MA Short Course

Advancing Pedagogy in Post Compulsory Education and Training

Choice, what choice?

- an investigation into the increase in home education, the conditions that led to it, and how to support these learners to attend college.

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1st September, 2019

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Abstract

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Choice, what choice? - an investigation into the increase in home education, the conditions that led to it, and how to support these learners to attend college.

Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today. (Malcolm X, 1964)

According to information from the Home Education in England Briefing Paper (Foster, 2018) also published by BBC, in 2016-17, 48,000 children in the UK (an increase of 40% from 2014-15) have 'chosen' to be home educated. This research explores the extent to which this is always a choice. If the answer is no, the issue then becomes why is this so and how we can reintegrate 'home-schooled' learners who would like to go to FE college so that they enjoy, achieve and succeed?

The research study considers historical factors that have shaped the current educational system in England (Ball, 2017). It then compares the English education system with the system in Finland (Sahlberg, 2018). Coffield (2008) invites us to consider the issue of what education is for, including whether it is seen as a competitive business or a process of leading to living a fulfilled life. This research discusses how key factors in systems of education impact on the number of elective home educated (EHE) children, the potential issues this brings and the steps that Further Education (FE) colleges could take to encourage some of this group of learners to progress into their institutions.

With growing numbers of home educated students in England, this study asks what FE colleges are doing to support the needs of those learners previously in home education? It reveals how some home learners are socially withdrawn, anxious, not able to attend fully and occasionally have emotional and/or physical outbursts. It explores if/how time could be better spent by being proactive rather than reactive in providing previously home educated learners with an improved educational experience in FE which might have a positive impact on their mental health and achievement?

Following a review of literature regarding historical factors shaping the English educational system, a sample of learners, aged 15-18, who had previously been home educated, participated in semi-structured interviews sharing their experiences before, during and after being home educated. Initial findings suggest that a 'one size fits all' strategy does not work and that a 'menu' of transition and support opportunities to select from, could be more appropriate in addressing and overcoming the reasons why they had to be home educated in the first place. The question is what can we do to ensure every child is able to access their pedagogic rights (Bernstein, 1996) in

institutions of education where they feel that they belong and that they have some say over what they belong to.

Key Words: Elective Home Education (EHE), pedagogic rights, transition to college.

Section A - What you set out to do and why

Literature review

To be able to critically evaluate the current educational system and elective home learning we should first gain an understanding on what education is for and how it came to be in its current state.

Method

With elective home education featuring frequently in the media, I sought to catalogue the main articles and other media to gain an overview of the situation in England. The key literatures are outlined below.

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.

It is hoped that through investigating the history of education and the reasons why some choose elective home education a greater understanding of the needs (physical, emotional and social) of these learners can be gained to identify what condition we need to create, with which to encourage and best support those who wish to attend further education establishments to continue their education.

Introduction

Growing media attention about the increase in numbers of children having Elective Home Education (EHE) (BBC reported a 40% increase from 2014/15 to 2016/17 with 48,000 children EHE with the Association of Directors of Children's Services reporting 21% increase in 18 months to 45,500 children in Autumn 2017 (Foster, 2018)) raises a number of questions such as: Is this acceptable? Why is this happening? What is the impact? and, with a focus on further education (FE); What can be done to help those EHE learners come to college (post 16) if they wish?

"OFSTED's chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, told MPs in 2018 she was concerned about a rise in home education, which could be partly blamed on schools 'shovelling' children back to parents" (Busby, 2018). This comment from someone with great

experience of learners and education from across the country raises concerns and suggests that not all who choose to home educate are doing so from a point of real choice.

Any figures regarding numbers who are EHE are estimates as in England and Wales it is currently impossible to have exact figures as children do not have to be registered if EHE and if the child has never attended school it is possible they are unknown to the authorities. According to Kendall and Atkinson (2006) referring to local authorities there are "...significant numbers of children they were not aware of". At the present time (2019) registration is a voluntary process although how long this will continue is unknown. In the Badman report 'Review of Elective Home Education (Badman, 2009) "It made 28 recommendations, including compulsory annual registration scheme for home education to be established" however on 8 April 2010 this was removed from the bill because no agreement could be made, therefore it was omitted from the Children, Schools and Families Act of 2010, perhaps in part to speed up the acceptance of the bill before an election.

Of particular concern is the concept of 'off-rolling', a practice where students are removed from a school roll, often in the final years of school, possibly with the aim to help their achievement data look better when GCSE results are announced.

Thousands of pupils could be "disappearing" from the school system as a result of illegal off-rolling, Ofsted has warned. Inspectors found that 19,000 children dropped off school rolls between January 2016 and January 2017, during the time students take their GCSE exams. Around half (9,700) of those dropping off rolls between Years 10 and 11 are not reappearing on the roll of another state-funded school. - TES, 2018

This highly unethical practice should be counterbalanced with the consideration that if a school is put into 'special measures' when graded by Ofsted - Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, (which could happen due to poor achievement data) it will then be taken over by an academy, and the impact that has, and therefore systemic reasons need to be investigated.

