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## An Evaluation of the Historical Development and Recent State of Homeschooling in the USA\*

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**Abstract:** At the end of 1960s, a time when the requirement to attend formal education institutions for a more promising future was commonly acknowledged, homeschooling emerged as a practice in which parents themselves undertook responsibility for educating their children instead of directing them to professionals. Having emerged as a social movement in the educational field, homeschooling is an alternative choice of education that is practiced legally in many countries besides the USA. One of the basic conclusions of this study, in which an overview of the emergence of homeschooling in the USA and its current situation have been taken, is that homeschooling, after emerging as a reaction against institutional education, has lost its marginality; and that in parallel to its legitimization, it has been transformed into a segment of institutional education today.

**Keywords:** Homeschooling, the USA, Alternative Education, 1960s, Social Movements, Sociology of Education

## ABD’de Ev Okulu Uygulamasının Tarihsel Gelişimi ve Bugünkü Durumu Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme

**Özet:** Ev Okulu, 1960’ların sonunda, daha parlak bir gelecek için resmi öğretim kurumlarına devam etme gerekliliğinin yaygın kabul kazandığı bir zaman diliminde, ebeveynlerin çocuklarının eğitimi konusunda profesyonellere yönelmek yerine bu sorumluluğu kendilerinin üstlendiği bir uygulama olarak ABD’de ortaya çıkmıştır. Eğitim alanında toplumsal hareket olarak ortaya çıkan ev okulu, günümüzde, ABD’nin yanı sıra birçok ülkede yasal bir uygulama olarak yürürlükte olan alternatif bir eğitim seçeneğidir. Ev okulunun ABD’de ortaya çıkışı ve evrildiği mevcut durumun genel bir değerlendirilmesinin yapıldığı bu çalışmada ulaşılan temel sonuçlardan birisi, kurumsal eğitim karşıtlığıyla ortaya çıkan ev okulunun bugün yasallaşma süreciyle birlikte marjinalliğini kaybederek kurumsal eğitimin bir parçası haline gelmiş olmasıdır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ev Okulu, ABD, Alternatif Eğitim, 1960’lar, Toplumsal Hareketler, Eğitim Sosyolojisi

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### **Introduction**

In our country (The Republic of Turkey), where education reforms are always among the current issues, homeschooling practice has recently been included on the educational agenda. The United States of America (USA), Canada, Norway, Belgium, Check Republic, Switzerland, South Africa, France, the United Kingdom, Australia, Ireland, Russia, New Zealand and Israel are some of the countries where homeschooling is legally practiced (see HSL-DA, n.d.). The USA, as the country where homeschooling is most widely practiced, has a very rich past and a literature which has been growing with this experience. In Turkey, on the other hand, while there are studies which discusses homeschooling in the context of alternative educational practices, because it has not been practiced within the existing educational system, this interest is limited to studies by pedagogues (Aydın, 2010; Aydoğan, 2007; Gündüz, 2006; Kılıç & Önen, 2012; Öz, 2008; Pehlivan & Pehlivan, 2000; Taşdan & Demir, 2010, 2013; Töste & Elçiçek, 2013).

In this study, the emergence of homeschooling in the USA as a social movement and its present status is discussed within the bounds of sociology. In this context, the emergence and development of homeschooling is examined in relation to the identity of American society. The USA, in a sense, is “the place where utopia has been realized”. At least, this is a perception of the USA that is prominent worldwide. America started to attract people from the Old World soon after its discovery. Although the immigrants brought along their nationalities as they moved to the new continent, the image of “America the dreamland” furnished them with the most convenient base for building an American identity. While the USA presents its “dreamland” image to the whole world via printed and visual media, education as a social institution has played a highly effective role in the presentation of this image to its own citizens.

When the social role associated with education as an institution is taken into consideration, the emergence of homeschooling in the USA becomes an even more interesting topic. To be able to reach an objective evaluation regarding this educational practice in the context of conditions of American society printed and online periodicals, essays and research reports have been reviewed. Besides helping to understand how educational institutions are viewed in the USA, the literature reviewed has also provided significant information that helps to contextualize the social conditions which set the ground for the emergence of homeschooling within the existing education system. However, the purpose of this study is not to reconstruct homeschooling practice as defined by its related literature, but to discuss it without disassociating it from the distinctive circumstances of American society.

