

Home Education: Globalization Otherwise?

Christian W. Beck

Home Education seems to be a successful way to educate. Academic results and socialization processes in home education are promising. Already home education is global, home educators everywhere educate their children themselves without schools. They develop new forms of local and international co-operation. Is home education an impulse to a renewing of modern education? Is home education globalization otherwise?

Key Words: home education, globalization, educational politics, pedagogy

JEL Classification: I21, I28

Introduction

Education is expanding through formal schooling and more people are gaining new possibilities. At the same time throughout the modern world we observe contours of new school problems. Assessments (OECD 2004), show that quality of education in the modern school is under pressure. Schools also have new problems with violence and bullying.

In the middle of school-expanding some leave the lowest and most established level of the educational system, primary and lower secondary school, and give their children education themselves at home. Home education is developing in most modern countries. At its strongest, home education is practised in leading modern countries like the USA and Great Britain (Bauman 2002; Rothermal 2003). Is home education counterworking or renewing future education and schools? No matter what the answer to this question is, it is necessary to discuss home education in relation to ongoing globalization.

Globalization and Modern Schooling

There is an economical and technological development towards a more united world, which cannot be reversed. The ideology that follows this kind of processes is called globalism. International capitalism operates on world wide markets. International organisations like EU, UN, The

Christian W. Beck is a Professor at the Institute of Educational Research, University of Oslo, Norway.

Managing Global Transitions 4 (3): 249–259

World Bank etc, play a dual part. Such institutions administer global processes, but also they try to oppose them or balance them. If these organisations in cooperation with national states are not able to do the latter, it could lead to a capitalistic world control with a consequent economical rationality, where the national state, the welfare state and social justice are breaking up, and where individualism dominates. This is called globalism (U. Beck 2001).

Against this Beck puts globality, where global processes are led into a different direction, where human rights, cultural differences, social unity and local distinctive character are respected and kept alive. He then speaks about the world community as a multiplicity without unity (U. Beck 2001).

The processes of globalization are grounded on development of an economy of knowledge, which brings education and school into the core of such processes. One has to emphasize both individual learning processes and social cooperation. A number of people hold that school must educate human beings to become competent participants in a globalised world. This is the right wing of global educational politics. The left side is critical of such aims and wants schools as a counterweight to global capitalism. They want more national controlled schools, which includes everyone and emphasizes social competence and equality.

It is astonishing, how people in all countries get more or less the same understanding of school. This is also a part of globalisation. Doubtless, both political right and left find more schooling positive. One disagrees on the content in school. However everyone wants more education, and more education means to them, more school.

Modern schools are expanding in the form of large scale education, the like of which the world has never seen. Standardization and bureaucratisation will be necessary in order to carry through such an education for all. International educational management is already a power in higher education. In primary- and secondary education the same development can be observed (Olssen 2004).

In postmodern societies the concept of capital is given a broader meaning (Luzòn 2002). Social capital in this connection includes ideas from theories of human capital (Schulze 1961), welfare-state thinking, J. S. Coleman's theory on social capital as informal social networks (1988). P. Bourdieu's ideas of both social- and cultural capital extend the concept of capital further (Bourdieu 1986).

Social and cultural capital may become an ideological and economic

link between the left and the right of global educational politics. Knowledge will be transformed among social, economic and cultural spheres so that actors will achieve an ambiguous surplus value, connected to development, transferring- and use of knowledge. Education will become the new ambiguous capital's important linking area.

Do we see the contours of an international united and centralized governing system of education where knowledge, equality as well as social competence are joined in an extended economic idea of utility, understood as capital, where the possibility of capital gain will be guiding societies and each person's involvement in school? The outcome could be more control in education and less emphasis on freedom and criticism.

Modern schooling is grounded on pedagogy digging deep in post modern identity. We can observe a new pedagogic and methodological orientation, characterized both by more objectivism and more subjectivism.

