



**International Center for
Home Education Research**



ICHER Home Education Research Conference 2021

9 Sessions | Sept 3 - October 8
Online & accessible around the world

Conference Proceedings

Edited by: Amber J. Fensham-Smith and Christine Brabant, with contributions from Seiya Miyaguchi and other participants

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Program Overview

Week 1: Discussing the Challenges

Workshops (90 min each) on the following topics:

Monday, Sept 13 | Research Ethics and Researcher Roles

Chair: Christine Brabant

- How do home education (HEd) researchers distinguish scientific research from advocacy?
- How to be HEd practitioner and researcher at the same time?
- How do HEd researchers deal with the media, HEd advocates or policy makers?
- What does it mean to be the HEd researcher among colleagues in an academic institution?

Wednesday, Sept 15 | Literature and State of Research:

Chair: Robert Kunzman

- What is particular about navigating HEd research literature?
- Which research questions are well covered, which ones are neglected?

Friday, Sept 17 | Research Methods and Fieldwork:

Chairs: Cheryl Fields-Smith & Thomas Spiegler

- What are the obstacles, challenges and methodological difficulties?
- What is particular about fieldwork in HEd research?
- How to find the right method for my research question?

Week 2: Communicating Results

Live Q&As with the presenters (90 min each) about their pre-recorded video-presentations:

Monday, Sept 20 | Home Education in International and Intercultural Comparison:

- I. **Comparing home education in French-speaking territories: Who? Why? How?**
Christine Brabant, Université de Montréal (Canada)
- II. **Homeschooling for a Chronically Absent Student: Re-examining Current and Proposed Policies in Japan and the United States**
Seiya Miyaguchi, University of Tokyo/Indiana University Bloomington (Japan/US)
- III. **Bicultural Youth and Maternal Identities: Perspectives of American Expatriates Homeschooling in France.**
Erin Tremblay Ponnou-Delaffon, Illinois State University (US)
- IV. **The Comparative Study on the Characteristics of Homeschooling in Asia in term of Law, Tradition and Habitus**
DeokHee Seo, Chosun University (Republic of Korea)

Wednesday, Sept 22 | Home Education in Practice:

- I. **Hybrid Homeschools: Definitions, Regulations, and Responses to COVID-19**
Eric Wearne; Kennesaw State University (US)
- II. **A typology of contemporary homeschool arrangements: An analysis of three waves of nationally representative data**
Albert Cheng, University of Arkansas; Daniel Hamlin, University of Oklahoma (US)
- III. **Homeschooling the gifted: A Chilean experience**
María Leonor Conejeros-Solar, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (Chile)
- IV. **STEM Educational Activities and The Role of The Parent in The Home Education of High School Students**
Courtney Gann, Amridge University (US)
- V. **Remote Home-based Education as a new Phenomenon in the Time of the Covid-19 Pandemic: The Experience of Czech Families**
Yvona Kostecká, Tereza Komárková, Veronika Novotná, Faculty of Arts, Charles University (Czech Republic)
- VI. **Irreconcilable Differences: A grounded theory study of regulatory noncompliance by home educators in Australia**
Selena Guest, The Australian National University (Australia)

Friday, Sept 24 | Home Education within a Schooled Society

- I. **Emotional and behavioral aspects in homeschooling – Comparative research among matched groups of homeschoolers and school-going children**
Oz Guterman; Ari Neuman; Western Galilee Academic College (Israel)
- II. **Formerly Homeschooled Young Adults in Czechia: First Generation Students' Reflections on Their Socialization**
Andrea Beláňová, Charles University (Czech Rep)
- III. **The social inclusion of homeschoolers in Szeklerland, Romania**
Kinga Magdolna Mandel, Eötvös Lóránd University, (Hungary)
- IV. **Work and Employment: Experiences of Previously Home Educated Individuals**
Rachael Barrow, Lancaster University (UK)
- V. **Unschooling Mothers' Relationships to the State. A Case Study In France**
Philippe Bongrand and Vanille Louis, Université de Cergy-Pontoise (France)

Week 3: Networking and Collaborating

Workshops (90 min each) which address the following groups of field actors:

Monday, Oct 4 | Children

Facilitator: Christine Brabant

Guest field actors:

Dr. Chelsea McCracken, Coalition for Responsible Home Education
Gaia Chagnon, Quebec Association for Home-Based Education
Dr. Dannielle Davis, Saint Louis University's School of Education

Wednesday, Oct 6 | Parents

Facilitator: Cheryl F. Smith

Guest field actors:

Cyrielle Havard-Bourdais, Félicia
KyungHwan Lim; ByungHo Hyun; HyungTae Kim (Republic of Korea)
Dr. Khadijah Ali-Coleman, Black Family Homeschool Educators and Scholars

Friday, Oct 8 | Supervisors

Facilitator: Christine Brabant

Guest field actors:

LaNissir James, Calvary Gospel Home Educators and HSLDA, Maryland, USA
Michele Luchs, Quebec Ministry of Education, Canada
Samantha Eddis, Eddis Tutorials, Arizona, USA

Foreword

The International Center for Home Education Research (ICHER) exists to provide expert information and analysis regarding homeschooling research and to facilitate networking among researchers studying home-based learning/home education (HEd). ICHER aims to support high quality research in this field, and to provide a space for open and rigorous discussion of the results.