Again, within the context of this study, no discussion of the academic achievements of children from families who have preferred homeschooling is made. Furthermore, teaching methods and techniques used in homeschooling and topics such as measurement and assessment methods which require pedagogical expertise were excluded from this study. Staying within the boundaries of this basic area, the emergence of homeschooling in the USA and its characteristics today was commentated.

### **Homeschooling: Definition, Scope and Background**

Taking a superficial view, homeschooling is as an education practice implemented for children of the K-12 age group at their family houses under the supervision of their parents; however to make an explicit, *de facto* definition is not so straight forward. Difficulty in making a definition for homeschooling arises from the fact that it is practiced in different forms. Furthermore, the use of terms such as homeschooling, domestic education, lifestyle of learning and home-centered learning are enough to hint at the variety in practice.

The most determining cause of homeschooling being practiced in different forms, and the varying conceptualizations of these forms, is variety in the motivation of families preferring to educate their children at home. However, some characteristics are shared in practice. The most common basic characteristic is that families, while having different motivations for preferring homeschooling, share difficulties with regard to the institutional forms of education and their content. Such families prefer homeschooling because they oppose the idea of their children taking part in institutional education for reasons as various as religion, ideology and economical conditions. The fundamental elements behind the idea of homeschooling are: opposition to official institutions of education (with varying persistence), and seeing the home as the center of learning.

Another common feature is the confidence of parents in the potential of homeschooling for ensuring a much higher quality education in comparison to official education institutions. Although they have access to specialized institutions for the education of their children, parents take on this responsibility with self confidence and by exercising free will. As homeschooling is an educational practice in which mothers and fathers are actively involved, it also entails intra-familial collaboration. In accordance with the requirements of that collaboration, parents guide their children within the limits determined by the children's interests and their own conditions. Some families, for example, follow one or more of the popular curricula; whereas some families never refer to any set curriculum or use one only sparingly. In contrast, other families keep up contact, to a greater or lesser extent, with schools. They can have

their children attend certain courses: such as gym, music, physics or chemistry at state or private education institutions. Therefore, in practice, homeschooling education can be flexible and personalized, in accordance with the needs of the child and expectations of the families.

Homeschooling has gained its variations in practice along its course of development. The fact is that homeschooling was only made illegal in the USA until 1990s, whereas it had begun to emerge as an alternative education around the 1970s. In this respect, the main attention-grabbing fact is that some families chose homeschooling during the period when institutional education became accessible in every state of the country because of the compulsory education law coming into effect; thus, the emergence and development of homeschooling has to be seen in the context of expectations about USA public school education.

### ***The Emergence of Public Schools in the USA***

Public schools in the USA started to emerge as of the end of 1800s. According to Horace Mann, who is considered to be the founder of public education in the USA, public schools were a highly effective means for creating a healthy society. Schools provided a base on which affinity could be established, an affinity which was necessary to create a nation from a society that consisted of immigrants, and to keep that society together (Spring, 2010, p. 8). "Classrooms" were seen as special areas for creating a consensual pathway towards the values that define American society and state schools were attributed special significance as a way of constituting the "ideal" society.

Social conditions in the USA in the 19<sup>th</sup> century created a need for such a grounding. With the acceleration of industrialization, the USA attracted huge waves of immigrants lured by the quest for prosperity. However, this new wave of immigrants presented demographic characteristics different from those of the colonial period. Newcomers had to learn to fit in, not to disturb the current climate and keep in line with industrial requirements. Therefore, the Americanization of newly arrived immigrants emerged as an urgent issue in US society. Schools, in this context, turned out to be the best setting for, and the most functional means of, Americanization. Thus schools were seen as the most convenient place to help create a nation out of immigrants, the network of public schools rapidly expanded throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Meyer, Tyack, Nagel and Gordon (1979) pointed out, "the rapid spread of public schooling across the continent during the 19th century is one of the most dramatic examples of institution-building in American history" (p. 591).

