

Avondale College of Higher Education

School of Education

SO YOU'RE A TEACHER, AND YOU HOME EDUCATE?

WHY WOULD YOU, AND HOW DOES THAT WORK FOR YOU?

Exploring motivations for, and implementation of,
home education by qualified teachers in Australia

An Honours Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Degree of

Master of Education (Honours)

by

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STUDENT DECLARATION

I hereby declare that:

- i) this thesis is my own work,
- ii) all persons consulted, and all assistance rendered are fully acknowledged,
- iii) all references used are indicated in the text and accurately reported in the list of references,
- iv) the substance of this thesis has not been presented, in whole, or part by me, to any university for a degree.

Date: 1st November, 2012

Kate Croft

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ABSTRACT

The Australian home education community is a rapidly growing, yet relatively unstudied segment of the population. The research presented in this thesis used a theoretical combination of *hermeneutic phenomenology* and *grounded theory* to explore motivations for and implementation of home education by qualified teachers within Australia. Research was conducted using an online questionnaire and follow up interviews.

Analysis of results revealed a number of themes relating to both motivation and implementation of home education. Motivating factors were represented by *push factors*, defined as negative perceptions of mainstream education and *pull factors*, positive perceptions of home education. Participants' background teaching experience strongly influenced their decision to home educate their own children. These qualified teachers expressed concern regarding the inability of institutionalised education systems to cater for the diversity of individual needs. Implementation styles fell into three categories; formal, eclectic and informal, with a tendency to become less formal over time.

In contrast with perceptions of home educators, participants supported schools as a necessary educational option. Participants expressed a belief that while teaching background provided confidence when beginning home education, and knowledge of educational jargon, it was often detrimental when home educating due to differences between learning which occurs within a framework of classroom instruction and that which occurs individually in a home environment. Comparison was made between the findings of this research and the work of Pestalozzi.

Findings are consistent with previous Australian home education research and this work can contribute to discussions about developing more individualised learning programs in mainstream education. Findings also provide support for flexibility regarding implementation of educational styles within home education.

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RESEARCHER'S BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT INTEREST IN TOPIC

I was educated for the most part at home due primarily to geographical factors. My curriculum was provided by the New South Wales Correspondence School based in Sydney, and later the Port Macquarie Distance Education Centre. Through these years I had a variety of friends and acquaintances educated both in homes, which used a variety of home educating approaches, and in mainstream schools. In 1994 I commenced attending Port Macquarie High School where I completed Years 11 and 12. My interest in home education led me to complete an Honours thesis (Patrick, 1999) at the completion of my B.Ed. Primary. This dealt with the community awareness of home education as a viable educational option.

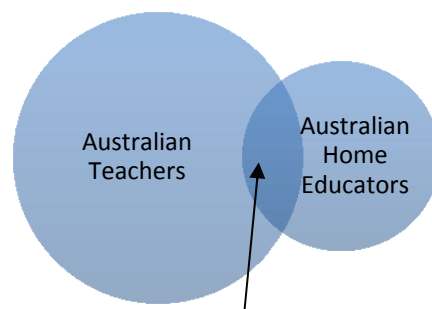
Through four years of teacher education and five years of classroom teaching, four of which were in a school providing a differentiated curriculum, I became increasingly aware of the difficulty of providing for individual student needs within a large group setting. This issue is frequently addressed across much of the education sector and I applaud those who are working towards this provision at both school and classroom level. My husband is a highly successful teacher within a mainstream school. Our children are currently being educated at home.

Perceptions regarding our decision, as teachers, to home educate tended to fall into two categories: criticism, as it was assumed that home education denotes opposition to mainstream schooling, therefore a teacher would be hypocritical having pursued a career in a field which they disregard (Roy, 2000); and relief, that children would still receive 'real' education as they were under the care of a teacher. The puzzled and defensive responses from friends and acquaintances to the perceived hypocrisy of a teacher electing to home educate led to my initial interest in this topic.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH

This research developed a theory of education as practiced by qualified teachers who are also members of the Australian home educating community. The following document outlines a study of the motivation for, and implementation of, home education by qualified teachers within Australia. Thus it provides insight into a group who have traditionally been part of the mainstream schooling structure and yet elected to educate their own children outside that structure.



Qualified teachers within Australia who home educate their own children.

Figure 1-1 Studied population

Much literature explores home education from either a parent or teacher perspective, with the two parties tending to present opposing views (Romanowski, 2001). This document outlines a third voice (see Figure 1), as identified within this research. This voice is that of the professional teacher; qualified, experienced and in some cases, still working within mainstream schools, yet also involved in the practice of home education. This research explored their motivating factors and identified strategies implemented by these teachers to ensure the educational needs of their children were being met within their home environment.

1.2 DEFINITION OF HOME EDUCATION USED IN THIS RESEARCH

While the term ‘home schooling’ retains its common usage, particularly in U.S. literature, in this research the phrase ‘home education’ is used. The two terms are often used interchangeably (Jacob, Barratt-Peacock, Carins, Holderness-Roddam, Home & Shipway, 1991) along with ‘home based learning’, with usage varying between Australian states and territories (Jackson, 1999). The term ‘home education’ is used throughout this document as it emphasises a focus on the child’s learning, rather than suggesting the implementation of a school like approach (Jackson, 2009; Knowles, Marlow, & Muchmore, 1992). Home education is defined in many ways (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Jackson, 2009; Jacob et al., 1991; Lampe, 1988). Jackson (2009) defined home education as “... education provided by parents, who use a home base to organise their children’s learning” (p. 5).

As this research did not differentiate between styles of home education and included both elective distance education and unschooling, it utilised Jackson’s (2009) definition of home education, with slight modification to include those following a child directed approach. In such cases it was not always appropriate to list parents as either ‘providing’ or ‘organising’ their children’s education. Therefore the definition used in document is as follows:

Home education is education overseen by parents, using the home as a base from which the children’s learning is facilitated.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THIS DOCUMENT

There is a constant tension present in the preparation of a research document. It is necessary to provide the reader with an understanding of the research process while retaining a focus on the findings being presented. This tension is further enhanced in

presenting phenomenological research. The hermeneutical spiral (Flick, 2009) describes a naturalistic research process of continual discovery, where one may revisit the same point on a number of occasions, each time gaining a greater understanding.

This process is difficult to reconcile with a linear document. This document attempts to present an understandable progression of thought (see Figure 1-2) while maintaining focus on the story being told by the participants.

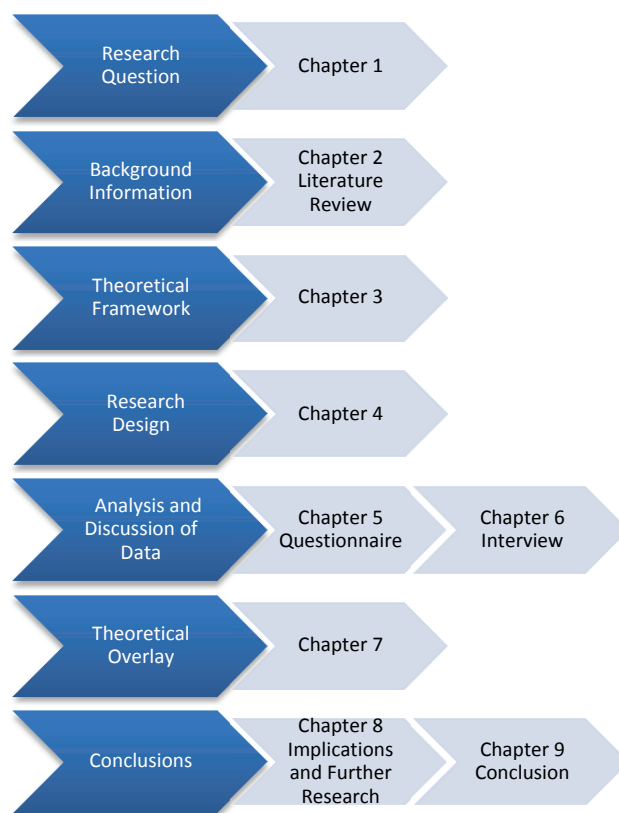


Figure 1-2 Illustration of the relationship between the structure of this document and aspects of the research process

Literature referred to within this document is grouped where it is deemed most relevant. Thus, while **Chapter 2** comprises a review of literature providing background to the topic, further references to related literature is located throughout the document where it adds to the progression of the idea presented. The most notable example of this is **Chapter 7** where

theories of education are presented as an overlay as they pertain to the data collected within the research.

The purpose of each of the following chapters within this thesis is as follows:

Chapter 2 comprises a review of literature relevant to the topic. While no literature was located addressing this specific topic, the review enables a brief overview of home education as well as research literature regarding qualified teachers within the home education community. A section on home education within Australia is provided in order to provide background understanding to the research. This is followed by an overview of the twin issues of motivation and implementation and what previous literature has identified about these topics.

Chapter 3 presents the context for the research, locating this research within the qualitative approach to research. It then presents the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the research. Following this it defines the research paradigm, discussing briefly the concepts of *grounded theory* and *hermeneutic phenomenology* and how they were applied within this research.

Chapter 4 describes the research design used in this research. It outlines the data collection and analysis methods used and moves on to address ethical considerations. This chapter also addresses issues of ensuring rigour and identifies four measurements of validity and how they were addressed within this research.

Chapter 5 presents an analysis of the questionnaire data, under three headings: Part A – Teaching Background, Part B – Motivation, and Part C - Implementation.

Chapter 6 presents an analysis of interview responses, also divided into three sections: Part A - Motivation; Part B - Implementation; and Part C - Relationship to mainstream education.

Chapter 7 outlines the findings of this study and how they relate to a number of theories of learning and education, specifically focussing on the theories of Pestalozzi.

Chapter 8 details implications that may be drawn from the findings of this research. It also outlines potential areas for future research possibilities.

Chapter 9 presents conclusions drawn from this research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This review begins by outlining what is known about the size of the home education community both internationally and in Australia. Following this it explores interactions between home and school education. It briefly outlines areas of tension between those involved in each of the two educational options, followed by areas of cooperation between the two. After this it gives an overview of home education within Australia, followed by identification of known motivators and how they are classified. The final section describes the known implementation practices of home educators within Australia.

2.2 HOME EDUCATION OVERVIEW

2.2.1 SIZE OF HOME EDUCATION COMMUNITY

Estimates exceed two million families involved in home education internationally (Jeub, 2005). As many homes include more than one child, actual figures are potentially 2-3 times that number of individual children being taught in their home environment with an estimated 2.04 million home educated children in the United States alone (Ray, 2011).

Australian estimates range from between 10 000 – 20 000 children (Williams, in McHugh, 2007), to potentially 50 000 children (Townsend, 2012) being home educated in Australia. Precise figures notwithstanding, home education is a rapidly expanding sector of the educational community (Harding, 1997; Houston and Toma, 2003; Ray, in McHugh, 2007).

2.2.2 TENSION BETWEEN HOME EDUCATORS AND MAINSTREAM EDUCATORS

Home education has often been viewed with suspicion by those outside the home education community (Broadhurst, 1999; Lyman, 1998) as it is seen as both opposed to and inferior to mainstream education, with critics using school structures and procedures as a guide to judge the effectiveness and value of home education (Lubienski, 2000; Reich, 2008). While critics have long raised the issues of academic outcomes (Reich, 2005; Reich, 2008) and socialisation (Naughton, 2007; Sekkes, 2004), these concerns are not supported by available research. Indeed, while the decentralised and personal nature of home education creates difficulty in generalising research findings, studies indicate that home educated students achieve as well as, if not better than, their peers both academically and socially (Carson, 2009; Hoog & Hooegeveen, 2007; Naughton, 2007; Sekkes, 2004).

2.2.3 COOPERATION BETWEEN HOME EDUCATORS AND MAINSTREAM EDUCATORS

Rather than an opposition to schools, home education can be considered as simply “a logical extension of the educational choice mechanism” (Morton, 2010, p. 55) as it is ultimately a choice for private education (Belfield & Levin, 2005; Cooper & Sureau, 2007). Home education moves education from a school construct and places it within the realm of families and communities (Anthony & Burrows, 2012).

It has been argued that both home and school educators should engage in “mutually beneficial relationships that improve chances for the academic success of both public school and home-schooled children” (Romanowski, 2001, p. 45). Schools which have developed such programs (Barrett, 2003; Eley, 2002; Hill, 2000; Pearson, 2002) are often considered innovative. However, those involved consider collaboration to be simply part of the role of

the school, whose task it is to provide education at whatever level of involvement is required by the family (Barrett, 2003). They further argue that a desire for some to educate from home rather than school “does not lessen the responsibilities that educators have to assist in the education of all children” (Pearson, 2002, p. 6).

Many home educating parents want to be involved with school programs (Olsen, 2008), however schools tend to be reluctant to allow such relationships, possibly misunderstanding the motivating factors involved by families selecting home education as their option of choice (Romanowski, 2001). Both parties may benefit from viewing education styles as being complimentary rather than competitive (Romanowski, 2001), as successful home educators could provide new insights to traditional methods. Potential benefits to mainstream education include financial considerations, as home education is cheaper than public schooling (Pearson, 2002).

2.3 TEACHERS INVOLVED IN HOME EDUCATION

2.3.1 NUMBER OF TEACHERS INVOLVED IN HOME EDUCATION

Inherent within the discussion of educational approaches is the understanding of schools as the dominant provider of education with schooling (and therefore education) belonging primarily to the domain of the state and professional educators. Parents, though interested stakeholders within the educational domain, usually defer to the perceived greater knowledge and experience of the teacher as the expert provider of education.

Home education therefore has been seen as a cause of tension between teachers, who represent the educational system, and parents, who represent their children. Mainstream educators have viewed home education as a threat to their function and ability as

educational professionals (Romanowski, 2001). Further, home education has been viewed as inferior due to a perceived lack of social and academic opportunities and students are seen as disadvantaged due to an absence of professional educators (Romanowski, 2001).

Thus it is intriguing to discover that a sizable number of parents who have chosen to home educate their own children are actually teachers (Patrick, 1999; Roy, 2000). Teachers have been noted to form a 'high proportion' of the home education community (Jacob et al., 1991; Rudner, 1999). Mooney & Kissane, (1985, in Harp, 1998) assert that almost half of home educating parents in the United States are qualified teachers, while Meighen's (1995) UK analysis found between 25-33% of those studied were members of the teaching profession. Previous research shows between 8% (Harding, 1997) and 26% (Patrick, 1999) of the Australian home educating parents studied held teaching qualifications.

Information and support abound for parents seeking to become home education 'teachers' (eg. Shaw, 2011). However there is little acknowledgement of teachers who become home education parents. One internet article (Roy, 2000) addresses this question with reference to three individuals in British Columbia, Canada, concluding that these teachers want the best for their own children and recognise the limitations inherent within the school system. One international study (Jablonski, 2004) addresses teachers who home educate. There has been no research located detailing the experience or actions of Australian teachers who have chosen to home educate.

2.3.2 TEACHING BACKGROUND AS A LEGAL REQUIREMENT FOR HOME EDUCATION

The requirement of teacher certification as a prerequisite for home education appears to indicate a belief that education is best conducted in a school manner, contrary to the

evidence that home education differs from that within a classroom (Shaw, 2011; Thomas, 1998; Thomas, 2006). Teacher certification has not been required to meet home education requirements in any Australian state or territory since 2003, when Queensland removed this requirement from its home education policy. Certification has been a contentious issue in the United States with attempts to legislate that one must be a credentialed teacher to legally home educate (Zehr, 2002). This is despite research showing no effect on performance levels or educational advantage for children based on whether a parent is a certified teacher (Havens, 1991; Rakestraw, 1988; Ray, 2000; Rudner 1999). Research indicates that teacher training is not necessary for successful home education, rather there is a need for greater understanding of the diverse nature of home education and a focus on its use of informal processes (Thomas, 2006).

2.3.3 QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE PRESENCE OF TEACHERS IN HOME EDUCATION

The large number of teachers among the home education community raises two key questions for this research.

The first addresses motivation: **“Why do so many teachers find schooling inappropriate for their own children?”** (Lampe, 1988, p. 22). There is an implication that the presence of teachers as home educators denotes a lack of confidence in schools, with the assumption that the teacher is “well acquainted with the inadequacies of the system from a teacher's viewpoint;” (Lampe, 1988).

The second question is that of implementation. Lampe (1988) notes that home educating parents who attempt to function like teachers within schools, face difficulty in achieving a successful home education environment. So, **how do teachers who home educate choose**

to implement their educational choice? The twin issues of motivation and implementation will be further addressed in the final sections of this chapter. First, is outlined a brief summary of Australian home education.

2.4 AUSTRALIAN HOME EDUCATION

While much research exists on home education internationally, particularly in the United States, significant differences in educational history between the United States and Australia mean that U.S. literature does not directly represent the Australian home education community (Barratt-Peacock, 1997). Thus for meaning to be gained from this research it must be situated against the background of the Australian home education environment.

2.4.1 AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION HISTORY

School attendance became compulsory in Australia earlier than many other English speaking countries, due to an attempt by authorities to reform the criminal and immoral aspects of society by removing children from the negative influence of their parents (Jacob et al., 1991). Schools were seen as a means of keeping innocent children from their immoral parents (Barcan, 1988), many of whom were convicts and/or involved in prostitution (Brosnan, 1991). Australian educational responsibility has predominantly been related to school systems and structures having moved over time, from home via church to state responsibility (Varnham & Squelch, 2008).

Australia's low population and vast distances have long complicated the delivery of education. City boarding schools were developed to allow rural families access to education alongside their city counterparts (Australian Government, 2012). Additionally unique institutions, such as correspondence schools and the famous "School of the Air", allowed

remote students to access school teachers and programs (Australian Government, 2012). Until the 1970's education and school were considered synonymous regardless of the technologies used to deliver the curriculum. Australian physical geography, combined with the history of Distance Education, affect the public's understanding and development of home education within Australia (Harp, 1998) leading to a perception of home education as a 'second rate' alternative when 'real' schools are not available.

2.4.2 AUSTRALIAN HOME EDUCATION REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Home education is legal in all states and territories of Australia, however the registration requirements differ between states and territories, ranging "from almost stifling to facilitative and enabling" (Allan & Jackson, 2010). Restrictive registration requirements may be indicative of an assumption that quality education necessarily must utilise school type practices (Allan & Jackson, 2010; Varnham, 2008; Varnham & Squelch, 2008). Traditionally those who judge the validity of the home education setting tend to be "professional educators who are more familiar with the workings of schools which they use as their reference point for monitoring and registration requirements" (Jacob et al., 1991). As already noted, this is despite research indicating that successful education within the home differs greatly from that seen in schools (Thomas, 1998).

2.4.3 AUSTRALIAN HOME EDUCATION COMMUNITY

What is known about the Australian home education community is that they are a diverse population, with varying demographics. Home educators may be found in both urban and rural areas (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Education Queensland, 2003; Jackson, 2009; OBOS, 2004) and are present in all states and territories of Australia. Home educators typically

have one income (Barratt-Peacock, 1997, Education Queensland, 2003, Harding, 1997, 2003, Harp, 1998, Honeybone, 2000, Jackson, 2009, Jacob et. al., 1991, Lampe, 1988, OBS, 2004, Patrick, 1999, Simich, 1998, and Thomas, 1998) with the mother usually the main educator at home. Students who have been involved in home education generally report positively about their experience and successfully move into mainstream educational institutions (Jackson, 2009). Research outlining motivation for, and implementation, of home education is explored further in the next section of this chapter.

2.5 MOTIVATION TO HOME EDUCATE

2.5.1 HISTORICAL MOTIVATIONS

The modern home education movement began in the United States in the 1960's when promoted by two teachers, Raymond Moore and John Holt (Kaziunas, 2003; Lyman, 1988). Moore and Holt represented different ideologies, having been described as representing the "religious right [and] ... countercultural left" (Lyman, 1998) respectively. While both attempted to reform the school systems in which they worked, they were motivated to promote home education as an option when they found institutionalised education too unwieldy to change. Since then much research has been directed at parental motivation for home education both here in Australia (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Brosnan, 1991; Harding, 1997; Harp, 1998; Hunter, 1990; Maeder, 1995; McColl, 2005; Jacob et al., 1991; Simich, 1998; Thomas, 1998; Varnham, 2008) and overseas (Cai et al., 2002; Jeub, 2005; Olsen, 2008; Rapoport, 2007; Romanowski, 2001; Wagner, 2008).

2.5.2 CLASSIFICATIONS OF MOTIVATION

Several researchers (Lampe, 1988; Lyman, 1998; Van Galen, 1987; Varnham & Squelch, 2008) have used binary labels to describe motivations (Monk, 2009). Van Galen (1987) divided parents who choose home education into those influenced by ideological differences such as religious views - ideologues - and those who chose a different method of instruction - pedagogues. While allowing for ease of assessment, simple classifications fail to encompass the broad range of motivating factors involved in the decision to home educate or the reality that persons may be influenced by a variety of factors which differ according to time and/or circumstance (Monk, 2009). The home education community is a multi-faceted demographic, leading to difficulty in generalisations (Aurini & Davies, 2005; Knowles, Marlow, & Muchmore, 1992; Knowles, Muchmore, & Spalding, 1994; Reich, 2005).

2.5.3 DIRECTION OF MOTIVATION

Rather than attempting to classify types of motivation, it is more useful to assess direction of motivation. Motivations for home educating may be separated into Push and Pull factors (Patrick, 1999) as seen in Figure 2-1.

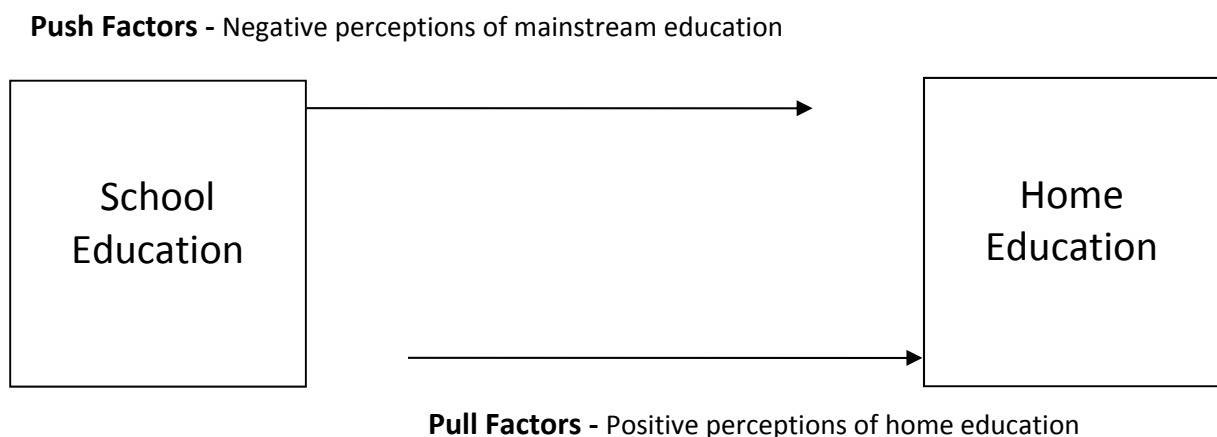


Figure 2-1 Push and Pull Factors

“Push factors” are negative experiences or concerns – such as bullying (Deery, 2012) which may cause people to leave the mainstream education system. Such decisions to home educate may be made more by default than by deliberate choice when parents find that schools are unable to provide what they perceive to be needed by their child. These decisions have been variously labelled as “last resort” (Morton, 2010) or “negative exit” (Stoudt, 2012). The perceived lack of provision for the needs of children may include a variety of factors including safety, morality or academic progress, with concerns tending to refer to specific individuals or schools rather than an entire system or philosophy of education (Morton, 2010).

“Pull factors” (Patrick, 1999) - also known as “positive entry” (Stoudt, 2012) - are perceived benefits which influence the decision to select home education above other educational options. Pull factors may include such perceived benefits as strengthening family relationships, religious beliefs, academic achievement or individualising learning programs (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Jacobs et al, 1991; Patrick, 1999; Thomas, 1998).

2.5.4 INDIVIDUALISATION AS UNDERLYING MOTIVATIONAL FACTOR

Home educators have often expressed concerns regarding the inability of school to provide for their child’s individual needs; including, but not limited to, giftedness and learning difficulties (Danaher, 1998; Jackson, 2009; Monk, 2009; Rapoport, 2007; Reilly, 2007). These parents considered home education to be the solution for their child’s individual education. This focus on the individual is not limited to the home educating community, but echoes a broader societal focus on individual development (Aurini & Davies, 2005; Morton, 2010).

2.5.5 PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Inherent within the decision to home educate is a belief that parents are responsible for the education of their child (Allan & Jackson, 2010; Brosnan, 1991; Harding, 1997; Jackson, 2009; Jackson & Allan, 2010; United Nations, 2011). While parents may be involved in their child's education through many means, it is within the home that they are able to most affect their child's educational development, as parental support is an essential ingredient for student success (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

2.5.6 FOUR ASPECTS OF PARENTAL MOTIVATION

Barratt-Peacock (1997) outlined four aspects involved in the decision to home educate, namely: *background factors*, the *crisis*, the *informant or mentor*, and *confirmation* (p.58). These four aspects will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 6 as they form part of the analytical framework for this research.

2.6 IMPLEMENTATION OF HOME EDUCATION

There is no "homogeneous group" (Morton, 2010, p. 1) of home educators, as there are "a myriad of practices, motivations and locations for home education" (Monk, 2009, p.157). The ever broadening scope of the movement allows only two generalisations, "The first is that families display considerable diversity in motives, methods and aims. The second is that they are usually very successful in achieving their chosen aims" (Meighan, 1995).

Barratt-Peacock (1997) and Thomas (1998) have produced the largest Australian studies describing the implementation of home education practice. The findings of these have been supported by a number of smaller studies (Habibullah 2004; Honeybone 2000; Lampe 1988; Patrick 1999; Simich 1998). The implementation of home education varies as greatly as does

motivation (Honeybone, 2000) with home educating families reporting the use of a wide variety of instruction techniques. It is a “truism among home educators that each family, each child, is unique and facing a unique situation” (Barratt-Peacock, 1997, p. 158).

2.6.1 CLASSIFICATION OF IMPLEMENTATION APPROACHES

Home education implementation is often grouped into three strands variously labelled:

- structured, semi-structured and no-structure (Patrick, 1999);
- more formal, less formal and informal (Thomas, 1998); and
- formal, eclectic and informal (Barratt-Peacock, 1997).

The term eclectic describes the combination of both formal and informal practices used by many home educating families (Barratt-Peacock, 1997). Research has found that parents tend to begin fairly structured, but become less formal over time (Allan & Jackson, 2010; OBOS, 2004; Thomas, 1998).

2.6.2 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN IMPLEMENTATION AND MOTIVATION

The selection of education style is inevitably connected to the purpose of home education (Barratt-Peacock, 1997). Assessment of home education implementation can only be understood in the context of the motivation behind that implementation (Brosnan, 1991). It is important that home educators be aware of their own motivating factors when developing the learning environment for their children, to ensure a sound fit between practice and philosophical intention (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Krivanek, 1985). A successful home education environment would demonstrate a “consistency between their reasons for

choosing home education, their goals and the means by which they were to be attained” (Barratt-Peacock, 1997, p. 148).

2.7 SUMMARY

Australian home education is a rapidly growing educational option. It is impossible to determine accurate numbers of home educators in Australia. Home and school education have traditionally been seen as opposing constructs, however there is evidence that a number of home educators hold teaching qualifications. Little international research has been conducted on this demographic. No available research has been found in Australia.

Factors motivating parents to select home education are many and varied. These factors may be divided into *push* and *pull* factors. While many parents report negative experiences with their child’s school experience, positive motivators include a twofold view of parental responsibility for the education of their own child and an attempt to individualise the learning process and environment for their own children.

Australian home educators represent a broad cross-section of society, and reasons for home educating are equally diverse. Education styles are classified under the three headings: *formal*, *informal* and *eclectic*. Strategies involved in the implementation of home education must be considered in the context of motivation.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Due to the exploratory nature of the question guiding the research: **What motivates Australian teachers to home educate, and how do they implement their decision?** it was necessary to select a research methodology suited for an exploratory process. This chapter presents the theoretical underpinnings of the research outlined in this document.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The research approach known as Qualitative refers to a range of research methodology which follows an inductive process of deriving meaning from the data (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012). While the line between quantitative and qualitative research becomes increasingly blurred (Grix 2004), quantitative research utilises numerical data and statistical analysis to test a hypothesis, whereas qualitative research may deal with a range of data, including words, pictures and observed actions and experiences (Yin, 2012) in order to increase understanding of an event or action. Qualitative research tends to view theory as developed from a data set rather than a structure in which data is sorted (Morse, 1994). Interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) is a key element in descriptive research that attempts to form an understanding of participants' lives (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

3.3 ONTOLOGY

Underlying this research is a view that reality consists as a construction of multiple, ongoing interactions. Knowledge of reality is necessarily limited to that with which one is able to

interact. Therefore while reality exists, it is not possible to be fully known or fully understood by any individual.