This review will focus mainly on those who have 'chosen' to EHE due to the conditions in mainstream education not being optimal for the child (reasons among the most frequently mentioned according to the NFER report, Some Perspectives on Home Education (Kendall & Atkinson, 2006) are 'dissatisfaction with school environment, withdrawal for reasons of non-attendance, bullying, risk of exclusion, or prosecution or special educational needs (SEN)').

The author is aware of EHE being a true first choice for some (perhaps with lifestyle, cultural or philosophical reasons (Kendall & Atkinson, 2006)), and whilst the outcomes of this research will hopefully assist should they want to attend FE college, their experiences, albeit valuable for other research, are not the focus of this review.

Why do children and families opt for home education?

What are the systemic issues behind the reasons why students might find themselves in home education?

Views of the purpose of education vary. Education in Buddhism would be a step towards enlightenment, Maslow would call it steps to self-actualisation, Bernstein (1996), had three groups of pedagogic rights: the right to be enhanced; the right to be included (as you); and the right to have participation (some say as to what you belong to and to have a voice). Others believe it is so each individual can lead a fulfilled life (Sahlberg, 2018) or to 'fuel the factories' teaching learners the skills they need to help their country function.

Stephen Ball, in The Education Debate (2017), chronicles the developing English education system starting with Dame schools in the 1800s, moving to a tripartite system and a current system of 70 different types of school (Courtney, 2015). During this development there can be seen an increase in competitiveness of schools, an increase in the idea of performance relating to money (although, along with inspections, not new as this was evident from 1862 (Ball, 2017) - see illuminative case study of Education in England in appendices) and that education is being seen more as a business with schools from 1862 measured by examination with 'payment by results' by way of a government grant (evidence of early performativity according to Ball (idim.)).

'Education is being reduced to the narrow pursuit of competitive advantage in international trade, an objective rightly close to the heart of any Chancellor of the Exchequer but not one likely to inspire staff or students' (Coffield, 2008)*.*

England was not alone in this increase in competitiveness, across the world many other countries were following. Parsi Sahlberg, an education consultant from Finland, thought that is started with England in 1988 then spread (he likens it to an infection using the term GERM – Global Education Reform Movement) to North America, Australia, New Zealand and others. (Sahlberg, 2014)

In England *'..the education 'system' we have is not the one we need. The testing regime is damaging our young people; and the audit culture is driving out innovation and destroying our trust in educators'* (Coffield, 2008 & Coffield, and Williamson, 2011).

With a focus on maths, English and science achievement these countries 'infected' by GERM haven't been able to improve results in this since the 1980s. Sahlberg has found close links between equality and learning using data from the OECD PISA 2012/13 study information (PISA, 2012 & Sahlberg, 2014).

'Such comparisons, based overwhelmingly on public examination results, are made internationally, nationally and locally and have become the benchmark of educational excellence whilst bypassing and even submerging the question of good for what and good for whom' (Biesta, 2009)*.*

Finland changed the way it educated its children forty years ago and invested heavily in equity with excellent schools, teachers, nutrition and others during the 1970s-90s. They changed their schooling so there was (and still is) only one comprehensive system with

no private education or alternative systems (elective home learning is not permitted, Sweden and Germany also do not). The unexpected result of this equity and equality in education in Finland has been an increase in grades. Now it is among the highest ranking in terms of learning and equity under the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment where every 3 years 15 year olds are tested in reading, mathematics and science (PISA, 2013)).

In the Education Act, 1996 section 7, parents have a duty to ensure their child is educated full time *'to his age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'*. Should a parent choose to home educate their child they take on the financial responsibility for this and funding is not from the Local Authority (LA) however some LAs offer support, such as paying for GCSE examination fees and advice, if they have the resources.

Whilst the Badman Report (2009) recommended those home educated to be registered this currently is not required legally, hence the difficulty is having accurate EHE data. Those who have never attended school may be unknown to authorities due to this lack of registration.

The impact of the current school system with its dependence on data, increasing competitiveness and businessification in England is not meeting the needs of all students with a growing number finding these conditions unbearable to be learning in and 'choosing' to be home educated.

In a county in the south of England 1,300 children were being home educated in Spring 2018, the reasons given for this included those common nationally and internationally with special educational needs not identified and or supported, bullying, and for cultural, religious and philosophical reasons (Hampshire Governor, Autumn 2018 & Neuman & Guterman, 2016). The report, *Some Perspectives on Home Education* by NFER (Kendall & Atkinson, 2006) has in addition to the above, dissatisfaction with the school environment, links to non-attendance and risk of exclusion or prosecution.

*Research conducted in England in the schools sector (Fielding et al., 2005; Ball, 2008) and in the FAVE sector (Gregson & Nixon, 2009; Coffield, 2017), indicate that the imperatives of highly prescriptive, top-down systems of accountability, performativity, inspection, league tables etc., introduce a climate of fear and distrust between teachers, education leaders and evaluators and that this in turn encourages and increases tendencies towards instrumental behaviour and fabrications of compliance discussed above (*Gregson & Spedding, 2018).

This 'fabrication of compliance', whilst referring to Further and Vocational Education teaching, replicates what Ball observed in the school sector and increases the disparity of power with the authority (school, college, head, educational authority) imposing

conditions upon those less knowledgeable about the system (students and their families) when discussing 'choices' due to needs not being met.

