



Transitioning to work without school: experiences of the home educated

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Abstract

The school-to-work transition is widely acknowledged as difficult, requiring meaningful support for young people to navigate successfully. This paper examines the reported experiences of six families navigating 23 home educated young people's transition from compulsory education to tertiary education and work. Data from semi-structured interviews with the parents were thematically analysed using Bourdieu's *habitus*, *capital*, and *field*. Findings indicate that the parents provided ample opportunity for self-exploration to encourage autonomy coupled with opportunity to explore and participate in the wider community, leading to a successful transition experience. The findings suggest that a contrasting, alternative career preparation method can be successful; one that values autonomy over the traditional approach which involves a scaffolded set of knowledge and skills. This study indicates that the transition can be successfully facilitated by providing young people with opportunity for autonomous self and career exploration in the community, without the standardised assistance provided through schools.

Keywords Home education · School-to-work transition · Autonomy · Advocacy · Bourdieu

Introduction

Transitioning from compulsory education to tertiary education and work can be an exciting but difficult time (Groves et al., 2021). Young people face the challenge of making perceived life defining decisions at a time when they are still working out who they are and want to be (Gati et al., 2019). Young people today spend longer in education, which means less work experience and understanding of the working world (Foundation for Young Australians [FYA], 2015; Mann et al., 2020). Yet, higher education levels no longer necessarily equate to better

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work (Mann et al., 2020). Entry level jobs for the inexperienced are increasingly scarce, partly due to increased automation and globalisation (FYA, 2015). This lack has been equated with high youth unemployment and a longer, more difficult transition experience (Galliot & Graham, 2015; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training [HRSCEET], 2018).

Career guidance has been shown to be a vital component for a positive education-to-work transition and working life outcomes for the youth and wider community (Hooley & Dodd, 2015; Hughes et al., 2016). From a socio-economic perspective, career guidance promotes stronger working world participation, leading to higher tax contributions and decreased economic support, contributors to economic growth (Hughes et al., 2016; Polvere & Lim, 2015). It is also positively associated with improved health and crime reduction (Hooley & Dodd, 2015). For the individual, outcomes include higher living standards, better health outcomes, increased social capital, and assistance with addressing inequalities (Hooley & Dodd, 2015; Mann et al., 2020). Essentially, career guidance is viewed as a win for all involved.

Consequently, governments, industry, and educational institutions are increasingly collaborating and providing career-related experiences, education, and guidance to high school students (HRSCEET, 2018; Mann et al., 2020). These initiatives have been shown to be valuable in combatting the difficulties young people encounter during their transition (Hughes et al., 2016). Through them, young people develop greater understanding of available work options (Mann et al., 2020). Further, they provide clarity regarding the relationship between education and working life, leading to increased educational engagement and beneficial career outcomes (Hooley, 2014).

In Australia, these initiatives mostly happen in, or are marketed exclusively to and through, high schools (Polvere & Lim, 2015). Career expos and fairs, work experience, career education classes, and chats with a career advisor tend to all happen within secondary school. Consequently, home educated young people do not have ready access to quality career education and guidance to help them navigate the transition from home education to tertiary education, training, and work. The difficulty home educated young people experience accessing career assistance may be detrimental to their transition outcomes (Polvere & Lim, 2015). Additionally, these young people are generally not eligible for Year 10 and Year 12 certificates, making standardised pathways more difficult (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2021; Queensland Government, 2022).

There is little data on the outcomes of home educated young people in Australia. Although limited and in some cases lacking sufficient academic rigour (Murphy, 2014), international data suggest that their outcomes are on par with their school attending counterparts (Valiente et al., 2022). However, there has been no detailed investigation of how they accomplish their transition. This paper explores the transition experiences of six Australian home educating families, 23 home educated young people, investigating the approaches and strategies they used to support their child's home education-to-work transition.

Transitioning to tertiary education and work

Literature indicates that a smoother, positive transition involves understanding of self, understanding of the working world, and development of various essential, transitional skills (see Marciniak et al., 2020; Patton & Porfeli, 2007). Self-understanding is considered foundational to making felicitous career-oriented decisions (Bryant et al., 2006; Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). Self-exploration and agency develop this understanding, particularly through hobbies and extra-curricular activities, family life, community participation, and early career-focussed activities in school (Bryant et al., 2006; Patton & Porfeli, 2007). Understanding of the working world develops as the young person learns about possibilities and limitations through career exploration. Career exploration fosters vocational identity development, contributing to individual identity (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). Family occupational experiences and conversations with parents, peers, teachers, and career advisors are powerful career exploration means (Turner & Lapan, 2013). Additionally, career education activities such as expos, work experience, and volunteering or paid work facilitate career exploration, positively impacting a young person's transition (Gaylor & Nicol, 2016; Patton & Porfeli, 2007).