In September-October 2021, we ran our first international online conference. Amid a global pandemic, board members intended to use this timely opportunity to fulfill ICHER's goals by offering a platform for HEd researchers to disseminate their work and to extend existing networks, nationally and internationally. To this end, we invited researchers affiliated with a higher education institution, among those currently doing research and publishing academic work on HEd. Graduate students were also welcome. In order to promote inclusion and participation across the world, the conference took place in the form of 90-minute live interactive sessions via visioconference, co-ordinated across multiple time zones.

In total, forty-one (41) invited researchers from around the world came together to participate in and contribute to this scientific event on HEd research: 15 from Europe, 13 from North America, 8 from Oceania, 4 from Asia and 2 from South America. Sixteen of them presented their research work. In addition, nine field actors shared their experience, preoccupations and suggestions for future research. Hence, our first international conference was a great success.

The sessions made use of both live discussions and pre-recorded presentations to promote collaborative discussion and audience engagement. Each conference week was dedicated to addressing pressing and timely themes connected to the practical, ethical, and theoretical implications of doing and disseminating HEd research.

The proceedings have been compiled with intention of capturing and representing a snapshot of the rich discussions that took place throughout the conference. They are divided into three key sections including: 1) the challenges of researching HEd, 2) dissemination of key findings linked to individual researcher projects and 3) networking and learning from the direct experiences of field actors.

For general queries or further information regarding the ICHER 2021 conference proceedings, please contact us [here](#).

With thanks,

ICHER conference organisers,

Christine Brabant, University of Montreal, Canada

Audrey Lachance, University of Montreal, Canada

Cheryl A. Fields Smith, University of Georgia, United States of America

Thomas Spiegler, Friedensau University, Germany

PART 1. Discussing the Challenges

The first week of the conference aimed to shed light on the crucial questions we face on our journey towards research findings. Part 1 was comprised of three interactive workshops covering the following themes:

- 1) Research ethics and researcher roles (chair: Christine Brabant);
- 2) Literature and state of research (chair: Robert Kunzman);
- 3) Research methods and fieldwork (chair: Cheryl Fields-Smith & Thomas Spiegler).

Across the sessions, experienced HEd researchers chairing the sessions introduced key questions and offered insight into their experiences and knowledge regarding each workshop theme. Then, presenters and participants discussed the practical, ethical, and theoretical challenges and opportunities of conducting research in this field. Each workshop focused on key aspects of the research process while providing space to share questions, experiences, and best practice ideas. Contributions from new researchers in the field (masters or doctoral students) were warmly welcomed.

1. Research Ethics and Researcher Roles

Participants in this workshop explored the following questions:

- I. How do HEd researchers distinguish scientific research from advocacy?
- II. How to be a HEd practitioner and a researcher at the same time?
- III. How do HEd researchers deal with the media, HEd advocates or policy makers?
- IV. What does it mean to be the HEd researcher among colleagues in an academic institution?

Key areas discussed

Literature searching

Participants discussed the tensions associated with navigating multiple forms of literature and markers of 'quality', including peer review and the ways in which different stakeholders interpret what counts as evidence, including empirical research alongside self-published biographies.

What counts as evidence?

In the feedback from breakout rooms, participants highlighted the ways in which they 'scanned' papers and/or journal articles to 'check' methodologies and the degree to which there was congruence between the reported research aims, methodology chosen and the reported outcomes and interpretation. While such methods of identifying the difference between scientific research and advocacy was important, discussions also highlighted the impact of advocacy-based literature within networks and communities in this arena.

Balancing multiple roles:

Several participants shared their experiences of navigating the dual role of acting as a researcher (affiliated to a university) in addition to that of practitioner. Methodologically, the insider-outsider posture reveals advantages and disadvantages of each experience/perspective.

The opportunities for accessing communities deemed hard to reach and the advantages of designing research so that it produces a tangible impact within and outside of the academy via this dual role was highlighted. This also presented challenges in situations where advocacy groups wanted the research outcomes to shape/influence a particular goal. Participants emphasized the importance of ongoing self-reflection throughout the research process”.

Collaborations

Equally, when navigating dual identities and stakeholder relationships, some dual role (practitioner/researcher) delegates narrated their difficulties in bridging understandings between supervisors or colleagues who were not families with HEd. This was heightened during national lockdowns across the world, where in many contexts, HEd was interpreted in the media and by official stakeholders as akin to online learning at home (pandemic schooling/lock down learning).

Feedback from the breakout rooms reiterated the importance of igniting and maintaining new and existing shared and collaborative spaces and opportunities to share and disseminate research with an international audience.