The power imbalance between schools and children and, or, their families relates to Freire's 'peasant/boss' (Freire, 1993) situation that disempowers individuals and leads them to 'choices'. Freire (1993), when interviewing for Pedagogy of the Oppressed, written in 1970, in relation to education used to dominate and maintain injustice in Latin America heard "The peasant feels inferior to the boss because the boss seems to be the only one who knows things and is able to run things" and interesting called himself (the 'peasant') ignorant, compared to the 'professor' as he was called, being the one with the knowledge. Almost 50 years later, halfway across the world in a 'First World Country' we can see parallels in the power relationship with the headteacher and a child/family being offered educational 'options' such as EHE.

Whilst Freire writes in detail about the power dynamic, little is said about the mental impact this will have on those 'oppressed'. This is in common with the majority of other literature reviewed with the focus on the more measurable GCSE grades rather than mental health and associated impacts that could be lifelong.

For progress to be made we should move away from being judged by the current system of qualification driven education where the students are 'receptacles to be filled by the teacher' with a 'banking concept of education (where) knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves to be knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing' (Freire, 1993) (and reminds us of being measured by grades and league tables) or look towards students being 'masters of their thinking' (Freire, 1993) and having a voice (Bernstein, 1996). Being denied access to the resources (e.g. teachers) means this is a challenge and reflects on our society.

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).

Our learners become (or already are) not just workers, but lovers, parents, consumers and citizens. We need to educate them for all these roles. We must, of course, prepare them to become committed and hard-working employees, but we must also prepare them to become active citizens, discriminating consumers and decent human beings (Coffield, 2008).

Conclusion

Whilst various past and present governments produced and implemented policies with the intention to raise standards it has also led to increased competitiveness in education

in England which, coupled with decreased funding, has contributed to conditions for learning not being met for all students leading to an increase in EHE, particularly in GCSE years.

The focus on equality and equity (rather than performativity) of education in Finland has led to an increase in grades and a very high position in the PISA survey.

The outcome as a researcher is that whatever the reason for EHE, we must be aware of personally and societal held assumptions, at times incorrect assumptions, such as EHE has not been found to delay social interaction skills (Bowers, 2018) and that we must be mindful of our own educational experiences and remain unbiased towards traditional mainstream education as this is what many have experienced.

'*I believe that the common position of assuming the normalcy of mainstream education and marginalising home education hinders a healthy inspiration for reflection of educational practice.*' Bowers, 2018

This un-biased view will assist in understanding the needs of the learner so that the best support can be put in place. *The legislative framework for Educational Psychologists to follow when addressing children and young people with special educational needs (the Children and Families Act 2014 (CFA 2014) and the associated SEND Code of Practice 2014 (SEND CoP 2014)) highlight the need to place the voice of the child and the family at the centre of all considerations.* Bowers, 2018

and this is good advice regardless of the learning needs identified. Whilst we need to understand the current situation and what led them to that, we need to look forward so that the best possible outcomes can be achieved.

Research methodology

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.

Review of literature about education in England and Wales to gain a broader understanding (current and historical) to help determine what is the purpose of education and what has led to an increase in EHE (secondary data).

Identify if local figures match national figures and if there is an increase by interrogating college database and requesting information from local council education department (quantitative data).

It is essential that our learner remain central to this project. Semi-structured interviews (primary, qualitative data) with previously home educated students (aged 15-18) will be carried out so they can share their experiences before, during and after being home educated. Ideally, they will also be used for the planning and running of a future transition programme.

Ethical considerations

This research is part of a larger project investigating the support offered to students who have come from elective home education so that a comprehensive package can be provided for future students to ensure their continued engagement, attendance and success. For this study, as well as analysing national and local data, one to one interviews will be carried out to establish current transition experiences and needs so that future experiences are improved.

Interviews will primarily take place in the study support areas of FE colleges in the south of England. Consent from parents (students will be aged 14-18) will be requested before interviews take place and information will be anonymised (interviewees will choose a pseudonym). Interviewees have the right to withdraw from the study at any time by contacting the researcher who is mindful of the potential power relationship between student and lecturer. All data collected (using BERA (British Educational Research Association) Guidelines) will be stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR).

Expected to happen

I expected to confirm that EHE is increasing and little is being done to support these learners.

I hoped there would be an increasing awareness of EHE, I was not expecting the amount, or the focus on off-rolling and how quickly Ofsted changed their criteria to respond to the situation. At the start of the investigation it was of concern to a small number of people with little information available, now, one year later, there appears to be an increasing awareness, with those who influence policy having their voices heard.

Section B - The data and its analysis in terms of themes and categories

Analysis of national EHE figures

Information from the Home Education in England briefing paper (Foster, 2018) also published by BBC, in 2016-17 48,000 children in the UK (an increase of 40% from 2014-15) have 'chosen' to be home educated.

