

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 804
Submitted by: Tiffany Pereira
Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

1.

Tiffany Pereira

To whom it may concern,

Thank you in advance for taking the time to read this correspondence.

I wish to write to you about my home education journey. Specifically, I wish to convey the reasons I chose to home educate, particularly with regards to the merits I see in a non curriculum bound form of education. These fall into three main benefits:

1. the power of experiential learning
2. self selected/ 'life' curriculum
3. self paced learning.

Firstly, I would like to introduce myself. I am not anti government. Both myself and my child are fully vaccinated. I am not religious, and do not oppose any particular part of the curriculum being taught to my child (such as gender fluidity). I am a highly educated, well travelled, Australian born individual. I have 6 university degrees, have lived in 9 overseas countries, travelled to over 70, and speak 5 languages. I have worked in the education field in various guises from outdoor education to English as a Foreign Language. I have worked for two universities, including The University of Cambridge. One of my degrees is a Post Graduate Diploma in Education. I believe this information is relevant so that you can understand that I am not speaking from an ignorant anti government/anti education standpoint, but rather as someone who passionately believes in self guided home education as the best form of education.

I purposely do not follow the set curriculum. I have never looked at it, nor do I want to. Having lived in various countries I am well aware that what is required by one national curriculum is not required by another, nor are the same requirements expected to be met in the same time frame. For example, children in Bavaria, Germany, where I have lived, only start learning to read at 8 years of age, in year 2, yet national scores for Germany are high. An 8 year old who can not read yet in Australia is "behind". I find such notions detrimental and limiting.

As previously mentioned, I find there are three overarching traits that make a non curriculum bound home education experience the best form of education: experiential learning, self selected curriculum and self paced learning.

Experiential Learning

Firstly, the power of experiential learning. Rather than making my child learn about something because the curriculum states it needs to be done at a certain time, say, grade 5, term 4, I believe learning occurs best when something is relevant, real, experienced and tangible. This engages the learner much more, hence resulting in greater attention to, and retention of, the material being presented. I also believe in a cross curricular, inter disciplinary approach to learning that is a mind map style of curriculum. I call it "life curriculum".

For example, rather than learning about the Great Barrier Reef from a worksheet during the stipulated time on the curriculum, I believe it is best to learn about it when we are able to experience it. This may not occur at the time learning about the reef occurs on the fixed curriculum. A mind map approach then links this learning experience to other learning opportunities. We could branch out to marine biology, climate change, conservation, tourism, economy etc. These topics are guided by my child's interest and knowledge, and may occur in a

formalised curriculum at a completely different time. Hence, a structured curriculum limits opportunities for experiential learning and a cross curricular/interdisciplinary approach to learning.

Self-Selected / 'Life' Curriculum

This leads to the benefits of self guided curriculum. A structured curriculum limits the opportunity for self guided learning. Two years ago I took my daughter to Turkey. During this time we delved into the various learning opportunities Turkey had to offer. We covered Roman history, Ottoman history, Trojan history (Troy is in Turkey), EurAsian geography, The First World War (Gallipoli is in Turkey), Islamic studies, and Turkish history and culture. These were the STARTING points of our studies, based on our experiential learning. From there we branched out. For example, having been to Gallipoli, we branched out to Australian Military history, did an in depth study of the turn of the century, including technology at the time, culture at the time, medical knowledge etc. We branched out to the pre war topics of the Titanic, and the post war topics of the demise of the European Royal families and how the Windsor family was created (they changed their name to become more anglicised). We then followed the royal family history in depth to the current day (we happened to be in Turkey when the Queen passed, so it all linked in beautifully). That is life curriculum. You start with something you experience in life, and expand out from there.

My daughter was 10 at the time of the Turkey trip. This is not an isolated trip we travel extensively through Australia and internationally. While I guide her with the starting point of our learning, where we go from there on our learning mind map is based on her interests. The ignition could be as small as a movie. For example, we just watched "Thor". That led us to look into Scandinavian geography, history and mythology. Not following a structured curriculum allows my daughter's learning to stay relevant, and as she is the sculptor of her education, her motivation to learn is unbounded.

Self-Paced Learning

This leads to the third point, self paced learning. Many of the topics my daughter has learned do not even enter the curriculum until late high school. At the same time, she is autistic, has dyslexia and dyscalculia (like dyslexia for maths), and suffers from extreme anxiety in formalised learning situations. As a result, her English and Maths, the two areas predominantly targeted for evidence of "education", are well below her peers. This is not due to her being home educated. Having her try to meet curriculum standards in these fields will lead to negative consequences for her mental health and have a direct impact on her willingness and eagerness to learn across the board.

I cannot stress this enough. Forcing my child to try to stay in line with a fixed curriculum will ultimately have negative consequences for my child's mental health and education. Conversely, the lack of forced curriculum has allowed me to hon my child's education to meet her mental and emotional needs in a way that a structured curriculum never could. She has a passion for history, environmental science and languages (she speaks two and understands a third all learned through experiential learning. The current Qld curriculum has no second language component). She can tell you all about Classical composers, explain our anatomy and tell you any number of historical facts. However, she struggles with maths and her spelling needs work. The best education for my child is one that allows her to be gently guided to follow her interests, while ensuring that she learns the basic skills she needs in English and Maths AT HER OWN PACE.

Allowing my child to learn what interests her, at her own pace, in a way that works for her (ie, in a non formalised manner no workbooks, tests, assignments etc) is the best education for my child. Of this I have no doubt.

I understand that you want to ensure children are learning. I support a system that requires evidence of learning, as currently exists in Queensland. I do not believe, however, that following the school system will improve my child's education. Rather it will be a detriment.

3.

Please consider the information provided in this one person case study when contemplating the negative repercussions of enforcing a school like structure of learning onto individuals who are out of the school system for a reason.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A very passionate home educating mum,

Tiffany Pereira

Mother of a very well educated 12 year old child who has never been in the school system.