Today, public schools, which initially began to develop in New England, has achieved a considerable level of state-mandated bureaucratic structure by

means of compulsory education bills (Baugus, 2009, p. 8). It is possible to observe the signs of this structure starting from an early period. In 1900, when half of the 5-19 age group were in school attendance, after the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the impressive ratio of 8 out of 10 people in school attendance was reached (Tyack and Cuban, 1995, p. 21). Donald A. Erickson (2005) summarized the scale of this growth in the quote below:

In 1898, the typical U.S. youth could expect to receive just 5 years of schooling. Now we are upset when youngsters drop out before completing high school, and we would like them all to graduate from college. The average number of days per year that youth spent in schools - during the years when they were there - burgeoned from 99 in 1900 to 158 in 1950. High schools (public and private) enrolled only a microscopic elite -2% of the nation's 17-year-olds in 1870, but 79.40% in 1940. Decade after decade, higher proportions of the nation's youth went to school, attended for longer periods of the year, and continued for more years. (p. 35).

The current ratio of students at public or private institutions of education also represents the social consensus that schools are institutions which should be attended without question. For the majority of families, being part of institutional education also warrants a more promising future. Therefore, a mentality has been created which clearly correlates attendance at official institutions of education with achievement of success in life. According to David Baker (2014), the sweeping idea that "everyone should go to school" is rather a new one and, in a sense, the evolution in education is a kind of revolution. Such a transition can also be observed through similarities between organizational structures in different societies from primary to higher education. The fact that education has been supported by individuals as well as states has eventually led to mass education.

### ***The Emergence of Homeschooling and Its Origins***

Homeschooling happened to emerge at a time when schooling in the US was becoming widespread, a period when society in general tended to send their children to public or private schools without question. However, some sources pursue the origins of homeschooling back into the colonial and post-revolutionary periods, supporting this argument with examples of US founding figures such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson and Franklin Roosevelt having been educated through homeschooling (Basham, Merrifield and Hepburn, 2007, p. 7; Campbell, 2012, p. 26; Grubb, 1998, p.3; Whitehead and Crow, 1993, p. 116). According to this point of view, although homeschooling has been considered a contemporary

educational practice, it was, in fact, a common and in many areas almost the only form of education until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. the colonial and post-revolutionary periods when state schools and compulsory education bills had not yet come out. Therefore, to find the origins of homeschooling, we must look far back into the US colonial period. (Al Andrade, 2008, p. 38; Gustafson, 2012; Hill, 2000, p. 20; Smiley, 2010, p. 2-3).

However, forms of education practiced by parents in colonial period America should not be confused with examples of homeschooling practice first seen in the 1970s. Before the first compulsory education bill was enacted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, receiving education at home was the only possible option for many in the new generation. In fact, it was an obligatory duty of parents. Yet, by the 1960s, those responsible for children's education were professional educational institutions, which were expected to have the necessary expertise. But just as the social life was being formulated through professional collaboration in the 1960s, this transformation was accompanied by a questioning of these institutions' very existence, operation and objectives. Richard Neumann (2003) briefly outlines this period as follows:

By all accounts the 1960s was a time of contestation, a time of widespread critical examination of social and economic institutions and the system of meanings, beliefs, and values that dominated American culture. It was an era of liberation and astounding possibility, of man walking on the moon, war on poverty, and the building of a 'Great Society'. It was also a time of riots in the streets and death, horror and destruction in Vietnam, a time of assassinated dreams and lies. (p. 9).

This was a period when almost all aspects of social life were questioned, in which new pursuits in education were articulated, and in which it was claimed that institutional education had only been reproducing an already existing system. It was under such questions that, towards the end of 1960s, the social movement of homeschooling emerged as one of many alternative educational practices. From this it can be seen that the homeschooling movement was in serious opposition to mainstream culture.