3.4 EPISTEMOLOGY

Human action has inherent meaning and therefore can only be known through an understanding and interpretation of this meaning (Schwandt, 2000). Meaning is created through interaction as each person is simultaneously making and being made by their individual background and experience (Laverty, 2003). It is impossible for our interpretation to be either complete or objective as we “are inextricably involved in the interpretive conversation” (Gallager, 1992, p. 9).

This research relies upon individuals sharing their subjective interpretation of events. As a result, there are several layers of interpretation –the individual participants’ interpretation of meaning, the meaning arising from the transcription process, the researcher’s analysis of this written data, and the context of the researcher’s personal background and understanding.

3.5 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This research used a *grounded theory* approach to develop a theory of the home education practice of qualified teachers, utilising *hermeneutic phenomenology* to develop a deeper understanding of participants’ experience (van Manen, 1990). The following selections provide a brief outline of these two approaches. Selection of which aspects applied in different parts of the project were made in an attempt to adhere to the underlying philosophies of both *grounded theory*, which insists upon methodology being selected on its ability to answer the research question (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1997), and

hermeneutic phenomenology which utilises an interactive approach in an attempt to fully and truly understand the perspective of another (van Manen, 1990). Thus approaches were utilised where they were deemed appropriate.

GROUNDED THEORY

The term *grounded theory* describes the inductive process of drawing themes and developing theory from data rather than interpreting data through the lens of theory (Birks & Mills, 2011). *Grounded theory* describes a fluid research process in which methodological choices arise from the research problem. Researchers are considered part of the research rather than objective onlookers. *Grounded theory* uses layers of analysis which move from concrete to theoretical in order to describe and develop an overarching theory of the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006).

HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

The theoretical approach of *hermeneutic phenomenology* best describes the foundational principles of research used here to answer the research question: **What motivates Australian teachers to home educate, and how do they implement their decision?** The purpose of *hermeneutic phenomenology* is to explore human existence in the world (Chesla, 1995).

Phenomenology is the development of an understanding of experienced reality (van Manen, 2007) with the intent to explore experiences in order to interpret and perhaps discover meanings which had not been located or had been previously lost (Lavery, 2003). *Hermeneutics* is an attempt to decipher and interpret the meaning intended by the individual rather than a study of the language used (Ricoeur, 1981). While involving the

study of texts, it is not a study of the text itself as in linguistics, rather *hermeneutics* uses language in order to understand the meaning behind the text (Gallager, 1992). Further, *hermeneutic phenomenology* assumes that it is impossible to separate the individual from the experience (Laverty, 2003). Meaning is therefore born from “the interpretive interaction between historically produced texts and the reader (Laverty, 2003, p. 28). Data collection is the attempt by the researcher to gain experience vicariously through others (Klamm, 2012) by borrowing “other people’s experiences and reflections on their experiences in order to be better able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning” (van Manen, 1990, p. 62).

The intent of this research was to describe the thoughts and experiences as shared by participants, rather than to make judgements regarding the validity of those thoughts and experiences (Thorne, 2000).

3.6 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the research. It outlined the ontological and epistemological understandings on which the research was based. Principles of both *grounded theory* and *hermeneutic phenomenology* were presented. The next chapter outlines the research design including the methodology and steps taken to ensure validity.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by outlining the methodology used within this research, including data collection and analysis procedures, an understanding of the population being studied and provision for ethical considerations. This is followed by an explanation of how issues of validity have been addressed within the research process, using Yardley's (2000) fourfold model: "Sensitivity to context", "Commitment and rigor"; "Transparency and coherence"; and "Impact and importance" (p. 215).

4.2 METHODOLOGY

This research utilised three stages of gathering information, presented in Figure 4-1. While the broad scope of literature provided background understanding to the research, data collection included an online questionnaire and follow up interviews as outlined below.

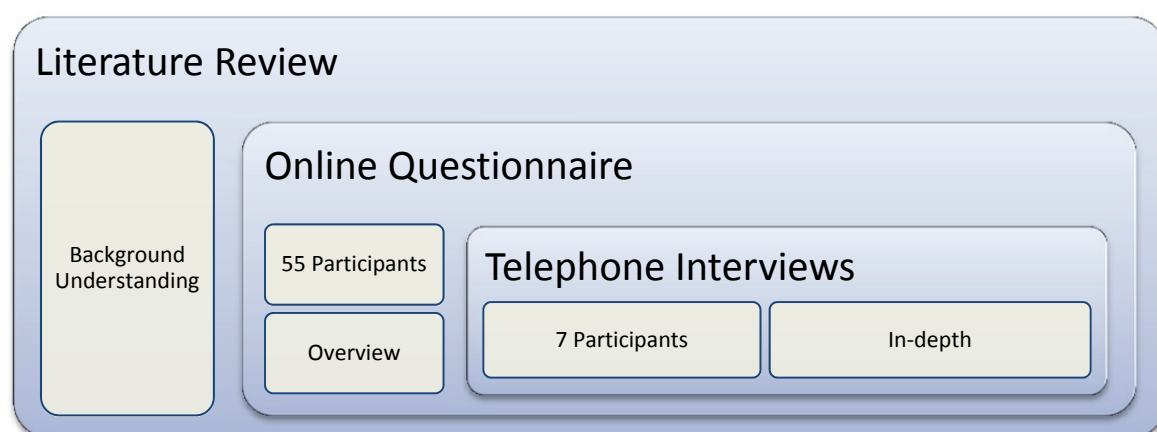


Figure 4-1 Aspects of research design outlining both the size of the sample, and the depth of interaction involved, at each level.

4.2.1 DATA COLLECTION

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire (see Appendix A) was developed to collect data from Australian teachers who had chosen to home educate their own children. The questionnaire was piloted on a local group of home educating parents, composed mostly of non-teaching backgrounds and one parent who was a teacher. The questionnaire was distributed online in 2012 via SurveyMonkey™. The link was shared through social media (Facebook), including pages for home education forums around Australia. Additionally, an email containing a link to the questionnaire was sent to the publicly identified contact person for home education networks in each Australian state and territory. Two reminders with new links were sent at intervals of approximately one month. Fifty-five valid questionnaires were completed.

The online questionnaire was widely circulated through a number of home education forums, particularly at national and state levels, rather than local groups in an attempt to reach difficult to access communities (Wright, 2005). However it necessarily limited the research to those who were technologically motivated and either linked to online home education groups or receiving emails from home education forums. The questionnaire was anonymous and completed online to reduce the difficulties involved with returning questionnaires as well as addressing concerns regarding identification (Wright, 2005).

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Interviews (see Appendix 2 for interview questions) were conducted with seven participants selected from the original fifty-five participants. Interviews are an opportunity for two

people to create a shared reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and a powerful method of developing an understanding of another's experience (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Six of the seven interviews were conducted by telephone as participants were located across several states and territories of Australia and it was impractical to visit each location. One participant lived near an interstate location to which the researcher was visiting and so this first interview was conducted at the participant's home. Each interview was recorded with the participants' permission, and then transcribed for coding and analysis. Researcher background and prior research experience were shared as a means of gaining trust and establishing rapport (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Given the descriptive, not evaluative nature of the research, this was not considered to create issues of bias (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The interviews were semi-structured (Fontana & Frey, 2000), as the order was adapted and additional questions included at the interviewers discretion to more fully explore themes arising within the interview process.

4.2.2 DATA ANALYSIS

NUMERICAL DATA

Responses to the online questionnaire were downloaded in spreadsheet format and simple analysis was performed with Microsoft Excel [™]. More complex statistical analysis was not necessary for this research.

TEXTUAL DATA

Notes were made documenting basic themes of each interview before transcription and analysis began. This was in order to identify holistic concepts and develop models of understanding (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Each transcription was read completely to establish

a prenotation of the whole before coding began. Written data (both questionnaire responses and interview transcripts) were then coded (Ryan & Bernard, 2000) individually using substantive codes by giving tags to each section of meaning, originally for each question. Substantive codes were then grouped under theoretical codes (Oktay, 2012) which were created to accurately depict tagged groups. This process was continued until overall themes were determined (Booth, Colomb & Williams, 2008). All codes were drawn from responses rather than being predetermined. This was to ensure that meaning was brought out of rather than imposed onto the data (Morse, 1994; Oktay, 2012). A coding sample has been provided (see Appendix C) to illustrate the coding process in order to ensure transparency (Yardley, 2000). The development of theoretical codes used a process of constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:1995) in which each code was compared to prior codes and either added under a suitable theoretical code or separated and given a new code.

In addition to transcripts, original media files were kept and both audio and written files were accessed during the course of the analysis in order to ensure that the parts were understood in the context of the whole (Silverman, 2000). It was considered important to ensure that each interview segment analysis was consistent with the overall tone and understanding of the full interview.

4.2.3 HOME EDUCATION POPULATION

Because it is currently impossible to know the population of home educators in Australia, there is no way to determine what a representative sample of any group among the home education community might entail as compliance with registration requirements is not universal (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Jackson, 2009; Allan & Jackson, 2010; Townsend, 2012).

As a subset of the Australian home educating community, it is not possible to determine how many of these families have parents who are qualified teachers. Even among the registered population, this is impossible to determine as this information is not collected in all states and territories upon registration.

As focus on this research is to explore a range of responses, there is no intention that numbers presented represent proportions of the teacher trained home education community within Australia, nor is this considered relevant to the descriptive nature of this research. This is not a concern as the purpose of this research is to explore motivations and implementation styles.

4.2.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is essential that any research project be protected by a strong sense of ethics (Yin, 2012). Ethics approval for this project was sought from and given by Avondale College's Human Research Ethics Committee (project number [2011:47]). Anonymity of participants was preserved throughout the process and identifying features removed from shared data. The final item of the questionnaire gave participants opportunity to provide contact details only if they were willing to be contacted for an interview exploring the same themes at greater depth. Additionally, opportunity was given for potential participants to send contact details separately from the questionnaire if they wished the questionnaire information to remain anonymous from a direct context. Participants in the questionnaire process have been identified by number, while those who shared in the interview segment of this research have been allocated an alias to ensure privacy was maintained.

4.3 VALIDITY

Assessing the validity of qualitative research is a complex process. This section outlines the manner in which this research uses the four areas as suggested by Yardley (2000) to maintain and ensure validity. These four categories are addressed in the following order: “Sensitivity to context”; “Commitment and rigor”; “Transparency and coherence”; “Impact and importance” (p. 215).

4.3.1 SENSITIVITY TO CONTEXT

Care must be taken when researching home education as home educators may already feel scrutinised and be hesitant to become involved (Lampe, 1988). In this research, there was no power differential between researcher and participants. The researcher’s role as both a teacher and home educator was clearly presented at the beginning of the research. Similarly, the descriptive nature of the research allowed for freedom of expression as participants had nothing to gain or lose by sharing as neither they nor their actions were being measured against any external criteria. While relationships were typically brief – anonymous questionnaires, or telephone interviews with participants, known only by accessing contact details which they had provided – the researcher’s background, as both a teacher and a home educating parent, gave participants confidence that their experience would be respectfully heard. While it is possible that a feeling of compatriotism affected participants’ responses, it is unlikely due to the exploratory nature of the research questions.

4.3.2 COMMITMENT AND RIGOUR

Methodology and methods describe different phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1983). Within the theoretical framework of hermeneutic phenomenology, specific research practices were selected according to their ability to access the information sought rather than their adherence to a particular method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The data collection process involved questionnaires, which are typically linked to quantitative research, particularly in the use of hard (numerical) data (Grix 2004) to describe demographic information. However, the questionnaire format also included many open questions which falls into the inductive research framework of the qualitative researcher (Grix, 2004), providing soft data (words) that can be used to describe participants' perceived reality, rather than to test a hypothesis. Methods (described in Section 4.2) were selected according to their ability to suit the task (Silverman, 2001) and therefore were considered to be consistent with the guiding framework of the research as outlined in Section 3.5.

4.3.3 TRANSPARENCY AND COHERENCE

Data collection and analysis procedures are outlined previously in Section 4.2.1. It is also important to note that the researcher in this research is not situated as an external observer as in the positivist tradition, but rather as an integral part of the analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The researcher is not called to put aside bias, but rather to continually consider such bias and assumptions as they impact throughout the ongoing process of interpretation (Laverty, 2003). As presenting the researcher's background and relevant interest in this project is as critical as outlining other forms of analysis used within the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) this background is located at the beginning of this document (see Page xiv).

4.3.4 IMPACT AND IMPORTANCE

This research has practical value (Hammersley, 1990) as it provides information useful for both home educators, whether or not they are qualified teachers, and the school-based system of education. This research fills a current void in the literature and provides a voice for a previously silent section of the home education community.

4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the *methodology* used within the research process, addressing data collection and analysis, population size and ethical considerations. Following this was a consideration of *validity* and how rigour was maintained throughout the research process. With an understanding of the research process in place, the next chapter presents the research findings.

5 QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into three sections illustrated in Figure 5-1, each addressing one part of the questionnaire (see Appendix A). Each begins with a presentation of findings, followed by a discussion of these findings. The chapter ends with a summary of questionnaire findings.

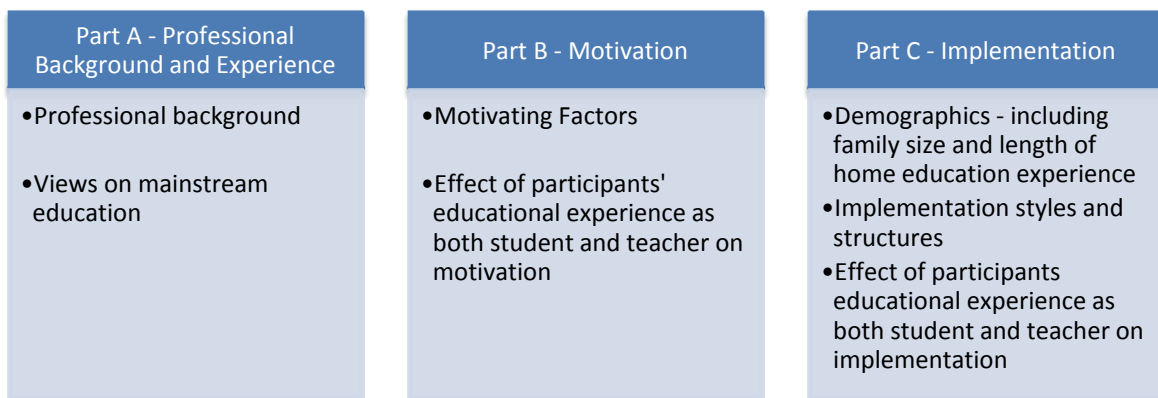


Figure 5-1 Structure of Questionnaire Sections, outlining Areas Addressed in Each

5.2 PART A – TEACHING BACKGROUND

5.2.1 PURPOSE

Part A of the questionnaire, shown in Table 5-1, addressed participants' teaching background, including their qualifications and experience. It asked their reasons for leaving teaching as well as their overall satisfaction with their teaching career.

Table 5-1 Questionnaire Part A – Teaching Background

Part A – Teaching Background	
Question	Type of Question
Informed Consent (see Appendix 2)	Yes/No
Where did you complete your training as a teacher?	Select from two options
When did you complete your teacher training?	Select from list of options
What teaching qualifications do you hold?	Select from list of options
What is your teaching field?	Select from list of options
How many years have you spent teaching in Australian schools?	Select from list of options
How many schools have you taught in within Australia?	Select from list of options
In which school system/s have you worked?	Select from three options
In which Australian states and territories have you worked as a teacher?	Select from list of options
Why did you choose to leave teaching?	Open response
How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your teaching career?	Likert Scale (Tullis & Albert, 2008)

5.2.2 TEACHER TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

There were fifty-five valid responses to the online questionnaire, each from a qualified teacher, located in Australia, who had chosen to home educate their own children. Forty-seven (85.5%) completed their teaching qualifications in Australia. Graduation years ranged from 1973 through to 2010.

Participants' qualifications ranged from Diploma of Teaching through to Masters (Honours). Several had completed Graduate studies in Education after other courses. The sample included teachers with both primary (66%) and secondary (34%) training, covering the following subject areas: Art, Biology, Chemistry, Commerce, Early Childhood, English, Geography, History, Information Technology, Industrial Technology, Mathematics, Music,

Physics and Psychology. Most (95%) had twelve or less years of teaching experience, as shown in Figure 5-2.

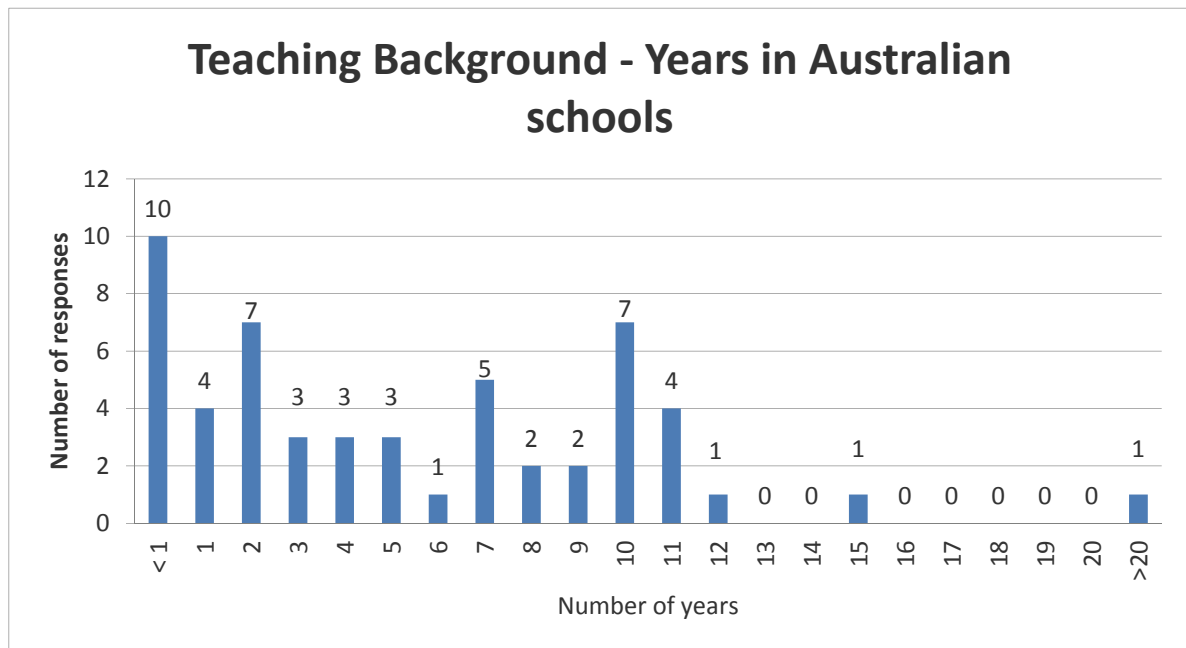


Figure 5-2 Participants' years of experience teaching in Australian schools

Most participants had taught in more than one school and therefore had experienced differences between schools prior to choosing home education for their own children. Some changed schools due to casual or relief teaching, or because they changed geographical locations. Others intentionally searched for a school compatible with their philosophy or educational practice.

I moved schools often looking for that 'better' school where the kids would be the main focus, in the end I gave up looking and decided to leave the profession ... (Questionnaire 52)

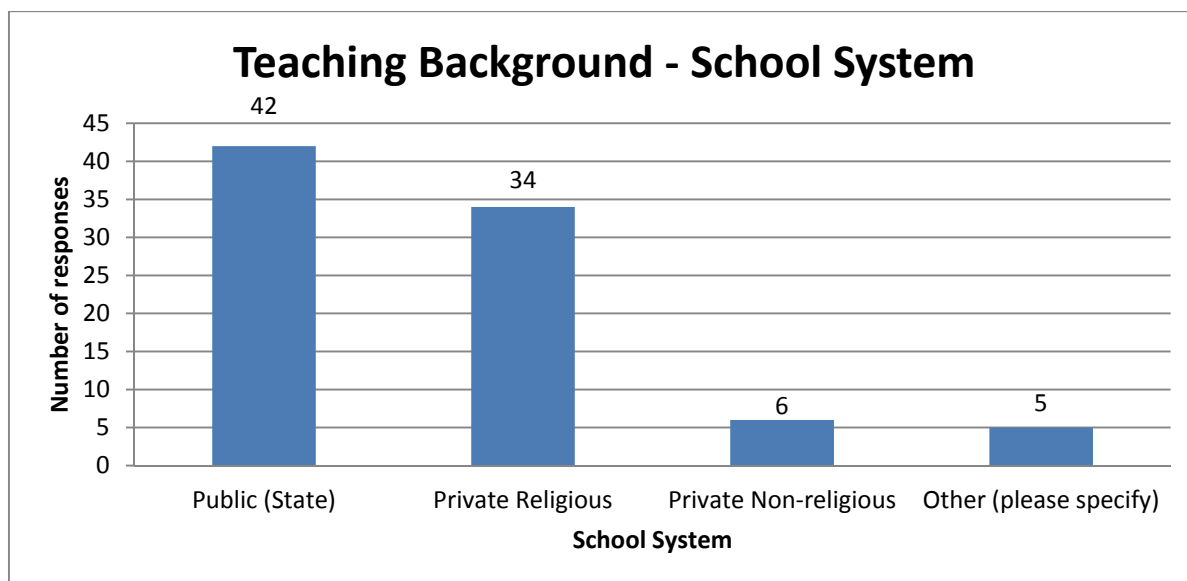


Figure 5-3 Schools system in which participants had previously taught

Participants represented experience across all Australian school systems (see Figure 5-3)

with additional responses including:

- 'Work with homeschooled teens',
- 'OUA [meaning uncertain – possibly, Open Universities Australia] tutor for education students',
- 'Year 9 Residential Programs',
- 'Life Education',
- 'Distance Education', and
- 'Special Education'.

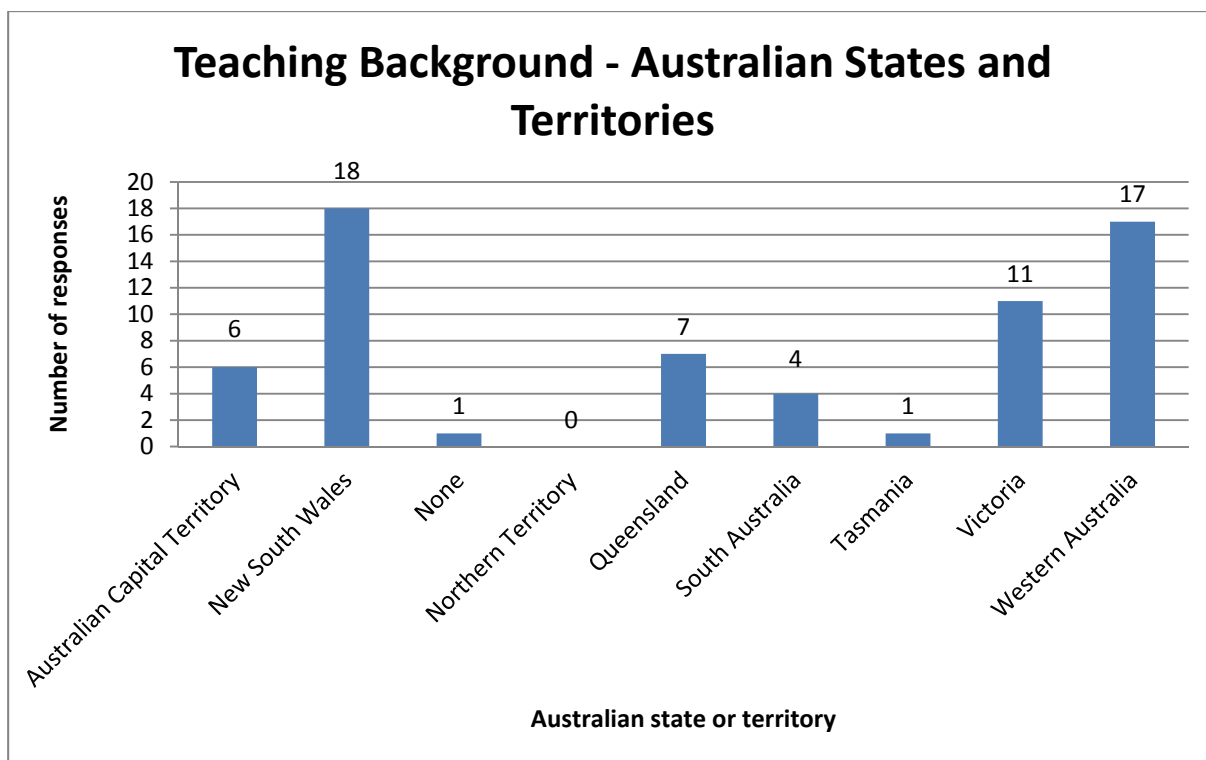


Figure 5-4 Australian states and territories in which participants had worked as teachers

Only one teacher had never worked in an Australian school, while New South Wales (34%), Western Australia (32%) and Victoria (21%) were most highly represented (see Figure 5-4). Northern Territory was the only state or territory not represented in these responses.

DISCUSSION OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

The questionnaire did not ask where participants completed their teacher training other than in Australia, although this could prove interesting for further studies. As stated earlier, previous studies found between 8%-26% (Harding, 1997; Patrick, 1999) of researched home educating parents held teaching qualifications.

It was not clear whether teachers who had worked in a particular system were more or less likely to home educate. The private non-religious sector had a smaller representation (see Figure 5-3), but this could be expected as it is the smallest sector in Australian education. It is also possible that this sector may have a greater focus on individual learning goals and

processes. It is not expected that the proportions of teaching experience across locations (see Figure 5-4), were indicative of the number of teachers involved in home education in each state or territory.

5.2.3 VIEWS ON LEAVING TEACHING CAREER

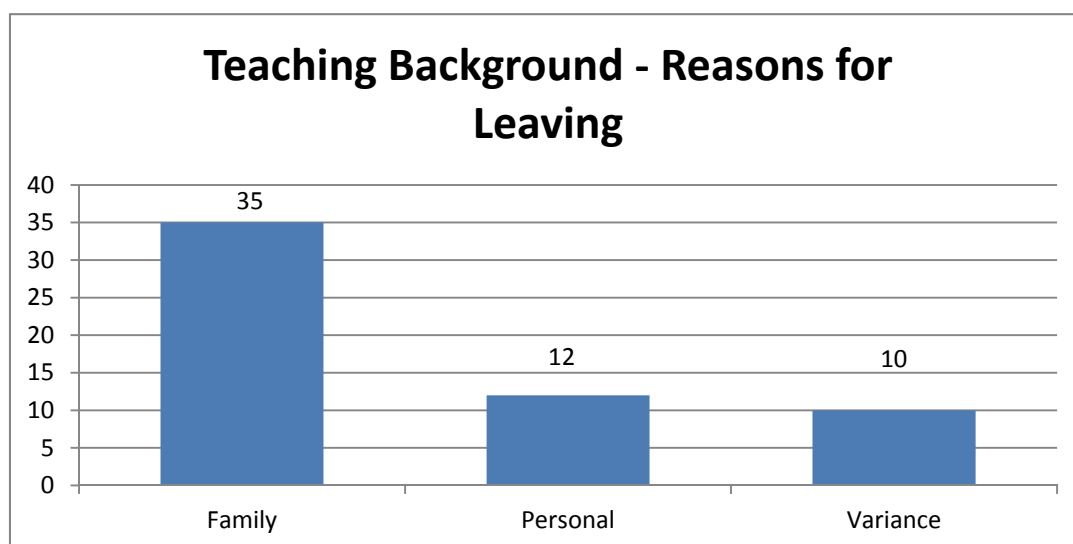


Figure 5-5 Participants' reasons for leaving teaching career

Many participants (61%) left teaching for family reasons, and this is indicated in Figure 5-5, - either when having children, or to home educate. Two other reasons were personal change (21%), including career location, retirement or a return to study; and variance with schools (18%), either political, philosophical or ideological. It is possible that personal change may have resulted from variance with schools, but this was not apparent in the responses.

Six participants (11%) considered themselves still employed as teachers at the time of the questionnaire; including relief teaching, music tuition, and part-time contracts. No participants held full-time teaching jobs at the time of questionnaire.

