What we know about homeschooling A critical review of literature and studies on homeschooling

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ABSTRACT: The number of parents who choose to completely take over the education of their children by giving it at home and away from state-run schools and state-accredited private schools is undeniably increasing both in the global and local context. This article provides an organized body of knowledge by putting together significant literature and studies made over the past decade. This critical review was structured in a manner of presenting important issues that are inherent in homeschooling as an educational phenomenon. The thematic analysis of literature and studies that this article made available presents the issues as in a spectrum of debate, providing the varying points of view of educational researchers. Among the themes discussed are the following: motives leading to homeschooling; scholastic development of homeschooled children; social and personality development of homeschooled children; impact of homeschooling choice on the family; the struggle for custody over children’s education; state recognition and legalization; homeschooling, community life and the purpose of public schooling; and homeschooling from the perspective of the main stakeholder.

Key words: critical review, education, homeschooling, literature and studies, Philippines

"At the heart of all education programs lies a critical analysis of key issues such as the nature of education, the content and development of curricula, teaching and learning, the relationship between ability, opportunity and success, and the policy issues impacting on all of these" (Bartlett & Burton, 2012).

INTRODUCTION

In the global context, the increase in number of parents who choose to completely take over the education of their children by giving it at home and away from state-run schools and state-accredited private schools is undeniably exponential. There is hardly any literature on homeschooling that does not mention the rapid growth of this educational phenomenon and has therefore captured the attention of the academic community and educational researchers, especially education policy-makers (Hill, 2000; Kunzman, 2009), sociologists (Crowson, 2000;), and even individual parents (Hiatt-Michael, 2008) since homeschooling is indeed a “development of significance” (Crowson, 2000, p.296).

After reading through voluminous literature and studies on the homeschooling phenomenon, it has come to my attention and interest as a researcher of how much homeschooling has brought a great stir in international academic communities not simply because of its skyrocketing increase in population but because of all its accompanying issues that matter.

This critical review of literature and study utilizes a thematic approach, using the relevant issues that emerged as the main themes for discussion. Some issues are presented from the perspectives given from the opposite ends of the spectrum of accounts; the others shall provide the discourse that the literature disclosed.

These themes provide the readers and researchers an organized discussion on homeschooling, which is a much debated on educational phenomenon but remains to have unresolved key issues.

The themes that emerged from this critical review are the following: motives leading to homeschooling; scholastic development of homeschooled children; social and personality development of homeschooled children; impact of homeschooling choice on the family; the struggle for custody over children’s education; state recognition
and legalization; homeschooling, community life and the purpose of public schooling; and homeschooling from the perspective of the main stakeholder.

**Motives Leading to Homeschooling**

Anyone who encounters the homeschooling phenomenon for the first time, whether as an educator, a parent, a public officer, or simply an “onlooker” from outside the education field, the query that he would naturally want to satisfy first is the issue of motives. Why do parents choose to homeschool their children when from the very onset doing so can actually bring more complexities into their life? What motives can be so strong that parents would actually want to forego the state-funded education of their children? Or the private education that they have financially prepared for? Many researchers have dwelt into the study on what motivated some parents to completely take the education of their children into their hands and away from public education.

The upsurge of the number of parents who choose to homeschool led researchers to probe into this issue as early as the 1980s. The often-cited framework for classifying parents’ motivations is that of Van Galen (1988) where two main categories surfaced: the ideologues and the pedagogues. The former group consists of those parents whose main motive for homeschooling is to teach their children a specific set of values, other than that which is taught in school or which they believe is non-existent from schools’ formal instruction. Some parents may have strong religious motives for taking over their children’s education. That is an example of an ideologue motive. The latter group of parents in Van Galen’s framework refers to those parents who believe that the pedagogy used in traditional schools is contrary to the way children learn best. Unpleasant experiences in traditional schools or deep rifts with school authorities led some parents to pull their children out of school and give refuge in their homes. That is an example of a pedagoge motive. According to Nemer (2002), this typology presented by Van Galen (1988) is the most useful for researchers as a springboard to further inquire into the motives.

