

Homeschooling in a Society of Change

Edukacja domowa w społeczeństwie zmiany

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Introduction

The reality we live in can be described as a period of rapid social change. The events that contributed to a new look at the surrounding reality, i.e. the pandemic or the war on the border of our country, forced people to perceive the world differently. We all understood that we are unable to control many situations, sometimes we are even helpless facing them. The changes that take place around us every day require a new perception on many levels, including education. Education must keep up with globalization, the development of new technologies, and prepare pupils for the social future (Pituła 2021). In many cases, the school is no longer an institution that inspires the trust of parents, which is why they decide to educate their children at home, taking responsibility for the direction and form of their children's education.

Homeschooling is not a completely new form of education, but it has become an alternative to the current system of educating children and youth, gaining the recognition of pupils and their parents who have specific views on innovative goals and methods of work. Parents are at the disposal of methodological and substantive knowledge passed on to children in an alternative way, and in their opinion more useful and even practical. Home educators interpret the education process broadly, without many limitations that they encounter in the adopted system of rigid curricula and mandatory content, in favor of unintentional knowledge and skills. Homeschooling is entering the education system as a social movement that meets the expectations of the information society, distancing itself from systemic institutionalism.

Homeschooling – a “new” social trend

Analyzing the priorities of humanity over the centuries, it can be seen that people have changed their beliefs, views, interests and requirements, hence the conviction that they should not be systematized and treated structurally. The surrounding reality is changeable, therefore social institutions should follow its trend, e.g. education, the compatibility of which with nature should be part of the global social change. State education has been competing with private education for years – more autonomous, open to compromises, blurring patterns, moving away from traditionalism, heading towards the future. Assuming that we are heading towards modernity, homeschooling has become an alternative that inspires us to take up new challenges, usually striving for a responsible choice of a new model of education.

Homeschooling is ‘a social movement based on independent undertakings of individual families, in which parents, driven by concern for the educational fate of their children, take full responsibility for their education, upbringing and socialization, taking over this responsibility from the state, as obliged by international law and national guarantor of the right to education and guardian of the obligation to fulfill it’ (Budajczak 2009). Webster’s Dictionary describes it as ‘the practice of homeschooling one’s own children’ (Webster, 1996).

Homeschooling is gaining more and more supporters, being recognized as a fashionable, new trend in education. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that it is not a new phenomenon, it has existed for centuries, successfully educating and raise young people. In Poland, it was used at the courts of the nobility, emphasizing Polish values, customs and traditions. It was of great importance in cultivating tradition and Polishness during the partitions. The 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century contributed to its popularity among positivists who wanted to raise the level of education. The takeover of the development of education by the state in the 20th century led to the marginalization of this form of education, but ‘(...) the introduction of Marxist-Leninist ideological and educational concepts to public schools after World War II in People’s Poland, contrary to the historical principles of patriotic and religious education, led to the need to rebuild traditional ,schooling by parents’ (Lewandowski 2009). After the political transformation in 1989, homeschooling became an alternative form of education to general school education. Homeschooling, as a form of teaching in the Polish education system since 1991, is a legally sanctioned departure from the systemic teaching at school; is a form of organizing education outside the school system, in which parents take full responsibility

for the education, upbringing and socialization of their children (Kupisiewicz 2017). Act of March 17, 2021. The Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2021, item 762) regulates the conditions that currently must be met by parents educating children as part of Homeschooling. Pursuant to the provisions, consent to start homeschooling, at the request of the parents, is given by the headmaster of the school where the child is enrolled. Parents are obliged to implement the core curriculum, enabling the child to take the obligatory end-of-year classification exams. Therefore, the student does not attend school classes, learns under the care of parents, but is formally enrolled in school, fulfilling the school obligation to which he is invariably subject. Most families working in the homeschooling system willingly exchange information with their home school (Bielecka-Prus 2018) and join thematic groups to exchange experiences. Although the name of education draws attention to the family home, in practice it does not have to be limited to the home space. Places, forms and methods of work within this education are free and unlimited.

