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SUMMARY OF AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND RESEARCH ON HOME EDUCATION

20th May, 2020

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Australian Home Education Advisory Service**

SUMMARY OF AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND RESEARCH ON HOME EDUCATION

Research on home education in Australia has a small but growing presence. Parent reasons for home educating have been extensively explored while student academic success has not attracted much Australian research. Socialisation has been examined in different ways by a number of studies. Demographic material on home educating families has been collected. A few projects have specifically focused on student perceptions of their home education experience while studies of students with specific needs have been conducted by a couple of researchers. Home educator interactions with networks, their use of community resources and their needs for appropriate information have also been analysed. Throughout the research problems with home education were identified. The most contentious issue identified was parent resistance to legislation and regulation. The developing theory of home education has distinguished home education as quite distinct from the education provided in formal schools and institutions. A few researchers have included Distance Education in their definition of home schooling and a few academics have addressed the possibilities of home education in the Australian context.

Australian Home Education Research

There is a small but growing body of research literature available in Australia on home education. Most of this is contained in unpublished theses but there is also some published work available. This literature includes professional journal articles, a book, and documents from Parliamentary Reviews and Departments of Education. The topics covered in this literature include quantitative data from government agencies overseeing home education, reasons parents home educate, demographic information, parent management of the home educating process, student perspectives, special needs, academic success, learning in home education, student competencies and social development, legislative and legal situations in all states of Australia, and home education as an alternative form of education in rural areas.

Jackson, G. M. (2016). Common Themes in Australian and New Zealand Home Education Research. In M. Gaither (Ed.), *The Handbook of Home Education* (pp. 329-361). USA: Wiley Blackwell Books. DOI: 10.1002/9781118926895

Government Quantitative Data on Registered Home Educators

There is a lack of broad quantitative data on Australian Home Education. However, there is a growing body of basic and reliable data, particularly about numbers of registered home educators, being published by various state and territory governments.

BOSTES (Board of Studies, Teaching & Educational Standards, NSW), (2014). *Academic Outcomes of Home Schooling - Review of Research and Analysis of Statewide Tests*. Retrieved from Sydney: <http://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/wcm/connect/8b9170fe-c90e-49d0-b62b-7cc18fe222cc/home-schooling-outcomes-review.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=>

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Other Surveys:

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Academic Success

Apart from one study specifically assessing the academic success of home educated students (BOSTES 2014), a couple of small studies and most other research indicate that Australian home educated children have achieved an equal or higher than average result to their formally educated peers.

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Socialisation

Studies which have looked at the social experiences of home educated students indicate that the students have broad, healthy social interactions although a few students would have appreciated more interaction with peers, particularly in home education network groups. Studies have also shown that some students who have been hurt socially at school have been able to recover when home educated.

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People Who Home Educate Their Children

It is difficult to estimate how many people are home educating because there is known non-compliance, however, official numbers per state and territory are available (Chapman 2015). Home educators come from all walks of life, from every corner of the country, from varying income brackets, and with various levels of education. None of these features appears to impact upon their success in educating their children.

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Home Educator Practices

Home educators use a variety of practices when teaching children at home. Typically, these range from structured approaches using formal curriculum, both purchased and developed at home, to eclectic programs that mix some formal aspects (usually in key subjects such as maths and English with more student selected topics, to the unschooling approaches that tend to be directed by student choices.

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Student Views of Home Education

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Special Needs

Special needs students (including school refusers) and their families especially appreciated the learning and social opportunities provided by home education. This group in particular felt the need for interaction between formal institutions and home education. Giftedness and home education is an area waiting for further research.

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Home Education Networks

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Use of Resources

Parents use a wide variety of community resources. These include the use of libraries, clubs, tutors and specialist classes as well as relevant excursions.

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Parents Seeking Information and Public Understanding

Many parents want access to information relevant to their home education programs.

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Trevaskis, R. (2005). *Home Education - The Curriculum of Life*. Unpublished MEd, Monash, Melbourne.

Greater Public Awareness

Home educating parents frequently express the wish that the general public had a better understanding of home education and its benefits.

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Problems with Home Education

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Professional Experiences with Home Educated Students/Student Transitions between Home and Mainstream Institutions

Professional experiences with home educated students and student experiences through transitions into and out of mainstream educational institutions indicate that most home educated students move easily between the two systems. Movements are occurring in both directions to benefit student educational and social outcomes. When there are problems for students moving into mainstream institutions, these are usually the result of learning needs different to average student abilities, family dysfunction, prior negative experiences in mainstream institutions and mismatch with particular mainstream institutional structures and features rather than from the practice of home education.

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Home Educators: Legislation and Regulation

The greatest cause of tension and ill-will for home educators was centered on legislative and regulatory bodies and their requirements. Resistance to regulations was significant. In the

Home Schooling Review it was noted that most home educators did not comply with the provisions of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 Qld*.

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