

Copyright Notices

Notice 1

Under the Copyright Act 1968, this thesis must be used only under the normal conditions of scholarly fair dealing. In particular no results or conclusions should be extracted from it, nor should it be copied or closely paraphrased in whole or in part without the written consent of the author. Proper written acknowledgement should be made for any assistance obtained from this thesis.

Home Education; the Curriculum is Life

Rosanne Catherine Trevaskis


M. A. (Aberdeen), P.G.C.E. (Leeds), P.G.C.E. (Monash)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education,

Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.

October 2005

<p>MONASH UNIVERSITY</p> <p>Thesis accepted in satisfaction of the requirements of the degree of Master of Education on.....4.12.05.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Faculty of Education</p>

Acknowledgements

Thanks be to God Who gave His only Son. So we might have Life abundantly.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
1. Case-study; A Parent's Progress	
Section1- Defining the journey	12
2- Participants on the journey	13
3- The journey begins	20
4- Challenges along the way	41
5- Detailed information about the journey	53
6- Nearing journey's end	68
7- Reflections; a paradox of love and hate	76
8- Significance of the case-study	86
2. Literature Review;	
Section1- General Discussion	90
2- Home education; a form of work-based learning	114
3- Teaching the learning disabled at home	134
4- Towards an epistemology of home education	145
3. Methodology	156
4. Conclusion and Recommendations	169
Appendix A; Olivia's story	178
Appendix B; Tina's story	181
Appendix C; Miria's story	183
Appendix D; DECV reports as data	185
References	186

Abstract

Despite increasing acceptance and uptake, there appears to be little advance in the overall theoretical understanding of home-learning. To correct this imbalance, this thesis suggests the existence of generic patterns within home-learning practice, describing two such practices, home schooling and home education. Home schooling reproduces the class-room mind-set, with its practices, expectations and epistemology into the home while home education requires a re-conceptualization of how children learn outside school to view it as a form of work-based learning and the child as co-contributor to a community of learning practice (Barratt-Peacock, 1997). A tentative structural model for home-learning development is also suggested with 'initial', 'establishment' and 'functional' stages classifying the movement of home-learning parents towards more informal methods of home-learning practice (Thomas, 1998).

Due to its social, context-rich, highly kinesthetic approach, home education is especially useful for the education of the learning disabled. The learning strategies of one home educating family are discussed in detail. Values are also important as everyday learning occurs within the family's structured worldview or meta-narrative. The tremendously demanding role of the mother, a Learner in her own right, is recognized. Mothering is seen as important work, an example of Lifeplace learning (Chisholm and Davis, 2005) contributing to the nation's social capital and the home is viewed as the arena of sophisticated learning processes that have been largely ignored.

Recommendations for further research are made including the possibility of frameworks of collaboration between educational authorities, universities and home-learning families as a way to support fledgling home learners, promote excellence in home-learning practice and provide transparency to safe-guard practitioners from accusations of malpractice.

Introduction

This thesis reports real life. I, the researcher taught my children at home for twenty years, intuitively solving educational problems, confronting the curriculum to find a way to enable them to learn at home despite learning difficulties. Having achieved success beyond my expectations, I reflected on that process, seeking out expert opinion and analyzed it. The result is this thesis – “an academic analysis of a lived experience” (Cairns, personal correspondence, 2005), an auto-ethnography.

My children’s learning problems focused my effort, thought and teaching practice upon literacy. There was no research question to direct the experience, only naïve wonderings, “How can I help this child learn to read?” and later, “How did she learn so well?” These were later refined into more sophisticated research questions. The methodology of this experience was, “ad hoc” and the literature, instead of provoking research questions, hypothesis and design, was reviewed after the experience to answer and refine questions that had emerged from it. The literature helped interpret

the lived experience and the lived experience helped evaluate the literature, pointing to urgently needed theory about home-learning. The research was carried out, “back to front.”

This “back to front” research experience is reflected in the structure of the thesis. The customary order of chapters has been changed to authentically reflect the chronological order of my growth in understanding about children and parents learning at home. Although the structure is unconventional, it is intended to assist the reader to vicariously experience home education, a goal-oriented, culture-cum-organization where the curriculum of Life occurs all around in the ‘community of learning practice’ (Knowles, cited in Barratt-Peacock, 1997). It is a life-style characterized by close relationships, independent learning within the parameters of the family meta-narrative and empowered parents.

This thesis argues that home-learning is an excellent educational option that produces self-motivated learners. It attempts to tease apart the home-learning experience, its methods and its learning environments to discover the nature of the factors that produce such results. So that other children and other families may be helped.

As I wrote this narrative, a purpose naturally emerged from the facts and events themselves. The thesis shouted aloud, proclaiming a dilemma. On one hand the value of home-learning and on the other, the needs of many home-learning families. How

will Australia respond to this dilemma? Will it oppose the efforts of home-learning parents or by supporting them, enable home-learning to continue addressing the needs of special children?

The Distance Education Centre of Victoria (DECV) has been part of our home education experience and is an example of collaboration between a home-learning family and educational authorities. However, some purists declare that because our children were enrolled with government departments, we did not 'home-school.' It depends on definitions but when defined as, "Parents and children living and learning together from a home base," (author) our family meets all the requirements for home learning.

Perceptions resulting from recent study are interposed in italics and in accordance with my feminist perspective, I occasionally resort to creative writing in order to express what could not be expressed in any other way. Because the Bible is foundational to the family's meta-narrative, it is used as reference material to help the reader understand the family's viewpoint.

Home-learning challenges the professional's hard-won knowledge about epistemology, ontology and pedagogy and defies ingrained assumptions about education. Women can present an alternative viewpoint from the male dominated understanding that has been accepted for centuries which can be refreshing and valuable, setting fondly held axioms on their heads! Reconceptualizations are what the feminist perspective is recognized as doing well, (Griffiths, 1988). Following in

this feminist tradition, I purposely introduce my journey of discovery with a wild creature. Reader, be alert, be aware! Pause from your inevitable bias for a moment to consider another culture, afresh!

A Stallion Speaks on behalf of his Herd.

“Listen, Manchild, with your heart, receive understanding and become wise. I was born among the tall bracken fern on the edge of the forest and the first thing I remember is the glowing chestnut of my mother’s flanks. Weakness overcame me then, yet something deeper within forced me to struggle upwards, flapping my wet ears, trying to hear through the sound of rushing, pounding water that obscured the dangers of the world around me.

Failure, prolonged failure nearly defeated me as crashing downwards, I became weaker and weaker. With every fall, the jolt reverberating through my ribby sides told me about myself; long legs, compact body and beyond that, something dangling! Ah, then the warm milk gushed, seizing me, empowering me to become something like my beautiful mother. Lovingly attentive, cleaning, directing, she nurtured me with a strong nose and rough tongue and eyes so deep and dark, like pools of water hiding treasures and mysteries.

“My son, grow strong” she nickered. “Be bold, be true. Never disgrace us with meanness or lies. Abide by the Deep Magic we were given from the beginning and that I must now teach to you.”

My mind reeled at the enormity of this responsibility. I was too weak, too small and insignificant for such an undertaking. So I said nothing and busied myself with the matter of the moment which was to balance 4 legs in a giddily moving world!

Those are my first memories and I am glad to pass them on to you although 30 winters or more have passed. That day was the start of a lifetime of learning, about men, our herd and the world. I know it's hard for you to understand because you come from a different kind but what I tell you must be told to others. How else can we survive? You men have power but you have lost your way. We horses abide by the deep things and are true to them. We cannot betray our deepest selves that men seem to sell so lightly.

You forget the important things of life and death, of birth and the Deep Magic. Our mothers taught us these things moment by moment, by example and discipline, training us and showing us from foal to yearling, until our young ones stood with integrity and character as mare or stallion. Even then, we were not exempt from the wise ones of the herd. Severe could be their punishment! Expulsion and isolation were the price for disobedience and not many of us would choose it lightly. Before long, we would return penitent, begging with lowered head and pleading lips to be allowed to return to the safety of the herd. How wise they were, the old mares of the herd! They knew when to observe in silence the rowdiness of the colts and when to act, decisively."

Then he turned to me, the old chestnut stallion and his great dark eyes questioned me. I was shocked, unprepared. “We don’t need you, or your ways any more!” I blurted out. Despite his 30 winters, his shoulders were strong and muscled and his golden tail swung gracefully around him. He struck out with a twisted, deformed foot upon the ground and light sparked from the stones as he did so. Then he tossed his arched neck and with a lunge and a rushing like wind, he spun around and galloped off, back to the hills and his herd.

This cameo introduces several topics, important to my argument. It alerts and challenges the reader to suspend the personal bias that everyone, often unconsciously holds, disarming misconceptions about ‘home schooling’ in order to introduce a new educational model. It validates the humble home as a place of valuable work and sophisticated learning processes that contribute to social capital. It suggests the trauma of the learning disabled who suffer repeated, prolonged failure and introduces the meta-narrative of the culture. It affirms parents, especially mothers, in their largely unrecognized role as teachers; the mother’s role is central to home-learning.

I have appealed for an open-minded reading of this narrative because “Facts are never neutral; they are always interpreted in the light of theory” (Popper, 1963). Although public opinion is changing, ignorance about home-learning has produced misconceptions about parents’ intentions and practices and has even led to court cases in Australia, (Education Dept. v. Slee, Benalla 1990) and overseas, (People v. Nobel,

Michigan, USA 1979). According to the media, home taught children are deprived of social interaction, have unchecked academic standards (Royall, 2003, p.13) suffer parental neglect, poor welfare, (Blackwell, 1989, p.13) and lack the resources available to other children, (Ryan, 1988, p.20).

In a healthy society, criticism can be beneficial, (Arendt, 1959) but against accusations, one is always on the defensive (Ashrawi, 2003). Therefore I do not intend merely to defend home learning, but to present a positive picture of caring parents producing a holistic learning environment at home that is able to meet the specific needs of all children, even those with learning difficulties. I present home-learning in a positive light, as an excellent educational option in its own right rather than being a negative reaction, an avoidance of school, a critical disconnection from society and the educational system.

Chapter 1; A Parent's Progress

Section 1; Defining the journey

This story begins with a 4 year old child and ends with a young woman of 24. It also begins with me, a mother searching for a 'better way' to teach her children and as a result, learning beyond the tradition in which I grew up. The memory of my own education in a traditional classroom clung to me and prevented me from imagining any alternative. I describe this model as home schooling, where the classroom and its principles are transferred into the kitchen and contrast it to home education which is learning as a co-participant in authentic social activity where the curriculum is 'Life' itself.

(It is important to establish at the outset that home education is "intrinsically social" (Gherardi et al, 1998, p.283) because it operates on a "learning-by-doing" system which is "always rooted in a social web of meaning and linguistic structures" (ibid)).

In 1985 however, as I started this journey, I had no idea of such a distinction. The classroom model held sway in my memory and I tried to impose it upon the children's time at home only to discover that it was impossible for me to run a home and a school at once. I realized I had made a serious mistake. From that point onwards I followed a path hesitantly towards home education. Children learn by doing, seeing, hearing and most of all by being part of their family, through the "social converse and constitution of the family" (Dewey, 1915, p35). Intuitively I

utilized principles of home education that are as old as human history but as modern as the research that supports it but I had to rediscover it the hard way, by trial and error.

I don't really know when the idea of home-learning presented itself. As far as I am aware, neither my husband nor I had ever attended a seminar about it, read a book proposing alternative education or even met anyone who was already educating their children at home. Later we discovered that various home-schooling groups existed in the main cities but by then we had begun our journey of discovery and felt no desire to join a particular "homeschool movement". For us, homeschooling happened more by default than anything. I mean, neither of us had a set plan or goal for the next 20 years and our children's education. We simply made step by step decisions that led us along the path to home education almost unawares. *(In this way, we would fit into Barratt-Peacock's description of "natural" home schooling parents, those who see 'home schooling' as a continuation of early childhood parenting practices).*

Section 2; Participants on the journey

As a child in Scotland, my mother gave me a first-hand example of motherhood. She found her life's greatest pleasure in her children, attending school functions and always there to greet us when we returned home, ready to hear about the little sorrows or achievements in our childish worlds, encouraging and seldom reproaching. My father provided the firmness that my mother probably lacked. His word was law in my eyes, until I became a teenager! He supported his children's

academic endeavours but did not feel the same about sporting or social ones.

Determination and hard work personify my father and he had a certain courage that I always admired.

(Barratt-Peacock, 1997) noted recently that almost half of the home teaching parents studied were immigrants. They created home environments that blended aspects of both their old and new cultures.)

The local primary school was a secure and unthreatening place and it seemed to me that everything was as it should be and that I was OK. As an obese child in the age of Twiggy however, the bubble was soon to burst. By High school, the excitement and wonder of early schooling had gone and I was left with memory work and no one to act as mentor. My mother died suddenly when I was 17 leaving a blur of unrelieved pain. University did little except give me a degree (MA, Hons) in English Literature and Language and four years of rebellion and questioning the status quo. I didn't know where I was going or why. Occasionally the great works of literature spoke for themselves and beckoned me on with the possibility of things greater but their promises seemed frail and fickle as death and loss settled in around me.

Finally, while teaching at a school in Papua New Guinea, alone in a foreign culture and desperate, I cried out to God. He heard me. My life turned around because of that experience and the direction it took then, in 1977, has been my compass point ever since. Such a profound experience opened up a new life for me, one with possibilities

and hope. I met an Australian, David who worked for the church in PNG. We married and started out for a new life together in UK and then Australia.

The experience of becoming a wife and mother helped salve the lingering grief of losing my own mother. Mothering, in the theoretical sense of caring and nurturing, was easy but the practical reality of looking after a tiny baby was like learning a foreign language; a squalling infant taught me that motherhood is not easy. But I knew the power of a mother's care in my own life and so, rather than running away, I sought to perfect the art. Mothercraft was something to be respected and revered. It was something worth attaining.

Perhaps here were the seeds of the desire to home school. Some women associate the role of wife and mother with that of slave-servant, but I had a vision of motherhood and the home as something precious. Now I see that a Mother's role is powerful but immensely challenging and to make a home which is a haven from the world's contradictory demands needs constant work, but twenty years ago, I only suspected this truth. In this way, carrying my own variety of baggage, I approached the question of home schooling. The problems and prejudices were in place and the stage was set for the next part of the adventure.

As for the father's background, David grew up at the very end of the pioneering age in Victoria. The eldest son of staunch Methodist dairy-farmers, his home was still surrounded by virgin bush and the only transport was the horse and jinka until he was

8 years old. He walked or rode to the local school 2 km away to be taught by his grandmother. Perhaps due to the fact that she was 70 when she retired, discipline appears to have been an issue and bullying made his school-life miserable at times. He left at the age of 14 to help on the farm, having never attended high school. At the age of 19 he left home to find work and visited Papua New Guinea to help at a mission school working as a general helper and agricultural staff member for 7 years. This was a wonderful time of exploration and discovery for him that strengthened his faith and extended his outlook on life. After 7 years in Papua New Guinea he met a young Scottish teacher and we returned to UK and were married.

Reiss (1981, cited in Barratt-Peacock, 1997) speaks of the “originating family” as pioneers, isolated, surviving under harsh conditions with their children as partners and co-workers and this certainly agrees with my perception of my husband’s childhood and our life on the farm. David’s characteristics also support the Biographical Impact Model (Knowles, quoted in Barratt-Peacock, 1997) which suggests that early life experiences influence the decision to home school and to maintain that choice. David shares the hard-working, self-sufficient ingenuity of an isolated pioneering family, his limited and unhappy school experience compared unfavorably with rich after-school experiences and he has deep religious faith.

Although the fathers in most home-learning families are not the primary teachers, their influence should not be overlooked or understated. Without the constant

encouragement of my husband, I certainly would have lost sight of the end-goal under the wash of daily toil.

My husband and I have 5 daughters whose ages at the time of writing are Olivia 24, Tina 22, Miria 20 and Fiona and Lydia, twins of 16 years. (Pseudonyms have been used for privacy reasons.) All the girls have been officially tested by an educational psychologist except for Tina but I feel sure that she also has a form of learning difficulties. Their IQs show wide discrepancies, from the 94th percentile (WISCiii) in the language subsets to the 2nd percentile in the performance, from the superior range to 2.8 standard deviations below the mean. They all struggled to learn to read and I was worried about their late development. Olivia attained independent reading at 7years and 6 months, Tina at 8years and 3 months, Miria at 12years and 3months, Fiona at 14 years and 1month and Lydia at 13years and 5months. My estimation of independent reading was gauged by observation of when they attained the “flow” of reading enjoyment rather than by use of a specific reading assessment tool. I never bothered to consider whether they were reading effectively or not because of their obvious involvement in the stories. Although they had struggled to break the code of the written word, once it was broken, they all quickly took to reading as a favorite pastime and delighted in it! This contradicted my experience as a classroom teacher. Many times their learning was to challenge my preconceived notions about how children ‘should’ learn.

Thomas, 1998) showed that home-taught children often read late, between 8-10 years but then become “enthusiastic, often insatiable readers” p.6.) Home educated children appear to develop reading skills later than their counterparts at school which accords with the idea that they would probably learn to read by being immersed in a community where reading and stories are heard and absorbed.. However, children such as mine with learning difficulties are different. They require explicit, direct, repeated teaching and over-teaching to ensure retention of information (Torgesen, 2000).

Despite their learning disabilities, these children have become literate, considerate, capable, self-motivated young people, able to pursue their own interests and careers and able to contribute to society. The eldest is teaching at a State Primary School after graduating with a double degree in Arts and Teaching from Ballarat University. The second is completing a double degree in Nursing and Naturopathy at Latrobe University. The third is studying Agriculture at Melbourne University and the youngest two who have severe and multiple learning difficulties continue with their home studies while running a small cottage industry called “Mottle Gum Felt.” What would have been the outcome if our children had attended regular school? Who can say? The statistics suggest a difficult outcome for children who score in the bottom 10% of the population.

My story concentrates mainly on Olivia and Fiona because Olivia’s story represents the steepest learning curve for me as a new home teaching mum and Fiona’s the most

taxing because she had the greatest difficulty learning to read. Struggling with dysnomia, she has more difficulty expressing herself in speech than any of the others although she enjoys writing stories.

(Her expressive language difficulty may be due to a Specific Language Impairment of the morphemic difficulty type. This 'diagnosis' resulting from my own reading, has proved useful in understanding Fiona's problems but has not been confirmed by a psychologist.)

Fiona is very quiet, often replying in mono-syllables but Olivia began to talk at 3 months of age and from that time on has persevered to perfect the art! She is very articulate, with good social skills and while at High School dreamed of being a lawyer. Olivia suffered the brunt of my ignorance about home-learning but somehow managed to survive and graciously forgave me for all my mistakes when asked. The educational psychologist's report describes her at 16 years of age as a, "friendly, intelligent and co-operative young woman...no indications of physical, sensory or emotional problems. She had fast, skilful movements and clear articulate speech...a verbal IQ in the superior range, a Performance IQ in the average range ... The difference between her Verbal and Performance IQ was significant...Olivia's strengths are numerous and probably reflect the high IQ and educationally enriched environment...Olivia satisfies the diagnostic criteria for Mathematics Disorder and Disorder of Written Expression."

By the time the youngest children were ready for “school-work”, I had some insight into children with learning difficulties. However, nothing prepared me for how the youngest girls seemed totally unable to learn anything related to symbols. They were delightful, helpful and happy. They were skilful with their hands and could use scissors and a paint-brush with ease, scoring well above age level in performance skills but they could not learn to read. Fiona scored 70 and Lydia 78 on WISCiii test of verbal IQ which put them in the bottom 5% of the population. Speech pathology placed them at 3 years below their age level. Both children showed very low levels of phonemic awareness and poor short-term memory. Their story has provided a fascinating lesson of how children with learning difficulties learn.

(Statistics and generalizations give a bleak outlook for children in the bottom 5 % of the population. My children have learned to love reading despite their learning difficulties and it is fair to suggest that home education is largely responsible for their success. Now the youngest are 16 years old and love to read. Papert (1993) talks about the immense font of natural learning ability of people outside school and questions how to promote and extend this natural learning process that is also seen in the home. I believe that home-learning may be one option to help these children.)

Section 3; The journey begins

Moving to a new town with a 4 year old, 2 year old and a tiny baby is an example of how circumstances just happened to shape our decisions. The thought of the kindergarten trip every day for the next year was daunting. Imagine, preparing one

child for kinder while organizing the toddler out of whatever she was into and then pulling the baby out of the bassinette to get to kinder on time and then repeat the whole process again 3 hours later! No thank-you! Besides, I told myself, little Olivia would miss so much quality time with her new baby sister if she was at kinder and as for socialization and games, well, I could provide that at home. After all, home is a very social place!

So Olivia's kinder year passed in the relative peace and busy-ness of any household with 3 children under 5 years of age. No one seemed to notice the absence of kindergarten. Olivia spoke beautifully for her age and was full of fun and creativity. We didn't own a TV, preferring to spend time reading stories aloud and making things. We were involved in lots of activities and wherever we went, Olivia mixed and made friends and would articulately recount the stories to any available audience for weeks afterwards. She was doing fine and I had plenty to keep me busy. The 2 year old was a happy, placid child who slept a lot and talked little which gave everyone else a chance to keep up with Olivia. The new baby did what all babies do and life was full.

By the time that Olivia approached 5 and the prospect of school loomed closer, we had decided to continue in our own happy way for a little longer. "Give me a child until he is seven and I have him for life", said the Jesuits which suggested to us that the age of seven was some kind of a turning point in a child's development. So, naively unaware of the implications, we decided to continue at home until Olivia

turned seven years. Then we would look again at the possibility of slotting her into a good school locally. After all, the girls were developing well and growing into their own little people and I didn't really want to miss out on all their precious moments of discovery. At the age of 5, Olivia seemed so vulnerable and what if she were bullied or teased? We didn't want that to happen to our daughter, not yet anyway. Some mothers can't wait to get their children "off their hands" and have time for themselves but it wasn't like that for me. I enjoyed the company of my children and found them interesting, mannerly and likeable people.

Was there an element of self-indulgence in our decision to keep Olivia home a bit longer? I really don't think so. I could remember enjoying time with my own parents as a child even though I had good friends at school. My family always seemed more important than friends and home was always interesting, at least until I became a teen-ager! No, I genuinely felt that the children would be better off at home. As Christians there were many aspects of school life that represented "The World," and from my own teaching experience I knew school was often petty, poor, limited and boring!

Once Olivia became 'school-age', there began a subtle change in my attitude to the informal but busy days we had been spending up until then. Now that my daughter was officially school-age, I felt I had to be diligent if I was to teach her at home. So I began to look around for some guidance as to how to introduce reading to my 5 year old child, I started a journal of "school-related" activities and I asked a friend, a

retired school-teacher with many years experience in teaching reading to visit our home and set up a demonstration lesson for me. She took a “look-and-say” approach to teaching reading which included a smattering of phonics. As far as I can remember, she did not introduce the sounds for individual letters until her students reached the stage of learning digraphs but expected children to “absorb” the Dolsch word list and then read simple early readers.

Her system seemed simple and took two hours. She chatted to the little girl, made her feel at ease and then steered the conversation to a suitable word for her to learn. That day the word was, “Olivia” and the two of them set about writing it carefully and decorating it. Then it was put onto a flash-card in large red letters and ceremoniously pinned onto the notice board. Olivia’s first word!

The next day it was my turn to introduce the formal part of the school day. The other two children were happily settled and I brought down the card with the big red writing on it. Olivia had no idea what it said and no interest in it either. She wanted to do what her sisters were doing and used every tactic in her small power to turn the activity of the morning to allow her to join them. I persevered for some weeks but Olivia never managed to recall the required number of words for her to start reading the first early reader. “There must be another way to teach reading”, I thought. So I began to search for something or someone else to help us.

As a result of talking to a school Principal, I opted for an appealing mix of phonics, art, music and games called the Self Pronouncing Alphabet (James, 1967). Each letter was introduced separately and associated with an animal shape e.g. 'H' was drawn to fit into the shape of a horse. Even now, it appears to me to be an excellent resource and used wisely, integrates literacy with other parts of the curriculum. Unfortunately, Olivia was only interested in the stories of the animals. I didn't understand that she wasn't ready for this kind of learning and that some children need persistent, explicit over-learning to break the code of our language. Olivia ploughed through work-books and graded coloring sheets but still she didn't learn to read.

We tried the phonic approach, whole word approach, shadow reading but to my amazement, none of them worked. Olivia loved the stories we all shared together and begged for more of her favorites, such as Narnia or the Little House on the Prairie but sight words she could not remember and even single letters were unrecognizable to her. It should have been obvious to me as a fully qualified primary school teacher that something was wrong, but perhaps I didn't want to understand. The trouble was that Olivia was so bright and intelligent! I never imagined she might have learning difficulties. It seemed more likely to me at the time, that she was suffering from a bout of pig-headedness than dyslexia as I struggled to teach her to read, in the midst of nappies and bottles and family life. However, when she started to develop stomach pains that seemed to coincide with the times that we would work on reading and writing, then I realized that this child was in trouble. More importantly, I was in trouble and I had to re-think in a major way.

Sending her to school might have provided a way out and at school, teachers were ‘experts.’ They would know what to do! But the truth was that I was a teacher too and I hadn’t understood my own child’s needs. So how could I assume that some stranger with 20 children in the class would provide the extra help and care that my daughter needed? I wanted so much more than just basics for my child. I wanted an education that would allow my children to experience a delight in learning, a wonder at natural beauty, a childlike curiosity and the time to pursue that curiosity. I wanted my child to know me and her family by being with us daily and for us to know her in return. None of these things seemed possible if she went to school. I saw school as the beginning of her leaving home and all the years that would follow as a continuation of that process.

(Rogoff et al, 2005) spoke of “intent community participation” (p.2) as a learning tradition requiring togetherness. The child and adult simply “being there,” (p16) is a pre-requisite for inclusion and the opportunity for learning in a range of adult endeavors. Perhaps, intuitively, home teaching parents understand the importance of participation and simply being there together).

Pride prevented me too. All my friends and family knew that we had decided to home school and was I to admit defeat after less than a year? There was much soul searching and self- recrimination. What was I doing wrong? Why wasn’t she reading

like others her age? How could I cope with all the normal everyday jobs and still have time to help this child?

When Olivia developed the typical stress symptoms of stomach ache, school refusal and tears, Love heard, loud and clear and set about finding another way. There was no one to help me, no one to explain the difference between home schooling and home education, no one to recognize the warning signals and realize that this child needed special teaching methods. God, what was I to do?

It was at this point of crying out that I had a ‘picture’. To call it a vision sounds far too grand and yet it “spoke” to me with a gentle power that re-focused my whole attempt to be a wife and mother. In the “picture”, I was sitting in my big comfy chair in the living room, which happened to be a bright, airy room. The sun was streaming through the window and I saw our three children playing on the floor, occupied in various childish pursuits. Then Olivia stood up with a book in her hand and came towards me with it. “What does this word say, Mummy?” she asked. So, I looked up from whatever I was doing and told her. “Ah, yes” she murmured and continued reading it, rapt in the story once again. I was part of that picture. I could feel the sun on my hand, the soft movement of the chair at my back and yet it wasn’t real in the sense of actually happening. But it had moved me with a powerful impulse of recognition. This is what home-learning could be like!

Now this may not impress you distinctly, but to me it was a revelation. I was their mother not some school-teacher in a classroom. So I had to let go of all the classroom techniques and expectations that I had learned and simply be their mother and let them learn in their own way with love and support and the insight into their development that my educational background gave me. By living and working together every day as a family, these children would learn all they needed to be truly educated, in their own time and according to their own schedule. Two years later I discovered John Holt and read in print almost word for word what this picture had taught me in a moment.

Our routine changed quite drastically from that point, because it had to. I had learned my first lesson; children are individuals and must be treated as such. Home education is different from class-room schooling. In fact they are worlds apart and although I had still to explore and realize that truth in all its fullness, we were on the path to discovery!

The following extracts taken from my journal, (1985-1987) support the story as already told. At that time, I made a weekly schedule and then added comments or revisions at the end of each day. Notes were brief and the many scorings out indicate that the schedule was very flexible. However, I think they show a definite trend over the 2 years which coincides with my own memories of that time. With the move to the farm, the journal entries peter out. My work-load increased drastically and my general health status declined. Writing a journal became a luxury for which I had

neither the time nor the energy but for the first few years it served a useful purpose, supporting me as I tried to validate what I was doing. The fear that I would ruin these children's lives was not something I took lightly and in the 1980's there was always the possibility of legal action against us. So the journal was intended to prove how educational, "regular and efficient", (Community Services Act, 1970) our home schooling attempts were.

(My journal notes reinforce the idea that home teaching is not easy, especially at first. I made many mistakes. My child showed me, in no uncertain terms, whether she was learning or not. In fact, as Thomas (1998) suggested, all my children have actively shaped the learning environment of their home school to suit their own aptitudes and learning styles. If a teaching method isn't working, the child does not experience the satisfaction and "flow" associated with achievement. Olivia exhibited frustration and resisted my attempts to teach her because the methods I used were inappropriate for her needs. Unaware of her learning disability, I had expected her to learn in a way that was impossible for her).