Objectivism. With increased international mobility schools and pedagogic strategies must be comparable and as similar and governable as possible. This forces the global education towards bureaucracy and conformity, in a direction of technocracy. Programmes, plans, tests, method evaluation and documentation with the use of advanced computer technology are necessary for a world wide administration and control of schools.

The struggle for equality and demand for competence will directly, but also indirectly through compensatory pedagogy and a universal system of special education, lead to internationalization and standardization of diagnosis, educational programs and diplomas. One needs to use objective facts and measurement more than ever. Such a development will be the frame and the structure of modern schooling.

Subjectivism. The contents and the processes in modern schools are developing in the direction of a social competence, communicative skills and production of identity. In postmodern societies the concept of identity is given political and pedagogical meaning (Giddens 1991), which can be expressed as *educational subjectivism* with the focus on:

- A relative conception of knowledge with emphasis on subjective experience of totality.
- Focus not only on knowledge but on social conditions of teaching and learning and processes, rather than on objective factual knowledge.

In such an ideology subjectivity is expressed as humanism. Objectivism and subjectivism are tangled into a new pedagogy which forms an ideological fundament for modern schools. Objective factual knowledge must give way for the subjective- and social- processes of shaping, which can be observed in methodology for measuring pupils' learning styles in schools. Then identity and social processes are coded into modern school's demand for objective management, evaluation and control. This may end up in ignoring personal freedom and lead to alienation in education.

Two Different Home Education Countries

Home educators do the same everywhere. They take responsibility for their children's education rather than sending them to school. Home education is legal education otherwise than school participation in most modern countries (Baumann 2002; Petrie 1995).

Home educators break with the school institution. Home education goes on in the middle of real life, in family and in society. The home educators concentrate on learning theoretical and practical knowledge. The socializing process appears more naturally in this case, out of the home education's integration in, and openness towards the actual social life, outside school.

Many home educators use Internet to a great extent. Across borders there is wide contact, and networks are established both electronically and more directly among home educators. It is possible for home educators to join electronic 'schools' or educational centres where they can get admission to educational programmes/materials, both with and without payment.

In the USA modern home education started in the late 1960s. There are today more than one million home educators in the USA (Bauman 2002; Princiotta, Bielick, and Chapman 2006). Norway is a small country. Home education appeared here much later, at the beginning of the 1990s. There are few home educators in Norway, both absolutely and relatively in comparison with the USA. The home educating population in Norway is approximately 400 (Beck 2003). Home education has a very different status in these two countries. It is of interest to compare them:

A comparison of social background for a sample of 128 home educated pupils with corresponding information for the Norwegian population is made (Beck 2003; see table 1).

Home educating families in the Norwegian survey have less education

TABLE 1 Comparison between the survey sample and the Norwegian population*

Circumstances	The sample	The population
The household's income (NKR)	271,250	517,800
Living in urban areas	25.2%	77.3%
Living with both father and mother	88%	77%
Number of brothers and sisters	3.6	1.7
Mother's education		
Some or completed secondary school	49.6%	55.2%
Only compulsory school / comprehensive school	17.1%	8.0%
Father's education		
Some or completed secondary school	53.6%	55.8%
Only compulsory school / comprehensive school	12.7%	8.8%

* The data for the population are from Statistisk Sentralbyrå (The National Bureau of Statistics). Income is for the population take-home pay for households with children from 9–16 in 2000. The income of the selection is also take-home pay. The educational data from the population is for the group from 30 to 39 years of age in 2000.

than the corresponding group in the population. One should especially notice that there is a relatively larger group of home educating mothers with only compulsory school qualifications.

The income of the home educators lies at a lower midlevel. About 60% of the home educating households earn from 20,000–40,000 euro a year. They have an average income less than half of what the corresponding groups in the population got.