Additionally, it was apparent in some comments that balancing the additional roles (e.g. previously homeschooled, homeschooling parent, personal relationships, government advisor, academic researcher, etc.) add tensions and pressure to ‘pick a side’. This in turn sometimes presented dilemmas connected to how to position oneself and to recruit participants for empirical research projects.

Recognition as a HEd scholar

The discussions surrounding identities, roles and positions surfaced the perception that many HEd researchers felt excluded or discriminated against in their university, e.g. less supported by their research supervisors, antagonized, especially in faculties of education (including teacher training education). Some reported a stronger sense of social inclusion in sociology and childhood and youth studies departments. Connected to this, it was felt that the legitimacy of HEd as an object of research is being challenged by colleagues and by peer-reviewers. Following on from this, a question was raised as to whether there was a need for a new HEd journal, aligned to the central aims of ICHER.

Quotes from the chat

- *I understand the feeling of others perceiving we don't like school or are against it. In my first year upgrade for my thesis my reviewer very much alienated me for implying I had this stance.*
- *Had a similar experience with my main PhD supervisor*
- *That's difficult I think being your supervisor - they are meant to be supporting you! It's tough I think with this topic of research.*
- *I had similar issues when gaining access for my fieldwork. I was met with resistance as a researcher (which required a neutral position) but when I declared I was home educated (and found it to be a brilliant process) they opened up to me more.*

- *There can be (understandably) fear about feeling 'misrepresented' and I will never be an 'insider'- always on the periphery because I was not home educated, nor am I a home-educator, I imagine that there are lots of multi-faceted challenges of negotiating the researcher/home educated adult identity.*
- *The insider/outsider and positionality issues are pertinent/multi-faceted in this arena*
- *I got the sense of the misrepresentation issue quite frequently. I have been working on including a positionality section in my methodology.*
- *There is a fine line between advocacy and research, because there is concern that the results would appear either to be critical of the school system or restrict home educators by new policy implications. Managing stakeholders very carefully is important. Freedoms/guidelines on registration vary from state to state.*

2. Literature and State of Research

Participants in this interactive 90-minute workshop explored the following questions:

- I. What is particular about navigating HEd research literature?
- II. Which research questions are well covered, which ones are neglected?

Key areas discussed:

Underrepresented groups, communities and practices

In the discussions and observations raised by participants who attended this workshop, the need to research and represent the experiences of minoritized groups who pursue HEd, for example, in response to racism - among other interlinked push and pull factors - was raised. Researchers from the US and UK both emphasised how the experiences of Black homeschoolers and Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities were not foregrounded strongly enough in international literature base. Equally, it was felt that there would be benefit in identifying opportunities to share and collaborate with others who are researching home education in the global south in a bid to increase and develop representation. While the pedagogies and practices used in home education are diverse, it was voiced that some, like hybrid or flexi-schooling, were more challenging to research, owed to their sporadic nature and sequence. There is a need to bolster research on different forms and types of HEd pedagogy and practice.

Parental motivations, a saturated topic

While literature on motivations seemed to be an area that researchers in Belgium, USA and the UK for instance felt was saturated (particularly among white and/or groups of higher socio-economic status), the cultural attitudes and conceptual framing of HEd as a means of resistance among minority groups was reported to be under-explored.

Home educated young people's experiences and outcomes

In relation to research on 'outcomes', some participants, approaching home education from a sociological lens, highlighted that methodologies seeking to make direct comparisons between the hard outcomes (e.g. examinations, degrees, etc.) of 'schooled' and 'home educated' children were increasingly challenging, given that home education itself is sometimes a temporary and/or blended or hybrid education alternative (e.g. flexi-schooling). The opportunities to explore longitudinal hard and 'soft' outcomes and the experiences of

home educated young people and adults as they transition through employment and/or start their own families is an area that warrants further research.

Quotes from the chat

- *We need a new journal with an international and comparative focus.*

3. Research Methods and Fieldwork

Participants in this interactive 90-minute workshop explored the following questions:

- I. What are the obstacles, challenges and methodological difficulties?
- II. What is particular about fieldwork in HEd research?
- III. How to find the right method for my research question?

Key areas discussed:

Participatory methodologies

An area that is overlooked in HEd studies is the extent to which children and young people themselves can co-design the research that they are invited to participate in. It was noted that in many studies wherein authors have reported to have captured the views and experiences of families, do not adequately 'give voice' to young people in the representation and/or interpretation of their data, but instead either implicitly or explicitly prioritise the voices and experiences of parents. This was described as problematic when considering the rights of children and young people to be represented and heard. Participants highlighted the need for research that is designed to capture, empower, and reflect the voices of HEd children and young people, particularly as they transition towards their own independent adult lives.

Integrity and rigour

It was perceived that as literature has grown over the past decade, studies themselves are evolving and improving based on academic integrity, rigour, and validity, although two key limitations were noted. Firstly, the limitations of self-selected and unrepresentative small scale sampling designs are an ongoing challenge for research in this field. This typically leads to confirmatory and/or self-selection bias. Secondly, participants noted that more needed to be done to promote a culture of critical reflection, transparency, and a willingness to accept and receive constructive criticism from peers.