In fact, Nemer (2002) used the ideologue-pedagoge classification as basis for an expanded framework of motives. For Nemer (2002), some parents actually fall in between the two preceding categories and that parental motives are actually multi-dimensional. The study of Nemer (2002) presents a broader range of motives and expanded the ideological and pedagogical motivations into four quadrants of classifications of homeschoolers, encompassing the high and low levels of both ideological motivations and pedagogical motivations.

A later study expanded these parental motives even more. Hannah (2011) conducted a longitudinal study where secondary motivations emerged. She further identified strong motives such as assisting some special needs of a child, attending to medical concerns of the children; and addressing safety and security issues. This last identified motive was affirmed and developed by Mazama and Lundy (2012) who put safety and security issues in the context of the African American parents whose strong motive for homeschooling is racial protectionism. Objecting to the notion that African American parents’ motivations can be subsumed to “White motives” (p. 742), researchers Mazama and Lundy (2012) did their own inquiry and found out that the specific cohort of their study strongly sees the need of protecting their children from school racism since they believe that it is a factor that can deeply interfere and destruct children’s academic development, sense of worth and self-confidence.

Other researchers inquired into the same issue of parents’ motivations but diverted from the given typologies and instead came out with their own listing of motives. Brabant, Bourdon, and Jutras(2003) for instance named four main reasons why some families in Canada choose to homeschool. These four include the following: a) the intent to pursue an educational project as a family; b) a strong objection to the organizational structure of the school system; c) the desire to offer an enhanced curriculum; and d) a deep concern for the children’s socio-affective development. Homeschooling parents believe that keeping their children at home is the best means to avoid a school environment which they perceive to be too violent and a strong agent for unnecessary peer dependency and pressure. Strong and active involvement in their children’s education is what some families believe would assure the quality of education for their children.

Similarly, Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) recognized that the three strongest motives that homeschooling parents have fall under the compulsion for involvement in the educational process. Parents believe that they should play an active role in their children’s education because they have the ability to help their children succeed in academic learning and that their family context is the greatest factor that makes homeschooling possible. Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) describe the homeschooling mothers as “a population that is clearly involved in their children’s education but in a very nonstandard way” (p. 281).

Aside from the American educational system, researchers within the English educational system had also done their share of inquiry into the motives of parents for going into homeschooling. Rothermel’s study (2003) was set in the UK where the homeschooling movement is not as out in the open as it is in countries using the American educational system. Nevertheless, Rothermel (2003) gives a good synthesis of the various taxonomies of home education that different researchers have concluded in their own studies. He cites Blacker’s (1981) three
categories of parents being the competitors, the compensators, and the rebels; Mayberry's (1989) four categories being the religious, the academically motivated, the social-relational, and the new age groups of parents; and Stevens' (2001) translation of the ideologue-pedagoge typology into earth-based and heaven-based parents, respectively. This two-prong classification of Steven's is also the basis of Apostoleris' (2002) classifications of the ideologues or the earth-based parents as those dissatisfied with content on one hand and the pedagogues or the heaven-based parents as those dissatisfied with method, on the other hand.

After giving a thorough review of different studies done on this single issue of motivations and after conducting a set of interviews with British families, Rothermel (2003) came up with the Rothermel Classification: The Stratum Approach. The stratum approach is a way of classifying parents not solely on motives but on the levels of sameness among the families. Hence, four levels emerged. Rothermel (2003) identified that the first level of families is the superficially homogenous group where the only thing common among them is the fact that they all homeschool. The second level of families is the group differences wherein homeschooling families have natural antipathies among themselves because of the different religious groups they belong to. Families in this level consider unity in belief as an important matter. The third level of homeschooling families are those with inter-family differences, which refer to the differences among the families within the same religious group. Among themselves, friction can arise as to who is really home educating in the truest sense. The highest level of the strata is reserved for the intra-family differences where factions spring from having different views within the immediate and extended family with regard to home educating. Rothermel's (2003) study reveals that it happens that one parent does not agree with the other parent’s desire for home education or that grandparents criticize parents’ decision to pull out from the public education.

The interesting message that Rothermel (2003) wants to highlight with this rather unique stratum approach is that the previous taxonomies and typologies of classifying motives can be narrow and limiting. The significance of the Rothermel Classification is to drive home the point that homeschooling motives and experience can be as varied as the number of families who are actually practicing it. The four levels of differences within and among the homeschooling families are a manifestation of that variety of cases of homeschooling experience and thus, anyone who wants to study this phenomenon would have to be faced with varied cases that can have more differences than similarities among each other.