5.2.4 SATISFACTION WITH TEACHING CAREER

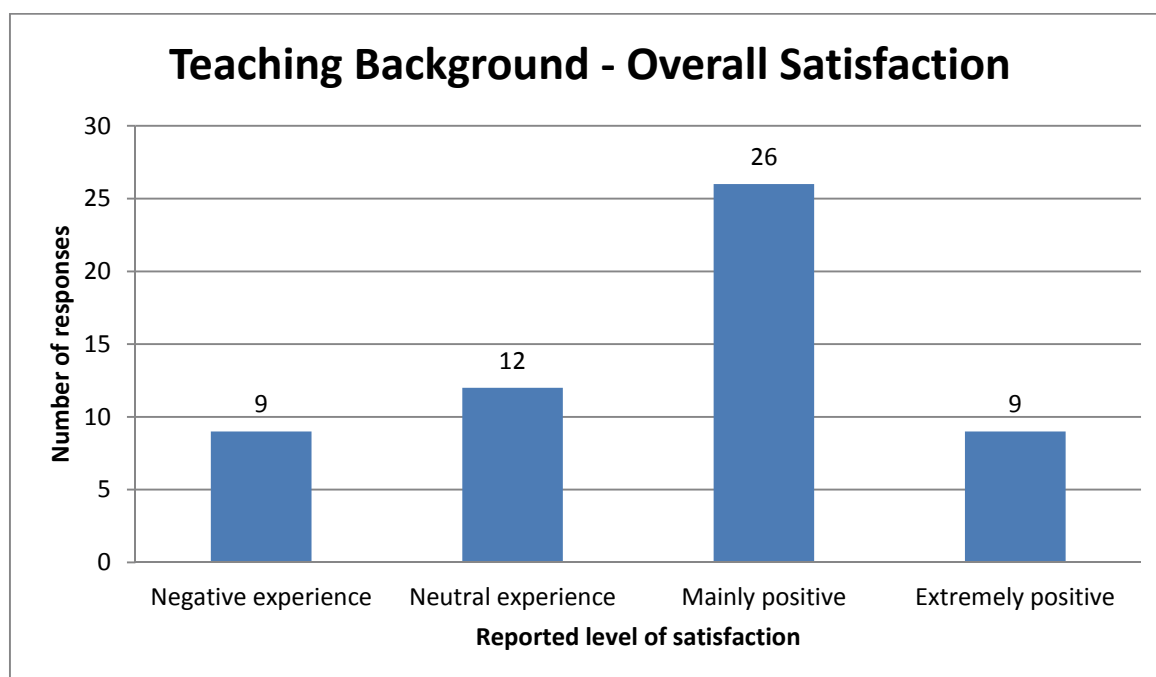


Figure 5-6 Participants' overall satisfaction with teaching career

Participants mainly reported positive satisfaction with their career as teacher (see Figure 5-6). Participants were given opportunity to provide extra information on this topic. The following is an analysis of themes arising from these additional comments where provided.

Positive aspect of teaching experiences included both the teaching process, and relationships with students and their families.

The connection with the children was positive. (Survey 22)

Negative aspects included frustration or disillusionment with systems, departmental politics and paperwork.

I enjoyed working with the children and their parents, yet became increasingly put off by the paperwork, staffroom politics and attitudes of other teachers towards the children and their parents. (Questionnaire 51)

DISCUSSION OF VIEWS ON LEAVING TEACHING CAREER

Most participants in this study left teaching for family reasons. In almost all cases this was directly related to either having, or beginning to home educate, their children. In only 18% of cases was a variance with schools reported as the reason for leaving. Additionally, 63% of participants reported satisfaction levels of either 'mainly positive' or 'extremely positive' with their teaching career. While others have suggested anecdotally (see Researcher's Background) that teachers who choose home education must therefore be opposed to schools, this is not supported by the research responses.

5.2.5 PART A - SUMMARY

Participants represented a broad range of teaching locations, experience and duration. There was no strong indication that teachers from a particular location, education system, subject area or school level were more likely to elect to home educate. The teachers who responded to this questionnaire on the whole indicated mainly positive teaching careers. Many had left teaching for family reasons, while some still worked part-time as teachers. This study provides no support to the premise that teachers who chose to home educate their own children were opposed to mainstream education per se. As a whole, participants reported having enjoyed working with students, but found politics, systemic restrictions and negative working environments to have negatively impacted their joy and satisfaction in building positive, nurturing educational relationships with students.

5.3 PART B – MOTIVATION

5.3.1 PURPOSE

Part B of the questionnaire, shown in Table 5-2, addressed motivation. Beginning with participants' initial contact with home education as an option, Part B explored factors which motivated the decision of each teacher to home educate their own children. Following this was an exploration of participants' experiences, as both student and teacher, and the impact each of these had on their decision.

Table 5-2 Questionnaire Part B - Motivation

Part B – Motivation	
Question	Type of Question
Where did you first learn about home education as an option?	Open Response
What were the main factors involved in your decision to home educate?	Open Response
Who instigated the decision to home educate?	Select from list of options
How long do you intend to home educate?	Select from list of options
What impact has your personal experience as a STUDENT had on your decision to home educate?	Likert Scale with space to elaborate
What impact has your personal experience as a TEACHER had on your decision to home educate?	Likert Scale with space to elaborate

5.3.2 INITIAL CONTACT

Participants' initial exposure to home education as an educational option were categorised into seven identifiable categories shown in Figure 5-7 which are explained below. Some responses were included in more than one category.

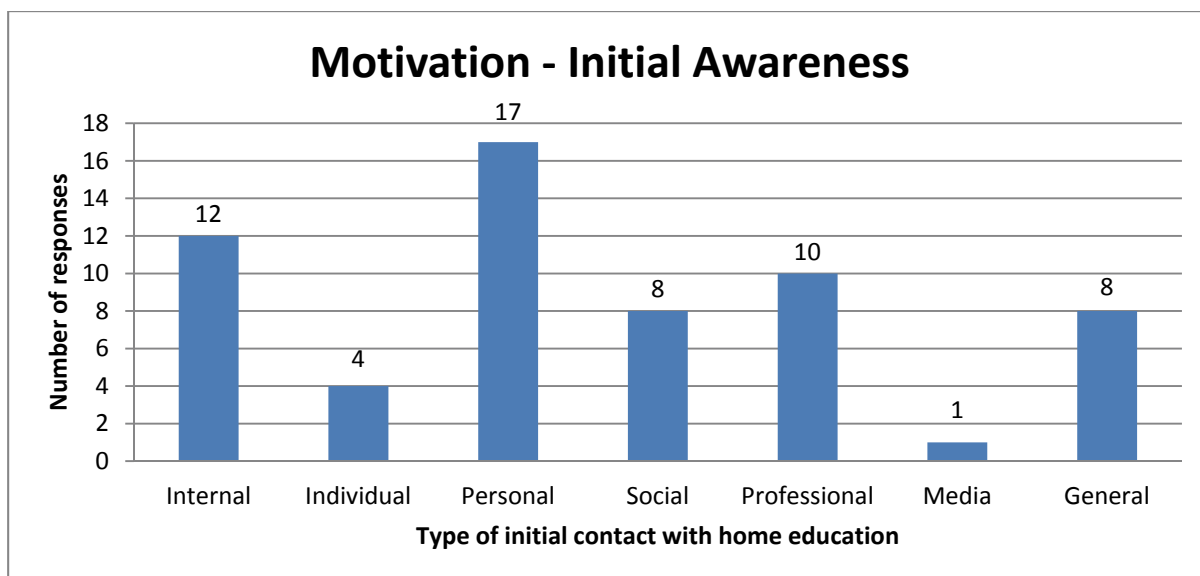


Figure 5-7 Participants' first point of awareness of home education as an option

In twelve (12) cases the participant faced a particular **Internal** dilemma - such as concern for their child's welfare within the school - and, after searching, discovered home education as a possible, although not always welcome, option.

I always considered home educators to be "weird" up until my children had so much difficulty with school. (Questionnaire 47)

Four had **Individual** experience as a home education student. Seventeen identified a friend or family member as a **Personal** initial contact with home education. Eight described **Social** encounters outside the immediate sphere of family or friendship, while ten initially encountered home education through their **Professional** role. Not all professional contacts were positive. One person listed **Media** as an initial contact while eight participants reported **General** first encounters with home education as evident in the following response.

I think I had always been aware of home education on some level. (Questionnaire 3)

DISCUSSION OF INITIAL CONTACT

The presence of a personal contact (informant or mentor) as a critical factor affecting the decision to home educate has been identified in previous research (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Patrick, 1999). This phenomenon was also evident in this research as almost half of the respondents listed a direct contact with home educators in either a **personal** or **social** capacity as being their initial contact with home education.

5.3.3 FACTORS AFFECTING THE MOTIVATION FOR HOME EDUCATION

This group of responses was analysed twice. Firstly, motivating factors were grouped according to the reported direction of motivation and labelled either 'push' - perceived negative attributes of mainstream schools, or 'pull' - perceived positive benefits of home education (see Figure 5-8).

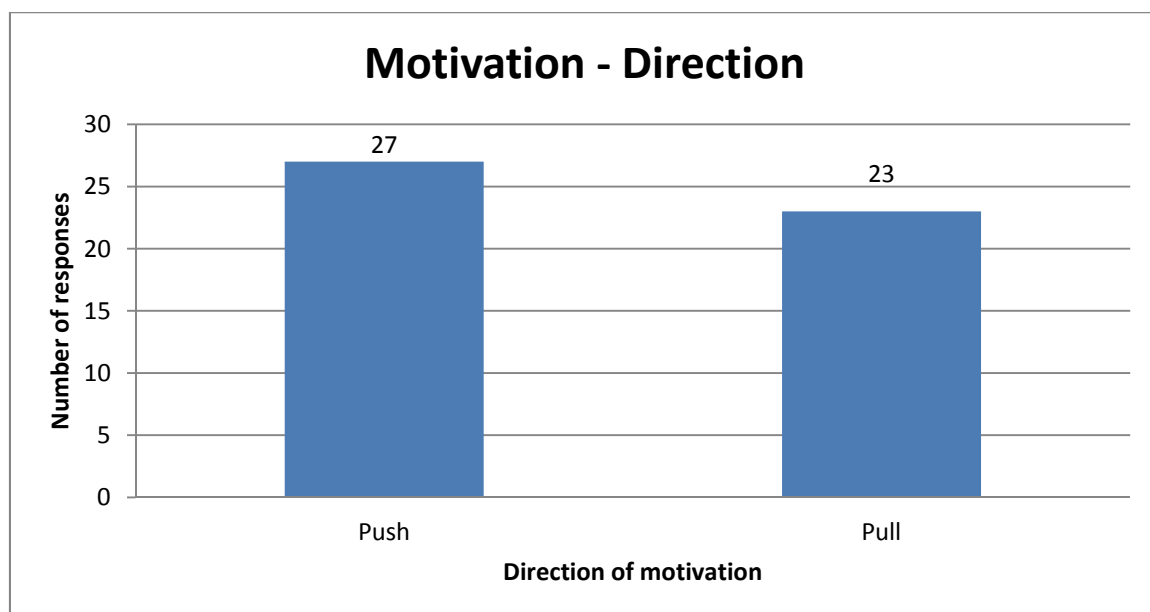


Figure 5-8 Direction of motivation

Responses were also coded and grouped according to these codes. Some responses were tagged with more than one keyword as participants listed multiple factors in their decision

making process. Analysis showed the responses fell into three groups (Figure 5-9). The first group addressed *child considerations*, regarding specific children and their needs (36%);

My son was on medication for seizures and found it hard to cope at school ... In a way I was forced into home schooling ... (Questionnaire 22)

The second group outlined *family considerations*, dealing with family viewpoint, philosophy or goal (37%);

To home educate during the 'formal' years would be an extension to what we have done so far. (Questionnaire 31)

The third group represented *teaching considerations* (28%), which were observations or decisions based on participants' experience as teachers within schools.

After being in the classroom as a teacher, I realised that the classroom culture wasn't the atmosphere that I wanted my children to learn when they were school aged. (Questionnaire 17)

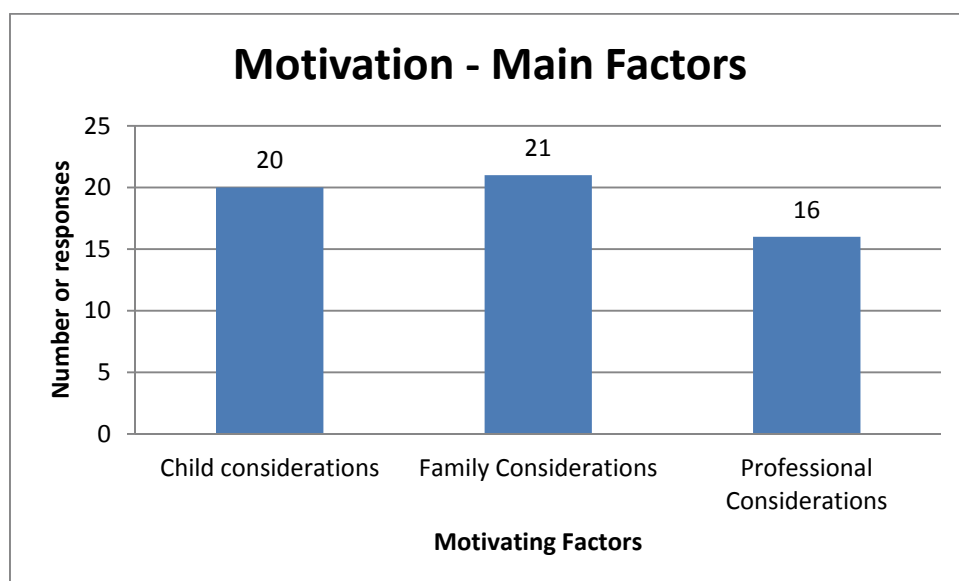


Figure 5-9 Main factors involved in participants' decision to home educate

When the two stages of analysis were compared, it was seen that push factors tended to be found in individual settings, either the experience of the child or the participant themselves

as a teacher. Pull factors tended to be more general and relate to perceived benefits for whole family function (see Figure 5-10).

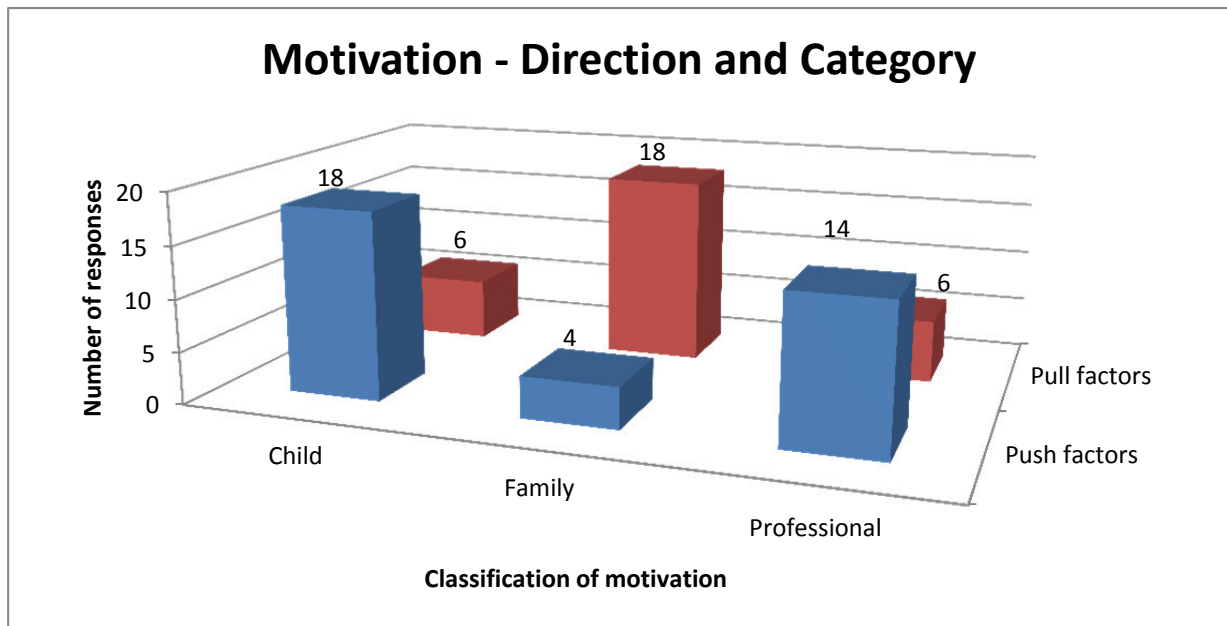


Figure 5-10 Direction and classification of motivation

In most cases (98%) the decision to home educate was instigated by one or both parents. One participant listed that it was the decision of the child.

DISCUSSION OF MOTIVATING FACTORS

Question 12 (see Table 5-2) was deliberately left open to allow participants to share their own experience rather than being guided by the question. It was anticipated that responses regarding motivation would fall into categories similar to those found in previous literature, namely ideological, pedagogical, social or content driven. These categories were listed later in the questionnaire (see Table 5-5) when referring to implementation, where it was found that participants rated all of these as important factors impacting the way they chose to implement home education (see Section 5.4.2).

During analysis it was found that the above mentioned themes were difficult to identify within the responses. Motivating factors were readily able to be grouped into push and pull factors (see Figure 5-8), however it was not simple to determine broader philosophical motivations. Instead there was a specific focus on individual needs and concerns that became apparent. These individual concerns were easily classified as *child* considerations, *family* considerations and *professional* considerations (see Figure 5-9).

Tailoring of both pedagogy and lifestyle to the individual needs of the child has been listed as motivators for home educators both in Australia (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Broadhurst, 1999; Clery, 1998, Jackson, 2007; Jackson, 2009; Jacob et al., 1991; Thomas, 1998) and internationally (Aurini & Davies, 2005; Neuman & Aviram, 2003). Broader family considerations are presented in a number of Australian studies (Jacob et al., 1991; Krivanek, 1985; Maeder, 1995). There appears to be no Australian literature addressing factors arising from teachers' professional experience.

While in this study, participants reported that the decision to home educate was instigated by one or both parents, with only one reporting that it was the child's decision, other studies have indicated that the child can play a significant role in the decision making process (Clery, 1998, Jackson, 2009).

5.3.4 INTENDED TIME FRAME

Participants were able to select from a range of options in response to Question 15 (see Appendix A). Most (82.1%) stated an intention to home educate "As long as we choose to do so" followed by 15.4% who "Evaluate year by year". One participant selected "Until it gets too hard".

Participants were invited to provide additional comments for their responses. Of these, two gave short term; “One or two terms” and “Until we move away from [our current location]”. Among the remainder of the responses, “the end of Year 10” was the lowest level mentioned, with most planning to home educate through to the end of high school.

DISCUSSION OF INTENDED TIME FRAME

Participants in this research reported a flexible approach regarding the intended duration of home education. This aligns with other studies which reported that the decision to home educate was need-based and flexible, dependent on other factors (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Thomas, 1998, OBOS, 2004).

5.3.5 IMPACT OF PARTICIPANTS’ EXPERIENCE AS A STUDENT ON MOTIVATION

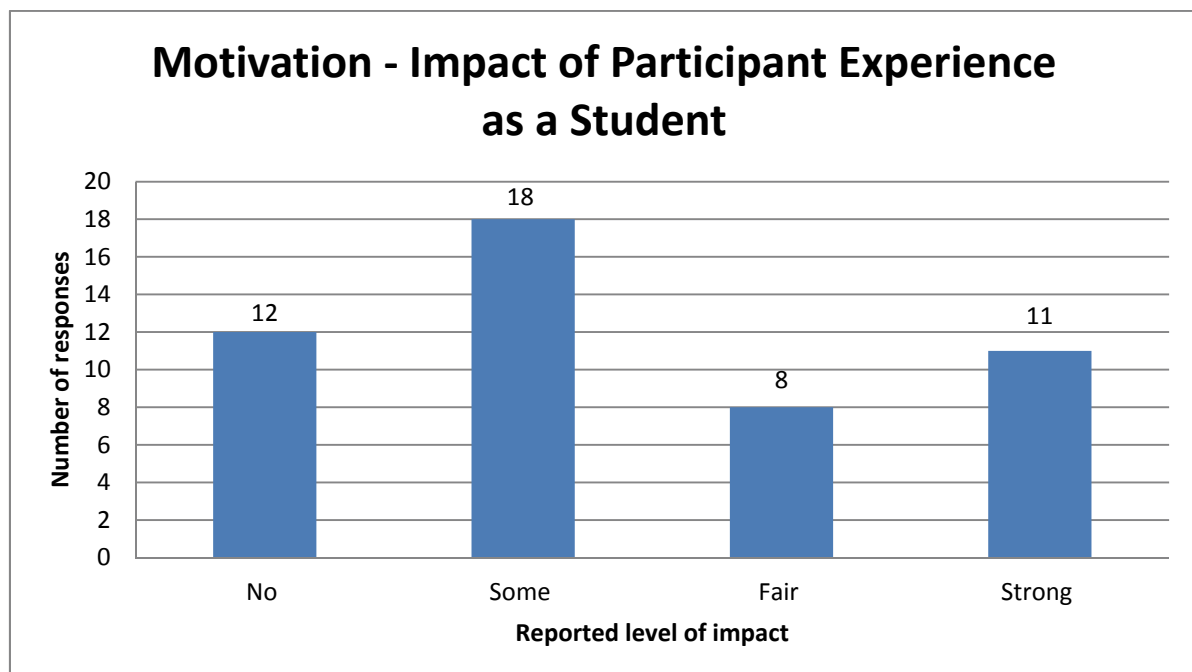


Figure 5-11 Impact of participants' personal experience as a student on their decision to home educate

Participants were asked to rate the impact of their own experience as a student, on their decision to home educate their children (see Figure 5-11 and Table 5-3). Some participants

gave additional reasons for their answers. The following analysis is based on those who provided further information.

Table 5-3 Impact of participants' experience as a student on their motivation to home educate

Level of Impact	Frequency	Major theme identified in this group
No	24.5%	Positive School Experience
Some	36.7%	Bullying and Social Difficulty
Fair	16.3%	Social and Some Academic Concerns
Strong	22.4%	Autonomy and Intellectual Freedom

When analysed according to the self-reported impact of student experiences it was evident that while a range of reasons were present in all areas, each level of impact was dominated by a particular aspect of shared experience (see Table 5-3). Dominant themes for each impact level are outlined below.

Three categories emerged among the personal schooling experiences listed as influencing participants' decision to home educate. One group gave very **general** responses with no specific examples of how their experience impacted their decision. A second group of motivators were categorised as negative **social** experiences, including bullying, lack of friendships and negative peer influences. These social factors appeared less frequently in responses as the reported impact of student experiences increased as shown in Figure 5-12.

The third category related to **academic/intellectual** concerns. These included perceived gaps in education, boredom, feelings of pointlessness regarding subject matter, and stifled creativity. This category appeared more frequently as the reported impact of student experience increased (see Figure 5-12).

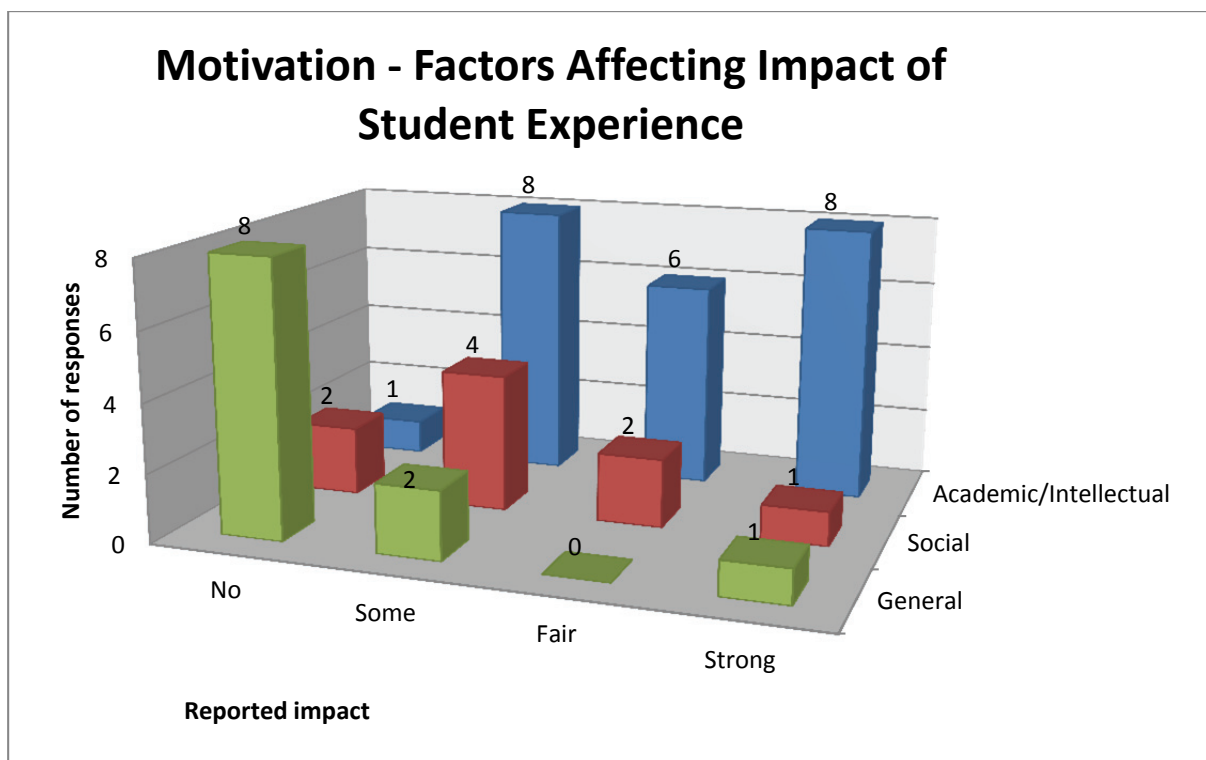


Figure 5-12 Factors affecting the impact of participants' experience as a student on the decision to home educate

DISCUSSION OF EFFECT OF PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE AS A STUDENT

While all three categories (general, social and academic/intellectual) were present across all levels of reported impact, it is clear that when assessing the motivation to home educate arising from participants' personal experience as a student, social concerns had less impact on the decision to home educate than academic/intellectual concerns.

Bullying is notable as being mentioned across each of the four reported levels of impact. It is perhaps not surprising that negative peer influences, especially bullying were specifically mentioned in all categories. This is a commonly mentioned motivation for home education in Australia (Deery, 2012; Habibullah, 2004; Jacob et al., 1991; McColl, 2005; Education Queensland, 2003).

Also interesting is the evidence that social concerns had less impact on the decision to home educate than academic and intellectual factors. One possible explanation may be that social

concerns were perceived as being restricted to specific individuals or groups, while other concerns, such as the curtailing of individual learning to accommodate the speed of the group, were perceived to belong to the education system rather than an individual.

Additionally, academic/intellectual concerns may be linked to issues of student autonomy, a topic explored by several Australian studies in home education (Broadhurst, 1999; Clery, 1998; Habibullah, 2004, Hunter, 1994; Reilly, 2007). Jackson (2009) described autonomy as the most important factor in students' experiences of home education, noting the felt lack of autonomy as students moved from home to school education.

5.3.6 IMPACT OF PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE AS A TEACHER ON MOTIVATION

After exploring the impact of participants experience as a student on their motivation to home educate, the questionnaire investigated the impact of their experience as teachers. Almost half (49%) of participants rated their teaching experience as having had a "Strong Impact" on their decision to home educate their own children. Only 4% considered their teaching experience had no impact on their decision, compared with the 24.5% who reported that their student experience had no impact on their decision to home educate (see Figure 5-13).