Positionality, trust, and access

The challenges and opportunities of balancing roles as both an insider and outsider within and across different HEd communities was discussed. Participants highlighted the importance of building authentic and ethical researcher conduct when working with different groups.

PART 2. Communicating the Results

The second week of conference sought to provide an opportunity for HEd researchers to present and discuss recent research projects and key findings. Presenters were invited to pre-record their presentations. Videos of these recordings were uploaded and released to conference participants in advance. The live 90-minute moderated sessions provided space for presenters and participants to discuss the findings and answer questions.

1. Home Education in International and Intercultural Comparison

The first group of presentations concerned research projects that had either an international or an intercultural scope, with a comparative perspective.

I. Comparing home education in French-speaking territories: Who? Why? How?

Christine Brabant, Université de Montréal (Canada)

Abstract: We recently surveyed four territories of the northern French-speaking world: Quebec (Canada), Romandie (Switzerland), Wallonia (Belgium) and France, using the same questionnaire, with the collaboration of their home education associations. This presentation compares family profiles, parental motivations, and pedagogical practices, then questions the relevance and challenges of this type of study.

II. Homeschooling for a Chronically Absent Student: Re-examining Current and Proposed Policies in Japan and the United States

Seiya Miyaguchi, University of Tokyo/Indiana University Bloomington (Japan/US)

Abstract: Chronic absenteeism has gained little attention in research on homeschooling policy. The presentation aims to introduce the perspective of ensuring education for a chronically absent student into the controversy over homeschooling policy. It involves the re-examination of current policies and debates, ranging from no regulation to a presumptive ban of homeschooling, in Japan and the United States.

III. Bicultural Youth and Maternal Identities: Perspectives of American Expatriates Homeschooling in France.

Erin Tremblay Ponnou-Delaffon, Illinois State University (US)

Abstract: This study examines the profiles, motivations, and experiences of American expatriate homeschoolers in France, who face a triple injunction to integrate linguistically, socially, and scholastically. Identity and identity politics underpin parental discourse on homeschooling, which comments on current debates around education, family, and integration from a unique intercultural position.

IV. **The Comparative Study on the Characteristics of Homeschooling in Asia in term of Law, Tradition and Habitus**

DeokHee Seo, Chosun University (Republic of Korea)

Abstract: This presentation is about the homeschooling phenomena of many Asian countries from comparative cultural perspective especially considering the multidimensional concept of culture (law, tradition, and habitus). I will present my research results of why homeschooling is legal or illegal in a certain country of Asia, how homeschooling is being implemented and practiced by families and so forth.

Key areas discussed:

School refusal/school phobia

Different motivations can be identified by different statements of reasons, for example school refusal/school phobia; whereby parents report bullying and/or other negative experiences. One participant explained that not all instances of school refusal positions HEd as the best, or indeed feasible, option for a child. For example, in Germany, where HEd is not permitted, some schools using flexible curriculum offer highly individualized learning. In Australia, school refusal is common, but many experts, including school counselors, invest much effort to prevent school refusers from leaving for HEd.

Moreover, it was noted that school refusers in Japan have access to some continued educational opportunities via Education Support Centers and 'free schools'. Centers are established and run by boards of education in most cases. 'Free schools' are alternative and private educational institutes - not recognized as formal educational institutes by any law. 'Free schools' are not regulated, nor subsidized by the government. However, in some areas, boards of education or other authorities provide a grant for some 'free schools'. In Japan, for some school refusers, HEd is perceived as the 'least bad' option. Reasons for this include:

- The necessity to comply with the national course of study and other regulations (low flexibility of schools);
- Disparate geographical distribution of alternative opportunities (including access to Education Support Centres).
- School refusers feel guilty for not going to school and are unwilling to go outside during the day so that they will not be seen by others with inquiring eyes (related to Hikikomori and highly school-centered society);
- Existing support provided by schoolteachers and counselors is not necessarily effective in improving circumstances. Thus, in Japan it was voiced that school refusers should be regarded as potential homeschoolers.

National legal frameworks

National legal frameworks significantly affect how HEd is defined and studied. Parental motivations for HEd seem to differ depending on the national educational system's strengths, constraints and limits, and the population's reactions to them. The HEd families' profiles and educational practices might differ too, according to the local culture. Hence, the HEd parents' motivations could help to shed light on an educational system's blind spots and excluded subpopulations of learners.

Transnational populations

Researching transnational populations and comparing different national populations helps to reveal cultural differences between national school systems. This is an area that would benefit from further research.

Quotes from the chat

- Sounds similar to the Alternative provision/pupil referral units etc. for pupils who have 'disengaged' from mainstream in the UK.
- Keen to understand what this landscape is like in Japan. In France, physicians avoid using the terms « school phobia » and prefer « refus scolaire anxieux » (anxious school refusal) and it *seems* to be the way they translate « futoko ». By contrast, « school phobia » is a common phrase in use in home-educators discourse (even when it's not validated by a physician)

2. Home Education in Practice

The second collection of presentations showcased research projects that aimed to define, conceptualise and/or describe different home education practices.