The 21st century offers greater opportunities to use time for alternative education and the content constituting its essence, if only because of new information technologies, the general availability of which opens up new viewing opportunities. In Poland, more and more schools are favorable to homeschooling, providing students with support in the form of appointed coordinators for homeschooling, individual or group consultations with teachers, and teaching materials. The data of the Ministry and Science indicate a great interest in homeschooling. In the school year 2021/22, the number of students was 19,427 (www.dane.gov.pl). The school year 2022/23 brought the number of approx. 31,000 students (Wittenberg 2022), which is not clearly specified due to the fact that the school year lasts and changes related to enrolling children in this form of education.

Undoubtedly, it is worth noting that the School in the Cloud was created, which has been “changing education” since 2015 (szkolawchmurze.org). The guiding principle of the aforementioned institution is for students to implement programs on their own, with the support of teachers from School in the Cloud, on a platform created for this purpose. This school is created by the Society Foundation – a nationwide public benefit organization established in 2011 to increase diversity in education and introduce positive social changes (szkolawchmurze.org). The school also works with students with certificates of special education needs, providing an individual educational tutor who conducts additional classes and therapy. It currently has over 10,000 students enrolled and the number continues to grow.

The most important issues regarding this form of education concern the parents' obligation to educate and raise their children, education for which the family home is the main base, and a specific teaching plan using generally available teaching aids (Ray, 2011).

Homeschooling in the world

The development of civilization, and what is connected with it - education, initially contributed to the inhibition of the development of homeschooling on a large scale. However, this process was subject to changes, which was directly influenced by educational policy and changes in the content of education. The available data show that the countries with the greatest freedom in education policy are the United States of America and Great Britain. In the United States, the beginning of homeschooling is considered to be the 1960s, while in Great Britain and Australia it is considered to be the 1970s (Beck 2006). The dissemination of homeschooling was consolidated with the dissemination of the Internet, which guaranteed access to information necessary to expand knowledge on many levels within various subjects.

In the USA, homeschooling was initially the only form of education, then there was a conflict between homeschooling parents and school institutions, to now find a common way of this system as part of mutual support and cooperation at the level of programs and the education process. The most vivid phases of the homeschooling movement are presented by Chapman, O'Donoghue: (Chapman and Donoghue 2000):

1. Contestation – parents negatively assessed the school system and signed their children out of school.
2. Confrontation – the dispute between the parents and the authorities reached its zenith and led to numerous court cases.
3. Cooperation – in most states, parents gained the right to homeschooling, and students could use the resources of public schools.
4. Consolidation – activity in the field of creating numerous associations, networks of cooperating parents and schools.
5. Divisions – emerging centers of competing schools.

Homeschooling is currently a very popular form of education in the USA, legally covering fifty states of America. In the US, each state has established its own homeschooling regulations. They include:

- Registration of children, if they are enrolled in the school.

- Submission of necessary homeschooling applications and registrations.
- Determining which homeschooling program and curriculum are appropriate for both the child and parents.
- Ensuring that all subjects specified by the state are included in the curriculum.
- Engagement in an information exchange and circle of support by contacting associations and organizations in each state (www.cambrilearn.com).

In the UK, homeschooling or ‘planned homeschooling’ (www.gov.uk) is a popular form of education that is being used by more and more parents, mainly those whose jobs involve frequent travels. A parent has the right to educate their child at home – provided that they inform the local authority and provide full-time education for their child from the age of five. However, the local council retains the right to review the quality of education and may conduct an investigation to ensure that it is appropriate. If the Authority considers that a child is not receiving an appropriate education, it may decide to send the child to a local school. Inspections are aimed at verifying the individual needs of the child and providing them with appropriate support (www.emito.net). The freedom to practice homeschooling, guaranteed by British legislation, also ensures complete freedom as to the forms and methods of teaching, as well as the scope of the curriculum. The parent is not obliged to draw up any teaching plans or reports on their implementation, the required level of education of such a parent is not specified. ‘Home’ students do not have to follow the national curriculum and are not obliged to take exams – however, children can take them (Giercarz-Borkowska 2016).

Motivations for choosing alternative education

The right to education results from the Constitution of the Republic of Poland¹ and is an obligation for people up to the age of 18, and the task of the state is to ensure the possibility of fulfilling this obligation and the possibility of choosing the institution and form of education. They also include homeschooling, the right to which can be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the UNESCO

¹ *Constitution of the Republic of Poland of April 2, 1997*, Journal of Laws of 1997 No. 78, item 483 as amended.

