

SECULAR STATE EDUCATION v. CHASSIDIC EDUCATION



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Jewish Chassidic community under attack

Can chalk be compared with cheese?

On 23 May 2022 the House of Lords denigrated and castigated Home Educating parents who are seeking to instil in their children high moral ethical values, branding them as abusers and “perpetrators”.

Negative media reports on Chasidic yeshivos, most recently in *The Times* and the BBC were similarly riddled with bias and contempt, half-truths and distortions, selective exaggerations and scaremongering. Hard on the heels of these reports, antisemitic attacks on the Jewish community followed.

Charedim are persistently accused of not teaching children proper English or maths, resulting in dysfunctional people.

The methodology and consequence of Chassidic education

Chassidic students obtain quite a satisfactory education. In addition to Jewish studies, pupils are taught the basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills.

As a by-product of their learning, Yeshiva students commonly emerge with an impressive knowledge in a range of different subjects, including history and business. Typically, Chassidic students will have analysed real case studies from architectural structures in the *Talmud*, including measurements and theories by the age of eight. They would likewise already know



English, Yiddish, Aramaic, and classical Hebrew, and possess the ability to move effortlessly from one language to the other. The information they amass and gain from the *Talmud*, surpasses by far what any general school textbook provides.

Talmud study is intellectually challenging, where one inherently learns to concentrate, create practical images of even abstract concepts, and connect these concepts through lateral thinking. When done well, such learning develops deep thinking patterns, powerful memory-enhancing and problem-solving skills, which become part of a student’s intellectual development.

Study after study concludes that success in life depends on learned

skills, not necessarily on classroom education. Furthermore, until children know their preferred career or occupation, being taught standardised topics, could waste precious years of discovery on potentially irrelevant subjects and may cause unnecessary stress.

Consequently, yeshiva students are well placed to eventually focus their time and studies on the relevant skills, or on obtaining further higher education qualifications, if and



when needed. The conservative emphasis placed on respecting elders also instils in them a sense of security and equips them to respect authority and to obey the laws of the land.

By the time they emerge from Yeshiva, most students will have examined in depth human relation issues relating to business disputes, the consumer, and the variations in quality, price, and inflation. They will also have a much more developed and mature understanding of their strengths

and therefore on what they want to do for a living.

The differences from the Western school system

Of the many threats and challenges that are facing secular state schools is bullying, which leads to depression and on occasion suicide. Children too often encounter violence, drug-abuse, or knife-crime. Government research into knife crime (Ofsted, 2019) reports a 35% rise in the number of sharp

instruments found on school property in the school year beginning in 2017, when compared to 2013-14. Such incidences are however unheard of in the Chassidic community.

Standard methods of schooling have long been shown as being inadequate in preparing for the workplace. Yet, those campaigning against Home Educating families, seek to impose on all children a state supervised school system, in lieu of a tried and tested approach to education.

Many educators believe that the mode of education is far less relevant than the character formed during childhood. In this respect, testing and national exams have limited value when it comes to measuring outcomes. Literacy, for example, is the ability to read and write to function effectively in society. Evidence from UK research shows that in 2016 *"almost half of children leave primary school unable to read and write properly"*. In contrast to this, research amongst home educating families has shown how children, even including those who are not formally taught to read, develop such skills from informal learning.

In yeshiva young people learn the skills most valued by employers: respect, efficiency, collaboration, discipline, endurance, and the like. Literacy achievement in Chassidic children and young people is known to be far higher than the shocking UK illiteracy statistics quoted above.

The fundamentals and objectives of Chassidic education

Chassidic parents educate their children in a pleasant and appropriate manner, providing them with the foundation for leading successful and fulfilled lives. They educate their children to live joyful lives, to have a sense of purpose and mission, to see the beauty and wisdom in the world, to see its happiness and kindness.

The Chassidic education system nurtures friendship and

the development of character. An important aspect of this is to maintain a healthy distance from corruption and enticements. Our children are therefore protected from the internet and TV featuring obscenities, violence, and crime. This also shields them from the modern phenomenon of cyber-bullying and other forms of abuse.

Chassidic parents believe that the absence of such distractions is a fundamental factor in their children being so focused and successful with their education. They are instilled with self-discipline, which enables them to go far and achieve yet more. Consequently, the incidence of gangs, suicide and violent crimes within the Chassidic community is insignificant when compared with wider society.

The outcomes of Chassidic education

In the Chassidic community there is a directory that list over 1,000 local businesses, along with many volunteer charitable organisations, such as first-aid ambulance services, lending out medical equipment and aids for the elderly and needy, etc. There is no other community in the whole of the UK that can compare with this.

Most Chassidic young men take on jobs after getting married, aged around twenty. Generally, English and basic mathematics is an essential pre-requisite for employment. Very

few fail to find work due to a lack of these skills.

The Chassidic education system is producing excellent results. So, as the saying goes: "If it isn't broken, why fix it"?

The challenges facing secular state education

As they approach adulthood, one of the most important issues a young person faces is discovering how to be a lifelong learner whilst developing the ability to make wise choices about their future life. This enables their being well-

economics curriculum is of any use to students. Most choices of what to include in a school curriculum are subjective, and the lack of objective criteria is evidenced by the continual changes in the English National Curriculum, without proper verification of the need for change, apart from political judgements, trends, and whims.

In schools, pupils find themselves subject to overbearing and autocratic rule. Because a democratic approach is lacking, young people have few rights, little say about what they learn, and hardly any



prepared for any eventuality. The notion that the state education system can correctly predict the future course of young children, especially in today's rapidly changing business world, no longer holds water. Wisdom is the best guide to a successful career.

Higher education has similar problems of irrelevance, according to some university lecturers. As a leading economics professor wrote, only a tiny part of the university

personal liberty. They have no freedom to learn in ways that are suited to them, nor about the content that they want to learn. Consequently, their education is constrained by an imposed curriculum, rigid timetables, homework, endless tests and examinations and political idealism. One could easily question whether this is a system designed to force a square peg into a round hole. There can be no 'standard education' which is suitable for the majority of children. The

ideal education treats each child as a whole person, understands their strengths and weaknesses, and develops their individuality. It would appear that mainstream education is failing in this.

Human rights should protect citizens not empower the state

The universal rights and responsibilities of parents to best direct their children's lives as they see fit should be respected and recognised by the state, even if their values differ from the prevailing culture in that state. This is fundamental to human rights.

An unprecedented desire for centralised control of children's minds and hearts has resulted in state overreach in educational

matters. This strains familial bonds and subverts the natural right of children to have their parents as their guardians and guides. It appears to be designed to undermine the very fabric of a traditional family lifestyle.

Parents, whose lives are profoundly dedicated to overseeing their children's welfare, are best placed to care for their children. They understand, nurture, safeguard, and sacrifice themselves for their children in a way that no-one else would. Politicians and political institutions however are swayed by economic theories and social trends which are here today and gone tomorrow.

By seeking to control what every child is taught, the state is

assuming it knows better than their parents. Society is already discovering that this encourages young people to lose respect for their parents, alienating children from them. As a result, the foundational unit of every society, the family, has been undermined and is dangerously near to total collapse.

The state must respect the autonomy and freedom of ordinary families to make educational decisions in their children's best interests. For millennia, parents have rightfully, and successfully been trusted to oversee the education of their children. This time-honoured arrangement should not be altered by unjustifiable blanket surveillance and control of responsible parents.

