Home Schooling:
An emerging research agenda

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Over the last two decades there has been an increasing trend for parents to choose home schooling as an alternative to traditional education for their children. Despite this trend, however, there exists a relatively small, and certainly incomplete, research base in this area of education. Accordingly, this paper is offered as one contribution to the construction of an emerging research agenda focussing on the various social, political, pedagogic and practicable dimensions of home schooling. First, a background section is provided. This illustrates that home schooling has a long history in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Australia, that it is well established at the present time, and that it continues to grow. The paper then outlines a research agenda in relation to four main aspects of home schooling: the reasons for home schooling; the categories of home schooling parents and family characteristics; the academic achievement and social development of home schooled children; and how parents manage the home schooling process.

The Background

As an educational alternative in which parents assume primary responsibility for the education of their children (Lines, 1991), home schooling can be seen as a temporary or permanent alternative to the education which is provided by the state or by private schooling. As such, it has an acknowledged world history. On this, Holt (1983:391) states that for much of history a number of parents have always chosen to teach their own children. In many cases this was because children were unable to attend regular schools due to poverty, geographical isolation or ill-health.

In the USA, prior to the nineteenth century, it was the family's responsibility to ensure the education of its children, and most were educated by parents or tutors at home (Knowles, 1988). Indeed, home schooling was the only form of education available to children of the early

colonists. Not only was it up to parents to choose a method and curriculum in education, but it was also left to them to decide whether or not to educate their children at all.

For later colonists, private education became available, most often provided by the Church, but home schools remained the primary form of education. Private schools emerged in the homes of wealthy landowners who hired tutors to educate their children. Many of the less well-off were unable to afford this type of education and organised community schools where children could go to obtain a basic education from a teacher. With the rapid growth of the country and the increasing development of factories, parents were unable to find the time to educate their children. At the same time, educationists argued that professional teachers should take control of children's education.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, compulsory education laws were passed in the USA. Massachusetts passed the first of these in 1852. Other states followed and by 1918 all existing states had such legislation. The number of state-controlled school systems grew and a more bureaucratic and centralised system of education evolved. Education moved from a family-based concern, to the development of specialised schools, to large state systems. By the twentieth century the traditional relationship between families and schooling had been significantly altered and the role of parents in respect to education was substantially diminished (Mayberry, 1989:171).

Knowles, Marlow and Muchmore (1992) suggest some major influences over the last thirty-five years in the origins of the USA home schooling movement. During the mid-1960s there was much criticism of public education by reformers, and by the 1970s alternative forms of education were becoming popular. In 1972, the case of Wisconsin versus Yoder granted Amish parents the right to educate their children. In 1977, the first major home school network was established by John Holt. In 1979, the case of Perchemlides versus Frizzle encouraged schools to cooperate with parents (Knowles, Marlow and Muchmore, 1992). This activity led to a gradual increase in public acceptance of home schooling and, since the late 1980s, many people have turned to this schooling alternative. According to the Home School Legal Defense Association, the number of home schooled children in the USA increased from 15,000 in the early 1980s to between 750,000 and 1,000,000 in 1994 (Alex, 1994:5).

In summarising their analysis, Knowles, Marlow and Muchmore (1992) argue that there have been five phases in the home schooling movement in the USA since 1970: contention; confrontation; cooperation; consolidation; and compartmentalisation. A period of contention emerged because of the statements and practices of a specific group of educational

reformers who showed their dissatisfaction with the public school system. During the early 1970s, conflicts between home school parents and public school administrators peaked and led to a period of confrontation. The third phase, cooperation, began in the early to mid-1980s due to an easing of legal requirements, resulting largely from litigation. As a consequence, public schools began to implement policies that permitted home school students to benefit from the facilities and programs of public schools. The fourth phase, that of consolidation, involves the numerical growth of home schoolers, networking, legislative lobbying, and public acceptance. As conflicts between home schoolers and public school administrators decrease, there is rising dissent among various competing home school factions, especially those that are religious-based. This is leading to ideological fracturing and the beginnings of a compartmentalisation phase.