Education critics have made significant contributions towards criticism of personal pursuit of gain in a collective context. As the critics had lost faith in the potential of reforms to correct the existing system, in a sense, they encouraged parents to have them educate their children at home (Collom, 2005, p. 309). Their studies provided intellectual support to homeschooling families, especially in rationalizing their discomfort by the taking of direct action. In this context, John Holt was a pioneer who came to the fore among those criticizing the education system and schools as institutions. Holt's criticisms

of institutional education were received as assertions of dissent and rapidly became popular. Among Holt's works, the ones which come to mind first are *How Children Fail* (1964), *How Children Learn* (1967) and *The Underachieving School* (1969).

By calling attention to the pitfalls of regular school work, Holt empathized the vitality of learning through experience. According to him, institutional education had been killing the most significant features of children's development: creativity and curiosity. That was because students tended to focus on the reward of pleasing their teacher. However, children should be set free to decide what to learn, when and why. Inspired by Holt, learning through experience has also been named as 'unschooling'. Holt uses the terms "unschooling" and "homeschooling" interchangeably in his works; however, according to Patrick Farenga (1999), he "created this word in order to avoid giving the impression that families were merely creating miniature schools in their homes, as the word homeschooling connotes".

Ivan Illich is another significant figure who shaped the period with criticism of institutional education. Especially in *Deschooling Society* (1970), his criticisms of institutional education are still effective today. Because he saw education as a lifelong activity which should not be left to teachers only, and as something in which everyone could learn from any other, Illich contradicts the widely accepted idea that children can learn only at school and, by association, he challenges the notion of compulsory school attendance. According to him, what is achieved through compulsory education is to raise individuals who are ready, to a great extent, to serve consumer society without questioning it.

Along with Illich, the intellectuals of the period such as Paul Goodman (*Growing Up Absurd*, 1960; *Compulsory Mis-education*, 1964), Allen Graubard (*The Open Classroom: Radical Reform and Free School Movement*, 1970), Herbert Kohl (*The Open Classroom*, 1970), Everette Reimer (*School Is Dead: Alternatives in Education*, 1971) and Jonathon Kozol (*Free Schools*, 1972) made significant contributions to the evolution of the homeschooling movement with their radical critiques.

Although homeschooling literature points out that the movement started with works and suggestions for reforms in education by the political left in the 1960s, this educational practice also has been embraced as a movement with Christian origins (Lyman, 1998). In the early 1980s, a period of heightened Cold War tensions, "Homeschools became grounds of and for ideological, conservative, religious expressions of educational matters, which symbolized the conservative right's push toward self-determinism" (Knowles, Marlow and James, 1992, p. 227). This group, defining themselves as Christian homes-



choolers, rejected institutional education and, by educating their children at home, they demanded to have control on their children's education. It must be said that though members of this group are troubled by institutional education, their main discomfort is with the secular structure of public schools. According to Christian homeschoolers, the real center of learning is the home; and they deem the education of children as a sacred duty given primarily to families by God (Kunzman, 2009). The fact that homeschooling was adopted at the beginning of 1980s by families defining themselves as Christian homeschoolers, and that the number of these families increased in a short span of time, means that they also have helped to shape the history of this movement.

Sociologist Jane Van Galen (1986, 1991) categorizes families' motivations roughly into two groups, which allows homeschooling to be seen as being embraced by contrasting social groups in the course of time: Ideological and pedagogical. The fundamental argument of families deciding to do homeschooling for ideological reasons is that school curricula do not match up with their faith. For those who choose homeschooling for pedagogical reasons, the main motive is opposition to the unduly authoritarian formation of schools that makes it impossible for children to develop inventively. Sociologist Mitchell Stevens also categorizes homeschoolers into two groups in his work (2001). In Steven's classification, Evangelic Christian homeschoolers are placed in a group called "believers", while all the others, such as non-Evangelic Protestant Christians, Muslims, Jewish, and agnostic homeschoolers, are placed in a group conceptualized as "inclusives". Education historian Milton Gaither (2008) also makes a similar classification. However, instead of dividing families into two isolated groups based on their preference to do homeschooling for pedagogical reasons or in accordance with their belief systems, Gaither draws a parallel between these two groups in the context of their motivation. According to him, whether they are liberal or conservative, both groups fall within the ideological camp. Their common ground is that they are troubled by the intervention of the state in the education of their children. The main point is the intensity of their personal ideological or religious motivations behind their preference for homeschooling. Measuring the extent to which they admit those who are different from them in terms of their personal ideological or religious motivations, he places families in two groups, which he names "open communion" and "closed communion".

