



A phenomenological study of parental involvement in children's homeschooling

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Abstract

The objectives of this qualitative research were: (1) to study parents' lived experiences with parental involvement in children's homeschooling; and (2) to interpret and describe the various units of meanings from parents' lived experiences with parental involvement in children's homeschooling. Hermeneutical phenomenology was employed to holistically explore this phenomenon, and surpass the pre-existing notions. Hence, a series of in-depth phenomenological-interviews were carried out with seven homeschool parents. After the anecdotal descriptions of the lived experiences were analyzed, under the two overarching themes, seven themes were found. These themes are: (1) understanding, strong sense of self and learning methodology; (2) finding and accepting homeschooling; (3) traditional education as a positive constraint; (4) wearing two hats and multiple roles; (5) balancing between nature and nurture; (6) learning methodology; and (7) parent's expectations. These findings show that parental involvement in children's homeschooling hold rich and insightful lived-experiences, which should be theoretically considered and further explored to fulfill the comprehensiveness of the doctrine.

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Introduction

In Thailand, it is fair to say that homeschooling is not considered to be a mainstream education. Traditional education, on the other hand, is clearly perceived by the public to be a dominant way to receiving education. Some studies had regarded the traditional education and its underlying system as ineffective. (Chansaengsee et al., 2017; Kritiyapichartkul, 2003). Thus, some parents

gravitated towards the alternative route of education, or progressive education. Homeschooling is one of the alternatives.

Homeschooling refers to a method where the child's education is provided by their family, or assigned body. They, therefore, are not enrolled into the school at any point. Relatively, homeschooling dictates the primary responsibility on the parents in regard to their involvement in the child's education. The term, parental involvement refers to parents' decision of becoming involved in the child's education, parents' forms of involvement, and parents' methods of involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Hence, parental involvement in the

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child's education has a direct relationship with the student outcome and characteristics in both homeschooling (e.g. Boulter, 1999; Ray, 2000; Rudner, 1999), and non-homeschooling setting (e.g. Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Siddiqui, 2011; Smith, 2005).

According to the Office of the Education Council (2008), in Thailand, homeschool parents encountered problems with the governing body and its process. Thus, they expressed the lack of assistance and corporation when initially designing the learning structure. As a result, it was claimed that the governing bodies were not evaluating the child's learning in accordance to the initial design (Ketprach, 2017). On the other hand, homeschool parents perceived that homeschooling creates a better learner, and not a traditionally-defined student (Pholwiwat, 2004).

Past literatures have shown that parental involvement justifies and presents itself as a significant component of a child's homeschooling. For example, parents become involved with their children's homeschooling because their educational philosophy, special needs for the child, school climate, family lifestyle, and religious and ethical reason (Lange & Liu, 1999). Moreover, some studies also reported that they homeschool their children due to the following reasons: personal sense of efficacy (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007), objection to traditional schooling, character development (Montes, 2006), better learning environment, better education, and more extracurricular opportunities (Wearne, 2016). Other studies that had looked into parent's involvement experience also share quite similar findings (Hurlbutt, 2011; Jolly et al., 2012; Neuman & Guterman, 2017), all of which highly emphasized parent's educational preference, and family lifestyle. While these findings can be considered conclusive, it is worth noting that most of the studies were either adopted or framed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) parental involvement model, developed originally from the traditional schooling setting. Based on the previous statement, this study aimed to holistically explore the lived-experiences of parental involvement in children's homeschooling in its purest form. As a research

design, hermeneutical phenomenology allowed this study to surpass the pre-existing models and literatures. This study, therefore, was not framed by the past literatures, but rather relied heavily on its operational framework to purely look into this phenomenon as it was "lived" by the homeschool parents. Thus, it questioned how homeschool parents experience parental involvement in children's homeschooling, and how the meanings of those lived-experiences can be described. The findings of this study enlarged the perspective in regard to this phenomenon. It is also proven that there are unprecedented areas of parental involvement in children's homeschooling which should be theoretically and empirically considered.

Methodology

This qualitative research employed hermeneutical phenomenology to holistically explore parental involvement in children's homeschooling. In-depth interviews were carried out with seven parents who were living in Thailand, and had been directly responsible for homeschooling their children for at least two years. These key informants were selected accordingly to the mentioned criteria. The names of the key informants are replaced and reported with a single letter (e.g. Parent A) to uphold their anonymities (see Table 1).