I. Hybrid Homeschools: Definitions, Regulations, and Responses to COVID-19
Eric Wearne; Kennesaw State University (US)

Abstract: This presentation will explore the phenomenon of “hybrid homeschools,” including their design, demographics, and relationship to full-time homeschooling, as well as a recent survey of hybrid homeschools about the state regulations they face, and how they responded to COVID-19. Finally, the presentation will address issues of data collection issues involved with researching these schools and a new project being undertaken to help address that issue.

II. A typology of contemporary homeschool arrangements: An analysis of three waves of nationally representative data

Albert Cheng, University of Arkansas; Daniel Hamlin, University of Oklahoma (US)

Abstract: Recent educational developments like online curriculum, virtual schools, and hybrid schools have changed homeschooling practice, bringing ambiguity to defining homeschooling. We estimate the prevalence of US homeschooling families who use educational services outside the home to bring empirical bearing onto more precisely defining the practice of homeschooling.

III. Homeschooling the gifted: A Chilean experience

María Leonor Conejeros-Solar, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (Chile)

Abstract: This research sought to analyse the decisional process carried out by the families of gifted students and understand the effect of the homeschooling practice on their lives. From the results, the reasons for homeschooling are related to push factors such as schools 'misunderstanding of students' needs, bad experiences with teachers or peers in schools, lack of academic challenge and, in some cases, ideological differences with methodologies and school culture.

IV. **STEM Educational Activities and The Role of The Parent in The Home Education of High School Students**

Courtney Gann, Amridge University (US)

Abstract: This qualitative case study examined the STEM educational activities and the role of the parent using a purposefully chosen cooperative group. The presentation will discuss results of the study such as parents using an eclectic mix of educational activities including curricular activities and curriculum extensions, along with how these results connect with other homeschooling literature

V. **Remote Home-based Education as a new Phenomenon in the Time of the Covid-19 Pandemic: The Experience of Czech Families**

Yvona Kostelecká, Tereza Komárková, Veronika Novotná, Faculty of Arts, Charles University (Czech Republic)

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to show how Czech families have coped with mandatory remote home-based education. Qualitative analysis showed that the families were coping well with the situation and had come up with effective arrangements. Nevertheless, despite these positive findings the research also revealed that many families consider this to be very demanding and stressful time.

VI. **Irreconcilable Differences: A grounded theory study of regulatory noncompliance by home educators in Australia**

Selena Guest, The Australian National University (Australia)

Abstract: This study explores regulatory noncompliance by home educators in the Australian state of New South Wales using documentary sources. The findings suggest that stereotype awareness plays a significant role in decision-making for these families. This study has important policy implications.

Key areas discussed:

Defining HEd is inherently complex for a multitude of reasons. In some countries, definitions of HEd are affected by increasingly hybrid forms of education. Participants discussed the relative strengths and limitations of different markers of distinction including full-time schoolers versus others (the number of hours in a 'brick and mortar' school versus home). Other points of possible distinction/similarity discussed included:

- The **main place of education** (home, public school, private school, co-op, charter school);
- **Responsibility** of instruction or evaluation (between parents, state, private instruction dispenser, distance learning service, tutor, charter school, etc.). Connected to this was the degree of parental involvement.
- How HEd **families identify themselves** (homeschoolers, private schoolers, hybrid);
- The approach or **pedagogical practice** identified by the parent/ child / or observer (e.g., self-directed learning, 'traditional', Montessori, declared or observed or through a portfolio).

It was concluded that the definition and categorization chosen by each researcher will depend on the research aim and questions. Ongoing issues for consideration encompassed the ways in which different labels, categories and profiles might affect

policies for supporting families (particularly regarding short-term HEd versus HEd as long-term mode of education for children and young people).

3. Home Education within a Schooled Society

The third collection of presentations showcased empirical studies of HEd mothers and HEd children (and/or) now adults' relationships with the State, the workplace, society, and postsecondary education.

I. **Emotional and behavioral aspects in homeschooling – Comparative research among matched groups of homeschoolers and school-going children**

Oz Guterman; Ari Neuman; Western Galilee Academic College (Israel)

Abstract: The research focuses on emotional and behavioral aspects of homeschooled and school-going children. The presentation will review relevant previous research and describe the results of the present research. The research was published in 2021 in the Australian Educational Researcher.

II. **Formerly Homeschooled Young Adults in Czechia: First Generation Students' Reflections on Their Socialization**

Andrea Beláňová, Charles University (Czech Republic)

Abstract: Based on interviews with formerly homeschooled children, the research focused on socialization experience. Family and later schoolmates were identified as key agents here. The findings show that the informants are socially active, appreciate the family unit and wish to homeschool their own children. They also reported on sometimes feeling being different, both positively and negatively.