Various skills and attributes are cited as contributing to a successful transition. These include goalsetting, planning, and working to achieve those goals (Turner & Lapan, 2004). Additionally, the ability and confidence to make decisions, problem solve, and adapt are cited as being valuable (Marciniak et al., 2020). As young people develop these skills, they are more likely to take advantage of opportunities that arise and make decisions in line with their own interests, contributing to a greater chance of a successful transition and happiness in their chosen career pathway (Steiner et al., 2019).

In addition to these three elements, various studies consider the contextual factors playing a role in the transition (Bimrose, 2019). Parents significantly influence the young person's experiences and understanding (Hill et al., 2018), and may hinder or support a successful transition (Marciniak et al., 2020). They shape a young person's worldview (Soresi et al., 2014), encourage or discourage certain pursuits and pathways, and provide access to social and cultural capital (Hill et al., 2018; Whiston & Keller, 2004). Entrepreneurial skills and work values are also developed in relation to the parents' own work practices and the parent-child relationship (Porfeli & Vondracek, 2007). Other contextual factors such as family background, culture, and local community, including the local labour market, can both positively and negatively affect the young person's transition (Mortimer et al., 2002). Sociological literature investigating the transition focusses on the interplay between the young person's identity development, their agency, and these contextual factors, and their influence on the young person's transition (Ecclestone et al., 2010).

Home education transitions

Literature focusses on the experiences of young people who transition from a school environment. Consequently, discussion of the transition from home education is sparse, and none in the Australian context. Nevertheless, home educated young people are still exposed to many of the same structural influences: local community, labour market issues, culture, family background, and in particular the influence of parents. Indeed, the parental influence in the home educated young person's experience could be assumed to be stronger because of the significant time spent with parents, and lack of school-based influence and support, whether via teachers, career advisors, or career education activities.

Questions have been asked about the home educated young person's ability or opportunity to develop their own sense of identity without school-based experiences that expose them to other views, values, and beliefs (Apple, 2000; Reich, 2008). However, other scholars have demonstrated that home education is only 'home' based in that the parents are responsible for the education (Moir & English, 2022). Home education is increasingly understood as a community-oriented practice rather than something occurring within the walls of the home (Kunzman, 2016). Several studies suggest home educators rely heavily on the community, both online and locally, to provide diverse opportunities for learning and socialisation (e.g. Carpenter & Gann, 2016; Hanna, 2012; Isenberg, 2007). Further, several scholars have demonstrated that the form of education does not significantly impact the transmission of values (Hoelzle, 2013; Kunzman, 2017; Uecker, 2008). Nevertheless, it is reasonable to suggest that there would be differences in identity development without school culture and environment.

Home educating families have been shown to encourage self-exploration and, through this medium, identity development (McQueen, 2019; Select Committee on Home Schooling, 2014). Additionally, home educated adolescents are reported to value the individualised approach to education that allows them time to focus on exploration of their own interests alongside their education requirements (Neuman, 2020), thereby providing opportunity to develop their own identity (Sheffer, 1995, as cited in Ray, 2004). Home education is also valued by its proponents for the purported opportunity to reclaim agency and independence for both parents and children (Dennison et al., 2020), particularly by those who choose to unschool.¹ Several studies demonstrate that the opportunity to choose what, how, and when they learn, even when restrained by state curriculum requirements, is particularly appreciated by home educated young people (Jackson, 2009; Neuman, 2020). However, as there is no one way to home educate, not all home educated young people are necessarily afforded an environment that invites such autonomy in their education (Van der Merwe et al., 2016). Several studies found that the home educating families they researched encouraged autonomy, critical thinking, decision-making, and

¹ Home education practices range from a structured 'school-at-home' practice to a more unstructured, child-led approach, often termed 'unschooling'. For a more detailed discussion on the differences between home education practices, see Gray & Riley (2015).

problem-solving (e.g. Bhopal & Myers, 2018; Dioso-Lopez, 2021) and that this level of agency facilitated a strong sense of their own values and identity (Hoelzle, 2013).

