



## **Experiments in education- Home schooling**

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### **Abstract**

*From our study of history, we know that from time to time, humanity goes through momentous changes and every time education takes a huge step forward. These too are times of change and experimentation and amongst the experiments being done in education; the one that needs to be looked at seriously is the phenomena of home schooling. Our present schooling system has not been effective enough to give us the education that we really needed and a survey has rightly caught this emotion saying today's schooling has resulted in "greater degrees and lesser jobs, greater sites but lesser social interactions and rising depression and student suicides in India" as cited by the NHRC and SIDH report 2009-10. And hence, many parents are now looking at alternatives like homeschooling. This paper sees the holistic view of the homeschooling phenomena, from what it means to what is the curriculum to its pros and cons and future prospects and finally a few concluding thoughts.*

**Key words-** Homeschooling, holistic education, alternatives, experiments in education.

Every morning five-year-old Shubham starts his school day by reading in bed with his mother. He especially likes Enid Blyton and the "Famous Five", there is no rush to go to school, no tiffins to be packed, no yelling, no shouting and definitely no hurry –burry! No Shubham is not on a holiday, he is "homeschooled".

### **What is Home schooling?**

These are times of change and experimentation and amongst the experiments being done in education; the one that needs to be looked at seriously is the phenomena of home schooling.

Our present schooling system has not been effective enough to give us the education that we really needed and hence many parents are now looking at alternatives like homeschooling. Home-schooling is in simple words, “studying at home” and is different from going to a public, private or boarding school. Students learn the same subjects in the curriculum as others but at home and with their parents. This method of schooling is considered by some as being especially supportive of students who have special educational needs, those who are victims of bullying and even those who are moving from place to place for personal or professional reasons.

### **The Start of Home Schooling**

In the 1960, R.J.Rushdoony in USA came up with the concept of Homeschooling after being disillusioned by the public School System. He vigorously attacked school reformers like John Dewey and Horace Mann and in his book *Intellectual Schizophrenia*.

During this time, researchers and educators Raymond and Dorothy Moore began their amazing research on Early Childhood education and found that formal school actually killed the creativity and reduced the children’s will to learn and explore.

Their primary assertion was that the “*bonds and emotional development made at home with parents during these years produced critical long term results that were cut short by enrolment in schools, and could neither be replaced nor afterward corrected in an institutional setting.*”<sup>1</sup>

- The greatest proponent of home schooling is John Holt , a great American educator who wrote the books, *How Children Fail* , *How Children Learn* (1967) and *The Underachieving School*. He said “*I have come to believe that that whatever we most need to learn .....I never learnt in school and indeed was not taught in any school!*”<sup>2</sup>

Homeschooling as an urban movement started about 30 years ago in the US. Disillusioned by the way schools impart knowledge to pupils all over the country; many parents chose not to send their children to school and taken on the sole responsibility of their learning. This group of parents is small in number, compared to the billions who send their children to form a tiny but ever growing group of people across the world who do not send their kids to regular school. Ivan Illich and his idea of deschooling is slightly different from home schooling because deschooling is for a limited period where school going kids are “deschooled” for a

year or month or two and them may be put back , it also includes alternative forms of schools like “ KFI “ schools in India.

### **Home schooling in India**

In India, the movement has only just gathered strength in the last five years since 2008. Before then there were just a scattering of homeschooling families far flung across the country. Unlike schooling which is more or less uniform, homeschooling is extremely diverse. There are on the one hand homeschool families that follow a structure, curriculum, answer tests on and offline, and appear for 10th board examinations. On the other hand there are families who home school their kids mainly do encourage their special interests and capabilities in dancing, singing and writing etc. There are many support groups for Alternative schools and Homeschoolers in India but most of them are only on the Internet.

Many of the Homeschoolers who interact in these groups are based in major urban Indian cities - New Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Pune, Chennai, Kolkata. However there is considerable presence of homeschoolers in smaller Indian cities as well.

### **Curriculum and Tools of Home Schooling**

Speaking of curriculum, most homeschoolers use a mix of structured studies and unstructured studies. Some follow standard curriculums like NCERT, CBSE, IGCSE,IB, NIOS. Some do only those subjects in which the child has shown more interest. Some focus on the basic reading, writing and arithmetic and some other extra-curricular activity and leave the child free to make her own curriculum. What one can do depends a lot on what interests the child. Some kids are bookish, some children like to build things, some are more mathematical or computer savvy, or artistic, or musical, or whatever. The mix is never the same for all home schoolers . There is no fixed standard and parents choose only a general curriculum.

