HOME EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

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Abstract

If school attendance is important to social integration, then out of school practice like home education (HE) could represent a threat to social integration. The findings of a Norwegian research project that surveyed socialization among Norwegian HE- students from different regions are presented and discussed in terms of socialization theory and a theory of cultural order. Among the conclusions: Pragmatic motivated HE-students are often well social integrated. Religious motivated HE- students with value distance to society, is not necessarily social isolated HE-*students. With more openness and more communication HE-students could better meet criteria to social integration.*

1. Introduction

Socialization is the process whereby the helpless infant gradually becomes a self aware, knowledgeable person (Giddens 2006). Education can be seen as methodical socialization of the young generation (Durkheim 1956). Education must assure, among the citizens a sufficient community of ideas and sentiments, without which any society is impossible (Ibid). Sufficient community is for Durkheim solidarity and the meaning of social integration. Social integration includes systems of integration, but also reciprocity of practices and communication between either actors or collectives (Giddens 1988).

Home education is increasing in Norway and other modern countries (Beck 2006). If school attendance is considered important to social integration, non-attendance due to home education can be viewed as a threat to integration. Home education challenge how strong parental rights and other fundamental human rights should apply in democratic societies before they counteract the idea of public education and social integration. Too restrictive practice of such human rights could on the other hand counteract reciprocity between home educators and society and the increase the possibility of segregation of home educators.

The social integration of home-educated students has become controversial, following a recent ruling of the European Human Rights Court (2006) in a case concerning home education in Germany. The ruling expresses concern about the development of parallel communities comprising distinct ethnic groups and immigrants in European countries. To avoid such social fragmentation, the Human Rights Court put the child's right to an education above parental rights. The state must guarantee the rights of children to an education which — according to the ruling — must also guarantee the child's right to social integration through

participation in the school community. The ruling also asserts that parents' religious influence over their children must occur in such a manner that the children understand the consequences of their religious training. The ruling represents a shift from previous rulings in similar cases, in that the status of parental rights has been diminished. The conflict has become more pronounced in democratic societies between the need to integrate immigrants into the main society and the need to preserve the rights of individuals in the context of human rights.

The aim of this article is to give further knowledge about home education pupils and their socialization and integration in to society. The article is structured as follows:

1. A brief introduction to the international status of home education.

2. Analysis of motives for home education as a possible cause for poor social integration of home educated pupils.

3. Socialization theory and international research on socialization of home educated pupils.

4. Presentation of a survey of home educated pupils in Norway and a regional analysis of results concerning such pupils` socialization and social integration.

5. A further discussion based on Mary Douglas theory about cultural codes and cultural purity.

6. Concluding remarks.

2. The international status of home education

Legal, social and educational frameworks that encourage home education vary among countries and within them. In Sweden and Estonia, for example, home education is treated as an exemption from compulsory schooling. In most US states, in the UK, Australia, and other English-speaking countries, and in the Nordic countries other than Sweden, home education is a way of providing compulsory basic education on a par with school attendance. Other countries take some position mid-way between the two (Beck 2006, Glenn 2006, Leis 2005). Although home education is prohibited in Germany, some 500 families in Germany practice home education (Spiegler 2004b).

Students educated at home in effective learning environments appear to achieve the same scores as school attendees on tests of their knowledge (Baumann 2002, Welner and Welner 1999), although there are large groups of home-educated students over whom public authorities have limited oversight and control (Opplinger and Willard 2004). Registered home-educated students, however, appear to be well socialized into society (Medin 2000), although there is concern in several countries regarding isolated home-educating families and their children. An estimated 40 percent of home-educators in Quebec, Canada, are not registered (Brabant, Bourdon, and Jutras 2004).

3. Motives for home education

There are various categories of home educators; the categories are based on the family's primary reasons for choosing home-based education. Differences in assessed social integration that may result from the varying motivations have been the subject of research. Two early attempts at categorizing home educators are found in Mayberry (1988) and Van Galen (1988). Mayberry describes four motivational categories: religious, academic, social

(students are better off, in terms of social factors, at home than at school), and New Age (alternative lifestyle). Van Galen distinguishes between ideological and pedagogic home educators. Ideological home educators emphasize family values and conservative values, and are motivated by disagreement with schools as to values; they are often loosely referred to as religious fundamentalists. Pedagogic home educators consider breaking with institutional schooling key, along with pursuing more desirable pedagogic approaches.