Data available on tertiary education and career outcomes of home educated young people indicate similar experiences to those who completed their compulsory education period in the school environment. They have a similar likelihood of completing tertiary qualifications, and achieve similar grades (Home Education Network, 2019; Valiente et al., 2022). They report themselves as happy in their choice of work, which is often related to childhood interests (Gray & Riley, 2015; Riley, 2021). Reports also find them working in professional or entrepreneurial occupations (Pannone, 2017), and favouring a work/life balance approach rather than climbing the corporate ladder (Riley & Gray, 2015). However, these data are sparse and not always peer reviewed. More work needs to be done to elucidate outcomes for home educated young people.

Conceptual framework

Considering the literature reviewed, it seemed reasonable to assume that identity, agency, and the contextual factor of parental influence would be highly significant in this study. The experiences and decisions of the young person would likely be influenced by their social context, particularly regarding their development of self and their understanding of their ability to make choices within that context. Therefore, Pierre Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' of field, capital, and habitus (Wacquant, 1989, p. 50) were used as a conceptual framework to analyse the social contexts of these families and their choices and actions as they facilitate their child's transition. These tools are used individually and relationally to provide a robust lens for understanding each family's perceptions and experiences. Further, they facilitate awareness of the benefits and challenges experienced by these families throughout their children's preparation and transition.

Bourdieu used 'field' to analyse the position and relationships of individuals within a social sphere (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The concept provides a means of identifying the social positioning of groups, the advantages and limitations they experience, and how they may change their social position. In this study, the concept of field was used to identify the position of home educators within the wider field of education and analyse how they improve their position within the field and access advantages, or assets, that will assist in moving into the working world. These advantages, or assets, are what Bourdieu terms 'capital', and can be used to improve an individual's place in the field.

Bourdieu identified various types of capital, including social, economic, and cultural capital. A person can improve their position in their field by acquiring more capital valued in that field. Bourdieu identified three types of cultural capital: objective, institutionalised, and embodied (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, economic (financial) capital can be exchanged for objective cultural capital such as items that might provide prestige or status in the field. Embodied cultural capital refers to the mannerisms and comportment of the individual, such as uniforms, accepted

fashions, or language common to the field. Institutionalised cultural capital is of significance to this study because it includes recognition of knowledge and experience through certification such as school leaving certificates and higher education qualifications. Home educated young people are ineligible for school leaving certificates in most states and territories unless they choose to enrol in school or complete those qualifications at TAFE. They therefore are unable to obtain certain capital that is highly valued in some parts of the education field and working world.

Habitus can be defined as the dispositions of the individual. It is the 'way of being' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 214) that the individual has learned from family (immediate and historical), culture, and field. These dispositions are the framework that the individual relies on to perceive and act in any given situation and therefore what Bourdieu uses to explain the day-to-day actions of individuals. In this study, the choice to home educate and the decisions made in how to prepare their children for the transition were directly related to the parents' habitus, position in the field, and any capital they may personally be able to use or transfer to their children. Consequently, field, capital, and habitus provided a lens that illuminates the experiences of these families.

Methodology

A case study approach was used to clearly define the bounded topic and participant eligibility. The main home educating parent was invited to participate if they had helped a child transition from home education to further education, training, and work in the last five years, and that child had been home educated for at least the three years before that. Potential participants were contacted through a national home education advocacy organisation. The participants were residents of Queensland ($n=2$) and New South Wales ($n=4$). Each had facilitated the transition of between two and five young people. The total number of young people's transitions investigated was 23.

Data were collected through online, semi-structured interviews. The online aspect enabled data collection regardless of distance, which made it possible to include a more disperse population, including participants from city, urban, and regional areas. The participants were invited to choose a pseudonym, which is used throughout the study. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and generate themes from the data. The study was approved through Queensland University of Technology's ethics process.

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for trustworthiness were influential in the research design, contributing to clarity, detail, and robustness so that readers can determine applicability to their own contexts and provide a foundation that may foster further investigation of the topic. Particularly, credibility was a focus for this project. Contrary to stereotypes (Morton, 2010), Australia's home educators come from a variety of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds (Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards, 2014). The home educators interviewed varied across socio-economic background and lived in different geographical areas. This enabled the study to include home education methods influenced by different regulatory requirements, geographical

limitations, economic differences, and personal contexts. The similarities found within participant diversity, while not representative, lend credibility.

