



Choice: What Choice?

48,000 children in the UK (an increase of 40% from 2014-15) have 'chosen' to be home educated. Why is this and how can we reintegrate these learners who would like to go to college so they can enjoy, achieve and succeed?

History

1976 PM Callahan raised questions about value for money of educational spending. Fit learners "to do a job of work".
1997 'Excellence in Schools' White Paper – zero tolerance of underperformance. Targets were set and threats of closure or replacement for 'under-performing schools'.
2002 Fixed penalty fines of £50 for non-attendance
2008 Every Child Matters policy implemented
2012 Raise GCSE benchmark
2013 Performance Related Pay
2016 Progress 8
2018 Concerns raised about children missing from education
2018 Off-rolling concerns from Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, who partly blamed an increase in home education on schools 'shovelling children back to parents' (Ofsted, 2018)

I felt like I was thrown in on my own not able to cope with the actual college itself. When I left school I didn't get to go to different colleges or meetings. I hadn't been in a classroom since Y7 so long hours and (being) away from home were a challenge. - D

I find it 'proper hard' with the anxiety until I arrive at college. When I first started a few months ago the anxiety levels were a lot higher due to coming to college 2 days a week (having been previously EHE). The more I am here the more it reduces because it is calm at college and I feel calmer. - A



Introduction

With these growing figures what are FE colleges doing to support the needs of those learners previously in home education?
Concerned that EHE may not actually be a choice for all, rather the least bad option, I read further to see if there was a systemic reason why increasing numbers of families were opting for home education and looked at the historical, political and legal context.

Recommendations

- A wider sample of learners, including from other colleges, to find out what conditions we need to create to help people in to further education
- Implement and evaluate a pilot transition programme to include:
 - ✓ Point of contact
 - ✓ Online resources
 - ✓ Summer school
 - ✓ Peer support
 - ✓ Health and Wellbeing support

Why it is important

With nearly 10k off-rolled pupils disappearing from the school system (Ofsted, 2018) how are these learners having a fair chance of a fulfilled life?
'Education has become one of the clearest indicators of life outcomes such as employment, income and social status, and is a strong predictor of attitudes and wellbeing.' (ESRC 2014)
What can we do to ensure every child has this opportunity?

Further Education is a 'second chance' for many especially as there is a sharp increase in home education in Y10 & 11.
This project will:

- Support current students
- Encourage future students

Right to Enhancement

Right to Inclusion

Right to Participation

"We can measure education against the model of rights and see whether all students receive and enjoy such rights or whether there is an unequal distribution of these rights" (Bernstein, 1996)

What I did

The focus of this small-scale research will consider historical factors and the current educational system within England (Ball 2017) and briefly compare this with the system in Finland (Sahlberg 2018) looking at what education is for, whether as a competitive business (Coffield 2008) or leading to a fulfilled life (Bernstein 2000); how this has had an impact on the number of elective home educated (EHE) children and the potential issues that brings; and the opportunities further education (FE) colleges can take to encourage some of this group of learners into their institutions.

Investigated history of education in England and Wales to draw conclusions as to what education is for and why the mainstream school environment is not acceptable/preferable to some.

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Semi-structured interviews with previously home educated students (aged 15-18) sharing experiences before, during and after being home educated.

Findings

- Increase in Elective Home Education
- Increase in 'off-rolling' learners – Ofsted concerned (is this due to data driven Ofsted inspections?)
- Learners have individual stories and whilst a transition programme would help many it should be a 'menu' of options to choose from.
- Learners should feel empowered (as masters of their own learning and having a voice (Freire 1993 & Bernstein 1996)) and work collaboratively to support each other to lead to a fulfilled life.

References

Ball, S. (2017) *The Education Debate*. Bristol, Policy Press.
Bernstein, B. (1996) *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity*. Oxford, Taylor & Francis.

Coffield, F. (2008) *Just suppose teaching and learning became the first priority....* Dorset, Blackmore.
Freire, P. (1993) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, Bloomsbury Academic.