

# TEACH Bulletin

## Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

Number 20

September 1998

### The Quality of Home Schooling

*(The Education Review Office produced a 12-page report in June of this year on the quality of home schooling as they had observed it while reviewing home educators since December 1997. The following are excerpts from this report.)*

In the past some doubts have been raised as to the quality of home-schooling. Very little is known about the overall quality of this form of educational provision. This report summarises the findings of the Education Review Office (ERO) on the quality of education provided for homeschooled children. It aims to identify those features of a programme that benefit homeschooled children.

For this report, a sample of 400 review reports was analysed from a total of 551 confirmed between December 1997 and April 1998.

#### As Regular and Well

In most cases formal study is timetabled for the mornings while less formal pursuits take place in the afternoons. This satisfies the requirement for the programme to be as regular as in a registered school.

The parent is required to describe their knowledge and understanding of their selected curriculum. Proof of competency is not asked for by the Ministry nor received. Homeschooling applications must also provide evidence of a commitment to certain routines appropriate to the maturity level and abilities of the child. Ministry officers also require evidence of the planning and balance that

would be a feature of curriculum organisation in any school.

#### Enhancing Features

It is possible to identify certain features that act to enhance the quality of educational opportunities.

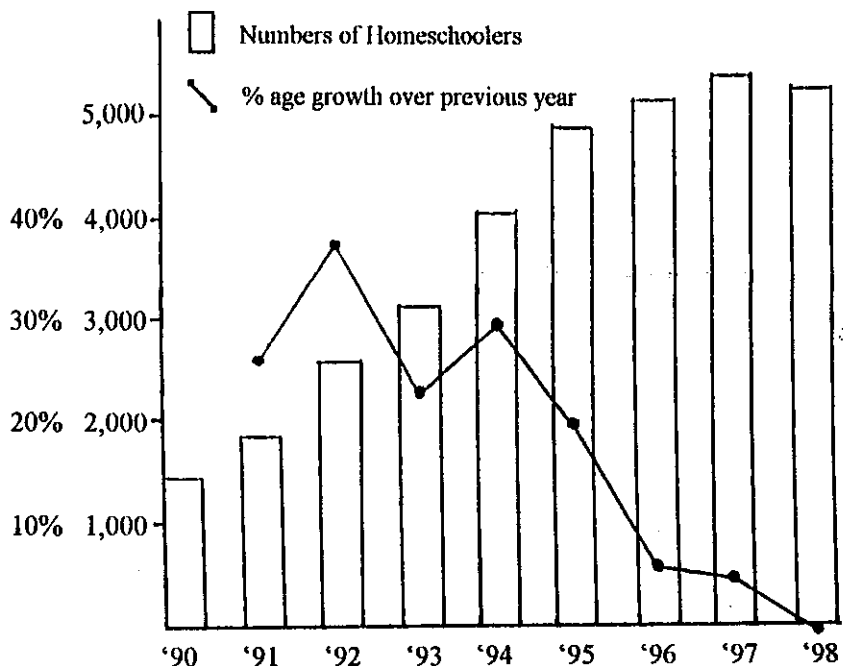
The programmes that integrate religion into the study of other subjects tend to be highly structured and to have formalised assessment procedures. Some of these programmes are narrow in scope and do not always offer sufficient stimulus for individual children. This is more obvious when the parent depends heavily upon the purchased programme to provide all the necessary guidelines. In these

cases, the emphasis is on children completing workbooks rather than on problem-solving activities. In some instances the content of the overseas material is inappropriate for the New Zealand context, and it may include stereotyped representations of cultures and social settings. The quality of these programmes is improved when the parent facilitates supplementary activities.

The inclusion of science, social studies, technology and health topics form part of a balanced programme. Participation in the arts and social and sporting activities are also essential components of a good quality programme.

When parents consider that educational development is part of everyday family and social life, children are encouraged to view learning as resulting from all experi-

*(Continued on page 2)*



**Shrinking Numbers** — 1998 saw numbers of home schoolers drop for the first time, although the growth rate has been shrinking rapidly since 1994.

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## TEACH Bulletin

is a monthly publication of TEACH Publications, and is concerned with those things which may impact on home educators. Articles will deal with political developments, statist and professional trends, correspondence with educationalists, and other items of general interest to home educators. There is also a regular opinion poll regarding educational issues of the day that may impact home schoolers.