Typical for Norwegian home educators is that they live out in the countryside. Home educating families often have a number of children. Home educated children have an average of 3.6 brothers and sisters. However, there is a great variety. 40% of the home educated children have two brothers and sisters or less. Home educated children to some extent live more often together with both parents, than is the case in the population as a whole (Beck 2003).

In a national survey about home education in the USA home education families are compared with data from the school-population families in the USA, (Princiotta, Bielick, and Chapman 2006). The greatest difference between Norwegian and American is that American home educating families earn somewhat above the average of the American school population families and that they have some a somewhat higher educational level than the average. In the USA the home educators are

most numerous outside the big towns and suburbs dominated by a white population, and less numerous in central areas in big towns (Princiotta, Bielick, and Chapman 2006).

About 50% of Norwegian home educators start home education on the basis of motives of principle, either pedagogical or religious. The other 50% home educate for reasons connected to certain events in school, for example bullying. If they continue home education for a long time, they get a more principled view of their own home education (Beck 2003). In England different kinds of pedagogic motives are most common (Rothermal 2003). Many parents do home education on a broader basis of values than purely education

The home educating teacher is the mother. In a few cases the father takes part in the teaching, then mostly in mathematics and practical subjects. A number of home educators give their children practical tasks and practical project work in addition to teaching them basic subjects. The most common teaching form is an effective theoretical teaching from the parents, often in combination with the pupils working on the subjects by themselves, solving problems and cooperating with brothers and sisters or sometimes with other home educated children. The majority of Norwegian home educators are generally satisfied with their home education. The parents are fairly satisfied with the progress their pupils make in the core subjects – mathematics, reading and writing (Beck 2003).

Research from the USA throughout a number of years shows that home educated children get high scores on final tests (Ray 1997; Rudner 1999; Bauman 2002). The average home educated pupil scores way above the average for school pupils. These results must be corrected because of the differences between the home educating population and the national school population. The home educating parents in the USA have a somewhat higher education and income than the parents of the school pupils, and there is a greater part of white middle class families with both parents in the household. In spite of such corrections, the conclusion that home educated children are doing very well at exams is maintained (Bauman 2002).

It is difficult to obtain an objective and justifiable answer to how well Norwegian home educated pupils are doing on their exams. Home educated pupils in Norway do not have an obvious right by law to get a certificate with marks, when they finish compulsory education as home educated pupils. Such a right is a matter of conflict in Norway. A number of home educators do not wish to have marks on the certificate. The

right to be admitted to further education does not depend on a certificate from compulsory education containing marks. Experience from several single cases over several years does indeed give the impression that we in Norway have the same situation as in the USA. Home educated pupils often get good marks on tests and exams.

Home Education: A Critic of Modern Schooling

Home education contributes to the debate on educational politics with new ideas and perspectives. Home education gives a new basis on which to evaluate educational thinking, which can be formulated on three main levels.

Level 1. This is a pedagogical and philosophical basis for pedagogic critics. The concepts of unschooling and natural learning are used by a number of home educators as a way of expressing the specific pedagogical and educational aims of home education (Fredriksen 2002; Gatto 1992; Holt 1968). These ideas have parallels within the school-based concepts of pupil-centered learning and reform pedagogy (Østerud 2004). Home education puts more emphasis on the pupil's learning than instruction per se, and stress is put on the importance of an education which is based on practical activities and work.

Level 2. This is home education as criticism of the school-institution. Parents break ties with the school as an institution. And take responsibility for their child's education. Some families make connections with other home educators and various other groups and individuals. Home education thus serves as the focal point of new networks and their structures. Here one can observe clear ties to deschooling tendencies of the 1970s (Illich 1972), but also to the contemporary concept of situated learning (Lave and Wenger 1999).

The connection between situated learning, informal learning and home education are dealt with (Thomas 2002; Barson 2004). A mutual principle here is the view that learning and education are socializing processes for participation in society, and that these supersede and transcend school attendance. Such processes must occur where social activity is actually taking place. Therefore, education must often break loose from the constraints of a closed educational institution and be free to move about in the wider society.