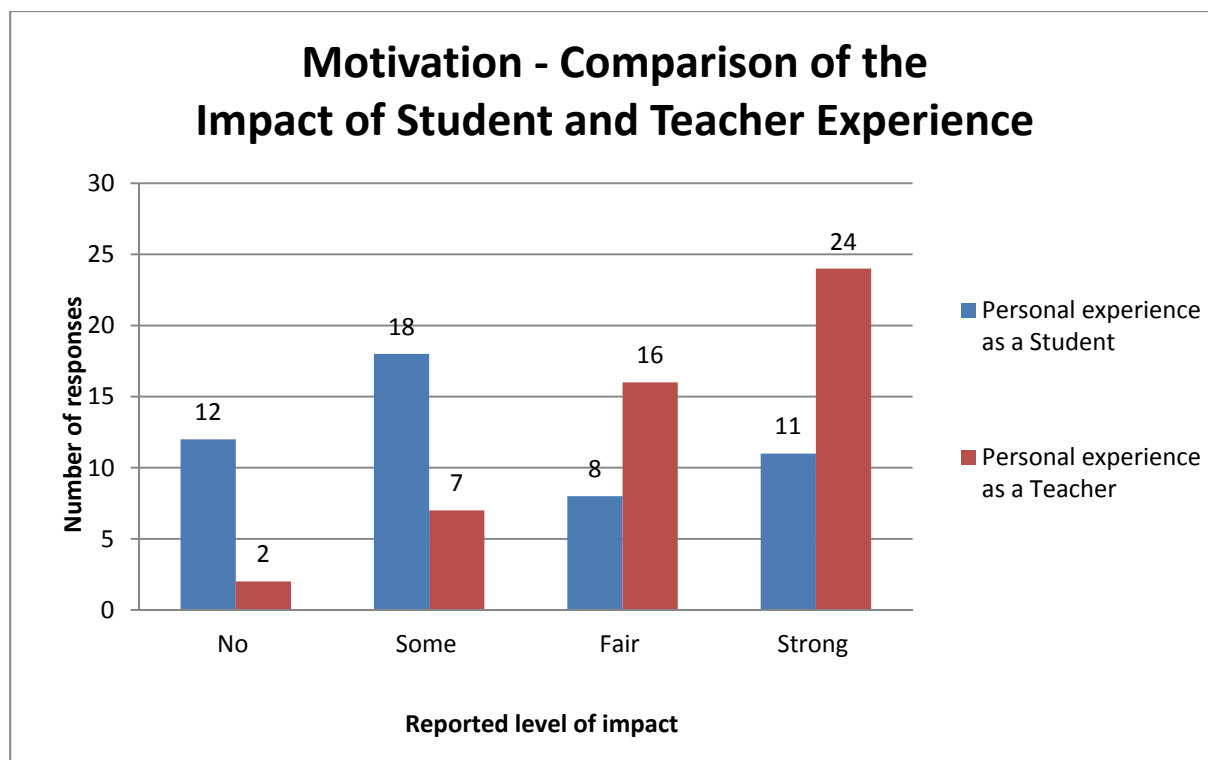


Figure 5-13 A comparison of the reported impact of participants' experience as both student and teacher on their decision to home educate

Reponses were grouped according to reported level of impact and analysed for themes at each level. While all aspects were mentioned at all levels, clear themes were present for each level (see Table 5-4). Aspects of teaching experience reported to have impacted participants' decision to home educate at each level were arranged under the following themes: General responses, Family needs, Individual needs and Systemic concerns.

Table 5-4 Themes arising from each level of reported impact of participants experience as a teacher on their motivation to home educate

Level of Impact	Frequency	Major theme identified in this group
None	4.1%	Positive Teaching Experience
Some	14.3%	Family Needs - Greater opportunities at home.
Moderate	32.7%	Individual Needs - Inability of school to meet individual needs.
Strong	49.0%	Systemic Concerns – class sizes, teacher/student ratios, ineffective teaching, poor teaching quality, time restrictions, inflexible curriculum

System concerns were reported more frequently as having had a strong impact on participants' motivation to home educate their own children (see Figure 5-14).

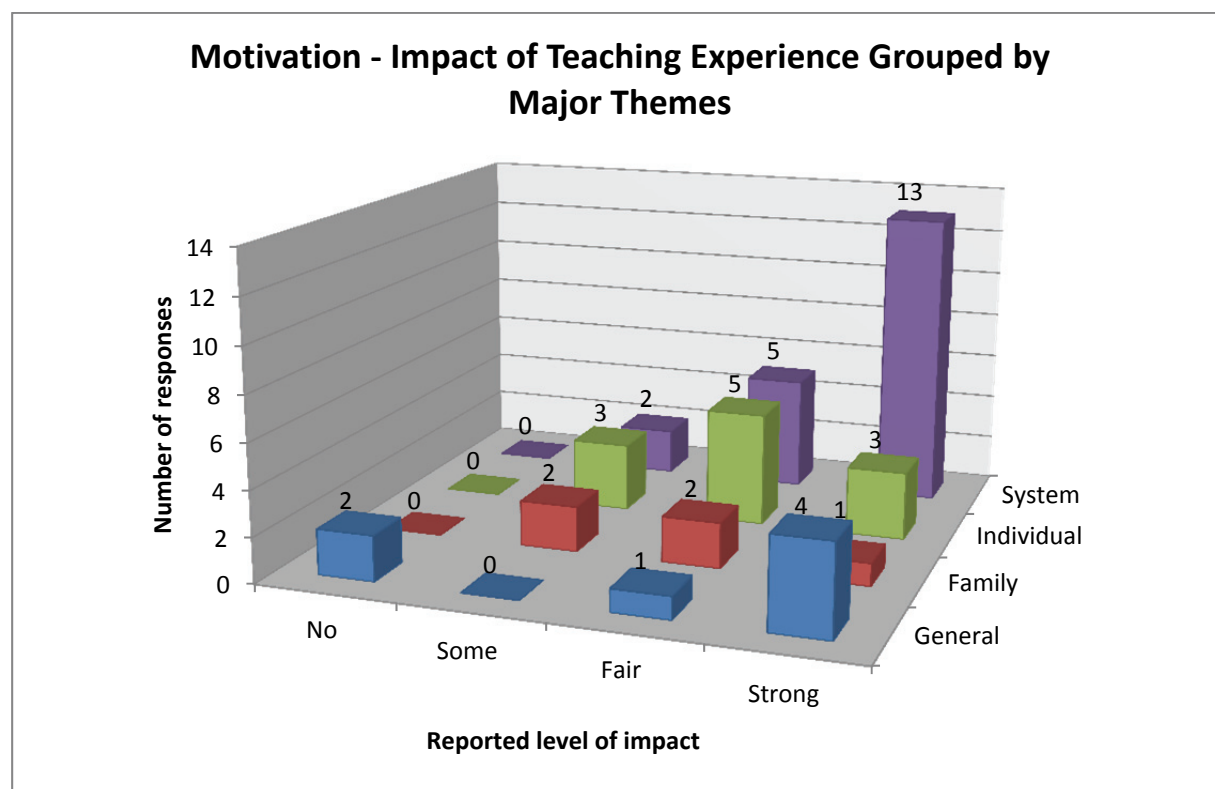


Figure 5-14 Major themes emerging as factors which affected the impact of participants' experience as a teacher on their decision to home educate

DISCUSSION OF EFFECT OF PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE AS A TEACHER ON MOTIVATION

While participants retained positive views of teaching (see Part A), all but two reported that their professional experience impacted their decision to home educate. Systemic concerns were seen as providing the strongest impact on their motivation, followed by a focus on meeting individual needs. This matches with prior research noting the experienced negative impact of institutions on individual freedom Jackson (2009).

5.3.7 PART B - SUMMARY

There were seven categories of initial contact of which personal and social contact with other home educators comprised the bulk. Participants were motivated to home educate by three main factors: broad family goals, professional experience, or specific needs of individual children. These were divided into push and pull factors, with push factors relating most specifically to professional experience and the needs of individuals, while pull factors related to more broad family goals.

Student experience counted as a strong motivator in less than half of cases. Social and intellectual factors affected the impact of participants' previous student experience on their decision to home educate. Intellectual factors such as a perceived lack of individual learning opportunities and freedom to explore personal interests contributed the greatest impact.

Triggers from participants' teaching experience included those that stemmed from a frustration with a systemic inability to cater for the needs of individuals, and a desire to provide meaningful and effective individualised learning environments for their own children.

Once a family or individual had decided to pursue the option of home education, for whatever reason, they then moved to the practical application of this decision. The next section will present Part C of the questionnaire which explored how home education was practiced among the response group.

5.4 PART C – IMPLEMENTATION

Part C of the questionnaire (see Table 5-5) aimed to address the implementation of home education as reported by participants. The analysis begins with an overview of the reported

family size, number of students involved in home education and the length of their home education experience, as well as the length of time they intended to continue educating their children at home. After this description is an outline of the implementation of home education, beginning with how they structured their education on both a daily and yearly basis. Following this is an identification of preferred educational approaches, a discussion of changes in approach across time, and an outline of factors which participants reported to have influenced the way they implemented their children's education. The section finishes with an exploration of the effect of the participant's past experience, as both student and teacher, and the resulting impact on their educational practice.

Table 5-5 Questionnaire Part C - Implementation

Part C. Implementation	
Question	Type of Question
How many children are you currently home educating?	Select from list of options
Have your children always been home educated?	Select from list of options
How many years have you been home educating?	Insert Number
How do the following categories describe your home education style?	Likert Scale for each of a list of categories with space to elaborate
How important is each factor in selecting the way you home educate your children?	Likert Scale for each of four factors with space to elaborate
How do you structure the education in your home on a DAILY basis?	Select from list of options with space for clarification
How do you structure your home education on a YEARLY basis?	Select from list of options with space to elaborate
What impact has your personal experience as a STUDENT had on the way that you home educate?	Likert Scale with space to elaborate
What impact has your personal experience as a TEACHER had on the way that you home educate?	Likert Scale with space to elaborate

5.4.1 HOME EDUCATION BACKGROUND

FAMILY STRUCTURE

Family size ranged from one to seven children. The mean family size involved in this questionnaire was 2.9 children of which 2.1 were being home educated. Seven families had some children attending school while the others were educated at home. Two considered themselves home educators although their children were not yet of legal school age. One gave a retrospective questionnaire as their four children were no longer school aged.

DISCUSSION OF FAMILY STRUCTURE

Families in this study had more children (2.9) than the national average of 1.9 children per family (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). This is consistent with other studies of home educators. While average home educating family size differs between studies (2.5 - Harp, 1998; 3.5 - Patrick, 1999; 3.8 - Simich, 1998), they are consistently higher than the national average.

This research shows an average of 2.1 children currently home educated at the time of this study. This is slightly lower than Patrick's (1999) study which showed families as having 2.3 children being home educated.

This matches existing evidence (Olsen, 2008) that it is not uncommon among home educating families to have some children being educated at home while others attend school and is consistent with a theme of catering for the perceived needs of each child as an individual.

Inclusion in this research was dependent upon participants' description of themselves as a home educator. Families with children outside legal school age were included in this research because many home educating families consider education as a lifelong process not necessarily limited to those between 6 and 17 years of age.

HOME EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

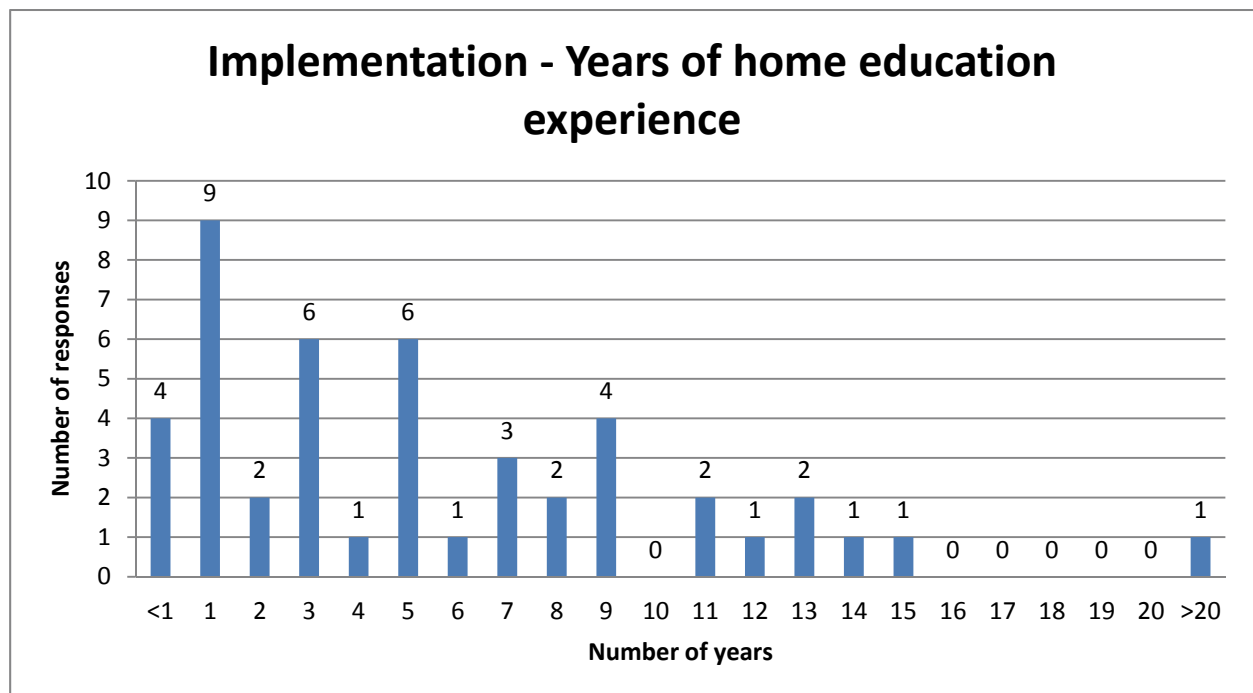


Figure 5-15 Number of years participants had been involved in home education

The home education experience within this research varied from less than one year to over twenty years (see Figure 5-15).

DISCUSSION OF HOME EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

Approximately 49% of the families in this research had been educating their children at home for less than five years. This is less than the 78% among those studied by Harp (1998). As all participants in this study were teachers, it is possible that teachers continue with

home education for a longer period than other home educators. This comparison was not made in this research.

5.4.2 FACTORS AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HOME EDUCATION

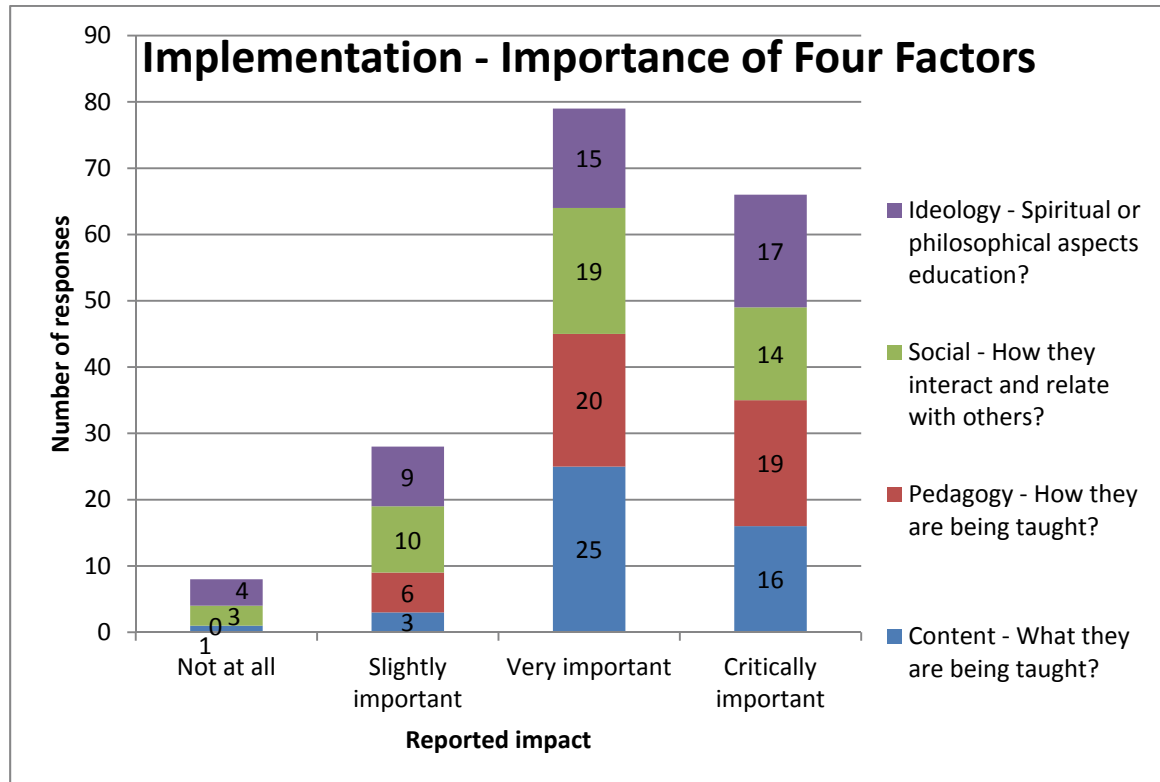


Figure 5-16 Reported importance of Ideology, Pedagogy, Content and Social factors when selecting the Implementation of home education

Figure 5-16 shows responses given when participants were asked to rate the importance of four factors in their home education implementation. The factors were listed with the following definitions:

- Content – What they are being taught;
- Pedagogy – How they are being taught;
- Social – How they interact and relate with others; and
- Ideology – Spiritual or philosophical aspects of education.

To further clarify, participants were invited to provide additional comment. These comments are explored below.

PEDAGOGY – HOW THEY ARE BEING TAUGHT

Comments relating to pedagogy tended to express a goal “to fit the needs of each child in each area in the very best way I can” (Questionnaire 20) with a specific focus on developing an understanding of “how he best learns” (Questionnaire 40). One example was given with regards to spelling. “My middle child ... has ADHD, Anxiety and learning issues ... she doesn't do [written spelling exercises] - she takes the book to the trampoline and jumps each letter” (Questionnaire 55).

One participant took exception to the wording of the question categories with the following statement.

‘Taught’ is a loaded word! I ‘teach’ as rarely as I can. I guide, I expose, I extrapolate, I encourage, I model learning and taking an active interest in things.
(Questionnaire 9)

CONTENT – WHAT THEY ARE BEING TAUGHT

Comments relating to content included those who felt “content is only important in its relation to developing early literacy and numeracy skills” (Questionnaire 5). Others described how their content was covered in the context of the individual’s needs and interests, outlining specific examples of how the content of the child’s education was developed.

SOCIAL – HOW THEY INTERACT AND RELATE WITH OTHERS

Comments addressing social factors outlined a variety of cross-age, cross-curricula social opportunities in which home educated children were involved. It was noted that social experience was a natural product of their education and lifestyle.

I am not looking for social interaction ... it just happens. (Questionnaire 1)

IDEOLOGY – SPIRITUAL OR PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF EDUCATION

The range of responses relating to ideological factors addressed humanist, atheist and Christian backgrounds, although not one participant claimed a deliberate connection between their spiritual beliefs, or lack thereof, and the implementation of home education. One specifically stated:

We do not homeschool for religious reasons. (Questionnaire 22)

One participant spoke of a connection between their parenting approach and their education choices.

Education as such has always been a sub-set of my role as parent. Conversely parenting has been a sub-set of education in its true meaning to bring out that which is within. (Questionnaire 2)

DISCUSSION OF FACTORS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

All four factors received similar totals when rated as being either “Very Important” or “Critically Important”. There was no clear indication of any one of these four factors having a greater influence than others on the implementation of home education.

It could be assumed that if parents were motivated to home educate for religious reasons this would be evident in the way that they educate. Thus the lack of reported impact of religious factors on implementation is curious, when some U.S. literature (eg. Cai et al.,

2002) have indicated that home education is predominately chosen by those with religious or philosophical motivations.

The tendency of participants to acknowledge the practical applications of learning styles demonstrated links to a home education view of parents guiding children as they learn through life experiences rather than formal instruction settings (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Jackson, 2008; Thomas, 1998).

5.4.3 EDUCATION STYLE AND STRUCTURE

EDUCATION STYLE

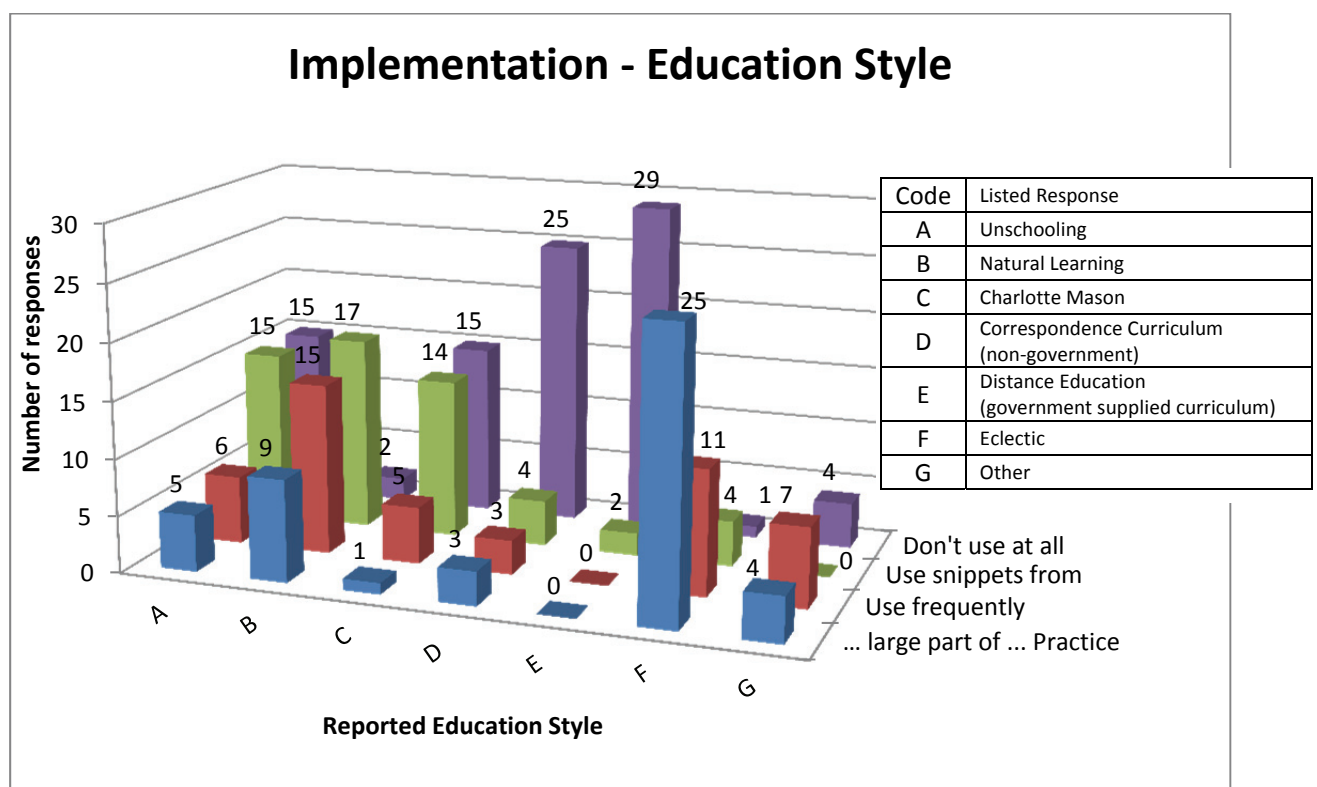


Figure 5-17 Reported level of use for a range of education styles

Participants were asked to state how each category listed described their home education style (see Figure 5-17). For the purpose of analysis, responses, shown in Figure 5-18, “Forms a large part of my home education practice” and “Use frequently” were counted and

grouped into *formal* (Charlotte Mason, Distance Education, Curriculum packages), *informal* (Unschooling, Natural Learning) and *eclectic* approaches. In this question the 'other' category was classified together with eclectic.

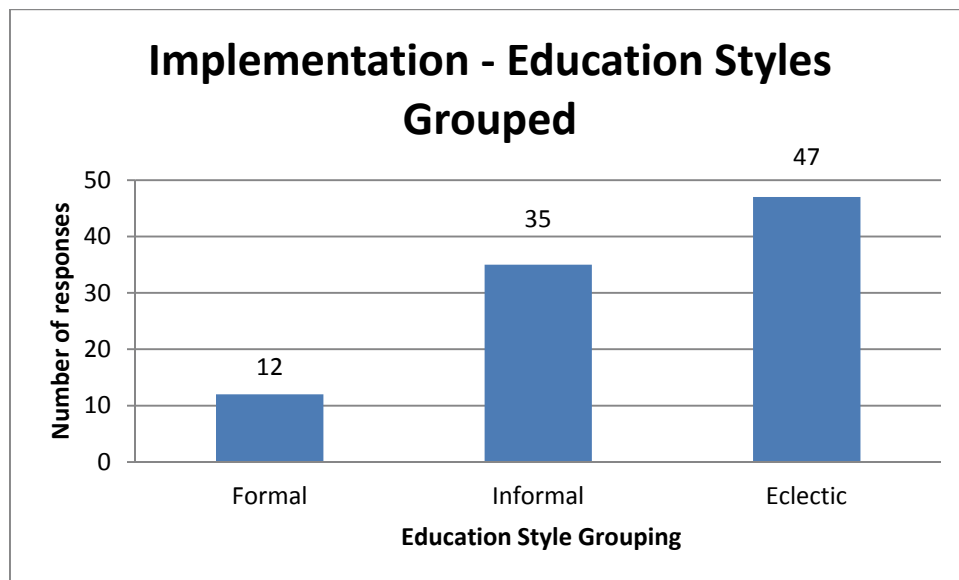


Figure 5-18 Educational styles grouped under headings used in previous home education research; Formal, Informal, and Eclectic.

DISCUSSION OF EDUCATION STYLE

As listed previously, Australian home education research has tended to group educational styles under three headings:

- formal, informal, eclectic (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; OBOS, 2004; Jackson, 2009);
- structured, semi-structured, non-structured (Patrick, 1999; Simich, 1998);
- formal, less formal, informal (Thomas, 1998, Thomas & Pattinson, 2007).

'Eclectic' describes a mixture of formal and informal approaches (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Thomas, 1998, Thomas & Pattinson, 2007, Simich, 1998).

While both Thomas (1998) and Barratt-Peacock (1997) use the terms formal and informal, there are slight differences in the usage of the term. Thomas describes informal learning as

learning happening in informal settings. The parents may use the setting to teach a particular skill or concept, but the setting is not developed for a teaching purpose. Barratt-Peacock (1997) defines formal and informal as being a distinction between adult directed or child/student directed learning rather than between structured and non-structured activities. These differences appear slight, but are useful to note when using these terms for classification purposes.

CHANGES IN EDUCATIONAL STYLE AND STRUCTURE OVER TIME

This research did not intend to address the ways that a family's practice of home education changes over time. However, this change was noted several times through the course of the research and thus deserves mention within this discussion. While informal approaches were strongest across all lengths of home education experience, there was a tendency to become more informal over time. This idea is shown in Table 5-6. It should be noted that there were exceptions to this trend.

[We] used the unschooling style when [she] was young, but I have been more skills directed now she is in the equivalent of high school. (Questionnaire 6)

Responses were grouped according to the number of years participants had been involved in home education.

Table 5-6 Themes evident within educational style when grouped into number of years of home education experience

Number of Years of Home Education Experience		Main Approach Evident Within this Group
0-4 years	59%	Parent directed, using school terminology eg. unit studies, textbooks
5-9 years	28%	Eclectic
10 + years	13%	Child directed (Informal)

0-4 YEARS OF HOME EDUCATION EXPERIENCE (59%)

The responses from those who had been home educating for four years or less, tended to be similar to terminology used within a school environment.

I like to use and create unit studies but also use textbooks and half of the time, follow a 'school at home' model. (Questionnaire 4)

One family stated a change in their approach within the first year of education.

Began totally following NSW Dept Ed curriculum with text books but moving toward interest based learning, internet and life experiences as we 'deschool'. (Questionnaire 47)

Two families described a less formal approach. Both considered themselves to be home educators although they did not as yet have children of legal school age.

5-9 YEARS OF HOME EDUCATION EXPERIENCE (28%)

Participants who had been home educating for more than five years had found their own ways of educating. This group rarely reported using a single style, but instead described an 'eclectic' approach, utilising a range of styles. The comments of this group ranged from those who followed a "conventional curriculum" (Questionnaire 13) through to the participant who stated "Infrequently I get a bee in my bonnet and force work in a particular area that I see needs a boost" (Questionnaire 9). Some focussed on a particular educational style or philosophy including Montessori (Questionnaire 39), Charlotte Mason (Questionnaire 33) and Classical Education (Questionnaires 16 & 33). Many focussed on individual children's needs.

I have always used an eclectic mix to educate my children. For one child I have found non Gov[ernment] correspondence useful for the regimented structure it provides. For the others, bits and pieces works well. (Questionnaire 48)

10 + YEARS OF HOME EDUCATION EXPERIENCE (13%)

In those families who had been home educating for ten years or more there was no mention of the parent designing the curriculum or learning program. While some children were participating in “formal courses completed outside home taught by other home educating parents, or other organisations” (Questionnaire 8), it was clear that this group tended to focus on “... child directed learning” (Questionnaire 52).

There was a clear focus on the child leading the learning process.

Everything is available and each child demonstrates their own style. Exploring the environment has been a large part. (Questionnaire 2)

However, participants emphasised how they as parents were still involved in this process.

This involvement might be discreet,

... being directed by my child but thinking about what I want him to learn and why. (Questionnaire 40)

or more deliberate,

My children decide WHAT they want to learn and WHEN they want to learn it. I then ensure all the activities are matched to the [state curriculum requirements]. (Questionnaire 52)

DISCUSSION OF CHANGES IN EDUCATIONAL STYLE AND STRUCTURE OVER TIME

This identified trend towards less formal education is not a unique result of this research. A number of studies have reported similar phenomenon (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Habibullah, 2004; Jackson, 2009; Jacob et al., 1991; Lampe, 1988; OBOS, 2004; Reilly, 2007; Simich, 1998, Thomas, 1998).