**Scholastic Development of Homeschooled Children**

Academic development of homeschooled children unsurprisingly belongs to the top of the list of concerns that educators and parents are interested in. After all, the development of knowledge and academic skills are at the very core of the teaching and learning process (Breitborde & Swiniarski, 2006).

A number of researchers have attempted to measure the effectiveness of homeschooling using the scholastic development of the homeschooled children as the measure stick. Hill (2000) revealed that his study concluded that students who have been home schooled their entire academic life prior to tertiary education have higher scholastic achievement test scores compared with those who have also attended other educational programs in regular academic institutions. However, Hill (2000) frankly discloses the inherent impediment of his study which is the absence of an accurate number of the homeschooling population. Furthermore, Hill (2000) admits that “it is still impossible to say whether, on the whole and on average, homeschooling students are doing much better than their public and private school counterparts” (p. 27). Hence, scholastic development of homeschooled children must be appreciated not from a norm-reference perspective where a group’s performance is seen in the light of another group’s performance. Rather, attempts to study the academic development of homeschooled students must be approached with a criterion-reference perspective.

The difficulty that Hill (2000) expressed was affirmed by the later study of Collom (2005) who claims that studying the academic achievement of home education students is even more difficult than studying parental motivations for the simple reason that not all homeschooled students take standardized achievement tests, which are the common basis for the scholastic measurement. Collom (2005) further says that those who take standardized achievement tests may not represent the homeschoolers as a whole. Recognizing this limitation in studying student academic performance, Collom (2005) avoided comparing test scores between homeschooled students and traditionally-schooled students but instead identified that the two main contributing factors of student achievement are actually parent-related. Students who are homeschooled by more educated parents have higher levels of academic achievement and students who are homeschooled by more conservative parents also perform better on standardized tests. The explanation of Collom (2005) with regard to “conservative” parents is quite revealing of an important matter to take note of. Conservative homeschooling parents are those who more likely teach their children at home in a way that the classroom environment is replicated. Collom (2005) further
discussed the conservative characteristic juxtaposed to the liberal parents who tend more towards practicing informal and experimental teaching at home.

Other researchers have also attempted to compare the academic achievement of homeschooling children with that of children in formal schools. Duggan (2009) and Rothermel (2004) both claim that homeschooling students perform at one or two grade levels above their public-schooled and private-schooled peers. Aside from this claim, another common declaration put forward by both researchers is that their findings are tentative because of the significantly small response rate they got from the homeschooling population.

Romanowski (2001) avoided the attempt to make comparisons but rather developed a discourse on how lack of peer classroom interaction can be detrimental to a child’s education. As an educational scholar himself, Romanowski (2001) asserts that students need to engage in discussions, share their ideas, and even compete with their peers. A classroom setup gives students this opportunity of significant interaction aside from the opportunity to compare and contrast themselves with their peers in a variety of areas. He also expresses the concern about the scope and depth of knowledge that is required in some content areas as the homeschooled children move into secondary level. Romanowski (2001) further reveals some degree of wariness on the proper assessment and diagnosis of problem areas, which are crucial components in broadening and deepening the quality of academic learning.

**Social and Personality Development of Homeschooled Children**

Wilhelm and Firmin (2009) and Beck (2001) recognize that adequate and appropriate socialization of children continue to top the list of significant challenges that exist for the home education movement.

Duggan (2009) reveals an empirical data of how much social experience homeschoolers have compared with the other formally-schooled children. Of his respondents, Duggan (2009) claims that 32% of the group of public-schooled students spent 16 hours per week socializing with friends, compared with 22.2% from the group of private-schooled students, and 18.2% from the group of homeschooled students. This data supports what an earlier research claimed. Beck (2001) states that teachers and education policy makers often express the opinion that homeschooling desocializes children that they often end up with “distorted ideas of the norms of society” (p. 359). The main factor that contributes to this distortion of ideas is the fact that homeschooled children have contact only with the family or within a small-scale of society. Romanowski (2001) concurs with Beck’s (2001) claim saying that the usual outside activities of homeschooled students involve going on field trips, boot camps, and museum visits with a select group of people who share the same values, background, and social class. Romanowski (2001) builds up his position on the danger of this small-scale society citing that such a controlled group does not represent the reality of life, neither in college nor in the work life. “Unless these children are exposed on a daily basis to the social life found in public schools, they will lack the skills needed to successfully adapt to real life situations when they get older” (Romanowski, 2001, p. 81). Homeschool interactions limit children’s exposure from the diversity of beliefs and backgrounds that can be encountered in formal schools.