The development of home schooling has as long a history in the UK as it does in the USA. During the seventeenth century children, from about the age of seven, shared the world of their elders, mixing freely with them at home, work and recreation. If children were from poor peasant families, they were often at work in the fields at that age; bird scaring, sheep-minding and stone-clearing. Young children from more affluent families were sometimes boarded away from home, the boys at grammar schools and the girls at private girls' schools. For the majority, however, going to school was just not possible:

> Grinding poverty must have denied practically all schooling to the great mass of the rural population living on or near the subsistent level as servants, labourers, cottagers and paupers. They could neither afford school fees nor forgo their children's earnings or labour ... As from time immemorial, most children probably received whatever education they had informally, at their mother's knee, playing together in the village street and watching and imitating their elders at or about the cottage and the fields (Lawson & Silver, 1978:111).

A variety of schools developed in the next century, largely through private and religious enterprise. The 1870 Act brought some order to this development through allowing for the support of two types of schools: the council or provided school, which was established and supported partly by the local authorities; and the voluntary or non-provided schools, most of which were operated by religious groups. To a great extent, the situation remained thus until the 1960s and 1970s, when radical groups of philosophers, historians, psychologists, scientists and sociologists began to campaign for educational reform. In particular, educationists such as John Holt, started to question the quality of education in schools and seriously raised again the possibilities of home schooling.

In the early 1970s, opponents of compulsory schooling began to examine seriously the implication of section 36 of *The 1944 Education Act*:

> It shall be the duty of the parent of every child of compulsory school age to cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability, and aptitude, either by regular attendance at school *or otherwise*. [author's emphasis]

In 1977, a self-help organisation called 'Education Otherwise' was established to advise and support families who had already started educating their own children or who were contemplating doing so as an alternative to conventional schooling. The aim of this organisation was to establish the right of parents to choose the 'otherwise' option and 'to shift the burden of proof from parents having to demonstrate that the education they were providing was "efficient" to LEAs having to demonstrate that it was not' (Wright, 1989:84). In the period 1977 to 1981, the number of known home schooling families in the UK increased from a few dozen to a few hundred and is still continuing to grow. By 1994, rough estimates put the number of UK families educating their children outside of the recognised schooling system at about 10,000 (Meighan, 1995).

The first schools in Australia were home schools which served a range of purposes (Hunter, 1990). For many families home schooling was the most socially desirable form of education. Often there was no choice other than to school children at home; distance, isolation or economic difficulties made it impossible to send them to schools. Other families chose home schooling as their preferred form of education, arguing that children who were taught at home could be protected from influences external to the family and contrary to its values.

There were important changes to education when the Federation of Australian States was established in 1901:

> A greater emphasis was placed on social democracy and the quality of education. The aim was to provide a State controlled system of schooling to allow children from all social and economic backgrounds to climb the ladder from primary to secondary to tertiary study (Brosnan, 1991:9).

Over the next fifteen years, as part of a general movement for national improvement, a wide range of reforms improved the quantity and quality of education throughout Australia. These reforms provided a greater equality of opportunity in education and a system was established to link primary, secondary and post-secondary institutions. Furthermore, an expanding democracy gave children from lower-class and lower middle-class

families much greater opportunity to rise socially by progressing through the educational system (Barcan, 1980:203).

Australia's entry into World War I produced some immediate changes in education. Schools experienced not only a shortage of teachers as many volunteered for military service, but also a shortage of paper and writing books. Once again, some parents had to return to teaching their children at home. The Depression also had an impact. In the six Australian States the economic crisis of 1929 to 1937 led to a heavy reduction of teachers' salaries. In some States teachers' colleges were closed and high school fees were reintroduced. With the passing of the Depression, schooling became the normal mode of formal education for the vast majority of Australian children.

Over the last twenty-five years, conventional or traditional schools have been challenged as never before. Many parents are dissatisfied with the education their children are receiving and feel that the schools of today are not suitable for achieving educational goals. Most areas of education, including curricula, assessment, school structure and teaching methods, have been re-examined at some stage, and have been followed by criticisms and suggestions for change. Some parents are also starting to question institutionalised schooling and are turning to alternatives, such as home schooling. Every state now allows for home schooling to take place through specific sections of their respective Education Acts. In 1990 it was estimated that over 500 children were involved in a home schooling program throughout, with a 25 per cent annual increase in enrolments maintained over the previous three years (Hunter, 1990). Since then there has been a substantial increase in this national figure, which is currently estimated to be about 6,000. Despite this trend, the research base on this aspect of education is neither comprehensive nor complete.