At the very start of the journal my tone is one of confidence and excitement. After all, Olivia was so bright and articulate and I expected it would be a delight to teach her and watch her grow to experience the thrill of reading.

"It's simple! Only an hour or so of "school work" each morning and then the rest of the day we can play and cook and be together. We can spend time tidying their

bedrooms because I want the girls to learn to keep things nice and we can shop and walk and make things – and the little ones can join in after Olivia’s had her hour of so of writing and numbers. She’s so bright that I won’t be surprised if she can do it all in less than one hour! I’m really looking forward to it- the next stage in her development!”

(There are many voices within the movement crying their wares for sale and/or recognition and although well-intentioned, the validity of their educational advice may be questionable. I was a casualty of just such a scenario. Because there is no accepted theory of home education, there is no benchmark against which alternative methods or claims can be evaluated and parents are at risk, open to doubtful advice or even charlatans.)

Enthused by the prospect of the new venture, I wrote down my educational aims and a rough schedule;

“Aims - 1985; we may not achieve them all, but, we may achieve much more!

To see Olivia “reading” happily and interested in books; to see her writing neatly and carefully, a few words from memory and others when copying from flashcards etc.

For her to write and read numbers to 10 and introduce values in (Cuisenaire) rods; to know ordinal numbers up to 5; to foster creative ability through manual activity, mime, dance, song etc.; to see her grow in the knowledge of the Lord. To include Tina at her own level and challenge and encourage her also.”

(These were not unreasonable aims but they were not to be achieved that year or the next. There were many false starts until Olivia finally started to read at the age of 7.6 years. My first schedule indicates that I was aware of the need for flexibility but really I tried to fit too much into a single morning. The classroom model was firmly entrenched in my imagination! Rogoff (2005) describes how the “Assembly Line” tradition of western schooling makes change hard and adults may have to actually participate in the new mode of learning practice, “to make the paradigm shift required for them to develop new ways of assisting others’ learning” (p30). But there was no one to demonstrate the new mode of learning. I had to falteringly proceed step by step).

“Schedule for week days, 1985; (flexible if something special is happening.)

10am to 12.30, housework can be done before and after.

Health and tidiness. This is housework with all helping, brush teeth

Praise and thanksgiving; sing and read a Bible story; pray about concerns.

Stories; introduce reading, words, ideas etc via an enjoyable story.

Next, I’ll start the little ones on an activity/game while Olivia sets out her book/pencil/flashcards. By the time I return, Olivia will be ready to start on a new word or new sound activity. This lets her learn one-to-one.

General revision of new and previous work.

Morning tea for everyone, including me.

Radio or TV programs or outside time to play until lunch.”

11/2/1985, the first day of home schooling.

“It wasn’t exactly how I expected, but it was fun- for us all, I hope. We cut out cookies and made the word “Olivia”. Then I helped Olivia put these shapes into written format. She holds her pencil very well and found writing the shapes easy. Then we went for a walk in the afternoon. I had to do the washing in the evening because I hadn’t been able to fit it in during the day. It got a bit chaotic, trying to do the washing and supervise the baths, but we managed. It’ll get easier as we all get into a routine.”

30/4/1985; Looking back on our first term

“We’ve covered lots of simple words e.g., Olivia, Tina, school, nice, I, in, out, says, us, like. We’ve also looked at some individual sounds to add phonic help- q, f, d, l. We’ve discussed many topics and I noted discussions on mazes, Easter, gravity, dissolving things. We visited the local quarry, police station, library, Traralgon shopping centre and the farm several times to see Grandma and Grandad.”

“There have been a few surprises. Even though David is so supportive of the idea of home schooling, he doesn’t seem to want to get involved or even want to help out a bit. I know he must be tired after working all day but when I suggested that he listen to Olivia read each night from a simple picture-reader he just wasn’t interested. When I pushed the issue he more or less just refused. Amazing! How little you can predict people sometimes? Another incident that shows me that he and I are on different wave-lengths is my idea of a fun family night with board games or cards and then a

nice supper. I tried it but it was pushing all the way and exhausted me-I'll never bother trying it again!"

(My husband's lack of actual help or interest in the processes of home schooling was a source of disappointment to me for many years. Much later when the "chips were really down", he was to show his genuine commitment to educating our children but for 9 years I had no help from him in this way. This is not unusual among home-learning families. Husbands decidedly tell you that their family is home schooling but on enquiring, the reality is that the mother teaches the children.

However, this is not the point I want to make here. Looking back on those early years of home schooling I realize that there may have been a real benefit from David's lack of interest. I was intensely involved in the experiment but uncertain of the theory behind it plus I was puzzled, anxious and self-recriminating about Olivia's lack of success in reading. What was I doing wrong? What was wrong with her? How much harder it would have been for the child if her father as well as her mother had been intense and concerned about the academic issues and standards of 6 and 7 year olds. Perhaps my husband's lack of help was in fact a great help for all the family. Perhaps it leveled out the ups and downs and kept us all sane!)

1985; 3rd term begins

"I intend to try a different routine this term. Instead of trying to complete all the "school" work in the morning, I'll give myself more time to do housework etc before

we start school at about 10.30. Then we'll work at the table til 12 noon, break for play and lunch. Have a quiet-time or rest after lunch and spend an hour from 2-3pm revising items from the morning. I'll see how that works. It'll give me more time to do chores and there will still be time to visit the library or shops after 3pm."

2/12/1985; Looking back on our first year

"There seems to have been a shift in our home schooling. The last term started with reading and writing and revising the flash-cards every day just as before, but I've gone much more to studying individual letters now. Especially since she was becoming distressed and her stomach-aches really worried me. She hasn't mentioned them for a few weeks now so I'm thinking that they must have been related to the effort of learning to read, at least by using the see-and-say memory method. She just couldn't seem to remember the different words. When she finally recognized some of them on the flash-cards, she didn't recognise them when she met them in the reading book. I've backed off a good deal. I wonder if I've started her too early. It seems unlikely because she's five and a half and her friend Sallie is reading already and I was advised that Olivia seemed quite ready for school work.

"We've spent more time lately, on sorting and colours, shapes and patterns, cuisenaire rods, symmetry and paper folding. We've balanced things and made models and puppets from socks and gloves. I suppose you'd say we've been busy with early maths preparation."

(Note the teacher's terminology. My language indicates that I was thinking in terms of the classroom paradigm.)

1986;The second year begins

"I've been looking and asking around for another method of teaching reading. I've been told about the Self Pronouncing Alphabet and intend visiting a school in Melbourne that uses it. Olivia and Tina both seem quite excited about the idea of a day in a proper school. They think they'll have fun with all the other kids."

It was a very hot trip but the school was most generous with their time and materials - lots of ideas and lots of worksheets and books. We're going to start all over again and learn each letter of the alphabet phonically. Tina's older now and she may want to join in with some of the activities too. The Principal of the school even invited us to come back occasionally so that the girls could join in with their own age group for a day of school! That would give me a chance to see how the girls are keeping up with the standard of the other kids at the school, which could be useful."

Although the staff of the Melbourne school was extremely helpful, it was as a result of this visit that the issue of standards raised its ugly head again even after I had glimpsed the reality of home education in the "Picture." My reliance on what was considered to be the 'norm', the standard, was to be a problem for me for many years. I needed the security of knowing that my children were doing OK. But the more I compared them with the 'norm', the more their learning difficulties caused them to

fall short of it and the more this increased my worst fears that I really was going to ruin my children's lives. I have often wondered if the process of evolving home education might have been easier if I hadn't been a teacher. Then I might not have been so concerned that my children should measure up to some arbitrary level. Much later I learned not to compare children, especially when they have learning disabilities.

This visit reinforced in me my years in the "System" and weakened my resolve and vision to walk along an alternative path. After all, the school image was concrete and familiar whereas there was no "flesh and blood" alternative for me to see in action. There was only a hazy, imagined possibility without a clear destination. Could this thesis serve as an example for others- at least of what NOT to do?

Feb 1986; after visiting the Melbourne school (Despite causing me to regress in my thinking about home-learning, the visit encouraged me and made me realize the need for organization.)

"Daily Schedule

Working together-up to 8am- working with children to organize home and school area and complete each child's specific duties eg care of pets, tidy bed. Working together time would also be expected to occur from 4-5pm.

Talking together- 8-9am- Sharing and talking about anything of interest and value.

Include child reading and Scripture story

Playing together-9.00-9.30- Games and Phys Ed. Includes jogging, walking, ball handling etc.

Demonstration Time-9.30-10.30. Sit down “teaching” session of disciplined work on language and number, include lego, puzzles, rods etc

Free Time; Lunch; Quiet Time for 30 minutes rest in bedrooms on their BEDS. They can each choose a book/s to take with them and this should give me a break!

Afternoon Activities-1.15-2.15 approx. A very flexible time where child is able to pursue own interest and creativity. Also includes field trips, social visits, library etc. Time allocations and order of working is entirely flexible but hopefully this will act as a guide.”

The schedule written in March 1986 shows development. It is less cluttered with teaching goals than the “Aims for 1985” and its simplicity and authority indicate the writer is more in control of the situation. The thematic titles for different parts of the day are clear, simple and achievable. “Working together; Talking together; Playing together” indicate a clearer view of the unified nature of instruction and living. The first schedule depended upon a naïve assumption that the children would always co-

operate e.g. play outside until lunchtime but a year later the schedule is more realistic, less demanding, more flexible, and the aims are clearer.

The formal teaching part of the day has been reduced to just an hour and coincides with the time that suitable TV programs are showing for the younger children. I was becoming aware of the amount of organization required to make the day pass happily and with some kind of order. Organization had never been my strong point but gradually I was realizing its importance in the home. I had written how the schedule was intended to help me “allot time to the different areas and to facilitate order”. By 1986 it appears that I was well on my way to grasping a more family-friendly, integrated approach to home-learning. From this time on it is possible that the children might have seen increasing success at home if it had not been for the biggest factor in our family’s learning history; dyslexia.

(One year on and the program includes time for an afternoon rest or “quiet time” which was very welcome since the day was starting earlier and finishing later. In fact, the day is increasingly being viewed as a whole unit where children and parent/teacher live and work together without specific times for ‘school or not-school’. School time will soon be seen as complete days of learning and challenge where the curriculum is Life. As “school” and life become increasingly knitted together so household chores become part of the day’s routine school-work. The formal session has been postponed to allow time for the chores to be completed which lends importance to the manual tasks such as cleanliness and organization that have

become too important to be overlooked. Academic learning is no longer the “raison d’etre” of the family but is seen as part of an ordinary day. A home-learning culture is evolving, with an organization to maintain it. The home must become self-supportive to continue over time and be able to adjust to the changing needs of a growing family. Academics become a tool for living in society, necessary but not the same as Life in Abundance which relates to the family’s meta-narrative).

1986; December; reviewing the second year

“This year has been spent reviewing all the sounds of the alphabet and towards the end of the year I introduced a few blends such as th, sh, ch, ay, oy, qu, ph. Olivia still isn’t reading but she has discovered the joy of long, serial stories, read aloud to her over several days or weeks! Our home schooling has unintentionally adopted a curriculum centered on literature. Best of all, these stories that both Olivia and Tina appear to love and understand are books that I can enjoy too!

It all started with The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe one hot afternoon when we didn’t feel like doing anything much. So I started reading and the girls clamored for more and more. When David came home from work we were still reading, so he helped by reading the last few chapters of the story for us. Since then, long chapter stories have become a regular part of our home schooling. We read on car journeys, on wet and miserable days and at times when we’re frustrated! In the last 4 months we’ve read The Magician’s Nephew, Charlotte’s Web, (we all cried), Secret Garden and My Side of the Mountain”.

1987- the third year begins

“A recent development has been a regular social day on a Friday when we visit another home schooling family who live on a farm nearby. “Joint School” has 6 children between the two families and the children are all similar ages. We even planned a weekend away together. We booked a cabin at the beach but unfortunately, the husbands couldn’t get away from work and it was hard on us two mums trying to keep an eye on 6 children running around exploring at a beautiful beach. We managed to survive without any casualties, thankfully, but returned home quite worn out.”

(The theme of maternal exhaustion and distress appears at this point and will recur.

In fact it is a major theme of this thesis.)

Despite following a more integrated daily routine, there was still a great deal of unresolved frustration and struggling to learn and to teach in our lives. But in 1987 when the girls were 8, 6 and 4 years old, a reprieve brought me closer to discovering home education. I fell pregnant with twins and this changed the whole family’s attitude. No longer was I searching for short-term academic results, now there was something so momentous happening in our lives that everything else paled into insignificance.

The children were enraptured with the process of preparing for their new siblings and “school-work” took on a different nature of togetherness. There appear to be no

journal entries during this period but one project I remember clearly was collecting the New Births page of the local paper which the children stuck into two columns to determine whether more girls or boys were born in the local hospital. Of course after many weeks, the two columns in the graph were about even.

The birth of the twins presented the other children with a living lesson from Life. They learned about pregnancy, birth and babies and learned to love their new sisters; quite a demanding curriculum! It was a happy relaxed time, as I remember it. I was content to let the children just live and learn within their family and enjoy life as it came.

“There’s enough for me to do. I don’t need any additional burdens!” I reasoned. If only I could have followed this philosophy beyond the months of pregnancy and the twins’ babyhood! How much suffering could have been avoided!

At around this time there came into our lives a lady who was to have an enduring affect upon us all. We were befriended by another retired school-teacher who loved JRR Tolkien and maps. Now they are grown up, the girls too love Tolkien and maps! With great patience and delight she took the older girls who were 8, 6 and 4 years old, through the Hobbits’ adventures, visiting us in town and continuing when we moved to the farm. Her love and support were a gift to us all and for me it was wonderful to have another adult to converse with in my isolation. It made the difference between thriving and surviving.

Section 4; challenges along the way

Business required that we move out to the family farm about 40 km from town. I knew no one there but reasoned, in between racking doubts, that I'd always loved the country and horses and dogs. It would be fine. "As long as we are together as a family, nothing else matters." "We'll try it for 6 months" David said, "and if you don't like it, we'll move." The sentiment may have been genuine but the reality is that a large mortgage binds you to earn money and everything else gets forgotten.

So began a desperate effort to pay ourselves out of debt. David worked two jobs and was away from the farm from 5am when he left to milk cows until 7 pm after the last milking. I tried to keep things going at home which included chopping wood for the stove, milking the house-cow and home schooling with an occasional day as a relief teacher at a school 30 minutes drive away. The older children were allowed to come with me and join into the class of their age group while the twins stayed at day care. It was a rather unusual way for our children to experience school life but financial constraints demanded it.

These days of returning to my previous life as a primary school teacher left me empty and worn. They provided some welcome income but the cost was too great and within a year my health was beginning to suffer. I reverted to my old mental model of school. I had lost the first tentative attempts to pursue home education in the effort to keep going from day to day. Enrolling with the Distance Education Centre of

Victoria, (DECV) a State run correspondence school for the children of remote, itinerant and a few other special families seemed like the easier option. However, small rural communities scrutinize everyone and “home schooling” albeit via a State run system put us in the category of abnormal. We did not isolate ourselves from our neighbours because of any fear or rejection of them or their lifestyles but became isolated because people were unwilling to associate with us; we were ‘weird.’

Enrolment with DECV meant I didn’t have to sculpt a curriculum. Now I was just a clerk responsible to ensure the prescribed work was sent in each fortnight. Instead of being a teacher, I had become an administrator but the work-load was no lighter. I still had to battle with the everyday demands while the “experts” in Melbourne, although aware of the discrepancy between Olivia’s obvious intelligence and her lack of school achievement offered neither advice nor support. It didn’t take long to discover that making Olivia produce work for a teacher in Melbourne was no easier than getting her to do it for me at home. Bullying and bribery were required and it all seemed a long way from the ideals I had held of children with a love of learning, full of the awe and wonder of creation.

The DECV allowed me to distance myself from the whole problem a bit however, and meant I could discuss my daughter’s lack of progress with another interested adult. It removed the fear of litigation as the children were officially enrolled with the Education Dept and so the journal entries cease in their previous form although intermittently there are some interesting ones.

Sometimes the pace and demands of my life bore down on me and I wanted to get away. Then I would walk down the paddock and talk to cows, (always sympathetic listeners), or I'd stomp off into the bush to gain some fresh-air and sob my way through the tangled logs and bushes. Worn out with fighting against nature, I was restored to some kind of equilibrium, stillness. On one such day snatches of children's poetry came into my head amid the mixture of fatigue and frustration;

“Lollies

And presents

A TAALLL Christmas tree.

A stable,

A baby,

That's Christmas for me!”

I imagined a small golden-haired girl reciting it in her “party-best” and the tiredness disappeared in the joy of it all. I hurried back to the house to tell the children about it and to ask who wanted to recite it at Christmas time.

Gradually, my resilience was worn down. “How long can I keep going?”, I wondered. Chest pains started increasingly earlier in the day as the weeks went by. Financial strain made matters worse. But what choice did we have? I had hated traveling on the school-bus for hours as a child and adapting to another system of education would require enormous effort too. The children were happy and healthy. I was really the only one who wasn't!

(Conflict was bound to result from the clash of “learning repertoires” that I was experiencing (Rogoff et al, 2005, p28). Being tacit and often implicit patterns of learning practice, one’s learning repertoires are often unconscious, difficult to even talk about).

Friends from the next town were a great support although new-comers to home schooling too. They helped us with the work load and taught us to enjoy bush-dancing while the children cemented friendships with each other but the visits were all too few and no one from the farms around visited. David worked long hours in town to pay for the mortgage and relations with his family were at an all-time low. Little did we realize the effect that leaving the farm would have on David’s father whose whole life had been entwined with the land. He was suffering terribly, in his own way, and meanwhile, they were unavailable to help me or the children even if they had realized how desperately I wasn’t coping.

Within a year of enrolling with the Distance Education Centre of Victoria, Olivia’s difficulties caused me to write to the Principal, explaining my dilemma. I had a bright child who did not want to be schooled. Our daughter’s array of problems was puzzling, even incomprehensible. In writing to the Principal, I describe the effect the school work is having upon her and make suggestions;

“Perhaps the most noticeable affect that the last year of schooling has had on Olivia, is a lack of self-motivation towards her school work. She generally did not want to do

the lessons so her main intention was simply to “get it finished” so she could do something pleasanter...Perhaps because of these enforced periods of unsatisfying school work, Olivia became an irritable, short-tempered child, often tearful and reluctant in her co-operation with parents and siblings...I am interested in the possibility of an experimental “flexible learning” approach.

My suggestion is for a term’s experiment with our daughter to consider her progress within a minimum supervision/self motivated project situation. Progress could be measured by her attitudes, (notably the number of arguments with siblings and parents!) and her general sense of well-being; her achievements and her self-motivation in starting and following through with projects that she finds interesting.”
(1991)

The Principal did not reply but Olivia’s allocated teacher encouraged us to complete the set Maths work while allowing wide scope in Language projects. This combination worked well and Olivia almost immediately responded by showing more interest and initiative and completed some excellent work. My letter sounds confident and professional but privately in my journal, I was exhibiting the typical anxiety response of mothers with children suffering from learning difficulties; I was blaming myself! “Have her early traumas in learning to read caused her to reject or rebel against some of our ways? Does she need time just to renew?”

My relationship with the children's 'teachers' in Melbourne varied enormously. Some had a very positive effect on me personally, leaving me strengthened to carry on the task while others, applying classroom standards and expectations inflexibly, left me feeling inadequate and uncertain. Their criticism added to my already large load of work and stress. One teacher returned work with every single spelling mistake corrected in red pen! The pages were colorful but both my daughter and I felt demoralized and disinclined to study the corrections. A third group simply left us alone, giving nominal approval and empty praise in their school reports.

Over the difficult years when Fiona & Lydia's development seemed almost negligible, we received help from 2 wonderfully caring teachers at the DECV. One teacher went out of his way to help us and even visited us in our home, 5 hours drive from Melbourne. Perhaps he was concerned that these children were being abused or neglected but if that was his motivation for coming, he never suggested it and simply kept supporting and encouraging us with excellent advice. He organized extra-curricular expeditions and introduced me to another parent who had children with learning difficulties. He suggested that the girls work at different grade levels for language and numeracy. So began their steady development of mathematical ability. This teacher understood that some children need extra help and that we as parents were doing everything within our power to help the learning process. It was a welcome surprise.

In 1990, 5 years after stating my original aims for home schooling I rewrote them.

Why I felt the need to re-think our educational aims, I don't recall but perhaps I was becoming more aware of the nature of the home education experience and its affect on the family as a unit. The aims are couched in very "spiritual" terms, (unlike my 'educational aims' of 1985) and don't mention subjects or standards. This may indicate that once the onus of curriculum had been lifted from me by enrolling with the Distance Education Centre of Victoria, I was free to think of home-learning in terms that reflected our real interests and concerns. I wrote;

"Our aim in educating our children is to lead them to a place where they realize who and what they are in God's universe; where they realize their own...need for God's Grace.Since this salvation is only by Grace, how can we, by education, help bring them to that point? We must tread a careful path between teaching values, morality etc and teaching Faith by our own example. "Do not impose your religious form on your children. Only let the child "walk with Christ" ...that which is inherent in the child, which develops from the child with the help of Christ, is the basis of all true religious education rather than something imparted to the child in dogmatic form." (Zinzendorf, in Gangel and Benson, p184, 1983).

My journal for 1991 begins in a positive mood although it identifies some of the problems facing us. Olivia has been working on a negotiated curriculum of project work and her teacher had been very encouraging. She is 11 years old and something is starting to work for her although my journal entry indicates that I have no idea what it is.

“Correspondence school requires a lot of formal bookwork and therefore a lot of stick-waving “encouragement” from me the supervisor...and although Olivia had knuckled under a good deal by the end of last year, she was not working on her own and she was taking valuable time from Tina and especially from Miria who is 6 and seems to be having a lot of trouble with spelling and reading too. Is she going to have Olivia’s problem too? Olivia tends to be a disruptive element. Is this due to lack of self-fulfillment? or lack of real challenge? Or lack of interest in the school-work offered? Would some time spent with relatives be beneficial eg Aunty M. or B. in Melbourne?”

Another entry is entitled, “Making up courses of study for Olivia, term 1 1991” and includes many possible activities linked to their educational objectives. I obviously was casting around for help because I have included people who could possibly teach Olivia different practical skills rather than just academics although my school mentality still shows through in the curriculum divisions. I show no inkling that home education can be a work-based form of learning.

“Making up courses of study for Olivia

PE-horse-riding, swimming

Health-TV program, daily hygiene

Social Science- make a papier mache map of Australia

Maths-cooking, sewing with my friend S., home budget, shopping

Science-follow “127 basic science experiments”

IT- follow typing tutor

Music-weekly music lesson from Mrs. V.

Foreign language-ABC program Mon 12.30 Buongiorno Italia

Art/Craft-knitting with Grandma, woodwork with Grandad

Social-Pony Club, camp, visits

Language-Literature, diary, library visits”

Looking back I see how few of these objectives were achieved. The Science book took too much of my time for supervision. Olivia didn't want to practice for her weekly music lesson so it seemed a waste of money and effort forcing her to continue. Her obvious ability with language did not extend to an interest in a foreign language, so that was quickly dropped. Grandma showed no inclination to teach her grand-daughter to knit even though she was an excellent knitter herself and the same thing happened with her Grand-father who never offered to help her construct anything in wood! Few others, it seemed, shared my vision for teaching or were willing to pass on their skills to the young.

Although some problems were being resolved, by August of that year, 1991, I had initiated discussions with the family doctor regarding recurring headaches. One year later, the symptoms were described as, “excessive lethargy...inclined to depression, irritability...pain in pelvis, thigh, abdomen and hip.” (Dr's report, 27/7/92 and 10/8/92) and despite trying various remedies, the symptoms continued intermittently until by March 1994 the doctor quotes my own expression of my situation; “feels

she's virtually an invalid....feels isolated on farm." These descriptions support my memory of that time as my health gradually succumbed to the pressures and difficulties of our situation.

The debilitating migraine-type headaches lasted for up to three days. Recovery was slow and meant that the constant round of household duties piled up, re-doubling the chaos. It became embarrassing to receive visitors because the house was messy and dirty. I seldom left the farm because I lacked energy to do anything extra.

(It appears from reading the girls' own versions of learning at home that while my health was deteriorating Olivia, (herself struggling with school work) and Tina realized there were health issues while Miria does not mention it. The younger children were young enough to be oblivious to it all).

One night I burst in on David, asleep, when he had gone to bed early. I must have seemed like a torrent bursting in on him. What did I expect him to do? I suppose it was a cry for help but 10.30 pm wasn't the right time to call out for it....The cry for help, although I didn't understand it as such, would burst out as anger sometimes. It happened over different things, someone dropped my cardigan on the floor, Miria couldn't sound out a word or Olivia hadn't helped with the dishes. Any of these situations would cause me to lose my temper. I would raise my voice and shout. Really I was shouting for help; but there was no one to turn to for help.... It all became too much.....

“The pain, the searing pain and the nausea! Get up, check on the children- make sure they’re all right; just one step. Steady. Slowly down the hall to the end. Push the door open.” Five bright little faces turn towards me from the television.

“You feeling any better, Mum?”

“Maybe, a little but I’ll go back and lie down again.”

Relief! Lie down, close my eyes just for a while and drift off from the pain, the responsibility, endless work, from everything...

“What will become of her? What will she do? What kind of job, if she can’t even read? She’ll have to stay home and work around the farm. She’ll turn into a recluse without any other young people to talk to.”

Perfect love casts out fear.

“Such a bright little baby too ...”

Vibrations bearing down on my nerves, chain-saw, banging...Can’t think, just drift, Can’t worry about them now, too big, too hard. They’ll have to make their own choices. I can’t protect them from everything!”

Drifting . Floating somewhere above the bed. Can’t bear the noise pumping into me, can’t bear it....

The Lord is

My Shepherd

The Lord

Sheep-lord

Is?

shshshshsh

The lord

My.....

Lord is

liiiiii

Sssssssss

Shepherd

Is

Lord

My Lord is.

There was nothing at that time that I could do to help myself. I had only summoned enough presence of mind to find Olivia in her bedroom and tell her; “Find Dad and tell him I need him.” “What’s wrong Mum, you look terrible?” and terrified, she had turned and run. David arrived, still out of breath, took one look at me and prayed on his knees until the moments passed and normality returned. It was not a “religious” experience but because of it, I changed. Now I accept myself despite my failures and

accept my children as they are which enables me to release them to be different, to be themselves.

This experience in 1994 represents the nadir of the last 20 years and having come out the other side I can say that it has changed me. Now I know my limitations. Before, it was as if I were super-Mum and Superwoman rolled into one. I would take on too much and expect my body to act like a machine and just keep on going as more and more demands were placed upon it. There was no one to help but when I cried out to God, He answered once again and brought me through.

Step by step, day by day, slowly with the help of my husband and the children who responded magnificently to their mother's need, I regained health and vitality and continued to educate our children at home because there seemed no other alternative. I see the advantages and the disadvantages of home education clearly now because I've experienced both its ups and its downs.

Section 5; Detailed information about the journey

I hoped desperately that Fiona and Lydia would breeze into the written word like some children do but dyslexia has genetic links and they were like their sisters, only affected more severely. They were happy, healthy and loved stories but by 1995, at the age of 6 they could not recite a nursery rhyme or name the common colors. I had delayed enrolling them with the Correspondence School because I believed that twins often develop language later but the real reason was I was still battling with fatigue.

The children appeared perfectly content with their routine but I felt responsible. Someone must teach them to read! "They will have to go to school because I just can't face teaching them." I felt totally unequal to the task of teaching two more children, although I loved them dearly. The very thought of starting again at prep level filled me with horror.

(How little I really understood about home education or how children with learning difficulties learn! There is no doubt in my mind now, that another 2 years of 'freedom' from school learning would have been beneficial for them. They could have continued to learn in their own particular way, doing everyday tasks with their sisters or parents that are so numerous around a farm. However, it is quite clear that during that year they learned almost nothing that the curriculum expected of them although the discipline of a regular "school-time" was not detrimental to them and the required tasks of cutting, pasting, matching, etc were quite enjoyable. Completing the activities at their own level with the undivided attention of their father, "school" had become a game which was fine by them but it did not help them connect symbols with sounds. The fact that they didn't understand the activities or retain any memory of single letters or short words was unnoticed by them. They loved their Daddy and loved spending time with him.)

At this point the father became involved; a statistical abnormality! When I had refused point blank to continue schooling our youngest two, David had decided that rather than let our children travel almost 3 hours daily by school bus, he would

become involved in a real, hands-on way. He had always whole-heartedly supported the philosophy of home education and many times had encouraged me to continue with it when things seemed difficult, but now he offered to teach the Prep level Language course each morning. I was skeptical and wondered how long this commitment would last. "As soon as there's a sick cow or a broken machine out there he'll be gone!" I thought, but I was proved wrong. David faithfully plodded on, doing the best he could for 5 years. In 2000, after I had attended an Australian Resource Educators Association conference on learning difficulties which filled me with new ideas and resources, we changed over and I taught the language side and David the Maths for another 2 years.