It is unclear from this particular research whether the trend for longer term home educating families to be less formal occurs over time within individual families, or is only seen at a

group level. While it is feasible that those who are more comfortable with formal educational styles only intend to home educate for a short period of time. It is possible that the difficulty of maintaining a strict adherence to school type structures creates more work and those who use this style either send their children to school or alter their approach. Interviewed participants (particularly Daphne, see Section 6.4.1) indicated that in their experience the second scenario was more accurate. Daphne described her experience as beginning very structured until both she and her children experienced 'burn out'. After this she altered her approach to a less formal structure.

A number of families in both the 5-9 years group and the 10+ years group referred to unschooling. While some listed unschooling as one of their educational methods, there were also a number who made it clear that while they utilised practices from Natural Learning and Unschooling (Holt, 1981) they were not '*unschooling*' as they disagreed with the philosophies behind these styles. It is not evident in this work how their understanding of unschooling philosophy corresponds with those who do choose to '*unschool*'.

DAILY STRUCTURE

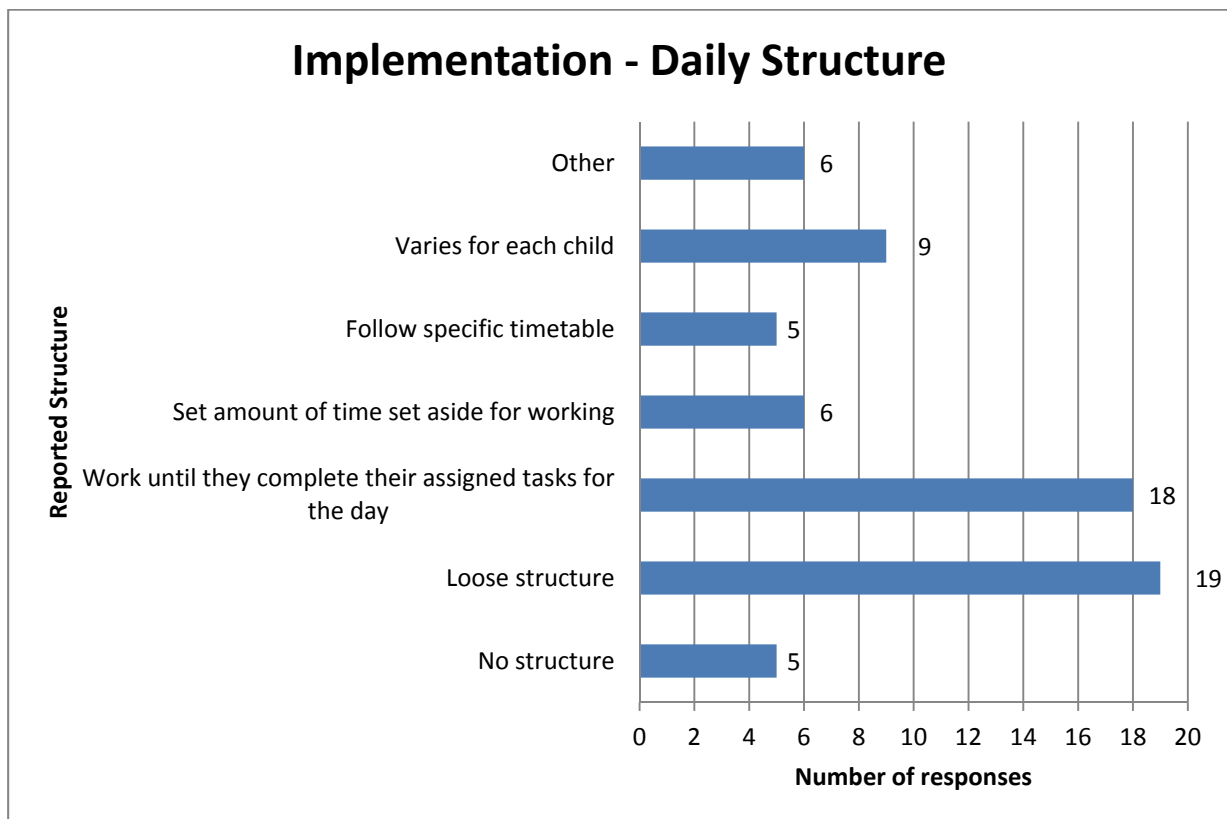


Figure 5-19 Education structure used within the home on a daily basis

A number of participants selected more than one category when reporting how they structured their home education on a daily basis. There were sixty-eight selections from forty-five responses. Most participants selected either following a “Loose structure” or having a process where children “Work until they complete their assigned tasks for the day” (see Figure 5-19).

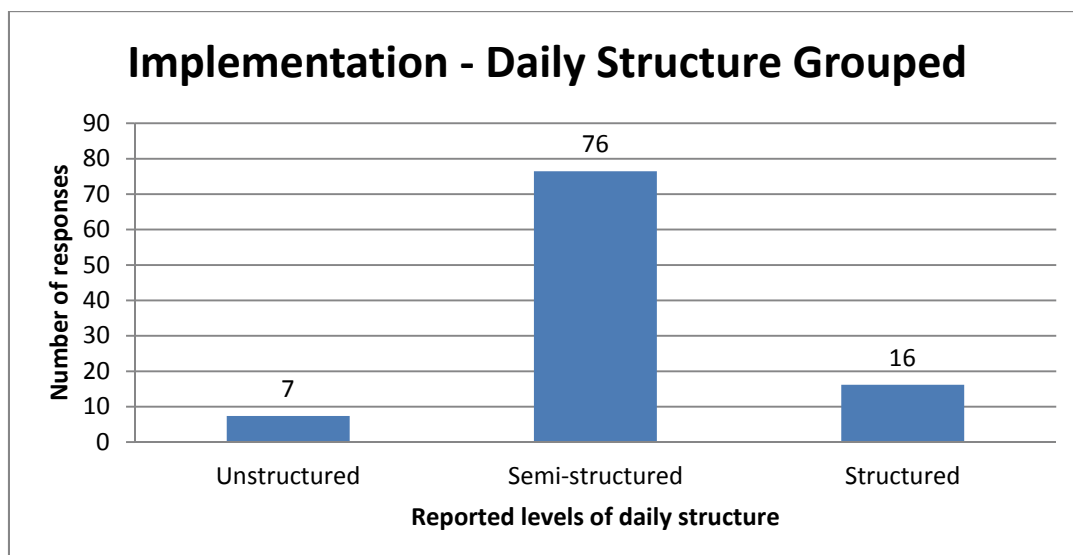


Figure 5-20 Reported daily structures grouped under headings used in previous home education research

Participants reported a range of structure levels when implementing home education. Most described a semi-structured approach (see Figure 5-20), although there were large variations within this category. Outside of the semi-structured approach, five participants reported using a set timetable, and five reported no structure at all (see Figure 5-19).

DISCUSSION OF DAILY STRUCTURE

It is important to note that a number respondents reported using more than one structure, therefore the numbers listed here describe proportions of structures utilised, **not** proportions of individuals using each structure, unlike previous research (Patrick, 1999) in which 25% of families used an unstructured approach, 24% semi-structured, and 35% structured.

YEARLY STRUCTURE

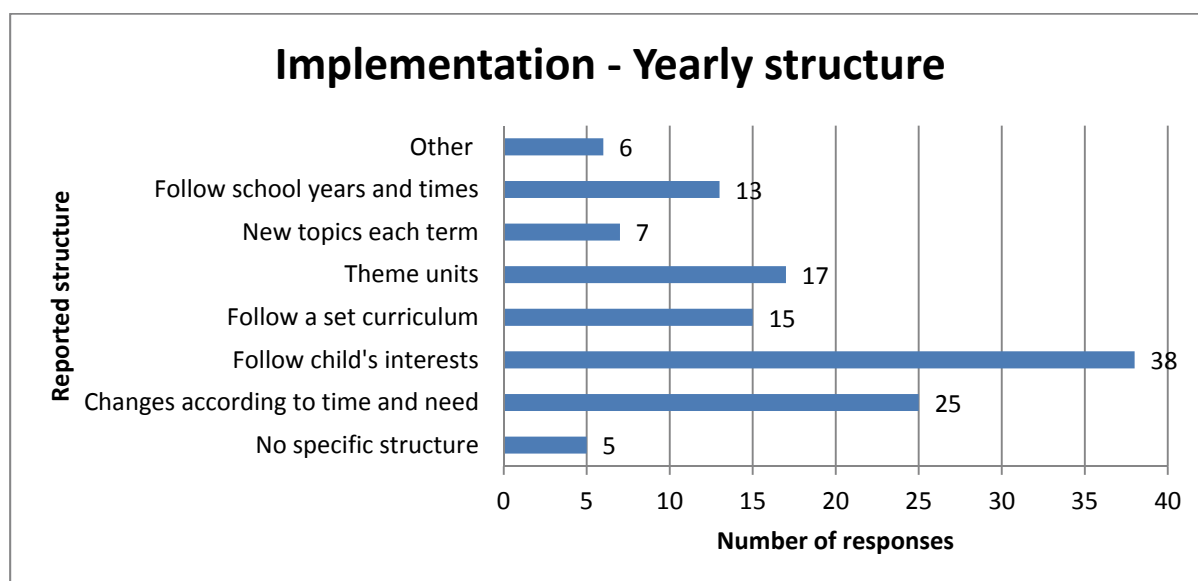


Figure 5-21 Education structure used within the home on a yearly basis

Participants were able to select more than one option when reporting their yearly educational structure (see Figure 5-21). Forty-six participants completed this question with a total of 126 responses.

DISCUSSION OF YEARLY STRUCTURE

This response set does not describe in which category individual participants fall. Rather it provides an understanding of the range of practices utilised. Most participants reported using more than one structure. It is clear that flexibility, regarding both time and individual needs, feature prominently within the home education programs reported in this research as does a focus on the interests of the child. This supports the premise that implementation is related to motivation as stated in previous home education research (Barrett-Peacock, 1997; Brosnan, 1991).

5.4.4 IMPACT OF PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE AS A STUDENT ON IMPLEMENTATION

Similarly to Sections 5.3.5 & 5.3.6 addressing Motivation, (see also Figure 5-12), participants were again asked to rate the level of impact of their previous experience as both student and teacher (see Figure 5-22). This time participants were asked to rate the impact of their experience on their Implementation of education within the home.

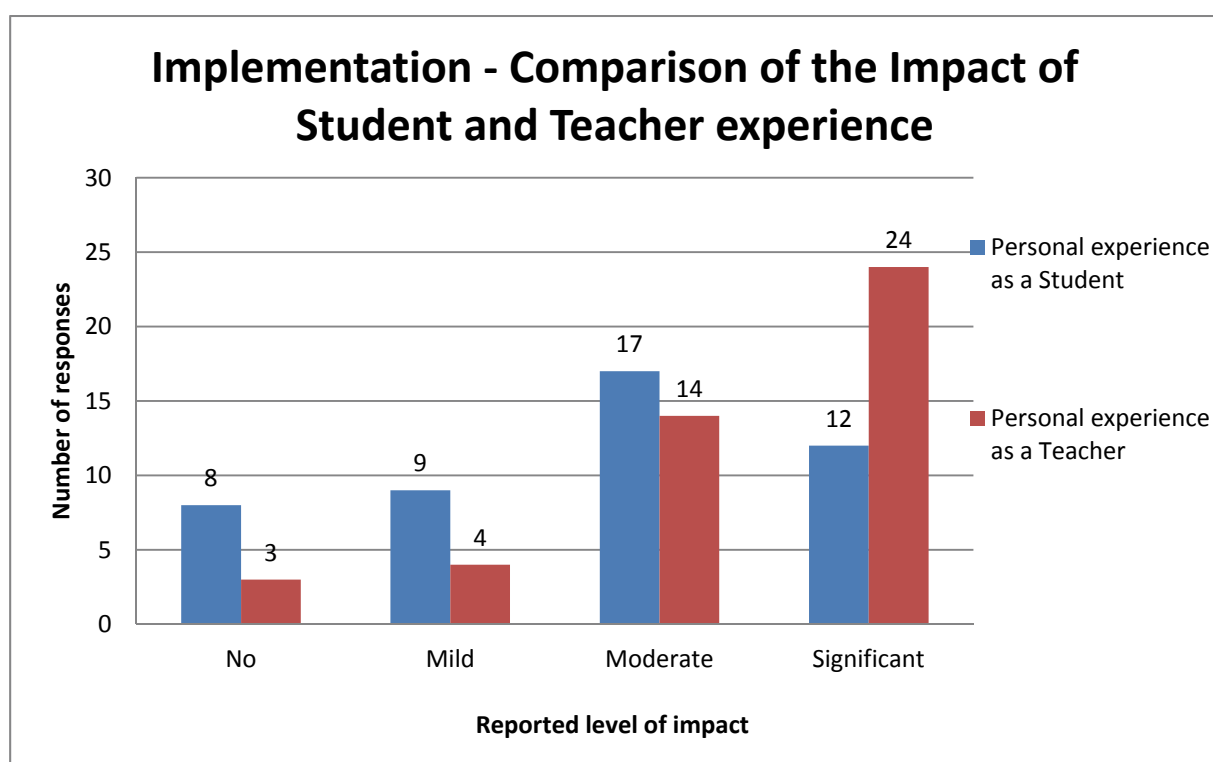


Figure 5-22 A comparison of the reported impact of participants' personal education experience as both student and teacher on their implementation of home education

Responses were grouped according to the reported impact and were then analysed to uncover themes for each level.

Table 5-7 Impact of participants' experience as a student on implementation of home education

Level of Impact	Major theme identified in this group
None	Child's experience very different to parent
Mild	General impact
Moderate	Relevance and personal interest
Significant	Autonomy and learning freedom

Where student experience was perceived as having affected their implementation of home education, participants were strongly motivated by aspects of personal freedom (see Table 5-7).

DISCUSSION OF IMPACT OF PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE AS A STUDENT ON IMPLEMENTATION

Jackson (2009) identified autonomy as a positive aspect of home education experience which students missed when transitioning to mainstream education. Studies have noted that home educating parents were affected by their own background experiences (Krivanek, 1985; Knowles, 1988). In this research personal school experiences are just one of a number of background factors which affect this consideration (Barratt-Peacock, 1997, Jackson, 2009).

5.4.5 IMPACT OF PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE AS A TEACHER ON IMPLEMENTATION

Those who considered their professional experience to have a mild impact on their implementation referred mainly to the need to cater for individual differences (see Table 5-8). Moderate and Significant Impact categories have been linked together as the same themes were present in both groups.

Table 5-8 Impact of participants' experience as a teacher on implementation of home education

Level of Impact	Major theme identified in this group
None	Home Education Very Different from Teaching Experience
Mild	Individual Differences
Moderate and Significant	Positive Aspects of Teaching Experience Negative Aspects of Teaching Experience Teaching Experience as a Hindrance

Three themes were identified among the group listing either moderate or significant impact on their implementation of home education. These three themes are explored below.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

The first theme comprised positive attributes from their teaching experience. In each case this included a strong focus on individual needs and developing the learning environment to suit the child.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Secondly, while outlining some positive aspects of teaching, participants described areas of the school system which they felt were negative. Again, individual differences and personal learning freedoms were paramount. Participants reported a perception that schools were unable to offer students sufficient individuation.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE AS A HINDRANCE

A third theme expressed teaching experience as a hindrance to their home education process.

The hardest job ... [was] to unlearn the teacher in me. (Questionnaire 2)

Three responses did not specifically addressing teaching experience. Each of these expressed the importance of individual experience.

What we do is individualised for each child. The child is the focus. (Questionnaire 52)

DISCUSSION OF IMPACT OF PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE AS A TEACHER ON IMPLEMENTATION

Personal relationships with students and their families were considered a positive aspect of participants' teaching experience. A strong theme of recognising the importance of the child as individual is evident throughout. Participants emphasised the need for education to be tailored to the needs of the child. Harding (2011) reports pressure on educators to individualise learning experiences and argues that home educators are leading the way in this respect.

The participants' reported experience of teaching experience hindering their ability to effectively home educate does not support the premise that teaching qualifications would improve the success of home education.

5.4.6 PART C - SUMMARY

Participants' families were larger than the average found in the Australian population with an average of 2.9 children per family of which 2.1 were reported to be home educating. Some families had children being educated at school in addition to those being educated at home. Most families had no fixed time period set for their home education goals, stating that they would continue as long as home education suited their circumstances.

Participants reported a range of factors affecting how Australian teachers selected and structured education within their own home. Pedagogy, Content, Social and Ideological factors were all rated as similarly affecting the implementation of home education.

Participants reported using a number of educational styles, represented by three categories, *formal*, *informal* and *eclectic*. Approaches tended to become less formal with each year

spent home educating. Participants reported a range of structures when implementing home education, with most utilising a combination of structural arrangements.

Background factors from participants' experience as both student and teacher were explored. In each case there was a strong focus on individualisation and catering to individual needs.

5.5 SUMMARY

Participants sought an *individually tailored learning experience* for their own children – for each child to be able to learn at their own pace and in their own time, free from the restraints of system requirements or being held back by mass presentation strategies used when dealing with large groups.

Learning is individual, mass instruction does not a person make. (Questionnaire 2)

While arguably this is idealistic, presumably it is no more so than what any parent wishes for their child and indeed is advocated by learning theorists and expected by Education Departments across Australia (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2011). The only real difference is that this particular group of educators have attempted to create that learning environment outside of the school system.

This research has attempted to identify, understand and present the motivation to and implementation of home education as expressed by teachers who home educate. Thus, while it explores participants' perceptions regarding this ideal, namely an individually tailored learning experience, as central to these teacher parent decisions, it is beyond the scope of this research to assess the effectiveness of the implementation.

Following on from the presentation in this chapter of the questionnaire and its analysis, with related discussion, the next chapter outlines the structure, analysis and findings of the interview process.

6 INTERVIEW ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with an outline of the interview process. It then explores the two research questions of

- a) Motivation - why teachers choose to home educate, and
- b) Implementation - how they home educate.

A final section illuminates participants' attitudes toward mainstream education including perceived effects of participants' teaching background on home education and vice versa.

6.2 INTERVIEW PROCESS

While forty-eight of the fifty-five participants expressed a willingness to be interviewed, the qualitative nature of the analysis restricted the number of case studies possible. Willingness to participate in the interview process and availability were the two criteria for selection and participants were followed up promptly as questionnaires were received.

The interview process included seven participants. In each case the interviewee was the mother, the instigator of the decision to home educate and also the home education facilitator within the family. All were qualified teachers who had experience teaching in Australian schools. Initially, to complete the study in a timely manner, it was intended to utilise five case studies. As questionnaire responses were reviewed, however, an additional two participants were selected in order to provide as broad a cross section of motivating factors as possible. This gave a wide range of motivations, from a participant home educating due to an absolute objection to school, through to a participant home educating despite an opposition to home education per se.

Reports of practice may not always match the reality of practice (Charmaz, 2006). However, in this research, the interview process is considered fit for the purpose as it was not possible to observe actual practice due to the geographical area. Nor was there reason for participants to alter reality to please the researcher. It was assumed that data collected would be dynamic and reflective of individual's perspective and experiences, rather than provide specific measurable data about a broader group (Booth, Colomb & Williams, 2008).

There is no presumption that these interviews are representative samples of the proportion of teacher-trained parents among the home education community. As stated in Section 4.2.3, the goal of this research was to explore a broad range of motivations and implementation styles with no intention of assessing numbers involved in them (Polkinghorne, 1983, van Manen, 1990).

After initial analysis of questionnaire responses, additional questions were added to the intended interview schedule. These probed aspects of participants' relationship to mainstream education. Telephone interviews ranged from thirty-five minutes to two hours.

6.3 MOTIVATION

As discussed in Section 2.5.6, Barratt-Peacock (1997) describes four factors involved in the decision to home educate: *Background*; *Crisis*; *Informant/Mentor*; and *Confirmation*. These have been represented in a linear format in Figure 6-1.

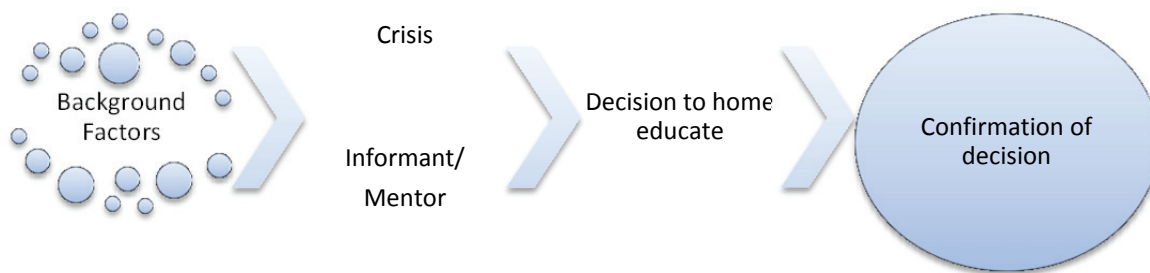


Figure 6-1 Factors influencing motivation to home educate as described in previous home education research

When analysing the data from this research, a close fit was found with the aforementioned categories. Therefore this section is presented under the same four motivational factors.

6.3.1 BACKGROUND FACTORS

Background factors in this research included both personal and professional factors. In both areas three main themes became apparent. Each of these themes is outlined below.

PERSONAL FACTORS

NATURAL PROGRESSION

Several participants spoke of home education as a continuation of their parenting style and philosophy.

I think that [home education] is the most natural progression in parenting.
(Rachel)

Progression clearly differed according to parenting styles and philosophy. Several participants used the word ‘hippy’ when describing themselves as differing from the mainstream not only in educational choice, but also in lifestyle - particularly relating to birth, breastfeeding and food choices.

... our kids are vegan ... I breastfed my children long term ... we home birthed ... we're kind of conservative hippies ... you'll find that the home educating community is like that ... because it really is about taking on those decisions yourself and ... what's best for your children. ... it's not just about education ... certainly there are lots of home educators who don't do those things, but you'll find there are a lot ... who do. (Mandy)

'CHILD SWAP'

Participants were passionate about being with their own children. The perceived irony of 'swapping children' with other teachers was a common element.

I love watching them take joy in learning, and don't want to pass that privilege to someone else. It doesn't make sense to me to send my children off to someone who doesn't love them all day while I spend all day with other children who I don't love! (Alexis)

PARENT INFLUENCE

Influence was also a factor involved in the decision. From their teaching experience, parents described a goal to maintain their position as the primary influence in the life of a child, rather than allow school to take that role.

As a teacher, I've seen that when children go to school ... to a large degree the parents lose that influence on their children ... and I wanted to be that major influence in my children's life ... (Daphne)

PROFESSIONAL FACTORS

While professional factors certainly include personal factors, they are listed here as they specifically relate to experience within mainstream education.

DIFFERENCE IN EDUCATIONAL STYLE

During their career some participants had felt slightly adjacent to mainstream educational philosophy and practice.

I've never really fitted into classes. I've always sort of looked for the alternative jobs, the alternative teaching positions. (Tanya)

CONCERNS REGARDING OTHER TEACHERS

Others expressed concerns relating to other staff and particularly specific attitudes which they found disturbing.

Sitting in staff rooms, listening to teachers talk and they are not interested in providing for gifted children ... (Bethany)

Teachers have such power over the lives of their developing students. I've seen some teachers completely abuse that [power]. (Rachel)

TIME

Time was a clear motivator as participants expressed a desire to allow their children more time freedom than was possible within a classroom setting. Participants commonly noted education within the home took significantly less time than was required in school. This was attributed to the management and behaviour systems required by the classroom setting.

... as a teacher ... I would say that 50% of the time is taken up with classroom control behaviours ... crowd control, and getting the whole group to co-ordinate and to move at once. And it's just a very inefficient way of educating a lot of people. ... we get our school work done in an hour and half each day and it is the same amount of work I would get through in a classroom in a whole day's worth of work. (Rachel)

DISCUSSION OF BACKGROUND FACTORS

PERSONAL

Barratt-Peacock (1997) describes background characteristics of families who differ from mainstream culture, including choices involving birthing, child rearing and diet as "the element of personal responsibility over key areas of life experience" (p. 71) and states that this element of responsibility is evident in many home educating families. This "willingness to take responsibility for different areas of life such as children's education, health, employment and self-fulfilment" (Neuman & Aviram, 2003, p. 132) is evident among home

educating families who express a belief that parents are responsible for the education of their own children (Harding, 2003).

PROFESSIONAL

Participants commonly noted education within the home took noticeably less time than was required in school. This was consistent with previous home education research (Jackson, 2009; Simich, 1998). Flexibility as an advantage of home education has been recognised by both home educators and educational administrators (Jackson, 2009; Olsen, 2008).

6.3.2 CRISIS

INTRODUCTION

After addressing background factors, Barratt-Peacock's (1997) model refers to a *crisis* or point of decision. This section outlines specific triggers expressed by participants as leading to a decision to home educate. Respondents are grouped into 'push' and 'pull' factors (Patrick, 1999). Of the seven interviewees, four had chosen to home educate before their children reached school age. Figure 6-2 shows the way participants are grouped as well as the major *crisis* triggers identified by each.

Three participants, Daphne, Alexis and Tanya, were motivated by 'pull factors', or the positive attributes which motivate one to move towards an area or aspect of a decision (Patrick, 1999), in this case, the decision to home educate. These three will be referred to in this section as Group A.

Of the four participants in Group B, three had chosen home education only after their children were already involved in the mainstream education system. In each case the

motivation to home educate came from issues that caused them to seek alternatives. These ‘push factors’ (Patrick, 1999) came from within the school environment. Mandy – whose decision was made long before her children were born – was included with this group as her decision was strongly motivated by ‘push factors’ although these came from Mandy’s own experience as a teacher rather than the student experience of her children.

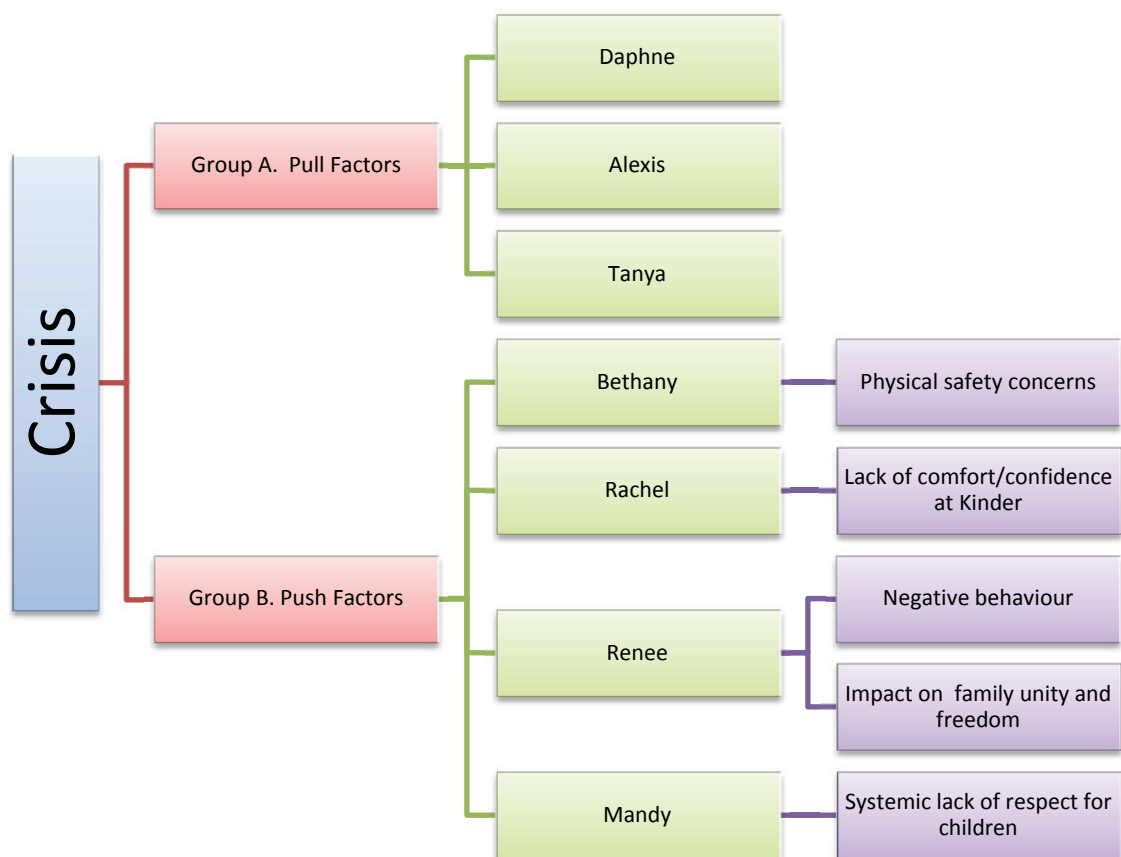


Figure 6-2 Crisis point identified by participants, grouped into Pull and Push factors

GROUP A - PULL FACTORS

Within Group A, crisis was not experienced as a particular event, but rather background factors affected by a developed ideology based predominately on parenting philosophy and experience, impacted often by an informant/mentor as outlined later in the chapter.