III. **The social inclusion of homeschoolers in Szeklerland, Romania**

Kinga Magdolna Mandel, Eötvös Lóránd University, (Hungary)

Abstract: In 2020 we realized a small size qualitative research on the social inclusion of homeschoolers in Szeklerland (Romania). We found that the social-economic settings, the religious-minority culture are offering possibilities and constraints regarding the social inclusion of homeschoolers during their studies and when entering the higher education and labor market. This is asking for consciousness in the study- and career decisions of the Szekler homeschoolers.

IV. **Work and Employment: Experiences of Previously Home Educated Individuals**

Rachael Barrow, Lancaster University (UK)

Abstract: This presentation examines how home educated individuals have experienced work and employment practices within the UK context. I argue that the experiences of home educated individuals represent examples of how individuals outside of the 'norm' interact with the cultural and social dimension of the workplace. The paper is premised on an empirical study that employed thirty-one qualitative life story interviews.

V. **Unschooling Mothers' Relationships to the State. A Case Study In France**

Philippe Bongrand and Vanille Louis, Université de Cergy-Pontoise (France)

Abstract: Based on interviews with a dozen unschooling mothers, our paper analyzes to what extent non-taking up to school reveals relationships to the state. Drawing on biographical accounts, we show how these mothers resist, implement and revisit three components of state building: monopolization of education, conformation to public action, governmentalization of private conducts.

Key areas discussed:

Children and Young people's voices

Questions raised by participants included the extent to which HEd children and young people's voices are represented as distinct to the voice/opinion from their parents. It was noted that many 'family' studies seemed to assume sameness/congruence. Other questions regarding children and young people's perspectives discussed included:

- How influenced are they by the lieu of the questionnaire administration (home, school, summer camp) and by parents' presence during the interview or questionnaire administration?
- How able are they to comment on their happiness or educational experience without feeling like they are betraying their parents?
- Is direct observation (during play or social activity) more reliable than interviewing children and questionnaires? Or focus groups of HEd children, outside the home, without parents?

Socialisation

Participants reflected on the overly positive/affirmative/generalizing statements (on HEd achievement and social skills), based on results too thin or too partial to do so. Regarding socialisation, participants discussed the need for more widely applied and developed definitions of socialisation/social skills, that do not come from research on HEd. For example: social competence, reaction to daily life problems, self-compassion, self-concept.

Self-selected sampling limitations

It is more common to read of positive experiences of HEd in academic research. Still, according to some presenters, they have encountered some HEd children who had negative experiences and struggles in HEd.

- How do you know whether HEd children have different experiences from ones of students in conventional schooling?

There are a variety of experiences even within conventional schooling. Both HEd and non-HEd children might have experienced the same thing in different ways. If you collect data from self-selected participants, experiences of HEd will look more positive than they are. It is challenging to identify whether HEd itself is one of the reasons for positive experiences because some other factors affect HEd experiences. This is a challenge faced by several participants who have researched HEd.

Researcher criticality

When reviewing previous research and designing new studies, participants discussed the need to consciously integrate and balance the minority of studies that illustrate negative outcomes (e.g. Cardus' study, Gaudreau & Brabant's study, whereby participants, for example, felt let down by parents for not including sex education at home, expressed feelings of abandonment, social isolation or disorientation in adulthood, lacked a sound education, etc.).

Regulation

The 'threat' of state control/inspections in France was discussed and the implications for unschoolers. In this context, parents and state inspectors must 'translate' unschooling pratiques into what the child's knowledge / abilities are until/unless unschooled children are required to sit regular exams annually. The composition of HEd families in France appears to be changing, with short-term homeschoolers possibly being a majority. When considering French HEd mothers' viewpoint about the State or about 'their' State, one could wonder if this was a general political orientation about the State, or a position in relation to their legal framework and school culture specifically.

Quotes from the chat:

- *This raises the question of the sample: if they (home educating families as well as schooling families) are « families who never say no » [to researchers], maybe these very cooperative families are not as representative of all families? (that's a very common question) (by common question, I mean: a question we all face)*
- *We have a similar implication in UK. A lot of Qual studies conducted over 10 years ago included families that are still home educating now, and still participating in research studies now.*
- *[Trying to avoid 1st wave or more activist home educators]*
- *Home education was not the problem, but low SES/class was? Are they perhaps both inter-related? Rather than discreet?*
- *For sure I think the two can be inter-related because sometimes what can be involved in home education for a family and the access they have to outside of the home opportunities can be influenced by their social class.*
- *A way to break [out of] our snowball samples consists in accessing the administrative files where all registered homeschoolers are listed in. It is possible at least: i) in states where there is mandatory registration; ii) when researchers manage to negotiate to access these files in a way that complies with personal data protection regulations.*
- *Children are complacent to their family (to a certain extent/age). Not all children are home educated because they told their parents they want to be home educated.*
- *[if] home education is a separate research field, why is it necessary to compare schooled and home educated children? The methods, approaches, goals, motives should be completely different.*

PART 3. Networking and Collaborating

During the final week of conference, participants considered the state HEd research and imagined future research projects together, with a particular focus on two key goals:

- I. Networking among scholars across multiple countries; to fulfill the need for comparative and international HEd research;
- II. Collaborating with the HEd field actors¹; to design research answering their needs and questions.