An Emerging Research Agenda for Home Schooling

As the rate of family involvement in home schooling escalates world wide, there is a clear need to conceptualise an extensive research agenda in this field of education. There are at least four major domains of research into aspects of home schooling: the reasons for home schooling; the categories of home schooling parents and family characteristics; the academic achievement and social development of home schooled children; and the process by which home schooling parents go about schooling. Each domain opens up possibilities for posing specific research questions. An outline of each research domain, and the sets of research questions they contribute to an emerging research agenda for home schooling, are now presented.

Reasons for home schooling

The existing and limited research literature into reasons why parents choose home schooling reveals nine major reasons:

(1) Dissatisfaction with traditional schools;
(2) Religious motives;
(3) The claim that schools cannot provide children with the personal interest and attention they can get from their family;
(4) Parental rights and responsibility over government regulations;
(5) Protection from unwanted influences;
(6) Negative schooling experiences;
(7) Maintenance of the family unit;
(8) Views on child development; and New Age influences.

At the same time, many home schoolers choose to educate their own children not for one particular reason, but for a combination of reasons. Nevertheless, in order to conceptualise a structured research agenda, it is helpful to consider the research base for each reason separately. In this regard, a set of specific questions is now posed for each area of investigation.

Dissatisfaction with traditional schools

Home schoolers may be dissatisfied with conventional schools for a variety of reasons. A research base is beginning to emerge which isolates a number of specific issues, including the popular beliefs of home schoolers that schools have a forced curriculum, that disagreeable beliefs and values are placed on all the children, that peer pressure is prevalent, that schools are too competitive and that they cannot provide what children need. Ella (1993) argues that there are parents who consider that all children are forced to learn a standard curriculum which does not cater for the specific and individual needs of children: 'Nowadays in schools guidance has become absolute control and the pupil has no liberty in dealing with the curriculum forced on him. He must like it or lump it' (p.72). Home schoolers believe that they can offer an individualised curriculum to their children, addressing their educational needs and interests.

There are also parents who consider that pupils at school are seen as vessels to be filled instead of as people who are able to nourish themselves. 'Each child is taught to write in the same way, to read in the same way and to take in the same facts' (Ella, 1993:71). This view underpins Holt's (1981) argument that children are capable of learning 'all by themselves' without well-intentioned adult interference. Based on his own observations of children learning and not learning in real-life situations, he purports that children really want to learn and that they will learn what they need to know if left entirely to themselves. Mason's (1989) position is also

relevant in this regard. He believes children have an inbuilt ability to learn and grow on their own but that they also need parental guidance. He argues that nature is the best teacher of many lessons and that children need a rich background of real-world experiences for their education to make sense.

According to Alex (1994), some parents are not happy with the political or cultural values they find in traditional schools. The negative effects of peer pressure in many public schools are motives for parents to educate their children at home. They believe that schools are either unable to control, or do not have the facilities to monitor, peer pressure. Home schooling parents can protect their children from peer pressure whereas schools cannot.

Hunter (1990) states that another factor is the perception that in schools there is an undue emphasis on competition. Nearly all classrooms in conventional schools are seen as highly competitive and it is suggested that 'in a home school children can better and more easily focus attention on achieving goals rather than on trying to be better than the rest or worrying about being a loser' (p.194). Many home schoolers feel that schools just cannot provide what children need to progress and see them as being doomed to failure.

Beirne and Adams (1992) note that home school parents believe they can provide a better academic grounding than conventional schools because of the quality, quantity and type of education they provide. Moore (1984) argues that home schoolers prefer their option to conventional schooling because of the perceived non-performance of the classroom school in preserving educational and behavioural standards. Some believe that classroom schools are unable to provide children with what they need, such as individualised instruction with a specific program that caters for a child's own learning needs.

Arising out of the foregoing, the following research questions are posed with regard to the issue of home schoolers' dissatisfaction with traditional schools.