Level 3. This involves educational politics on a general level. Home education provides a critique of our contemporary educational politics in which there is an increasing focus on schools and governmental control.

In its most extreme form, this is formulated as resistance to the statism of our time (Gabb 2004). Here one is protesting against government intervention and state-sponsored socialization strategies. Such critique is especially aimed at the public schools as these represent the key institution behind statism. Public schools are viewed as a threat to individuality, parental rights, the family and to quality in education.

These three levels are representative of dissimilar and sometimes contradictory aspects of the critique of educational politics, which are at the core of home education.

On the other hand, there also exists a socio-educational basis for critique of the practice of home education. This critique is most clearly articulated in the USA where home education is most widely practised. In general terms, the criticism consists of the view of home education as a threat to social unity, both in the context of the schools and in the wider society as a whole (Lubienski 2000; Apple 2000).

Lubienski views education as a zero-sum game. If resources are dedicated to home education, there are negative consequences in the public schools in terms of material and human resources.

Apple brings this critique up to a socio-ideological level. He sees home educators as playing key roles in populist, neo-liberal and neo-conservative movements, which now have considerable influence in the USA. He points out that these groups consider themselves as being stateless because of the secular humanism, which is now so prevalent in public schools. They are involved in a serious conflict of values due to the prevailing educational ideology of the public schools.

Apple views the home educators as an important group within the rightist political base, with an emphasis on individualism, fundamentalism and freedom. He considers these as cultural necessities for globalised capitalism. Apple places the government and public schools on the opposite side of this scenario as the protectors of equality and community.

Over the course of time, home education in the US has mostly become a movement involving white, Christian members of the middle-class. Although recent developments have modified the situation somewhat, this still holds true in general terms (Bauman 2002).

Conclusion

Home educators in most countries generally represent a form of protest against public schools as an institution, against pedagogical methods, against the degradation of family values, and they are fighting for indi-

vidual and local freedom. This emphasizes the populist aspects of home education. Populist being understood as a movement with its origins among the common folk and ultimately forming a sub-culture in the modern sense of the term, which in both Norway and in the USA can be traced back to more traditional sub-cultures and their evolution from movements in rural areas.

Home education in Norway compared with the USA is a small-scale phenomenon, which is still in its start phase. Additionally, the political situation as concerns education in Norway is quite different. Here criticism of educational politics is almost by necessity a critique of both government and market since these chief institutions are so closely intertwined in forming educational politics, in a way that is unlike the situation in the USA.

Home education in Norway and also in other European countries, like England (Rothermal 2003) and Sweden, appears in some degree to have different social and political characteristics than in the USA. This is not only expressed through recruitment to home education from another social class. In Norway, we also observe ideological differences, such as a reference by home educators to the leftist, educational ideologists from the 1970s (Freire 1971) in a project in local history (Beck 2000, 38).

Norwegian home education clearly has a firm foundation both in religious motives and in local-society based political ideology from the 1970s. In concrete terms, this type of communitarian, ideological origins is visible when some local communities implement home education in an effort to keep local schools that have been closed. One observes similar indicators, in another form, in terms of the tight, internal integration we find in new home education sub-cultures.

Home educators may be examples of what the sociologist Z. Baumann calls our time's missed community, collectivism and community in an individual world. The missing community is those communities which are necessary to handle issues which cannot be solved individually, where there is concern and responsibility for all people's right to be a human being and the right to act according to this right (Baumann 2001). We are here speaking about the renewal of informal, communities, civil society and populist values.

Modern education is forced towards a greater degree of formal institutionalization. This pressure is being made upon the schools by both the market and the national state. One resulting problem appears to be that education has a shortage of individual freedom and a firm foundation

among the people. One might say that converting this to a surplus is the political ideal of home education.