On the other end of the spectrum on the issue of socialization and personality development is Parker (2012) who contends that the homeschooling experience had instilled a high level of self-esteem in the students whom she followed closely through a case study. She observed them to be assertive and have a well-developed personality that enables them to be quick learners and excellent in goal setting. This position coincides with the other perspective that Romanowski (2001) highlighted. He supports the argument that because homeschooled children spend most of their time around their parents in an accepting atmosphere, they are able to engage socially in multi-age situations with a high level of confidence. While this may be an advantage from one angle, Breitborde and Swinarski (2006) assert firmly the significant role of peer interaction for a richer and deeper learning experience.

**Impact of Homeschooling Choice on the Family**

The education of children remains to be a family concern. Educational decisions are oftentimes made by the parents and their choices leave traces of impact on the entire family. The decision to completely home educate one’s children can be a daunting one (Sheehan, 2010) and the journey in sustaining the decision is a whole family affair (Kambayashi, 2002). For this reason, Brabant et al. (2003) assert that the parents’ motivations that led to the decision to homeschool must be strong enough to be accepted by themselves and all the other members of the family who must be willing to accept the lifestyle change that consequently comes with the decision. Brabant et al. (2003) further emphasize that parents have to accept both the “hazards of marginalization” (p. 114) and the linked possibility that their children could develop a sense of exclusion from the mainstream majority who are being educated in formal schools.
True enough, Lois (2009) reveals that some homeschooling mothers are accused of maternal deviance for keeping their children out of conventional schools. They receive powerful allegations from even their closest friends and family members that they are irresponsible mothers who “ruin their children by depriving them of the opportunity for normal development” (Lois, 2009, p. 224).

An earlier study cautions parents on the manner in which the decision to homeschool is reached. McDowell’s advice (2000) is grounded on his in-depth conversations with homeschool mother-teachers who reveal that how parents reached the decision to homeschool greatly influences the overall positive or negative feel of the homeschooling process. McDowell (2000) shares the lessons learned from his case study and the greatest of which is that the “undercurrent of anger” (p. 198), springing from feeling forced into the decision, does exist in some mother-teachers and the anger permeates the homeschooling process and therefore affects the parent-child relationship in a detrimental way.

Homeschooling brings about inherent challenges that can significantly impact the individual family members and even in the level of the entire family as a social institution. According to Rothermel (2004), raising a family on the equivalent of one income can be a burden to some, if not most, families. In the same light, Romanowski (2001) claims that home schools are no different from public schools with regard to resources, funding, and facilities. Both Rothermel (2004) and Romanowski (2001) support firmly their position that family income affects the overall educational experience and hence, limited resources affect the families’ capability to provide adequate educational opportunities. Home education can therefore become limiting and selective in favor of the affluent families, or the well-to-do families at the least. Romanowski (2001) highlights that “wealthier families can often provide a better overall home school education” (p. 82) since the experience can prove to be a financial burden for poorer families. Davies and Aurini (2003) carry the same sentiment asserting that even with the newfound legitimacy that homeschooling families enjoy in Canada, there is a “natural cap” (p. 71) on the homeschooling population as it is limited to families who can afford the time and the gone income of at least one parent.

Aside from the financial challenges that homeschooling families face, another major concern that parents, especially mothers, have to confront is the feeling of personal shortcomings as a teacher and balancing all the workload of being both the teacher and the home manager at the same time (McDowell, 2000; Lois, 2010). This tension between roles results to another stressful predicament. The in-depth interviews that Lois (2010) conducted with homeschooling mothers reveal that the intensive demands of their double roles in the family leave them stressed and dissatisfied with the amount of time they had to pursue their own interests. The group of mothers in the study share their feelings that although they are happy to live up to the ‘ideals of good mothering by developing a great deal of time to our children, we also wish for ‘me-time’” (Lois, 2010, p. 428).