(1) What is the level of parental dissatisfaction with schools?
(2) What is the relationship between parental dissatisfaction with schools and choice of home schooling?
(3) To what extent is the curriculum a factor in choosing to home school?
(4) Is the freedom to offer an individualised curriculum a factor in choosing to home school?
(5) To what extent are political and cultural beliefs and values factors in choosing to home school?
(6) To what extent is peer pressure a factor in choosing to home school?
(8) To what extent is competition a factor in choosing to home school?

Religious motives

A large number of parents home school their children for religious reasons. Some 'Fundamental Christian' parents feel that the state system of education is not the best method of bringing up a child and look to home schooling as a legal alternative if they cannot locate a suitable religious school. Divoky (1983) reports the probability that some home schoolers are religious fundamentalists who believe that the public schools fail to teach religious and spiritual tenets.

Studies on religious groups of home schoolers undertaken in the USA suggest that 'religious home school parents are primarily concerned with what they perceive as a family right, rather than a state right, to take charge of the education of their children' (Mayberry, 1989:12). These families also believe it is their duty to pass on particular religious beliefs and values to their children. In addition, they oppose the secular orientation of public education, including secular humanism, values clarification, the teaching of evolution, and the anti-religious atmosphere of public schools.

The research suggests that, through home schooling, Fundamental Christian parents are able to reproduce their way of life by controlling the content of their children's education. Mayberry (1989) reports that the 'typical' religious home school family see their responsibility to educate their children as essential as feeding, clothing and providing for them, and will not delegate that responsibility to the school system.

The following research questions suggest themselves in relation to the role of religious factors in choosing to home school.

(1) To what extent·are religious beliefs factors in choosing to home school?

(2) To what extent are parents dissatisfied with the secular orientation of government schools?

(3) To what extent are home school families dissatisfied with religious schools?

Schools cannot provide children with the personal interest and attention they can get from their families

For home schoolers, parental interest in participating in the education of their children is another very important motive for teaching their children at home. Beirne and Adams' (1992) research indicates that home school parents enjoy being with their children and helping them; they have observed their children from birth, growing and learning; and they have the utmost confidence in the integrity of their children's learning and their own. ability, as parents, to facilitate that learning. They are aware that their children are intelligent, resourceful, skilful, adaptive, inventive and

competent. Parents feel that they are able to extend and develop these skills without sending their children to schools.

In relation to the foregoing, the following research questions emerge for investigation.

(1) To what extent are personal interest and attention factors in choosing to home school?

(2) Do home school parents believe that personal attention is more important than the acquisition of academic knowledge?

(3) Do home school parents feel sufficiently able to facilitate their children's learning?

(4) What is the relationship between choice to home school and children's learning?

Parental rights and responsibility over government regulation

According to Hunter (1990), many families believe that educating their children at home is their constitutional right. He states:

> The compulsory education system has all but erased parental involvement in education. The important issues such as values, morals, and social actions, are hauled out of reach of parents ... home schoolers have to act like outlaws because of a government more concerned with persecution that protection (p.195).

Holt (1981) suggests three reasons for keeping children out of conventional schools. Parents think that:

> raising their children is their business not the government's; they enjoy being with their children and watching and helping them learn, and don't want to give that up to others; they want to keep them from being hurt, mentally, physically, and spiritually (p.13).

Beirne and Adams (1992) also support the view that home school parents believe that their children are family business and not the government's, especially when parents are prepared to take full responsibility for their children and educate them to 'superior' standards. This view gives rise to the following research questions regarding parental rights and responsibilities in the education of children.

(1) To what extent are parents dissatisfied with the level of governmental control of the education system?

(2) What is the relationship between parental involvement in government education and choice to home school?

(3) What power and influence does the education system exert on parental choice to home school?