The intensity of the home educator's motivation can be a reflection of his or her sense of conflict with society-at-large. For some, home education is an act of conscience in a secularized society and secularized schools. The US sociologist Mitchell Stevens (2001) distinguishes between heaven-based and earth-based drives for homeschooling. The heaven-based category expresses motivations that are mainly matters of principle, religion, and life view, and adherence to ideological pedagogic approaches. According to Stevens, earth-based home educators are acting on situation-specific, pragmatic, and other specifically pedagogic issues. Thomas Spiegler (2004a) has concluded that the growth in home education in Germany is most pronounced among families acting on so-called heaven-based motivation. Because of their religion or life view, they tend to find themselves in conflict with schools more frequently than so-called earth-based home educators. Thus, they stand to gain more than earth-based home educators by withdrawing their children from school and home-educating them. Nevertheless, earth-based reasons for homeschooling are also cited by the heaven-based category.

Social costs are associated with home education. Home educators may find themselves in conflict with their local communities, schools, and school authorities. Heaven-based home educators are better able to minimize such social costs than earth-based home educators, due to their faith and their fellowship with others who share their faith. Home education based on religion and life view may tend to make home educators more prone to stronger bonds within their particular subcultures.

In the United States, some 40 percent of home educators cite religious or moral convictions as their key motivating factors, although more than 90 percent of them also cite pedagogic reasons for homeschooling (Bauman 2002:9-10). In Canada, motivations are largely pedagogic or related to other home- and family-centric values; a mere 14 percent of Canadian home educators cite religious reasons as key (Brabant, et al. 2003:117-119). In another Canadian survey, 72 percent of respondents stated that they home educate for pedagogic reasons (Priesnitz 2002: 5). In the UK, the majority of home educators cite pedagogic reasons as primary. Educational freedom and flexibility, as well as providing individualized education, are cited by about two-thirds of UK home educators. Only 4 to 5 percent of UK home educators report that they are homeschooling for religious reasons (Rothermel 2003: 79).

4. Home education, socialization and social integration

Some educators question whether home education does more than remove children from school, and actually isolates them from society-at-large. Similarly, many have expressed doubts as to whether home educated children are sufficiently socialized. Apple (2000)

believes home educators in the United States isolate themselves into separate clans, which undermines both school and society.

Michael Apple views homeschoolers as playing an important role in populist, neo-liberal, and neoconservative movements that have gained a great deal of influence in the present-day United States. Apple perceives homeschooling families as viewing themselves as stateless due to the secular humanism that now characterize public schools. Also, they find themselves in a deep value conflict with public school's ideology (Apple 2000). The great socio-cultural distance between secularized and post-modern values in schools and conservative Religious values anchored in the family, can engender more conflict than might seem necessary. A dispute in Norway concerning dancing in schools ended up in the supreme court — the country's highest court — as a home education case (Straume 2004).

Social integration include both a cultural, life-view-oriented aspect and an instrumental social interest aspect (Hoëm 1978). Hoëm distinguishes between specific and general parts of the socialization process, which may be home and school, respectively. Successful integration relies on a sufficient commonality of values and interest between specific and general social elements.

Obviously, home educators and schools have, to a greater or lesser extent, a conflict of interest. However, that does not necessarily mean that their interests or values conflict with those of society-at-large. Self-sufficiency, a focus on home life and equality are key Norwegian values (Gullestad 1985). These very values constitute the values of home educators (Beck 2006). Different groups of home educators have varying degrees of value and interest commonality/conflict with school, their local/regional community, the national community, and global society, regarding overarching social elements. Here, it is probably best to focus on conflicts with society-at-large, and to a lesser extent conflicts with schools.

A meta survey on how home educated students develop socially and emotionally has been conducted (Blok 2004). Blok asks whether they learn interaction with other children and adults, if they develop character traits such as endurance and self confidence. He reviews eight studies, most of them qualitative, with a participation of between 20 and 224 students. The conclusion drawn is that home-educated students appear to be as well adapted as school students — or better. Blok concludes his review by pointing out that it is incorrect to claim that home-educated students grow up in isolation from other children and youngsters.