On the other end of the spectrum on this issue, some researchers have managed to bring out the more encouraging effects of the homeschooling decision on the life of the entire family. McDowell (2000) refers to these as the jewels of homeschooling. The most treasured ones are the flexibility it brings to various aspects of schooling and family life, children being able to teach themselves, and the peace of mind that homeschooling gives to the parents, relieving them of the worry about what might happen physically and emotionally to their children in school. Rothermel also mentions that although parents experience the financial load that homeschooling brings, they value more the freedom to live according to their own ideals and “relished the flexibility to ‘do what we want’ and ‘when we want’” (2004, p. 296).

From another perspective level, Hill (2000) considers homeschooling to be a large teacher training program where thousands of people are learning how to teach. Hill (2000) also sees it as an opportunity for parent education, declaring that “homeschooling must be one of the biggest parent training programs in the country” (p. 22).

The Struggle for Custody over Children’s Education

The question on whose custody does children’s education really belong has been the bone of contention between the homeschooling advocates and the promoters of public education. On one end, Meisels (2004) claims that parents’ decision to homeschool sits within the boundaries of their parental rights to choose. On the other end, Blokhuis (2010) classifies this claim of parental right as outside the context and a deliberate disregard for the parens patriae doctrine.

Lubienski (2003) has also recognized this pull from either poles saying that while claims about parental right and duties may be valid up to a certain extent, they neglect the public’s legitimate interest in the process of education. According to Nemer (2002), parents who choose to homeschool their children actually view themselves to be diverging from the mainstream society, yet their belief of the extent of their rights and duties over the education of their children gives them the justification to accept the label of being divergent.
According to Meisels (2004), parental authority encompasses the right to make life choices for one’s children and laws on compulsory attendance to public education are an outright intrusion of the parental boundaries. Meisels (2004) further justifies his adamant claim that major educational decisions belong primarily to parental rights and duties by saying that children are the property of their parents, parents have the right to rear their children according to their own values, personal beliefs and chosen lifestyle, parents have the stewardship rights to provide children’s needs especially with regard to receiving adequate care and education, and parents know their children best, always acting in their best interest.

On the other hand, Blokhuis (2010) stands firmly that compulsory attendance laws do not infringe upon the parents’ or even the children’s human rights. He regards any contradictory claim to be illogical. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child qualifies children below the age of eighteen years to be still “legally incompetent” (United Nations, 1989, Part. 1, Article 1), incapable yet of recognizing and advancing their own interests. Thus, the parens patriae doctrine essentially means that the state “supervenes when individual custodians act unreasonably, where unreasonableness is defined in terms of unwillingness or inability to prioritize the independent welfare and developmental interests of a child” (Blokhuis, 2010, p. 201). This perspective that Blokhuis presents goes to show that the responsible custodians are those who put the developmental interests of their dependents ahead of their personal interests. But children, being the dependents of their custodians, usually the parents, are not yet able to recognize, much less, express their welfare needs and developmental interests, where educational choices fundamentally belong. Therefore, the decision to homeschool is in fact the parents’ choice, with simply an approximation and assumption that it is what their children independently need and want as well. Hence, Blokhuis (2010) disputes with those who use the name of parental rights to justify their practice against public education that their claim does not hold logic within the parens patriae doctrine, which has precedence over parental authority.

**State Recognition and Legalization**

The battle on who really has custody over the children’s education is but an introduction to the even more controversial issue of whether the homeschooling way must be made legal and recognized as an open public option.

Meisels (2004) is straightforward in her statement that “homeschooling ought to be recognized by Israeli law and society as a legal and socially accepted alternative to public schooling” (p. 131). Meisels (2004) argues in favor of legalization of homeschooling and loosening of the universal school-attendance legislations, not only in Israel but in other liberal states as well. In contrast, Glanzer (2008) who, like Meisels (2004), is also a homeschooling defender but refuses the idea of homeschooling being regulated by the state. Glanzer (2008) claims “the state should only regulate real and not imaginary or vague threats to its own interests or the children’s well-being” (p. 7). Some homeschooling parents feel slighted by the idea of being regulated because they think that regulation presuposes that they pose danger to the children and to society.