Protection from unwanted influences

Home school parents perceive that there are many aspects of traditional schools that expose children to negative influences. Hunter (1990) notes that some families take up home schooling to protect their children from negative aspects such as cheating, stealing, drugs, violence and unwanted sexual behaviour; they fear their children will be 'mentally, socially, physically or spiritually harmed within a state-sponsored or supervised school environment' (p.195). Beirne and Adams (1992) have also found that home school parents perceive life for school children as less than ideal, because they believe schools must conform to parameters as a result of fiscal and administrative limitations. According to Mayberry (1988), religious groups particularly see home schooling both as 'a means to protect their children from these unwanted secular ideologies and as a means to ensure that their children are raised with a belief in the authority of the scriptures' (p.8). The following set of research questions are prompted by the foregoing:

(1) To what extent is protection from unwanted influences a factor in choosing to home school?

(2) What do parents believe are the 'negative influences' associated with public schools?

(3) Do home school parents feel sufficiently able to protect their children from the 'negative influences' associated with public schools?

Negative schooling experiences

Research into negative schooling experiences which influence home schoolers falls into two categories: experiences of parents; and experiences of children. With regard to the former, some parents turn to home schooling in order to protect the children from the negative experiences that they themselves experienced. Mayberry (1989) suggests that through home schooling parents are able to relive a new, more positive schooling experience.

Personal past schooling experience has a bearing on why many parents are choosing the home schooling option. On the other hand, poor experiences of schooling on the part of the children who are now being home schooled can also be influential. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some parents have turned to home schooling because their children were desperately unhappy at school, or achieving little, or both.

Several research questions concerning the influence of negative schooling experiences as a reason for choosing home schooling suggest themselves:

(1) To what extent are the negative schooling experiences of parents a factor in families choosing to home school?

(2) What are the negative factors in the experiences of parents who choose to home school their children?

(3) To what extent are the negative schooling experiences of children a factor in families choosing to home school?

Maintenance of the family unit

Home schooling allows the parent-child relationship to be extended as long as possible and is yet another motive for families to choose this option. On this, Mahan & Ware (1987) found that 'home schooling parents want their children to be family-socialised and desire their lives and the lives of their children to be home-centred rather than revolving around school schedules and activities' (p.3). In addition, Mayberry (1989) states that home school parents also see the time they spend with their children as a valuable benefit of home teaching.

In a general sense, according to Mayberry (1989), home schooling represents a commitment made by families to regain control over one aspect of life that is fundamental to the maintenance of the family unit, namely, the education of children. Similarly, Hunter (1994) states that the family 'togetherness' that takes place in the home environment can 'enhance social development, based on the assertion that a family setting is superior to a mass peer grouping for the social development of love, security, discipline, interdependence and responsibility' (p.29). Beirne and Adams (1992) also found that home schooling offers a totally positive endeavour with the whole family growing and learning together and it is a commitment to the family as a basic unit of society. These findings from exploratory studies generate the following set of research questions.

(1) To what extent does home schooling contribute to maintenance of the family unit?

(2) To what extent is the parent-child relationship a factor in choosing to home school?

(3) To what extent are parents dissatisfied with the social development of children at public schools?

(4) In what ways does home schooling enhance the social development of children?

Views on child development

Views on child development are a further motivation for home schooling. Some parents do not send their children to school because they believe they

are not ready for the type of formal instruction that takes place in conventional schools. Indeed, Holt (1981) went so far as to argue that there are two increasingly popular ways of looking at children:

> seeing them as monsters of evil who must be beaten into submission, or as little two-legged walking computers whom we can program into genius, it is hard to know which is worse (p.102).

His work suggests that the programmed approach to learning in conventional schools cannot suit every child; each is unique and has different learning requirements. Such a view prompts the following research questions:

(1) To what extent are parents involved in making decisions about what should be taught, and how it should be taught, in schools?

(2) To what extent are parents dissatisfied with what should be taught, and how it should be taught, in schools?

(3) To what extent does home schooling provide individualised learning for children?

(4) Do home schooling parents feel sufficiently able to provide individualised learning for their children?

New Age thinking

Several home schooling families maintain an alternative or New Age world view and lifestyle and so home school their children in order to be able to teach them a set of values and beliefs congruent with New Age philosophy (Mayberry, 1980). Both religious groups and New Age groups see home schooling as a way to reinforce a way of life and beliefs, albeit different ones. According to Mayberry (1989), New Age families are concerned with 'metaphysical philosophies that reject the supremacy of God and uphold the supremacy of humanity; the ultimate source of authority lies not with God but within each individual' (p.175). Two research questions stem from their New Age thinking:

(1) To what extent are New Age lifestyle and beliefs factors in choosing to home school?

