

Homeschooling Legalization – is not Suitable for China Nationwide at Present Time

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Abstract: In this article, the author provided an explanation and deduction that even though the Family Education Promotion Law was promulgated, homeschooling should not be legalized in China nationwide at the present time. After a concise introduction and review of homeschooling practices in certain Western nations, the author shall delve into the reasons why homeschooling cannot currently be recognized as lawful in China.

Keywords: Homeschooling legalization; Family education; Comparative study

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Introduction

In October 2021, China officially promulgated the ‘Family Education Promotion Law of the People’s Republic of China’, which regulates and guides family education at the legislative level. Under this new background, the traditional concepts of education and talent must be updated. A number of parents have misconstrued the legislation, expressing their desire to educate their children at home, thereby refraining from sending them to school. However, the major project of the National Social Science Fund, ‘Research on the Construction of Family Education Guidance Service System in the New Era’, conducted large-scale research from 2020 to 2021 in 9 provinces, 113 counties (districts) found a cruel fact that there is a shortage of personnel in family education guidance services, with a significant talent gap (Bian, etc.,2022). There is no established professional and standardized team and training system. The professionalization level of the family education guidance service team is insufficient, and their professional knowledge and skills need improvement. 38.1% of the principals of primary and secondary schools (kindergartens) reported that the number of personnel engaged in family education guidance services “completely cannot meet” or “cannot meet” the needs of work development. This phenomenon is more severe in communities, where 33.1% have no family education guides, and among those that do, 21.7% report that the number of guides “completely cannot meet” or “cannot meet” the needs of work development.

From the current situation, it can be understood that despite the efforts of various parties to promote the implementation of family education law, there are still many shortcomings, let alone receiving education at home instead of educated in school. Homeschooling, refers to the education of children inside the home rather than in traditional public or private school. In past decades, homeschooling has been increasingly discussed for its effectiveness and its drawbacks. As an alternative way of education, some countries and places legalized homeschooling, including the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and some states of the United States. However, for China, it is not a decent choice that legalizes the home education nationwide, considering the compulsory education law, education level of the majority, and infrastructure construction like libraries and parents cooperative organizations. Apart from the situation in China and Chinese education system, homeschooling itself is not as that good as its supporters extolling. In the following part, the mixed result of homeschooling studies and its drawbacks, then the difficulty and problems that Chinese government may face after home education legalization, and finally, some advice of partly pushing forward homeschooling.

1. Uncertain outcome and side effect of homeschooling

Homeschoolers claim better academic performance than those students in the conventional schools, but the mixed test results do not support their claim. Moreover, the drawbacks of homeschooling need more considerations before this policy is pushed through.

According to one of nongovernment organizations about homeschooling — the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), some studies confirm homeschooled children's academic excellence (2004). Some researchers did prove that homeschooling students get better grades in a standardized test (Rudner, 1999; Weiner, 1999; NHES, 2013). However, this statement and research results cannot bear closer analysis. Obviously, there are a lot of other factors could impact the results. As we know, some parents and students prefer home education because the children are gifted, which means school curriculum not fitting them. When you compare students above normal with students on an average level, it is highly possible to get a better result from the former. Besides the inborn talent, one of the researchers, Rudner, who did a related study, mentioned the parents as an environmental factor(1999). Their better academic performance may result from their gift or their parents' effort instead of the way they were educated. Data from a limited number of homeschooled children may be not convinced and cannot represent all homeschoolers. Additionally, studies, which used SAT and ACT, showed mixed results and there are many experts and experienced teachers against homeschooling for potential social problems it may cause (Levy, 2009; Medlin, 2013; Weiner, 1999). Stanford University political scientist Professor Rob Reich declared that homeschooling might lead to biased students, as many homeschooling parents consider the education of their children as a matter accurately under their governor and no one else's, in *The Civic Perils of Homeschooling* (2002). The National Education Association, United States teachers' union and professional association, has a disagreement with home education. Teachers in this organization oppose homeschooling by such opponents including incompetent standards of academic quality and extensiveness, lack of socialization with peers of different ethnic and religious backgrounds and the potential for development of religious or social extremism/individualism (Medlin, 2013).

2. The infrastructure of homeschooling

Despite the outcome and side effect of homeschooling, related institutions and authorities for supporting homeschooling are not available in China. It is going to prove that homeschooling is not suitable for Chinese education system nowadays, not only because of its potential threat but also because of its large and unusual requests of supporting facilities. If we look at the organizations established for offering home education support and cooperate service, we could find out that they have existed for several decades. It is must be contemplated that the time-frame required for China to establish a comparable guidance and regulation system, as well as the extent of our endeavors necessary to safeguard children's general education and typical social engagement. Associations in the United States, HSLDA was founded more than thirty years ago, in 1983; The National Christian Forensics and Communications Association was established in 2001, which is a speech and debate league for Christian homeschooled students. In the United Kingdom, people have some national level organizations and charities providing advice on problems about homeschooling, for instance, the Education Otherwise which was founded in the mid-1970s and the Schoolhouse Home Education Association which was established in 1996.

It may be subject to skepticism among some individuals that a span of several decades does not constitute a lengthy period of time, and it is feasible to concurrently undertake both the process of legalization and the establishment of systems. The author somewhat agrees with this point of view, but not at present time. Additionally, the UK government mandates homeschoolers to register, and the council conducts informal inquiries to ascertain whether children are receiving a suitable education at home. As per Van Schalkwyk and Bouwer (2011), the guidance provided by homeschool organizations regarding learners' social and emotional needs, along with parents' programs, was found to be inadequate and not grounded in reliable research. This could potentially contribute to learners' unmet needs. Even in developed nations such as these, there are instances where homeschooled children feel compelled to learn knowledge that does not pique their interest.

3. Worrying and possible solution

Moreover, there is a worrying that homeschooling legalization may provide an excuse for people to escape compulsory education law, which may undermine some children's right to be educated. In certain underprivileged regions, discontinuing education often translates into financial relief for families in terms of tuition expenses, and simultaneously, an increase in income through children's engagement in either legal or illegal labor activities. Above information suggests that to promote compulsory education and make education more equitable are the emergencies, instead of considering about home education legalization. If homeschooling legalization is without building sufficient and competent authorities, homeschooling might be an excuse for children and their parents to drop from school and then take jobs for family finance support. At that time, it might be huge difficulties to identify if the children were educated at home or doing child labor out of school. Maybe more children will lose their chance to be educated at school.

Homeschooling is not suitable to be legitimate nationwide in Chinese nowadays society, but it could be used as a form of supplemental education and as a way of helping children learn under particular circumstances. For example, the child who has higher IQ needs or communication difficulties needs personal syllabus to fit his better receptivity. In the situation above, with the will of students, in some places like Beijing and Shanghai, some parents might be allowed to educate their children at home, since their government budget and education resources are possible to build backup service system. Moreover, parents in these cities comparatively have modern education thought and capability to teach children by themselves, a case study of homeschooling showed that (Sheng, 2013). Given the constraints of resources and the absence of vital supervisory authorities, it is imperative that homeschooling could not be a legitimate educational practice, due to the unpredictable nature of the potential harm and deficiencies in education. It does not mean that homeschooling cannot be legalized in the future. With the development of the economy, technology and education, it is possible for Chinese to make good use of educational resource and make home education as an optional choice some day.

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