Convention against Discrimination in Education. Parents are predisposed to educate their own children also on the basis of their own religion, and the role of the state is to support them in this activity. However, they encounter a number of difficulties, such as: of a financial nature, as the costs of homeschooling are borne by them, which involves limiting earning opportunities or their complete cessation (Giercarz-Borkowska 2021).

Among many questions and doubts about the legitimacy of homeschooling, there is an area of motivation for choosing an alternative form of education.

1. The school system does not meet the emotional and intellectual needs of the child. The child's difficulties in learning prevent them from equalizing educational opportunities in relation to more gifted children, accumulating didactic problems translate into reduced self-esteem, anxiety, depression, withdrawal and discouragement. All this makes it impossible to acquire knowledge at a certain level, adequate to one's own needs and psychophysical abilities.
2. A particularly gifted child, despite the fact that it is mentioned in the Regulation on psychological and pedagogical assistance², cannot count on the development of their passion and predispositions due to the fact that they do not have enough hours, specialists, willingness, but most of all time which the overworked teaching staff still has too little in relation to the needs. This evokes passivity and reluctance to additional development, which can be imperceptible and even troublesome.
3. Motivations for worldview – 'the positive dimension of the worldview motive in undertaking homeschooling implies the conscious creation of the curriculum so that it is consistent with the parental vision of the universe, and not just avoiding the threat of indoctrination with 'foreign' philosophy or indifference to values or their destruction' (Budajczak 2004).
4. Children with behavioral difficulties do not have a chance for a special way of evaluating their behavior, adequate to their needs and social capabilities, which is not entirely inappropriate, principles, rules and norms, the law is the same for all citizens, and the school is to prepare for functioning in society. Nevertheless, the process of socialization does not al-

² *Regulation of the Minister of National Education of August 9, 2017 on the principles of organization and provision of psychological and pedagogical assistance in public kindergartens, schools and institutions* (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1280 and of 2022, item 1594) announced on July 22, 2020, effective from September 1, 2017.

ways run in the same way, hence the alternative form of education that often limits social contacts, allowing for calming down emotions and shaping a holistic style of behavior.

5. Eliminating stimulants, physical and psychological violence from the school environment, which have a destructive effect on young people and which occur in peer groups, constituting abuse and persecution of a psychosocial nature.
6. Unhealthy competition, which sometimes takes the form of psychological violence. Profanity, ridiculing deficits and imperfections leads to the isolation of individuals, discriminatory behavior that can lead to suicide attempts.
7. Accepting of the child's education with frequent changes of place of residence resulting from the parents' profession.

Despite the commonly held beliefs that a child should be exposed to the 'lashes' of a cruel life, for the sake of 'healthy' tempering (Budajczak 2004), parents – home educators do not share these beliefs, deciding to introduce their children into a world based on other values, principles and beliefs, sparing the child's psyche. Parents decide to protect their own children, especially in the early period of their lives, against excessive intensification of challenges, so that 'toughening' the child does not become their demoralization (Wenklar 2013).

From the perspective of the educational process in a modern society whose changes are constant, the socialization process, which may seem to be omitted, is also important. This is a challenge for parents who should use every social situation to positively influence the child's development. It is important to understand the importance of this process, because 'children in homeschooling spend a lot of time with people of different ages, which is a chance for socialization, perhaps much better than the one at school, where students are divided into age groups, which is unrealistic in adult life' (Mielnicki 2018, p. 113). The key here seems to be the belief that homeschooling does not consist in locking the child at home, without the possibility of contact with peers and the surrounding society, but is open to relationships, freedom, developing interests, expressing one's own opinions and views. It is important that the motives for choosing alternative education for the child stem from positive premises, i.e. the desire to educate for creativity, independence, curiosity of the world. If, on the other hand, the parent feels the need to teach the child, they enjoy it, discover that their child willingly responds to teaching, then the whole process has a good chance of success (Brudka 2009). Therefore, the motivation should be the good of the child and not against the school, teachers or the system.