Data Collection

Following van Manen's (2014) approach, the researcher conducted a semi-structured in-depth interview. A minimum of three serial in-depth interviews were carried out with each informant. The first question of every interview started with the same question: what is it like to be involved in your child's education? Based on previous response, another follow-up question was to be asked to phenomenologically reflect the lived experiences. This process is repeated until the informants' answers created a full cycle, and given no new information. All the interviews were done before any made restrictions or lockdowns due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1 Demographic information of the key informants

Replaced name	Relationship to the children	Numbers of children	Numbers of homeschooling children	Homeschooling child's age and gender	Location
Parent A	Father	1	1	7 y/o (female)	Samutprakarn
Parent B	Mother	1	1	9 y/o (male)	Bangkok
Parent C	Mother	2	1	13 y/o (male)	Bangkok
Parent D	Mother	1	1	8 y/o (female)	Samutprakarn
Parent E	Mother	1	1	3 y/o (male)	Bangkok
Parent F	Mother	1	1	4 y/o (male)	Bangkok
Parent G	Mother	1	1	17 y/o (female)	Rayong

Data Analysis

The data analysis of this study was an interpretation of the descriptive lived-experiences. The researcher adopted Pietkiewicz and Smith's (2014) 3 steps analytical framework for interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), namely: (1) multiple reading and note-taking; (2) transformation of notes into emergent themes; and (3) relationship seeking and theme clustering. Nevertheless, this interpretative process also followed van Manen's (2014) thematic reflection guideline. The data analysis process of this study can be declared as follows: (1) the audio recording of the interviews was transcribed, translated from Thai to English, and back translated by an independent translator who had no prior involvement in the study; (2) the transcribed interviews were coded using descriptive coding method; (3) clusters of coded information were grouped into emergent themes; (4) all descriptions were re-read multiple times and notes made; and (5) descriptions were reorganized, and themes were renamed.

This research methodology was approved by Office of The Committee for Research Ethics, Mahidol University (MUSSIRB No. 2020/023).

Results

In the following sections, the interpretive texts are declared into seven themes under two overarching themes: (1) the buildup to the decision; and (2) the world of being involved as shown in Table 2.

The Build up to the Decision

Some literatures implied that involvement starts at the point when parents decide to become involved in a child's education (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Walker et al., 2005). In this study, it was found that parental involvement begins prior to the involvement decision. An individual can yet not be a parent while also being involved. This overarching theme covers the

interpretations of the descriptive experiences in regard to the buildup to the decision. Such concerns experiences that gradually influence parents towards the decision.

Understanding, Strong Sense of Self, and Learning Ideology

Even though they are closely interrelated, understanding differs markedly from knowledge. While knowledge is an information awareness by oneself, understanding refers to how one comprehends anything in this world. This also applies to parents. Throughout their lives, they have been gradually obtaining understandings about life, and how they go about with those understandings in hand. Understandings can be wildly scattered, or properly structured. Hence, it solely depends on how an individual mindfully manages their understandings.

"I understand since the beginning that it's a matter of time. If she spent a lot of time on something, then there is progress. If she spent less time on something, it doesn't mean she doesn't have it in her." [Parent A]

In respect of the above account, this parent experienced that he had intimate understandings of his child because he was closely acquainted with her. On the other hand, parents surely had prior understandings of the world before they became parents. It can be anything from preferred diet to the purpose of life. Every understanding is influenced by the past. It serves as the lens that parents see their children through. For example, subjectively speaking, a parent believes that his/her child is not learning effectively only because that parent holds particular understandings about learning. The importance lies in how those understandings of/in life manifest themselves into a learning ideology.

Parent C shared that *"The goal since the beginning until now is to do whatever it takes to make sure that my son can live with himself. That is the concept."* In compliance to this statement, parent C was a former news reporter who resigned from her stable job to pursue a different path in the interest of her children. She decided to dedicate her undivided attention to her children.

