

Editorial: Home Education in Trouble—Of the Polis, Not a Mob

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What is the difference between personal behaviours and educational affiliation to a particular pathway, when education is organised through the personal? Home education is conducted as learning, growing, seeing, believing and understanding, through the personal. That is its strength. It is also a fundamental potential weakness. A weakness wherein the state can, has and possibly intends to, intervene.

To be a person and to be personally engaged in a personalised education is political. In times such as these when home education is being attacked across the globe as, frankly, having too much success as successful education (especially in light of covid dynamics to do with educating via online and with the home), thus a threat to state cohesion, this personal is politically heightened. It is being targeted as wrong and for control. Is it wrong? Ought it to be controlled? Or trusted?

Recently I have begun to suspect it might be going wrong. Why? I am not speaking of the educational mechanism and modality with which home educating busies itself. There is nothing wrong with freedom in education. Quite the opposite—there is, research *increasingly* tells us—everything right with it. But a gap exists. That gap is where a person feels responsible to the society around them that may not agree with them. We are all of us responsible to each other, even if we do not agree with each other. We are not personally free, completely, ideologically, politically. We are entwined. I am responsible to my son even though I do not agree with him attending his school. But I respect his decision, despite disagreeing with it. I find comfort in what is good about the situation, involving him in ways to survive well and flourish in his chosen circumstances. Somewhat as Boaz Tsabar outlines in his *Other Education* paper (Tsabar, 2014) where he points toward the school-based formation of resilience and dialogue. Such research by Tsabar is an example to those, like me, who seek solace in a child attending a mainstream school. Some good can come of the school, after all. Phew. Such research, saying this, goes—without ever mentioning home educating—against a too-often dogmatic home educator’s grain. That grain states only home education done via cultish beliefs and partisan profiling demonising others, will do. No it won’t. Education is wider than home educating and I CANNOT BELIEVE I AM SAYING THAT. I cannot believe I am having to say that, given recent encounters with dogmatic home educators. A wider vision will make the personal less blind.

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Home education is education. It is not a belief set. It is not a dogma. It is not a mob. It is not a community! If it is ever a dogmatic mob of believers it is nothing to do with either education nor society. It is just nasty shit.

Recently I was attacked and vilified online by home educators because they did not agree with me. So, is this what happens to *some* people who home educate? They become divorced from the reality of being part of a polis? If so the state is right to exercise some controls. For truly this is a parallel world operating in a land not of my understanding as safe or secure for flourishing lives—even if I dream of other lands—and one does indeed wonder. We need to be wary of the phenomenon of belief in education because it is poison for those children who do not fit in and it is poison for their parents (De Meyer, 2016). This applies *significantly* to schooling and it is starting to apply to education without schools.

I do not believe home education is an education like that—vilely vocal. That’s just some parents kicking off because they are ignorant and drunk on social media seeming power. But it is vulnerable. It is vulnerable because its strength is to have no centre, no controls, no police. It has no moral code, no law, no judgement. Other than of the polis. The polis without a polis? Tricky. The polis it stays away from? Dangerous. It is not sufficiently organised or together, or of any kind of one voice (no home education research can claim home education is homogenous), to develop alternatives to the polis it refutes and from which it is at a remove. There is no alternative but to remain attached *through dialogue and acceptance of difference* to the imperfect state. If only the imperfect state would have some informed respect for the difference personified in home education...

Which brings me onto that state. How blind? How ludicrously ignorant and violently ill-informed can it be? So much is going on right now to do with home education controls that has nothing to do with education and everything to do with political agendas failing entirely to take into account that woefully underdeveloped concept of the personal. It is a mess, this state idea of home education. With grave consequences for freedom. Yes. If only the state would consult home education expertise found across the board in non-home-educating-researchers and in non-researching-home-educators. All have valuable insights to share. None will agree but all of us, including the state, seem to have one thing in common: we care about the well-being of children. So what? So, we should talk. Together.

Helen

De Meyer, K. (2016). The Mind of the Educator In H. E. Lees & N. Noddings (Eds.), *The Palgrave International Handbook of Alternative Education*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Tsabar, B. (2014). Resistance and Imperfection as Educational Work: Going Against the “Harmony” of Individualistic Ideology. *Other Education*, 3(1), 23-40. found here:

https://www.academia.edu/7755455/Resistance_and_Imperfection_as_Educational_Work_Going_Against_the_Harmony_of_Individualistic_Ideology



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