

HOMESCHOOLING: ADVENTITIOUS OR DETRIMENTAL FOR PROFICIENCY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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This article presented an overview of homeschooling; the reasons families selected this initiative as an educational option; and the reported academic status of homeschooled students as compared through questionnaires, surveys, interviews and measured datum from American College Testing (ACT). This research supported the hypothesis that homeschooled students achieved similar, if not better success academically, than their traditional public or private schooled counterparts.

Homeschooling is seen in the United States today as a viable alternative to public school education. Homeschooling has been designated as a learning situation where children have been taught, generally by their parents, in non-traditional environments. Until the incorporation of public school education in the nineteenth century, homeschooling was the predominant method of instruction for children of every economic, social, and cultural stratum (Meehan & Stephenson, 1994). Ray (as cited in Meehan & Stephenson, 1998) gave evidence that public school education was incorporated into the American system to propagate ideals and values of a democratic society. Clark & et al. (as cited in Grubb, 1998) reported that a democratic society can only flourish and prosper in economic and social growth once its people focus on a unified set of values and ideologies; those revolving around religion, education, and morality. These same values and ideals, that unified our society into a public school educational system, has been the same values and ideals used to break away from public education.

One of the main reasons generally laud-

ed as central to the resurgence of homeschooling has been a decline of moral and ethical propriety. Students exhibiting a lack of control, discipline, respect for property and life itself, all characterize a deficit in what many say was spiritual "ideologies, values, and practice" (Ohio Department of Education, 1995). Securing a safe place free of drugs, gun violence, and negative peer pressure were all factors which turned families toward homeschooling (Martin, 1997). These factors all carried a negative connotation, but it was equally important to consider the positive factors that turned families to homeschooling.

Multicultural ideology was one positive proponent of choosing homeschooling over public school education. Cultural awareness strengthened the family bond to language, customs, and values characterized by their heritage. Students' cultural awareness within a system was realized because cultural identity was incorporated into their school work.

One-on-one education leads to another positive proponent of homeschooling, academic excellence. Gorder (as cited in

Martin, 1997) reported that with individualized curriculum, students progressed quickly as the information was assimilated. Many families find "educational reforms is not providing children with the basic education feel is essential, and some believe schools are not a nurturing place where their child's individual differences are nourished to help their child achieve his or her fullest potential" (Grubb, 1998, p. 8).

According to Pearson (1996), homeschooling has flourished with the "advent of technology and personal computers, homeschooling is no longer dependent upon parental education and teaching skills" (p. 8). The influx of supplemental teaching materials, subject area kits, video-cassettes, internet sites, and educational television programs, has increased the propensity of educational achievement for students who have been homeschooled.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine whether homeschooling students were able to academically compete in higher education.

Hypothesis

Research will demonstrate that homeschooled students performed as well or better academically as compared to traditional schooled individuals.

Review of Literature

Education has always been a concern by society to equip our children with the skills necessary to meet the everchanging needs of a diverse global market. Homeschooling has gained renewed consternation with

the public as the influx of participants has grown. The Ohio Department of Education (1995) has found they rank fifth in the United States in homeschooled students, and data suggested that this rate will increase 20%-25% annually. The Ohio Department of Education obtained their data through interviews, literature reviews with books, articles, and their own organizational data, and surveys. Research was compiled to evaluate many components of homeschooling, but in particular, academic competency for higher education.

The Ohio Department of Education (1995) reported that students were given a normed, standardized achievement test or an alternative test, and an assessment test by a certified teacher to track progress of academics. Standardized testing was not conclusive, but highly probable in predicting academic achievement in higher education. The Ohio report cited the National Home School Legal Defense and the Home Research Institute found that homeschooled students averaged between the 65th and 80th percentile on normed, standardized achievement tests, where the national average was the 50th percentile. Also, results from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Spring 1994 test (as cited in Ohio Department of Education, 1998) showed 80% of homeschooled children across all age groups achieved individual scores above the national average, compared to 50% of the conventional school population. Ultimately, the Ohio report found that 53% of homeschooled children achieved individual scores in the top quarter percentile rank of the students who took the test.

Further research by the Home School

Researcher (as cited by the Ohio Department of Education, 1995) and individual family interviews found homeschooled students did as well or better than conventionally schooled peers in academic achievement. The Ohio Department of Education found not only was it not a disadvantage to be from a homeschooled environment and seek admission to higher education, but found they were being actively recruited. Their ability to read for comprehension, know how to access and use information, and their continued commitment to education, all contributed to their success in academics, and ultimately in higher education.

Rudner's (1999) study was comprised of 20,760 students in 11,930 families, and provided useable questionnaires and corresponding achievement test data. His work was two-fold in that it disseminated demographic characteristics and achievement results of the homeschooled student. Bob Jones University Press Testing Services administered the achievement tests. Iowa Tests of Basic Skills was given to students in grades K-8. Tests of Achievement and Proficiency were administered to students in grades 9-12. Both groups were given questionnaires to fill out which would depict the demographics that characterize their respective families. The combined achievement tests and questionnaire results were combined to form the dataset used for the study. Rudner's research did find that homeschooled students did achieve quite well on the 1998 ACT scores. This study showed that a strong commitment to education through homeschooling will net a successful academic environment.

Galloway's (1995) research focused on

homeschoolers potential for success in college by comparing their performance with that of students who have graduated from conventional schools, either public or private. The basis for comparison was their aptitude for, and achievement in a college-level English course. Data was collected from the academic records of 180 first-time freshman students enrolled during the 1992-93 and 1993-94 academic years at a large, private Christian University located in the southeast.