Portsmouth registered EHE students (Houghton, 2018)
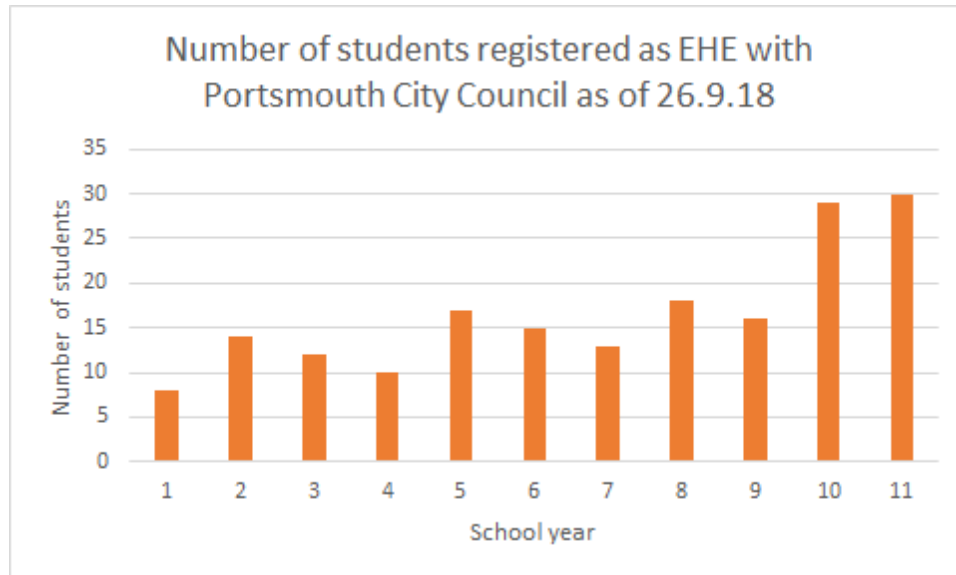
Portsmouth City Council were happy to share results with the date above being when they could share the information. Hampshire Council did not respond to requests so equivalent information was not possible to obtain however published statistics show an increase in EHE even if they cannot be directly compared with Portsmouth City Council data.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight registered EHE students (Hampshire, 2018)

New EHE cases registered by month – Hampshire & IOW
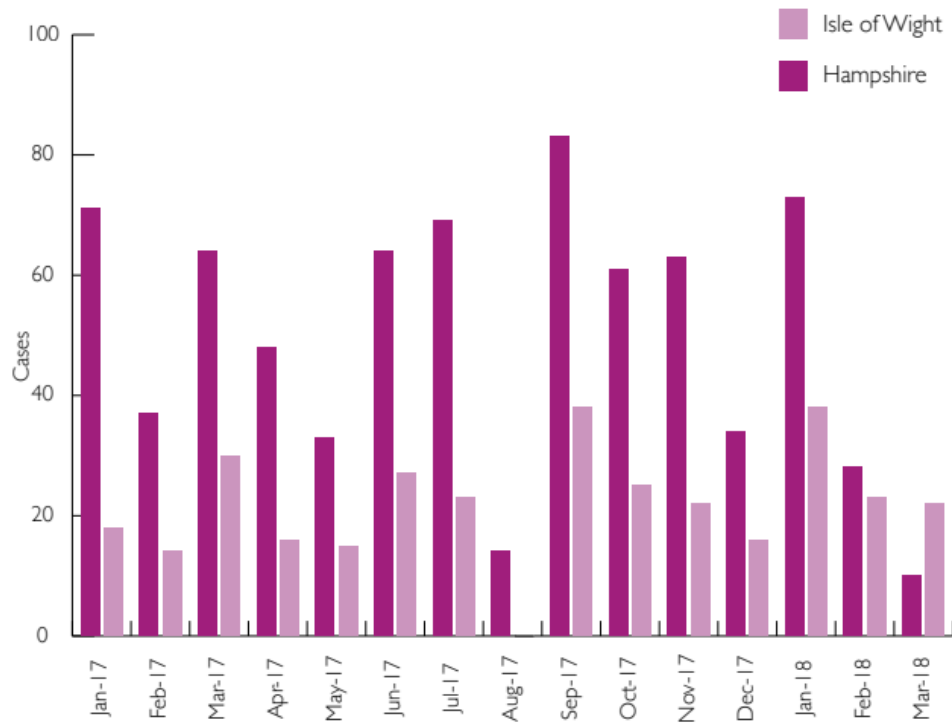
The data around age is shown below:

Year Group	Hampshire			Isle of Wight		
	Total December 2017	Spring Term 2018	Increase/ decrease	Total December 2017	March 2108	Increase/ decrease
R	12	15	+25%	0	9	–
1	32	27	-16%	17	22	29%
2	54	59	+9%	14	13	-7%
3	74	73	-1%	18	23	28%
4	76	76	0%	10	17	70%
5	81	91	+12%	30	34	13%
6	109	113	+4%	22	30	36%
7	116	128	+10%	20	21	5%
8	147	157	+7%	35	38	9%
9	185	199	+8%	38	42	11%
10	173	189	+9%	61	72	18%
11	189	204	+8%	83	85	2%
Total	**1248**	**1331**	**+7%**	**348**	**406**	**17%**

The data shows that in years 10 & 11 for Portsmouth and Isle of Wight and years 9, 10 & 11 for Hampshire are where the greatest number of students are moving from mainstream education to EHE. This corresponds with when students study and take GCSE examinations and also when post year 11 options are highlighted. This reflects the national picture of an increase in EHE as identified by Ofsted's Amanda Spielman (Busby, 2018).