After a year of "school-work", Fiona and Lydia still could not name the colors, (although they could group colors together identically or in shades,) nor recite the days of the week or months of the year but they were extremely skilful with scissors, cutting out with great precision and they could copy single letters or digits very nicely. They could not read or write their names independently but they could ride a horse quite well and happily take part in Pony Club and other social family activities. They could not remember the words for "Twinkle, twinkle little star" but they could clean and organize their bedrooms with a place for everything. Their development was a total mixture but most of all they were delightful, happy, loving and sensitive people.

(Although the set work was sent to us by mail, the content, order, timing, place and application of the work were flexible. While to some our approach to home-learning might appear “Formal” (Barratt-Peacock, 1997) in other aspects our approach was negotiated, variable and opportunistic. Content was occasionally considered inappropriate or boring and therefore dropped. The order of work was sometimes switched to mesh with something that could reinforce a learning point eg a shopping trip. Timing of work was flexible depending on the weather, season and energy levels. The place of learning extended to the farm boundary, the locality or the distant city! By ‘application’, I mean whether the work was tackled as suggested in the text or adapted and re-applied to another situation more accessible to the child as in the example below).

At 7 years old the language course required students to cut and paste pictures into a pictorial phonic dictionary. Since my daughters were struggling to remember the letter shapes and their associated sounds, this exercise made no sense to them. So my husband took them walking through the paddocks and down to the creek where they collected clay from the river bank, checking the stock and the state of the creek erosion at the same time. On returning home, they molded the clay into letter shapes and fired on a camp fire, these became the basis for many kinesthetic phonic lessons. The academics were subsumed inside the companionable and useful job of checking the animals and the riparian areas; academic teaching happened coincidentally with necessary work.

(Home educating parents are in the wonderful position of being able to create learning environments that will challenge the child just enough but not too much. Carefully watching for the tell-tale signs that a child was approaching the frustration level with a task, I would gently assist the child to proceed before the frustration was too great. Years later, in 2001 I learned that Vygotsky had described this very technique as teaching towards the Zone of Proximal Development and Bruner had described the benefits of “scaffolding” (Moll, 1990.) I had called it good mothering.)

The twins were assessed by the educational psychologist at 8 years 2months. Four and a half months later, on 23/4/97 the report finally arrived. It indicated that there was a, “pattern indicative of a student with language-learning difficulties.” It confirmed the obvious but it also showed considerable strengths in their Performance sub-tests which encouraged me to keep teaching to make the most of those strengths. I’d been reading about dyslexia and recent research indicated the value of direct, repetitive, persevering instruction for children with learning difficulties. So began 6 weeks of intensive, direct, phonic-based teaching using an adaptation of the Spalding Method (1959). I cancelled all appointments and other interests and persevered with the twins for 6 hours per day.

I tried every conceivable variation of immersing them in the printed word and reinforcing the sound/symbol link of the English language. We pasted notices on familiar objects and then played a Treasure Hunt game with written clues, wrote letters to friends and relatives, entered competitions that required them to write name

and address, wrote shopping lists for use in the supermarket, wrote stories, painted and decorated 3D alphabet letters as well as the other techniques already mentioned. In every possible way I tried to vary the same lesson of linking a sound and a symbol each day and they responded with great patience and perseverance. It was at this time that I discovered the “manual alphabet” quite by chance.

The “manual alphabet” was introduced to us through Helen Keller in this way. The girls were enjoying her story being read aloud to them. The “miracle” had happened for Helen as her teacher tapped the word “water” onto her hand and then pushed it under the gushing flow from the garden pump. At this point Helen ‘connected’; the tappings on her hand represented real-world objects! The twins were fascinated but I wasn’t sure that they had really understood so I picked up Fiona’s hand and because I didn’t know the symbols used by the teachers of the deaf and blind, I gently scraped the alphabetic letters on her palm. “Oh”, she said, “like this” and picked up a pencil that was on the floor and wrote the word “water” perfectly on a piece of paper. I was astonished. This child who could not even write her own name had written a 5 letter word she’d never seen before, perfectly! This was not just a lucky fluke; the tactile sensation on her hand must have stimulated some method of remembering shape and meaning. From then on, my approach became highly kinesthetic and we gradually made progress.

At the end of the 6 weeks of intensive teaching and at 9 nine years of age, Lydia was able to read her first book, “John and Betty” but although Fiona’s memory for single

letter sounds had improved, she could not blend them together and she could not keep up with her sister. We rejoiced in Lydia's success but now began to walk the tricky path of preventing one twin from feeling less worthy or less able than her sibling.

I began to fear that Fiona was actually regressing, unable to remember simple things that previously she had known. I wondered if she might have a dreadful regressive brain disorder and discussed the possibility with the ever-patient family doctor, who wrote, "Fiona whose IQ scores were higher and who should therefore have learned more easily has, her mother feels, regressed and has forgotten things that she previously knew." (Doctor's letter of referral, 6/4/98). The pediatrician was very supportive and agreed that "there does not seem to be any other reasonable alternative...it does not seem possible for them to attend school."

A turning point was reached in June 2000 when I attended the Australian Resource Educators Association conference on learning difficulties. It provided both encouragement and excellent teaching. Experts in the field of learning difficulties presented the latest findings on the most successful ways to assist children with learning difficulties to learn. I no longer had to guess at the best way to teach children, I had quantitative proof! I returned home determined and encouraged and immediately swapped teaching roles with David. I would resume teaching the Language course and put into practice all my new-found knowledge and David could take over teaching numeracy. My spirits soared because now I felt informed and I

was no longer alone! I had become one member among a vast number of people working to teach children with learning difficulties.

Three months after the conference we traveled to U.K. to visit family, friends and places from many family story-tellings. The twins were delighted at the prospect of 6 weeks camping without “school” and the chance to meet cousins of their own age whom they had never met. They had instructions from their teacher to keep a scrap-book but that was the only injunction laid on them.

Summer that year in the U.K. was warm and sunny and the trip was everything we could have hoped for. We visited castles and walked over moors and Roman excavations and sought out interactive museums which allowed the girls to participate without having to read. They loved it all and seemed to benefit from it in confidence and an awakening interest in the wider world. Despite increasing practical skill levels, their progress in literacy remained incredibly slow for the next two years. I took solace in the fact that some progress was being made in maths. Then an unexpected crisis occurred.

Stories are made up of problems and resolution, of critical moments resolved that change the characters as they work through them. In the same way, during the twenty years of teaching at home, critical moments have occurred changing individuals, our family and our educational practice. I cannot think of them as negative experiences although each was painful at the time. Each crisis brought new understanding which

has left me and my family richer than before. The first critical moment has been described when Olivia developed symptoms of school-refusal, as has the second that brought me close to physical and mental collapse.

The third critical episode occurred in 2002. It may have been the nature of the grade 4 course or Fiona's growing awareness of her learning disabilities or the prolonged stress and frustration resulting from them, but whatever the cause, she became increasingly morose and sullen, quite out of character for the placid, happy Fiona. She was becoming harder to motivate and would be tearful and even rebellious when school-work was suggested. It reached the point that I knew I couldn't push this child any further because I began to fear the consequences if I did.

I informed the Correspondence "teacher" that another plan of work would have to be formulated and he acquiesced as he had always done to my suggestions regarding the girls' school-work. Perhaps he understood more about their learning difficulties than I realized. A discussion with my supervisor at Monash University introduced me to negotiated learning. I determined to allow Fiona to mould her own schedule; negotiated learning had begun.

The plan that Fiona and I negotiated allowed her to have a complete break from written language work but simultaneously challenged her with lots of hands-on learning. This wasn't going to be too hard for the next little while because we had planned a working holiday to Tasmania. We were part of a project to collect

Blackhead worms from the far North-west corner of Tasmania's mainland to try to colonize them on mainland Australia. The children were an important part of the project because we all had to help dig them up, wash, sort and pack them safely for their trip to our farm. But it wasn't going to be all work; we intended to look around a bit too.

I explained to Fiona that she could drop the Language course if she liked and take up some other subjects like gardening, cooking and sewing. She would still be expected to complete the Maths work but since she liked Maths, it wasn't a problem. Within only a few days of relaxed work in the garden, she began to change back to the smiling, happy Fiona I remembered. She began to talk more as we worked together in the garden too; the crisis had been averted. Fiona's frustration had been relieved but she still couldn't read and at that stage I didn't know that she was just about to leap into the written word! About one month later she began to read for pleasure and since then she has hardly stopped. So sudden was Fiona's leap into the written word that I feel it is worthwhile to look more closely at events surrounding her that may have impacted on her. Archived material has helped me re-construct how this period appeared to the mother/teacher.

January: Fiona's older sister, Tina is involved in a serious car-crash. She climbed from the wreckage unhurt but exceedingly shaken.

February: Lydia notes in her diary that she is reading "The Hobbit." I date her independent reading from this time (13years and 5months.) Fiona visits the family doctor, complaining of stomach pains.

March: After a hair analysis test shows evidence of lead, Fiona is referred to a pediatrician who assures me that such tests are unreliable. He reported "no significant attentional problems ...present." (Dr's report, 21/3/2002)

April: As part of a Pony Club Team, Fiona wins the Mounted Novelty Games competition for the Zone; a remarkable achievement.

June-July: Crisis. My diary notes,

"I can't push this kid anymore...a break from the stress of language study may allow her to return to reading with an OK attitude towards it later on. Otherwise maybe she'll forever hate it!"

Negotiated Learning replaces set Language work with sewing, gardening, an art and craft session in the local township. Fiona & Lydia become Water-watch monitors with their father to assist them.

August: Trip to Tasmania to collect black-head worms and to look around. David, Olivia, Fiona & Lydia and I travel over-night by boat and enjoy other new experiences such as hiking on Cradle Mountain. We take early morning walks on the beach and just enjoy each other's company. Back home, Fiona develops her love of

writing by using the computer as this journal entry notes, “Fiona very talkative and said how she likes to write. She likes to use a bigger font when writing but then change it to a smaller one to send it to Distance Education Centre of Victoria.” Fiona happily continues with her Maths; still no established ‘system’ for her language work except an occasional story written on the computer.

September: Fiona & Lydia attend a church youth camp and happily socialize with older girls. A simple brain-wave shows a way for Fiona to share her sister’s level of school-work but at her own pace. “Fiona will write on one of the topics in each set...and then draft and develop it.” So Fiona and I began a time of exploring ideas together. I read aloud books and articles on the chosen topic for that set and then Fiona wrote about it. This new system worked well and I realized that there are two different strategies for learning and that one is more suited to Fiona and maybe other children with learning difficulties.

“Lots of diverse information and tasks ...about a single topic and leading to an understanding of it in the end...seem to “fizz” the brain whereas, one task (writing and then improving it) ...gives a frame-work for learning (the topic.)”

Sometime during this month Fiona began doing a series of exercises formulated by the DDAT Centre. Working on the premise that learning difficulties are caused by a malfunction of the cerebellum/vestibular system rather than of the cerebrum, they advocate exercises to stimulate this part of the brain to rectify the problem. Whether these exercises effected an improvement is uncertain but my diary records she was

highly motivated to maintain the exercise routine twice daily. Shortly afterwards, she began reading for pleasure.¹

October: “I discovered Fiona, reading in her bedroom!” My diary records this as the start of her independent reading, 14years and 1 month.

November: “No one cooked tea while I was out tutoring because Fiona & Lydia were busy reading!” I didn’t mind! “Fiona reminded herself that she hadn’t done the DDAT exercises today and then she went and did them straightaway.” Her Distance Education Centre of Victoria report reads, “The project...about her trip to Tasmania was outstanding.”

Fiona’s development and achievement have continued steadily. She always had obvious ability in design, color, organization, maths, life-skills and sensitivity to other’s needs but illiteracy has a profound effect on one’s life. Once she could read, despite continued difficulty with spelling and dysnomia she became more confident, less stressed, less fearful of growing up, eager to take on new challenges.

(Thankfully, this crisis occurred when Fiona was 14years old and she was able to reason with the problem. Supported by her family, she was able to undertake negotiated learning with excellent results. Frustration due to her disabilities had to be faced at some point in her life but if she had attended school it seems likely that the crisis may have happened earlier, at a more vulnerable age, within a less flexible

¹DDATAustralia PtyLtd, 8 Malvern Av, Chatswood, NSW 2067, ph02 94112511 www.ddat.com.au

system and with less satisfactory results. An ordinary 6 year old may grasp the sound-symbol connection of a letter within 2 or 3 lessons but Fiona required 30 or 40 repetitions to understand and then more repetitions and over-learning to ensure that the point was remembered. Only a full-time parent could invest that kind of effort and time into a child's education.

Three critical moments occurred over the 20 years of home-learning, namely the episode of the "Picture" in 1985, that of maternal exhaustion and distress in 1994 and that of Fiona's frustration in 2002. Their causes appear to have been;

- 1) Ignorance of home-learning theory and practice; lack of mentoring (1985)*
- 2) Ignorance as above; lack of support; maternal exhaustion (1994)*
- 3) Dyslexic frustration; (2002)*

Ignorance of home-learning theory comes with a price and when aggravated by other factors such as isolation, lack of support, "special needs" children and exhaustion, can produce distress.

Semester reports from the DECV provide valuable evidentiary support for my narrative. (See Appendix D for a summary.) They show that;

- 1.) Fiona had extreme difficulty learning to read.
- 2.) There was a discrepancy between her maths, language and performance ability.
- 3.) Fiona enjoyed writing despite her language disability.
- 4.) Teachers' understanding of home-learning and learning disability varied.

5.) Parents and children learning at home need to 'de-stress'.

6.) Learning difficulties cause tremendous frustration but home-learning (supported by the DECV as an educational partner) can mitigate their effect by offering social support and the flexibility to meet individual needs.

Years of frustration could have culminated in crisis for Fiona but thankfully negotiated learning and DDAT exercises averted it and 4 weeks later, at 14 years and 1 month, she was reading for pleasure! Fiona is now 16 years old and working on four subjects at VCE Year 11 via DECV. She works at the local ice-cream parlor every Friday afternoon and 3 shifts a week during the school holidays. She passed her Learner's Driving Permit first time and is training a young horse, competing at Pony Club competitions and was awarded the "Best Member" by her Pony Club in December 2004. She received high praise for her work experience at a local Day Care Centre. She is making her way in the world. "Fiona has made astounding progress..." (DECV report.) The story is continuing....

(To summarize, home education enabled a profoundly dyslexic child to develop at her own pace with the benefits of individualized instruction, a secure home and a stimulating, highly kinesthetic learning environment, unhampered by comparisons and peer pressure until a crisis of frustration occurred. At this critical point, home education provided the opportunity for the parent, guided by the student's behavioral needs, to negotiate the form of educational practice until the problem was overcome. Or this is how it seems to me.)

Section 6; Nearing journey's end

In 1996, Olivia was approaching VCE and we wondered, "What is she to do with her life?" With an education she would be more able to choose where and how she wanted to live and work and perhaps even work for herself. So it seemed clear that we must provide her with the opportunity and the choice of further training. But could I face the rigors of home educating an unwilling student at a higher level with 4 other children also to be loved and taught? It was beyond me. The memory of my recent health problem was still vivid. It made my heart quail because I knew it was something too big for me. There seemed no way out of the impasse.

However, a casual remark from a relative, "Olivia can board with us if she needs to go to high school" made everything suddenly appear obvious. Why shouldn't our child experience some years of high school as a preparation for tertiary or further training? By 16 most students are becoming mature and might have developed a better approach to learning and socializing. Olivia would have to face young people's issues if she went to university so high school might provide a good stepping stone by giving guidance and support until she was faced with more choices, greater freedom and further decision making in the coming years.

(Plausible though this logic appears on the surface, Miria exposes our misconception in Appendix C. She explains that home education bears similarities to university and is therefore a better preparation for it than High school is. Home education she

states, prepared her for living and studying at university with its freedom and flexibility, more than High School did with its timetables and rules.)

The mental shift was almost complete. It only remained to find a suitable school and prepare our home for the flight of the first fledgling. So much thought and consternation had gone into the issue of Choice. To allow our children the ability to choose, we had decided long ago, that our children must have education. Without education and the ability to think for themselves, each child would be at the mercy of society and manipulation. Choice is such a precious commodity. Choice is free will. Whoever takes away my choice in a situation, resorts to violence against me, reduces me to less than adult status and at the same time reduces their own freedom to act. I knew the time was close when my child must begin to exercise her own choices. The world is all around us, with its many voices. As a child, she had been guided and protected, but now was the time for her to practice using her freedom of choice. We had tried to grow our family in health and wholeness and all our years of home-learning had been leading up to this moment in time, it seemed. The fledgling was about to fly.

As I write this in 2005 Fiona and Lydia are 16 years old and almost ready to fly too. The educational practice has changed with the children. Now there are deadlines to meet and programs of study to follow but the girls themselves assign their work according to the often important and contradictory demands upon their time and organization. Early mornings are sometimes used to get a good start on the book

work and sometimes Friday sees an enormous burst of school activity! One week there may be only one completed set but the next there may be ten. The scheme is extremely flexible and the students, valued contributors to the family business, are involved in many work-sites beyond their desks and books and are appreciated for their strong work ethic, enthusiasm and insight.

Home education for young children focuses on exploring the world together, through the senses. When the children were young we had worked indoors and out, making and doing, sharing and thinking. There had been lots of reading aloud and playing together while numbers and letters had taken a second or third place in the scheme of things. For some children, learning to read, write and reckon happens incidentally, as a by-product of doing other things within the safety of the family but for those who are severely affected by learning disabilities, instruction has to be phonemic, direct, intensive and persevering (Torgesen,2000) . In this way they break through into written language and into an appreciation of the wider world.

(The early journals contained practically no comments on “work-sites” although my children always helped with the many jobs necessary to maintain the household and business, peripherally, according to their age. Ignorant of alternative forms of education such as work-based learning, I failed to recognize the enormous learning potential of work-sites for children who are included peripherally in adult practice. My class-room mind-set had blinded me so I did not even notice the learning processes happening everyday under my very nose! My early comments reflect my

traditional teacher training; my theories about education and what I believed it should look like had blinded me. My early journals prove an important point. I was home schooling and did not understand about home education. The teacher had to become a learner again, forget previous pedagogy and epistemology and gain a new understanding. Although my teacher training proved problematic for me when I began home teaching, it had trained me in an attitude of enquiry and observation which were very important to the final outcome. The absence of evidence for work-based learning becomes valuable evidence of the parent-learner's growth that led to a re-construction of theory about how children learn.

I realize now, that children who develop certain skills very rapidly e.g. reading or tables memorization, are not necessarily the most intelligent nor examples of optimum development. A "slow and steady," strategy is essential for some students and may even produce better results in the long-run. Einstein, has been cited as an example of a late developer. Children developing quickly in the early years of primary school do not always continue their accelerated achievement. Piaget called the fallacy of rapid early achievement the "American Question". Faster is not necessarily better in educational terms and especially so for children with learning difficulties.)

At some point along the way home education became a reality in our everyday lives again. Previously, we had glimpsed the freedom and variety within routine that is a hall mark of home education, but ignorance and daily pressures had snatched it away

and replaced it with the classroom model once again. Gradually, unaware of the process, but led by the children's many interests, work-sites grew up around us. Our lives are full of learning and doing. Working together is a frequent occurrence even though the three eldest girls are only home during holidays. Olivia has pointed out (Appendix A) how the work-based elements of home education have affected us all, and created a culture of working and learning together that has flowed on into the children's adult lives. She describes how each new project represents another "family bonding time" (p 5) reminiscent of home educating days as children, filled with laughter and discussion.

Home education potently affects everyone involved. Both my husband and I extended our qualifications during the years of home education. This thesis, while a form of debriefing after the prolonged period of intense involvement with home education, also extended my learning. The obvious way to answer questions about maturation, learning environments, parental involvement and children's learning difficulties was to study. Having lived through the process, I could perhaps extricate the various factors sufficiently to allow analysis of them to help other children with learning difficulties.

What follows is a turn to creative writing which is intended to off-set my failure in the early years to see home education as a form of work-based learning and the lack of reference to work-sites in my early journals. The following 'cameo' shows how home educated children are involved in many real and meaningful "work-sites,"

thereby acquiring many skills. The story is authentic and mentions 17 actual work-sites in which the children were involved. No doubt there were others.

A Researcher's Introduction to Home Education

Driving up the gravel road past paddocks on one side and eucalyptus forest on the other, I notice the serenity of the area but also its isolation. A few houses are scattered around the hillsides but basically the farm is alone, bordered by forest.

Turning up the driveway I wondered again about my motives in coming. I had been briefed. I had my agenda. I was looking for key features, for evidence of;

learner-managed learning

situated learning

apprenticeship theory

self-motivation

co-operative learning

work-based learning

social skills and interaction

communication skills etc.

Would I find evidence of any of these here, among this family?

A flash of color attracts my eye. In the paddock on my right there are no animals, only a variety of colored drums and poles arranged in assorted ways as horse jumps.

My attention turns quickly to my driving to avoid the dogs that come leaping and barking around the car.

Slightly disconcerted at the prospect of emerging in the midst of this excited canine horde, I am relieved to see a young woman approaching and smiling with recognition. This is Olivia, 24 years old, tall and slim, dressed in jeans and a shirt. She's a primary school teacher home for the vacation. She welcomes me and suggests an initial tour of the house. "Everyone else is working," she explains. "They weigh cattle today." Her younger sister however is preparing scones for morning tea in the big old farm kitchen. She smiles and laughs, slightly embarrassed by her floury hands and the apron she's wearing. We continue into the other rooms through a hall stacked to the ceiling with books and into the younger children's neatly decorated bedrooms, each with a computer, desk and overflowing book-shelves.

The house tour over, Olivia suggests a walk outside until everyone returns. We visit the chooks busily re-cycling garden rubbish in preparation for next year's vegetable crop, poddy calves that hopefully suck our fingers and into the dairy where my tour-guide proudly shows me the felting machine her father recently invented to help her sisters with their felting business and the rope-making machine that re-cycles baling twine.

A short walk brings us to the old house which is now used as a tack room for saddlery and mending horse-rugs. Olivia waxes lyrical about how they all helped move it last

summer because being close to the main house, it had been a fire-risk. “We all expected it to collapse,” she explains with a chuckle, “but it didn’t!” At the moment it also houses an old wooden chest that Lydia is struggling to renovate. She has already stripped off most of the paint but a few cracks still need to be freed of the old blue color. It’ll be a nice piece of furniture when it’s finished!

Next stop is the garage where a large plastic paddling pool takes up the far end. My guide carefully removes it revealing an old commercial leather sewing machine. Restored to working order, it is now used by the younger children to sew felt into the “Mottle Gum Saddle Adjustment System” which they distribute through a local horse shop.

Laughter and the barking of dogs indicate that the others have returned to the house for refreshments. They are all looking rather hot and tired but the cattle weights were good so everyone is in high spirits as Olivia begins the introductions.

Obviously, I thought, these are the parents, a man tall and quiet and a grey-haired woman smiling. Then a young woman about 20 who appears very involved with the data on the clip-board that she’s carrying- these are the cattle weights just obtained. Then I meet two younger girls about 15, shy and quiet, slim and well-tanned. This one must be Fiona, I think to myself. The one I’ve heard about and I take another look. Dressed like all the others in jeans and shirt, there was, however, a certain awareness of style and color in her clothing. “I wonder if she’s made a special effort

to impress me?” But certainly these aren’t fashion items. They look comfortable and well-used but still, there is something about the combination of hat, color and hairstyle that makes me realise that here’s a young woman aware of being herself.

She doesn’t say much when introduced. She just smiles, briefly looks in my face with “Hi!” and a little wave before turning to reprimand the dog that is demanding her attention. I look at her again. “I wonder if she’s as interested to see me, as I am to meet her or if any of them are as curious about me as I am about them?” I have a dozen questions buzzing through my head.

Is this a home-school or a bunch of people living and working together? When do they sit down and use those desks in their bedrooms? How often do they see other people? What’s going to happen next?

Next we go inside and wash, with the tantalizing smell of hot scones wafting from the kitchen. They were very good, (served with strawberry jam) as was my orientation to home schooling, a family educating their children at home.

.....

Section 7: Reflections on the journey; a paradox of love and hate

Everyone knows pain of some sort in their life. Jesus said, “In the world you will have tribulation.” So when I talk about loneliness, exhaustion and anxiety I do not

suggest that it was worse than the average Australian experience; it was only different. To lose a child or a spouse, to experience divorce or break-down would all be terrible. My challenge came in the form of home educating 5 children with learning difficulties.

During labor, a woman groans and cries out, but when she holds the baby in her arms, the pain is largely forgotten. I want to write about the last twenty years to remind myself and tell other people that the difficulties were real and at times loomed seemingly insurmountable. The daily toll upon me was enormous and the more so after moving from the town onto the farm. I may represent an extreme case on the spectrum of home-learning experiences, but others have told me of their times of distress. Friendships formed between “fellow sufferers” are real and lasting. We understand each others’ trials and the triumphs that keep us going.

(Levison’s (2000) rare example of honesty regarding the woman’s role, supports my own experience.

“Burnout is definitely a crisis for people who educate their children...I have often felt the need to speak plainly about the severity of Burnout and the general difficulty of home schooling itself... acknowledge the hardship rather than dismiss it as nonexistent.....it often starts with comparison” (of your own children with others’)
p108.)

There were factors in our situation which were bound to cause overload; lack of family support or net-work; children with disabilities; remoteness from facilities; low

income and all-girl children that may have separated the father from the task of teaching his daughters. When there are compounding difficulties and other supports are missing, then the stress may be so great that the family is in danger of distress. To experience intermittent periods of dysfunction is not unusual and in my case it served a useful purpose; it taught me a lot. Revisiting the difficulties of my situation allows me to forgive myself and release the past. Since realizing that all home educating parents are themselves learners on a steep learning curve, I now understand why I made mistakes and this has helped me excuse them.

I now realize the odds were stacked against us but nothing was so clear at the time. I had hoped that David's family would gradually integrate teaching their grandchildren into their own lives but their love did not extend beyond enjoying trips and visits with them. I had hoped that David would teach the children practical subjects but there was only minimal up-take of that over many years. We had hoped for good seasons on the farm and good prices to ease the financial burden but small farms are a dying way of life. I had hoped that the twins would delight in the written word without difficulty but I was wrong. I had expected other people to revel in the art of teaching as I did, seeing it as passing on priceless gems to the next generation but I was foolishly ascribing to others, my own motivations and feelings. I have grown up a little since then.

However, without the problems there would be no "Undercover Story", no unpublished history. I want to tell the woman's story that you won't find in the books

and articles because it's been glossed over by researchers. Holt, Ray, Thomas, Meghan and Knowles are all men! This is the story of the person who carries the load of teaching, nurturing, disciplining and constantly "doing" for the family. As the years pass it may be that I will forget the difficulties too and remember only the good that came out of it.

That good did result from the experience, I am certain. To see my twin daughters, Fiona and Lydia deeply engrossed in a book or coping with multiple tasks requiring skill, determination and judgment assures me that our struggle was worthwhile. I hear the older children talk about their home-learning years in terms of appreciation not bitterness and realize that although it was hard, it was hard for us all and we came through it together. (For the children's own reactions to learning at home see Appendices A, B and C.)

The process of reflecting on the home-learning experience has expanded my concerns to include the needs of home teaching mothers. Who would speak for them? Certainly it seemed the fathers and leaders of the home-learning movement would not because very few had addressed the issue of maternal distress in the last 30 years. "Mother Burn-out" had been broached in the 1980's but leaders of the Christian home-learning sector declared it to be impossible in families following the will of God. Submissive Christian women had been effectively silenced, not by lack of education or opportunity as Belenky's "silent women" (1997) were, but from mistaken teaching. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Bible, Phil 4: 13) imposes the

image of Superwoman upon gentle, serving mothers and submissive wives. The responsibility lies with husbands to actively love their wives as themselves, (Bible, Eph, 5: 25-30) to ensure the 'weight' of home-learning does not produce maternal distress. By synthesizing the joys and demands of home teaching, perhaps a woman can show the way through the maze of confusion, guilt and doubt that can beset home teaching mothers.

Desperate problems produce unusual solutions and by struggling to teach my own children to recognize the link between symbols and sounds, I stumbled upon methods that were able to help other children eg the "manual alphabet"; Passe's "Cued Articulation" providing a concrete representation of different sounds for children with poor phonemic awareness; stand-alone sand-paper letters enable children to touch and feel letter symbols and move them around in different combinations. I imbue the different symbols of the alphabet with personalities and stories to help children to remember rules as letters "interact." To help children with learning difficulties has become my passion and the skills I developed while helping my own children overcome their difficulties have enabled me to tutor and help others.