When modern home education came to Norway (1991–1994) it aroused conflicts and debates. Home education has given impulses to arguments for personalized education and populist perspectives in education. In Canada there is a development in the direction of home education as a more normalized form of education, and home education has effect on a more personalized education in school (Davies and Aurini 2003). Maybe we now will see such a trend in Europe and other modern countries?

References

- Apple, M. W. 2000. The cultural politics of home schooling. *Peabody Journal of Education* 75 (1–2): 256–271.
- Barson, J. 2004. Communities of practice and home education (HE) support groups. Paper presented at the BERA conference in Manchester, 15.–18. September.
- Bauman, K. J. 2002. Home schooling in the United States: Trends and characteristics. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives* 10, no. 26. [Http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n26.html](http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n26.html).
- Bauman, Z. 2001. *Savnet fellesskap*. Oslo: Cappelen Akademiske Forlag.
- Beck, C. W. 2000. *Kodenavn skole: Kampen om norsk utdannings framtid*. Vallset: Oplandske.
- Beck, C. W. 2003. Hjemmeunderviserne i Norge: En spørreskjemaundersøkelse. Report, Institute of Educational research, University of Oslo.
- Beck, U. 2001. *What is globalization?* Cambridge: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P. 1986. *Kultursosciologiska texter*. Stockholm: Salamander.
- Coleman, J. S. 1988. Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American journal of Sociology* 94:s95–s120.
- Davies, S., and J. Aurini. 2003. Homeschooling and Canadian educational politics: Rights, pluralism and pedagogical individualism. *Evaluation & Research in Education* 17 (2–3): 63–73.
- Fredriksen, H. 2002. Avskoling: Den nye utdanning? *Sax*, no. 2:12–13.
- Freire, P. 1971. *The pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Gabb, S. 2005. Home schooling: A British perspective. In *Home schooling in full view*, ed. B. S. Cooper. Greenwich: Information Age.
- Gatto, J. T. 1992. *Dumbing us down: The hidden curriculum of compulsory schooling*. Philadelphia: New Society.
- Giddens, A. 1991. *Modernity and self-identity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Holt, J. 1968. *How children learn*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Illich, I. 1972. *Det skoleløse samfund*. *Copenhagen*: Hans Reitzel.

- Lave, J., and E. Wenger. 1999. *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lubienski, C. 2000. Whither the common good? A critique of home-schooling. *Peabody Journal of Education* 75 (1-2): 207-32.
- Luzòn, A. 2002. La question du capital social, nouveau front contre l'exclusion sociale? Paper presented at the 2002 CESE conference, London.
- McDowell, S. A., and B. R. Ray., eds. 2000. The home education movement in context, practice and theory. Special issue, *Peabody Journal of Education* 75 (1-2).
- OECD. 2004. Pisa assessments. [Http://www.pisa.no/index_rettspor.html](http://www.pisa.no/index_rettspor.html).
- Olsen, M., J. Codd, and A. O'Neill. 2004. *Education policy*. London: Sage.
- Østerud, S. 2004. *Utdanning for informasjonssamfunnet*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Petrie, A. 1995. Home education and the law within Europe. *International Review of Education* 4 (3-4): 285-90.
- Princiotta, D., S. Bielick, and C. Chapman. 2006. *Homeschooling in the United States: 2003*. Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics.
- Ray, B. D. 1997. Strength of their own. Report, National Home Education Research Institute.
- Rothermal, P. 2003. Can we classify motives for home education? *Evaluation and Research in Education* 17 (2-3): 74-89.
- Rudner, I. M. 1999. Scholastic achievement and demographic characteristics of home school students in 1989. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives* 7, no. 8. [Http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v7n8](http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v7n8).
- Schultz, T. E. 1961. Investment in human capital. In *Economics of Education*, ed. M. Blaug. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Thomas, A. 2002. Informal learning home education homeschooling. [Http://www.infed.org/biblio/home-education.htm](http://www.infed.org/biblio/home-education.htm)