Analysis of 14-16 EHE numbers at 1 college of FE (Course, 2018)

2016-17	11
2017-18	21
2018-19	38
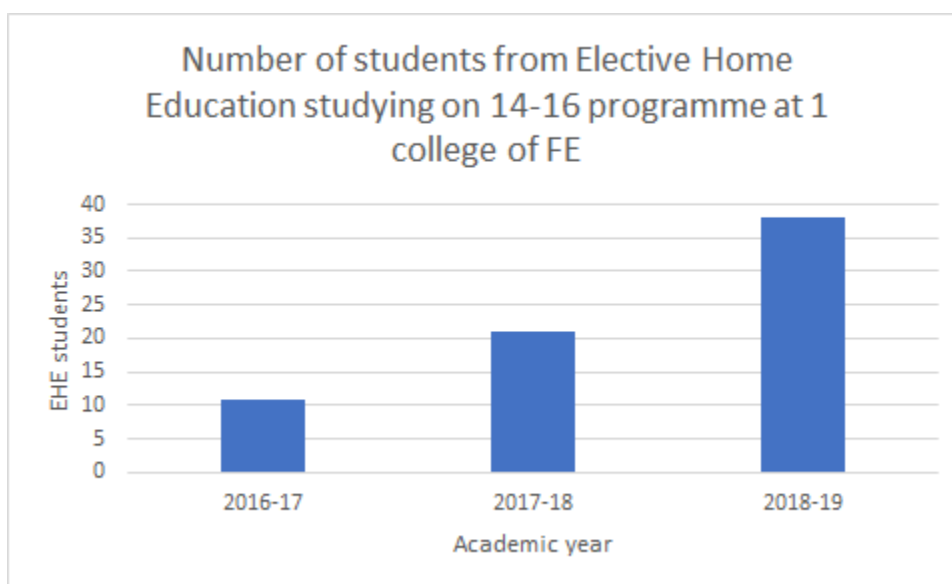
In a college of FE offering a 14-16 programme for those in and out of school there has seen in the past three years almost a doubling year on year of EHE students participating. This is forecast to slow in 2019/20 due to one of the two local authorities refusing to allow and fund places however there has still been growth.

Analysis of achievement of previously EHE learners 2017-18 (Weldon, 2018)

Elective Home Education students at 1 college of FE 2017-18	
31 individual EHE learners taking 69 courses	
Out of 69 EHE entries in 2018, 65 are on the 14-16 programme (the other 4 entries are ESOL)	94.20%
Out of 69 EHE entries in 2018, 48 achieved	69.56%

Out of the 69 EHE entries in 2018, 5 withdrew from that course	7.25%
Out of the 69 EHE entries in 2018, 1 transferred	1.44%
Out of the 69 EHE entries in 2018, 10 are continuing or intending to continue and lead to the learning aim	14.49%
Out of the 69 EHE entries in 2018, 5 completed programme but did not achieve learning aim	7.25%

Initially these figures look positive with students achieving at college on the 14-16 programme when in the past they may have not had access to resources. Further investigation would be beneficial to establish why 5 learners withdrew, were the conditions not right for their learning at college and what can be done to improve? How does this data compare with the following year? Remembering that the students' journeys are important and looking at their achievement holistically, another method of recording qualitative experience is also required.

Analysis of previous EHE learners' views

To gain an understanding of what conditions brought the student to be home educated, their experiences of home education and now as a college student semi-structured interviews took place. Students who had been previously EHE were first asked to choose a name, pseudonym, to use for the purpose of this research and explained it was to maintain their anonymity. They enjoyed this and it helped engage and relax them. The purpose of the questions was to structure the interview and act as a starting point for the conversation.

Students interviewed were all first home educated during secondary school with ages ranging from 10-14 and EHE for between one and four years. They are now attending college either on a 14-16 programme or a full-time course.

The circumstances leading up to being home educated included bullying, anxiety, bereavement with SEN needs leading to exclusion, and personal choice as had always wanted to be home schooled being able to choose subjects to study and getting up later.

There was variety in the form of home education with many using workbooks that started being completed enthusiastically but was not sustained. One student saying -

I did it myself using books, AQA books, but just for a couple of weeks. My mum's not very smart so I home schooled myself. Mum encouraged me to do it, but when I stopped it caused arguments and then I started at college because I didn't do work at home. It was either attend college or go back to school according to mum.

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This college was chosen due to friends or friends of parents suggesting it and another local college not offering the appropriate courses.

The college has good links with the local schools with all being welcomed in for an experience day however none of those who had been home educated had been to the college before the interview. Following the interview, they started the course and did not have a tour or induction.

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.

Having been at college for a number of months, but less than a year, comments about being a student at college were positive with them enjoying being treated as an adult, having freedom, learning new topics, being rewarded with a qualification, being out of the house, away from bad influences, socialising and meeting new people. Some of the challenges were physically coming into college with getting out of bed and the journey to college, finding their way around college and the length of days.