Although these classifications provide us with profiles which help to comprehend the variety of motivation for choosing homeschooling, and the history of this movement, the current situation into which homeschooling has evolved presents a diversity which transcends these classifications.



### **Homeschooling Today**

Today, families may prefer homeschooling for a variety of reasons, for example: concern for their children's academic achievements; the system of values their children would be educated according to; or the need for an environment which both fulfills the mental or bodily requirements of the children with special needs (Cizek, 1990, p. 110-111; Stoudt, 2012; Wagner, 2008, p. 14-19). Moreover, nowadays' homeschoolers comprise a heterogeneous group which cannot easily be labeled as religious or liberal, white or black, middle- or upper middle-income group (Rudner, 1999; K. M. Welner and K. G. Welner, 1999, p. 3).

The main dynamic underlying the situation homeschooling has evolved into today has been the need put this form of education on a legal footing. In addition, the legalization process has been decisive not only in the way it has shaped today's homeschooling, but also because of its rapid development. Since the 1970s, homeschooling families have negotiated at state level in order to obtain legal rights. Most troubling has been that the state with its power of control and approval at every level could intervene between homeschool parents and their children (Isenberg, 2007, p. 388). The collective reaction to this reveals itself mostly in the emergence of associations and support groups. Procedures towards ensuring a legal footing for homeschooling, which had been practiced illegally in many states until the 1990s, have continued with the advocacy of these associations. Two of these associations which are still active came to the fore by urging homeschoolers to come out into the open and have their *networks* enhanced.

The first of these associations is the Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), which was founded by the lawyers Michael Farris and Mike Smith in 1983. It played a significant part in providing lobbying and legal support to ensure Evangelic Protestant homeschooling gained legal rights and protection (Isenberg, 2007, p. 388). Although HSLDA membership is also open to faith groups from outside of Christianity, "it is an overtly Christian establishment with an agenda dedicated to supporting the rights and duties of families as commanded by Biblical mandate" (K. M. Welner and K. G. Welner, 1999, p. 4).

Another of these associations is the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), founded by Brian D. Ray in 1990. Ray, who was also a homeschooler, has tens of publications on the advantages of homeschooling over public or private schools, and he is still continuing his work. NHERI is a support organization which does research and publishes on the subject of homeschooling. Comparing it to HSLDA, it is more inclusive of homeschooling families with different motivations. Through this organization, homeschool-

ing families come together on a common platform where they can exchange their knowledge and enhance their *network*.

Institutional and individual endeavors produced results and homeschooling ceased to be an illegal educational practice; and, as of 1994, it became an educational choice which was legally applicable in all the states of the US (Howell and Sheran, 2008, p. 3). On the other hand, although homeschooling now has a legal footing, families consider any kind of surveillance - from having to notify local school authorities of their decision to do homeschooling to submitting progress reports for their children - as a form of state intervention, which they still continue their legal struggle to overcome.

The widespread use of computer and Internet technology is also among the constitutive dynamics which has enabled homeschooling to gain its current form. As a new media where information and problem fields can be shared easily and where required resources can be accessed more quickly, the Internet is one of the most effective innovations to make the implementation of homeschooling easier. The Internet is a platform which quickly and conveniently brings together families with similar perspectives with regard to children and child-raising. The contribution of technological developments is not limited to allowing families who prefer homeschooling to communicate with others of the same mind, and to building up their own *networks*. As a result of the opportunity for homeschooling students to register for online classes or forums, new hybrid homeschooling forms have emerged.

