

# What we know about Homeschooling and Autism from Literature and Studies

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**Abstract:** *This study examined the literature and studies on homeschooling and autism towards capacitating teachers and parents in the education of children with special needs in schools, inclusion programs, and home settings. The insights drawn can be used as a resource for teachers and parents. This paper presents a comprehensive review of current global and local related literature and studies trying to establish what we know about homeschooling and autism. The presentation of insights from the readings is presented using a thematic approach. The identified and unifying themes are presented one after another and then a synthesis is made that provides the grounds to launch this specific study and its justification.*

**Keywords:** home education, homeschooling, parents, children with autism, autism spectrum disorder

## 1. Introduction

The themes are: 1) Dissatisfaction with the school system prompts parents to choose homeschooling their children, 2) Parents must be competent to successfully implement homeschooling for children with autism, 3) Parents experience multiple concerns and challenges in homeschooling their children with autism, 4) There are observed benefits in the homeschooling choice on the families of children with autism, and 5) There are differentiation strategies that work for learners of all types.

### **Dissatisfaction with the school system prompts parents to choose homeschooling their children**

This first theme is dissatisfaction with the school system prompts parents to choose homeschooling their children. According to Simmons and Campbell (2018), dissatisfaction with educational placement or accommodation, dissatisfaction with school instruction, negative interactions with education professionals, social-emotional responses of children to traditional school, inability to provide religious instruction, lack of happiness at school, bullying, child safety, finances, and stress placed on the family were the compelling reasons among many that made autism parents choose homeschooling for their children.

Another reason given by Simmons and Campbell (2018) regarding parents' decision to home school their child is the experience of being dismissed by professionals who were supposedly the ones that may provide their child with the necessary therapy or intervention. Parents experience being asked to repeatedly submit referrals where they would have to compete for slots and schedule, thus compelling them to rely on their own ingenuity and instinct in finding solutions to their child's schooling needs (Simmons & Campbell, 2018).

### **Parents must be competent to successfully implement homeschooling for children with autism**

The second theme is parents must be competent to successfully implement homeschooling for children with autism. According to Shindorf (2019), parents need to be competent to successfully implement homeschooling for

their children which come from parent management training (PMT) that equip them in a homeschooling environment to be able to implement the homeschooling curriculum and manage its outcomes. Parents need to be competent in standardized assessment preparation especially for parents with no education degree or training (Simon & Campbell, 2018). Additionally, Shindorf (2019) argues that parents should become "therapists" and should undergo training in order to effectively implement evidence-based instructions. This runs parallel to the contention of Cahapay (2020) wherein the outcomes and input to the homeschooling students has "implications on parents' skills" and capacity to conduct homeschooling.

### **Parents experience multiple concerns and challenges in homeschooling their children with autism**

The third theme is parents experience multiple concerns and challenges in homeschooling their children with autism. Simmons and Campbell (2018) observed that the concerns of the homeschooled children with special needs such as decreased opportunities for socialization. Another observation made is that many homeschooling programs are lacking in meeting the requirements on "daily instructions", content, and social opportunities (Simmons & Campbell, 2018).

Furthermore, Simmons and Campbell (2018) observed additional challenges that parents encounter such as conflict between their "independent work" fulfillment and their child's "on-task time". Parents encounter frustrations on their clamor to accomplish their own work as well as monitoring their child to be focused "on" his work (Simmons & Campbell, 2018). Parents are stressed out in terms of lack of access to professional help such as guidance counselors, mentors, parent groups, to name a few, which may also take a toll on the mental, emotional, and physical stability of the parents who are providing the homeschooling instruction (Simmons & Campbell, 2018).

Cahapay (2020) identified other concerns and challenges in homeschooling their children with autism that might present "unavoidable" stress especially to families of children with autism that may include routines that are already in place.

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Lucero (2017) pointed out barriers in educating a child that arise from differences in parenting style, which comes with normative patterns of behavior and tactics that parents use to socialize and control their children yet incompatible with teaching practices. Since children with autism exhibit various or unique ways in performing and learning things, inconsistencies in the parenting style as well as the adjustment and coping mechanism of the parents may pose a problem for the homeschooling parents especially if they are new (Lucero, 2017). Along with these, numerous impediments prevent parents in implementing with certainty intervention plans for homeschoolers with providers due to the inherent conditions brought about by the behavioral manifestations of a child with autism such as attention seeking and impulsivity (Shindorf, 2019).

#### **There are observed benefits in the homeschooling choice on the families of children with autism**

The fourth theme is there are observed several benefits in the homeschooling choice on the families of children with autism. Cahapay (2020) discovered that there are benefits of homeschooling that include bringing the family together; increasing family involvement in the learning process of the child with autism; freedom to use varied and “personalized homeschooling activities”; and freedom to teach “new social behavior” that could lead to the realization of their child’s full potential aside from cognitive development.

The other observed benefit is “flexible learning” for individuals who may encounter some difficulties in adapting to the traditional educational set-up (Jamaludin, Alias, & DeWitt, 2015). Flexible learning is a benefit because it addresses some social issues such as “racism, special needs in learning, and incompetency of traditional learning” (Jamaludin et al., 2015, p.117). Other benefits noted are that there are higher chances of developing better character and morality; providing supportive learning settings and sense of order and empowerment; and imparting perception of meaningful learning (Jamaludin et al., 2015).

#### **There are differentiated strategies that work for learners of all types**

The fifth theme is there are differentiated strategies that work for learners of all types. Winebrenner and Brulles (2012) as well as Martin-Denham (2015) presented the following differentiated strategies that worked for learners of all types: adjusting the amount of work, changing the pacing of the lesson, changing the content, teaching using preferred learning modalities and preferences, finding topics that are highly interesting to the learner, changing peer interactions, and seeking out to the parents and former teachers of the learner.

Specified different universal instructional strategies that work for children with special needs which include using everyday materials that are found in most classrooms; getting children’s attention by identifying their highly-preferred activities to motivate them and optimize their learning; using an ounce of prevention through understanding and using a variety of preventive strategies to minimize challenged behaviors; talking to children while documenting it to support language development and cognition; teaching one step at a time by using *task analysis*

to break skills into small steps; and working in the learning zone through the use of social mediation of the environment such as *scaffolding* and *reciprocal teaching* to guide the teachers in providing the right amount of support (Cook, Richardson-Gibbs, & Dotson, 2018; Smith, 2007).

Other added universal strategies that work for children with special needs are repetition of routines, modeling, and exposure to predictable environments are fundamental means by which learners with special educational needs learn effectively (Cook, Richardson-Gibbs, & Dotson, 2018; Martin-Denham, 2015).

## **2. Synthesis**

The foregoing presentation highlights what we know about homeschooling and autism based on global and local literature and studies. We have learned that parental dissatisfaction of school systems prompted them to homeschool their children; successful implementation of homeschooling of children with autism would require competence; there are multiple concerns and challenges for parents who homeschool their children with autism; there are observable benefits to families of children with autism in the homeschooling choice; and there are differentiation strategies that work for all learners in the regular as well as the homeschooling context for children with all kinds of abilities and disabilities.

## **3. Insights and Recommendations**

Based on this review of literature and studies on homeschooling and autism, the following recommendations are made based on the insights gained which may be useful for improving the teaching and learning experience for children with autism in schools.

- 1) There is a need for school systems to satisfy parents in the education of children to prevent the decision to home school children.
- 2) Teachers should find differentiation strategies that are well-documented and proven to work for learners of all types.

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