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Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and reject not your mother's teaching.  
— Proverbs 1:8

ences. Programmes within these contexts maintain the flexibility to capture the teachable moment.

Many parents consider that participation in activities that supplement formal studies is an essential part of homeschooling. Including activities that are based on physical and social challenges can add balance to the formal educational programme.

The advantage of one-to-one teaching is that learning activities can be quickly adapted to the needs of the child.

### Assessment

Record keeping and a structured programme provide review officers with tangible evidence of planning and are common in good quality programmes. Written work also gives parents and review officers data on which to base their evaluations. It is very difficult to evaluate programmes that are based upon oral activities and assessment.

In many families it is difficult to separate educational learning from daily living. One indicator of a successful programme is the extent to which the child is enthusiastic about homeschooling activities. Another is how far the child accepts responsibility for positive participation.

The academic progress of a home-schooled child is relatively straightforward to monitor. It is more difficult to appraise a child's social development. (However,) not one report in this study suggested that a greater emphasis on social interactions would be beneficial.

### Advice & Support

A key issue that has emerged from ERO evaluations of homeschooling is the need for more frequent advice and support to parents. Many parents indicate strongly that the suggestions for improvement given by review officers are very useful and state that they would like more frequent opportunities to receive advice and

guidance. More consideration needs to be given to how guidance and advisory services can be made available to home-schooling parents.

### MOE Exemptions & ERO Reviews

Another area that needs further consideration is the relationship between the exemption process and ERO evaluations. In order for evaluations to be consistent and to provide an assurance to the key stakeholders about the quality of homeschooling programmes, they need to be based on clear criteria. This requires co-ordination between the Ministry of Education and ERO at the various stages of the exemption process. In particular there should be a close relationship between the criteria set out in the guidelines for applications for exemption, the criteria used by the Ministry of Education in granting the application and the criteria used by the Education Review Office in determining whether the application should be maintained; and the approved application for exemption should be sufficiently comprehensive to be able to be used as the basis for the Education Review Office to evaluate the quality of the programme.

Currently there does not appear to be any link between the guidelines for applications for exemption and decisions by the Ministry of Education to grant an exemption. There is a lack of identifiable criteria against which the application can be judged. In addition there are often inconsistencies between the programme as outlined in an approved application for exemption and the quality of the programme as evaluated by ERO.

### ERO Reports

The criteria against which the programme is evaluated are those specified within the application for exemption approved by the Ministry of Education.

ERO reports are used to inform parents about their performance in

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fulfilling their contractual obligations and undertakings. They also provide information that can be analysed by ERO to inform policy development and decision-making by the Government and for reporting on aspects of the homeschooling system.

The application for exemption is commonly used as a base line for examining the content of the programme.

The reports provide information within specified categories:

a. the type of programme that is undertaken and its consistency with the application for exemption approved by the Ministry of Education;

b. the delivery of the programme. This includes the use of learning resources, the availability of workspace, the regularity of the learning exercises and the inclusion of social and non-academic activities;

c. the processes of assessment and monitoring of the child's progress and achievement; and

d. the social and academic achievement by the child. This includes the appropriateness of the programme to the child's needs and the outcomes in terms

of enjoyment and achievement.

When programmes were consistent with the application but were inadequate, the review officer identified the weaknesses and either recommended revoking the exemption or a follow-up review.

*(TEACH Comment: Although the Education Act does not define the requirement that home educators provide instruction as regular and well as in a registered school, note here the ERO's understanding of what these things could mean. The ERO is an audit agency, checking the programme of home educators against some criteria. Where do they get these criteria? From what each home educator writes in the original application for exemption. In discussions with MOE officials in March of 1997, home educators were told that the MOE expects home educators to change from what they write in their applications.....in fact, the MOE officials said they would be worried if home educators didn't change from what they first wrote. For this reason TEACH advises home educators to always end their exemption applications with words to the effect that "All of the information given above is subject to change at any time".*

*The manner in which home educators are audited against their statements in the exemption application is similar to how schools are audited against their statements in their school charter. And so exemption applications become de facto school charters, with the following major exception: a fair chunk of state school charters are dictated by the state. Home educators are expected to "describe their knowledge and understanding of their selected curriculum." They can choose whatever curriculum or methodology they want, but are expected to be able to articulate this to Review Officers. The only time this may not be considered completely within reason is when a home educator is being reviewed very soon after acquiring an exemption. TEACH would tend to say six months is not always enough time to have a philosophy bedded down that well.....12 months would be more reasonable.)*

### Letter

I am a fifth form home schooling student. I would like to correspond with other home schoolers who plan to study at Canterbury University.