Participants

The six participants were all mothers who were the main home educating parent in their family. All had been home educating multiple children for between 18 and 28 years and were still home educating younger siblings. Their children used a variety of pathways into tertiary education and the working world. Forty-three per cent ($n=10$) chose to study at university, with 30% ($n=7$) gaining entry through open university units, enabling or extension programs, or bridging units, and 13% ($n=3$) using TAFE qualifications as a method of entry. Apprenticeships and traineeships were the chosen pathway to the working world for 17% ($n=4$). One young person chose a more entrepreneurial approach, using TAFE qualifications to assist in developing their own business. Finally, 34% ($n=8$) gained access to the working world either via paid or voluntary opportunities, gaining tertiary qualifications while working. Four of the 23 young people had not completed their transition, i.e. they had transitioned to further education or training, but had not yet completed any qualifications and settled into the working world. Most of the young people ($n=19$) had paid work or volunteered throughout their transition.

Nine young people (39%) held completed qualifications within Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) bands 1–4 as their highest level of educational attainment, and 14 (61%) held qualifications with AQF bands 5–8. Seven (30%) held qualifications in both bands. The young people pursued a variety of education areas and now work in health/science, hospitality and management, information technology, childcare, business administration, education, electrotechnology, and mechanical technology.

Findings

The present study was designed to investigate how home educating families transition their children from home education to tertiary education and work. Firstly, several codes were developed inductively, such as community, advocacy, and opportunity. Secondly, codes applicable to the conceptual framework such as agency, parental influence, identity, field, capital, and habitus were developed. Two strong themes were generated: autonomy and advocacy. In this section, the approaches these families used will be discussed in relation to these two elements.

Advocacy

All participants reported spending significant time researching opportunities for their children to participate in educational and working world experiences. These experiences included tertiary studies and informal opportunities to develop skills and pursue interests at a deeper level.

A prominent issue for participant families was how to access further education and qualifications without formal recognition of their child's compulsory education. One of the participants, Scarlet, who had four children who had transitioned out of home education, reported being 'really concerned' when her children reached high school age because she did not know how her children would be able to transition to further study. Consequently, she started researching 'all the multiple pathways' for different jobs and qualifications. Violet's family, who also had four children who had transitioned out of home education, began attending 'open days at universities and TAFE info sessions' every year. Kaye, a mother of five children, two of which had completed the transition, reported that she commenced liaising with a university on how her daughter could access the qualifications in which she was interested two or three years before she accessed that pathway.

All participants indicated that this process was difficult and time consuming. Both Kaye and another participant, Mumof10, reported that educational institutions and government organisations often do not have clear and accessible requirements for home educated young people to access a course or traineeship. Both mentioned they experienced confusion within organisations, with different people within the same institution offering conflicting advice regarding entry requirements for home educated young people. Consequently, accessing accurate information often involved a great deal of parental time and advocacy. Kaye pointed out that while brochures and guidelines are provided for school leavers, those who choose alternative paths struggle to find clear, accurate, and succinct guidance. She expressed a desire for 'clearer tertiary pathways' and easily accessible information on the requirements for home educated young people to gain entry to tertiary courses.

The consequences of this lack of clear information are seen in Kaye's reports of their experiences. Kaye described difficulty arranging a childcare traineeship for her daughter. Kaye estimated that because of the lack of clarity regarding how to access this pathway, it took longer to organise a traineeship. Interestingly, her daughter was able to use the time to complete a university unit in early childhood, which Kaye felt added to her resume and helped her find work after her traineeship.

The participants also described their advocacy experiences in finding informal growth opportunities in the wider community. Such learning opportunities included deeper learning with a subject expert, developing skills to a higher level, or accessing volunteer or paid work. These efforts were always related to the young person's interests, although at times the parent might suggest an activity that would develop adult skills or be 'a good thing to have' on the young person's resume, like a first aid certificate. Alice reported that 'people don't understand homeschooling', which resulted in difficulty accessing these types of opportunities for her children because their child's education 'doesn't fit the norm of society'. She indicated that some opportunities were closed to the young person, either because they were considered too young and therefore not seen as being sufficiently capable, the sought for activity was only available to a limited group, or organisations refused to provide insurance cover. In these circumstances, Alice reported that she would organise her own insurance, or offer to attend an activity and be responsible for the young person herself. These methods often overcame such difficulties, although Alice reported that sometimes the barriers were simply too great.

The effort to advocate for their children and provide opportunities in the wider community usually led to further opportunity. Scarlet's children participated in various musical events in the youth music field, volunteered in nursing homes, supported other young people's musical endeavours, and participated in music ensembles. These experiences led to opportunities to develop networks, knowledge, and skills. Their understanding of, and early participation in, the music field provided beneficial experience for their chosen career pathway: studying music at university.