Final comments included:

I find it fine going to a new place. Didn't need a tour. In college there is less of a bad influence as being at school.

Challenges – coming in. I should be coming forward, but I feel like I'm going backwards sometimes. Difficult leaving the house, getting out of bed sometimes. Depends on day and mood.

Finding my way around the college was a challenge. Was getting hot, bothered and panicky. Colleges can be quite difficult to get around. Shorter days maybe would help.

First day coming in I was sh***ing myself. Came in with mum, I didn't want her to leave, she stayed around college so could call at any time. It's still challenging, coming in sometimes, once I get here I am fine, it's the bus ride (public bus) over here when I get anxious.

Ideas from the small group discussion of preciously EHE students that took place April 2019 in 1 college of FE included:

- Meet others before the course starts
- Meet teachers in advance
- Get to know college and buildings –tour, map, understand room numbering system
- Option to visit with parents

It is interesting to note that the body language and engagement suggested all felt valued by having their voices heard. This reinforces the importance of keeping the student central to this, and future, projects not only for their feedback on experiences

but also in the planning and implementation, and perhaps evaluation, of a transition programme/ support package. Freire (1993) discusses the value of students and educators working together with the idea of co-collaborators of learning as a solution.

Key findings

There is a substantial increase in Elective Home Education seen nationally and this is mirrored locally. These students are not gaining the experiences of college during taster days from school and invited to open evenings and days.

When EHE is chosen the local authority does not receive funding for the child, does not have a financial responsibility and offers limited support.

There has been an increase in 'off-rolling' learners (is this partly due to data driven Ofsted inspections?) and Ofsted are concerned.

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.

Webb (2011, referenced by Bowers, 2018) identified that there is currently relatively little UK based research in the area of EHE experience however there is a growing awareness of the need to address the issue of 'disappearing' students with both the Education Secretary vowing to take action on school exclusions (Gov.UK, 2019), a new team of school/exclusion education policy specialists at county level, the position of Head of Programme, Alternative Education for the Centre of Social Justice being advertised late December 2018 and Ofsted focusing on the personal development of learners (Ofsted, 2019) rather than the previous perceived emphasis on achievement data.

September 2019 will see the introduction of a revised inspection framework, one aim would be that "schools do not remove, or lose, pupils from their roll for reasons other than those in the best educational interests of those pupils" (Ofsted, Education inspection framework 20-19: inspecting the substance of education, 16 January 2019).

To assist with transition to further education in their local area City and Islington College is set to open a Home Education Hub September 2019. It will offer 14-16 year old students the opportunity to study for 12 hours a week to gain future entry on to the level 3 programmes offered by the college by gaining the equivalent to 5 GCSEs. This will be interesting to compare to the college the students who were interviewed attend. The

college attended by those interviewed offers a smaller provision that potentially could be upscaled and promoted.

Recommendations

This small-scale research has limitations, one of which was the limited sample of learners. A wider sample of learners, including from other colleges, is needed to find out what conditions we need to create to help previously home educated students into further education. In future research the parents' views would also be useful. A wider selection of previously home educated learners could be selected as currently they are mainly on level 1 programmes. Would results be different with level 2 and 3 students, post 16 students or students from other institutions? Further investigation could answer these questions.

Design, implement and review a pilot transition programme with current students who were previously EHE involved throughout. Valuing and empowering them and developing useful skills. Implement and evaluate a pilot transition programme to include:

- ❖ Point of contact/ Health and Wellbeing support - students who are carers, parents, looked after children, have physical or mental health challenges all have a point of contact within college, this should be extended to those who have been EHE and be easily accessible.
- ❖ Online resources - with the complex reasons of why students are EHE, further online resources about the college would be useful so the student can become familiar with the surrounding before physically visiting if they wish to.
- ❖ Summer school - this would offer a programme to develop confidence attending college during a quiet period of time where students could meet key members of the college team and know where to go for all situations.
- ❖ Peer support - knowing there was someone at college who understood a little of the situation would help the new student and empower the current student developing their social skills.

A pilot transition/ induction programme could meet the needs identified in the small group discussion and if it were run before college started this may reduce any anxiety of being in a busy environment when unfamiliar with it. To further reduce this potential anxiety and increase confidence in coming to college an online video of teachers/lecturers and the college facilities and buildings could be produced. This should be available to be accessed at any time, as often as required and be on any platform so technical devices are not a barrier. A 'buddy' or mentor system using college systems could be introduced. When implementing the programme guidance offered by O'Hanlon & Holmes (2004) when discussing inclusion and educational

achievement for Gypsy and Traveller children will be relevant for EHE student programmes.

Investigate developing links with EHE networks– could college offer facilities such as an exam centre, taster days or revision sessions. Currently those in schools would have visits to school for talks, revision sessions and the students would have the opportunity to attend a 'Taster day' for either a half or whole day. Those who are EHE should have equity and be offered the same opportunities regardless of where they study.

Further Education colleges are often seen, in part, a second chance to many students but can also be viewed as a second chance for the English education system to get it right for this growing group of students. This opportunity should be seized and maximised to the benefit of all those involved.

