

Choosing to go to school or Iraq

Submitted by David Deutsch on 26 June, 2005 - 20:52

This is a slightly edited version of a [TCS List](#) posting dated Fri, 11 Feb., 2000, at 03:19:47 +0000

David Deutsch (<http://www.qubit.org/people/david/>)



A poster asked:

Do many TCS parents whose children don't have to go to school find ways to persuade their children to continue with home education (unschooling, whatever) even when the children say that they want to go to school?

Another poster replied to the first:

I hope so. It's my belief that school sucks, generally, even with the freedoms I describe above, and that the only reason a TCS child would want to go is because of the paucity of other ways to get what they want (like meeting people, being with friends, and so on). The best way a TCS parent could handle such a situation IMO is to help provide (create!) a bounty of other good ways for the child to get what they want. This would have the effect of turning school into a sad silly choice (by the child's lights) compared to the better ways of being with friends, or whatever. This is another one of those things that's easier said than done (for most people, anyway).

I think this is rather too sweeping. Lots of things 'suck' *for most people*, but very few things suck *for everyone*. People are very, very different, and there is a danger in just *assuming* that a child is acting out of desperation when in fact they are quite healthily pursuing their own ends. The danger is that one will then, in effect, be refusing to help them pursue these ends, and, in effect, start to undermine them by constantly seeking alternatives and constantly acting on the assumption that there must be something wrong with them, or with the alternatives that you are providing for them, if they persist in wanting this.

Take Iraq, for instance. Replace 'school' by 'Iraq' in what Stephen suggests above, and you may see what I mean. Very few TCS children want to go there, and if one did want to, the chances are that this would be because of some misconception or ignorance (e.g. underestimating how dangerous it is there). But if the desire to go survived the child's hearing the relevant explanations, then the chances are that *for this child, at this point in their life* visiting Iraq is a good idea. So then I think the next step should *not* be to "create a bounty of other good ways for the child to get what they want ... turning [Iraq] into a sad silly choice (by the child's lights)...". Instead, the parents should try to find ways of helping the child actually to visit Iraq while avoiding as many of the disadvantages as possible.

Admittedly, thinking along those lines might well also include trying to find other countries that were similar to Iraq in the respects that interested the child, but weren't as dangerous etc. This would count as finding “other good ways for the child to get what they want”, but it still wouldn't make the original idea of Iraq seem silly, just less then optimal after all.

Same with school.

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