Home teaching taught me the hard lesson of learning about myself. My lack of organization figures largely in my mind. In the early days I seemed to be continually caught between two extremes, either unprepared and in a chaotic mess or bored silly by preparing for the next meal or activity. It seemed there wasn't time to just enjoy the moment. I erred on the side of chaos and tried to simply enjoy, despite the mess!

However, a more organized approach would have helped me to manage the eternal round of duties and preparations better, with less stress. I learned to lament the idle days of my childhood when I had wasted time doing nothing much, although no doubt I had enjoyed myself! I lacked many skills that would have been useful in home teaching. As a child I had been given the opportunity to learn piano but never practiced, to learn housekeeping skills but always avoided them, to train for sport but preferred to read novels! How much I needed these skills now! It was the most demanding job I had ever had. It required all my resources and then some more.

Home education is not just another educational choice but a lifestyle. The repercussions of home education are far-reaching, challenging, affecting life roles. Ultimately it produces a culture which is distinctly home-learning. The family and the home undergo a metamorphosis to emerge as an organization devoted to its own survival and growth, to meeting the educational, social and other needs of members. It is an all-engrossing goal and in pursuing it, it is not surprising that our children became separated from the local children who seemed dominated by the peer pressure of school and the need to be “cool”. Our children knew that they were important contributing members of the organization to which they belonged and this affirmed their self-esteem and made ‘childish’ games less important to them.

Day by day, I was privileged to train my children in adopting life-giving values and attitudes, in choosing right from wrong. Values are often absorbed unconsciously rather than learned as a result of direct teaching, best exemplified in real life settings,

as a by-product of doing some other task. In this way home education is the ideal arena for values training because children assimilate ‘crumbs’ of attitudes from those with whom they associate, their family. These crumbs “gather to a greatness,” as the poet Hopkins said, over time and form part of a person’s world view. In a few years, I recognized that each one would have to decide for herself about which values and attitudes to embrace. But for a short while, I had the opportunity to share with these children my perspective of the world, to inspire them with my own vision. Home educating parents cannot hide themselves from their children. Metaphorically, we stand naked before them with all our faults clearly visible. They know us well, even as we know them.

Several times in the early years I was criticized by family or friends for educating our children ourselves and reduced almost to tears by their attacks. Their confident assertions that I would ruin our children’s chances of living a full and normal life shook my assurance in this untried educational experiment. Our decision to home educate was not an accusation aimed at other parents or the education system but simply a personal choice. Now that 3 of our children have grown up and left home, people don’t seem so aggressive. Perhaps we have been given up as a “lost cause” or people realize that the educational experiment has worked. Did our family group threaten people or is it just that home education is more tolerated nowadays?

Criticisms came from unexpected quarters. The local church minister criticized us for removing our children from the school system because it made us unavailable to

provide a Christian witness to the unbelievers in school. To another friend ours was a, “hot-house of religious nuttiness”. In her eyes we were headed down a steep road to destruction. She recanted her statement later, “I was wrong...my diagnosis was wrong. They’ve done really well and are a credit to you and David and I am very, very impressed” (personal correspondence, 7/9/03.) Accusations varied from that of self-indulgence, (personal correspondence, 2004) to irresponsibility and over-protectiveness. I knew I was far from over-protective. I wanted to challenge my children to grow in every sphere of their lives; body, soul and spirit but I also wanted to make sure that each challenge was appropriate to their ability and personality because nothing is more disheartening than repeated failure.

David remained unmoved by our opponents’ criticisms. As a child, he had been the victim of bullying at school and believed that home could provide a better learning environment than the classroom and would encourage children to appropriate challenges and opportunities. He wanted them to be bold enough to be willing to make mistakes and then go on and learn from those mistakes. Besides which, he seemed to have great confidence in me and my ability to teach our children; a confidence which I did not share.

One danger that I have wondered about is that some home taught children, satisfied with the “status quo”, seem to lack a constraining need to explore or contribute to the ‘outside world’. Among one home-learning group this tendency has led them to reject or become suspicious of tertiary education or further training. These children may

find themselves with few qualifications and reduced to low paid jobs of a menial nature. However, home taught children generally have so many personal skills to their credit, learned from years of fulfilling their part in their family team-work that this seems unlikely.

Some home teaching friends of ours are training their daughters to be wives and mothers. They emphasize the skills required for that role but do not encourage them to pursue further training. This was not my desire for my daughters even though I extol the power and value of motherhood. Without education, I believe my daughters would be limited in understanding but especially in choice. The ability to choose, whether that means wise or unwise choices, is the hallmark of full adulthood.

Despite being a teacher who should have known better, I had been infected by “the pervasiveness of dominant ideas” (Mason, 1989, p256) that are hard to challenge. Vociferously, I would have declared that all children are different with different learning rates and strengths, yet unconsciously, I was still dominated by the misconception that children should develop at a certain rate, in a certain way. I was prejudiced against ‘slow children but having dyslexic children of my own forced me to change my values. Now I realize that human value is not dependent upon achievement.

I broke free from such binding misconceptions at the time of my near break-down. The “wonder-woman” myth had vanished and I saw myself as simply human

alongside millions of others. I had no great expectations of myself now and so didn't demand greatly from the rest of humanity either. I knew that Man was capable of the most amazingly unselfish and heroic deeds but they were not the norm. My new philosophy made life seem all the more wonderful when such acts of altruism did occur. I had discovered an important truth about life but also about myself. I had been unable to pull myself out from the mire of my own making and this revelation of my own inadequacy was like a salvation experience. From almost total physical and mental break-down, God had rescued me and because of it, I had changed. I was growing in maturity and the teacher-parent had learned a difficult lesson!

Ultimately, home-learning is dependent upon the wisdom and choices of the parents.

"This is the strength of home education but also the danger for where there is wisdom, sensitivity and discernment the home education will uplift and edify but where there is mediocrity and bigotry, the children's experience will be likewise."

(personal correspondence, 9/09/2003)

My friend expressed it beautifully but failed to see the whole picture. Home-learning does not respond to the analysis of reductionist theory. No matter how much it is classified or categorized the end result will always be greater than the parts because of the remarkable synergy which exists between parents and children living and learning together. There is also the important effect of the "G-factor"- that is, God. Many home-learning families espouse a religious viewpoint (although others avoid it.) Whatever one's world-view, parents who teach their children themselves, are

motivated by love and the desire to help them. Their motives and the parent-child relationship represent Love, another form of the G-factor.

If a serious pathology existed in the parents then could it be expected to manifest itself in the home and the children? “The Children on the Hill” (Deakin, 1973) is a biographical description of a home educating family where the mother appears to show a destructively low self-image. Despite this the three children thrived and after a number of years of home education, fitted into school life in rural Wales without incident showing remarkable talents in the different fields of science, art and music.

Although the relationship with the DECV varied with the understanding of the “teacher,” it has been an important part of our home-learning experience, providing a system that was sufficiently flexible to allow me to retain responsibility for my children’s education. This was my God-given responsibility and privilege. It also provided an economical curriculum, some valuable support and assistance and it put an end to the fear of litigation by making us “legal.”

Section 8; The significance of this study

Auto-ethnography deals with a single case and is not therefore generalizable, (Yin, 1984) however its significance reaches beyond merely one family’s story, to point to theory. It raises the important issue of the home and family as contexts for learning, venues of socialization and enculturation just as school or the factory-floor. Context may play a larger role in learning than previously thought (Rogoff and Lave, 1999.)

Its transferability and cognitive affect, appear to fluctuate with the learning situation (Rogoff and Lave, 1999). In home education, learning contexts are authentic, purposeful and connected to everyday life and the child does not have to adapt to the different speech, norms and values of a school context (Wells, 1986).

Home allowed Fiona valuable time to mature until she was able to cope rationally with her dyslexic frustration. It also appears to produce self-directed learners who are well prepared for the university experience as Miria explained, (Miria's story, Appendix C). In contrast, school has contexts that may hinder certain forms of learning because they are artificial, fragmented and unrelated to the rest of life.

This thesis re-affirms women in their bi-lateral role as mothers; nothing can compare with time spent with your child and no one can replace you in your child's eyes. Perhaps this is why mothers can teach their children so effectively. Home education theory, although in its infancy, legitimizes the average home as the venue of highly sophisticated learning processes that have been largely ignored.

Previously, it was considered best to 'hand over' children with learning difficulties to special-needs experts. This narrative shows how children with learning difficulties can experience a better learning environment in a home that can adapt to meet the child's individual needs better than any institution could be expected to. Living and learning, family and friends, work and play are unified in the home, to form the

curriculum of Life, covering all modes of learning (Chisholm and Davis, 2005) and multiple intelligences (Hatch and Gardner, 1990).

This study and the home-learning movement as a whole contribute to educational knowledge. They represent a, “research project, done at no cost, of a kind for which neither the public schools nor the government could afford to pay.” (Holt 1983, p393.) As proof, Butler (2000) found new insights into children’s learning from home schooling and used them to enhance her class-room practice. Illich’s dream of de-schooling society and de-institutionalizing education (1971) may be ushered in as people search for new answers to old problems in the area of home-learning.

This thesis provides the Christian ‘home schooling’ movement with some timely “home truths.” Home education is not a standard or a set of rules but a process, an evolving relational life-style (Thwaites, 2002) yet leaders of the movement appear to have lost the original idea of home-learning which is a family living and learning together. Pursuing a Platonic “Ideal” of excellence, purists define home-learning narrowly, within self-imposed limitations and husbands and leaders of the movement have neglected to address, through doctrine or example, the issue of maternal distress. Failing to recognize that home-learning exists in different forms, they throw away opportunities to influence its future development; attempting to achieve a perfect form, they crystallize it to extinction and the family members, whose needs should be central to the home-learning endeavor, have been forgotten. A new vision for home-learning is desperately needed.

This thesis proposes an epistemology of home-learning that distinguishes generic patterns of home-learning practice and stages of home-learning development that reflect parental understanding of how children learn at home. The prevalence of work-based learning, the family as an evolving organization, the benefits of home-learning for the learning disabled, the importance of a meta-narrative to which academic learning is subordinated, the issue of maternal distress and parents as Learners and the correction of a misconception regarding the role of conversational learning have all emerged from the narrative. Research is needed to further examine these ideas, particularly to see whether they apply to the non-Christian sector of home learners.

Throwing our children into the world, we lose them. By bringing the world into their little lives we enlarge them and ourselves.

Chapter 2; Literature Review;

Section 1; Overview of home-learning

There is an urgent need for a theoretical understanding of home-learning if the intellectual argument regarding its legitimacy as an educational option is to be fairly addressed. Once underpinned by a sound theoretical understanding, its acceptance and uptake will follow, resulting in a new option for the education of children with learning difficulties and the transfer of useful home-learning principles into classrooms.

Qualitative data analysis from an in-depth case-study has described the processes at work in the ordinary home, pointed towards theory (Yin, 1984). and illustrated that the average home is not just a place where people sleep but a workplace, the arena of highly sophisticated learning processes leading to valuable social capital. Home-learning processes are familiar and ubiquitous and have been overlooked except by a few insightful researchers such as Tizard and Hughes (1984) and Wells (1986). They proclaim the importance of the woman's role in the home as wife and mother.

In Australia, home-learning is one option among the many different educational options offered from State Schools to Independent Schools and from Technical and Further Education Colleges (TAFE) to University. It is legal, although states vary in their requirements (Jackson, 2000).

Definitions of “home schooling” vary. The Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council defines it as parents choosing to “assume responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating their children’s learning program from a home base.” Reference to methods, curricula, philosophies or characteristics of home-learning is notably absent. (“Red herrings,” they have caused divisions within the home-learning movement as a whole.) However, the definition is still influenced by the class-room paradigm. The thinking is that of the class-room programmer where the parent, teacher-like, has a role of “planning, implementing and evaluating,” although it is from a home base.

Home education sees life and learning as a unified whole and could be defined as “parents and children living and learning together from a home base” (author). They “learn through living” as Thomas (1998, p.67) puts it. The “plan, do, review” mentality becomes unnecessary when a family is a community of learning practice with learning opportunities found everywhere and assessment being shown in everyday artifacts, attitudes and behavior.

Definitions vary but the essential point is that children are learning in a home environment from their own parents (Rudner 1998, in Barratt-Peacock, 1997). Some purists (Klicka, 2002) differentiate between independent home schooling and public home schooling but this distinction is unhelpful, or worse. Such narrow boundaries have caused schisms within the movement that lessen its influence over future educational developments and reduce its influence upon society generally. Schisms

isolate home-learning families from each other thereby detrimentally affecting the mother's experience because social support can mean the difference between thrive or survive for the home teaching mother.

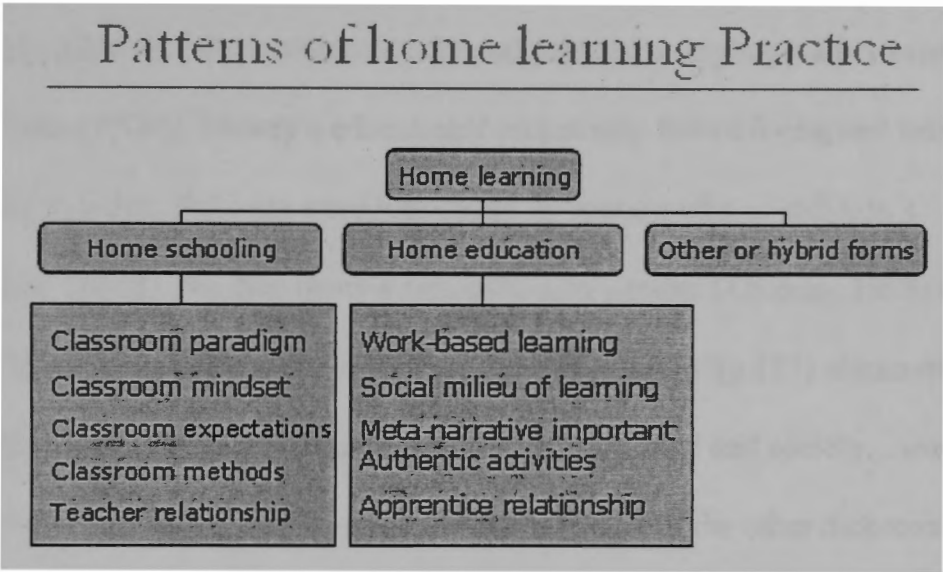
The most popular term in USA is home schooling while home education is often favored in Australia but terms are used loosely and synonymously. Preference for one term over another has been discussed 'ad infinitum' (Rodd, 1991) but the precise use of terms to describe different approaches to home-learning has not. Systematic use of terminology is not mere quibbling. Distinguishing between different concepts of home-learning and their associated learning practices will provide a better understanding of the topic than has existed up until now. The case-study showed that different approaches to educating children at home exist and correct use of terminology will help explore this.

This thesis uses the term 'home schooling' to describe the transferal of the class-room model of education into the home along with its methods, expectations and understanding of how children learn. It represents one approach to home-learning based on the seriously flawed premise that teaching children at home is the same as teaching children at school. Sadly this error is perpetuated within the home-learning sector itself. Curriculum which is supposedly specifically designed for home-learning such as Accelerated Christian Education is still grounded in the school-learning paradigm.

Home education is another approach to home-learning and represents a form of situated workplace learning where children gradually become co-participants in authentic activities, the work of their daily social world. Children's learning is "situated" in the home environment, workplace of a community of learners where experts demonstrate skills and a meta-narrative framework provides structure and perspective for life. Organization evolves to support and sustain the nurturing/educating community where the child is immersed in a social milieu of learning. The potency of this particular mixture of highly kinesthetic situated learning, values teaching and parental relationship may explain home education's success.

Being a reproduction of the classroom, home schooling emphasizes teaching and views the parent as teacher. In home education the emphasis is upon learning with the parent viewed as the director and co-participant in the home environment. This is reminiscent of Montessori education where environments are specifically created to enhance children's learning opportunities. However, unlike Montessori environments, the community of learning practice is not limited to educational purposes but evolves naturally across all spheres of the family's life, within the guidelines of the family meta-narrative. The result is a values-rich education centered upon people learning together. Character training and the engendering of values within the members' lives become more important than academic achievements.

In this thesis, the terms home schooling and home education are used intentionally as explained above, (unless in quotation), with home-learning and home teaching being generic terms that may include other, as yet un-researched approaches to teaching children at home. This classification is illustrated in the diagram below.



Historical Background

Home-learning is not a modern phenomenon of westernized nations but results from the age-old parental desire to raise children as valuable members of their own society (Rogoff and Lave, 1999). The home was the normal focus for educating the young from antiquity (Gangel 1983) and still is in 3rd world countries (Rogoff and Lave, 1999). Even as recently as the 19th century, the European aristocracy employed tutors and governesses to educate their children at home (Illich 1971). When viewed from a historical and world-wide perspective, schooling is the aberration while home-learning is the ‘norm’.

Similarly, calls for educational reform are not new. In 1900, Dewey's Laboratory School was radical with its child-centered approach to education. It had gardens, playing fields, laboratories, shops, low teacher/student ratio and open-ended, group work projects. It sounds remarkably like home education today both in its learning environment and its philosophy. (Dewey never advocated home education but rather grudgingly allowed that excellent educational principles might possibly exist in an 'ideal' home (1900)). Dewey's educational philosophy linked living and learning intimately together. Subjects were introduced as "outgrowths of children's experience" (p113). He, like many home educating parents (Thomas, 1998) aimed to train children in, "co-operative and mutually helpful living"(p.117) eliminating, "the barriers and artificial hindrances...separat(ing) school and society...work and play, thought and action, cognition and volition and all of the other dichotomies we so commonly use to categorize and ultimately to isolate the polarities of human experience." (Dewey, 1900, intro.)

Dewey imagined a place for children to learn in freedom and challenge. A century later it has been fulfilled in home education where days are not divided between work and play but all of it becomes Life, spent in the midst of family, working and learning together. "At home they can learn just by living," (Thomas, 1998, p.15).

Many home education families are self-employed (Barratt-Peacock, 1997) and their business surrounds them and is part of everyday living. Compartmentalization is reduced and each day is unified towards a long-term goal which has been expressed

as, “growing a family in wholeness and health” (personal correspondence, 26/7/04).

Work-based learning is purpose-driven and goal oriented which contrasts with Dewey’s educational philosophy where education has no goal except to enable the learner to better direct future experience (quoted in Barratt-Peacock, 1997).

In the 1960’s and 70’s a number of educational reformers including Holt, Illich and Kozol expressed disillusionment with standard educational practices, (Knowles et al 1992) They helped support and provoke dissatisfied parents until the idea of home schooling as an educational option was proclaimed (Holt 1969; Moore and Moore 1975) and the modern home schooling movement had begun.

In 1970, Illich wrote *Deschooling Society*, a seminal work on alternative education, but in it home schooling is not even mentioned. Illich spoke of reversing the educational structure and of new kinds of education, but never imagined school in the home. Home education is a difficult concept for educators. It challenges every assumption about education and defies the body of educational research that is based around learning in the class-room. It is a difficult concept for society too, because education has become professionalized. Government legislation on education indicates how far this process has been completed. Similarly, the number of legal requirements imposed upon home education to ensure that it meets the standards set for class-room education suggests that it has not yet received the status of a legitimate educational option in its own right.

Illich's "Deschooling Society" provides a handy reference point to mark the end of an era of alternative education which omitted to include home-learning in its thinking and the "beginning" of the modern home schooling movement. Although, as already pointed out, home-learning has existed for as long as children have been socialized within families to become full members of society, learning by inclusion in a range of adult endeavors (Rogoff et al, 2005).

Using Illich's work as a significant starting point, it becomes clear how home schooling has changed in 30 years. From a barely-conceived idea, it has grown to be counted in millions world-wide and one which is beginning to be considered a significant educational player in the USA (Romanowski 2001). From being viewed as a counter-cultural subversive life-style, it is achieving an acceptable respectability, (Knowles et al 1992) largely due to the media's growing acceptance and positive portrayals of home educating families (Blackwell, 1989, p13).

Knowles et al (1992) have neatly identified 5 phases in the history of home schooling in the USA. Their potted history of home-learning illustrates its background and introduces its most recent expression. They categorize its history as periods of contention, confrontation, co-operation, consolidation and compartmentalization while in conversation, Jackson (2000) has suggested a new and 6th phase, that of 'collaboration.'

Similar phases are identifiable in Australia. Contention between state education authorities and home-schoolers developed into confrontation within the law courts but because most judgements were made in favor of the home schooling families (Slee versus Education Dept, 1990, Benalla) and litigation proved very costly for the local authorities, a new period of co-operation emerged. Some schools even formed unofficial alliances with home-school families (Yea Secondary College) making school resources such as library and sport facilities available to them. Consolidation between home schooling families developed to some extent as different factions united to face legal battles that might occur in Australia as they had done in USA but once legal security seemed achieved, differences re-appeared causing compartmentalization, isolating home teaching families from each other.

Collaboration, the latest and 6th phase of home-learning should be distinguished from the instances of Co-operation that sprang up earlier between individual schools and families. Collaboration suggests some form of official association between home-learning families and educational authorities that distinguishes a truly collaborative effort, such as in the Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council, Distance Education Centers or the Virtual Charter Schools in USA.

The Distance Education Centre of Victoria may be an Australian example of long-term collaboration between a publicly funded system and parents teaching their children from a home base. Originally, the State funded home-learning system was for remote families but now it caters for more than 3000 children with many different

needs (DECV handbook, 2005). In USA, Virtual Charter Schools and Enrolled Home Study systems use modern technology and State funding to “stem enrolment losses to home schooling” (Lines, 2004) by offering curriculum, materials and support to those families who wish to teach their children at home. Stipulations are made upon families such as a minimum number of hours per week on campus, particular forms of assessment or regular conferencing with teachers. Lines (ibid) noted that regulations that seemed minimal at first appear to gradually become more demanding and restrictive.

In 1984, Iowa offered a Home Instruction Assistance Program with 15 students but now it numbers 300 K-12 students. In 1997, Alaska offered Enrolled Home Study and their students more than doubled in 5 years. While there are no nationwide data on enrolments in public home schooling, Lines (ibid) believed that the growth rate of home-learning has dropped from 20% to 10% mainly due to increasing numbers of home study students enrolled with public education bodies.

These Virtual Charter Schools are considered by some purists within the home-learning sector as a “Trojan Horse” trying to destroy the ‘soul’ of the home-learning movement (Klicka, 2002) while others see them as a transitional stage for families either moving out of or into home-learning (Lines, 2004.) This recent development in collaboration allows parental input in a home environment and encourages parental involvement with schools. They reduce the financial burden on individual families for home-learning and drive teachers to experiment with different systems (ibid). Klicka

(2002) suggested that Cyber Schools are a façade hiding attempts by education districts to extend funding and power over the home-learning sector. Whatever the case, cyber schools and home-learning generally, must either supply the “goods” and fulfill the needs of a diverse range of families or become an educational irrelevancy, a passing 20th century phenomenon.

However, home-learning does not seem about to disappear, having increased dramatically in USA, if estimates can be trusted, from 15 000 students in 1984 (Romanowski, 2001) to 1.7 million students in 1999 (Ray, 1999). Ray (2004) projected that 3 million students might be taught at home by the year 2010 but neglected to mention Cyber or Charter Schools which according to Lines (2004) have produced a decline in home schooling numbers. Such growth may be viewed either as an affirmation of home-learning or a criticism of the class-room system.

Australian information is limited and contradictory. In 1991, Hunter estimated 10,000 families home-learning with a growth rate of 20% per annum (cited in Barratt-Peacock, 1997). In 1998 Thomas estimated 10 000-15 000 home taught children in Australia, indicating a decrease which would run contrary to anecdotal evidence. Royall, education reporter in the Herald Sun (23/5/03) wrote, “About 5000 Victorian children are now being taught at home” but gave no reference for this information. Why are there no reliable figures? Fear of litigation no longer applies but the lack of any uniting body to provide an overall picture of the different factions may explain the lack of data. Alternatively, Australians may not be particularly interested in

quantifying the population whereas American studies have mostly taken the form of survey analysis (Meighan, 1997).

Previous Research Studies

If, as suggested, the modern home-learning phenomenon is traced from 1970, then ‘early’ research of the 1980’s and 1990’s would understandably take a comparative approach (Meehan and Stephenson, 1994). Being new and unproven, researchers wanted to know whether children “measured up” in academic, social and other areas. American researchers approached the question mostly by way of “systematic survey analysis”(Meighan, 1997, p.5) to report that home schooled students were on average 2 years ahead on scores of social skills and maturity, emotional stability, academic achievement, personal confidence and communication skills, (“Home School Researcher” cited in Meighan, 1997). Many studies reported home schooling achievements, (Ray, 1988, Hunter 1994 cited in Barratt-Peacock, 1997,) but due to the effect of parental support and sampling problems, their reliability is flawed. “Parents of lower scoring students would be less likely to have the child tested or report the scores,” (Hunter, 1994 cited in Barratt-Peacock, 1997). The comparative research approach to home-learning is insufficient; in-depth qualitative studies leading to a theoretical understanding of home-learning are needed to legitimize ‘best practice’ and direct appropriate support to home teaching families.

Early research focused on the external influences upon home teaching families (Barratt-Peacock, 1997) such as size, demographics, parent education, reasons for choosing home schooling and also compared student outcomes. Unfortunately, comparisons sometimes merely muddy the waters and prevent understanding. Cizek (1993) suggested that home schooling should be assessed according to the aims they have established for themselves. They should not, he said, be expected to fulfill the goals of the traditional, mainline schools, nor be criticized for failing to reach goals to which they never aspired. Being different to classroom schooling, a more sophisticated appreciation of its internal aspects (Barratt-Peacock, 1997) is required to understand it. In fact a new epistemology is needed, "one predicated on pluralism and on connection between domains" (Papert, 1993, p155).

Quantitative studies have their limitations but so do case-studies which cannot be generalized to the larger population although they can point the way towards theory (Yin, 1984). The author's family cannot be called representative since the home-learning population has not been adequately defined but it appears remarkably typical of home teaching families in the USA as described in Ray's survey of a largely Christian organization, (1990). He suggested that 'home schooling' families were white, largely middle-class, Christian, with two parents of more than average formal education, with more children than average whose average age was just over 8 years. Most had never attended public or private schools. Mayberry (1995) added that most lived in small towns or rural areas. Although the Australian picture with its separate history and development of education, (Barratt-Peacock, 1997), might be expected to

differ from the American, the author's family closely resembles Ray's model and suggests that home-learning in USA and Australia may share other characteristics. Some of these are discussed below.

Although the reliability of quantitative studies is questioned the narrative supports the findings of Ray's 1990 survey that suggests that home-learning may equalize educational opportunities. Although the poorest sectors of society were not well represented (1.4% of total) yet some of the poorest children scored as well as some of the wealthiest. Similarly, the case-study family provided an "educationally enriched environment" (Psychologist's report, 1997) despite a very tight budget.

The link between the decision to home teach and parental childhood experiences (Knowles, 1988 quoted in Barratt-Peacock, 1997) is confirmed by the case-study where the reasons for home teaching were mainly religious and social and could be traced back particularly to the father's childhood. Knowles and Barratt-Peacock also linked the parent's choice of instructional practices to childhood experience. In other words, parents tend to teach from their own learning tradition or repertoire (Rogoff et al, 2005). The author certainly reproduced her own classroom tradition, much to the detriment of the family's home-learning experience. Isolation should also be noted as a reason for home schooling in Australia (Distance Education Centre of Victoria Handbook, 2001.)

The case-study data indicates a development in home-learning. The concept of stages of home-learning experience and practice is a new but useful one. The terms “initial, establishment and functional” have been coined to describe the changing learning practices and philosophy of the home-learning family. The ‘initial’ stage may be characterized by the teaching parent reproducing their own learning tradition in the home and experiencing the tension of re-learning and reconceptualizing education. Appropriate teaching and mentoring could assist the beginner by presenting guidance and a range of learning options to suit the family’s needs. In the ‘establishment’ stage, the family has worked through initial problems and the children have unconsciously shaped the curriculum to suit their learning needs (Thomas, 1998.) In the ‘functional’ stage, the family’s particular form of home-learning has become accepted and is functioning to produce outcomes in accordance with the parental aims. There may still be issues but a unity of purpose has developed that assists the family to meet challenges. Whether this concept of ‘stages’ could be usefully applied to other home-learning families needs to be explored.

Van Galen’s “Ideologue or Pedagogue” distinction (cited in Barratt-Peacock, 1997) appears sadly simplistic in the light of the case-study since the family represented both educational positions. Learning practice, after the ‘initial’ stage was “Pedagogical” because it was shaped by the children’s learning needs but the parents’ ultimate aim was undeniably “Ideological” throughout. In the ‘initial and establishment’ stages, the stated aims were couched in religious terms while later the mother’s aims, “to grow a family in health and wholeness” appear less obviously

religious. By this third or “functional” stage, home-learning had become an accepted and functional educational practice. The experiment had worked despite problems and the mother’s aim suggests a more relaxed and unified purpose. The word “wholeness” still indicates the spiritual, holistic nature of the aims but the striving has ceased.