'I learned from my father, as he learned from his, to hear the music, the excitement and the hope in the word 'education'. I also learned that it is the job of teachers to help other people's children to hear and respond to that music. We do it because teaching is a noble profession, which dedicates itself to the lot of those who have not had our advantages. We do it because we believe in social justice and, like our parents and grandparents, we want a better world for ourselves, our children and all children. That is the meaning of our lives as teachers' (Coffield, 2008).

Appendices

Dissemination strategy

Effective dissemination is key to the project success so all stakeholders are committed to a positive outcome. The Education and Training Foundation and University of Sunderland have generously shared resources to support this research and with it comes a responsibility to share the outcomes.

During the research period October 2018 – August 2019 opportunities to discuss the project with fellow practitioner researchers were maximised through informal and formal discussions and presentations over three residential conferences. A wider audience was received at the ETF Annual Research Conference with the theme – Improving Educational Practice Through Educational Research held in July 2019 and attended by over one hundred delegates.

ETF Local Area Network Groups held sessions in July with both being attended and the research discussed informally. University of Portsmouth held their annual MICE (Mental Health in Childhood and Education Hub) conference with the theme Displaced Children in a Global Context and the research was discussed informally.

In applying for the practitioner- researcher position support was required from senior leaders and line manager at the college where the research took place and the concept was discussed with informal updates during the year. The completed research will be shared with these leaders to raise awareness, inform and inspire them and to support the next stage in the project with a proposed pilot transition programme. A news article to be published in the college staff newsletter will be written, with links to the full report, and shared with 1,000 plus members of staff. Training for lecturers to gain an insight into EHE can be offered as part of the staff development programme. These dissemination strategies can easily be upscaled to colleges and education departments in the local and national area and findings can be shared at local, national and international conferences.

Research Poster

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?

University of Sunderland

EDUCATION & TRAINING FOUNDATION
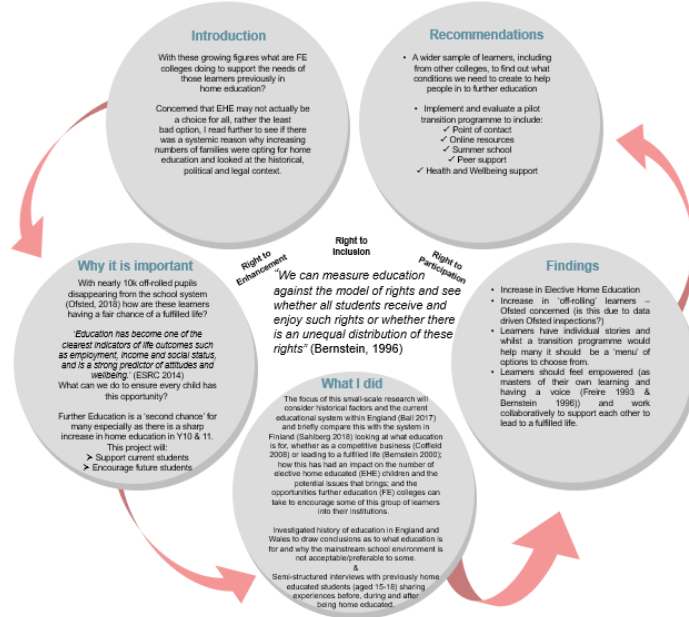Jasmine Course
jasmine.course@hsdc.ac.uk

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 Inclusion
Right to Enhancement
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)

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.

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

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Poster presented at Education and Training Foundation Annual Research Conference, 1st July, 2019, St Mary's House, London and discussed with Dr Lynne Rogers, Reader in Education at UCL, who also was the keynote speaker presenting Disengagement from Education.

Original poster to be emailed with this document so a better quality version may be viewed, please email jasmine.course@hsdc.ac.uk if copies for other purposes than MA assessing are required.

Illuminative case study of the history of education in England from 1939 – present demonstrating the purpose of education according to the government, the increase in competitiveness and businessification of education and how this can lead to conditions not being suitable for all to be in school.

Education started to be prioritised with the development of an education committee in 1839 (with grants available for education) and an education department in 1856 although it was not until 1870 when church schools were supported and other schools were established to 'fill the gaps'. Before this only teacher training was financially supported by the government to be a '*role model for their working-class students. Teachers were trained to be 'virtuous' rather than 'over-educated' (Jones, 1990, p 62 quoted by Ball). … bastions against chaos and social disorder' (Ball, 2017).* These teachers were also inspected, with the first inspectors being appointed in 1837, and in 1862 the schools were measured by examination with 'payment by results' by way of a government grant (evidence of early performativity according to Ball).

By the 1860s the '*Newcastle commission found that education provision was limited and standards were low. Only one in seven poor children attended school, often on a casual basis. By the age of 10 most had left to find work...poor provision for secondary education, uneven distribution...misuse of endowments...only 13 secondary schools for girls in the whole of England and Wales'* (Ball, 2017). This led to a tripartite system of education, one each for the different class of family (lower, middle and upper, presumably each with a different purpose of education) and the start of education acts from 1870, with compulsion (5-10 year olds had to go to school) from 1881 and fees removed by 1891. The exception to this was those children with additional needs that the state did not have a responsibility to educate until the Education (Handicapped Children) Act of 1970, one hundred years after the first education act.