Taking the other side of the issue, many researchers – both homeschool advocates and critics – argue in favor of state regulation. Reich (2008) contends that the education of children has tripartite interests at stake: interests of the child, interests of the parents, and interests of the state. Neither of the three can be permitted to exercise sole authority over the education of the children, which in reality is what many homeschooling defenders invoke through the argument of parental rights. Cooper and Sureau (2007) also see the need for states to have regulation over the homeschooling families because their current situation of being invisible may indeed be problematic as some maltreatment in the homes may pass undetected. According to Kunzman (2009), non-regulation of the homeschooling families is an easy opportunity for inadequate and even inappropriate homeschool situations to “slip through the cracks” (p. 326). He further discloses that parents who do a good job in homeschooling are generally amenable to reasonable levels of state regulation such as basic skills testing. These parents understand that such regulations are aimed not at them as parents being eyed on but to ensure the protection of their children. In the same way, Spiegler (2009) believes that the combination of legalization, regulation and control of the home education practice in Germany would be better protection of the interests of the child, the parents, and the state over children’s education than how it is in its contemporary illegal status. To date, no education authority knows the exact number of home educators and homeschooled children in their area of territory and is therefore clueless as to what kind of education is taking place in these families (Spiegler, 2009).

Beck (2001) exposes the current practice of regulating the homeschooling movement in Norway. In the Norwegian constitution, there is what is called the “control” paragraph, which states “the community can demand that the child go to school if the conditions for homeschooling according to school laws are not fulfilled” (Beck, 2001, p. 359). The position of Romanowski (2001) in this issue goes along with that of Beck (2001) thinking that homeschooling parents have too much freedom under its current legislative status. Romanowski (2001) upholds that the legitimate concern about homeschooling is to have some guarantee that the children are being taught by
competent adults who have the ability to present instruction to children in a coherent and skillful manner. “Not everyone can teach” (Reich, 2008, p. 82).

Aside from security issues and concerns within the homeschooling families, another reason for the need to regulate this movement is that there is simply no good evidence about the overall performance of homeschooled students. As a social scientist, Reich (2008) expresses some frustration over the fact that the little research that exists is either of poor quality or can reach only limited conclusions. Reich considers “the very biggest obstacle to good research is the simple fact that no accurate data exists on what ought to be the very simplest of questions: how many children are being homeschooled?” (2008, p. 22).

**Homeschooling, Community Life and the Purpose of Public Schooling**

“A century ago, philosophical arguments of educators were reduced to discussion of method and strategy. Today, we witness a return to a more fundamental and primary argument about purpose in schooling” (Wiles & Bondi, 2011, p. 304).

After all the unresolved debates and struggles for state legalization but against regulation, it is helpful to be jolted by that wise reflection that serves as a break from endless confrontations and as a lead to return to the essentials. As Monk (2003) articulates clearly, the concerns about socialization and human rights have overshadowed the broader yet more critical issues, such as the meaning of democracy, the purpose of education, and the role of public education in society.

Other researchers have expressed the concern about the inevitable consequence of parents pulling out from public schools and keeping them in their own homes. Wilhelm and Firmin (2009) assert that while parental participation in children’s education in schools may be good and helpful, when they bring it to the extreme and pull their children out of the public schools, it can leave deep implications for the remaining children and the school milieu. The growing number of homeschooling families in societies leaves some social dent and cannot simply be dismissed by public school leaders (Wilhelm & Firmin, 2009). In fact, a common statement among social researchers speaks of the need to find the right balance between community rules and individual freedom, and between cooperation with homeschooling parents and viewing their children as needing to rejoin with the local public school systems (Beck, 2001; Wilhelm & Firmin, 2009; Taylor, 2009). Furthermore, Lubienski (2003) strongly offers a piece of criticism and concern regarding the tension between private benefits and public goals. When families who have high-achievement attributes and expectations opt to leave public education and pull their children away from community life, they are removing as well their share in carrying societal burdens and in contributing to the larger public good (Lubienski, 2003).