Home-learning research has tended towards superficiality, failing to appreciate the variety and depth of home-learning. Just as Van Galen’s description was simplistic, so was Barratt-Peacock’s Formal/Informal distinction (1997) criticized by Billett as “negative, imprecise and ill-focused” (2004, p.313). In the case-study, parent-student negotiation occurred as the children grew older, until finally, the students organized their own schedule entirely. The formal/informal distinction is derived from the school learning paradigm and does not explicate the breadth and development of home-learning processes. From reproducing their own class-room learning tradition (Knowles cited in Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Rogoff et al, 2005), the parents gradually adopted a more child-centered approach, (Thomas, 1998) ultimately becoming partners in learning (ibid, p 46). This is another example of how home-learning cannot be understood using the parameters set for the classroom.

The advent of Barratt-Peacock’s (1997) “explanatory framework for Australian home education,” (p.270) meant home-learning was finally considered a unique educational expression in a social context. He adopted Lave and Wenger’s concept of a community of learning practice where all participants benefit. Children gain

confidence in their ability and worth because they view their role in the family community as useful and valued. Parents gain great personal satisfaction from their role in the home-learning family, particularly the mother who also experiences restored status and prestige. Barratt-Peacock identified the social crux of home-learning.

Meehan and Stephenson (1994) have rightly called for more qualitative, in-depth and longitudinal studies of home schooling to clarify the results of earlier studies. There is a need for “substantial publications by educational or sociological researchers” (Knowles et al 1992 p223; Duffey 1999). This thesis helps to supply this need.

Arguments for and against Home-learning

Proponents of home-learning focus on the issues of time, values, individual needs and safety while opponents cite lack of socialization, lack of resources, including income as arguments against home-learning. The case-study indicated that these are valid criticisms.

Time is an important aspect of home-learning practice. Parents spend time with their children, become involved with their learning and strong family bonds result (Ballman, 1987). The link between parental involvement and a child’s academic success at school (Tansley, 1981) is multiplied in home-learning due to the depth of involvement and the continuity of commitment (Romanowski 2001.) Parents can provide character and values-based education as well as an intellectual one (Romanowski 2001) and can individualize curriculum to suit the child’s needs. One-

to-one tuition leads to greater academic engagement (Butler 2000) and flexibility allows parents to seize the child's "teachable" moments and encourage entry into the Zone of Proximal Development. Unfortunately, many home teaching parents are still trapped by the classroom mentality. Unaware of their own freedom, many try to impose an alien schedule upon children's natural desires to learn.

Home-learning was perceived by parents as being a safer option, physically, emotionally and educationally (Hensley 1995); physically safer from bullying or violence, emotionally safer because they could work at their own pace without competition or comparison and educationally safer because they could explore their own interests and develop intrinsic motivation. Parents hoped that this would develop a love of learning for its own sake (Romanowski, 2001.) Ray's (1990) 'after-home-school' information showed half (50.5%) of the tiny sample of 'home-schoolers' pursued further study at Junior college or University, as did the case-study children.

Lack of socialization has always been the main criticism of home schooling.

However, parents interviewed by Romanowski (2001) felt that home schooling allowed positive socialization across age groups and minimized negative socialization with its associated detrimental long-term effects (Ballman 1987). Parents felt that their children's self-concept benefited as a result.

In 1982 Holt, himself a teacher, wrote a damning indictment of school socialization.

“In all but a very few of the schools I have taught in, visited, or know anything about, the social life of the children is mean-spirited, competitive, exclusive, status-seeking, snobbish.”(p.44-45).

Is socialization in schools really so beneficial? The Home School Researcher considered that home-taught children were “socially mature, emotionally stable and personally confident” (quoted in Meighan, 1997, p.15). Mattox (1999) found that home-learning students were typically involved in 5.2 social activities outside of the home and Ray (1997) found that 98% of ‘home schooling’ students engaged in 2 or more social activities outside of the home. Children taught at home are socialized but according to different priorities; “we begin with happiness,” said one “home schooler” (Smith cited in Meighan, 1997).

Critics believe that children educated at home cannot experience the breadth of social diversity, belief and culture which is available to children at school although Holt (1981) pointed out that schools are themselves classist and racist. Even when home teaching families net-work, they tend to share similar beliefs, class and values (Simmons 1994). Rather than a criticism this has been considered one of home education’s benefits because it prevents values-dilution and its concomitant confusion within the mind of the child.

However, the crux of the argument is that the socialization issue in education has been misunderstood. The important issue is, to what extent does social interaction affect cognitive development? The Social Interactionist school of thought has linked

intellectual growth with language development, mastered with the help of a more advanced learner (Garton and Pratt, 1990) such as occurs between a mother and child, or between a child and older siblings. Beneficial social interaction occurs mainly in small groups or pairs (Perret-Clermont 1980) rather than in large groups. This explains why the normal home provides such a rich educational environment for the growing child regardless of class, income or parental education (Tizard and Hughes 1984).

Perret-Clermont (1980) believed that the kind of cognitive conflict, which produces intellectual growth, was not present in classrooms where collective teaching methods were used. Instead of social-cognitive challenge, there was a “social vacuum in the pupil-teacher relationship” (ibid, p189) that limited intellectual development. Home education, as shown in the auto-ethnography, is an essentially social activity; it practices the very principles of socialization that have been used to criticize it!

Other criticisms of home-learning such as lack of time and resources, loss of income (Butler 2000,) and parental lack of education, skills or character qualities also appeared in the case-study although none have mentioned the total physical exhaustion experienced by the author. This may have been caused by the extra strain of teaching children with learning difficulties.

Simmons (1994) feared that ‘home-schooled’ children would not learn certain organizational and study skills necessary for later life but this seems unlikely because

living and working as part of a large household requires great organizational skills, as any mother knows! Home-learning evolves into a self-supporting organization which requires the active participation of all members; children learn organizational skills by being part of an organization. In Appendix C, Miria tells how her home education experience prepared her for university where she was required to organize her study, social and domestic life away from home whereas High School had been constrictingly scheduled.

Another critic of home-learning put his objections this way;

“Home education will never be a major force in education because most parents are neither willing nor capable enough to undertake the responsibilities of educating their children at home.”

Mike, who made this comment in conversation, is an educated and thinking man who dismissed home-learning, (rather than actually criticizing it,) because of his opinion of parents rather than on any inherent problems within the concept of home-learning itself. Because Mike’s argument contains 3 commonly held false assumptions about home-learning, it is worth discussing further.

Mike’s first erroneous assumption was that home-learning is similar to classroom education and therefore will require similar resources to those of a school. On this premise, parents cannot be expected to reproduce the resources and infrastructure of a school in their home and so Mike concluded that home-learning will be too hard for most parents. When home education is understood as a different type of learning,

comparisons become inappropriate. No better/worse relationship should be inferred from the word “different”. The debate has moved on and continual comparison indicates a lack of understanding of the basic issues in this discussion. The time has come to investigate the nature of the instructional episodes that the child experiences every day at home, (Fisher and Berliner, 1985.)

Mike’s second false assumption was that, like Dewey, (1900) he believed that most parents are not “capable enough” to educate their children. Thomas (1998) reported that home teaching parents are very aware of their limitations of education, skills and time but, when parents discover their children’s needs, they often “rise to the occasion” and surpass the educational level they had achieved previously. They make a choice, accept responsibility for it and are empowered by that decision. The author achieved her aims of educating her children at home, beyond her wildest expectations.

Thirdly, Mike assumed that being small in number home-learning will never influence education generally. This mistake was the least dangerous of the three, merely underestimating the usefulness of different ideas in a healthy society (Arendt, 1959) and the value of benefiting even one child or one family.

The case-study showed the limitations and problems with home-learning but it also showed remarkable benefits, especially for the education of the learning disabled. It illustrated how home teaching parents are learners with imperfect educational

practice who will benefit from support and wise counsel as they progress towards their long-term goal of ‘growing a family in wholeness and health’ (the author) by a process of “de-bugging” (Papert, 1980). Home teaching parents constantly receive feed-back to evaluate their position relative to the long-term goal in the same way as a missile tracks down its target by a system of repeated corrections. De-bugging the system means you are moving in the right general direction, not necessarily getting it right the first time. The family’s ‘target’ is indefinable but drawn towards step by step over the years as they continually receive feed-back and adjust their learning practices to suit the family needs. There are problems with home-learning but for the author’s family, the benefits outweighed them.

Summary of General Research Findings

This thesis proposes that home-learning exists along a spectrum of different approaches to educating children at home. Two distinct approaches have been described as home schooling and home education. These terms apply to epistemologies of learning, to urgently needed theories of how children learn in a home environment from their parents. The analysis of each approach may help parents recognize the strengths and limitations of their own and other educational traditions (Rogoff et al, 2005) and so identify the practice appropriate to their needs.

The home-learning family explores stages of development as it is gradually shaped by the children’s and the parents’ learning styles (Thomas, 1998, Cai, 2002) to meet the children’s needs and reflect parental interests. The mother (Thomas, 1998) is the hub

of this caring, nurturing, social environment and a learner in her own right. The home-learning family produces a culture, (Barratt-Peacock, 1997, p109) a context for learning, (Rogoff and Lave, 1999) and organizational structures to sustain it. These provide valuable learning opportunities “on the job.”

The research literature’s statement in favor of home-learning on academic, emotional and social terms is discredited by the findings’ lack of reliability. In-depth qualitative studies are needed, especially regarding the education of children with learning difficulties at home.

The two outstanding facts about the home-learning movement are its rapid growth and the continuity of its practitioners indicating that it must be fulfilling some need in the eyes of parents. Public schools cannot and should not be expected to fulfill the educational needs of all children and all families (Romanowski, 2001) but home-learning can be customized to specific needs to do what no institution could be expected to do.

If home-learning is a viable educational option, it will continue to grow and prove itself by fulfilling the needs of parents and children across many groups of society. If not, it will fade with the passing of time and history will view it as a late 20th century phenomenon.

Section 2; Home education as a form of work-based learning

As researchers seek to understand home-learning, a re-focus on the idea of learning is required because of the different relationship between Knowledge, Life and Learning that exists in the home. This leads to a re-appraisal of what constitutes “successful education” (Papert, 1980) which is foundational to the proposition that home education is a form of work-based learning. How learning is viewed and assessed in a particular context, (the classroom, the kitchen or the factory floor,) depends on the ideas one has about Knowledge and about different modes of Knowing (Papert, 1993; Wells, 1998).

Modes of ‘knowing’ have been contrasted (Chisholm and Davis, 2005) and are summarized below to indicate how knowledge can be co-constructed in all areas of life;

Mode 1; explicit, theoretical knowledge as in information accumulation,

Mode 2; contextualized, transdisciplinary knowledge as in work-based learning,

Mode 3; “lifepace learning...based on a person’s life role” (ibid, p.4) with flexible, informal learning situations reflecting the person’s “motivation and interest” (ibid

p.5). All three forms of Knowing are active in home education; mode 1 as the child

accumulates information about the world; mode 2 in work-based learning and its

apprentice relationships; mode 3 in the child’s role as co-contributor to the family and

in the mother’s role as the caring, nurturing hub of the community.

Theoretical knowledge, although necessary for scientific advances is not generally necessary for everyday living (Wells, 1998) and if over-emphasized, produces a school system decontextualized from everyday needs and problems that ignores the holistic nature of children's development and human personality. Some learning is temporary, superficial and de-contextualized whereas other learning can be life-changing, affecting attitudes and beliefs (Wertsch, cited in Billett, 2004).

Work and learning

Work always produces some form of learning whether it is new learning or the honing of old skills (Boud & Solomon, 2001.) Activity theory attempts to explain how work mediates between the mind and the external world to allow learning to occur (Billett, 2001). Seen in this light, work, activity or Dewey's "occupations" (1900) become vital links in the learning process that home education utilizes and which enables children with learning difficulties to learn. Situated learning is highly kinesthetic, extends engagement, utilizes multiple intelligences (Hatch and Gardner, 1990) and different modes of knowledge. Learning is not merely a cognitive function but involves the whole person as s/he co-participates in activity (Wells, 2004) to reconstruct knowledge.

The debate between Education (higher theoretical knowledge) and Training (context based learning of skills) relegated work-based learning to the role of the poor cousin of "higher" learning (Burgess, 1977.) However, changing social and economic factors

have forced education to accept the validity of all kinds of learning and knowledge, each in its own sphere of reference according to need (Boud and Solomon, 2001.)

What represents basic need is debatable. Maslow suggested that the need for food, shelter etc was primary to the human being with “self-actualization” being at the pinnacle, but more recently Zohar and Marshall (2004) inverted Maslow’s “pyramid” to make spiritual needs the primary ones with others being secondary. In home education the family’s interpretation of need will depend upon their meta-narrative which in turn affects the environment created by the parents and the organization that supports it. Routines are designed to meet the family’s real and present needs which become powerful motivators for learning the authentic activities of the adult world. Need motivates children to learn.

It was very important that the children in the case-study should become independent, self-motivated learners since the work-load required the contribution of every member. Participation was expected and needed according to the child’s age and ability and in-turn, participation produced new learning or the refining of old skills and enabled the community to function (Billett, 2004); “the deliberate structuring of learning experiences within workplaces ...maintain(s) their continuity” (Billett, 2004, p318.) The parents aimed “to grow a family in health and wholeness” (author) which included learning as a long-term goal but need provoked the organization of many of the structures that evolved to maintain the learning community and inadvertently produced learning.

Home taught children appear to learn very well. The largest study to date, of young American adults, taught at home for an average of 11 years, reported that they were “doing well in the real world” (Ray, 2004, p.5) and the case-study supported this finding. Ray (2004) reasoned that their success was due to “sound academic skills...social and emotional nurturance, respect for others, a stable world view and a zest for learning” (p.5). Ray said nothing about the educational processes that produce such valuable attributes in children. This thesis argues that there is a reciprocal and shared learning process involved in home education whereby the “curriculum,” which is Life and the fulfilment of its needs, occurs in and around the family and can best be understood through the lens of workplace learning theories.

Situated learning in the home and at work

Situated learning is learning embedded in an activity where context and authentic activities (Rogoff and Lave, 1999) encourage learner engagement. Barratt-Peacock connected the “community of learning practice” to situated learning and this thesis extends this idea to show how situated learning is a distinguishing characteristic both of home education and work-based learning.

Until now, work-based learning theory has been isolated to adults but this thesis extends it to children. Rogoff (1999) noted apprentice-like relationships between young girls and the women who were teaching them to weave. Dewey (1900) recognized the educational value of work for children and since a basic premise of

work-based learning is that all work results in learning then it seems feasible that these principles can apply to children. The western world has marginalized children from the essential things of Life and its authentic activities (Illich, 1971) and so fails to see that appropriate work can be beneficial to children. The “childhood” of affluent western societies is very different from that experienced by children in the rest of the world where children working is accepted (ibid).

Work and learning occur together in the home where children learn to help with small tasks, exemplifying “legitimate peripheral participation in adult social worlds” (Lave and Wenger, quoted in Barratt-Peacock, 1997, p.32) which is a “defining characteristic of work-based learning” (Boud and Solomon, 2001, p.34). Learning is situated in the work tasks of the home under the guidance of a parent or more expert member. The home is a workplace and a context for learning where everyday cognition (Rogoff and Lave, 1999) and problem formulation/solving occur. The concept of ‘exploratory engaged time’ is proposed to describe engagement with problems of authentic daily living. It is linked to ‘bricolage’ or “tinkering” thought, (Levi-Strauss, quoted by Papert, 1980) and involves innovative or lateral thinking. Engagement in a task leads to learning; learning leads to change; change is essential to evolve the learning environment of the home that must meet the needs of the growing family.

The home educating home continues childhood teaching practices (e.g. modeling and scaffolding) for many years (Barratt-Peacock, 1997); learning is situated in the

community's social practice and in its many workplaces (Barratt-Peacock, 1997); relationships develop as a result of the child's apprenticed co-participation and the child is immersed in a social milieu of learning invested in community activities, expectations and values. As a result, the child experiences social engagement (Rogoff, 1990) which releases tremendous learning opportunities within the parameters of the created environment.

Peripheral participation burgeons into greater skills, involvement and responsibility as the child becomes more expert and a socially organized workplace develops to sustain and extend the learning environment created by the parents in accordance with the family's needs and ethos. Members, (parents as well as children) take on the roles of workers at different work sites as they advance towards their shared goal which in the case-study was expressed as, "growing a family in wholeness and in health."

The community of learning practice exerts a potent influence on adults as well as children, causing many home educating parents to extend their own education thus making learning part of the "field of authentic adult practice" (Barratt-Peacock, 1997, p270.) In the community of learning practice, learning happens everyday (Rogoff and Lave, 1999) and all around. Adult learning sets an example for the children and becomes the norm which is a powerful tacit form of expectation reinforcement and affects children's learning.

In the discussion of work-based learning, “competence,” a measure of achievement, is distinguished from “capability” which is difficult to measure and refers more to the future potential of an organization or individual to use knowledge and skill increasingly effectively with a view to the long-term gain (Boud and Solomon, 2001). “Capability” recalls the long-term goals of home-learning, the ethical business systems of Zohar (2004) and the character building and character training esteemed by home teaching families. Basic to the idea of capability is the belief that ethical values are of practical use and should be practised.

Work-based learning aims to produce autonomous learners while management provides a “culture of support” (Boud and Solomon, p.86). Similarly, the case-study mother desired to engender a “love of learning” in her children and appears to have succeeded, since they independently undertook further education at the tertiary level (Appendices A to C.) Autonomous learning may be an unexpected outcome of home-learning according to Boston University (quoted in Meighan, 1997, p.20) where applications from home taught students are encouraged because their “passion for Knowledge, ... independence and self-reliance ...enable(s) them to excel in our intellectually challenging programs of study.” The child’s motivation to learn has been linked with parental support for their child’s autonomy (Nicholls, 1999.) As mentioned, home-learning enables children to unconsciously exercise control over their curriculum (Thomas, 1998.) The link between home-learning and the production of autonomous learners will be explored further as linking to the motivation to learn.

Home education and work-based learning both operate within the tacit nature of informal learning (Polanyi, 1967) that is difficult to teach or even explain. Both have been maligned for lacking structure but Billett (2001) asserted that work place learning is structured according to its own goals and practices although these may be unlike those of the classroom and the same could be said of home education. Just as workplace learning has curriculum, (Gherardi et al, 1998) values, practices, methods and structures, so has home education along with personally set, negotiable goals that link to the meta-narrative of the community. Neither the curriculum of home-learning nor that of workplace learning can be prescribed since it depends on the community with its interests, values and prior learning.

The phrase “pathways for learning” previously used in work-based learning can also be applied to the careful development of ways and means to enable children and young people to learn in the home environment. Parents are directed by their children’s responses to find learning methods and approaches to suit the child (Thomas, 1998.) The auto-biographical description of the Barth family (1991) illustrated how the parents created learning pathways according to their children’s personal interests and then applied the skills to useful, practical projects that enhanced the family’s togetherness and quality of life. In effect, students’ natural propensities were scaffolded by the parents’ creation of appropriate projects to support their learning.

Scaffolding requires a great deal of individual attention. In fact, the closer the teacher understands the “head-fit” (Brown, quoted by Rogoff and Lave, 1999) of the task to the student the more likely the student will enter into the Zone of Proximal Development. In home education the mother/teacher knows her pupil’s ability and with individualized attention gives the child more extensive scaffolding and more fail-proof situations to enhance learning and extend self-confidence than is possible in a class-room. Scaffolding in the home is qualitatively as well as quantitatively different to that occurring in school where time is limited and attention must be shared among many class-mates. In the case-study, the mother, being also a teacher, may have enhanced the degree of scaffolding and “head-fit’ that the students received and this may have assisted the children.

“Common knowledge” holds that homes are inappropriate to the learning needs of older children and this popularized position has extended consequences for society such as the issue of urban drift that is adversely affecting rural areas. Many country children, attending schools in local towns, have been absented from their homes and rural environments for many hours of every week-day sometimes involving 2-3 hours of traveling daily. Absent from the home environment for much of their youth, they lack expertise in family occupations because their time has been spent learning other skills. Although this may widen their career choices, it makes them less able and less likely to return to the family occupation.

Quality of learning in the home and at work.

Quality of learning is an important issue in work-based learning as well as home education. It is dependent on the situation's 'invitational qualities,' (Billett, 2001, p20) that is, the kinds of activities engaged in with the goals, expectations, access to opportunities for learning and the guidance available. Opportunities can be created by parental adaptation of the learning environment, (Barth, 1991), guidance depends on having members of the learning community who are knowledgeable, available and willing to help the child while culture affects the tasks the child is expected and allowed to learn. In this respect home education could be criticized for promulgating class boundaries and limiting subject choice but schools are no different since intakes are generally classist due to area, fees or subjects offered. (Holt, 1982; Burgess, 1977.)

The quality of learning is related to the quality of purpose-driven thought which depends on the complexity of the problem formulated. A simple problem demands a simple solution but what problem is simple? If taken to a deep enough level, any problem takes on new elements of complexity. To formulate a difficult problem requires a deal of thinking about the unknown- that is where learning occurs, in the 'place' where Knowing stops and this requires envisioning something that isn't. Reconceptualizing home education as work-based learning allows context-rich everyday cognition, (Rogoff and Lave, 1999) motivated by problem formulating and problem solving situations to enter the discussion.

Rogoff (1999) limits 'precise and systematic' thinking (ibid, p7) to academic settings and does not allow for the spread of types of everyday thinking. She admits that much practical problem solving is assisted by 'tacit Knowledge' which is not visible or even measurable but received incidentally via experiential learning or vicariously from modeling. These forms of informal learning are important in home education where the child has the mentor beside him/her daily modeling not only skills but also attitudes. It contrasts to classroom schooling which tends to emphasize explicit learning.

The quality of a child's learning is largely determined by parents whether they home educate or not. Parents vary, from the wise and discerning to the sick and damaging and so do the home environments they create. Understandably, society is concerned that children may suffer abuse in home-learning families. Research has shown many rich learning environments and loving homes with strong family bonds but has never noted abuse. Home-learning stems from a selfless parental attitude that obviates the malevolent. However, families permitting research provide a degree of transparency for home-learning.

The "Place" of learning and work

In home education, there is no separation between school and home as different learning sites. For too long, school has been over-emphasized as the "place" where learning occurs and education is received while the home and family have been relegated to the rest of life and motherhood to a social/biological role. Workplace

learning and its extension, Lifespace learning (Chisholm and Davis, 2004) re-instate mothering as valuable work. Mothers create the particular nuance of the family's learning place and contribute to the nation's social and spiritual capital. A "learning place" need not be physical because learning can happen anywhere, anytime e.g. in the midst of one's family is not strictly speaking a place.

When life and work are unified, work-places can exist anywhere, without necessitating a specific 'place' (Cairns, 2003). A unified approach to life and learning rather than a polarized one (Dewey, 1900; Holt, 1970) means that learning and work are complementary supporting each other throughout every day. Work-based learning "celebrates the pedagogic significance of the particular and the present," (Boud and Solomon, 2001, p.42) and accords with Rogoff's ideas of everyday cognition and context-rich learning environments (1999) that can occur anywhere, anytime. When people work together on everyday problem solving they experience social engagement with the task, a powerful learning situation. Home education with its unified approach to life and learning "normalizes" learning, provides opportunities for learning everywhere and so people develop the educator's ultimate aim, "a love for learning" (Mason, 1925).

The current discourse on work-based learning identifies the danger of taking situated learning to the extreme where it becomes mere "situational determinism" (Billett, 2004, p.314). In such a case the agency of the individual and human free-will are lost to the power of the workplace context. Such a theory over-emphasizes the importance

of “place” in the learning triangle while minimizing the “agency” of the individual who chooses to try to learn and “mindfulness”, the individual’s meta-cognition about how they are able to learn (Cairns, 2003). There is no way of knowing what one does not know because learning, by definition occurs in the unknown “place” that exists in the mind. However, place should not be exalted over mindfulness or agency, all are essential elements of the learning experience.

Parents as Learners whose practice develops

The “Learning while Earning Project” (1986-1988) looked into work-based learning in the UK (Boud and Solomon, 2001). The participants’ experiences were similar to those of the mother in the narrative and pose the research question. Who is the learner? Is it the home teaching parent/s or the home taught child, or both?

Learners in the industries project found difficulty with the scheme’s flexibility and where to set their own learning goals. They found the process of negotiating personal learning pathways time consuming and often felt isolated from other workers who appeared not to understand their difficulties or aspirations. Despite problems, employees found the experience worthwhile leading them to a new appreciation of “employer expectations and their own responsibilities” (Boud and Solomon, 2001, p.70). However, their success and satisfaction depended largely on the willingness of supervisors to give generously of their time and effort. Such generosity was reflected in the employees increased “motivation and accomplishments” (ibid, p.70).

These findings echo the home teaching mother's experiences in the narrative;

- * She felt uncertain about where to set educational goals or boundaries.
- * She often felt isolated from other parents who appeared defensive or disinterested in the daily issues of home-learning.
- * She found the task tremendously rewarding despite the problems, with unexpected bonuses for parents as well as children.
- * She had to give generously of her time and effort.

This thesis suggests that home teaching parents be viewed as learners whose learning experience should be explored. Thomas (1998) reported that parents gradually adopted more informal educational methods that were unlike their own experience of school while Barratt-Peacock's findings (1997) appeared to contradict this by linking home-learning practices with parents' childhood school experiences. These apparently contradictory findings can be synthesized into one understanding through the already mentioned concept of stages of development that reflect the 'parental learning experience,' namely 'initial, establishment and functional' stages.

Parents in the "initial stage" of home-learning will experience tension as they attempt to break free from their own school learning tradition (Rogoff et al, 2005) because home-learning operates within a different tradition to class-room schooling, namely the Intent Community Participation tradition (Rogoff et al, 2005). Most parents have been reared in the Assembly Line tradition (ibid) of the classroom system and unconsciously reproduce it in the home. Certainly this was true for the case-study

mother although her tension was multiplied by the knowledge that despite her best intentions and efforts, there was always the possibility that the child might learn best by allowing maturation to take its course.

The exigencies of home-learning make it impossible for it to function within a learning tradition alien to it and tension results until the parent gradually moves on to explore other more satisfying learning options (Thomas, 1998). It seems likely that maternal distress is most likely to occur at this initial stage although outside factors could make it possible at any stage. The transition from the initial to the establishment stage could be facilitated by knowledge of home-learning theory and its different approaches, support and mentoring.

Home-educating parents, (especially in the initial stage) are Learners subject to the stresses of a new and demanding learning experience. There is learning about teaching, about shared work roles, organizational skills, learning styles but most of all, learning to break free from the dominating classroom paradigm of one's own learning "repertoire" (Rogoff et al, 2005). The parent must discover "on the job," how the child learns as part of everyday social practice within the home. Once viewed as learners, parents' needs for support, mentoring and wise counsel become obvious. Errors or over-sights in parents' educational practice become useful feed-back in the learning process of "de-bugging" the system (Papert, 1980) rather than a criticism. Frameworks of assistance are advocated to support them in their excellent work and to address the issue of maternal distress.

The term “establishment stage” describes the period during which parents and children explore other learning practices to find those that suit their needs. Children unconsciously shape the parents choice of ‘curriculum’ (Thomas, 1998) and gradually become more actively engaged in the learning process as “joint enquirer(s)” (ibid). In this way, the learning environment becomes increasingly negotiated and the learning practice increasingly suited both to the children’s and parent’s needs.

The third stage of the home-learning process is described as the “functional stage” and was pictured in the creative writing, “A Researcher’s Introduction to Home Education.” After many years the organization and community have developed as have the parents’ skills. Challenges still occur, of course, but the family faces these with the knowledge of participants’ roles, abilities and commitment. The wheels have been greased and the community moves onward together towards its goals. Parents are older but so are the children and while students may have moved away from home to study or work, the ethos of commitment and bonding times of working together still applies (see Appendix A for Olivia’s description of recent projects).

Differences between home education and work-based learning

Some important differences exist between home education and work-based learning, most notably their goals. Both management and parents are interested in continuity but workplaces, unlike homes, are motivated by profit and the regulation of learning experiences can be highly contested (Billett, 2001). Increased skill levels mean increased remuneration and power so they are not equitably distributed. However, in

the home, learning opportunities while limited by the family's particular situation are parentally organized for children to develop interests and skills in their chosen fields (Barth, 1991.) Opportunities for participation are allocated according to the child's age, ability, interest and prior learning whereas workplaces may distribute affordances for learning on "affiliation, associations, gender, language skills, employment status (or) standing in the workplace" (Billett, 2004, p319). Young children are unable to negotiate their own learning choices (although older students can) and so parents must undertake for their children some of the administrative functions and agentic choices that employees pursued for themselves (ibid).

To sum up, the everyday participatory practices of home education are comparable to workplace practices and will affect the nature of the learning experience as well as the learning outcomes and may explain the particular potency of learning at home.

