THE PAINT PROFESSIONALS
Established in the United Kingdom in 1799

Available from all leading paint stores

Email: info@berger.com.mt

www.berger.com.mt

 Berger Malta