Families can rely on lots of non-traditional tools for learning in home schooling such as:

- Reading out loud
- Reading silently for pleasure
- Field trips
- Art projects
- Computer programs
- Science kits

- Learning handicrafts
- Taking classes that interest them
- Visiting parks and going for recreational activities
- Taking nature walks
- Starting a garden
- Cooking and baking
- Using actual science equipments like microscopes, pH strips, etc
- Using math tools like calculators, scales, protractors .
- Encouraging free writing, journaling, blogging
- Using a variety of computer apps (there are lots that are there in math, physics and even grammar)
- Photography as a tool to learn
- Blogging and taking part in age-appropriate web sites
- Playing outside
- Building with LEGOs and other building sets
- Playing games
- Attending programs at nature centers and historic sites
- Spending time with friends
- Frequent library visits
- Volunteer work in the community
- Meeting up with other home schoolers

### **The Pros and Cons of Home Schooling**

These benefits are not universal in nature and not enjoyed by all homeschoolers just as the failures of regular schools are not experienced by all. Perhaps the biggest advantage to homeschooling your children is that parents know exactly what their child is learning and have complete control over when and how they learn it. other pros are:

- Flexible schedule and own pace of learning
- Flexible teaching methods for differing learning styles.
- More time with your children for bonding with you.
- Opportunity to disciple the children with greater depth, and more understanding.
- Siblings can strengthen their relationships among themselves.
- Children learn self-reliance at a younger age.

- More efficient learning experience.
- Reduced exposure to physical harm.
- Reduced exposure to corrupt ideologies.
- Reduced exposure to peer pressure especially in profanities like underage drinking, drugs.
- Less pressure to fit society's definition of coolness.
- Opportunity for a better education.
- Emotional Freedom from peer pressure, competition, boredom, and bullies.
- Higher self-esteem especially among girls (Research on *A Sense of Self: Listening to Homeschooled Adolescent Girls* by Susannah Sheffer( 1997)).
- Closer Family Relationships.
- Stability during Difficult Times like, an illness, a death in the family, or another obstacle or transition, homeschooling helps families cope during challenging periods.
- Children get enough sleep
- No Homework- Homeschooled children can accomplish in a few hours what takes a typical classroom a week or more to cover. It is a major “pro” of homeschooling: No more homework!
- Homeschooling is legal in India as the Minister of Human Resource Development Kapil Sibal officially recognized and affirmed homeschooling as a legal educational option under "The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009".

### **Cons of homeschooling**

The greatest fear is the isolation of the child and the lack of socialization but there are other issues like legal sanctions, certification at board levels etc that homeschoolers need to think about;

- Home-schooling can be costly compared to public schooling.
- Only the tutor can guarantee the level of education received, and whether or not it follows the curriculum correctly. The student must trust that the tutor is educating to the requirements set by the local authority.
- As home-schooled students study alone, some may feel lonely or suffer from a lack of social, interpersonal and communication skills.



- Limited access to sports.
- Loneliness even though there are the parents and sibling who interact with them.
- Exhaustion for the mother
- Not all parents are qualified to be teachers especially for higher class teaching of maths and science.
- Some homeschoolers converse with adults better than publicly educated children. Home educated children frequently demonstrate greater character and love for their fellow man.
- Parents and children remain too connected and may be too scared to live outside the home.
- The other problem arises if the parents are fighting, have family problems, are not motivated enough or disciplined enough; homeschooling can just blow up in your face.

### **Successes and Possibilities after School Years**

There are homeschooled children who score high marks if they so wish and are capable. They have got admission to the best colleges and universities. Recent reports in mid 2010 in Indian newspapers about Sahil Kaushik, the IIT topper of Delhi who was home schooled by his doctor-mother highlighted how homeschooled children in India could also enter mainstream education fields.

One of our Pune homeschoolers has completed her MPhil at Oxford, and three have been admitted in to Fergusson College.

- *In fact, home-schooled kids are just as socialized as other children. One study, by a Canadian home-schooling group, found that 67% of formerly home-schooled adult respondents said they are "very happy," as opposed to the general population's 43%. Another study, published in the Journal of College Admission in 2009 found that home-schooled students perform better on their ACTs scores, have higher college GPAs and are more likely to graduate in four years*

Many good universities in the US **prefer** homeschooled children as statistics show that they are less competitive and more co-operative, they make great team mates on projects and take initiative.

They are highly motivated as they are doing the course because they are interested in the subject matter, not just the marks and the certificate that will lead to a job. They have created

separate admission criteria for homeschoolers based on portfolios of actual work done. According to a research based book by Dr. Joseph Murray of Vanderbilt University, "*Home Schooling in America*", homeschoolers tend to be far more stable and well connected to others than regular school kids.

**In Conclusion....**

"Our vision is to form character over academics and raise children who are secure enough to perform without competing with no one but themselves, growing better each day, and fulfilling their own unique calling in life by discovering their unique strengths and using them to their full potential."

- *Swami Vivekananda*

The regular school is a kind of artificial environment created to teach (*read tame*) the children and make them all like products off an assembly line whereas a home is a very natural one. There are lots of societies without schools, but never one without homes. Home is the center of the circle from which we move out in all directions, and therefore the best possible place to get oneself educated and not merely trained is the home.

- *Once when John Holt was speaking to a school audience, a student asked him, "But surely there must be something important enough that everyone needs to learn?" He thought for a moment and replied, "To learn to say 'I'm sorry', 'I don't know', and 'I was wrong'".<sup>8</sup>*

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