All participants reported similar opportunities resulting from their active involvement in the wider community. Social networks, volunteering, and work experience led to apprenticeships or paid work. For example, Elizabeth's daughter was able to participate in work experience that led to employment, a traineeship, and job promotion. She was also able to find new work and growth opportunities later through a social contact. Elizabeth's sons were notified of new possibilities through social networks, as were two of Violet's children. It should be noted that, although the social networks provided knowledge of opportunities, the young person still had to apply for the opportunity and compete in the selection process like everyone else.

Through the parents' efforts and advocacy example, the young person was able to take advantage of opportunities in line with their interests. Additionally, in some cases the young person developed the ability to advocate for themselves in similar situations. Particularly, Alice noted her children's developing discernment of potentially beneficial opportunities and their subsequent focussed determination to access them, indicating that 'they want to push through the barriers... ultimately, they will push through things, or they'll want to if it's important enough to them'. Some participants reported their children negotiating favourable outcomes with employers that suited their education and working goals. These young people demonstrated an ability to take over the parents' role and work to achieve the outcomes they wanted for themselves. Participants seemed to view this ability as evidence of a successful transition.

Autonomy

In this study, autonomy is defined as 'a sense of initiative and ownership in one's actions... supported by experiences of interest and value' (Ryan & Deci, 2020, p. 1). Although their reasons for home educating varied, the participants placed high value on their right and choice to home educate, and their decision to do so engendered a disposition of autonomy. Several participants reported multiple experiences throughout their education journey that reinforced their decision and enhanced their value of their own autonomy and by extension the autonomy of their children. Alice reported that although her initial desire to home educate was to provide a more family-oriented education for her children, through her home education journey her goals became focussed on the young person's autonomy, well-being, and preparation for adult life.

The participants' value of autonomy for their children became evident in their reports of how they home educated. Alice and Violet spoke of their journeys to being fully comfortable with the decision to home educate despite negative societal

messaging. They spoke of wanting their children to be happy choosing their own path and not feel a need to conform to societal pressures. Alice spoke of the ‘baggage from expectations. And I think sometimes as a home schooler there’s more, because if you’ve homeschooled and your kids are not going to uni you failed’. Her efforts to provide an environment that encouraged her children’s autonomy centred on her own ‘big paradigm shift’ to remove her ‘own expectations of what [she] wanted for them, what [she] thought would look good’ and to ‘respect [her] children if they didn’t want that’. Consequently, her reported focus was on helping her children discover and pursue their interests and desires.

All participants reported providing support for their children’s developing autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2020) throughout their child’s education. Learning often centred on the child’s interests, either through preparation on the parent’s part, or through impromptu deviation from the original plans to support the child’s learning autonomy. Mumof10 reported that ‘I have a plan of what [learning] we need to do [that day], but [I’m] quite happy to ditch it if the kids come up [with other plans]’. Additionally, the children would have input into the materials used. Mumof10 reported that ‘I got some books that I thought... were terrific but the kids were like “we’re not having a bar of it”, so... they’re sitting there gathering dust’. Kaye discussed not using materials that her children ‘resist[ed]’ and following a more self-directed approach to education in the high school years as her children took ‘more ownership’ of their education. The participants indicated that this flexibility and support for the development of autonomy was important to their home education methods and reinforced the development of the child’s interests, understanding of self, and family relationships.

They also reported that their efforts to provide autonomy support increased in the secondary education years and into the transition. To support their child’s exploration, discovery, and development of their own interests, all participants used a similar approach. They would seek out and offer opportunities in line with the young person’s interests. The participants reported always letting the young person decide whether to pursue that opportunity. Alice described it as follows:

...if they had goals, or we were discussing certain things they were interested in, I would just be the facilitator to find the resources or help them find resources... if I found something I would, you know, ‘this is here, have a look at it, are you interested?’ So constantly bringing up opportunities that they would need to... decide ‘do I want this, is this what I want?’ Getting them thinking so they’re continually moving forward.

Alice reported that the flexibility practised in the early years naturally developed into communication with her children about ‘what they wanted’ (understanding of self) and provided a ‘wider taste of life[,] people and experiences’ (understanding of the world). The participants felt that opportunities should never be forced, and that this aspect of the transition required flexibility, strong communication, and ‘being respectful if that’s not a direction they wanted to go in’. All participants indicated that the young person’s autonomy and decision-making were paramount. This opportunistic approach seemed to be how they provided autonomy support

throughout their home education, particularly during their secondary education and the transition.