The first part of each session was devoted to listening to field actors from two or three invited organisations exemplifying the targeted group, who were interested in collaborative research and who shared and discussed the challenges they faced in their present HEd practice.

The second part of each session served to collectively identify and scope out new research questions and the type and forms of research needed to attend to the field actors' needs. For both field actors and researchers, the aim was to share knowledge and new insight for mutual benefit.

1. Children

Guest field actors:

- *Dr. Chelsea McCracken, Coalition for Responsible Home Education (USA)*
- *Gaia Chagnon, Quebec Association for Home-Based Education (Canada)*
- *Dr. Dannielle Davis, Saint Louis University's School of Education (USA)*

Key areas discussed:

Chelsea McCracken (CRHE)², identified six key areas for research focused on HEd children and young people's needs:

1. Lifetime outcomes for homeschool alumni;
2. Incidence of child abuse in homeschool settings;
3. College attendance rates of homeschool alumni;
4. Representative study of home education practices;
5. Representative comparison of academic achievement;
6. How homeschooling laws are being implemented;

¹ Defining 'field actors': here, 'HEd field actors' were understood to constitute three main stakeholder groups (and one session was devoted to each of these three groups): 1) HEd parents; 2) HEd children and 3) HEd inspectors/supervisors/counsellors - a new category of professionals developing as the number of HEd children grows around the globe, and facing challenges with little to no specific training on HEd.

² CRHE's policy recommendations ([accessible here](#)):

1- Registration; 2- standard test or portfolio review for progress, 3- child seen by a professional and 4- background check of adult in charge of HEd.

Regarding the sixth suggestions, was the need to offer retribution to supervisors/superintendents for participating in such an overview. The Bill of rights of homeschooled children published by CRHE was also mentioned ([accessible here](#)).

Danielle's testimony:

- Was withdrawn from school by parents because of racist attitude from teacher;
- Very positive experience, very competent parents-educators, learned a lot;
- Developed good levels of self-esteem and positive image;
- Wants to offer HEd to own children due to conflict with school teachers/principal.

Gaia's testimony

- Enjoyed his experience of HEd; feeling ready for postsecondary education;
- Received negative perceptions regarding his HEd experience from others, especially worries about his socialisation;
- Has developed good strategies for: interacting with different groups of persons in different social settings; completing his secondary education toward getting a diploma and adapting to postsecondary college.

Following on from Gaia's testimony, it was highlighted that the strategies identified by previously home educated children should be researched and documented, with other families (parents and youth). Additionally, participants identified the need for co-produced research within the field, where young people involved could co-author and contribute writing to any project they are invited to, and use/evidence their experience/co-produced involvement in research, future CV's etc.

2. Parents

Guest field actors:

- *Cyrielle Havard-Bourdais, Félicia (France)*
- *KyungHwan Lim; ByungHo Hyun; HyungTae Kim (Republic of Korea)*
- *Dr. Khadijah Ali-Coleman, Black Family Homeschool Educators and Scholars (USA)*

Key areas discussed:

The recent concerns of HEd families in France
Cyrielle's testimony regarded recent changes in French law on HEd and the key concerns of families:

- **Legislation process:** how families might be able to lobby and 'to get a seat the table' and become more involved in decisions that affect them;
- **Representation:** the challenges of gathering diverse families in one structure;
- **Statistics:** how to create strong data from a small population. Collaborative studies between associations and researchers can produce results with bigger samples and more representative figures;
- **Pedagogy:** how to promote new learning approaches;
- **Society:** how to become fully part of the education system;
- **Politics:** how to represent HEd as a positive within the context of diversity in education;
- **Community:** how to create a broad and inclusive network for parents and children.

Home education context in Korea:

- **There are homeschooled children** and school drop-out children (who would have preferred to stay in school if they felt fit for it);
- Lack of financial, social and community support for HEd;
- **Need support from school teachers** or guardianship for involuntary drop-out children (guardianship = experienced HEd parents who would help when drop-out children's parents are not voluntary home educators);
- **Community educators:** offer education to out-of-school children out of the goodness of their heart, but are not recognized or funded unless they create a community center (non-profit organisation).
 - First alternative education magazine, called "Mindle"
 - 600 alternative schools
 - new 'Alternative Education Institution Law' created in 2020, but preparation might have suffered from pandemic constraints.

Khadijah's experience with leading a HEd support group:

- There are substantial differences between state's frameworks;
- **Changes in educational provision** and focus depending on portfolio reviewing is currently carried out by ex-HEd parents or by school teachers/principals;
- **Dual-enrolled Black students** are more apt to graduate; should be the target/comparison point when assessing Black students' educational success.

3. Supervisors**Guest field actors:**

- *LaNissir James, Calvary Gospel Home Educators and HSLDA (Maryland, USA)*
- *Michele Luchs, Quebec Ministry of Education (Canada)*
- *Samantha Eddis, Eddis Tutorials (Arizona, USA)*

Key areas discussed:**Divergent regulations across the USA and Canada**

In some locations, a centralized governmental agency supervises all HEd (e.g., Quebec, Canada). In parts of the USA such as Arizona, local authorities supervise HEd.