Emergence of new hybrid forms of homeschooling has been accompanied by enrichment in curriculum options. Today, homeschooling curricula have become richly and suitably varied to meet the needs of children and the expectations of families. It is at the disposal of families to choose the kind of curriculum – Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, Islamic or non-religious – to follow. Besides, some families prepare their own curricula without using any of the options available in the market, or use curricula focused on the interest areas of the child. In this way, while the way the child can get in contact with academic knowledge is strictly controlled by some families, other families take only the interests of the child as the criterion to determine how she/he gets in contact and deepens their connection with academic knowledge. And while some families ensure their children participate in group activities within their own social networks, others have their children half-time registered at public or private schools to ensure they attend specific courses (Johnson, 2013).

The relationship with the state schools is not limited to attending a few courses. First of all, the decision to do homeschooling does not determine the child's education life as a whole. Families are allowed to take their children from a state or private school at any stage of their primary and second-

ary education and start doing homeschooling, or they are allowed to have their homeschooling children full-time registered at any official institution of education. There is no legal barrier to the realization of either of these two conditions. The fact that primary and secondary school children have not received education at any institution does not prevent them from continuing higher education. This fact assures for parents that official institutions are, in fact, not a necessity for the design of their K-12 children's futures. Although different applications are being applied under each roof where the home as the center of learning, this education practice remains an alternative to institutional education.

### ***The Transformation of Social Consensus and the Increase in the Number of Students***

Currently, as was the case at the beginning of the legalization period, it is unlikely to be able to mention about a homeschooler profile that has been marginalized by the decision to do homeschooling. Negative social attitudes towards homeschoolers has been moderated to a great extent. As stated in Rose and Gallup's survey (cited in Basham, Merrifield and Hepburn, 2007, p. 5): "A poll taken in 1985 showed that only 16 percent of families thought homeschooling a good thing, whereas in 2001 this figure had risen to 41 percent" which is a marked change. Various dynamics have determined this transformation. The most important of them is the fact that, whatever the ideological, philosophical or psychological background of a family's inclination towards homeschooling, it is ultimately seen as a way of pursuing the best for their children. As a concept, it has achieved legitimacy in American culture to a significant extent. It can be observed in the variation of demographic layers of families who prefer homeschooling and in the increase in the number of families who are homeschooling.

Estimates vary on the total number of families who prefer homeschooling and the number of homeschooling students in the USA (Bauman, 2002; Bielick, Chandler and Broughman, 2001; Lines, 1991, 1999; Princiotta, Bielick and Chapman, 2006). While the number of actively homeschooling families is stated as between 200,000-300,000 in a survey completed between 1985-1986 (Knowles and others, 1992, p. 195-196), according to the results of the surveys conducted by the National Household Education Survey Program (NHES) in 1996 and 1999, the number of homeschooling students increased from 636,000 in 1996 to 791,000 in 1999. According to the results obtained by National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) 800,000 to 1 million children were continuing their education at home in 2001. According to the Homeschool League Defense Association (HSLDA) the number of homes-

chooling students in the USA was 1.7-2 million in 2002 (Princiotta, Bielick and Chapman, 2004). The estimates regarding the numbers of homeschooling students in the USA are not limited to these researches. According to the surveys conducted by NHES this figure was 1,096,000 in 2003 and reached 1.5 million (1,508,000) in 2007 (Bielick, 2008). In Ray's study (2011) this number was 2.04 million in the spring of 2010.

Although it is possible to show from the research that there has been a rapid increase in the number of homeschooling students in the US, even today it is not possible to determine the exact number. The main reason is that the American education system, in line with the American political structure, is administered locally. This means auditing is done by standards determined by local authorities, within legal regulations that prevail only within the boundaries of each specific state. Therefore, the structure of the American education system does not enable a standard practice of homeschooling to be determined. In other words, while families are obliged to inform the local education authority about their decision to do homeschooling, in some states there is no such obligation. Although many other families in addition to the confirmed number are homeschooling, these families cannot be contained within the figures because they are in an "unrecorded" state.

