

Educational Philosophies

Example 1

Autonomous Educational Approach

In terms of my particular provision we follow an autonomous, child centred style of education with learning through life as our main aim. The questionnaire you enclosed is not therefore relevant to our educational philosophy and delivery, but I am more than happy to provide evidence of how the educational provision is,

- "efficient full-time education suitable;
- to her age, ability, and aptitude, and
- to any special educational needs she may have,"
- as laid out in section 7 of the 1996 Education Act.

As you will be aware, 'efficient' education has been established in case law as an education that achieves what it sets out to achieve. It is therefore most useful for me to set out my educational philosophy as a basis for long-term educational goals and what we are setting out to achieve.

The theoretical basis of my educational philosophy is that:

The child/learner is best placed to know what best suits her intrinsic motivation to learn provided that she has a rich and stimulating environment in which to operate as a learner.

Learning should follow the child/learner's questions.

The child is an active learner with her own unique set of interests, concerns, questions and problems that she is actively addressing at any moment. The role of education is to support this.

The growth of knowledge is a creative and non-mechanical process within the mind of the learner. An environment with access to a large range of resources, conversation, experiences outside the home etc, is best placed to nurture and facilitate this process.

Education is about every aspect of learning, every opportunity for conjecture and refutation. Autonomous education is about having the conditions for self-direction within life. Autonomous education does not divide life up into 'education' and 'not education'.

Basic Skills

It is a core assumption of autonomous education that children will acquire the skills they need to take advantage of their environment and pursue their own aspirations. As such literacy and numeracy are not forced components of a curriculum, but are outcomes within the process acquired in numerous ways, both formal and informal, depending on the child's questions and developing educational priorities. What could be more efficient than a child learning something to suit his or her own intrinsic and individual purposes?

Socialisation

The combination of autonomy and learning in the real world with access to a broad range of social experiences spanning all age groups has an enormously positive influence on the socialization process. In an autonomous learning situation the delicate and complicated balance between being a social creature and the growth of personal knowledge are not put under the enormous and artificial pressures for conformity and homogeneity. Rather, the child is supported in negotiating their own solutions to complex social situations.

Progress

Monitoring and evaluation are not neutral tools, but effect the process they attempt to analyze or describe. Any kind of monitoring that intrudes on the process will tend to objectify education as a discrete part of life rather than as an integral and inevitable element of life. What is therefore most relevant to ensuring that progress will occur is that parents are highly committed to ensuring that the child has every opportunity to pursue whatever it is they want to pursue for as long as it is relevant to the child. Autonomous learning takes place all the time, in all contexts and is efficient by definition (see above)

Aims

The aims of autonomous education are:

- To respect the child as a real person with a right to her own thoughts.
- To maximise the innate impulses to learn.
- To maximise children's opportunities to participate in real life contexts for learning and to succeed in a modern society.
- To give full scope to successful learning systems, particularly conversation and multi media opportunities.
- To allow for undamaged emotional and personal development.
- To allow children to develop such abilities as being able to define problems, ask hard questions, work independently, argue coherently and use a wide range of thinking strategies.
- To establish a model for life long learning.

In conclusion

Autonomous education is a valid system of education, which allows children and young people to develop the lifelong habit of being self-directed and intrinsically motivated learners.

Autonomous education takes as its premise the idea of instruction from within.

Education is the process by which we develop intellectually as our knowledge grows and it relies on the rational development of conjecture and refutation. Autonomous education is simply that process by which knowledge grows because of the intrinsic motivation of the individual.

The core to understanding autonomous education is the primacy of intrinsic motivation.

Autonomous education, in addition to being centred in the child 's intrinsic motivation, demands a broad definition of education, a step back from the products and outcomes thinking of conventional education, a positive view of children as creative and rational and an ability to conceive of problems as having solutions.

Autonomous education does not have a list of essentials, but considers that children will learn whatever they need to live the lives they choose and they will do so at ages that suit their own particular and individual processes.

Education is not something that can be demarcated from the bulk of life, but rather involves the whole of life, in both breadth and duration.

Autonomous education is not only theoretically supportable, but also a consistent legal way for parents to discharge their duties to educate their children under section 7 of the 1996 Education Act

It is the optimal approach for ensuring that a process of flexible, creative, lifelong learning is set in motion.

In short the education that I am providing aims to:

- Equip XXX to discover and follow her own interests fully
- Enable XXX to develop her strengths and character within a responsive, individual learning environment.
- Foster the long-term skills to ensure that XXX can find a satisfying role within modern society according to her own intrinsic motivation.

Educational Delivery

Given this philosophy, delivery of educational provision is not based on a time-tabled curriculum. Learning takes place all the time without the boundaries of set hours or terms and is initiated by xxx interests or suggestions that are followed up.

We use a wide range of resources, including a full range of art and craft materials, cooking ingredients, IT resources and internet sites, extensive access to XXX museums, library and leisure facilities (Names of facilities used etc.), written media (fiction and non fiction books, comics, newspapers etc) and communication media (radio, TV, videos). We also join in regular events across the region in which you live with other home educating families. XXX is also having Any tutorials he/she is undertaking. This ensures that XXX is able to make educational choices and follow interests within the context of a stimulating environment with ample access to social, cultural, artistic, scientific and physical outlets. XXX is also part of her local community, Name any local groups like scouts, church, first aid classes etc.

Since XXX's learning is intrinsically motivated it is, by definition, tailored to her age, ability and aptitude. It is constantly reactive to her individual learning requirements and under constant review.

Whilst in school XXX found the learning environment stressful and there was some discussion about possible SEN. With home education, it is quite clear that XXX's only special need is for an individualised learning environment and both her educational and social skills have benefited enormously from having a more personal approach.

You mention in your letter the possibility of termly visits. As you will be aware the purpose of your informal enquiries is to establish that XXX is in fact receiving a suitable education and for this purpose it is the role of the parent to provide evidence in any form. I am happy to provide an annual report or to perhaps to meet annually, but do not consider termly visits to be helpful to the style of provision I am aiming for. This would be intrusive to the very fluid process of autonomous education and similarly I would not expect XXX to attend any meetings as I consider that when children begin to objectify their own education as a separate entity it intrudes on the whole process of intrinsically motivated learning to its detriment.