Medin (2000) characterizes research on socialization of home-educated students as a young research discipline without a developed theory and with poorly developed research design and measurement methods, poorly defined research questions and is often studies featuring self-selection of a small number of interview subjects. Nevertheless, Medin draws the following conclusions from the available research:

1. Home-educated students participate in the daily life of the families and networks they are part of.
2. They are not isolated; rather they associate with and feel close to all sorts of people.
3. Parents encourage home-educated students to maintain social contacts beyond the family.
4. They have solid self-esteem.
5. They appear to function well as members of the adult community.

A preliminary conclusion must be that organized and registered home education does not pose particular problems as to students' socialization.

5. The Norwegian home education survey – a regional analysis

A Norwegian survey based on a questionnaire answered by parents for 128 home educated pupils (90 % of all asked), from all regions of Norway, about 36 % of the Norwegian home educated pupils population estimated to 365 (2002). The difference 237 (365 – 128: 64 %) could be a tentative but clearly overestimated guess of numbers of unregistered home educated pupils in Norway. The analysis identified four main groups of home educators (Beck 2006):

1. *Structured home educators.* These are frequently religious well educated middle-class parents who are role- and position-oriented and well educated (Bernstein 1977), and who provide traditional, curriculum focused education in the home.
2. *Unschooling.* Well educated, often with radical political and cultural viewpoints, middle class, anti-establishment, person- and identity-oriented (ibid), who provide child-centered home education with a low degree of structure and planned curricula.
3. *Pragmatic home educators.* Typically rural, working-class families with limited formal education, who emphasize home education anchored in practical work.
4. *Unregistered home educators.* Romanis; unregistered immigrants; socially troubled families, frequently with substance abuse problems; and some fundamentalist religious families, some of these appear to use home education as part of a self-imposed isolation from society.

The four categories of home educators may have varying degrees of value and interest commonality and/or conflict with schools and national society (Table 1).

Table 1   Degree of value and interest commonality between home educators and schools/society

Home educator category	Interest commonality with school	Value commonality with school	Interest commonality with national society	Value commonality with national community
Structured home educators	Weak	Strong in areas other than primary beliefs	Strong	Strong
Unschooling	Weak	Weak	Medium	Medium
Pragmatic home educators	Medium	Strong	Strong	Strong
Unregistered home educators	Weak	?	Weak	?

The conflicts that home educators are involved in are, primarily, conflicts of interest with the schools in which their children would otherwise be enrolled. Schools want to educate their children; parents want to educate them themselves, at home. While such conflicts may be founded in a value conflict between home and school, this is generally not the case. If schools view the non-educational aspect of school participation as valuable and necessary, then a

limited disparity of interests and values between home and school regarding the provider of education can develop into a more severe, principled rift over value differences regarding home-based and school-based education.

Seen as a whole, unregistered home educators generally comprise groups that in various ways may be said to be poorly integrated into the national community. A key, articulated concern is that their children may become isolated in socially deviant, religious fundamentalist home environments. In the worst cases, there is suspicion that such isolation covers up inadequate parenting or even child abuse in some instances. Only limited research and documentation are available to shed light on such suspicions.

4.1 All regions
In the early phase of modern home education in Norway, in the years 1991-2000, conflict levels were high. Home education triggered a sort of crisis mobilization on the part of school authorities, which home educators perceived as disproportionate and even absurd. To understand schools' reaction, we should distinguish between conflicts over actual issues concerning individual students on the one hand, and conflicts over home education driven by philosophy or policy at the local and national level. Individual cases of the time indicate that the level of conflict was indeed high during the early phase. After some time passed, a reduced level of conflict prevailed, with significant differences among geographic regions (Beck 2006).

Where there is limited commonality of values and social interests between home and school, Hoëm (1978) believes that this discordance will result in greater socio-cultural distance between specific and overarching social elements, and, hence, poorer socialization and more social segregation. Corresponding to Hoëms theory, HE-social segregation can be split in three: *Degree of HE-social isolation from society* (1), *HE-Value distance from society* (2), and *degree of internal HE-community* (3).

1) Degree of HE-social isolation HE-students who were both counted and completed a survey questionnaire for the researcher, can be characterized as more visible and available and then less isolated than those who were merely counted. Thus, the number of students participating in the survey, as a percentage of all home HE-children that had been identified and counted in a region, can be a measure of home educated students' social availability. Low availability could mean social isolation and segregation and could identify unregistered home education.