(2) To what extent are New Age parents dissatisfied with the philosophy of government schools?

Categories of Home Schooling Parents and Family Characteristics

The response to the idea of home schooling is often that of a political stance, it being assumed that home schooling families must be radical, de-schoolers or anti-establishment. There is also a general feeling that home

schooling is strange and abnormal. On this, Meighan (1984) points out that the 'analysis of the characteristics of the membership expose this view of home educators as wildly inaccurate' (p.166). On analysing the many different reasons parents choose home schooling as an educational alternative for their children, studies identify four general categories of home school families: religious, New Age, socio-relational, and academic.

According to Mayberry (1988), religious and 'New Age' families home school their children for ideological reasons. By home schooling they are able to control the content of the education they provide for their children. Religious home schoolers are 'strongly committed to Judaio-Christian principles and believe that, as parents, they are responsible to cultivate orthodox Christian values in their children' (p.8). Religious groups believe that through this type of education they can protect their children from certain aspects of the curriculum, such as evolution, sex education and moral relativism. Divoky (1983) also reports that many religious groups are unhappy with the failure of the public schools to teach religious and spiritual tenets.

New Age families, defined earlier as those who believe in metaphysical philosophies rejecting the supremacy of God, are often also ideologically committed to home schooling but have different views to those of religious home schoolers. Mayberry (1988) found that New Age home schoolers turn away from public schools because they do not reinforce New Age values and philosophy. Home schooling for this group enables them to provide experiences that reinforce a way of life and a set of beliefs in the same way as religious groups. For example, New Age home schoolers may teach reincarnation and the Law of Karma.

Socio-relational and academic home schoolers are primarily concerned with the pedagogical environment in public schools. They believe that the social and developmental benefits children should receive from a good education can best be provided at home. Gustavsen (1981) suggests that the socio-relational factors that influence the former group to home school are their concerns for moral health, character development, and a desire for closer parent-child relationships. The negative effects of peer pressure and an emphasis on competition in the public and private schools are common factors influencing parents to home school their children. In addition, home schoolers want their children to be family-socialised and desire their own lives and the lives of their children to be home-centred rather than revolve around school timetables and activities.

Mayberry (1988) found that academic home schoolers are mainly influenced by academic success and opt for home schooling for pedagogical reasons. They are dissatisfied with the academic standards and programs of public schools and believe that one-on-one instruction is necessary to

enable children to work at their own pace and to suit individual learning needs.

Other researchers, such as Gustavsen (1981), Bliss (1989), Gladin (1987) and Ray (1989), have also investigated the characteristics of home school families. The findings suggest that home schoolers have diverse demographic characteristics but, in the USA at least, vary little from norms on a range of variables, including parental levels of education, parental income, area of residence, frequency of church attendance, and family size. The following research questions relate to the characteristics of home schooling families:

   (1) In what ways can home schooling families be categorised?
   (2) What are the characteristics of the families in each category?
   (3) What are the charaterististics of the parents of home schooling families?
   (4) What are the charaterististics of the children of home schooling families?
   (5) What are the charaterististics of the learning programs in home school situations?

Academic Achievement and the Social Development of Home Schooled Children

Student achievement and socialisation are two further questions relating to home schooling. Overall, the evidence is scarce on both issues. Frost (1988) has investigated some aspects of academic achievement in home schooling in the USA and concludes that home schooled children are not academically disadvantaged. Calvery (1992) found that the average Arkansas home schooled student achieved higher academic standards than children educated at public schools. According to Lines (1987), scattered testing data suggests that successes are more numerous than failures in home schools. Alaska, which has tested home schooled children for many years, finds that they perform above average on nationally standardised tests (p.513). In summary, Meighan (1995) states that 'the academic excellence of home schooled children has been repeatedly demonstrated in research in the USA' (p.278).