The Motivation for Home-learning

Research shows that home-learning families do not prioritize their children's academic outcomes (Lindvall, 2001, Barratt-Peacock, 1997.) The real motivation for home-learning is 'Life' or perhaps, 'experiencing Life together' with learning occurring as a by-product. Families may define 'Life' differently, but it basically represents the "Bigger Picture" and for the Christian family in the case-study, it had the spiritual interpretation of Jesus who is Life. The children were continually referred, either by specific reference or by implication to a values position, a meta-narrative. By presenting daily life and the child's own individualism in perspective

with the bigger picture of the world and existence, children are prepared for the real world of work and responsibility. Learning is embedded in activities and academic success is presented as an important subsidiary to the real purpose of their lives (Lindvall, 2001). The child's appropriation of the family meta-narrative may promote meta-cognition since both are related to the bigger picture; thinking about 'Being' may transfer to thinking about 'Thinking'. Meta-cognition assists learning and may help explain why home learning produces independent learners.

The home taught child experiences autonomy in learning (Thomas, 1998) and this empowers him/her to become responsible for learning which produces independent, self-motivated learners pursuing their own interests. This contrasts sharply with the lack of autonomy experienced by children in the school system and the tendency for classrooms to produce dependent learners (personal correspondence, 6/7/05).

Institutions such as schools cannot allow one child to affect it; the child must submit to the system or face the consequences. The student is powerless in the face of a "bully" system (Holt, 1964.)

In the same way, learning was not necessarily the primary outcome for Mexican girls learning to weave (Rogoff and Lave, 1999) although it occurred alongside occupation in the work-place. The mat was the most important outcome of the exercise, and the girls' learning, although important, was secondary to it. Similarly, parents' higher imperative may be to engender values within their children's lives. This concept is

important in understanding the usefulness of home education for the learning disabled and is re-considered later.

The “Discipleship Approach,” to home-learning centers on values and relationship (Lindvall, 2001.) It rejects content-based education in favor of the Hebrew educational paradigm which Jesus expressed as, “Follow me” or, Become what I am. Life, as lived by the teacher becomes the curriculum and the pupils are there, able to watch and learn at every turn. The learner knows the mentor and becomes like him/her rather than just mastering his knowledge. In this situation, thinking and learning are "intricately interwoven with the context...(its) physical and conceptual structure as well as the purpose of the activity and the social milieu in which it is embedded"(Rogoff and Lave, 1999, p2.) Home educating families’ daily living and learning are social and context-rich, deeply interwoven with the purpose of sustaining the home base, the learning environment. With the meta-narrative as a structural framework, the community is focused towards a higher goal which is the true motivation for home learning.

Summary of findings

Home education can be re-conceptualized as a form of work-based learning within a community of learning practice. It is a broad-based, multi-sensory goal-oriented form of everyday cognition (Rogoff and Lave, 1999) where learning flows from participation in the authentic everyday activities of life in the child’s culture. The need for overt instruction is often reduced because children learn through engagement with the learning situations around them as they co-participate in authentic problem

solving situations on behalf of the community. (However, for learning disabled children who have great difficulty understanding print, the teaching of reading has to be direct, specific and persistent (Torgesen, 2000.)) Home education avoids the separation of learning and real life that occurs in schools, (Holt, 1964; Wells, 1998.) The unified approach to life and learning motivates co-participants and helps to produce autonomous learners.

Learning is situated within daily social routines with the learner gradually becoming a fully-participating member of the society through a method of apprenticeship-tutelage from more expert learners, (Lave and Wenger, 1991 cited in Rogoff, 1990.) Therefore home education exists in a social context, being based upon social relationships; it produces an environment of 'relational reality' (Thwaites, 2001.) Home is a workplace where people participate, co-constructing knowledge in small groups, under close supervision, with more expert members modeling and "scaffolding" skills. In this light it becomes an important part of the discourse on learning as a social construct, thereby refuting the criticism that home taught children lack socialization.

Home educating parents should be viewed as Learners and workers in their own right. They utilize, albeit intuitively, excellent educational strategies while academic achievement becomes secondary to the more important aim of engendering values and spiritual capital within their children's lives. This is the challenge and the opportunity for home learners, to integrate 'knowing' and 'doing' in their everyday

lives to such an extent that their children have the personal character qualities to face a changing world and not only survive but thrive to become mature adults, contributing to society.

Section 3; Teaching learning disabled children at home

The media cite wonderful examples of high achieving children who have been home-schooled (Ryan,1988, p20), but what about the other end of the spectrum? Does home-learning fulfill the needs of children with learning difficulties? Despite limited research in this area there has been an assumption that untrained parents could not adequately teach children with special needs (Ensign, 1998.) The narrative suggests differently, in fact quite the reverse. Parents, being highly attuned to their children's learning states and stages, make excellent teachers within the community of learning practice. Parents do not teach according to the assumptions and stereotyped techniques of special educators (ibid) but according to better guidelines that I dare to call maternal instinct. This statement requires examination in the light of existing literature on home-learning.

Learning difficulties have been estimated to affect 20% of the population mildly and 5% severely (Tansley,1981), so there is little doubt that many home schooling families will be dealing with the problem of educating a child with some level of learning problem. Duvall et al (1997) estimated the number of children with learning difficulties being taught at home in the USA to be as high as 30 000 and yet very little

is known about them. National Challenged Home-schoolers (NATHHAN) is an organization of 15 000 families in USA who teach children with special needs at home. Australia has no estimate of the number of students with learning difficulties studying at home although in 1977 the Isolated Children's Parents Association surveyed 556 families with children studying by distance mode and the data indicated a very low incidence of disabilities (McFisher, 1977.) To the question, "Does your child need special help in any area?" only 7.1% of parents answered affirmatively which seems low compared to Tansley's estimates already mentioned. This may have been affected by the reporters, either parents or professional researchers; parents may hesitate to admit their children's difficulties.

From opposing or ridiculing home-learning, the media has completed a 'volte face' and now does an equal disservice in perpetrating a new myth; that home-learning produces above-average achievers or even prodigies (Blackwell, 1989, p13). As a result, some parents face the unenviable task of explaining to themselves and to others why their child does not conform to this false perception of the typical 'home-schooler'. The media have presented a distorted picture by omitting those students with learning difficulties from the picture in the same way as researchers have done. Home-educated students may suffer from behavioral, emotional or any of the other problems that beset ordinary people.

The myth of the "prodigy home-schooler" may have increased parents' reluctance to volunteer information about a child unable to meet the arbitrary standards set by

educational authorities, other home-schoolers or most importantly, those they set for themselves. Mothers of learning disabled children in the school system experience self-guilt, condemnation and increased stress levels (Brock, 2001.) Children's stress levels also rise because of school demands and parental anxiety (ibid) and home teaching mothers and children probably experience similar feelings. When combined with isolation, exhaustion and defensiveness (Ray, 1988) this could develop into distress.

At school, children with learning difficulties often leave early, with poor skills and a damaged ego, their self-esteem scarred, (Maglen, 1998.) Home education provides the benefits of increased family bonding, values affirmation and reduced time wasting, especially suiting children with learning difficulties due to individualized instruction, instinctive adoption of situated work-based learning with its kinesthetic emphasis, absence of peer/standards-comparison and the benefit of unlimited Time. Home education maximizes learning by removing the artificial time and place limitations of the class-room institution from the child's natural instinct to learn and provides a far richer educational environment for the young child, than any institution could (Tizard and Hughes, 1984; Wells, 1986.) It extends the scaffolding techniques of early childhood being the traditional method of passing on skills and values in the past (Gangel and Benson, 1983) and is still the dominant teaching method in many 3rd world cultures today (Rogoff, 1990.)

The recommended principles of remediation for the learning disabled (Tansley, 1981, Ensign, 1998) include a multi-sensory, individualized approach, use of structured methods, over-learning, pupil success and teaching from the child's strengths while remediating his/her weaknesses. But, more than these, there remains an "indispensable ingredient for success...motivation" (Nicholls quoted in Tansley, 1981, p234.) By uniting life and learning, engagement and modeling, home education with its work-based learning approach provides motivation for the learning disabled child. However, a still greater concern is the child's emotional well-being, (Tansley, 1981) one that the author recognized as her daughter faced the frustrations of her disability.

A new approach is needed

Adults with learning difficulties report the traumas they suffered at school. They felt "alone, frustrated and dangerously depressed...(in a) vortex of confusion-powerlessness- fear- humiliation" (Smith, 1990, cited in Weeks, 1998.) Australian Primary Schools have one teacher to 20 or more pupils (DOE regulation, 2004) and many students leave with minimal skills in reading and writing (Maglen, 1998.) School life has not changed. Maglen (1998, p5) suggests a "mismatch between the individual's learning needs and styles and the approaches favored in mainstream classrooms," with the deficit approach towards under-achieving children becoming an excuse for students, teachers and the community to accept poor achievement. She boldly suggests a connection between learning difficulties and "inappropriate teaching or curriculum arrangements," (ibid, p5.)

The learning needs of the learning disabled are incompatible with a school system that is not designed to cater for their needs. They need enormous amounts of involved time, a limited resource in schools and one that Carroll identified as a central factor in learning (quoted in Fisher & Berliner, 1985.) Unfortunately, teachers in school lack time and often lack the expertise to effectively recognize and teach children with learning difficulties (Terrill, 2001.) A vicious cycle of frustration and failure may ensue. Home-learning has its own problems as shown in the case-study, but suitable and sensitive assistance could mitigate them to produce an excellent option for the education of children with learning difficulties.

Stevens (1988) speaks poignantly of the effect that “failure...prolonged inescapable failure “(p3) has upon a child’s psyche. Such children begin to expect to fail, goals appear unattainable and so does future success. They may even be excluded from parts of our culture which to some extent is defined by books and from the power of reflective thinking that critical comprehension of a story produces (Maglen, 1998.) The learning disabled child may be on the difficult road to low self-esteem, anxiety and depression (Stevens, 1988). Higher levels of anxiety and stress among learning disabled adolescents than among their normal class-mates have been noted (Brock, 2001), as were lower expectations of success and fewer strategies for coping with normal, everyday stress and problems (Stevens, 1998). Prolonged failure leads to low self esteem and the child experiences closure from the subject leading to further failure (Bloom in Fisher & Berliner, 1985.)

Depression, deliberate self-harm and suicidal behavior among youth is increasing (McLean and Redman, 1999). Recently, the approach being taken is that suicidal tendencies have both an immediate and long-term underlying factors such as “childhood adversity” or “social disadvantage” (Beautrais, 1996). Children with learning difficulties experience prolonged childhood adversity, not only due to learning frustrations but also due to school teasing and humiliation. No significant link has been established between learning difficulties and youth suicide but no research study has been discovered to date.

The continuous struggle just to keep up with peers in class, subjects the child with learning difficulties to increased levels of fatigue which may present a health risk (Weeks, 1998), “The relationship between stress and dyslexia is clear,” (ibid, p.13) although Weeks points out that this relationship is not inevitable. She reports some good news - social support can greatly moderate a person’s vulnerability to stress- and the bad news- many people with learning difficulties lack the social skills to make friends and maintain the social relationships they so desperately need.

Home education can mitigate the damaging effects of learning difficulties for the child by providing the social support and structures inherent in the average home, by reducing fatigue and by giving the child the individualized teaching that is needed. Dewey (1900) believed that only the “wisest and best” parents could educate their children but this thesis proposes that even “ordinary” parents can create an excellent

learning environment for their children. All that is needed is the time and desire to care and nurture the child until s/he is equipped to enter the wider world.

Piaget warned educators of the dangerous “American Question” i.e. equating fast development with optimal development (cited in Rogoff, 1990). Faster is not necessarily better, especially for children with learning difficulties. Home taught children often read later than their school counterparts (Thomas, 1998) but home teaching parents, raised in the Assembly Line tradition (Rogoff et al, 2005) often may not realize this. They, as the author before them, may need help to break free from their classroom mentality and expectations such as ‘normal’ reading development. By focusing on long-term not short-term goals, home-learning offers children time to develop at their own speed and in their own way without the distraction of norms or standards.

A dearth of research

While research has shown that parent/school co-operation for the dyslexic child is very important (Cotterell, quoted in Tansley, 1981,) there is little about such children learning at home (Duvall et al, 1997; Duffey, 1999.) However, one research study found academic engagement was 2 1/2 times greater among learning disabled students instructed at home (with concomitant gains in reading, written language and maths, (Duvall et al, 1997)) compared to their schooled counterparts. Higher academic engaged time and smaller groups were suggested by the authors for the effectiveness of the home instruction.

There appears to be a dangerous lack of understanding about learning difficulties among researchers. Barratt-Peacock failed to understand that ordinary parents are highly attuned to their children's needs. Speaking about the sampling problem in survey analysis of home teaching families, he asked, "Until the children were tested how could (the parents) know that their children were higher or lower scoring?" (Barratt-Peacock, 1997, p.32). He is unaware that home teaching parents know their children well, as the case-study showed. When a mother spends time with a struggling child, she can identify degrees of difficulty or comprehension expressed by the smallest gesture or tone of voice. Perhaps only a mother can operate on such a level of intuitive understanding! This thesis challenges the misconceptions of male researchers as well as the resources and organization of schools.

This thesis takes the bold step of proposing home-learning as an excellent alternative for the education of children with learning difficulties, thus breaking new ground in the education of the learning disabled. However, some misconceptions about how the learning disabled learn at home must be rectified.

Conversational learning

Conversational learning has been repeatedly stressed as important in the life and development of the home taught child (Barratt-Peacock, 1997; Thomas, 1998). Since Dewey, it has been understood that the child learns through, "the social converse and constitution of the family" (1900, p.34). It is "dialogic meaning making" (Wells,

1998, p.13) as children and adults form a “joint construction of reality” (Barratt-Peacock, p.134) bringing “identity to the family members” (ibid). Conversation between child and parent in ordinary homes covers topics of remarkable breadth and depth (Tizard and Hughes, 1984) whereas school’s contextual language is biased against lower class children along with the elevation of academic skills over “exploratory and collaborative talk” (Wells, 1986, p137).

Family conversation in 6 home-learning families was quantified (Barratt-Peacock, 1997). Approximately half the children’s day (from 10.25 to 12.75 hours), was spent in conversation about learning, domestic routine or social activity. In contrast, the case-study pointed out how little the author’s daughter contributed to family conversation due to her language difficulty, something that has not previously been noted in the literature. Despite this lack of conversation, she learned. ‘Conversation’ as Wells pointed out (1998) does not have to be verbal.

Children with language learning difficulties may find conversation horribly difficult and other forms of communication such as gestures, mono-syllables, demonstration or writing may be preferred. These contribute to “joint co-construction” of reality just as speech does and are viewed by Wells as “utterances” (1998.) At work around the home environment, when conversation is situated in a particular context and mediated by the tactile nature of an authentic activity (Billett, 2001), stress is reduced and speech and the expression of ideas become easier.

In the situated learning of home education, the “curriculum is tacit” (Gherardi et al, 1998, p.291) which makes it difficult for practitioners to explain what and how they teach. In home education, the mode of learning is different to that of the classroom, one that allows the language impaired child access to a learning medium other than speech. Wells (2004, p.2) spoke of the “holistic nature of learning as a co-participation in activity” and education for the learning disabled needs to be viewed in these terms. The mother/teacher in the case-study developed successful strategies for teaching her learning disabled children such as using stories to create shared world experiences that in turn led to collaborative talk, 1-to-1 instruction and Time to learn (Carroll, quoted in Fisher and Berliner); the same strategies recommended for introducing literacy to socially/economically disadvantaged children (Wells, 1986). Is there a connection between socially/economically deprived children and learning disabled ones that the same techniques worked? Home education is rich in context, authentic kinesthetic activity and social engagement but also, it is needs-directed, enabling the home teacher to discover in isolation, strategies endorsed by research.

Home-learning families, as in many third world countries, often operate in the cultural tradition of “intent community participation” (Rogoff et al, 2005) where children learn by observation and inclusion in a range of adult endeavors. In this situation, talk, “extends communication...in shared activities rather than being the sole means of instruction...Talk has an important role (but) is never primary.” (Jordan, cited in Rogoff et al, 2005, p.28). In this tradition, learning is linked to activities rather than to academics. So speech is no longer the dominant means of

instruction. Instead, “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave and Wenger, cited in Rogoff et al, 2005, p.13) is the usual method of knowledge acquisition and this enables children with language difficulties to learn. This challenges the classroom emphasis on speech as the mode of instruction and the acceptance of conversational learning as the norm in home-learning.

Such children who are unable or unwilling to communicate verbally would most likely be diagnosed as ‘deficient’ in some way in the classroom (Maglen, 1998). The language used in learning difficulties suggests disease or abnormality but children with learning difficulties are more helpfully understood as ‘different’ rather than ‘deficient.’

“The deficit approach only reinforces, in the students themselves, in their teachers and many in the community, expectations and acceptance of failure or poor achievement”(ibid).

Misdiagnosis of children with learning difficulties is an enormous problem today (ibid) from which home teaching parents may not be exempt.

Children with learning difficulties face tremendous frustration in a society dominated by the written word but this frustration can be mitigated by home-learning if the family meta-narrative subordinates academic learning to more important spiritual capital. Learning problems take on less importance when viewed in the light of the Bigger Picture of life and the universe. A lesson that is too hard today can be mastered later, while today the child has time to experience satisfaction by honing

existing skills or learning new ones in other areas. In this light, home education with its situated, highly kinesthetic, needs-directed curriculum is eminently suited for educating the learning disabled.

Section 4; Towards an epistemology of learning

An epistemology of home education emphasizes life-wide learning rather than teaching. Home education promotes a unity of purpose as work and play become indistinguishable and teaching and learning flow from the relationships and interaction between members of the community. Wherever parents or older siblings are assisted by a child, modeling and situated learning occur; when the child is cognitively challenged, “intersubjectivity” occurs; when the child is nurtured, the skills of “motherese” and scaffolding naturally function and encourage the child into the zone of proximal development. (In Appendix B, Tina describes caring for younger siblings.) Ordinary homes are a rich source of culture and vocabulary whatever the socio-economic status of the family (Tizard and Hughes, 1984; Wells, 1986) due to the highly sophisticated learning processes that occur naturally therein and provide the child with the cultural infrastructure for interactions and relationships with others later in life (Rogoff et al, 2005).

Despite difficulties the case-study family continued to teach their children at home for years with considerable success. Barratt-Peacock (1997) attributed this continuity to the satisfaction gained from children’s academic achievements or increased parental prestige and satisfaction, but this inadequately explains the particular

“magic” in home-learning. “Because the situated curriculum is tacit, the practitioners find it hard to explain it” (Gherardi et al, 1998, p.287). Socially situated learning, resulting from relationships in the learning community exists in the tacit dimension (Polanyi, 1967) where processes are hard to identify or articulate. Home teaching parents intuitively apply excellent teaching methods but seem unaware of the richness of the learning practice that is situated in the home’s authentic contexts.

Home-learning is a process rather than a standard or a philosophy and could be likened to a growing organism. Research must take its dynamic nature into account and avoid reductionism and the tendency to institutionalize knowledge (Gherardi et al, 1998). Once analyzed into parts, the holistic nature of the experience is lost, producing misrepresentations that have caused some to question the motives of home-learning research (Mark Hegener, Editor of Home Education magazine) and has discouraged parents from participating in studies. Home-learning may be best researched by home teachers themselves because the Assembly Line tradition of learning imposes its own bias upon researchers who find it very difficult to understand home-learning as it operates within the learning repertoire of Intent Community Participation (Rogoff et al, 2005).

The Research Questions

Lived experience, analysis of the case-study data and the literature review produced these research questions;

- 1.) “Is home-learning a social activity?”

- 2.) “Does home-learning take different forms?”
- 3.) “Can home education be re-conceptualized as work-based learning?”
- 4.) “Are home teaching parents also learners?”
- 5.) “Is the concept of a family meta-narrative helpful in understanding home-learning?”
- 6.) “What is the theoretical foundation of home-learning?”

The questions focused analysis of the data and further reading of the literature to produce an understanding of home-learning as an educational method, embedded in a culture and existing in different forms. One form, home education is described as a goal-oriented, culture-cum-organization founded on meaningful social relationships where learning occurs all around in the work-based context of a community of learning practice. In this community, the mother is very clearly a Learner struggling to shed her own educational traditions (Rogoff et al, 2005) and extend her understanding of how children learn outside of the classroom. Foundational to the home-learning experience is the positive framework of the family’s meta-narrative that provides security and comfort, guidance and perspective through difficulties. Further research is needed to investigate whether a meta-narrative is important for home teaching families outside the Christian sector.

Home-learning is insufficiently explained in theoretical terms. While existing educational theories shed light on various home-learning processes, a comprehensive understanding of how children learn at home is urgently needed. Further relevant theories will now be explored to extend that understanding.

The parent as modeler and joint enquirer

Rogoff (1990) synthesized two apparently contradictory theories of cognitive development, those of Vygotsky and Piaget. Her synthesis of these theories illustrates important home-learning processes that occur at different stages of children's development.

Vygotsky believed that children learned best from an expert or more experienced partner while Piaget believed that optimal learning occurred during the intellectual challenge experienced between partners of equal knowledge and ability. According to Rogoff, their theories explain different types of learning that occur at different stages of a child's cognitive development. Vygotsky's model applied to the young child's development of skills and retention of information necessary for implementing the cultural tools of thinking such as reading and writing. At this stage unequal partners are very effective as in the case of "motherese". Whereas Piaget's model applied to the older child's qualitative shifts in perspective on logico-mathematical problems.

According to Piaget's model, the older child, having developed the skills and information needed for using the cultural tools for thinking, is able to consider another person's point of view and can experience "intersubjectivity." Mentally challenged when his experience of the world seems opposed to the ideas that he already holds about it, co-operative discussion with an equal partner enables him to

deal with the 'cognitive conflict' and reach a state of mental equilibrium. Differing viewpoints are explored and this process of mental challenge was considered by Piaget to be the ideal form of social interaction to produce cognitive development. By "cognitive conflict," he did not mean quarrelling and classroom chaos but a logical comparison by the child of different understandings of the world around him. Piaget studied children in groups of two or three and did not advocate that large numbers of children be herded together or that cognitive development resulted from a wide range of social experience.

In the home, novice-expert relationships are available all day and every day with partners varying as needs require which provides the ideal social learning situation according to Vygotsky. Home-learning families adapt and individualize their teaching to the young child, modeling skills and extending his understanding and knowledge beyond what could be expected in a classroom situation where one-to-one tuition and personal interaction is infrequent (Thomas, 1998). Continually involved in the everyday work and routines of the home environment, children are valued co-workers with their mentors and experience peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991, cited in Rogoff et al, 2005, Gherardi et al, 1998) in the presence of a more expert member until they become experts themselves.

The needs of the growing child change and in tune with the growth, the mother moves naturally, instinctively from the role of expert tutor during the child's early years to that of equal inquirer or joint researcher (Thomas, 1998) as the child grows

older. This phenomenon of a changing parental role was frequently noted among the 100 home-learning families Thomas studied. Home teaching parents are often challenged by the child's curiosity about things outside their sphere of knowledge and are very aware of their own lack of expertise, (ibid.) They are often not qualified teachers (ibid) although in USA they generally have some college education (Ray, 1990.) Mental challenges and "intersubjectivity" occur as the child and parent as partner share their interests and seek together for the answers.

Piaget felt that the unequal relationship between an adult and child prevented the necessary degree of discussion and "intersubjectivity" for cognitive development because the child would automatically abandon his own ideas for those of the "superior" adult. He believed 'equal' partners would generally be two children of roughly equal ages. However, if the adult and child interacted co-operatively on a, "I don't know either. Let's find out together," basis as Thomas identified, (1998) then a sufficiently equal partnership would exist to allow co-operative thinking and reciprocal understanding to occur.

To sum up, home teaching parents move from functioning as an expert modeler of skills to their very young children to a more 'equal' relationship as a partner in research as the child grows older. Partaking of the learning experience with their children, parents make enquiry part of normal adult practice. In this way children experience autonomy over their learning as they become equal partners in enquiry and research with their parents.

Surrounded by helpful adults or sibling experts, the home taught child experiences exceptional opportunities for cognitive development when viewed from Rogoff's synthesis of Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories. In this light, the small number of age-peers appears beneficial rather than detrimental and the close and co-operative nature of home-learning families (Thomas, 1998) with their values-based meta-narrative provides security and support for the growing child in a sometimes confusing world.

Traditions of Learning; Intent community participation

Rogoff (2005) delineated three traditions of learning, although there may be others and hybrid forms;

- 1) Assembly Line learning - as in Western classrooms,
- 2) Guided Repetition - much used in the learning of sacred texts,
- 3) Intent Community Participation - common in third world societies.

Home education operates within the learning tradition of Intent community participation where the inclusion of children into a range of adult endeavors is normal. This confirms home education's ancient roots.

In the tradition of Intent Community Participation, children are expected to observe adults living (i.e. at work and play) and to contribute to shared tasks when able. In this way, children experience "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave and Wenger, cited in Rogoff et al, 2005) and apprentice-like relationships with those more expert than themselves although the roles of learner and teacher are flexible. Time for

children and adults to be together is essential because learning occurs by watching and sharing in activities valued by the community. Rogoff likens this learning tradition to an orchestra whereas the school learning tradition is compared to an Assembly Line.

The organization of children's opportunities to learn and participate in any culture (Rogoff et al, 2005, p.4) is hard to explicate because it is implicit, accepted as the 'status quo' and therefore it often goes unnoticed. The idea of "activity settings" (Rogoff et al, 2005, p.5) helps articulate the aspects of a culture that in combination organize a child's opportunities to learn. They include the characters with their conduct-rules and motivations, the scenario, activities and cultural goals and beliefs. In the case of the family studied all these aspects were shared, shared rules, shared motivations of necessity, shared activities, shared goals and beliefs. The home educating family studied is an example of an "activity setting," that allowed children to share time with adults to observe and participate in a range of adult activity. The home educating parents in the case-study developed work sites or projects to provide opportunities for learning and/or necessity (e.g. keeping hens, rearing calves.) Indeed the mother's heavy work load rendered the children's assistance a valued and appreciated contribution.

Cultural infrastructures

Home educating families evolve as learning communities along with intrinsic cultural routines and practices. Although everyday routines appear of little value, they are

important to a child's development, providing, "patterns of engagement ...to build on in daily activities" (Rogoff et al, 2005, p.2). Each individual builds up a "repertoire(s) of cultural practices" (ibid, p.4) i.e. familiar ways of interaction based on previous experiences, expectations and values. Later on these ingrained patterns of behavior will guide actions and interaction with others in new situations.

Daily experiences within the case-study family developed traditions and expectations of work, assistance, commitment and belonging, "cultural infrastructures," (ibid, p.7) that provided positive foundations for future engagement. The parents based their actions and social interaction on the Bible, attempting to minimize the children's negative social experiences in order to engender confidence and self esteem in their children.

Work seemed to provide a useful link between the inner world of thought and the outer world of speech for the language disabled child in the case-study. Talk was very difficult for her and conversational learning therefore was not a preferred learning option. Her prospects of learning in a classroom situation where Talk is the dominant form of instruction would be poor. In the intent community participation tradition of learning, talk has an "important role in the context of practice...(it is) closely tied to and supportive of action...Talk is never primary" (Jordan cited in Rogoff et al, 2005). The home educating family instinctively provided a medium of work and activity that enabled the language disabled child to learn which is now validated by theory.

Home-learning curriculum

It is a welcome revelation to the world of home-learning that children direct the choice of curriculum and teaching methods that they will experience at home (Thomas, 1998). This relieves parents from the heavy responsibility of choosing the “correct” teaching approach or the “best” course of study for their children.

According to Thomas, the students themselves, without realizing their own power, indicate to the parent-teacher whether they are experiencing learning satisfaction or not by their attention level, interest and engagement or alternatively, by resistance, refusal or “switching off.” Little by little, the parents in the study adopted techniques and strategies suited to the individual student’s learning styles and aptitude. When the students resisted, “They say(ing) in effect that the way they are being taught does not accord with their implicit and inarticulated theory of learning” (p.61). Children train the parent to become a more successful educator.

Unable to learn via the methods used, Olivia showed the typical symptoms of inattention, disinterest, school refusal and finally stomach pains until the methods changed. Eventually, ignoring her inabilities and utilizing her strengths, the author found something that both the child and the adult enjoyed namely, long, involved stories. A student-centered approach to learning was adopted and two years later Olivia began to read.

Home-learning methods

Wells criticized home-learning for being “sporadic and unsystematic” (1986, p.67) but research has shown that excellent home-learning methods are exactly that;

sporadic and unsystematic (Thomas, 1998; Barratt-Peacock, 1997). Terms used by Wells as criticisms now explain home-learning pedagogy and illustrate once again, how classroom learning and home-learning differ. Home-learning is sporadic in so far as it utilizes the child's natural curiosity and enthusiasm by engaging with topics in spurt. It is unsystematic because there is no need to systematically plan, exhaustively "cover" a topic before going on to another or assess understanding because there will be time to observe the child's understanding and return to the topic later when the child's interest is again aroused. The home-learning method is to take small bites of a topic and then move on, revisiting and reinforcing as the child's interest, ability or an authentic learning situation arises. Thomas has relieved home-learning parents of the need to be trained teachers, to systematically follow learning programs or diligently assess different curricula.