2) HE-value distance to society. In spite of a national church (Protestant Christian) and regional differences, Norway is quit a secularized society. Percentage of home educators whose religious beliefs are the primary motivation for home education can then be used as a measure of HE value distance to society.

3) Degree of internal HE-community. Percentage of home educators with a great deal of contact with other home educators is used as measure of degree of internal HE-community.

Table 2 HE- social segregation, regional differences in Norway

Region	1) Degree of HE-social	2) HE-value	3) Degree of internal HE-

	isolation (%)	distance to society (%)	community(%)
Eastern Norway	40,3	43	65
Southern coastal Norway	18,2	30	45
Western Norway	114,3*	17	36
Central Norway	21,6	83	42
Northern Norway	17,0	0	29

- Exceeds 100 percent because the figure includes students who were home educated as a result of a rural school conflict originating before the 2001-2002 survey year.

Measured rang-correlation (Spearmans rho) gave R12 = .30, R13=.30 and R23=.70. Conclusions from this study are:

1. Religious motivated home education with large HE-value distance to society, gives higher degree of internal HE-community. Opposite: pragmatic motivated home education is more often related to less HE-value distance to society and to lower degree of internal HE-community.
2. High degree of social isolation of home educators is only weakly related both to large HE-value distance to society and to high degree of internal HE-community.

4.2 Each region

In The *Western region*, pedagogic and pragmatic motivations dominate. The Western region is characterized by a high incidence of individuals having a center to right-of-center political orientation and a traditional strong religious (Christian) background. A high degree of common values exists between the region in general and homeschoolers. Western Norway stands out as the region in which homeschoolers are best social integrated into society.

Home education in *Eastern Norway* appears to be driven by principles; there is an equal distribution between families motivated by religion and related beliefs — and those motivated out of pedagogic concerns. Here, religious groups are generally weaker than along the country's west area, and politically, HE-families tend to be more left wing. The value gap for the region is pronounced. In Eastern Norway, HE-students are more weakly social integrated into society than in the south coastal and western areas. In Eastern Norway, we see the contours of a new sub-culture in which home education is a significant unifying factor.

In *The Southern, coastal region of Norway*, fewer home educators than in Eastern Norway state that religion and other beliefs are the reasons they are homeschooling; rather, pedagogic reasons dominate. The gap in values between home educators and the rest of the region is minor, as is the case in Western Norway. Nevertheless, home-educated southern coastal Norway students are less social integrated into their society than their Western Norway counterparts are. No nascent homeschooling subculture appears in Coastal Southern Norway.

In *Central Norway*, religious and other beliefs dominate as to motivation. There is a great gap in values between home educators and the rest of the region, where left-of-center political parties are strong. Home educators' children in Central Norway are relatively poorly social integrated into society. Central Norway is vulnerable to conflicts associated with home education. It may not be accidental that two out of three home-education court cases in Norway in the late 1990s were in central Norway.

Home educators in Northern Norway report that pragmatic issues are the main reason for choosing home education. For example, long traveling distance to schools is often a factor. In this region, there are few conflicts between home educators' values and the value set typical of the region, despite the fact that Northern Norway is where home educators are most social isolated. Northern Norway home education occurs on an as needed basis; the Sami (Lappish) population is, as are other northerners, accustomed to arriving at independent solutions, given the long distance to governmental headquarters in Oslo. Harsh nature and settlements that are scattered invite autonomous, pragmatic solutions, and relations with schools are no exception. Home education in Northern Norway has roots dating back to the 1700s, when extensive home education was recorded in the region (Tveit 2004).

5. Conflicts in home education — a cultural anthropological explanation

Activities and functions that promote the spirit of a community are prominent features of schools. In Norway, as in other countries, public schools are perceived as key to national community (Telhaug 1994: 130-131). Slagstad (2001: 388-394) emphasizes the role of public schooling in nation building. He establishes that public school's task was to raise a nation and to provide public education. School's most important tasks were to level out societal differences and to implement social integration. Public school's importance to national cultural community, social justice, and national independence is emphasized. Breaking with school becomes a threat not just to school itself but to national identity.