### **Criticism of Homeschooling and its Defense**

Various studies have been made on the potential drawbacks of homeschooling (Apple 2000; Evans, 2003; Lubienski, 2000; Reich, 2002, 2005; Waddell, 2010). The focus of these studies is the assumption that homeschooling is a practice of education which is far from eliminating social inequalities (Apple, 2000, p. 257- 267). Following this line of criticism, homeschooling families are accused of selfishness in pursuing their own interests, of ignoring the public good, and of potentially posing a threat to the unity of society. Parents are criticized for being unconcerned about the public good when bringing up individuals, of being complacent in their own life philosophies by making the assumption that it is they who know the best for their children, and of self-satisfaction in performing their duties in the best way (Apple, 2000; Lubienski, 2000).

With regard to the sensitivity of the public good, there are serious doubts about whether children not attending official institutions of education may be raised as proper citizens. This concern arises mainly from the trust that is placed in the social functions of public schools, and is based on the postulate that "citizens are created, not born" (Reich, 2005, p. 112). In spite of disagreements over the content of citizenship, schools are the institutions where certain values are transferred. It is thought that they provide the most conven-

ient environment for students to share those common social experiences that override individual and demographic differences. The classroom environment at schools provides children with opportunities to realize that the values of their classmates may be different from theirs, and that this realization is necessary, especially in liberal democracies where religious and cultural diversity is extensive (Reich, 2005, p. 112-115). Because homeschooling students do not take part in this common social experience, which is considered necessary for the continuum of social life, eventually democracy is harmed and civil society is shaken at its foundations (Lubienski 2000, p. 208).

Another point on which homeschooling criticism is concentrated is the matter of the socialization of the child (Evans, 2003; Reich, 2002). Because of its “sterile” form, in not allowing children to socialize outside the family and family acquaintances, it is argued that homeschooling does not provide an adequate and healthy environment. Museum visits, excursions, hobby activities and picnic organizations which are organized through the social network in which homeschooling families participate, or courses are given on scheduled days at their own home by mothers or fathers thought to be competent in a certain field provide a closed-loop socialization. But because they are devoid of the opportunity to meet people with the diverse views and life-styles, consequently homeschooling students are isolated from actual life. The opportunity for these students to develop social interaction skills dies out and they, in a sense, become “handicapped” in terms of socialization (Romanowski, 2001, p. 81).

As homeschooling is a practice of education implemented under parental supervision, parents assuming the role of teachers is another aspect which is criticized. This criticism questions the rights of parents wishing to attempt to educate their children at home. (Blokhuys, 2010; Evans, 2003, para. 2; Reich 2002, p.56; Waddell, 2010, p. 561). According to this point of view, no educational environment other than homeschooling would provide parents with a power of control over the education of children. As Reich (2005) describes it,

Parents can limit opportunities for social interaction, control the curriculum, and create a learning environment in which the values of the parents are replicated and reinforced in every possible way. With little or no exposure to competing ideas or interaction with people whose convictions differ from their parents', children who are homeschooled can be raised in an all-encompassing or total environment that fails to develop their capacity to think for themselves. Parents can control the socialization of their children so completely as to instill inerrant beliefs in their own worldview or unquestioning obedience to their own or

others' authority ...In short, children become unfree, unable to imagine other ways of living. (p. 114).

However, according to homeschooling families, criticism of "controlled" socialization (referred to as the "S" question) may have resulted from an extremely prejudiced approach no homeschooler has been untainted by (Medlin, 2000, p. 107; Ray, 2005, p. 4). Asserting that their children are not detached or isolated from real life, families do not accept the criticism made and have countered it with arguments based on the research conducted (Medlin, 2000, p. 110-112; Smedley, 2005, p. 72 ).

First of all, homeschooling families think that the classroom environment establishes a ground for hostile attitudes, and that the socialization experienced there has negative effects on their children. They see schools as places where students are expected to comply unconditionally with whatever they are presented with, and where that kind of compliance is rewarded. However, an environment which is dominated by such a strict and authoritarian atmosphere doesn't contribute to children's development or allow their independent personalities to flourish, and it seriously impairs their self-trust.

In comparison with schools, where they feel the individual needs of students are ignored, homeschooling families believe they can offer more academic advantages to children than would be given in traditional classrooms. The reference points of these arguments are the fact that homeschooling does not involve a strict, unalterable, uniform teaching and learning environment. Besides having the opportunity to develop their own interests, free from the sense of competition caused by the classroom environment, homeschooling students can allocate more time to the topics they are interested in with its structure based on "one-to-one education". The process to acquire academic knowledge takes a flexible form in terms of time and place.