Mark Wylie  
5 Durie Vale Rd.  
Wanganui

## Paid Parental Leave

There is currently a Member's Bill before Parliament titled the Paid Parental Leave Bill which seeks to amend the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987. The Act currently requires employers to grant both maternity and paternity leave from work without pay. The Bill is proposing that employers be required to grant both maternity and paternity leave from work at 80% of full wages.

Home educators need to think the issues through. It sounds good because a mum working for wages would be eligible for 12 weeks maternity leave at 80% of normal wages. She could take all 12 or only some of it and let her husband take the rest from *his* place of work at 80% of *his* normal wages. The husband would already be eligible for two weeks of paid paternity leave. This leave applies to both a natural birth or an adoption.

Some say it is unfair to make bosses pay for this, and that they will be less likely to hire young women of child-bearing age. Well, the Bill actually levies ALL employers and the money goes into a central fund from which those employers who need it may draw. So inevitably, the cost of all goods and services will

(Continued on page 6)

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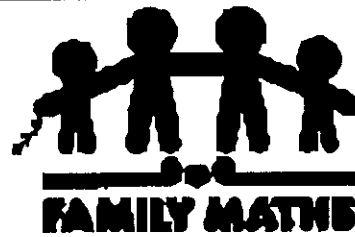
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rise and these costs will be passed on to consumers. This means that although home educators will be paying for this leave like all other consumers in society, they generally will not be taking advantage of the provisions of the Bill since virtually all home education mums are full-time mums and home makers. Their husbands may get the two weeks paid paternity leave...unless they are self-employed, in which case they too do not qualify to receive the benefits of this Bill.

So home educators as a group are not likely to benefit from this Bill as are those mums who intend on pursuing a career. This Bill enables them to have 12 weeks or less of paid leave with their job waiting for them at the end of it. The swop-with-your-spouse provisions are interesting, enabling a couple to take 80% of whichever one has the highest wage. As usual, full time mums and home makers, those committed to pro-

viding the best for their children, meaning families on a single income, are offered no such financial rewards. It seems the Bill will also create a market for part-time workers to fill in while the new mums and dads are away at home for those few weeks.

## Family Matters

The family problem lies at the heart of most social problems. It is not money but the family that is the foundation of public life. As the family has become weaker every structure built upon that foundation has become weaker. In fact, the evidence concerning the powerful effect of the familial foundation is now so strong that even some sociologists believe it.

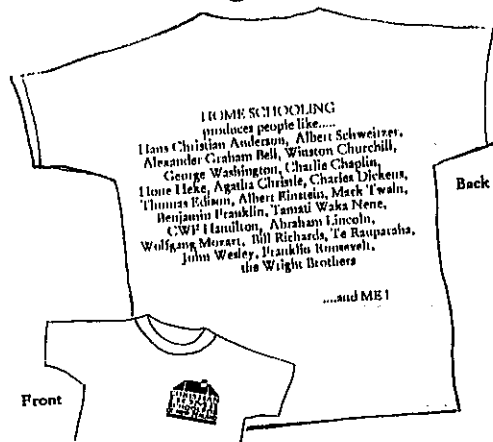
— Bruce Logan, *Cutting Edge*, July/August 1998.

## Faith in Education

"Ignorance is our greatest enemy." It was this faith that led the Unitarian Horace Mann to see the school as man's true church and saviour. He saw an end to crime and evil coming with universal public education. Unhappily for these humanists, as this humanistic education has prospered, so too have crime and social decay. On all sides we see education heavily financed as the key to social salvation but producing instead social decay.

—R.J. Rushdoony, "Education as a Panacea", *Chalcedon Report*, March 1992.)

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