It was very much a smooth transition. It was just something that I had already pretty much decided before she got to that point of being school age ... so it was very smooth, very natural. (Daphne)

When prompted to recall specific triggers, participants noted such items as distance from town and thoughts of travelling around Australia, however these appear to be starting points, and not significant factors in the decision.

GROUP B - PUSH FACTORS

Three families followed a mainstream process of sending their children to school, expecting them to follow a typical educational pathway. Each developed concerns due to their child's experience with school.

I sent a child to school, and wasn't happy ... Something that I'd never, ever considered ... as I'm a teacher. (Renee)

The fourth interview in this group differed slightly as Mandy's negative motivation, as already stated, related to her professional experience rather than that of her child.

NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR

For Renee, crisis came in the first few weeks of school with noticeable behavioural changes.

Within two or three weeks of sending her to school we sort of thought ... we're not happy, you know, we sent off to school a kid that has ... manners and interacts with everyone and plays with her sister and [we] just didn't like the kid that was coming home and as a parent I didn't want to send her to school but, you know, you have to – don't you? (Renee)

Renee felt that school was not worth the negative impact on her family. Apart from the social influences her daughter was experiencing, Renee found that family unity was reduced.

... we put her on the bus at eight o'clock in the morning and got her off the bus at four thirty at night and she reads a reader, has her tea, has a bath and goes to bed. And you think is that, that's all I get - as a parent? (Renee)

She also felt that family freedom was compromised.

And all of a sudden not, not being able to have the extended family contact that we'd had because you're governed by a school term, ... family comes first in life as far as I'm concerned ... (Renee)

Renee considered other schools, but decided that

... things that didn't sit right with me in school were going to be an issue anywhere. So I decided to look for something else and that's what I found.
(Renee)

LACK OF COMFORT/CONFIDENCE

Rachel faced her challenge when her eldest daughter was in kindergarten. While this is not technically school, this case has been included in this group because kindergarten is usually considered part of the school pathway.

I sent [my eldest] to three year old kinder ... she didn't feel safe ... She wasn't feeling secure ... by [the] end of term 3 ... And that's when I started looking at ... other options. ... my normally outgoing, happy child was shy and, withdrawn ... which is something that was not like her ... and so I wanted something that was ... more *her* than what [kindergarten] was. (Rachel)

PHYSICAL SAFETY

Bethany's daughters experienced bullying and exclusion within the school environment, however her crisis was lack of care for her daughter's physical safety.

My daughter [who has anaphylaxis], in her first term at kindergarten had a stall day. She had been left to decide on her own whether items were safe for her to eat. Another time, I left instructions that she was not to be allowed to purchase food, so the teacher gave her food as a prize. On another day, I was working in the school ... her epi pen was accidentally locked in the classroom. I found her crying. Several teachers had walked past and left her there. She explained that her epi-pen was locked in the classroom and I suggested that she take the spare from the canister. Later that day, ... she ... had accidentally injected her own finger. She was left, sitting there, alone ... (Bethany)

Following these major triggers, academic factors reinforced the decision.

[My daughter] was a quick learner, but they wouldn't give her any advanced work or anything. She just had to do the same as everyone else. (Bethany)

LACK OF RESPECT FOR CHILDREN

Mandy's crisis occurred long before she had children. She stated a love of teaching but had difficulty working within the system.

Teachers, in the most part, really didn't care about children. And, when I was teaching and I would look around at my colleagues and I would go "If I had a child would I put them in your class?" and I went "no, no, no, no, no, and no." So, even before I had children, I was realising that there were teachers out there that I didn't think were good enough to teach my child. If I had one. ... Respect is a big issue, and there is *no* respect for children in schools. (Mandy)

When Mandy did have children she realised she needed to seek alternatives.

... when she was a week old ... I kind of went, 'oh, what am I going to do now?' ... because I knew I was never putting her in a school. (Mandy)

DISCUSSION OF CRISIS FACTORS

Reasons given by participants as influencing their decision to home educate, are consistent with prior research on motivations for home education. Negative behavioural influences and safety concerns have been noted as a reason for removing children from a school environment (Olsen, 2008). Several studies (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Simich, 1998) refer to dissatisfaction with schools as being a motivating factor in the decision to home educate.

6.3.3 INFORMANT/MENTOR

The *Informant/Mentor* section explores the impact of other home educators on the decision to home educate.

Participants in Group A identified influence by personal contact with someone who was involved in home education. This influence was often through friendships.

Then once I got to know a few home schoolers I decided that I liked that lifestyle and I could do that for longer than a year. (Alexis)

Tanya discovered a new educational option through her professional experience as a science educator.

... when I was teaching ... I was asked to do some science sessions for [some] home schoolers. ... They had a whole street, full of home schooled kids. ... I wanted what they had. They did so well, they were really good at it! ... they were a peaceful group, they played well, they were happy, and they were obviously well educated and well-mannered and they enjoyed everything and they appreciated it, and I thought "I want that!" (Tanya)

Group B appeared less influenced by other home educators than Group A. After her initial concern regarding her daughter's lack of comfort Rachel began to research:

... an internet search, used google search. I ... joined a few online forums, met people through there ... went on play dates, talked to people. I spent that whole year ... working out whether this was what we wanted to do. (Rachel)

Mandy found a home education group after some years of considering options. This group provided her with the pull that influenced her final decision.

[A] couple of 16 year old girls who didn't know who I was ... came over, introduced themselves and asked could they push my daughter on the swings for me while I spoke to their mum. And I just went, "yep, that's what I want."
(Mandy)

Renee described a lack of other home educators within her local area and a difficulty in finding social opportunities for her children.

Bethany did not interact with other home educators at all as she was opposed to the philosophy behind home education and had only pursued that path when she felt she had no other option. She had negative perceptions of home education from a previous encounter with a home educated child

... whose mother was terribly proud of him, but was obviously behind socially. [He] couldn't relate to peers or to adults. (Bethany)

6.3.4 CONFIRMATION

Confirmation refers to the way home educators view their decision over time. Often triggers instigating a decision differ from those which cause families to continue with home education (Barratt-Peacock, 1997). Group A participants particularly illustrate this occurrence. Distance and Travel were concepts that triggered the original idea of home education.

At that stage it [distance] was a major factor, although that now, is probably one of the minor factors in my experience. ... I have changed a lot in my thinking since then. (Daphne)

Those original factors were very different from those which motivated parents to continue which could be summarised as lifestyle, influence and freedom. Alexis enjoyed the relaxed lifestyle home education offered, Daphne wanted to be able to influence what her children were learning and Tanya loved the freedom to explore interest areas.

[M]y decision to home school came as a lifestyle choice ... because ... we've got a lot more freedom to do what we want and follow our interests. And I can go travelling any time I like. ... It's great, I love it! (Tanya)

Group B participants did not express such an obvious confirmation response. Mandy's passionate outline of the benefits of home education predominantly related to her objections to mainstream education. Rachel gave the only clear confirmation. She expressed her belief that home education was beneficial to her as well as her children.

... Teaching was my passion. I loved my job. ... being able to mix the two together is very exciting for me. ... It's so exciting to see that look of sudden insight or gained understanding on their faces is just, it's just *magic* for me. ... But to be able to take that journey with ... my focus, my children, my love! ... It just makes it so much more, special. (Rachel)

6.3.5 DISCUSSION OF MOTIVATION

Participants outlined a number of factors motivating their decision to home educate. While both professional and personal factors were involved, in all cases, participants referred to examples from their professional background to illustrate their considerations. An individual's past educational experience has been noted in other studies to affect the decision to home educate (Knowles, 1988).

Those participants motivated by positive attributes (pull factors) of home education, rather than negative aspects of mainstream education, placed greater emphasis on the influence of other home educators. This is illustrated in Figure 6-3. This Informant/Mentor interaction combined with the effect of participants' background experience to motivate the decision with minimal impact of a specific point of crisis (see Figure 6-3).



Figure 6-3 Decision process when motivated by Pull Factors with emphasis on the presence of an Informant/Mentor and little reference to a point of crisis

In cases where motivating factors came from negative attributes of mainstream education (push factors) the crisis was a more notable aspect of their decision making process, with little or no mention of other home educators (see Figure 6-4). This is not surprising as the motivation to home educate came from negative aspects of their own experience with

schools rather than from positive interactions with home educators. Participants gave varying levels of confirmation responses.



Figure 6-4 Decision making process - when motivated by Push factors with emphasis on the point of crisis and little reference to an Informant/Mentor

Once a family had made the decision to home educate, the next step was to determine how they would implement that education. An exploration of implementation practices forms the focus of the next section.

6.4 IMPLEMENTATION

This section begins with an overview of families involved with the interview process. The case studies are shared using headings from Barratt-Peacock's (1997) observation of the educational practices in home educating families, namely *Background, Organisation, Content and Resources*. An additional category outlines each participant's attitude towards mainstream education. The structure of case study presentations is shown in Figure 6-5. Barratt-Peacock's (1997) case studies also included observed techniques, however this category has not been examined in this study. Following the case study overviews, there is an analysis of educational philosophy and goals.

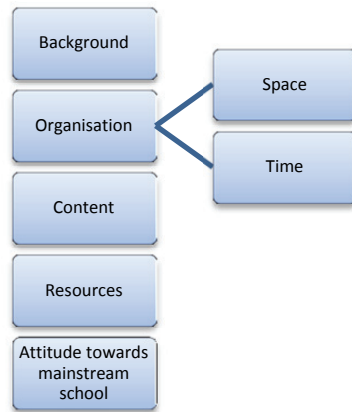


Figure 6-5 Structure of the presentation of case studies

6.4.1 CASE STUDY OVERVIEWS - GROUP A

These families are grouped as in Section 6.4.1. Group A families were motivated to home educate by perceived positive aspects of home education.

DAPHNE

BACKGROUND

Daphne and Richard home educated their six children, aged between 6 and 18 years of age, on a rural property where they were working with a group of other families to establish a health retreat. Daphne trained as a primary teacher. She chose to home educate initially due to distance and time factors, but continued due to a desire to influence her children's education, both moral and academic. None of her children had ever attended school.

ORGANISATION

Space

The family were temporarily living in a caravan and annexe while waiting for council approval on home building plans.

Time

Daphne originally followed a very strict, 'school at home' structure, but 'burnt out' after a few years. After a year of what she described as 'unschooling' she settled into a structure of formal mornings and less structured afternoons.

I write in their diaries, what they need to achieve for that day. And they set their own pace, and work at their own pace and achieve it ... We always finish home school before lunch. ...After lunch is gardening, building, riding horses, building buggies, whatever it happens to be for the day. ... there's no lunch – until the school work's finished.

CONTENT

Daphne set work in what she called 'the basics' (essentially reading, writing, comprehension and mathematics) for each child who worked independently to complete these tasks.

[T]hey'll do a lesson of maths, they'll ... review their spelling lists and do a spelling exercise and ... they'll read for a certain length of time and do a comprehension activity, and they write every day. Either a journal, or ... a letter ... so I'll just write what ... comprehension I want them to do ... and they know that it's just the next maths lesson.

Other subjects were covered in a 'natural learning' approach as the family worked together completing such tasks as gardening, building, bee keeping, engine maintenance, and cooking.

Maths ... and spelling ... follow a curriculum. And everything else is whatever I choose for them. ... one of my boys is about to get his own beehive and so...his reading has been about how to keep bees. ... so that he doesn't actually kill the bees. ... when he's finished that, then I might put him back onto, a, you know, just a standard comprehension book ...

RESOURCES

Daphne used comprehension and mathematics textbooks. The annexe contained a bookcase holding numerous reading books as well as 'school' books. Daphne included the remainder of the farm as resources for the 'natural learning' subjects.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MAINSTREAM SCHOOLING

Daphne believed schools and home educators were performing the same task in different ways and supported the concept of both working alongside each other, even together. She worked occasionally as a relief teacher.

ALEXIS

BACKGROUND

Alexis had chosen to home educate her three young children for lifestyle reasons. She and her husband had considered travelling around Australia for twelve months and researched home education in preparation for that adventure. The travel never eventuated, but the idea of home education was attractive and so she continued, even when she separated from her partner. She appreciated the relaxed lifestyle and the practical application of the educational philosophy. Alexis was starting her second year of home education.

ORGANISATION

Space

The children often worked in the lounge area,

In my house I have a big sun room that is basically the kids' area.

but all areas of the house were stated as learning areas, dependent upon the desired learning.

Time

Alexis utilised some formal structures, keeping the rest of the time free for child directed activities.

[T]wo days a week, I set up work boxes ...

CONTENT

Specific work was set in language and mathematics, the remainder considered natural learning time.

We're covering a ... a maths curriculum and ... spelling curriculum... but apart from... that, it's just day to day stuff, they know, everything's at their level, they can just grab whatever they want. ... once they've got something out, then, yeah, I'll help them with it. I'll play with them.

RESOURCES

Alexis listed numerous resources:

Books upon books upon books upon books ... games ... Puzzles. Manipulatives. Toys. Science experiment kits. ... blocks. educational ... CD ROMs ... iPad ... educational applications on there. ... They go to the library and ... borrow their own books. They've all got a bank account, ... they can all ... focus on what they want to save for. ... that's how we learn about money ... we go shopping and we spend and we save and all those sorts of things. ... the kids know where the cook books are if they want to, cook something, they get the cookbooks out. Or they just ... experiment with food. (laugh) Which can be quite messy. ... I've got a whiteboard with magnetic letters and things like that too and, you know, they enjoy that too, as much as they enjoy playing a board game ...

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MAINSTREAM SCHOOLING

Alexis did casual work relief teaching, viewing home education as an option available to those who want it. She believed not every parent could or would want to home educate and therefore schools were necessary.

TANYA

BACKGROUND

Tanya valued diversity in learning and believed that if learning was not made interesting, then it would be 'sub-optimal'. Tanya and her husband home educated two children - one of

whom was not yet school age - in a small town comprised mainly of people she described as 'escaping from city'. Tanya first encountered home education when called to provide science programs for a group of home educators who essentially ran their own school. She loved what she saw and decided to emulate the education style well before her children were born. Tanya had always home educated her child, but he was in his second year of formal school age.

ORGANISATION

Space

Tanya described a range of locations for formal work.

[A]bout three days a week, we sit down at the kitchen table ... or ... outside's nicer!

Time

Tanya described her formal education time, but stated that

[M]y input will be six, at most nine hours a week ...

While she distinguished between bookwork and other activities, she considered all time to be learning time.

I do an art class ... and we'll go to kids club and soccer and swimming and markets and shopping ... I take every opportunity ... to ... bring his attention to something ... " oh here's some adding, can you add that up, or can you do this ..." it works well... just immersion learning.

CONTENT

The formal work Tanya dealt with covered

...some bookwork, to encourage his penwork and things like that ... handwriting, maths, ... reporting ... creative writing ... he's only seven, so he's not that big on handwriting at the moment! He's not thrilled by it, so I'm not pushing it *too* hard! ... we'll do some number games, card games, things like that ...

The remainder of his education was through natural learning. Tanya gave an example of watching the frog life cycle in real life, rather than learning via a text book.

[W]e might read a little book ... on tadpoles and frogs ... *because* we've got ... a wheel barrow full of tadpoles! ... and five dams full of tadpoles and a creek full of tadpoles! ... *he* decides when he is going to do those sorts of things and what he's going to learn a lot from it. And he's taking photos and things at the moment and looking at their stages ...

RESOURCES

Tanya described opportunities to use anything she had in her home as resources. She did not use programs and textbooks as she believed in practical, experiential learning.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MAINSTREAM SCHOOLING

Tanya did relief teaching at times and believed schools provided an alternative she termed 'mass education'. In her opinion, mass education had its benefits, but was not what she wanted for her child.

6.4.2 CASE STUDY OVERVIEWS - GROUP B

Group B families came to the decision after deciding that the mainstream school system was not appropriate for their situation.

BETHANY

BACKGROUND

Bethany and her husband Paul lived in an outback town which had three schools available. They had three children, one in year three, one completing year two although at grade one

age level, and a pre-schooler. Bethany had never supported home education as an option and chose not to make contact with other home educators as she did not identify with a philosophy of home education. Recent experience with schools had been bitter involving health and safety issues leading to the reluctant removal of her two daughters from school. She viewed the school as negligent in dealing with the issues of bullying as well as her child's anaphylaxis. Bethany felt she had no option but to teach her children at home. She saw home education as a temporary situation until her husband was able transfer to a larger metropolitan centre where she would again send her children to school. Bethany was beginning her second year of home education.

ORGANISATION

Space

A school room was set up with desks, blackboards and resources gathered by Bethany during her teaching career. She noted that other spaces were used at times.

I do adjust the time at a desk etc. for my middle child as she has ADHD, Anxiety and learning issues – eg. she doesn't do look cover write check - she takes the book to the trampoline and jumps each letter...

Time

Bethany followed a highly structured 'school at home' program with her two children.

They have specific tasks that need to be done and it's based on what amount of time I believe it should take them to do it.

The only difference to a school program Bethany reported was they completed the year's work sooner at home than they would have at school. Once the yearly program was completed, the children were given scope during school time to work on less structured projects.

CONTENT

Bethany followed state curriculum guidelines and utilised curriculum materials as she would if she were teaching in a mainstream school.

RESOURCES

Bethany focussed on school type resources using many of the resources she had developed while working as a teacher, but also utilised purchased curriculum materials.

I browse the educational bookshops and websites like Pascal press and buy workbooks like Reading Freedom and Targeting Math, handwriting, English and we use them as the basis of our plan - with literacy and math games to break up the bookwork.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MAINSTREAM SCHOOLING

Bethany stated her decision to never return to teaching as her experience had left her completely opposed to schools. However she intended that her children would one day return to school.

RACHEL

BACKGROUND

Rachel and her husband had four children, two not yet of school age. Rachel considered herself an excellent teacher who had loved her teaching career and only left in order to raise her own family. Rachel intended that her children would attend school, but found that her eldest child was not comfortable with the large group dynamics of kindergarten. After a year of research she decided home education would suit her children better and chose not to send them to school. At the time of the interview they had been home educating for two years and were part way into their third year.

ORGANISATION

Space

Rachel's children worked at the kitchen table while she worked nearby. Rachel distinguished between 'school time' and unstructured free time. While outlining activities her children were involved in, such as swimming and walks etc., she did not include these as part of her home education.

Time

Rachel followed a structured morning program with children completing work from work boxes.

I like to start at around nine o'clock in the morning, because that gives us an hour before I serve snack. And then they have play after they eat something and then ... maybe an extra activity, and then they go off and play for the rest of the day. But when it's work time, it's work time and when it's play time it's play time.

I like to get it over and done with in the mornings because ... they've got things that they need to do. So, we try and get our homeschooling done in the mornings, we have play dates and unstructured free time in the afternoons. Activities, swimming lessons, you name it, everything, go for walks. Lots of free play.

CONTENT

Rachel followed a work program that listed what she intended the children to achieve each day and recorded what was achieved. She followed a ten week program with five activities to be completed each day.

[B]asically we do a tray system ... They've got five activities that they do each day. And I fill up their trays and they choose what activities they do in what sequence, but they have to get through each activity.

She followed state curriculum requirements much the same as if she were teaching in a school. She developed report folios to demonstrate their level compared with children attending mainstream school.

RESOURCES

Rachel focussed on school based materials, utilising school workbooks and activity sheets. She set work to ensure an equivalent curriculum with students in a mainstream school environment, something that her husband had insisted on when they began to consider home education.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MAINSTREAM SCHOOLING

Rachel believed schools were necessary because many people choose not to home educate. She saw home education as simply another option, alongside public and private schooling.

RENEE

BACKGROUND

Renee and her husband lived in a small country town. As a teacher, she had been vocally opposed to home education, however when she saw how inflexible the school system was towards the needs of her own children, she began to reconsider. Renee was surprised to discover her views on home education changed once she became a parent. She was also disappointed with the changes in behaviour and attitudes she observed in her children when they began school and so sought alternatives. Renee had been home educating for five years.

ORGANISATION

Space

Although she initially started with a desk in her daughter's room, Renee realised that the children needed to work where she was available.

[We have a] kitchen bench that everyone told me was ridiculously long, but I had a plan for! ... all of them, even the three year old sit up at the kitchen bench in the morning because ... unfortunately – where I spend most of my time is in the kitchen! ... they're right there, ... where I can ... help them ... So, I *love* the idea of a school room, but for us at this age and this stage, it won't work. ... their laptops, ... are ... on a desk, not far from where they all sit, ... along the kitchen bench with their books.

Time

Renee allocated activities for formal schooling, however her children completed work in their own time.

I put them out before I go to bed. ... They have – this is the school teacher part of me! A pile of stuff sitting there with their pencil case on it. ... my second [child] ... could get up at six thirty and be done, in an hour. ... Whereas my oldest, could drag herself out of bed at ten o'clock and still be thinking about having breakfast and ... dawdle her way through her stuff, but ... it's there ... we aim for ... a rough, sort of goal for the week ...

While she expressed a tendency to outline learning plans she had accepted that student directed learning wreaked havoc with such goals.

I'd like to have a yearly plan, but I've decided that it's not worth my time! (laughter) ... our term outline is rather sketchy ... For a start I would do proper unit plans and everything else, but if all of a sudden they're interested in something else or all of a sudden they're wanting to do a lot more maths than they are of the other stuff, then, that's the direction that they go in, so. Or one of them might decide for the week she's writing some great big elaborate story, so that's what she spends the week doing ...

CONTENT

Renee set out each child's work at night so that in the morning they would have everything sitting on the bench for them. This work covered literacy and numeracy outcomes. Other subjects were covered through a less formal 'natural learning' approach.

They have their standard stuff that I want them to get through ... some sort of writing, spelling, ... comprehension and some sort of maths, and ... I would say that we lean toward the natural learning with the ... other subjects, whatever they're interested in, or someone might suddenly have an idea for the rest of the day, so that's what we'll go and do.

RESOURCES

Renee outlined specific curriculum resources such as 'Maths-U-See', Fitzroy Phonics, and Jolly Phonics, but stated a tendency to pick and choose between curriculum materials depending on what would cover adequate content. She considered herself "very, very eclectic. Whatever works!"

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MAINSTREAM SCHOOLING

Renee believed herself to "walk a bit of a different line in our overall life, not just our school". While having no issue with curriculum materials and teaching styles, she was concerned with social and behavioural aspects of school education. Renee considered partial enrolment for her older daughter to access extra social opportunities due to a limited number of home educated children nearby, but hesitated as social issues were a major factor in the original decision to home educate.

MANDY

BACKGROUND

Mandy was passionate about home education. She and her husband lived and home educated their two children in suburbia within an Australian capital city. Mandy believed herself to be an excellent teacher who loved teaching and working with young people. She had worked in a number of schools across a range of systems, looking for a school in which she was comfortable working. Mandy had home educated for thirteen years and her children had never attended a mainstream school.

ORGANISATION

Space

Mandy lived in a standard suburban house with a large backyard. She emphasised the deliberate lack of a set school environment.

We do *not* have a school room. We do *not* have desks. We have ... the kitchen table if that's where we want to work on bookwork, but we tend to work on the floor, because we do a lot of hands on learning.

She considered the whole house to be a learning space.

At the moment it's cake decorating that she's into. So therefore...the kitchen is ... the learning place! Because that's where she's ... got cakes out and she's ... using different ... forms of decorating and creating different things in there. So it just depends on ... what is the ... theme at the time.

Time

Mandy's daughter was involved with a Distance Education program which provided face to face classes two days each week.

We cover all the key learning areas on those two days. And one day in the week, I still attend a home ed. ... support group ... and we just play. Play will always be important ...

CONTENT

Mandy described her children as self-directed learners. She supported their learning by providing resources and opportunities for them to follow their interests. She remained involved in this process and also assessed their progress to ensure they covered state curriculum requirements. Her daughter attended classes through a distance education program covering each of the key learning areas and was also active in extra-curricular activities such as the state youth choir. Mandy emphasised a belief in learning through play and identified this as the only curriculum planned at that time for her younger child who was five.

[W]e're not doing anything formal *at all* with him. ... legally we don't have to, and ... he's a boy and he just needs to play. So I will have him playing for as long as he possibly can before we do anything formal with him.

RESOURCES

Mandy's children had access to computers, including iPads with a variety of 'apps'. Most formal work was completed online using programs such as 'Mathletics' or 'Maths Online' and 'Skwirk'. She referred to her daughter's use of a digital camera in developing movies and uploading them to a private 'youtube' site.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MAINSTREAM SCHOOLING

Mandy believed bullying was rife within 'the system' and did not believe schools had anything to offer her children to the point that she and her husband had made provision in their Will that those who cared for the children would not send them to school.

6.4.3 CASE STUDY EMERGENT THEMES

INTRODUCTION

The previous section presented case studies which outlined participants' descriptions of the practice of home education in their own families. The next section considers the themes that emerged during the analysis of the responses of interviewees as a whole.

Participants generally reported similar educational goals regardless of differences in educational style. Four areas of focus emerged: attention to academic 'basics'; learning as an enjoyable life skill; natural learning processes; and the development of each child as an individual. These ideas are shown in Figure 6-6.

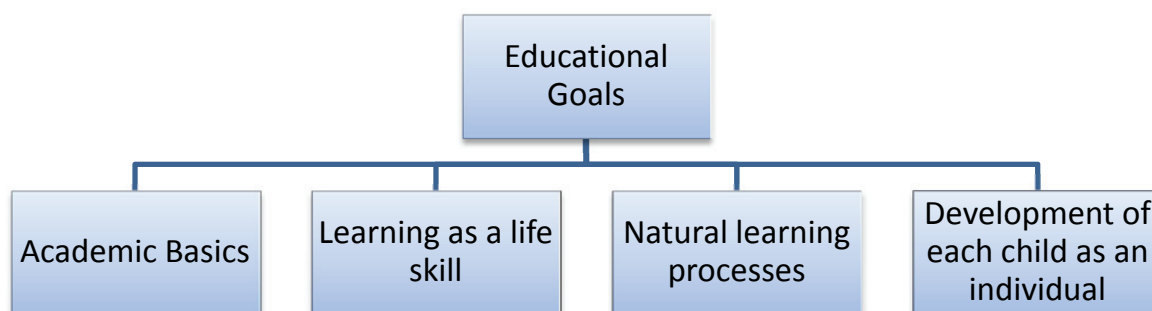


Figure 6-6 Educational goals emerging from case studies

ACADEMIC BASICS

Each participant expressed an aim to ensure 'the basics' were being covered. In all families there was an attention to ensuring that children were 'moving forward' in their learning including, in some cases, assessment against curriculum documents in their state. Some used age level textbooks, kept portfolio records or accessed 'NAPLAN' (National Assessment Program, Literacy and Numeracy) tests to assess their children's progress against external

criteria. These academic 'basics' were considered a means rather than an end to the learning process.

[I]f they can read well and they can write well and they can spell well ... and they can do their maths then they can ... learn anything and do anything. (Daphne)

[W]hen we talk about formal education, I see it as those building blocks towards learning. ... (Tanya)

PRACTICAL EDUCATION/ NATURAL LEARNING

While implementation structure differed among families, in addition to providing academic building blocks, each outlined a range of 'natural learning' practices ranging from after school activities, to an almost complete natural learning focus. Practical education was seen as part of preparation for life, not just school.

[I]n the garden, building houses, building chook pens, incubating eggs, visiting different places ... education covers all those aspects. It covers the academics ... can they grow a garden, can they dig a hole if they need to bury pipe, can they cook in the kitchen, can they clean a house? ... Education is the development of a character, a well-balanced child. (Daphne)

Each participant detailed some form of practical educational application. In the most structured it took the form of adapting spelling lessons from 'look, cover, write, check' format, to jumping on the trampoline and spelling out one letter per jump. In less formal families the focus on practical experience was greater.

You've got to do the art ... to really enjoy it. You can't just keep looking at pictures. And there's a whole world of difference between listening to music and making it! We don't do formal music ... but music's all around us. ... We've got heaps of instruments, my husband plays in a band, and therefore, the children pick that up too. ... naturally, without us ... discretely teaching them ... They've figured that out for themselves, they've never needed a lesson on that. (Tanya)

LEARNING TO LEARN

All stated a focus on learning for the sake of learning rather than only to meet 'arbitrary external' requirements. Participants expressed a wish for their children to experience learning as a joyful lifelong action.

It is important to have a love of learning ... so that's what I see ... as that preparation for life, learning how to learn. (Alexis)

I want them to learn what it means to be excited about something ... at the end of the day, I want them to be lifelong learners. And to love learning new things. (Rachel)

This love of learning was also strongly tied in responses to a perception of freedom.

