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Op-Ed

Homeschooling Is Not The Answer For All

In the era of school choice, parents look for the best possible option for their students. While many turn to private, charter, and magnet schools, some forego educational institutions completely, turning to self-educating their children (in an often-unregulated manner!) because there are a lack of schools seen fit (Hale 2021:133-134). **However, I believe that homeschooling is not a substitute for a team of quality educators and a social experience, and can often lead to deficits for many homeschooled students (Coalition for Responsible Home Education, n.d.).** School choice is an issue for many because people find an issue with their available schools and want options for their students (Hale 2021:116-117). People want the best possible option, and some believe that option is themselves. But I believe that to not be the case, and that not only do you need a village, for many, you may need the expertise of schools, educators, and paraprofessionals.

A strong component of the educational experience is exposing students to social strata outside their own, as social reproduction is strongly related to the class of the family a student comes from, as they mainly going to transmit the resources they themselves have (Lareau 1987:79). I believe that it is important to put students in situations where upward mobility is possible, especially since it is noted in the research that even parents understand they can only contribute so much to the access their children have to resources and cultural capital, and that school helps supplement and prevent the simple reproduction of views produced by a student's family (Lareau 1987:79-80; Colarco 2014:126-127). Students should not be insulated from the growth of their social capital by being insulated from exposure to the outside world by homeschooling. I believe

that students can lose out on the opportunity to improve their social capital with homeschooling the same way they can with a low-quality public education. Socialization, growth of confidence, and interpersonal skills are education as much as math, science, and social studies. The growth of these soft skills is as important as other skills, and the “I can do that too!” ideology taken by non-educators does not take into account that these skills cannot be as effectively supported in a home environment.

Ivan Illich captures the ideology of the homeschooling, deschooling and unschooling movement quite well, though in a far more radical and much less conservative view than those typically espoused by homeschooling families and parents. Illich posits that the credential system of schools to assign social rank should be done away with, and that schools should be shied away from in favor of experiential and reciprocal learning, much like many homeschoolers and unschoolers (Illich 1971:469-470). The issue is that de-schooling is a risk, as school is a site of much of the experiential and reciprocal learning its detractors want! Illich contends that much learning happens casually (Illich 1971:471), and while this supports the idea of deschooling in that it supports informal learning, if you reduce the amount that any learning can happen, it is harmful.

Why is mass individualistic de-schooling a risk, exactly? A lack of socialization, and a deficit of skills. How to mitigate this risk, though? The answer is simple: eliminate the unnecessary use of homeschooling to those it would truly be the best option for. Require virtual or otherwise curriculum based options, equivalent to an actual school setting in some fashion. They should be at least as content heavy, even if the school year is different. Homeschooling should not be a go-

to for every other parent who decides they are unhappy with their public school and believes they could do a better job, it should be for extreme cases of a mismatch between a student's local milieu and their educational options. A student and a sole tutor are simply an outdated mode of instruction in the modern day, and one that leaves students behind with deficits, see Homeschooling Fast Facts (Coalition for Responsible Home Education, undated).

Why do you need a team of quality educators? The answer is simple. You cannot raise a child alone. A parent cannot do it all, and you need to defer to others. A parent does not raise a child completely alone, and whether it be family, school, or other parts of the community, we need others to help raise our children and provide for them. Parents do admit that teachers teach them the things they can't (Lareau 80). Parents need others to supplement, and who else than those who work to benefit the development of students? Their expertise is, in my opinion, not for just a credentialism monopoly as Illich suggests (1971:470), but to truly help and benefit children, not just by teachers and from curriculum but in the other roles present in education as well. There is a complete picture of development in schools and around others that individualistic homeschooling environment does not produce.

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