Discussion and conclusion

The parents' dispositions towards advocacy and supporting the development of autonomy enabled them to overcome their children's lack of capital valued in the field, that is, recognition of their compulsory but home-centred education. A habitus that was both autonomous and advocational in parent and child, coupled with the confidence to make decisions in line with their self-exploration, was essential to the successful transition of their children. The intentional focus on encouraging the young person to develop autonomy allowed the young person to concentrate on their interests, make decisions, and participate in a wide variety of community-based activities that provided beneficial experience in the working world. This approach developed their understanding of themselves in relation to career possibilities and increased the young person's decision-making self-efficacy; essential components for a positive transition (Marciniak et al., 2020).

The parents' intensive efforts made avenues of interest to the young person possible. These efforts included hours of research into possibilities, arranging work experiences and traineeships, and liaising with educational institutions to advocate for their child's participation. Although parents reported difficulty achieving these goals, most participation barriers were either overcome or similar opportunities found. The strength of parental involvement could be seen as a form of capital for their children to navigate through the education field and enter the field of work. Interestingly, despite their lack of institutionalised cultural capital—a valuable commodity in transitioning to the tertiary education and work fields (Graham et al., 2015)—the young people were able to access appropriate pathways in line with their interest. Each pathway was unique to the young person as it aligned to their individual interests and choices. Despite this individualised approach, their pathway often fitted within the system of standardised pathways already established. Pursuing community-based activities related to their interests was essential to most of the young people's successful transitions. The parents provided social and economic capital where they were able, and the young person's activity in the wider community helped them build their own social and cultural capital that was valued in the chosen field of work. In this way, parents seemed to fill roles normally associated with teachers, VET co-ordinators, and career advisors, as well as providing parental support.

The young person learnt from their parents' advocacy example by developing their own advocacy skills that they then used to assist themselves with their transition. The focus on autonomy was a key factor in the young person's career identity development, their own practice, their decision-making skills, and in some cases, their entrepreneurial skills. Their habitus and the capital they developed and utilised made it possible for them to navigate the education field without the capital usually required and afforded as standard and essential for school students (Polvere & Lim,

2015). It also facilitated their entry into the field of work. In short, their transitions appeared to be successful due to three factors:

1. increased interaction with the community and working world at an early age,
2. high parental support levels, particularly through advocacy and discussion, and
3. high levels of autonomy support throughout their education and transition.

The experiences shared by these home educating families suggest that practices focussed on supporting the young person to develop autonomy and interests, coupled with a supportive facilitator who advocates on their behalf for involvement in experiences, options, and pathways of their choosing, can facilitate a successful transition to tertiary education and the working world. Extensive use of experiences in the wider community were said by the participants to be essential to a positive outcome. Additionally, the opportunity to develop and exercise autonomy may have contributed to their decision-making self-efficacy. The major hurdle for these families seemed to be difficulty clarifying tertiary education pathways and options for their young people. Industry, educational institutions, and government can support home educated young people by developing policy and processes for alternative entry, providing clear information and support on career pathway options, and developing an understanding of the capabilities and differences of home educated young people.

The small sample and the Australian context limit the data's generalisability to all home educating families. Additionally, the study only explored the perspectives of the main home educating parent and did not explore the transition from the young person's point of view.² Although home educating families have been cited as being from diverse socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, the participants of this study were all from similar ethnic backgrounds and had similar motives for home educating. Further investigation of home educating families with a more diverse range of experience may overcome this significant limitation. Considering the growth of home education over the past decade in Australia (Moir & English, 2022), a larger investigation of the transition experiences of this cohort would be beneficial.

This study illuminates an alternative approach to the transition from compulsory education to tertiary education and work. Those who find themselves outside or struggling in the school system may find aspects of this method helpful in navigating their own transition, as well as those who assist them. This study also provides a more in-depth understanding of home education methods, which may prove valuable to regulators and those new to this growing education choice. In addition, Bourdieu's thinking tools provided a lens that highlighted inequity and limitations in the transition from the compulsory education period to tertiary education and the working world, as well as tactics the participants used to tackle these issues.

² As this was a Master of Philosophy project, there was no capacity to interview the children of the participants. Therefore, the transition is reported from the perspective of their parents.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The author declares that she has no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval Ethics approval was granted through QUT's ethics process, approval number 4986.

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