[T]he freedom to learn too. The freedom to ... guide their own learning to a degree in things that interest them. (Renee)

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

Every participant expressed the importance of catering for individual needs, and described a focus on the individual development of children. While exhibited differently in different families, in every case education was seen as a means to allowing children to follow their chosen course through life.

I look at ... my children as whole, complete people ... and I try to approach their education individually. ... it's more about developing the whole person. (Rachel)

While the most structured cases saw freedom as choosing between university and vocational training, others were less formal in their expectations. Freedom to treat each child as an individual was outlined as being one of the main benefits of home education.

My goal is for them to achieve their potential. And that varies child to child ... I want them to achieve what they want to achieve. ... Without pushing them to be something they don't want to be. (Daphne)

6.4.4 DISCUSSION OF IMPLEMENTATION

Participants were clearly intentional about their children's education. There was a definite focus on academic basics within these responses, but only as one aspect of their educational goals. It is possible that academic standards hold greater focus among teachers than other home educators, but this cannot be determined from this research. Individual development was highly valued in this group of participants. This is consistent with previous studies which emphasise that home education is motivated by a desire for an education designed for the individual (Aurini & Davies, 2005).

While participants expressed awareness of the value of their child's ability to learn from play and 'natural learning' opportunities, there was a sense of *presence* with the parent being involved in the learning process in some way. In some cases this was as a facilitator and provider of resources. Others took a more active role, deliberately drawing links with daily activities and skills/knowledge that their child could gain. Still others considered themselves as more of a presence, someone on whom the children could call if they decided they needed assistance.

This parental presence could indicate the role of the parent as a More Knowledgeable Other [MKO] (Vygotsky, in Jackson, 2008) being the link between what the child can do/learn alone, and what they can do/learn with the assistance of a more knowledgeable or experienced person. The presence of the parent is also consistent with the concept of parental responsibility for the education of their child (Harding, 2003; Neuman & Aviram, 2003).

Three of those interviewed referred to the term “unschooling” while stating that it did not match their implementation style. In each of these cases “unschooling” was viewed negatively by the participant and described as a style where either children receive no education at all or parents have no input into their child’s education, even when asked by the children. This differs from the philosophy of unschooling as outlined by Holt (1981).

6.5 RELATIONSHIP TO MAINSTREAM EDUCATION

In addition to information regarding the implementation of home education, participants shared their views regarding the role of schools in society, how they perceived themselves in relation to mainstream education, and the interactions between teaching and home education. These three areas are outlined in the following section.

6.5.1 ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN SOCIETY

VALID OPTION

All involved in this research, including two participants who expressed their personal opposition to schools, stated a need for mainstream schooling. Of the two who were personally opposed, Bethany felt that she had no possible connection with schools in her local area, but intended to enrol her children in school as soon as her husband was able to transfer to another location. Mandy would never send her children to school, but acknowledged that others had different opinions and circumstances.

In most cases home education was viewed not as an opposition to schooling, but rather as another educational option.

... an alternative option. You know, you can send your kids to private school, you can send your kids to public school, you can home school, you can send them to boarding school ... what's best for [your] family. (Alexis)

Several participants stated that more people needed to be aware of home education as an option.

You hear about all of these problems that kids have at school. And you see on the news all these parents going "why isn't this school doing more for my child?" and it's like, "Well, there *are* other options out there!" ... I see school as a valid option. I see private school as a valid option, I see home school as a valid option. (Rachel)

Many felt their choice to home educate was perceived as a judgement on other's choices to send children to school, however, they emphasised that this was not their intention.

I don't see it as a competition thing or ... an "us better than them", or "we don't trust them" situation. I think it's just "I've chosen to take an opportunity that I have" ... I see myself as just working alongside [schools] ... we're both doing the same work ... in different ways ... (Daphne)

CHILDREN'S DECISION

Other than Bethany, who intended to send her children to school when circumstances permitted, all participants stated that the decision to attend school would be made if their children really wanted to attend school. This was usually prefaced with the condition;

I wouldn't let them make the decision now. That would be when they're older. ... old enough to understand ... the consequences of that decision. (Alexis)

Mandy's belief in child-led education meant that if her child really wanted to attend a school she would accept that choice, on the provision that Mandy was allowed to accompany her to the school.

I have always said that I would send my children to school if they really wanted to go, because that is what we practice ... child directed learning. However ... I would be there too ... Because, we don't actually hand our children over *to anybody else* ever. (Mandy)

MOTHER ILLNESS OR BURN-OUT

A second factor potentially affecting a decision to enrol in school was the possibility of sickness and/or burn-out in the mother.

I plan on home schooling all the way through ... but I mean ... That's another fifteen, sixteen *years* that I'm staring down the face ... home schooling. ... if in five years ... I don't want to do it anymore, then ... I'll put them in school. ... But that would be if I needed a break or I didn't want to do it anymore. (Rachel)

While participants were positive about their experience, they were pragmatic about the workload involved with home education.

That would be one of the biggest things with home schooling I think. Your house is never, never tidy (sigh) (laughter) ... and I think it's part of juggling ... we're on a farm, we have a part of a hay contracting business, ...my father-in-law passed away last year, so now I do a lot more stuff around here too, and I work part-time as well, and yeah, having the older ones always chasing ballet and joeys and netball and other things. (Renee)

NECESSITY OF SCHOOLS TO ALLOW PARENTAL CHOICE IN EDUCATION

While each interviewee had chosen not to utilise the mainstream education system, they understood that this decision was personal.

[I]t is every parent's decision whether or not they want to educate their own children. Just because I choose to home educate mine, doesn't mean that everyone else will. (Bethany)

Participants expected others to respect their choice to home educate and realised the need to reciprocate for those who chose school as an option. They expressed an understanding that there needed to be an education system in place because there would always be children and parents who either preferred school or were unable to home educate.

I am very positive about mass education and what it does and the service it provides to people who couldn't do it otherwise ... for some ... children, they LOVE SCHOOL, IT'S GREAT! And they're the kids who are fairly successful at it. And go well, and do the right thing. And that's really rewarding for them. They find it rewarding. And for the kids who come from ... terrible homes, school is a great place. So it's a fantastic place to be in comparison! ... if you have plenty of patience and enjoy spending time with your children. Sure! You should definitely home school. But if you've not, for ---'s sake, send them to school and don't torture them. (Tanya)

6.5.2 EFFECT OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE ON HOME EDUCATION

Four main points emerged from this section (see Figure 6-7). Participants presented two advantages arising from their teacher training and experience. Firstly, confidence to begin educating their own children. Secondly, an ability to speak the language of mainstream education. Additionally, participants stated that the processes involved in school education differed from those within the home. A final point was that participants found that their teaching experience had been disadvantageous in their home education practice due to the differences between home and school education.



Figure 6-7 Themes emerging from the impact of teaching experience on home education

CONFIDENCE TO BEGIN

Participants explained how having teaching experience allowed them to begin home educating with the knowledge that they were able to guide their own children through the education process. While there were other advantages, such as access to resources and

specific knowledge of curriculum choices, these were isolated to individuals, whereas confidence was seen as an advantage across the board.

I didn't have the blind panic ... over where to start and what to do. I started with what I knew. And then ... went from there ... I didn't even touch any of those things with my second one ... But ... it stops that initial panic. (Renee)

UNDERSTANDING OF "EDUSPEAK"

Several stated one benefit of teaching experience was the ability to communicate with mainstream educators and understand both curriculum documents and legal requirements.

They did not find this important for themselves, but rather to put others at ease.

I spend a lot of time ...talking to [other home educators] about 'eduspeak' and I teach them how to read eduspeak ... I've sat down and we've actually ... demystified them all. (Mandy)

[I]t does I guess, allow you to make a comparison ... with what we were doing in school. ... if someone is concerned. I'm not the sort of person to be concerned like that though ... (Daphne)

SCHOOL IS DIFFERENT FROM HOME

It was particularly noted that it was not necessary to have teaching qualifications in order to be an effective home educator. Most saw no conflict between their career choice and their role as home educators. Several referred to large numbers of teachers within the home education community, expressing this phenomenon as simply a logical progression.

[M]y husband [is] an air conditioning expert. He installed the air conditioning on our house. ... for him to employ somebody to come in and do that is ridiculous! So why would I send my child to be taught by somebody else when I am more than capable and have the willingness to do it myself at home. (Rachel)

It was noted that school structures necessary for 'mass education' were not relevant to the home education environment. Therefore skills necessary for implementing that structure were not required when teaching one's own children.

Working solely with one, is *completely* different to working with thirty. ... where it comes to the actual practicality [teaching experience] didn't help very much, I had to unlearn a lot of my methodology ... (Rachel)

TEACHING BACKGROUND DISADVANTAGEOUS

Ironically, a third theme was that teaching experience was actually perceived as a disadvantage once participants had reached their decision. Apart from Bethany who still followed a very strict school-at-home structure, all reported moving further from their training once home educating.

I feel my teaching background has been detrimental to home schooling in those early years where I tried to bring the classroom into the home. ... I ... needed to let go some of the, the forms that you **must** have in a classroom setting to maintain discipline and order ... I burnt myself out and I burnt my children out doing it that way. (Daphne)

There was a move from 'teacher' to 'facilitator' evident in a number of statements.

I have to get the 'teacher' out of my head and focus more on being a facilitator of learning. (Alexis)

6.5.3 EFFECT OF HOME EDUCATION ON TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Participants stated that, were they to return to the classroom, they would focus more on individual learning, allow greater student responsibility for learning, and enact flexibility for different learning styles, even if this progression might potentially leave gaps in student knowledge when compared to school levels at set ages. The difficulty of facilitating such individual responsibility within the structure of 'mass education' was clearly acknowledged.

I'd run myself ragged trying to cater more to each individual child! ... That would actually be a nightmare! (Renee)

6.5.4 DISCUSSION OF RELATIONSHIP TO MAINSTREAM EDUCATION

VALID OPTION

Participants expressed a need for community awareness of home education as one of a range of educational options. Patrick (1999) explored means of raising community awareness of home education as a legal and viable option. The focus on cooperation with, rather than opposition to, schools is consistent with Olsen's (2008) emphasis that home educating parents want educational administrators to be aware they are "not in opposition to them. We still respect what they do" (p. 147). Participants in this research expressed an overwhelming belief in parental choice in selecting their children's education. This supports prior research (Harding, 1997; Harp, 1998).

CHILDREN'S DECISION

It was clear that participants considered that a decision to return to mainstream education would include the views of the child. This was also seen in questionnaire responses. Existing literature indicates that it is not uncommon for children to be part of the decision as to whether, or when to return to mainstream education (Clery, 1998, Harp, 1998; Habibullah, 2004; Jackson, 2009) although administrators considered it a parent responsibility (Jackson, 2009; OBOS, 2004).

While some researchers (Krivanek, 1985; Lampe, 1988) report parents viewing school as an option for later years once they have passed their ability to 'teach' older children, this was not seen in this research. This may be due to the fact that this research was comprised of teachers and might also link with the confidence described earlier in this chapter, but this link was not addressed in this research.

MOTHER ILLNESS OR BURN-OUT

Participants expressed an awareness of increased expectation and potential stress home education placed on the principal educator, usually the mother (Harding, 2003; Harp, 1998; Patrick, 1999; Simich, 1998). This concept of 'mother stress' has been identified in a number of studies (Amies, 1986; Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Barratt-Peacock, 2003; Habibullah, 2004; Honeybone, 2000; Krivanek, 1985; Olsen, 2008; Rathmell, 2012; Reilly, 2007; Trevaskis, 2005). Other studies (Broadhurst, 1999; Reilly, 2007; Schetter & Lighthall, 2009; Thomas, 1998), while not specifically dealing with stress, acknowledge increased parental workload and commitment.

EFFECT OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE ON HOME EDUCATION AND VICE VERSA

No available literature addressed the effects of teacher training and/or experience on home educating parents. Therefore it is assumed that the following section provides new information building on the understanding of home education in Australia.

QUALIFICATIONS ARE FOR SCHOOL, NOT HOME

Participants in this research outlined the fact that school structures, which are necessary for 'mass education', were not relevant to the home education environment. This supports prior research outlining the differences between learning at home as compared to learning in a school environment (Reilly, 2007, Thomas, 1998).

TEACHING BACKGROUND IS DISADVANTAGEOUS

The perception of teaching background as possibly being disadvantageous is in line with Olsen (2008) who reported on the experience of one home educating teacher. Stating that while the teacher "perceived [teaching qualifications] to be an advantage, since it enhanced

their credibility in the eyes of the judging public”, they reported having to alter their “approach to learning because they originally attempted to replicate ‘school at home’.” (p. 84). The reports of participants in this study modifying their approach to education over time is supported by a variety of prior studies (Jacob et al., 1991; Lampe, 1988; OBOS, 2004; Reilly, 2007, Thomas, 1998) which report a similar progression.

EFFECT OF HOME EDUCATION ON TEACHING PRACTICE

This research indicates that teachers who have been involved with home education express an increased awareness to individual needs and the difficulty in attempting to educate each child as an individual within a classroom. The flexibility of home education to meet individual needs is addressed in several studies (Harding, 2003; McColl, 2005; Reilly, 2007).

6.6 SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Six background factors affecting the decision to home educate were identified. Personal factors were **natural parenting progression**, reluctance to ‘**swap children**’, and a desire for **parent influence** over their child/ren’s education. Professional factors listed were: a **difference to mainstream** educational style, **concerns regarding other staff** and a sense of **wasted time** in school. While personal and professional factors were listed separately, in each case experiences and knowledge from participants’ teaching background was drawn on as part of the decision making process.

Parents motivated by positive attributes (pull factors) of home education rather than negative aspects of mainstream education did not identify a specific crisis point in their decision to home educate, but rather a progression relating to background factors and influenced by the presence of an Informant/Mentor. These families shared a confirmation of

their decision. Those motivated by negative attributes of mainstream education (push factors) were less influenced by other home educators as they were more motivated by a need to escape the school setting than an attraction to home education per se. This group identified **negative social behaviours, unsafe environments** and **lack of respect for children** as crisis triggers.

Four educational goals were drawn from the interview responses. Home educators in this research reported a framework of **academic basics** and **practical skills** intended to instil a **love of learning** that would allow their children to pursue their own passions and facilitate their **development as individuals**.

Participants outlined the need for mainstream schools. They also maintained a need for greater awareness of home education as a valid option. **Children's desire to attend school**, and the presence of **stress or illness in the mother** were noted as potential reasons for sending children to mainstream schools.

Confidence to begin home education and an ability to utilise educational jargon ("eduspeak") were seen as advantages arising from professional teaching experience. Once home education had begun, however, it was noted in most cases that a **teaching background was disadvantageous** to the home education experience and much had to be unlearned. Home education was seen as providing the parent/trained teacher a greater understanding of individual needs and flexible learning opportunities. This understanding was transferred where appropriate to professional practice within schools, albeit with difficulty.

This chapter, which outlines interview responses, in combination with Chapter 5 (questionnaire responses), present the findings of this study. Together the two chapters provide an understanding of the responses of qualified teachers within Australia regarding why they were motivated to home educate their own children, how they implemented that process, and their views regarding mainstream education. With an understanding of these areas, it is valuable to consider how the findings of this research relate to prior theories of learning and education. These will be explored in Chapter 7.

7 THEORETICAL OVERLAY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter briefly outlines the connections between this research and other theories of learning and education, particularly with those focussed on the development of the individual. It begins with a summary of the connection between motivation and implementation as found in this research. Following this it revisits the main themes noted by prior Australian home education research. It then lists a number of theories which address individual learning styles. The final section notes similarities between the findings of this study and the work of Pestalozzi.

As stated in Chapter 3, themes within this research were drawn from rather than imposed upon the data (Charmaz, 2006). A general exploration of educational theories and philosophies began at the start of the research, however it was not until themes had been identified from the data that a search began for other literature relevant to the theory being developed (Birks & Mills, 2011). These educational theories and philosophies were then overlaid upon the analysed data in order to enhance a theoretical understanding of the findings of this particular study (Morse, 1994). It was deemed appropriate to delay reference to these theorists until now that their relationship to the data may be more easily noted.

7.2 CONNECTION BETWEEN MOTIVATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The connection between motivation and implementation of home education has been raised in prior studies (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Brosnan, 1991; Krivanek, 1985). This connection is seen in this study. Implementation practices were selected within the overall

motivating theme of reconciling the individual education with the needs of the particular child. Where physical safety concerns motivated the decision to home educate, the implementation resembled a school setting except for a separation from those factors impinging on the safety of the child (see Section 6.4.2 regarding Bethany's case). In another setting, the abuse of power within schools was the primary motivator for home education. In this home, structured programming was accessed through day classes, but undertaken only at the child's discretion (see Section 6.4.2 regarding Mandy's case). Still another participant recoiled from a perceived waste of time within schools. In this home formal work was kept to a minimum, in order to allow maximum time for exploration and natural learning (see Section 6.4.1 regarding Tanya's case). While home setting and educational structure varied within the research, the common factor linking motivation and implementation was an intentional focus on provision for individual needs.

7.3 LINKS WITHIN AUSTRALIAN HOME EDUCATION RESEARCH

Prior Australian research (Barratt-Peacock, 1997) shows a fit between the Australian home education environment and a community of learning practice as described by Lave and Wenger (in Barratt-Peacock, 1997). Additionally, connections have been noted between Australian home educational practice and the theories of Vygotsky (Jackson, 2008). In each case there is demonstrated the essential value of community and the learning environment on the educational development of children. Additionally, prior research (Barratt-Peacock 1997; Jackson, 2009; Thomas, 1998) has stated the significance of the child as an active participant within the learning process. The research presented in this document supports these previous studies which developed an understanding of Australian home education as

the practice of families which aim to develop an environment rich in learning with strong relationship ties in order to enable focussed learning.

7.4 LINKS TO OTHER THEORIES OF EDUCATION AND LEARNING

An additional aspect noted among participants in this research is a distinct focus on the *child as an individual* and the need for an *individually tailored learning environment*. In order to more fully understand this focus, comparison was made of a number of educational theories expressing the importance of the individual. These theories included those of Kolb (1984) who identifies four learning styles corresponding to stages of development. Gardner (2006) presents a theory of multiple intelligences. Both Kolb and Gardner attempt to understand the individual in order to best suit particular learning requirements.

Dweck (1999) postulates the effect that self-theories have on educational achievement. Each of these presented additional information towards the development of an understanding of the individual. However the data drawn from this research is not adequately supported by any of the theories listed above.

7.5 LINKS TO THE PESTALOZZI METHOD

A close link was found between the findings of this research and the work of Pestalozzi (1830), a Swiss pedagogue who influenced practical educationists throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Soëtard, 1994). The Pestalozzi method brought little in the way of teaching tools or techniques; rather it describes an approach to working holistically with individuals, combining practical and theoretical learning to develop each child as best suits their own nature (Soëtard, 1994).

7.6 COMPARISON BETWEEN THEORY AND REPORTED PRACTICE

To assess the connection between the participants in this research and the “Pestalozzi Method” the elements of both are compared. This comparison is shown in Table 7-1 and discussed in the following section.

Table 7-1 Comparisons between the Pestalozzi method and attributes found in this research

Pestalozzi Method	Teachers who home educate
A home like atmosphere	Home environment
Education must be intentional	Deliberate focus on ensuring children are learning as well as ensuring that ‘academic basics’ are covered
Holistic learning at a child’s pace	Focus on each child’s development as an individual
Education is about the child, not the subject	Development of a love of learning as life process rather than to meet external requirements
Personal, direct encounters with the phenomenon to be understood.	Natural learning, with development of practical skills

There are five key areas in which the Pestalozzi method may be linked to the findings of this study. These are outlined below.

7.6.1 HOME-LIKE ATMOSPHERE

Pestalozzi believed that education began at birth and the mother was the ideal first teacher as she was the one most able to observe and encourage the developing individuality of each child (Pestalozzi, 1830). In this he received criticism by those who did not consider the mother willing or able to take on this role (Krusi, 1875). Believing that modelling and relationships formed the basis of education (Bruhlmeier, 2010), Pestalozzi acknowledged the increased workload of the mother who accepted the role of educator, stating that she

would find “her duties at once easy and difficult to fulfil” (Pestalozzi, 1830, p. 6). Pestalozzi favoured a home-like educational atmosphere (Ornstein, Levine, & Gutek, 2011) designed to develop “the child as a free and autonomous being” (Soëtard, 1994, p. 5). Given the many factors undermining families (Soëtard, 1994), schools - as opposed to individual tutors - were implemented as a practical option for teaching older children (Ornstein et al., 2011).

In this research all interview participants were both the mother and the main educator of the children (see 6.2) and all education was conducted from a home base (see 6.4.1, 6.4.2).

7.6.2 INTENTIONAL

Pestalozzi believed that education must be intentional (Soëtard, 1994, p. 5) rather than a mere extension of family life. However this intentionality must be focussed primarily on developing the child, rather than on the “needs of society, the economy and the state” (Bruhlmeier, 2010, p. 58). Pestalozzi promoted an eclectic approach, advocating a plan of action which would follow the “spirit rather than the letter” of the method in order to “generate freedom in autonomy” (Soëtard, 1994, p. 6). Pestalozzi believed in meeting children’s needs before attempting to introduce new ideas, allowing natural interaction with real life (Ornstein et al., 2011).

Participants in this study reported an intentional focus on academic skills with the intention that these be used as tools to enable each child to develop and learn according to their own needs (see Section 6.4.3).

7.6.3 FOCUSED ON THE INDIVIDUAL, NOT THE METHOD

The Pestalozzi method is fundamentally and thoroughly concerned with the education of the individual (Bruhlmeier, 2010). This involves a thorough understanding of the “unique

nature” of each child and directs the “full attention” to the way each child thinks and learns (Bruhlmeier, 2010, p. 74). Catering to the uniqueness of the child demands a willingness to grasp or create new ways of doing things rather than adhering even to Pestalozzi’s own recommended teaching methods (Soëtard, 1994).

Examine everything, keep what is good and if something better has come to fruition in your own minds, add it in truth and love to what I am trying to give you in truth and love in these pages. (Pestalozzi in Soëtard, 1994, p. 6)

Pestalozzi’s educational approach does not allow for the concept of developing a particular predetermined outcome. Rather education was to allow the recognition of each person’s individuality, ultimately resulting in the achievement of individual autonomy (Soëtard, 1994). Pestalozzi believed that educational reform would only occur when each child was allowed to develop his natural ability to the fullest (Persky & Golubchick, 1991, p. 82).

Individual development was a strong theme evident in both the motivation for (see Sections 5.3.2, 6.3.5) and implementation of (see Sections 5.4.2, 6.4.3) home education in this research.

7.6.4 LEARNING FOR THE CHILD’S SAKE

No GAPS

Pestalozzi strongly promoted an education without gaps in knowledge. While this could easily be misunderstood and taken as a basis for an increased intense focus on gaining knowledge, this was not his intention.

No one would have been more vehemently opposed to the pointless accumulation of knowledge than Pestalozzi. The principle of coherence, of not leaving gaps, does not concern the amount of material but the progression from one stage to the next described here. All of this requires the teacher to allow the child to *take time* at every step in his development, to learn at *leisure*. Nothing is more harmful than to attempt to achieve a lot in a short time. The result will mean knowledge and ability that are superficial and will not provide a firm foundation for what is to be learnt later. (Bruhlmeier, 2010, p. 73)

While Pestalozzi utilised a range of educational methods, he believed that the purpose of books was to “supplement experience, and to supply those facts that are not readily accessible by direct investigation” (Krusi, 1875).

HEAD, HEART, HAND – HOLISTIC, PRACTICAL

One of his most recalled theories is the concept of head, heart and hand. This tri-fold model was not used to divide subjects, but to emphasis the holistic and harmonious understanding of all aspects of each subject. The intellectual understanding, the personal/social impact and the practical application of knowledge must never be separated (Soëtard, 1994).

ANSCHAUUNG

Pestalozzi used the German term *Anschauung* to describe a significant learning principle.

The word has no direct English translation but describes

... the immediate experiences of objects or situations ... immediate awareness, direct acquaintance, direct appreciation, concrete experiences, personal contact, first-hand impressions, face-to-face knowledge, the direct impact of things and persons. (Sharma, 2002, p. 100)

The principle enunciates the complex process of the interacting with and learning from direct natural experiences without the intervention of a third party between the learner and the experience (Sharma, 2002).

Natural learning, involving the provision of opportunity for children to engage in learning directly from their environment was a common learning style practiced within this research (see Sections 5.4.3, 6.4.3).

DELAYED BOOK LEARNING

An additional factor seen in some, although certainly not all, homes represented in this work was Pestalozzi's ideal of delaying bookwork until practical understanding was developed (see Section 6.4.2).

7.7 SUMMARY

This chapter showed theoretical connections between the research of this investigation and other established models. It addressed the connection between motivation and the implementation of home education. It outlined links with other Australian research on home education. Also, it provided a brief overview of several theories of learning and education which addressed individual learning. A number of links between the findings of this study and the Pestalozzi method have been outlined and discussed.

While no practical application will ever achieve perfect fit with theory, the Pestalozzi Method was seen as providing a suitable theoretical basis for understanding the reported practice of the community of teacher/home educators explored in this research.

8 IMPLICATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

8.1 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

The findings of this research are beneficial for mainstream education, including both public and private schools, as they provide an understanding of the reasons that teachers may choose to educate their own children outside the school system.

The presentation of this view holds value for both current and potential home educators who may be uncertain whether ‘real’ teachers do things differently to ‘ordinary’ parents. This research outlined some of the ways that teachers implement their home education approach, thus providing information that others may find useful.

For both schools and individuals it uncovers a hereto hidden and potentially misunderstood area of education – within the home, yet conducted by a teacher. It is intended that the presentation of this research provides participants with a ‘voice’ in the wider educational context. There are those who question the ‘hypocrisy’ of being a teacher, but not sending their children to school. The research explored this perceived disparity and provided a deeper understanding of both the motivation and educational styles of these individuals as participants were encouraged to explore and elucidate their own ideas, goals and ways of doing things and given opportunity to share their concerns and triumphs.

This research gave an overview of the study of motivation and implementation of home education by qualified teachers within Australia, creating a window into the workings of a group who have moved from mainstream education into the practice of home education. It demonstrated a range of reasons that teachers have given as to why they educate their children at home rather than through the system in which they themselves have worked. It

showed that professional teaching experience impacted on the decision to home educate, with many parents citing concerns from their teaching experience that had influenced their decision to home educate their own children. An awareness of these concerns is beneficial for schools, both public and private, as they are directly affected by alternate educational options.

Participants in this research used a wide range of educational approaches to tailor education to the needs and goals of their individual children.

This research explored the perception by qualified teachers/home educating parents, that while teaching qualifications and experience may have given confidence when choosing to home educate, they offered little further advantage, and indeed were seen as disadvantageous due to differences between home education and that undertaken within a classroom environment.

This research gave no support for the premise that home educators should be required to hold teaching qualifications. While this research did not assess the outcomes of the educational practice involved, it did present the views of professional educators as each participant was a qualified teacher. These views may provide balance to the views of professional educators who oppose home education, and fair practice requires the consideration of alternate perspectives. Any decision making process considering the regulation and structure of home education should consider the views of this group.

Also noted within this research was the concept of freedom, for students, parents and teachers. Participants within this research strongly presented a felt lack of freedom within their school teaching practice. Teachers need to have freedom in order to be able to allow

the development of autonomy in students. Thus, following Pestalozzi's ideal, autonomy must be given to the teacher/instructor/parent, in order to ensure the autonomous development of the child (Bruhlmeier, 2010). How this can be achieved within a classroom or school system setting is a subject worthy of consideration.

8.2 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A number of additional areas of interest were encountered through the course of this research. These are areas which are worth further research and exploration and are therefore listed below:

- An analysis of differences between those who selected home education before their children contacted school and those who began in mainstream schools and chose to home educate later.
- An exploration of similarities and differences between those who completed their teacher training in Australia compared to elsewhere.
- Further study of perceptions of “unschooling” by both those home educators who do and do not practice this educational philosophy.
- An exploration of the reasons for ideological differences between motivation in Australia and that of other nations.
- Further investigation into the focus on ‘educational basics’ (eg. maths, reading, writing) among teachers who home educate in comparison to the broader home educating community.
- Teaching background is listed in this research as providing confidence to begin home education. This suggests value in longitudinal studies to explore whether it also provides confidence to continue into higher years of education.

9 CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to develop a practical and theoretical understanding of the motivation and implementation of home education by qualified teachers within Australia. This research, through the use of questionnaires and interviews, identified participants' intended goal of meeting the particular needs of individual children as the primary motivation for home education (see Chapters 5 & 6). It was seen that participants selected implementation strategies which would enable this individual focus (see Sections 5.4.2 & 6.4.3). This is consistent with previous research indicating that the motivation for selecting home education impacts the way in which home education is implemented (see Section 2.6.2).