By contrast, in Maryland, 'umbrella' schools or organisations are mandated by the State to supervise and support HEd families. In addition, guest field actors highlighted that:

- **Access to post secondary education** (including the requirements and procedures) differs significantly and can be quite complex in the USA and in Canada.

Different perspectives and preoccupations:

- School officials see more of **the unsuccessful families than support groups** do;
- **Tutoring services and support groups** see more of the committed families;
- State officials are not allowed to recommend commercial resources (books, exercise books, software) nor support groups or associations to families, even when they would like to for the benefit of children and parents;
- Significant volumes of **paperwork requested** by state supervision is a burden for many families;

- **Most families do well**, while some require a lot of support and one-on-one time for help with planning, assessing progress, preparing documents and teaching;
- **The pandemic has triggered a rise in HEd registrations**: implies more work for supervisors, and higher expectations from new families in terms of support.

Expertise and further training

It was highlighted that state officials might lack expertise and the capacity to offer or refer families to complimentary services, such as occupational therapy and specific resources for children with special educational needs.

Umbrella organizations

Umbrella organizations often 'plug the gaps' by offering conferences, portfolio reviews, pre-enrollment council, discussion on academic plan, learning goals, help for student preparation and suggestions (including references to textbooks, conjunction of parent and teacher observations, help with transcripts, communication with public schools or authorities).

Challenges

Unschooling was perceived as a form of HEd that was more challenging to accompany, supervise and support. In addition, it was highlighted that it was challenging to support HEd in circumstances whereby children with special educational needs were experiencing difficulties (parents sometimes are not aware of special needs, and without diagnosis). Building relationships with families overtime was key to meeting complex needs.

Regulation

It was highlighted that strict regulations, e.g. imposing the state curriculum, offered clearer landmarks for supervisors, but more restraint and tensions with families. More flexible regulations offer greater possibilities to respect and accommodate atypical profiles and projects (see above) but fewer means to give clear orientation and goals to disengaged or less experienced families.

Quotes from the chat:

- *One of the biggest differences between access to postsecondary education in the USA and the UK is that home schoolers in the USA still have to match what their schooled peers have to do. This is counter to the flexibility that home schoolers may have had during their high school lives.*
- *There isn't a systematic/shared practice for admissions for Home ed. young people across the UK*
- *There are no two home educated individuals who have lived the same educational trajectory, so in admissions we should appreciate that and value the diversity they have in terms of what they would bring to their studies and the university.*
- *It would be fascinating to find out how home schoolers are using online resources to complement or complete their educational journey for university admission.*
- *Question for the panel: drawing on your insight and experience, what is key for building trust among state officials and homeschooling families?*
- *To understand the other's perspective and find common ground*
- *A 'key' is the number of meetings. « Oneshot » meeting (= one home visit during one school year, and then, the year after, the supervisors are not the same persons) contrast with the relationships arising starting with the second meeting, when state oversight is implemented by the same civil servants with the same families during several years.*

- *For different reasons related to state supervisors sociology and career management, there is a strong turnover among home ed supervisors, and this takes part into the families/administrations sometimes problematic relationships.*
- *The continuity and relationship building has a significant impact. When an inspector/education welfare officer changes abruptly, this has a knock-on effect on community relations, one negative family experience spreads like wildfire and before you know it, some actively discourage new families from co-operating with their local authority. It becomes cycle of mistrust on either side.*
- *Teachers need to be the supervisors or point of contact with home educators. Not welfare personnel or those who oversee children who are truant or missing.*
- *Having teachers as resource people is the most important step!*
- *It's been wonderful to hear about the different approaches to home education around the world and gain first-hand insights into the research that has been conducted to date. Thank you to all who have made this possible and those who have contributed!*

Closing remarks

ICHER's president, Robert Kunzman, closed the ICHER Home Education Research Conference 2021. He and all members of the organising committee gave thanks to all those who made the conference possible including graduate students, presenters, field actors and academic researchers across the globe.

The conference itself provided an important and timely opportunity to share new insight, exchange ideas and to generate new research questions and project ideas in a new way. The ICHER Conference committee reiterated the success of holding the conference online and across multiple time zones. This facilitated a presence and participation from around the world, as reported in the foreword.

Participants also expressed satisfaction, and offered many thanks for the event.

As a result of the conference, several key projects were identified to be taken forward, including:

- Creating a peer-reviewed journal of home education;
- Submitting a thematic issue with 2nd week presentations to an existing journal;
- ICHER's Facebook and Twitter;
- A next edition of ICHER Home Education Research Conference.

Thank you once again to all those who helped to make ICHER Home Education Research Conference 2021 a success. Special thanks to Amber J. Fensham-Smith who coedited these conference proceedings.

For general queries or further information, please contact us [here](#).

With warm thanks,

ICHER Conference organisers,

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