Again, the fact that children are categorized by age group in the usual school environment is naturally not true with homeschooling. Therefore, homeschooling students are not compelled to be socialized only with those from the same age group, as is the case in usual classrooms. On the contrary, homeschooling families have been actively using the network which they share with families who are similarly minded. This relationship can be both in the form of information exchange, and in the organization of various social and academic activities that bring together homeschooling students of different age groups.

From the fact that, besides being able to participate in various organizations made by their parents, homeschooling students can attend courses at state or private schools - and join their music or athletics teams - is evidence

that they are not obliged to be socialized only within their own small groups. Under these conditions, homeschooling does not break the child's connection with social life and, contrary to the negative assertions about their socialization, it allows them to come together with people from any age group. Families consider their children's higher level of maturity, in comparison to their state and private school peers, as one of the positive results of the fact that they actually meet up with people from any age group, and mix in diverse social circles (Medlin, 2000, p. 119).

Homeschooling parents also think that this educational practice strengthens family bonds, as it allows them to spend more time with their children. From that aspect, homeschooling is as great an experience for them as it is for their children (Kunzman and Gaither, 2013, p. 10). Therefore, they believe what is needed for the survival of liberal democracies where religious and cultural diversity is intense is for the practice of homeschooling to be considered as a form of multiculturalism implemented in the educational field, rather than of bringing it under control by law (Glanzer, 2008).

### **Conclusion**

Having emerged as a new pursuit in the educational field in the USA at the end of 1960s, homeschooling, today, is a legal educational choice. Its emergence there, and the diversity of practice being experienced currently, is a striking example of how significant decisive social conditions may be in catching the rhythm of the education-society relationship.

The literature points out that, in the USA, homeschooling came to the fore at the end of 1960s by the efforts of groups critical of mainstream culture. In this period, when the institutions and values which social life had been built upon were called into question, the education system was also criticized from various aspects. Considerations such as the reproduction of the established order by the traditional institutions of education, and the questionable utility of education reforms, resulted in new pursuits in the educational field. The assertion that learning was not a single-form process, but rather a process which involved life itself, became the point of origin for various alternative practices of education. Homeschooling was also one of the alternative practices of education of the period.

The point to be stressed here is that homeschooling is a full educational practice and not simply the backing up of children's education at home by their parents. Homeschooling, from its inception at the end of 1960s, is a social movement that emerged under the conditions of that period. Therefore, as a completely new situation, neither should it be considered as an educational renaissance that refers to the teaching of children at home in a throwback



to the conditions of the Colonial period. The difference with homeschooling is the fact that it emerged during a period in which the education of the new generation was assigned to professionals, and in which attendance at a state or private school was considered mandatory for a brighter future.

However, today, homeschooling is no longer the choice of anomalous groups or a counterculture movement. Besides the fact that it is no longer a marginal choice, it doesn't follow that this practice should be considered a conservative or liberal educational movement. Although the categorization still prevails that homeschooling's basic motivations are those of White, Christian, middle/upper middle-income religious folk, its demographic layers have substantially diversified.

The legalization process of homeschooling has had a large part in its transformation from an emerging counterculture movement into a legal alternative practice of education preferred by families with diverse demographics. Although advocates of homeschooling think of their rights as something acquired in front of the public and the law, the actual achievement is that homeschooling has been legalized in all the states of the USA and transformed into an educational option implemented under the control of the states. Therefore, although homeschooling's legalization process was welcomed by its advocates, at the end of the process, it turned out that they had actually contributed to the integration of homeschooling into the very school system they had objected to at the beginning of their movement. Today, homeschooling has been transformed into one of the multiple components that make up the option-structured American education system. In this respect, the adventure of homeschooling practice in the USA is an example of how, in the history of the American education system, there have been no radical divergences from the expectations of the educational institutions. In other words, *social order* has continued to be the key concept.

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