From the research presented in this thesis it can be seen that home education, as reported by qualified teachers, consists of several distinct qualities which are similar to those proposed by Pestalozzi (Soëtard, 1994):

It is individual. Parents within this research strongly voiced their goal of catering for the individual and their needs whether physical, social, mental or emotional. It was clear that the educational focus was on the development of the child rather than the learning of a curriculum (see Sections 5.3.2, 5.4.2, 6.3.5, 6.4.2).

It is intentional. Parents in this research viewed their role as important in their child/ren's education. While many practiced child-directed learning, this learning was not done in isolation from the parent. The structure and level of involvement varied, but the parent was always actively involved in the educational process. Participants

reported having actively developed a rich learning environment for their child/ren (see Section 6.4).

It is holistic. There was a focus on developing the whole child, and learning as an understanding of the world rather than distinct, separate subjects (see Sections 5.4.3 & 6.4.4).

It is practical. It was strongly stated and supported with examples that parents saw education as a lived process, not an acquirement of knowledge (see Section 6.4.3).

It is possible. The qualified teachers involved in this research stated that this form of education was within the realm of any parent, not only those with teaching qualifications. Participants expressly stated that while their teaching background had served initially as a confidence boost, and gave them terminology with which to communicate to those inside mainstream education, overall it was seen as having a detrimental effect on their home education and they needed to move away from a school background towards a new and different understanding of best practice (see Section 6.5.2).

It is useful knowledge for both home and school educators to know why professional educators have chosen to educate their own children at home rather than within the mainstream education system.

Participants' views about learning styles and institutional structures provide valuable information for any department considering regulation and monitoring of home education. It is beneficial to home educators to gain knowledge of how professional educators view their home education experience. Professional educators and administrators would also

benefit from an increased understanding of how home education differs from that presented with a school even when implemented by qualified teachers.

In this research, participants formed part of both the home educating community and the community of professional educators within Australia. In this sense their voice was unique and worth hearing by both these groups in particular. It is hoped that the sharing of this research will provide a deeper understanding of this segment of the community.

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APPENDIX A – SURVEY

Research Information

This page gives you details about the research project.

You're a teacher AND you home educate? Why would you, and how does that work for you?

(Exploring motivation for and implementation of home education by qualified teachers in Australia)

INVITATION

You are being invited to participate in this research project which is being conducted by Kathryn (Kate) Croft. Kate is completing her Masters degree through the Faculty of Education at Avondale and her research project is being supervised by Dr Glenda Jackson and Dr Peter Morey.

PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THIS RESEARCH

This study intends to take a closer look at the education practises of those who have trained and worked as school teachers and yet have chosen to educate their own children outside of the school system. It intends to explore both the motivating factors and the strategies employed by these individuals/families.

WHO IS BEING INVITED OR SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE?

Qualified teachers who have elected to home educate their own children.

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a short survey and possibly participate in an interview. This will be conducted at a mutually agreeable time and place. If you prefer a telephone interview can be conducted. It is anticipated that the interview will take approximately 1 hour.

BENEFITS

We cannot and do not guarantee or promise you any individual benefits from participating in this research. We do, however, anticipate that this research will benefit both home and school educators as it will provide insight into a group who have traditionally been part of the mainstream schooling structure and are now electing to work outside that structure.

For schools it will provide an understanding of the reasons that teachers are choosing to educate their children outside of the mainstream school system.

For home educators it will provide a sense of the methodologies used by teachers. Many home educators are uncertain whether 'real' teachers do things differently to 'ordinary' parents. This research would outline some of these methodologies thus providing information that may be used to answer this question.

It is intended that this research provide participants with a 'voice' in the wider educational context. There are those who question the 'hypocrisy' of being a teacher, but not sending their children to school. The research aims to explore this perceived disparity and provide a deeper understanding of the motivation and educational styles of these individuals.

CONFIDENTIALITY, ANONYMITY AND DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Each participant will be coded and tagged with a non-identifying false name. All material based on the interviews will use the tag name in order that any further identification is not possible.

The data will be store for five years in a locked cabinet in my office. At the end of the five year period after the conclusion of the research, hard copies will be shredded and electronic data will be erased from discs, servers and hard drives.

All aspects of the study including results will be stored securely and only accessed by the researchers unless you consent otherwise.

USE OF INFORMATION COLLECTED

The information collected may be analysed and reported in a thesis, scientific papers and professional conferences. Confidentiality of individual participants and organisations will be assured. In any publication, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified. Participants may request a summary of the final results.

FREEDOM OF CONSENT

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Even if you agree to participate you may withdraw at anytime without giving a reason. Should you choose to withdraw and if it is possible to retrieve, your data will be returned to you.

Please read this information statement and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. After you have read this information, if there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, you can contact the researcher.

If you would like to participate please contact Kate Croft on 03 9756 7922 or by email: kcroft99@tpg.com.au to arrange a time for an interview.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like further information please contact Kate Croft on 03 9756 7922 or by email: kcroft99@tpg.com.au . If you have a complaint or concern about this research project or the way it is conducted, contact the Secretary of Avondale's Human Research Ethics Committee at PO Box 19, Cooranbong, NSW, 2265 or phone +61-2-4980 2121 or fax +61-2-4980 2117 or email: research.ethics@avondale.edu.au. Or alternatively, contact Kate Croft on 03 9756 7922 or by email: kcroft99@tpg.com.au.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this invitation.

Kate Croft

Consent

1.

Researcher : Kate Croft (kcroft99@tpg.com.au)

I agree to participate in the above research project and I give my consent freely.

I have read and understand the information provided in the Information Statement.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have been given to keep.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers.

This research project has been approved by the Avondale College of Higher Education Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Avondale requires that all participants are informed that if they have any complaint concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted it may be given to the researcher, or if an independent person is preferred, to Avondale's HREC Secretary, Avondale College of Higher Education, PO Box 19, Cooranbong NSW 2265, or phone (02) 4980 2121 or fax (02) 4980 2117 or email: research.ethics@avondale.edu.au



I have read and understand the above information and willing to be involved in this survey.

Teaching Background

This provides an overview your teaching experience and qualifications.

2. Where did you complete your training as a teacher?

☐ Australia

☐ Other

3. When did you complete your teacher training?

Year

Year completed

4. What teaching qualifications do you hold?

Qualification

Level

Other (please specify)

5. What is your teaching field?

Major

Minor

Primary

Secondary

6. How many years have you spent teaching in Australian schools?

Number of years

7. How many schools have you taught in within Australia?

Number of Australian
schools

8. In which school system/s have you worked? (tick all that apply)

☐ Public (State)

☐ Private Religious

☐ Private Non-religious

Other (please specify)

9. In which Australian states have you worked as a teacher? (Tick all that apply)

☐ Australian Capital Territory

☐ Northern Territory

☐ Tasmania

☐ New South Wales

☐ Queensland

☐ Victoria

☐ None

☐ South Australia

☐ Western Australia

10. Why did you choose to leave teaching?

11. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your teaching career?

☐

Negative experience

☐

Neutral experience

☐

Mainly positive

☐

Extremely positive

Space is left to include clarification if you choose...

Motivation

This page talks about why you chose to home educate your children

12. Where did you first learn about home education as an option?

13. What were the main factors involved in your decision to home educate?

14. Who instigated the decision to home educate?

☐

One parent

☐

More than one child

☐

Both parents

☐

Other family member (eg grandparent)

☐

One child

Other (please specify)

15. How long do you intend to home educate?

☐

A year or two

☐

Primary school

☐

Until it gets too hard

☐

We evaluate year by year

☐

As long as we choose to do so

Other (please specify)

16. What impact has your personal experience as a STUDENT had on your decision to home educate?

☐

No impact

☐

Some impact

☐

Fair impact

☐

Strong impact

Please elaborate on your answer

17. What impact has your personal experience as a TEACHER had on your decision to home educate?

☐

No impact

☐

Some impact

☐

Fair impact

☐

Strong impact

Please elaborate on your answer

Implementation

This page talks about the way you home educate your children.

18. How many children are you currently home educating?

Number of children

Currently below school age

Currently being home educated

Currently attending school

No longer home educating / completed education

19. Have your children always been home educated?

Number of children

Number of children who have started at school and moved to home education

Number of children who have always been home educated

Number of children who started at home and have since started school

Number of children who have always been at school

Other (please specify)

20. How many years have you been home educating?

21. How do the following categories describe your home education style?

	Don't use at all	Use snippets from	Use frequently	Forms a large part of my home education practice
Unschooling	☐	☐	☐	☐
Natural Learning	☐	☐	☐	☐
Charlotte Mason	☐	☐	☐	☐
Correspondence Curriculum (non government)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Distance Education (government supplied curriculum)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eclectic	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify)	☐	☐	☐	☐

Space is left to include clarification if you choose...

22. How important is each factor in selecting the way you home educate your children?

	Not at all	Slightly important	Very important	Critically important
Content - What they are being taught?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pedagogy - How they are being taught?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social - How they interact and relate with others?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ideology - Spiritual or philosophical aspects education?	☐	☐	☐	☐

Further comment if required...

23. How do you structure the education in your home on a DAILY basis? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ No structure
- ☐ Follow specific timetable
- ☐ Loose structure
- ☐ Varies for each child
- ☐ Work until they complete their assigned tasks for the day
- ☐ Other - (please specify)
- ☐ Set amount of time set aside for working

Space is left to include clarification if you choose...

24. How do you structure your home education on a YEARLY basis? (tick all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ No specific structure | ☐ Theme units |
| ☐ Changes according to time and need | ☐ New topics each term |
| ☐ Follow child's interests | ☐ Follow school years and times |
| ☐ Follow a set curriculum | ☐ Other - (please specify) |

Space is left to include clarification if you choose...

25. What impact has your personal experience as a STUDENT had on the way that you home educate?

- ☐ No impact ☐ Mild impact ☐ Moderate impact ☐ Significant impact

Please give a reason for your answer

26. What impact has your personal experience as a TEACHER had on the way that you home educate?

- ☐ No impact ☐ Mild impact ☐ Moderate impact ☐ Significant impact

Please give a reason for your answer

Further Involvement

Potential Interview Participants

27. Would you be willing to be interviewed to provide further information regarding this topic?

- ☐ No, I am not interested
- ☐ Yes, I am willing - I will send contact details to your email address (kcroft99@tpg.com.au)
- ☐ Yes, I am willing - here are my contact details

APPENDIX B - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

[items in italics are possible prompts to use if respondent appears stuck on a question]

- Tell me how you came to the decision to home educate.
- What would you describe as significant factors in the process of making the decision?

[to home educate your children]

- Can you share with me any particular incidents/critical moments in the decision making process?
- Who was involved in this decision?
- How has your decision been received by your community?

[family, friends, acquaintances etc.]

- How has your teaching experience and training affected your decision?
- How would you define your educational philosophy?

[What is education? What is important in education? What role does education play in preparation for life? Etc]

- Could you outline your goals for your children's education?

[Preparation for life, training for job/career, shaping the mind etc]

- Tell me about your educational structure/procedure? What does home education look like in your family?

[structured, school style, unschooling, natural learning, eclectic,]

- What impact has your teaching background had on the way you educate your own children?
- How do you view yourself in relation to the school based educational community?
- What, if anything, would make you decide to send your children to school?
- If you returned to teaching, what would home education bring to your teaching experience?
- How would you respond to the following comment.

“It is hypocritical to teach my children in a school and yet home educate your own children. Why is it good enough for my children but not good enough for yours?”

APPENDIX C – CODING SAMPLE

All responses for a question were placed in a Word [™] document. Each response was identified with a particular code and a heading was created for that tag. All related responses were grouped together under appropriate headings. The following is an example of a completed tagging session.

QUESTION 17. WHAT IMPACT HAS YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AS A TEACHER HAD ON YOUR DECISION TO HOME EDUCATE?

PRE-CODING

NO IMPACT

“As a teacher I could not have 'sat any further on the other side of the fence' to where I am now! I was very definite in my opinion of home educating / the reasons why parents would choose it and none of it was positive.”

“I loved teaching and would [have] liked to have sent my children to a similar school but it is not possible financially”

SOME IMPACT

“Seeing how much time I was spending with the students made me realise that parents who send their children to school miss out on this time.”

“I don't have an issue with schools. I feel that they can provide wonderful experiences for kids. However I know that I can cut the chase and much less fill in work as a home educating parent”

“See the need to be able to meet each individual need, which really can't be achieved in a classroom situation.”

“Being in the schools, as a teacher I have seen that teachers are all doing their best, and that nothing in the school system is really the fault of the teachers, however what I saw was students who had been left behind, and students ahead of the class, and both group growing bored.”

“Knowing that my son doesn't ask for help and can easily get lost in the system.”

FAIR IMPACT

"I saw the negative impact of peer pressure, and being restricted to the group. Specific personality types get much more attention, while others may miss out on learning."

"It gave me more confidence to do it, not because I thought I could do a better job than an untrained parent, but because I knew that there is nothing magical about teachers or schools and parents are perfectly well up to the job."

"I know, from my many years in the system, that there is very little assistance available for bright children with a specific learning disability. Intellectually and physically disabled kids are quite well catered for in [the state we live in], but a child like [this child], with dyslexia, is left to flounder because there are no resources available."

"I recall how some children did not cope with the institution of education, just did not seem to like being stuck there all day even if they had friends, smart children not having the resources to expand their curriculum or on the other hand struggling children not have the resources to effectively help. The emotional issues of looking after and educating children aged 0-10. Not simply learning but all the emotional issues they are living through or 'life' questions you are left to answer."

"My time in the classroom highlighted how little real teaching and learning occurs."

"I saw so much in school that was a waste of time. Plenty of great teachers but a frustrating system."

"As a teacher I saw that school was a good place to be for most kids but somewhat ineffective in individual learning (can't cater to everyone's needs) and that there were many social pressures on children that could be avoided at home."

"So much teaching is geared towards examinations. So much material is forgotten after the test. So many students slip beneath the radar in high school, it is hard to know everyone and their lives when you have 200+ students a week. It is all about the material you cover. We spend 1 lesson on 8 science inventors, choose one and write a report. Now with HS we can read the full biography and enjoy the experience for all of them if we choose. I felt the kids in the top streams were fine, but those stuck in the second stream and lower had a difficult learning environment."

"The drudgery of schooling the feeling of wasted time, busy work impacted my desire to home educate."

"No way in heck I would send my kids to a public highschool :)"

"I saw how institutionalised school was, how bright kids were overlooked, and how hard it was for teachers to really educate teachers."

"I consider myself an excellent teacher, and want my children to have the best that I can provide for them."

"The attitude of other teachers I had worked with regarding children with disabilities and learning difficulties concerned me since my child has both a disability and learning difficulties. I didn't want him to be disadvantaged or ignored because he was perceived to be too difficult."

STRONG IMPACT

When I quit teaching I realized two things - that school was about control, actively quashing self - responsibility; and also that you can't teach learning, you can only facilitate it. Learning is individual, mass instruction does not a person make.

I saw how time constraints and the necessity of moving ahead with content challenged and weakened some of my students resolve. I realised the difficulty and near impossibility to create the best learning environment that takes into account the different learning styles and personalities for each student to best optimise each learning environment. I saw students lose their ability to question and think independantly as more and more information was placed before them with a predetermined beginning and end. They knew there was no mystery. They understood their role was to imbibe knowledge rather than create their own knowledge in relation to themselves and their environment.

I have taught for 19 years and have had plenty of time to observe what goes on in a classroom.

I know that an average teacher has little time or inclination to give full attention to the educational needs of individuals in the classroom. The teacher:student ratio is too high, the demands of the syllabus too great, and the school system too inflexible, to allow learning to progress in a way that will really impact students.

I am not hoodwinked into thinking any magic really happens at school. Every year you think crikey! These kids know nothing! You do your best to teach them and the kids would be engaged and do what you asked but you knew the next teacher they had would say the same thing about them. It's pretty much short term learning. Also, to be honest in lesson planning and classroom time management sometimes you know you are just filling in time. It's absurd.

Witnessing the poor quality of some teaching practises. the emphasis on measurable outcomes and conformity. The restrictions on social and physical interaction and the content and opportunities for contextual learning.

so much time is wasted in class. 2 mins per child per hour... learning things which many already no and which are irrelevant to life. Bullying, homework - all problems in my book,

Class sizes at normal schools too large- no way teachers can look after the interests

of all the children every day = a lot of wasted time trying to motivate bored kids.

I have seen as a teacher that the reasons why I didn't always enjoy school and the school atmosphere myself are still present in schools today, and so I don't want my children to have to experience the same.

Studying pedagogy, including the humanist work of Shinichi Suzuki and John Holt, and the challenging words of Alfie Kohn, along with my experiences teaching in schools made me believe there was a better way.

I feel confident as a teacher - my experience at school was I could do it well, so I thought I could do a good job of educating my own kids

I could see things weren't working for the majority of students. It was great to find an alternative for my own kids.

Although I had liked the idea of homeschooling before we had children and prior to teaching, it wasn't until we had taught for a few years and our first son was born that we decided that we weren't offering him up as a sacrifice to schools. We didn't know any teachers who were passionate about their classes enough to really care if a child passed or failed (teachers just assume the child can't achieve more than they are and move them onto the next grade level). We knew that the basic vital subjects of Math and Language were being squeezed out of the day by all of the extras that were taking equal, and in some cases more, importance than core skills. We knew that children who struggled, if not remediated by grade three, would be stuck in remedial classes throughout their education and with the social stigma and poor self esteem that came with that. We knew above average students were rarely extended and all lessons were targeted at the average children in hopes to teach the majority, not the whole group of thirty (usually more!). We knew the children in our classes (Catholic school kids - one of my schools was extremely poor and the other very affluent) were increasingly coming from unstable difficult family situations and the children themselves were not well mannered or behaved. They were very involved in themselves, their peers and media. We knew that the friends our children fell in with would directly affect their behaviour and path in life. We knew that by placing our children in school we were relinquishing our parental control (and responsibility) of education and raising our children. Parents have very little say in the classroom. It's usually relegated to those occasions when they really feel they must put their foot down, and sometimes they have to put their foot down hard to be heard. Teachers don't like parents who rock the boat so most parents step back and let their children float along in schools. We knew the government would determine what they think is important for our children to learn, plus all sort of political and social creations. The thought of all of this horrified us. It was my husband who made the final decision on the day our son was born. He said our son was too precious to put in the hands of those who don't love him so we kept him where God had placed him....at home with his parents.

frustration at seeing boys especially who are 'bright' but fools and then

understanding what ADHD did and how it made them unable to sit in a classroom and instead turn into class clowns so that they got the attention they needed. Also being in a rural community, seeing how they grew up after school and recognising that schools were failing them

I chose to work at schools that were innovative and responsive to individual needs and strengths for teachers and students. Schooling is a system that doesn't work for everyone and spends too much money and energy trying to output homogenous people with generic skills. Looking at schools as a teacher/parent I found it too easy to spot the flaws in a school, or a teacher's approach, or the principal's style of leadership. Children, being people, deserve more respect and more voice than the education system can allow. There are too many rules, too many standards, not enough room to empower anyone to think for themselves nor to learn to value contributions made by peers. I don't want my children to be disempowered nor desensitised, nor become complacent in an environment that does not truly value the individual.

I do not feel that mass education is the way to go for my child. The limitations imposed by mass education stifle and train children to a particular mindset that is not ours.

I know how much stress teachers and schools are under these days to keep to the current regulations but it is no excuse for not providing the basic education they are there to provide. Disruptive behaviours, emotionally damaged kids, pressure from parents, unsupportive staff and lazy teachers all make for an environment I would rather avoid and do not wish my children to experience. I often felt I was on another planet in the school environment.

Firstly, the sheer busyness of day to day teaching and getting everything done frustrated me when I looked at the individuals in my classes. The kids who struggled got help, the behaviourally challenged took up a lot of time and the good students were pretty much on their own. The sheer numbers of autistic and ADHD students represented in each class now has an impact on the learning environment of the non challenged students. I wanted to have a great impact without the distractions with my own children.

So much time is wasted at school, and I don't believe that teachers can give themselves fully to each of their students so as to achieve maximum potential from each child.

The focus on 'paperwork' more so than the children, the 'one size fits all' curriculum, the time wasted lining up, sitting with legs crossed, 'managing' behaviour etc

I know what goes on in classrooms and schools. And for gifted kids (and even more so for twice-exceptional kids) I know that schools can not really adequately cater for them. I also didn't want my kids trying to have to negotiate the social minefield

that is high school.

I use all the resources I had collected. It makes it very hard to not - 'school at home' as I know no other method, even though I've read about them I just can't put them into practice.

POST CODING

NO IMPACT (4.1%)

GENERAL

As a teacher I could not have 'sat any further on the other side of the fence' to where I am now! I was very definite in my opinion of home educating / the reasons why parents would choose it and none of it was positive (Survey 42).

I loved teaching and would [have] liked to have sent my children to a similar school but it is not possible financially (Survey 50)

SOME IMPACT (14.3%)

FAMILY NEEDS

I don't have an issue with schools. I feel that they can provide wonderful experiences for kids. However I know that I can cut the chase and much less fill in work as a home educating parent (Survey 24)

Seeing how much time I was spending with the students made me realise that parents who send their children to school miss out on this time (Survey 4).

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

See the need to be able to meet each individual need, which really can't be achieved in a classroom situation (Survey 29).

Being in the schools, as a teacher I have seen that teachers are all doing their best, and that nothing in the school system is really the fault of the teachers, however what I saw was students who had been left behind, and students ahead of the class, and both groups growing bored (Survey 31).

Knowing that my son doesn't ask for help and can easily get lost in the system (Survey 32).

MODERATE IMPACT (32.7)

FAMILY NEEDS

It gave me more confidence to do it, not because I thought I could do a better job than an untrained parent, but because I knew that there is nothing magical about teachers or schools and parents are perfectly well up to the job (Survey 3).

I consider myself an excellent teacher, and want my children to have the best that I can provide for them (Survey 41).

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Learning Difficulties

I know, from my many years in the system, that there is very little assistance available for bright children with a specific learning disability. Intellectually and physically disabled kids are quite well catered for in [the state in which we], but, a child like -----, with dyslexia, is left to flounder because there are no resources available (Survey 6).

The attitude of other teachers I had worked with regarding children with disabilities and learning difficulties concerned me since my child has both a disability and learning difficulties. I didn't want him to be disadvantaged or ignored because he was perceived to be too difficult (Survey 45).

Personality Differences

I recall how some children did not cope with the institution of education, just did not seem to like being stuck there all day even if they had friends, smart children not having the resources to expand their curriculum or on the other hand struggling children not have the resources to effectively help (Survey 12).

I saw the negative impact of peer pressure, and being restricted to the group. Specific personality types get much more attention, while others may miss out on learning (Survey 1).

As a teacher I saw that school was a good place to be for most kids but somewhat ineffective in individual learning (can't cater to everyone's needs) and that there were many social pressures on children that could be avoided at home (Survey 25).

SYSTEM CONCERNS

Wasted Time

I saw so much in school that was a waste of time. Plenty of great teachers but a frustrating system (Survey 23).

The drudgery of schooling the feeling of wasted time, busy work impacted my desire to home educate (Survey 35).

Limited Educational Scope of Classroom

So much teaching is geared towards examinations. So much material is forgotten after the test. So many students slip beneath the radar in high school, it is hard to know everyone and their lives when you have 200+ students a week. It is all about the material you cover. We spend 1 lesson on 8 science inventors, choose one and write a report. Now with HS we can read the full biography and enjoy the experience for all of them if we choose. I felt the kids in the top streams were fine, but those stuck in the second stream and lower had a difficult learning environment (Survey 26).

I saw how institutionalised school was, how bright kids were overlooked, and how hard it was for teachers to really educate teachers (Survey 39).

My time in the classroom highlighted how little real teaching and learning occurs (Survey 16).

General

No way in heck I would send my kids to a public highschool :) (Survey 38)

STRONG IMPACT (49.0%)

FAMILY NEEDS

I feel confident as a teacher - my experience at school was [that] I could do it well, so I thought I could do a good job of educating my own kids (Survey 20)

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

frustration at seeing boys especially who are 'bright' but fools and then understanding what ADHD did and how it made them unable to sit in a classroom and instead turn into class clowns so that they got the attention they needed. Also being in a rural community, seeing how they grew up after school and recognising that schools were failing them (Survey 40)

...Children, being people, deserve more respect and more voice than the education system can allow (Survey 44).

I saw how time constraints and the necessity of moving ahead with content challenged and weakened some of my students resolve. I realised the difficulty and near impossibility to create the best learning environment that takes into account the different learning styles and personalities for each student to best optimise each learning environment... (Survey 5)

Firstly, the sheer busyness of day to day teaching and getting everything done frustrated me when I looked at the individuals in my classes. The kids who struggled got help, the behaviourally challenged took up a lot of time and the good students were pretty much on their own. The sheer numbers of autistic and ADHD students represented in each class now has an impact on the learning environment of the non challenged students. I wanted to have a great impact without the distractions with my own children (Survey 48).

I know what goes on in classrooms and schools. And for gifted kids (and even more so for twice-exceptional kids) I know that schools can not really adequately cater for them. I also didn't want my kids trying to have to negotiate the social minefield that is high school (Survey 54).

When I quit teaching I realized two things - that school was about control, actively quashing self - responsibility; and also that you can't teach learning, you can only facilitate it. Learning is individual, mass instruction does not a person make (Survey 2).

... We knew that the basic vital subjects of Math and Language were being squeezed out of the day by all of the extras that were taking equal, and in some cases more, importance than core skills. We knew that children who struggled, if not remediated by grade three, would be stuck in remedial classes throughout their education and with the social stigma and poor self esteem that came with that. We knew above average students were rarely extended and all lessons were targeted at the average children in hopes to teach the majority, not the whole group of thirty (usually more!). We knew the children in our classes ...were increasingly coming from unstable difficult family situations and the children themselves were not well mannered or behaved. They were very involved in themselves, their peers and media. We knew that the friends our children fell in with would directly affect their behaviour and path in life. We knew that by placing our children in school we were relinquishing our parental control (and responsibility) of education and raising our children. Parents have very little say in the classroom. ...Teachers don't like parents who rock the boat so most parents step back and let their children float along in schools. We knew the government would determine what they think is important for our children to learn, plus all sort of political and social creations... our son was too precious to put in the hands of those who don't love him ... (Survey 33).

SYSTEMIC CONCERNS

Waste of Time

So much time is wasted at school, and I don't believe that teachers can give themselves fully to each of their students so as to achieve maximum potential from each child (Survey 49).

The focus on 'paperwork' more so than the children, the 'one size fits all' curriculum, the time wasted lining up, sitting with legs crossed, 'managing' behaviour etc (Survey 51)

so much time is wasted in class. 2 mins per child per hour... learning things which many already know and which are irrelevant to life. Bullying, homework - all problems in my book (Survey 13).

Poor Teacher/Teaching Quality

I know how much stress teachers and schools are under these days to keep to the current regulations but it is no excuse for not providing the basic education they are there to provide. Disruptive behaviours, emotionally damaged kids, pressure from parents, unsupportive staff and lazy teachers all make for an environment I would rather avoid and do not wish my children to experience. I often felt I was on another planet in the school environment (Survey 47).

Class Sizes

I know that an average teacher has little time or inclination to give full attention to the educational needs of individuals in the classroom. The teacher: student ratio is too high, the demands of the syllabus too great, and the school system too inflexible, to allow learning to progress in a way that will really impact students (Survey 8).

Class sizes at normal schools too large- no way teachers can look after the interests of all the children every day = a lot of wasted time trying to motivate bored kids (Survey 15).

Ineffectiveness of Common Teaching Practice

I am not hoodwinked into thinking any magic really happens at school. Every year you think crikey! These kids know nothing! You do your best to teach them and the kids would be engaged and do what you asked but you knew the next teacher they had would say the same thing about them. It's pretty much short term learning. Also, to be honest in lesson planning and classroom time management sometimes you know you are just filling in time. It's absurd (Survey 9).

Restrictions within which Teachers must Work

Witnessing the poor quality of some teaching practises. The emphasis on measurable outcomes and conformity. The restrictions on social and physical interaction and the content and opportunities for contextual learning (Survey 11).

General

I have taught for 19 years and have had plenty of time to observe what goes on in a classroom (Survey 7).

I have seen as a teacher that the reasons why I didn't always enjoy school and the school atmosphere myself are still present in schools today, and so I don't want my children to have to experience the same (Survey 17).

I could see things weren't working for the majority of students. It was great to find an alternative for my own kids (Survey 22).

I do not feel that mass education is the way to go for my child... (Survey 46).

Influence of Particular Authors

Studying pedagogy, including the humanist work of Shinichi Suzuki and John Holt, and the challenging words of Alfie Kohn, along with my experiences teaching in schools made me believe there was a better way (Survey 19).