Observing these "unsystematic" elements of home-learning, critics assume that it cannot work because it fails the standards of classroom practice. Thomas (1998) revealed how apparent educational 'errors' produce an engaging, vital learning environment at home because it is **not** a classroom. He compared home-learning to the process of acculturation, where "all the bits and pieces manage to coalesce into a coherent body of knowledge about the culture" (p.4). Home-learning produces a culture.

Chapter 3; Methodology

Others have written eloquently about home-learning and surveyed, interviewed, collected and interpreted data from 'home-school' meetings, newspapers, TV programs and court cases. All I can offer is a case-study made up of memories, journal entries, school reports, my children's responses to this thesis and my reflective analysis; an auto-ethnography at the "intersection of mechanism and life" (Sacks, 1985, px); my interpretation of the facts, but striving for the highest standards of truthfulness and trustworthiness in my re-construction of happenings.

Two types of methodology apply to this thesis; one is not a 'research method' at all. It was simply a mother's trial and error attempts to find the best way to teach her children with learning difficulties guided by her teacher's training and classroom practice. It relied heavily on observation of the children to identify their strengths and weaknesses to optimize on them. The bulk of this qualitative study concerns actual life-happenings rather than a carefully designed research study. So it seems appropriate, though unconventional, to consider this 'ad hoc' methodology as distinct from the second form of research methodology which was the purposeful recall, reinterpretation and rewriting of past experience to produce a coherent and useful understanding of 20 years experience.

The qualitative/quantitative argument

It appears to me now, having considered the qualitative/quantitative debate that I really had no alternative in choosing auto-ethnography as my methodology because I was and still am a participant interventionist observer in the research. The perceptions of those being studied are central in ethnography (Wiersma, quoted in Miller and Dingwall, 1997) and in this case the researcher is observing herself and her family. The trained teacher became the learner trying to discover a way to teach her own children. 20 years later, the author is still the learner, learning to research and trying to understand how her children learned despite learning difficulties and the limitations of an ordinary home. However, a degree of detachment is still needed, particularly when reflecting on the case-study which I have tried to achieve.

I am writing from my personal viewpoint, with my own assumptions and bias, reconstructing by a system of interpretation, selection and emphasis (Lieblich et al, 1998) the events of 20 years. As the researcher and the home educating mother I am too intricately entwined in the everyday experience to be able to separate myself objectively from the material. A positivist approach, therefore, is impossible because whatever quantitative information might be collected about my family and home, I would still be there, affecting the data. Arendt, (1959) first indicated to me how obsessed Western society has become with the “certainty” of science. Positivist science looks ridiculous from this perspective.

Many concepts from quantitative research have been imported into qualitative work. Concepts of bias, validity and generalizability prove a problem for qualitative

research since objective positivist science requires measurement of one variable while everything else is held constant. By altering any of the multiple layers that make up a social context such as home-learning, I would be studying something other than our family and home and the world would be as ignorant as ever about the kind of learning and living, the methods and the experiences of children and parents who learn at home.

So it is a narrative that I present, involving my perceptions which have been visited thrice, once in first-hand experience, then in remembering and again in writing. I do not pretend to be objective in telling it; perhaps objectivity has been over-emphasized. History contains the word “story” and is made up of stories, usually the victor’s and the survivors’ and this is a story both of survival and victory despite the difficulties.

The Feminist, Humane, Holistic Approach

The doctor’s concern for his patients shines through all of Sacks’ well-known “stories” (1985). He could have reported the science of disease but he preferred to centre on his patients’ humanity and “bring us to the very intersection of mechanism and life,” (ibid, preface, px). Taken to their extremes, quantitative research may become cold and clinical and qualitative research almost fictional, “mere standpoints”, (Miller and Dingwall, 1997, p.489) but at some point there is a perfect combination, the ‘intersection’ of the two methods with the person at centre-stage; a very humane Humanities.

Just as the physician's study of disease and the patient's identity are inseparable (Sacks, 1985) so is home-learning and its family. Therefore, I must describe the family with its values and philosophy because they are an integral part of how and why home-learning functions the way it does. The family's Christian world-view of a Creator God who cares for humanity and is intimately involved in the lives of those who love Him, affects educational practice, making parents responsible before God for the care and nurture of their children. The world is viewed as a place of order and logical design which encourages intellectual investigation. Absolutes of good and evil lead to a respect for Truth and the sacredness of life engenders self-esteem, respect for others and social responsibility. Because the Bible is important to the participating family, it is important in the argument and is used therefore as valid reference material

The narrative method has been associated with a feminist approach to research and I gladly embrace this position and its imperative to promote "real" understanding, which is empathetic, holistic and subjective (Griffiths and Whitford, 1988). The feminist approach encourages the use of "bricolage" (Levi-Strauss, quoted in Papert, 1980) and leads to a deeper and intuitive understanding of the whole picture with the human subject as the centre of interest. With this in mind, I have resorted occasionally to creative writing in order to express what could not be expressed in any other way. Dingwall advocates a "looking glass" role for ethnography (Miller and

Dingwall, 1997, p.204) and by writing creatively I have tried to make the scene alive and 3 dimensional so that the reader can partake of the experience vicariously.

As I wrote this narrative, a purpose naturally emerged from the facts and events themselves. I did not have to struggle to make the “evidence” fit my argument or the argument fit my purpose. The thesis shouted aloud, proclaiming the usefulness of home education but also the needs of many home-learning families and many children with learning difficulties. Will Australia oppose this growing movement or, by aligning itself with home educators will it support and assist them to fulfill their aims?

Generalizability

I am dealing with a unique case so I cannot generalize my findings to a larger population, even of home educators, because their characteristics have not been defined. Generalizability is non-existent in ethnography which, “taken to its extreme becomes mere standpoints,” (Miller and Dingwall, 1997, p178). However, my findings may point the way towards theory (Yin,1984) or to expand upon theories already existing and the narrative method is highly compatible with action research (Doecke, 2003).

Data

My data consist of the narrative, a personal record based on memories, diaries and schedules written over 20 years and responses to the case-study written by three grown-up children (Appendices A,B and C). This narrative represents the twenty years' experience from which everything else springs. The theoretical basis for home education, its reconceptualization as work-based learning and the recommendations for the future, all emanate from the experience of teaching my children at home as expressed in the narrative and its analysis. Archived materials prompted and supported my memories.

Bias

Another evaluative criterion borrowed from quantitative research, bias is an integral part of the narrator's perception, particularly of a participant narrator. The decision to include or exclude material is affected by one's position, belief, interpretation, bias. Popper's words ring true again, "Facts are...always interpreted in the light of theory" (1963). The statement of my own position reveals assumptions and prejudices, (of which I may be unaware) to the reader who should always ask, "Who, if anyone will benefit from this bias?" (Simmons, 2003)

My feminist interpretation emphasizes woman's giftedness for care and nurture. Whether women have relegated their role or been tricked out of their birth-right by the deceptive promise of worldly success, is beside the point. In this story I extol the joy and heart-ache of mothering; mothers are central to home-learning. Without

mothers, it would not continue, yet the issue of maternal distress is seldom mentioned within the movement.

As a qualified primary school teacher and a fundamentalist Christian I can speak as an insider to the home-learning movement and to professional educators. My viewpoint allows me to understand the positions and attitudes of home-learning families that professional educators find difficult to comprehend (Rogoff et al, 2005) and my teaching background helps me address issues dear to teachers.

Grounded theory;

I have tried to justify my thesis by linking home-learning to the wider educational community. But how relevant is my “standpoint?”(Miller and Dingwall, 1997) For twenty years I strove through careful thought and practice to learn how to teach children with learning difficulties, twenty years of first-hand experience in an alternative method about which little has been written, twenty years of theory grounded in daily practice will hopefully justify my narrative as more than a mere “standpoint.” My daughters’ versions of their education experience (Appendices A, B and C), add credibility to my writing.

I know what it is to have a child with learning difficulties. My own children’s struggles forced me to find other ways to teach them and these techniques were used to tutor pupils privately. Some of my private pupils had been misunderstood and misdiagnosed. Nick, a bright boy with mild learning difficulties was considered to be

of below-average intelligence. With specialized help, he regained confidence and interest in class-work and quickly was recognized as a top achiever. Tanis was also misunderstood. Her teacher exclaimed, "It's not hard. It's easy," even though Tanis was unable to read even simple words. Jenny, traumatized at school, was taught at home by her mother and a retired teacher but by the age of 12 she was still unable to read. With appropriate instruction her reading improved 6 grades within a year, accompanied by improved self-esteem and confidence. The strategies I use and the arguments that I put forward, have arisen from the desperate need to teach children with learning difficulties.

My standpoint is grounded in experience. I propose grounded theory, (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, cited in Miller and Dingwall, 1997) that flows naturally over time from the researcher's experience "on the field." Theory grounded in long practice guards against the arrogance of "blitz-krieg ethnography" (Rist, quoted in Gay, 1992) but to assume explanations for phenomenon can also be arrogance. I have described one home education experience, providing examples of its success but explaining the "Why?" is a different matter.

Observation

Unable to explain my children's unusual development and without assistance from mentors or other home educators, observation of my children's behavior became my only resource. I observed their strengths and weaknesses during different stages over

many years and this observation eventually played an important part in theory formulation.

The process of writing an auto-ethnography has allowed patterns and themes to emerge from the data as I attempted to understand the last 20 years and express its lessons for others to use. Reliving memories, interpreting journal notes and sorting archival material led me to interpret and re-interpret what at first seemed a curious amalgam of days and personalities but gradually some sort of synthesis emerged to understand it.

Kidder (quoted in Barratt-Peacock, 1997) established criteria for the use of observation as a research tool. It should,

“(1) serve a formulated research purpose;

(2) (be) planned deliberately;

(3) (be) recorded systematically;

(4) (be) subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability” (ibid, p42).

Unfortunately, I cannot meet these criteria and for good reasons, as I will explain.

1) The nature of my observations is a peculiar one in that my careful and sustained observation, “an indispensable part of the study of any social institution,” (Webb and Webb, cited in Simmons, 2003) was without any formulated research purpose.

Instead it had a more authentic purpose, namely, to discover how to teach my children with severe learning difficulties to read. Children cannot tell you what they

don't know or what they find hard to understand and a child with language difficulties is even less likely to articulate problems or feelings; it is left to observation then. The astute mother can recognize minute bodily indications of stress or understanding in the child she knows so well and can either increase or decrease the pace of learning as required. The observing teacher notices when it is possible to proceed beyond the child's present level of understanding into the Zone of Proximal Development and so maximize the child's learning.

2) The observations which constitute my data accumulated over many years into a body of intuitive understanding about children and home education. They were not planned deliberately but were part of a family's daily routine with the long-term intention of evolving a learning environment that would change and grow with the growing family. The purpose was to grow a child into an adult; the purpose was Life. Therefore I argue that the impressions generated over the years were more reliable because the observer did **not** have a research schedule in mind but was open to whatever events occurred, with a general educational aim in mind.

3) In some cases the observations were recorded in diaries or as comments in the teaching schedule. They were teaching records written prior to and independently from this study to note achievements or gaps in the children's understanding and occasionally as souvenirs of amusing things that the children had said. They were not intended to persuade or propagate a point of view and therefore may be considered unbiased although my interpretation of them is not. However, in the 1980's when the

journals first begin, there was a fear that the authorities might forcibly remove home taught children from their parents. The early journals may reflect my desire to prove to suspicious authorities that our children were being taught, “regularly and efficiently” (Community Services Act, 1970) if a confrontation should arise. As home-learning became more socially acceptable, this fear subsided and the journals were written simply for my own use.

I suggest that an important aspect of observation would be lost if the concept were limited to written comments as Kidder suggests. Much that was observed over the years may not have been put to paper but was still committed to the memory or some place even deeper, for retrieval as needed. I write from this source of long-term, deep understanding and if such a stance is considered acceptable, then new criteria may be required for the use of observation as a tool in narrative research.

4) This study cannot meet Kidder’s 4th criterion for observation, ‘checks on validity and reliability’. When I say that home education worked well for our family in the following ways, how can I validate these statements? Validation is always a problem in ethnographic studies that deal with social settings and institutions that cannot be replicated in time or place. Auto-ethnography relieves me of the need to validate them because the reader knows that I am speaking about my own perceptions. It is a biographical narrative in which internal consistency and context (Higgs, cited in Simmons, 2003) and Riessman’s (ibid) notion of “trustworthiness” provide an alternative to validation and reliability.

I suggest that the lives and the writing of the children themselves validate the home educational process. They are sensitive, competent, loving young people who contribute to Australian society. Were they less than this, it would be cause for concern. The words of their own stories (Appendices) assure the reader of the “correspondence” between the author’s perception and their own that Riessman, (cited in Simmons, 2003) required for “trustworthiness.”

A method eminently suited to the purpose

My purpose is to describe home education evocatively, to reconceptualize it as a form of work-based learning and suggest its theoretical basis thereby showing its legitimacy. I am not searching to express Truth, some “undefined correspondence between language and an independent, objective reality” (Simmons, 2003, p.47) but to ‘make a difference’ by illustrating the educational importance of the home, the arena of sophisticated, underestimated learning processes. Auto-ethnography offers me a method where experience and reflective analysis are acceptable as data to investigate an educational option that is effective beyond the measurable criteria of quantitative science.

However, the data must be “trustworthy” which Riessman (cited in Simmons, 2003) suggested as the qualitative researcher’s reply to validation. He discusses ways to determine it;

“Is the interpretation reasonable and convincing to the reader?”

“Do those involved consider the researcher’s representation adequate?”

“Does an embedded narrator justify goals and speak on behalf of others?”

“Is it useful?” The answer is “Yes” to all these questions but the last is still to be decided; “Will the method stand up to the critique of peers?”

The auto-ethnographical method allows me to describe in rich detail my experience of home-learning and my perceptions of my children’s home-learning experiences. In auto-ethnography, “meaning is as perceived or experienced by those being studied,” (Wiersma, quoted in Miller and Dingwall, 1997). During the years of home education, I had always been too busy living the experience to have much time to reflect upon it. Auto-ethnography has given me the tools to make sense of apparent randomness and has helped me, the participant learner answer the question, “How do children learn at home?”

Chapter 4; Conclusion and Recommendations

Home-learning challenges our culturally accepted concepts of education, learning and knowledge. It may be seen as an anomaly of the present system, a criticism of it, an alternative to it or a fore-runner of the future. Whatever view is taken, criticisms and alternatives should always be welcomed by a healthy society (Arendt, 1959).

Two distinct approaches to home-learning practice have been identified, 'home schooling' and 'home education.' Research is needed to examine the prevalence of these practices among home-learning families.

The Future of home-learning?

It seems probable that in future home-learning will increase because;

- 1) The media contain positive descriptions of home-learning (Royall, 2003)
- 2) Social acceptance of home-learning has grown (ibid)
- 3) Concerned parents are still looking for an alternative (Maslen, 1989)
- 4) Home-learning has become a niche market with specifically designed curricular materials and support and net-working groups
- 5) Tertiary institutions recognize and accept home schooling students (Boston University quoted in Meighan, 1997; personal correspondence, 10/4/05)
- 6) Research is demonstrating the benefits of home-learning and is developing its theoretical understanding.

Home-learning may be more socially acceptable nowadays but there is a “huge, latent group who would home school(ing) their children but are afraid to do it or don’t want ...the time commitment” (Ruff, 2004). The difficulties of home-learning are considerable but so is the satisfaction. Parents have expressed feelings of failure when they had to “give in,” forced by exhaustion, isolation and lack of finance to accept “second best” in sending their children to school (Personal correspondence, 2002, 2004). Prospective home teaching parents may be increasingly well informed about home-learning but will they be as desperate or as dedicated as the pioneers of the previous generation? It may be that in future, many parents may prefer a “half-way house” that would allow them to educate at home while partnership with educational authorities provided support and security.

When home education is viewed as a form of work-based learning, it is placed within the sphere of established theories of workplace learning and their experience becomes available to the home-learning movement. Collaboration between learners, employers and universities has produced tremendous innovation in education as in the University for Industry in UK (Boud & Solomon, 2001). Their insights into systems of individual assessment, learning pathways and agreements, standards’ benchmarking and support processes may be adaptable for use in home-learning’s future development of partnerships with authorities.

Cyber schools and Virtual Charter Schools in America may represent such an intermediary between independent home-learning and public schooling although their

intention may be to “stem enrolment losses to home schooling” (Lines, 2004) rather than to foster parents’ educational aims. As support for this statement, a 1997 survey showed 71% of public school executives (n= 1000) indicated that home schooling was insufficiently regulated and 95% of the superintendents and principles believed “anything is better than home schooling” (Klicka, 2002, p35).

Cyber or Virtual Charter School may give parents greater freedom over their children’s education than the traditional classroom, but opponents warn that they operate under the same “institutional mind-set” as schools (ibid, p37) and “attack the very soul of the movement” (ibid) making assimilation with home-learning practice very difficult. Some feel that home-learning’s hard-won independence is being eroded as home-learning families abandon the movement by enrolling with Cyber Schools. Indisputably, parents’ priority must be to find an educational system that suits their child and their family and this must come before other allegiances. If home-learning no longer meets the needs of children and families then it must change or disappear. The home-learning movement must move on from the past and see that something new is happening and Australia, with its history of providing education to out-back families through Distance Education, School of the Air and Home Missionary Societies may be well situated to experiment with innovative forms of collaboration.

I recommend further study into possible frameworks for collaboration between educational authorities and home-learning families, ones that will preserve the

essence of home-learning. To advance this process, the more that is known about its theoretical basis the better. Then parents and professionals will be able to formulate forms of collaboration to suit the variety of home-learning practices.

What is Collaboration or Partnership?

Various groups or organizations have attempted to reconcile home-learning and educational bureaucracy, producing embryonic forms of collaboration e.g. Distance Education Centers or the Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council. Loose home-learning net-works have provided valuable arenas for discussion and support but are not considered examples of Collaboration.

Collaboration is new and uncertain ground that needs to be carefully explored. It demands a new framework, based upon home-learning epistemology and specifically designed for home-learning rather than a re-working of the old system otherwise collaboration may hamper the very dynamics that it needs to foster. Thankfully, workplace learning proponents have gone before and given warning;

“Exporting the Situated Curriculum from its own original practical context- where it makes sense and works - into a different setting is not a viable proposition...(It is) ...rooted in a domain of activity and in a logic of practice quite different from that embodied in the prevailing approach to schooling and professional instruction”

(Gherardi et al, 1998, p.297).

The “epistemology of managed vagueness” (Papert, 1993, p.185), and its process of de-bugging used in developing home-learning practice may also be useful to create a home-learning management system. Such a system must respect parents’ commitment and perseverance to home-learning and utilise them as essential features of the “Process” designed by and for ordinary people without the necessity of any academic training. It must be “participant friendly” and respect the participant’s right to decide priorities, time scale, contribution, methods, interests and goals. It must affirm parents’ independence while making expert advice, practical knowledge, on-going support and counsel available.

Collaboration with the DECV had some benefits for the case-study family mainly in the area of curriculum and legality. Although two “teachers” assisted the mother’s teaching efforts, in general DECV staff failed, lacking;

- 1.) A theoretical understanding of home-learning; how home-learning, as distinct from classroom education works.
- 2.) Training for parents; to enable parents to identify their preferred choice of home-learning practice and train them to recognize issues e.g. learning disabilities, indicators of stress, the need for team-work between parents.
- 3) A curriculum designed specifically for home-education.
- 4) The personal touch; face to face encouragement from parents and mentors.

Any future attempts at collaboration between home education and educational authorities must take these issues into account.

Why Collaborate?

Quality Assurance is a world-wide trend that is increasingly affecting education (Petrosky, 2003) by demanding teacher accountability. This will affect student learning outcomes and classroom teaching practice as teaching for tests becomes normal (Petrosky, 2003). It seems wise therefore, to pre-empt bureaucratic regulation of home-learning from the 'top-down' by producing frameworks for collaboration from the 'grass-roots up', created by home learners who understand the issues and the essence of the home-learning experience.

As quality assurance increasingly becomes an issue, home learners may be forced to re-consider the danger of isolation and association within groups or with educational authorities may appear more attractive to safeguard them from accusations of malpractice. This thesis has been written to further the understanding of the home-learning process so that collaboration, the latest wave in home-learning history, may be placed on a sound theoretical footing and continue to provide enriched educational environments despite the detrimental effect of quality assurance policies in schools.

Lifepace Learning in the home

Collaboration, although intended to support home-learning families and promote excellence in home-learning practice may be viewed by many home-learning families with distrust as bureaucratic restrictions, values dilution or an inroad upon their God-given responsibility to train their children. However, the concept of lifepace learning

(Chisholm and Davis, 2005) may alleviate these fears. Lifeplace learning is “based on a person’s life-role... learning derives from the motivation and interest of the learner” (ibid, p.4) and occurs in unpaid situations such as voluntary organizations or within the home when raising children where people meet “problems and challenges in situations of purposeful joint activity” (ibid.) It may be “the most relevant learning place in life” (Cairns and Malloch, 2005, p.6) and others (Chisholm and Davis, 2005) have suggested that such transdisciplinary learning, if quantified and evaluated, could serve as a basis for formal qualifications.

Home teaching mothers gain skills in the Lifeplace with its many work sites and such contextualized knowledge could be credited towards formal qualifications, useful for joining the workforce later when children have grown up. Since it would require liaising with universities rather than (or as well as) Departments of Education and would produce tangible benefits by way of qualifications, collaboration might appear more attractive.

Workplace learning theory is still in its early stages. Visionaries of the new and flexible forms of learning realize the need for, “robust procedures, qualitative systems and evidence of level and depth of study” (Chisholm and Davis, 2005, p.5). It will not be an easy road but workplace learning is already blazing a way that home-learning may be able to follow.

Conclusion

Home-learning is a social activity that offers a bright hope for the future of education. As part of the Intent Community Participation tradition of learning (Rogoff et al, 2005), it merits recognition and study in its own right. Professionals and academics should regard it as a partner in education contributing to the field of learning as a social construct rather than disparaging it and attempting to regulate it out of existence; a tactic which will only drive it underground.

From the original query, “How can I help this child learn at home?” has arisen a theoretical model of home-learning practices consisting of home schooling, home education and possibly other and hybrid forms. A tentative structural model of home-learning development has been proposed with initial, establishment and functional stages representing evolving home-learning practice which may provide a useful guide for new or struggling home-learning parents.

Home education has been reconceptualized as a highly kinesthetic form of workplace and lifeplace learning that involves all 3 modes of knowing (Chisholm and Davis, 2005) and utilizes a ‘curriculum of life’ that involves situated, learner-managed, values-based, workplace and academic learning. Everyday cognition, apprenticeship relationships and multiple intelligences (Hatch and Gardner, 1990) are also important to explain why home education benefits children with learning difficulties.

The nature of the home-learning experience is often foreign to those reared in the Assembly Line tradition of education (Rogoff et al, 2005). Therefore parents

experience stress and should be viewed as Learners who will benefit from innovative frameworks of support that are flexible enough to suit different home-learning practices while respecting the independence and commitment of home-learning parents to their educational choice and to the meta-narrative that informs home-learning practice and purposes. To emphasize the importance of this meta-narrative, the definition of home-learning has been extended to, “parents and children living and learning together from a home base within the parameters of a family meta-narrative” (author.)

Auto-ethnography has pointed towards a theory of home-education as a social activity that explains how children with learning difficulties are enabled to learn at home but further research is needed to examine whether these models apply to other home-learning families, especially to those outside the Christian sector.

Hopefully, this thesis will increase understanding of home educational processes, emphasize the importance of the mother’s role to home-learning with its associated danger of maternal distress and offer another option for the education of learning disabled children - in their own home, within their own family.

Appendices

Appendix A; Olivia's story

When you have read something that pertains so closely to your childhood and the way that you have related to your mother, it is very difficult to know what to say or how to reply. But I will try!

Many of the things that Mum has spoken about I do not remember or I can recall them but in the muddled fuzzy way that young children can envisage their childhood. Which is what this was, my childhood. In my memory my childhood was a happy time, a time of laughter and playing with my sisters. It is almost like snapshots in my mind, brightly coloured pictures where there is always a child or children smiling. Occasionally I remember something different to this, a time when I struggled or felt hurt, (my younger sister Lydia being knocked on the head with a piece of metal was just such a time and filled my young mind for months afterward) but generally my early years are just filled with many happy memories. The dark days are blotted out by the bright sunshine of the rest.

In 1993 I think I began to realize there was something different about me. Many things had been happening in our world, Mum, Dad, Tina and I had returned from a trip to the UK in '92 (a time which I reveled in), my grandfather had died, my grandmother was very ill and my mother was becoming weaker.

My South African Grandfather had also come to stay! And it was during this time, when he was helping out my mum by giving me my spelling test, that I became aware of my own limitations. Grandpapa was very different to my Mum! Mum's idea of giving a spelling test was sitting next to me telling me the word and waiting for me to write them. This is my memory anyway. Grandpapa's method was very different and he made it all too easy to cheat; a tactic which I was all too good at! Then I started to think, why did I need to cheat when my other friends didn't?

Looking back I suppose this cheating was a way for me to survive, if I couldn't do the work then at least I needed to look like I was doing it, only I couldn't fool my mother. As a school teacher I see this method of survival used time and time again, (It becomes a habit with many children) teachers simply do not have the time to sit with each individual child and children who need specific assistance simply can not be catered for in the classroom. Cheating is not the best method, but a child who simply can not understand often feels threatened by explanations that do not make sense and as many people will testify to, cheating works and you can fool teachers in a way that you can never fool a parent who is with you all day and knows exactly what you can do. Which is a valid reason why L/D children benefit so much from h/sing, it allows the teacher (i.e. the parent) to focus in exactly where the child needs to learn and stays there until they are ready to move on, as in the case of my twin sisters.

So my teenage years, I turned 13 in 93, in my memory were more filled with frustration, this also coincides with my starting high school at home. I remember trying hard but as nothing ever seemed to work and all I did was frustrate the people

around me, I just didn't want to try anymore it all seemed too difficult. I often think back in horror at how difficult I must have been for my mother and although she has asked me to forgive her, I feel that it is me who should apologize, I did not make her live easy. However the bright picture still remains and when I think of my home schooling years it is with joy and appreciation and love.

Joy because I can not think of a better way of spending your childhood than with your family. Who even though you are not perfect and you can hurt them dreadfully sometimes, still love you. Appreciation because my parents and especially my mother gave up a lot to help and nurture us, turning us into the people we are today. Women with the ability and desire to receive an education, Women that I firmly believe we would never have had the opportunity to be, if we had not been home schooled. Love because facing difficulties and tribulations together as a family unit, living together and not being able to get away, has created a special bond between all of us. A short hand, (which can become nasty sometimes) and a closeness that I would not trade for anything. Home schooling is hard and tough but I am so glad and so blessed that although there were so many tears there was also perseverance!

Thank you Mum!!

Now that I have given a brief 'memorandum' of my home schooling days I feel more able to talk about what I have read. All or nothing!

Reading the case study was, at times almost like reliving what actually happened. I could feel my frustration and I could feel my mothers frustration, the memory came back and I thought "yep she got that spot on". At other times moments that I would have thought were important have almost been skimmed over.

Mum explains that during the middle and late 90's she found living on the farm, teaching children who seemed incapable of learning, earning money and all the other 1000's of things she did, extremely difficult. However I don't think she tells just how hard that was.

Some of her experiences I do not remember, even from when I was relatively older. Mum coming in to me and asking me to "go and get Dad" is only a hazy and misty figure in my mind but I do recall the feeling of panic, I didn't know what was wrong. These were hard times and I don't think Mum gives credit to that, but perhaps she doesn't want to. They were the most difficult for her! I am continually amazed by my mothers grace and strength, with so many difficulties and situations in which many other people would have given up, we always knew that we were loved.

It is impossible to write everything, a whole life, a family cannot be put on paper no matter how many words you use. The shift from school like routine to an apprentice style learning environment was a natural progression for me. I do not distinguish the stages in my mind, but Mum has brought the bulk of our home schooling experience to light in a way that allows me insight into her mind and allows me to relive some of them in my memory.

During the time that both Mum and Dad were becoming increasingly worried about the twin's progress, I for the first time in my life, was spending the majority of my time away from my family. In 1997 at the age of 16 I went away to school. (I think this was a very good move on my parents behalf I was becoming unmanageable at home, on school terms, and the competition from other students challenged me to stop thinking that I would always fail and to try. And I did try, more than I had in all my high school years.)