Thus, homeschooling is not about isolating a child and limiting their relationships with others. This belief is only a false idea of a process whose assumptions are significantly different. Alternative education not only does not interfere with socialization processes, but it can even strengthen them due to good time organization (Frankowska 2014), it is based on the most important social cell, which is the family. The authors of books on homeschooling (Beck 2008; Medin 2000) dispel myths about the lack of socialization, emphasizing that homeschooling does not deprive the child of contact with peers and does not detach them from reality and social realities. Children not only know social values, but also have strong local ties, learn cooperation and critical thinking, contributing to the co-creation of civil society (Beck 2006).

In a society whose nature seems to be constant change, education becomes an important value. Globalization, progress, pandemic, war are challenges that are the essence of modern reality. In a society of change, the flexibility of the concept of education becomes important, openness to new, alternative forms that are not inscribed in the schemes and do not captivate with mandatory content (Pitula 2023). It should be remembered that along with social change, education is needed for the future, not for oneself, but for life.

It should be emphasized that homeschooling as a social movement is not a contesting movement. It focuses on the family, local and school communities, and various organizations that understand the need for social progress and support children and their parents in it. Freedom of access to homeschooling should therefore be the right of every citizen-parent who educates in the spirit of responsibility. The future of societies depends to a large extent on the state of education, which is to keep up with the change, participate in it, and to be its promoter to some extent.

Institutionalism is no longer the most popular form of education nowadays. The implementation of the assumptions of this process must go towards free access to alternative forms of education in symbiosis with the available information resources, which are the source of the global message and the basis for the functioning of permanent learning.

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STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest przybliżenie zjawiska edukacji domowej, która nie jest zupełnie nową formą kształcenia, jednak uznawana jest za novum w kształceniu dzieci i młodzieży. W artykule zastosowano historyczną i pedagogiczną analizę źródeł, wykorzystując między innymi akty prawne; przeanalizowano dokumentację odzwierciedlającą działalność edukacji domowej w kraju. Artykuł przedstawia powstałą dla potrzeb edukacji alternatywnej Szkołę w Chmurze, której popularność świadczy o potrzebie innowacji w edukacji. Autorki ukazują edukację alternatywną jako trend współczesnego społeczeństwa oraz uwarunkowań prawno-systemowych, które wpływają na ten proces. W artykule opisane zostały modele kształcenia w domu w krajach o największej wolności w polityce oświatowej – w USA i Wielkiej Brytanii. Autorki ukazały motywy wyboru edukacji domowej oraz procesu socjalizacji związanego z tą formą kształcenia, zwracając uwagę na to, że przeświadczenie o brakach socjalizacyjnych jest nieprawdziwym wyobrażeniem procesu edukacji w domu. Podkreślają potrzebę zmian w kształceniu dla przyszłości i przypominają o elastyczności koncepcji kształcenia, otwartości na nowe, alternatywne formy, które nie są wpisane w schematy i nie zniewalają obowiązującymi treściami. W konkluzji stwierdzają, że instytucjonalizm przestaje być dominującą formą kształcenia.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: edukacja domowa, szkoła w chmurze, nauczyciel

SUMMARY

The aim of the article is to present the phenomenon of homeschooling in the changing social reality, which is not a completely new form of education, but is considered a novelty in the education of children and youth. The article uses historical and pedagogical analysis of sources, using min. legal acts, analyzed documentation reflecting

the activities of home education in the country. It presents the School in the Cloud, created for the needs of alternative education, the popularity of which proves the need for innovation in education. It focuses on showing alternative education as a trend in modern society and the legal and systemic conditions that govern this process. It draws attention to models of homeschooling in countries with the greatest freedom in education policy – the USA and Great Britain. It shows the motives for the choice of home education and the process of socialization related to this form of education, paying attention to the fact that the belief about socialization deficiencies is only a false idea of the education process at home. It emphasizes the need for changes in education for the future, paying attention to the flexibility of the concept of education, openness to new, alternative forms that are not included in the schemes and do not captivate with mandatory content. In conclusion, it draws attention to institutionalism, which is no longer the dominant form of education today.

KEYWORDS: homeschooling, cloud school, teacher

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