Meighan (1995) believes that few people dwell on the academic issue of home schooling; rather, it is the social education that they question. According to Lines (1987), however, the evidence for the social development of home schooled children is even more scarce than that for academic achievement. What does exist, suggests superior development. Ray (1989) reported on a US study that measured factors associated with social development in home schoolers and concluded that home schooled children were in no way socially disadvantaged or deprived. Webb's (1989) UK study

of social characteristics of home schoolers found that home schooled children showed particular positive social characteristics in teenage and adult life. Taylor (1986a, 1986b) investigated the self-concept of home schooled children in the USA and found that the self concept amongst a cohort of home school students was significantly higher than that of public school students. Delahooke (1986) compared privately schooled children and home schooled nine year-olds and found significant differences in measures of social adjustment, but not in those of a psycho-social nature.

Overall, the studies mentioned in this section do not constitute a major corpus of research. Accordingly, a range of research questions can be posed in relation to the academic achievement and social development of home schooled children. They include the following:

(1) What is the relationship between home schooling and academic achievement?

(2) What are the differences in academic achievement between home schooled and public schooled children?

(3) What features of the home schooling situation are influential in promoting or inhibiting academic achievement?

(4) What is the relationship between home schooling and social development?

(5) What are the differences in social development between home schooled children and those who attend public schools?

(6) What features of the home schooling situation are influential in promoting or inhibiting social development?

How Parents Manage the Process of Home Schooling

How parents manage the process of home schooling is an area of study which has received scant attention to date. According to Crossley (1992), since most home school parents come from a schooling background, they imagine that home schooling is just like conventional schooling, except that they are in the home giving instruction directed at the children's individual level and with a lot more time for the children. Consequently, they structure the day according to school hours. A room is used as a 'classroom' and the children work from textbooks. Examining such practices, however, Beirne and Adams (1992) found that many parents within their first year of schooling suffer 'Home School Burn Out'. They then start to organise a certain number of 'off' weeks. Crossley (1992) notes that it is during this time that parents notice that their children's natural creativity surfaces and that they learn more.

Both Crossley (1992) and Arthur (1992) suggest that as parents become more experienced at home schooling they start to experiment with different

approaches. For example, they may start off with a set timetable and a set room for learning, but over time they do away with these rigid school-like structures and let learning take place when and where they feel it is working. They prefer to let their children learn when they are ready and when it is relevant to introduce new concepts. Arthur (1992) suggests that parents do not want their children to see education as separate to their lives, but as a means to helping them understand the world in which they live.

Older home schooled children tend to take a significant amount of responsibility for their own education. This not only enables them to pursue their own areas of interest but is also useful where parents have a limited ability or knowledge in certain areas. According to Crossley (1992), many parents decide to return their children to school when they reach secondary school age because they feel they no longer have adequate skills or expertise to facilitate their children's learning. Other parents hire tutors to provide help with particular subjects. Ray (1988) noted that 70 per cent of home schooled children in the USA were between nine and twelve years of age. Cizek (1993:10), in 1993, argued for a research agenda that investigates what home educators actually do. Such studies, he contended, might examine the teaching strategies used by the home educators, the quality and effectiveness of home instruction, the role that each of the parents actually plays in home education. This agenda prompts a further set of questions, concerning how parents manage the home schooling process:

    (1) How do parents manage the home schooling process?
    (2) What pedagogical strategies do parents use in the home schooling process?
    (3) How is the home schooling time structure organised?
    (4) How is the home schooling curriculum devised and implemented?
    (5) How does a home schooling program change over time?

Conclusion

Throughout much of the world, public education has traditionally been the preserve of centralised bureaucracies, with parental involvement limited to activities such as fund-raising, providing school equipment and serving on various auxiliary bodies. Since the 1970s, however, parents have increasingly expressed dissatisfaction with the education their children receive. The research literature has kept pace with some of the associated developments, including the increase in parental involvement in mainstream 'public' and 'private' schools, and the emergence of such alternative 'systems' as Fundamental Christian schooling. There has not, however, been a corresponding degree of research on those parents who have opted for home schooling. The research agenda suggested in this paper addresses this

situation by focussing attention on the wide variety of research questions which need to be examined. There is every indication that home schooling will generate a vibrant research field in the next decade if growing public dissatisfaction with government schooling intensifies.

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