In 1999 I went to Uni and from then until 2002 I lived mostly in Ballarat, coming home for holidays when work allowed. So I heard about the twins progress or lack of it only on weekend or holidays. To me they were my little sisters, bright, bubbly and happy. They were always willing to work hard and were happiest when they were doing something with their hands or riding their ponies. I didn't see the frustration or the headaches and stomachaches.

When Fiona started having intermittent pains in her stomach I was surprised and when Mum suggested they could be caused by stress, I was even more surprised. What could she have to be stressed about?

I remember very clearly the conversations I would have on the phone to Mum and she would express her worries to me about the twins and their progress, particularly Fiona. She would sometimes be in tears and I just didn't know what to do, I had no concept of how hard it really was.

Then about 2001 I remember Mums voice becoming a little more hopeful, telling me that F or L had read a line by herself, then a paragraph and so on until the joyful proclamation that Lydia had been found reading a book by herself. More hard work and nearly a year down the track and the relief that F had done this or read that and then an ecstatic phone call telling me that F had been found crying. When Mum had asked her what was wrong, she sniffed and said "(a character) ... just died and it was so sad". Mum almost cheered and was just about ready to cry with relief, she told me. How amazing that now F could read!!

There were some difficult years but writing this in 2004, I think I can say Mum has reached her goal of teaching us to read, although we still have to ask her what words mean sometimes. Along the way she has instilled in us all a love of literature, a love of learning and a love of discovery that many children with L/D are never able develop. The path of home schooling was a lot more rocky and steep than she thought it would be, but climbing it all together has brought us a lot closer than many other families are.

This thesis is an invaluable tool; an accurate description of hard won lessons and small triumphs, slow steps and great blessings. I feel privileged to be a part of it (even though I caused many groans) and very proud of 'my mum' for persisting with all of it and being willing to put her experiences on paper for other people to benefit and learn from.

PS

Looking back on it all I realize now that h/ed has affected us in a certain way because it is a form of work-based learning. We are never happier than when we all get together to start a new “project.” When I come home for the holidays I wonder what we’ll do, what project will we get involved with this time? Our latest and the most extravagant so far is to renovate an old house in the nearby town. I saw it advertised in the paper and once we’d seen it we were all hooked or at least, I was! It’s fun and it’s like old times- all of us working together, laughing and discussing the best way to solve a problem or design a new garden. It’s what we’re used to! It’s what we always did as children at home; we worked together helping each other. H/ed taught us to work at all sorts of things and now that we’ve grown up we continue with the habit!

It’s as if work projects have become family bonding times. Working as a team each one has his or her role to play, understood and appreciated by the others and satisfied once it’s finished. I spend my holidays like this, “working”! I always knew that h/ed had a great effect on my life but now I realize that its affect is greater than any of us thought, but it’s good.

Appendix B; Tina’s story

Having just read my mothers thesis I feel the urge to put into writing some of my views and memories of home schooling. My memories of growing up are on the whole happy. While things were not perfect and there were times when we didn’t have things that other kids had, I didn’t mind. My universe was my family and that was the most important thing to me. I knew there were issues with money and Mum’s health but how was I to know that this was not the norm? Mum has talked about the agony of uncertainty that she went through, I knew none of it. My trust in Mum and Dad was implicit. They knew everything and would look after us all. Looking back now, having read about the last 18 years of my life from Mum’s perspective all I can say is my outlook was that of the child who has now become an adult and I would not change anything.

One of my earliest memories of h/s is sitting at the kitchen table in a bright sunny room with my two sisters and Mother beside me. I enjoyed the work I did. It meant that I was a big girl not little like Miria. I was unaware that I had any difficulty in learning because although I wasn’t as good at stuff as Olivia, I was much better then Miria and everything was right in the world. The difficulties came when I went outside my family and met people who wanted me to be faster, able to write better, able to talk better and most importantly able to communicate effectively.

I have always enjoyed my family; I knew my place in the scheme of things and didn’t really like it when things were interrupted by other people. I have always felt that there was a barrier between myself and other people as if I was speaking another language and could not make myself understood, even at times between myself and my family. Perhaps this is simply my personality or alternatively it could be part of my dyspraxia. Our family used to joke that the reason I didn’t talk until almost two was that Olivia was there to interpret for me. Another joke when I was younger was

that (as a lone straight haired sister among four curly sisters) Miria had stolen all my curls and Olivia had gotten my share of language skills. Whatever the reason, communication has always been an issue for me unless I am in my family and even then there have been and will continue to be moments of extreme frustration.

Although I have never been officially tested for learning difficulties I have borrowed from Mum's library enough books to be fairly confident that I suffer from Dyspraxia. While it may not be a textbook definition my understanding of dyspraxia is that it is a difficulty with muscle functioning and spatial relations; whether it is motor, fine motor or fasciculatory muscles. I seem to have problems with all three types of dyspraxia. I remember before we moved out to the farm, I would have been about 5, going to a speech therapist because I couldn't say some words. I was given exercises to do and Mum helped me to say news instead of noos and make noises like a car going rrrrrrrr. I didn't realize I even had a speech impediment until last year when I was reminiscing with Mum. While I may have a learning difficulty the dyspraxia provides me with more than sufficient challenges and it is those issues that differentiate my experience of learning difficulties from the other girls.

Olivia and I have an interesting relationship. We were the two eldest and therefore responsible for the rest of the girls. I love Olivia but for many years our relationship was based on need. We needed each other to function and cope with our daily chores and responsibilities, it was us against them. Olivia was in charge most of the time, controlling and disciplining the girls when she saw fit but also loving us, while I took the opposite role, caring and trying to provide comfort when necessary. As I look back it seems to me that Olivia took on the "father role" while I took that of the "mother." This is just my opinion but it would be interesting to see if Olivia agrees with me. I think this was developed both as a survival mechanism as Dad was working continuously and Mum was sick a lot but also partially imitating our environment seeing how other people and especially our parents interacted.

Olivia, despite other roles she took on was also my big sister, tougher and more combative than I was. I am sorry to say that for the most part I was unaware of the struggle that Olivia had to learn and complete her school work. In our safe family environment we were all roughly similar in ability and I never saw anything to contradict the ability I saw in her. Rather I knew her to have many gifts and skills that I myself did not possess. I knew that Olivia would often slip out her bedroom window to escape doing her school work but I thought it was that she disliked doing her work rather than being unable to do it. I seem to have been a very unobservant child but as I had nothing to compare it to, what was I supposed to expect? Olivia's school work was much harder than what I could do. I thought that when I reached her level I also would have difficulty with my school work and this was just a normal part of growing up.

By the time Fiona came around I had different expectations. I had grown up looking after Fiona and Lydia, especially when Mum was sick. Having gained more experience and understanding in the world surrounding me, I was aware that the level

at which Fiona and Lydia was struggling was not normal according to their age group. At the same time they were very clever at practical things such as horse riding which they have done since before they could walk properly. Any hands-on skills, such as cook tea and shop for the weekly groceries they were able to accomplish at an extremely early age. People who did not understand why they could not read were amazed when they saw them doing the weekly shopping independently, from memory, at the age of ten.

While I sometimes doubted if they were ever going to be fluent readers I never doubted the Twins' intelligence or ability to make their way in the world. I became aware of the Worlds' misunderstanding and neglect of people who for whatever reason do not fit in. Instead of looking at the talents and abilities of two very special humans, the world saw two children who were unable to perform the tasks expected of their age group, never comprehending the myriad of other responsibilities and skills Fiona and Lydia possessed of which other teenagers would have no comprehension. I firmly believe that if Fiona or Lydia had been sent to school they would have been humiliated and ridiculed. I also believe that it is only through the efforts of both my parents that Fiona and Lydia have grown up to be well adjusted teenagers who interact well with their environment and who have no evidence of psychological distress.

While there are problems with home schooling, I have always enjoyed the freedom that it gave me. I hated normal school when I attended a secondary school for VCE although I am most likely biased as I suffered from ill health in year 12 and was later diagnosed with chronic fatigue brought on by glandular fever. I have no regrets about being home schooled and sometimes think of myself as an advert for the home schooling process as I have just completed a degree in nursing, have accepted a job and will continue with my degree in Naturopathy in a year. I hope in the future to further my career by becoming a midwife. Home schooling has shaped my life and I believe it has been for the better.

Appendix C; Miria's story; 30/3/05

Having just read my mothers thesis I have decided that I would comment on my views of coping with dyslexia and being home schooled.

I remember being asked if I enjoyed being home/s when I was younger, I used to wonder what they meant, I know nothing different. I loved being home all day riding my horses when I wanted, playing with my sisters or helping mum or dad. However I did not like school work. I didn't understand why I had to learn something that it appeared I'd never need to use on the farm, what did math's have to do with horses and cows and as for reading I never understood why I couldn't work it out, the letters would be on the page in front of me. I know they were suppose to stand for words but to me they just appeared to be a mesh of lines and scribbles. The words I could work out and read I considered to be boring, I was used to having stories like the lord of the rings and the Narnia chronicles read to me I had no interest in reading little golden books which I considered to be for babies yet why could I not read them? I remember

one day when one of my friends lent me a book that she had read telling me that I'd love it, it was the silver brumby, a few weeks later I gave it back pretending that I had read it and had not liked it to get out of admitting to my closest friend that I could not read more than a little kids picture book, I would have been about 9 at this time.

The inability to read and learn as I saw it caused me a lot of embarrassment, I would go out of my way to avoid instances where I would be asked to read something or mention which grade I was completing through correspondence. For this reason I am relieved that I never went to school, because if this was how I felt in small groups of people who were friends how much worse would it be in a group of my peers who would have no scruples in teasing me about my inability to learn. When I entered year 11 and went to school for the first time I went in trepidation for even though I could now read I was still afraid of being slower than every body else.

When it came to actually learning I found that I could learn if it was some thing that I enjoyed or was good at; at about the age of thirteen our family went to the Shakespeare festival in Stratford and saw an amateur version of the taming of the shrew, I was hooked! I have been watching listening and reading Shakespeare ever since I can memorise quite long passages and play them out to people, (Hamlet and Much Ado About Nothing being my favorites), not bad for some one who could not read until they were 11! And yet I had great trouble trying to complete any of my school work, understanding questions or remembering formulas.

I feel that I have always learnt in a very spontaneous way; I could be flogging away at a problem for hours and have no luck, I could go away be thinking of something completely different it could be hours or days later and the answer will come to me, in this same way many concepts will spring in to my mind -things I have never learnt which will some times work out to be right. I find that how I learn is very often influenced by the way I feel, whether I am doing it off my own bat or have been told to do it, the things that surround me, and if they are related to things I enjoy. Because of this and other things I feel I did not perform to my best at school, non of these things were covered, I was told when to studie what, I was confined within four white walls with nothing to spark enthusiasm, and non of the teachers knew me well enough to put things in a way that I understood or enjoyed so that I could learn them, they never really personally tried to teach me, rather they tried to teach the whole class.

I studied biology and chemistry at school and could never understand anything other than the basics, then I went to university and while the same things were tort they were tort in contexts of cattle and sheep and grass- things I was interested in and could understand. I had same problem with studying art at school, I like to think I am able to draw reasonably well, however it has always been when the mood takes me, I have always had to feel like drawing to be able to draw, it could be any where at any time. At school however I was told when, where, and how to draw, something which I could not cope with and even though I did year 12 art, looking back I do not like any of the pieces that I completed at that time. When I look back through my drawing

folder I find that the main thing I draw are faces not beautiful pictures or people but people who are old, sick, or disabled, for I find that it is these peoples disabilities that interest me and make them who they are, not what they are good at or how fast they do something.

I have always been aware that people find home schooling strange and tend to stay away however I have always seen it as their problem if they do not want to get to know me and my family simply because we studied at home (some thing which is even more normal and traditional then sending kids off to school when you look back at history.) That was their loss not ours. When I was younger kids my age used to think it strange however talking to people these days about being home schooled, incites more interest then comment, maybe because they can see that we are normal, I am at uni studying things I am interested in and we are not strange people that lock ourselves away from the world.

I think that h/ed prepared me more for uni than for school because uni and h/ed share some characteristics. They have a flexible routine; you can turn up to lectures or not and in between, you have to organize yourself. That's a bit like h/ed. You have more independence than at school where you have to keep to a strict regime and in other ways too, you find yourself just following along with your age group. At home and at uni you have more choice over your learning styles and how, when and where you work whereas at school the regime was quite obtrusive especially for a subject like Art when you need to feel creative to do your best work.

I don't think I was really prepared for High School and yet I was much more so for uni. Having 'left home' to board during the week at school meant I adapted quickly to living away from home at uni as well as finding it fairly easy to organize myself and my work/study schedule.

While I know that I seem to have portrayed a very bad view of school, there were other factors which affected me such as suffering from Glandular fever and discovering that I had been suffering from Celiac's disease after I had finished VCE. I do think that it was good for me though, it motivated me to compete with people in my class not to look too dumb beside them and the teachers and the discipline ensured that I was doing my work not off riding my horse some were. Looking back on my two years of school I see them as a necessary evil that I had to go through to get where I am.

Appendix D: Using DECV reports as Data

Reports received twice yearly provide valuable evidentiary support of the narrative. I have chosen abstracts from these reports and added my own comments.

1995 (6 years and 4months; grade prep) Fiona and Lydia enrolled with the Distance Education Centre of Victoria

1996 (8 years 2months; grade 1) "Fiona is a hard working student who is making sound progress in ...numeracy and ...some success in literacy...working at her own pace in reading." I felt desperate at the slowness of their progress; in fact I doubted whether there was any progress at all.

1997 (nearly 9 years; grade 2) "Fiona uses some known letters to represent written language...She is beginning to regularly make connections between letters and sounds." Lydia had begun to show more progress in reading than her sister but this was mainly due, I felt, to the fact that Lydia had been more able to absorb the direct teaching given to them both through the intensive phonic course.

1998 (10 years repeating grade 2 language) Fiona continued with the Grade 2 courses, helped by a wonderful teacher who took extra time to assist and encourage us. "Fiona demonstrate(s) a growing confidence with recognition of sounds, reading and comprehension...She can spell some phonetic words." My daughter was working on a course 3 years behind her age level and making no progress. Lydia's reading continued to improve.

1999 (11years; grade 3 Language) "Fiona has made excellent progress in Maths this year...Her success is due to the unstinting teaching, support and reinforcement provided by her caring parents." Her progress in Maths highlighted her lack of progress in all forms of language.

2000 (12 years; continuing Grade 3 Language) Fiona is reported to be at the "beginning to" level of reading. I attend the Australian Resource Educators' Association Annual conference, recommence teaching Language and we make our big trip to UK. Fiona's report reads, "Fiona has had an excellent year. Suddenly numerous learning blocks seem to have dropped into place. The resulting progress in Fiona's development has been significant...in both math and language...The adventure in England may have been the catalyst for the sudden spurt?" But still she couldn't read. She was starting to enjoy writing however and the teacher had noticed this, "Fiona is an emerging writer...developing a...range of skills that allow her to communicate ideas to her readers."

2001 (13 years; still working at grade 3 Language.) Another change of teacher who did not hassle us but neither did he provide any valuable input. We were on our own again! He noted that Fiona, "explores her language through regular pieces of written creative work...Excellent progress in Maths this year."

2002 (14 years; grade 4 Language); the language course was well designed and interesting but required much more input from Fiona. Her report illustrates the "teacher's" expectations.

“Spelling is a concern and Fiona needs to work consistently on this, to use a dictionary and continue to edit all written work before sending.”

The teacher had no appreciation of the situation at all, even although he had been informed about her learning difficulties. He probably did not imagine how much hard work this young girl was putting into her school work. It wasn't hard to “disappear” that report and Fiona never realized it had even come. It was shortly after this that Fiona faced what I have called a “critical moment” and after a negotiated schedule was introduced and DDAT exercises, she was reading for pleasure.

2003 (15 years old and entering Distance Education Centre of Victoria Secondary School level); reading voraciously for pleasure, Fiona experienced tremendous academic improvement. She took a specially formulated course of Language Studies for students with literacy difficulties majoring on films, magazines and newspapers. She completed the sets in record time and found them a welcome change from her previous English work. Her report read;

“Fiona has worked extremely well ...she became more confident as she was able to work on tasks independently...demonstrated a sound understanding of the set work and was able to provide comprehensive responses...showing an ability to understand new content.”

2004 (16 years old) Fiona's enormous leap in reading ability with its concomitant increase in confidence and understanding of other subjects continued and the teachers in Melbourne, although distant, perceived her achievements. The Maths teacher wrote;

“Fiona has made astounding progress this semester. She has completed 3 terms in 2. She has demonstrated excellent understanding of the concepts...with a high standard achieved in both term tests.”

In the Curriculum and Standards Framework, she was assessed as working at the upper end of year 9 in maths and almost grade 7 level in reading and writing. Having only recently learned to read, it is not surprising that Fiona is still struggling to catch up in English, although her last report read, “reading comprehension has improved throughout the semester and there has also been an improvement in written expression.” Who can predict the ceiling of her achievements?

References

- Apostoleis, N. (1999). The development of children's motivation in the home-school setting. *RIEDEC level 1*.
- Archer, J. (1999). Research; Unexplored Territory. *Education Week*, 19(15), p22-25.
- Arendt, H. (1959). *The Human Condition*. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- Ashrawi, H. (2003). ABC Radio Broadcast on receipt of Sydney Uni Peace Prize.
- Ballman, R. (1987). *The How and Why of home schooling*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books.
- Barratt-Peacock, J. (1997). *The Why and How of Australian home education*. Unpublished PhD, Latrobe University, Melbourne.
- Barth, J. M. (1991). *Child training and the Home School*. Charlotte, Vermont, USA: Parable Publishing House.
- Beautrais, A. (1996). *National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy Setting the Evidence-based Research Agenda: A Literature Review*. Retrieved 3/7/02, 2002, from <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/pdf/mh12.pdf>
- Belenky, M. (1997). *Women's Ways of Knowing; Development of Self, Voice and Mind*. New York: Basic Books.
- Billett, S. (2001). Learning Throughout Working Life; Interdependencies at Work. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 23(1).
- Billett, S. (2004). Workplace Participatory Practices. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 16(6), p312-324.
- Blackwell, B. (1989, 17/6/89). A Rebel Family's Ordeal. *New Idea*, p. 17/16/89 p13.
- Boud, D. a. S., N. (2001). *Work-based learning; A New Higher Education*. UK: Open University Press.
- Brock, A. (2001). Parent study: sources of stress, an effective intervention program. In D. a. B. In Greaves, D (eds.) (Ed.), *Creating Positive Futures* (pp. p77-84). Melbourne: Australian Resource Educators Ass.
- Burgess, T. (1977). Education after School. In. UK: Penguin.
- Butler, S. (2000). The 'H' word: Home schooling. *Gifted Children Today Magazine*, 23(5), 44-50.
- Cai, Y. (2002). Home schooling and teachingstyle; comparing the motivating styles of home school and public school teachers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol 94, no 2, 372-380.
- Cairns, L. (2003). *Examining Place, Agency and Mindfulness in Learner's Managing their own Learning*. Paper presented at the School of Lifelong Learning and Education, International Centre for Learner Managed Learning, UK.
- Cairns, L. a. M., M. (2005, Sept 7-10 2005). *Working to Learn; meaning, issues and theory relating to learning and work*. Paper presented at the European Educational Research Ass., Dublin.
- Carroll, J. (1985). Perspectives on Instructional Time. In I. F. C. a. B. D. (eds.) (Ed.). New York: Longman.
- Chisholm, C. a. D., M. (2005). *Extending the models for work-based learning into the Lifespace*, 2005
- Cizek, G. (1993). The mis-measure of home schooling effectiveness. *Home School Researcher*, 9, p1-4.
- Deakin, M. (1973). *The Children on the Hill*: Quartet Books, UK.
- Dewey, J. (1900). *School and Society: Child and Curriculum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Doecke, B. (2003, 2003, July 10th). *Narrative Enquiry*. Paper presented at the Monash University Educational Research Winter School, Melbourne.
- Duffey, J. (1999). Home schooling and students in special education; sorting out the options for parents. *Preventing School Failure, winter 1999*.
- Duvall, S. W., D; Delquadri, J; Greenwood, C. (1997). An exploratory study of home school instructional environments and their effects on the basic skills of students with learning disabilities. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 20(2), 150.
- Ensign, J. (1998). *Defying the stereotypes of special education; homeschool students* (No. EC 306 403). San Diego, Cal: Southern Connecticut State University.
- Fisher, C. a. B., DC (Ed.). (1985). *Perspectives on instructional time*. New York: Longman.
- Gangel, K. a. B., W. (1983). *Christian Education; Its History and Philosophy*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Garton, A. a. P., C. (1990). *Learning to be Literate*. UK: Blackwell.
- Gay, L. R. (1992). *Educational Research*. Ontario: Maxwell Macmillan.
- Gherardi, S. a. N., D and Odella F. (1998). Learning in the workplace. *Journal of Management Learning*, 29(3), p273-298.
- Griffiths, M. a. W., M. (1988). Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy. In G. M. a. W. M (Ed.). London: Macmillan Press.
- Hatch, T. a. G., H. (1990). If Binet Had Looked Beyond the Classroom: The Assessment of Multiple Intelligences. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 14(5), pp415-429.
- Hensley. (1995). *Home schooling children with special needs*. Gresham, OR.: Noble.
- Holt, J. (1964). *How Children Fail*. London: Pelican.
- Holt, J. (1970). *The Underachieving School*. London: Pelican.
- Holt, J. (1981). *Teach your Own*. Norfolk: Lighthouse books.
- Holt, J. (1982). *Teach Your Own*. New York: Dell.
- Hunter, R. (1991). Utopian Education; home school phenomenon. *19th ANZ Comparative and International Education Social Conference*.
- Illich, I. (1973). *Deschooling Society*. UK: Penguin.
- Jackson, G. (2000). *Legal requirements for homeschooling in Australia*. Unpublished Master of Education, Monash, Melbourne.
- James, C. L. (1967). *Self-pronouncing Alphabet*. Santa Cruz, California: Beacon Enterprises.
- Kellaghan, T., Sloane K., Alvarez, B. and Bloom B. (1993). *The Home Environment and School Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Boss.
- Klicka, C. (2002). Virtual Charter Schools; Battle for the Soul of the Homeschool Movement. *Home School Digest, vol 13, no1*, p 34-38.
- Knowles, J., Marlow, SE and Muchmore, JA. (1992). From Pedagogy to Ideology: Origins and Phases of Home Education in the USA, 1970-1990. *American Journal of Education*, 100(2), 195-235.
- La Voie, R. (2004). *Some Thoughts on Success*. Retrieved Oct 2004
- Levinson, H. (1993). *A Scientific Watergate, Dyslexia*. New York: Stonebridge Publications.
- Levison, C. (2000). *More Charlotte Mason Education*. Beverley Hills: Champion Press.
- Lieblich, A. T.-M., K; Ziber, T. (1998). *Narrative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

- Lindvall, J. (2001). The Discipleship Approach to Academic Motivation. *The Home School Digest*, 12, 51-52.
- Lines, P. (2004). Enrolled Home Study Partners with Public Schools. *Education Digest*, 69(6), 43.
- Maglen, F. (1998, Dec 1998). Tackling literacy problems with adolescents and young adults. *SPELD Bulletin*, 29, 5-10.
- Maslen, G. (1989). Crisis in the Classroom. *Education Age*(25/4/89), p4.
- Mason, C. (1989). *The Original Home Schooling Series* (Vol. 1-6). London: JM Dent and Sons Ltd.
- Mattox, W. J. (1999, February 3, 1999). Hidden Virtues in Home schooling. *Newsweek*.
- Mayberry M, K. J., Ray B and Marlow SE. (1995). *Home Schooling- Parents as Educators*. 1000 Oaks, Cal: Corwin Press.
- McFisher. (1977). *Educational Disabilities and Needs of Isolated Correspondence School Pupils*. Bourke, NSW, Australia: The Isolated Children's Parents Ass, Federal Executive.
- McLean, I. a. R., E. (1999). Power tools for positive living. In. Mitcham, Vic: Hi Perform Learning.
- Meehan, N. a. S., S. (1994). *Homeschooling in the United States A recent review of literature*, 2004, from www.writerspost.com/homeschoolsteps/seealso/researchintro.htm
- Meighan, R. (1997). *The Next Learning System; Why Homeschoolers are Trailblazers*: Education Heretics Press.
- Miller, G. a. D., R. (1997). *Context and Method in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Moll, L. e. (1990). *Vygotsky and Education*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Moore, R. a. D. (1975). *Better late than Early; A New Approach to Your Child's Education*. New York: Reader's Digest.
- Moore, R. a. D. (1982). *Home Spun Schools: Teaching Children at Home_ What Parents are Doing and How They are Doing It*. Waco, Tex.: Word.
- Nicholls, B. (2001). Embedding positive teaching into the Ysseldyke Framework for "Effective Instruction": a strategy for teacher development. In D. a. B. In Greaves, D (eds.) (Ed.), *Creating Positive Futures*. Melbourne: Australian Resource Educators' association.
- Papert, S. (1980). *Mindstorms*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Papert, S. (1993). *The Children's Machine; rethinking school in the age of the computer*. New York: Basic Books.
- Perret-Clermont, A. (1980). *Social Interaction and Cognitive Development*. Geneva: Academic Press, London.
- Petrosky, A. (2003, 10/7/03). *The Fetish of Standards; Methodological Issues in Research on Professional Standards*. Paper presented at the Monash University Winter School, Melbourne.
- Polanyi, M. (1967). *The Tacit Dimension*. UK: Routledge and Keagan Paul Ltd.
- Popper, K. (1963). *Conjectures and Refutations*. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul.
- Ray, B. (1990). *A Nationwide Study of Home Education*. Paeonian Springs, VA 22129: Home School Legal Defense Ass.
- Ray, B. (2004). Homeschoolers ont to College; What Research shows us. *Journal of College Admission*(185), 5.

- Rodd, E. a. D. (1991). *Training for Royalty*. Shippeysburg, PA, USA: Companion Press.
- Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in Thinking; Cognitive Development in Social Context*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rogoff, B., Moore, L, Behnosh, N, Dexter, A, Correa-Chavez, M and Solis, J. (2005). Children's Development of Cultural Repertoires through Participation in Everyday Routines and Practices. In J. a. H. Grusec, D (Ed.), *Handbook of Socialization*. New York: Guildford.
- Rogoff, B. a. L. J. e. (1999). *Everyday Cognition*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Rogoff, B. T., C; Bartlett, L. (editors). (2001). *Learning Together; Children and Adults in a School Community*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Romanowski, M. H. (2001). Common Arguments about the Strengths and Limitations of Home Schooling. *The Clearing House*, 75(2), 79-84.
- Royall, I. (2003, 23/5/03). Home Classes Surge. *Herald Sun*, p. p13.
- Ruff, H. (2004). *Homequest Software*. Retrieved Feb 2004, Feb 2004, from LDOnline
- Ryan, M. (1988, 17/7/88). Now they're at Harvard. *Parade Magazine*, p20.
- Sacks, O. (1985). *The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat*. London: Macmillan.
- Sanborn, R. S., A; Montgomery, A; Caruthers, J. (2005). Four Scenarios for the Future. *The Futurist*, 39(1), 26.
- Simmons, B. (1994). Classroom at Home. *American School Board Journal*, 181(2), 47-49.
- Simmons, M. (2003). *The Discursive Construction of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder*. Unpublished Ph D, Flinders University, Adelaide.
- Spalding, R. (1969). *The Writing Road to Reading*. New York: Quill.
- Stevens, R. (1988). The learning-disabled adolescent. *SPELD*, 19(3), 3-4.
- Tansley, P. a. P., John. (1981). *Children with Specific Learning Difficulties; a critical review of research*. London: Nelson.
- Terrill, M.-L. (2001). Parent interviews: where are the gaps? In D. a. B. In Greaves, D (eds.) (Ed.), *Creating Positive Futures* (pp. p73-76). Melbourne: Australian Resource Educators Ass.
- Thomas, A. (1998). *Educating Children at Home*. London: Cassel Education.
- Thwaites, J. (2001). *Renegotiating the Church Contract*. Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press.
- Tizard, B. a. H., M. (1984). *Young Children Learning; talking and thinking at home and at school*. Glasgow: Fontana.
- Torgesen, J. K. (2000, July 2000). *Lessons learned from intervention research in reading; a way to go before we rest*. Paper presented at the AREA National Conference, Melbourne.
- Weeks, A. (1998, July 1998). Stress and Dyslexia. *SPELD BULLETIN*, 29, 12-13.
- Wells, G. (1986). *The Meaning Makers; Children learning language and using language to learn*. Portsmouth, UK: Heinemann.
- Wells, G. (1998). *Dialogue and the Development of the Agentive Individual; An Educational Perspective*. Paper presented at the Human Agency in Cultural-Historical Approaches; Problems and Perspectives, University of Toronto.
- Wells, G. (2004). *The holistic nature of Learning as a co-participation in activity*. Paper presented at the Toronto Symposium.
- Yin, R. (1984). *Case Study Research; Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Zohar, D. a. M., I. (2004). *Spiritual Capital: wealth we can live by*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.