Prime Minister Callaham, in his Ruskin College talk of 1976, raised performativity and the purpose of education *'We cannot be satisfied with maintaining existing standards...and the challenge in education is to examine its priorities and to secure as high efficiency as possible'. Education should have two goals, Callaghan argued: to equip children for 'a lively constructive place in society' and to fit them 'to do a job of work'* (Ball, 2017).

The 1980s and 90s saw funding cuts to education, however, in a speech by the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in 2005 said …'*education is our best economic policy...This country will succeed or fail on the basis of how it changes itself and gears up to this new economy, based on knowledge. Education therefore is now the centre of economic policy making for the future' and in the White Paper 'Excellence in Schools (DfEE, 1997) along with a number of intentions was - There would be zero tolerance of*

underperformance... The government would work in partnership with all those committed to raising standards (Ball, 2019)*.*

Fixed penalty fines for non-attendance of £50 were introduced (did these encourage attendance or criminalise parents (see Isle of Wight Council v Platt, 2017) and has this led to some 'choosing' to home educate to avoid this?). Inspections would now be on a six year cycle with underperforming schools threatened with being closed for being replaced with a '*'Fresh Start' school or taken over by a more successful one'* (Ball, 2017).

Progress 8 was introduced to schools in 2016 as a fairer way to judge progress, looking at value-added and encouraging schools make the progress of all learners a priority. Prior, and suspected continuing, to this schools would work hard to do well in the league tables that were first published in 1992. It was as this time there was a large increase in exclusions, partly presumably to 'game' the system and maximise their position on the league tables.

Since 2017 there has been a growing awareness and concern of the practice of offrolling. This term is used to describe the trend of students being removed from school without an exclusion.

> *'The practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil. Off-rolling in these circumstances is a form of 'gaming''.* - Ofsted 2019

With 45% of teachers surveyed by YouGov, on behalf of Ofsted's Annual Teachers' Survey, 2018, aware of this practice happening, 11% had seen it in their current school and 10% in a previous school. Their perception matches figures later in this paper that it happens to those students approaching GCSEs and also those with SEN or other needs adding *'parents with low understanding of the education system are most at risk of being pressured into removing their children from a school'* (Ofsted, Teachers say parents need help to resist off-rolling pressure, 10 May 2019 referenced by Long & Daneshi, 2019). This has echoes of Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed with the imbalance of power that is discussed later.

Ofsted, in June 2018, stated that students leaving school early were more likely to be from a disadvantaged group. Those with SEN made up around 30% of those who leave in years 10 & 11 compared with 13% of all students. '*Where these pupils go to is unclear for half of these pupils, which could be a sign that a large proportion are being home-schooled'.* In the annual report, published in December 2018, 19000 students, around 4% of total, did not move from Year 10 to Year 11 in the same school. Of those 19000, 9700 are 'missing' as they are then not registered at another state school. It is possible that some moved to other schooling such as independent schools, special

school, alternative provision, unregistered schools, home education or no education, all at this crucial time in a student's life. (Long & Daneshi, 2019)

Children's Commissioner report on 'invisible children'. Published in March 2019 *Skipping School: Invisible Children*, looked at those not in school.

> *Some parents report that they opted for home education after the school threatened to exclude their child or fine them for non-attendance, believing that this would help their children by avoiding a formal record of exclusion. The Children's Commissioner has heard of schools, anecdotally, where pro forma letters declaring a decision to home educate are kept at reception, ready for parents to sign when things at school get tough. She has met distraught parents who have signed up to home-educating their child without even realising that was what they were doing.* - Childrens Commissioner, 2019.

This happening when five years earlier there were clear guidelines from the Government -

Schools must not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding an exclusion or because the child has a poor attendance record.... If the pupil has a poor attendance record, the school and local authority must address the issues behind the absenteeism and use the other remedies available to them (Elective Home Education Guidelines for Local Authorities (England), quoted by Nicholson, 2014).

The Timpson review published in May 2019 investigated exclusions, including off-rolling, and came up with 30 recommendations. These include accountability of the schools for the students' outcomes, that Ofsted should, in most cases, grade the leadership and management as inadequate if off-rolling is identified, considering how and when funding goes to schools so that they do not incentivise exclusions, students should be tracked to identify where they go and why, and consider a 'right to return' period for any students who elect for home education. - Department for Education, 2019.

September 2019 will see the introduction of a revised inspection framework, one aim would be that "schools do not remove, or lose, pupils from their roll for reasons other than those in the best educational interests of those pupils" (Ofsted, Education inspection framework 20-19: inspecting the substance of education, 16 January 2019).

2014 saw performance-related pay introduced to attract and encourage excellent teachers however it also increases competition and businessification of education as Taylor states in Ball (2017) *'Education systems have been made objects of micro-economic reform with educational activities being turned into saleable or corporatised market products as part of a national efficiency drive'.* This all during a time when spending on education has been dramatically reduced (*Capital spending on schools fell 57% by 2013/14 as compared to its 2009/10 value* (Ball, 2017)).

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