This brings us back to John Dewey’s philosophy of education, which Breitborde and Swiniarski (2006) took time to elaborate in their discourses on the foundations of education, that public schools could be models of a democratic society. Schools are considered social institutions, and students and teachers are equal participants in a “community of living and learning” (Breitborde & Swiniarski, 2006, p. 16). Moreover, schools’ hidden curriculum is fundamentally considered as much, if not more, important to children’s future as the planned or written curriculum is. Unfortunately, it is precisely the concept of hidden curriculum in schools that homeschooling advocates at times use as the support for their decision to pull out (Collom, 2005; Hanna, 2011; Hill, 2000; Safran, 2010).

**Homeschooling from the Perspective of the Main Stakeholder**

“Inside versus outside the system’ choice is a consumer decision” (Wiles & Bondi, 2011, p. 302). This is another good reminder from the gurus of curriculum studies. After all the talk on the controversy that the homeschooling movement has produced in all societies it ventures into, a rather important question remains: what do the homeschooled students say about their experience? How do they feel about being homeschooled?

Only a few researchers have scientifically dwelt into this query. South Africa-based researchers van Schalkwyk and Bouwer (2011) noticed that the trend in literature on homeschooling is limited and biased, and focused predominantly on the homeschool educators’ perspective. True enough, the themes that emerged in my own review of literature primarily include studies on the motives for homeschooling (Nemer, 2002; Rothermel, 2003), the academic and social advantages and disadvantages of homeschooling (Collom, 2005; Duggan, 2009; Rothermel, 2004), the parents’ perceived participation that warrant sole authority over their children’s education (Meisels, 2004; Blokhuis, 2010), the advocates’ clamor for state legalization without regulation (Glanzer, 2008; Reich, 2008; Kunzman, 2009), and the negation of schools’ hidden curriculum (Monk, 2003; Wilhelm & Firmin, 2009).
The homeschooling parents are clearly not the only participants in a homeschooling situation. Parker (2012), Meisels (2004), Duggan (2009), and van Schalkwyk and Bouwer (2011) focused on the importance of heeding the voices of the learners themselves.

In the case study conducted by Parker (2012), the homeschooled students, already in college at the time of the study, expressed contentment in their experience. They even expressed gratitude for their homeschooling experience, which they believe prepared them to enter the traditional college they are in at present. Duggan (2009) also disclosed positive feedback from the homeschooled student respondents who reported enjoying the freedom and flexibility of their situation, coupled with the ability to work at their own pace.

However, the same respondents also expressed that what they liked the least about being homeschooled was the lack of competition both in academics and in sports (Duggan, 2009). Another account reveals that homeschooled students disdain the automatic labels they felt others often lay on homeschooled students in general (Duggan, 2009).

The importance of hearing the learners is highlighted in the studies of Meisels (2004) and van Schalkwyk and Bouwer (2011) where a child expresses clear preference for conventional schooling yet is silenced by the mere fact of his being voiceless in the family. Meisels (2004) admits that such cases happen at times in homeschooling families and pushes strongly that these be reported and children’s voices be respected. Van Schalkwyk and Bouwer (2011) also carry dismal testimonies from homeschooled children. Of the four cases that the study followed closely, three homeschooled learners came out to be intensely resentful about their situation since they were always expected to carry out their parents’ wishes while compromising their own (van Schalkwyk & Bouwer, 2011). Children’s pent up feelings of discontent, feelings of rebelliousness, and feelings of restriction and isolation can be very detrimental that should lead concerned individuals to question whether the specific homeschooling situations do actually support and promote the developmental needs of the child.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the foregoing discussion, homeschooling is an educational phenomenon that proves to have elements that have yet to be rigorously inquired into. Addressing issues on the extent of parental involvement in children’s education would enlighten both parents and school authorities. To reveal the impact of homeschooling on the entire family, and the social and personality development of homeschooled children, and the dent that homeschooling leaves on the entire community life are worth venturing into since the homeschooling population proves to be increasing in size. Most importantly, to heed the voices of the homeschooled students is the most crucial and critical in any attempt to understand the phenomenon because the students are the main stakeholders and it is supposedly for their welfare and developmental interests that homeschooling is practiced.

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