Mary Douglas provides analysis of the connection between cultural codes and what she calls cultural purity. In her classic work, *Purity and Danger*, she hypothesizes that what is anomalous or impure in a community is an outgrowth of that community's order and rules of cultural and societal rules. The purpose of a society is to protect what is pure. In this way, all societies feature some aspects that would be considered "dirty," something impure that needs to be dealt with (Douglas 2004). This can apply to the most profound and religious sensibilities. Generally, the concept here involves morality. A society has norms for right and wrong. If one violates these, one becomes a criminal to be punished, or one is regarded and treated as one who has deviated. Such an understanding of purity also applies to daily life, in the form of common rules for proper behavior (Wuthnow 1987: 84-92). Douglas points out how quickly changes in and of themselves may increase the threat to the established social and cultural order, as well as social unity.

Mary Douglas presents a hypothesis on the interconnection between the drive toward cultural purity, and cultural classification and boundary setting. Applying Douglas' analysis is useful to understanding the high level of conflict associated with home education.

The hypothesis is about the position of what is pure or impure/dirty. Douglas sets forth the claim that which is impure or dirty in society is not so in and of itself, but because of its position (Douglas 2004: 43-50.

Home educators may, to varying degrees, deviate from the educational content provided by public schools. Most home educators accept the importance of a shared foundation of knowledge in society and they largely support the fundamental values of society and institutions of society beyond school. It is neither home education's content nor methods that are perceived as threatening by public authorities, but the fact that home educators break with

the public school system and conduct students' education in the home, outside of established schools.

Returning to the notion of things that are out of place being threatening, home education becomes a threat to public school and to national community. Home education in and of itself is not dangerous, but its placement — outside of school — is. Applying M. Douglas's terminology, home education is declared "dirty" to protect social unity and to prevent the shutting down of public schooling. When the place at which education is conducted, is moved from the schoolroom to the home, it becomes important to both public authorities and home educators to maintain and defend their values and interests based on the choices made and to proceed according to the new situation that has arisen.

Public authorities accomplish this by a negative attitude towards home education and ill will toward flexible solutions. Nowadays, compared with just a few years ago, public authorities seem to be more restrictive when it comes to allowing split solutions that provide some school attendance and some home education. Public authorities may thus be emphasizing the border that distinguishes school participation and home education. A national community under pressure may in and of itself be an independent factor that reinforces the conflict level between home education and public schooling, and may promote the fear that home education leads to social segregation.

Embarking on home educating is a difficult choice for a family to make; for most people, the threshold to cross is very high. Once the choice is made, many experience stigmatization by schools and, perhaps, by others in the community. Like-mindedness is an issue. Douglas's purity hypothesis may hold particular internal significance to home educators who begin to home educate due to religious beliefs. These often break with public schooling because, in their view, it has become inadequately religious and over secularized. The holy and pure in their lives is threatened. Thus, they seek greater community in their own religious environments and with other religious home educators. Mary Douglas's purity hypothesis is turned upside down. Religious home educators may perceive school authorities as dirty and threatening to the purity of their own beliefs and in their own home education.

Having been placed outside of the school environment, home educators tend to seek out contact with other home educators. They seek advice from experienced home educators, with whom they exchange advice and opinions regarding home education, public authorities, and other topics.

In interactions between home educators and school authorities, new social and cultural boundaries between "us" and "them" are readily codified. Both home educators and authorities characterize the other party as dirty and apart from their own environment, and they prefer to stick with the "pure." The "outsiders" easily become scapegoats for anything and everything that goes wrong. This pattern maintains and reinforces conflicts associated with home education; it may also be an independent reason for inadequate social integration of families that home educate.

6. Concluding remarks

Sustained, long-term home education can occur due to parents' religious beliefs and practices, pedagogic preferences, and pragmatic needs for fulfilling children's compulsory, basic education outside of public or established private schools. Home education, particularly

among the religiously motivated, can challenge social unity. Nevertheless, among homeschoolers who are registered and monitored, home-based education also appears to produce well-socialized students. The greatest difficulties regarding social integration are in the category of unregistered home educators.

Post-modern national society is overloaded with subjective identity-management tasks that are best handled at a local level (Bauman 1997). When a centralized public school emphasizes universal national, secularized, and objective values, home educating environments may constitute post-modern, particular, local communities of shared values, which could be a threat to social integration, but could also be constructive and essential for maintaining social diversity and necessary to overall social integration. Home education on individual, local and national levels depend on Giddens` reciprocity of practices, upon an atmosphere of open-mindedness and open communication. With such conditions home education could be an integrated part in a more pluralistic public education.

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