Galloway selected 60 students who had completed their high school education in public schools, and 60 students from private schools. The homeschooled group consisted of all available freshman students who had completed their entire high school education in a homeschool and who had taken the English course which was the focus of the study. Galloway also solicited ACT data from the participants academic records of 1992-93 and 1993-93. Chi-square analyses were used to determine that there was no significant differences (at an alpha level of .01) on any of the selected demographic variables (age, race, gender, geographical region).

Galloway reported prior high school settings in which the student was educated (i.e. either public, private, or homeschooled setting) as the independent variable. The dependent variables were the norm-referenced test scores reflecting aptitude for a college-level English course. Due to similarity among dependent variables, they were divided into three sets: (1) the measure reflecting aptitude for College English: the ACT English subtest scores and the ACT Composite test scores; (2) the measure reflecting achievement in com-

position skills: the grades on the library research paper and the scores on test items that measure knowledge of composition principles; and (3) the measures reflecting achievement in usage shells: the scores on test items that measured vocabulary skills and the scores on test items that measure grammar skills (p. 13).

Galloway found that the homeschooled student scored higher on the ACT English subtest when compared to the private school graduate. When comparing the library research paper and the test scores of the homeschooled student to the other groups of freshman, there was no difference. Finally, when comparing the test items reflecting vocabulary and grammar skills for the three groups of college freshman, there was no difference. Conclusions were drawn from this evidence that homeschooled students exhibited similar academic achievement in college as students who attended conventional schools. Homeschooled students, therefore, demonstrate comparable, as well as foundational requirements for English skills that were being met in unconventional environments. It also demonstrated that homeschooled students performed as well as conventional schooled students in higher education.

Methodology

The method used for evaluating homeschooled students academic competency in higher education consisted of a qualitative study, or finding consistent reasons or patterns in professional literature to prove or disprove homeschooled students performed as well or better academically as compared to traditional schooled individuals. In this qualitative study a content

analysis design was used. Documents related to reading research were examined for relevant findings from researchers and their theoretical studies. The professional literature was collected from Southeastern Oklahoma State University Library through microfiche and internet research. These accumulated professional articles are dated from the last ten years, and thus, recently theoretically based. The sample used for this study was accidental.

Results

The Ohio Department of Education (1995) supported the hypothesis that homeschooled students performed as well or better academically as compared to traditional schooled individuals. They also reported that it was not a disadvantage for students seeking admission to college from homeschooled environments. They found over 150 colleges and universities in the United States were actively recruiting homeschooled students due to their reading comprehension, their know how to access and use information and their commitment to learning. Furthermore, a study by the 1990 National Home Education Research Institute (as cited by the Ohio Department of Education, 1995), indicated that directly following completion of homeschooling, 33% of students attended a four-year college, and 17% attended a two-year college. This same study found that following a wait of one year, an additional 17% went on to higher education. This research provided further evidence from ACT test scores that homeschooled students have the resources to be academically successful and achieve in higher education. Therefore performing as well

or as better academically as compared to traditional schooled individuals.

Rudner's study (1999) found that homeschooled students did quite well in 1998 on the ACT college entrance examination. It did not show that homeschooled students ranked academically above public or privately schooled students. This study did show that when parents made a commitment to homeschooling, a very successful academic environment was provided. Students with available resources were able to score as high or higher on academic achievement tests. Therefore, this substantiated the hypothesis that homeschooled students performed as well or better academically as compared to traditional schooled individuals.

Galloway's (1995) research showed that homeschooled students performed as well, or better than both elementary and secondary levels in academic achievement tests. Furthermore, the strategies employed in homeschooling were consistent with academic achievement and the propensity to propagate achievement in higher education. This demonstrated a two-fold phenomena and upheld our hypothesis that students who were homeschooled were academically prepared to compete achieve in higher education.

Conclusion

Increasing gun violence, lack of individualized education and the proliferation of drugs within the schools have turned families within my social circle to nontraditional education. Initially, concern focused on whether these middle-class, nonteachers could supply adequate instruction for their children in all subject areas

to prepare them to face the challenges of an everchanging, specialized world. Furthermore, they aspired for their children to compete and achieve in higher education once secondary instruction has been completed. This research has challenged the author to reconsider beliefs that homeschooled students were disadvantaged, and inadequately educated to compete and achieve academically as compared to traditional schooled students.

Many homeschooled families form communities of support groups to alleviate isolation and ignorance on curriculum standards, and to provide available materials and the legalities pertinent for homeschooling. Homeschooled families were then able to incorporate their lifestyle, values, and needs into the content areas as they educated their children. Technological advancement has furthered the abilities of these families to propagate understanding and enrichment in academics. What has been clearly unspoken, yet undeniably evident by homeschooled parents, has been the staunch support, commitment and belief in their children's abilities to achieve. This has resulted in a reciprocal effect in which Meehan & Stephensen (1994) noted that children fulfilled expectations because of their supportive environment.

Rudner's (1999) study of achievement test results substantiated that commitment, support, and resources bear heavily on successful academic achievement. Galloway (1995) showed that not only on tests of achievement and proficiency, but also in higher education classes, were homeschooled students able to perform as well or better than traditionally educated students. The Ohio Department of Education

(1995) found that with the extended support system that homeschooled families have, the skills that homeschooled students developed and utilized made them viable candidates for higher education and academic excellence. Therefore the hypothesis was supported by a variety of researchers that homeschooled students performed as well or better academically as compared to traditional schooled individuals.

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