Table 2 Overarching themes and themes

Overarching themes	Themes
The buildup to the decision	Understanding, strong sense of self, and learning ideology Finding and accepting homeschooling Traditional education as a positive constraint
The world of being involved	Wearing two hats and multiple roles Balancing between nature and nurture Learning methodology Parent's expectations

She left what the society would consider as something secure. Based on her understandings of life, she firmly believed that it is completely acceptable for your life to take turns; perhaps many turns. Those understandings manifested themselves into an ideology which conveys that one should be able to prevail in one's life. Thus, it was evidently expressed in the previous description that she insisted to pass on the ideology to her children.

On the other hand, an ideology or a goal of parent's homeschooling practice can also derive from a strong sense of self. This differs from sets of understandings in that a sense of self is more intuitive, and instinctive. While understanding requires an individual to comprehend something by reasoning it against what they already know, a sense of self is how a person views his/herself within the world. Parent F's anecdote emphasized relatively to this aspect:

“So, I felt like, one day I want to open a learning area for children to learn from nature. Finding their potentials through art and nature. I wanted to have something like this. I feel that my heart is strong because I've grown around nature, and art. Like whatever I run into, I would have this as a ground that allows me to, how to say this, not lose trust in myself. And I feel that each child has a different special power.”

Sense of self can be regarded as merely a feeling. Parents feel good about their ideas, or have a strong confidence in their senses. While that can be the case, the strength of it lies in how parents throw their personal strengths into the mix. Personal strength contains personal experiences and thoughts about themselves that validate and strengthen the “ground”. A strong sense of self (personal strength with sense of self) is a strong ground built with “concrete” and sensible materials. Relatively to the previous description, Parent F had been assist-teaching nursery children since she was thirteen. She studied performing art in her university years, and taught performing art right after she graduated. She expressed:

“I have ideas in terms of roles. How to encourage children to learn and understand, I already knew how. Therefore, transiting to parent's role wasn't difficult for me. Meaning that it wasn't anything new.”

Similar to any foundations, the foundation of parental involvement yields various characteristics and attributes. Relatively, the differences in components, such as the structures and the materials, they bring forth the attributes and characteristics of the foundation. Having said that, each foundation is suitable for different planting.

Finding and accepting homeschooling

To accept means to take or agree to what is offered. Thus, the presupposition to the act of accepting concerns how one finds the offer. If the foundation is a nicely cultivated land-of-soil, parents are finding and choosing (accepting) the seed for their ground. In this case, the offer (homeschooling) has always been on the table. It is available, and it is there to be found. While there are other options available, homeschool parents are the ones who find homeschooling as something that fits with their learning ideology (formed by their understanding and strong sense of self). These experiences can be a series of events that occur in a span of time. The following description illustrates the stretch of finding and accepting homeschooling.

“I wasn't homeschooling my kids since they were born. It occurred to me when my older son was in the nursery. My son was having a problem at school. He was fighting with another kid. The problem got blown up. The other parent called and threatened to press charges. Goodness, it was just kids fighting ... During the primary school, the teachers were not okay. The learning system was not okay. Even though, there was no homework, I felt that the classroom management was not okay. ... It was the internet. I searched around and found homeschooling. I just read through it then I found a group called Homeschool Network. ... This was even before I was pregnant [with the younger child]. When he was born. I was determined to put him in a progressive school, but all of them were very far away ... It was then and there.”
[Parent C]

In the above account, Parent C went through a period of finding and accepting an offer. The impulse that drove the finding process was the incident with her older son. She did not accept homeschooling right away, but the offer was found. An impulse is often an eventful and stretched experience. Thus, the finding period shows that a parent reasons, evaluates, and rationalizes their final decision before accepting or taking action to become involved. The finding process was found to have different methods; however, they shared quite similar experiences of seeking more information to select the desired “seeds”, and reinforce their upcoming decisions. Through an investigation of this aspect, it was found that parents experience different kinds of motivations throughout this process.

In the previous description, Parent C was motivated by preventing the same kind of experience (the fighting incident) from happening again. On top of that, her

unimpressed experiences with schooling motivated her even further. In an educational context, where parental involvement can be seen as having only child-oriented purposes, the objective fact that a parent prevents certain experiences from happening to the child again is not necessarily true. Since they are involved, this suggests that parents are also preventing the same experience from happening to themselves. This is an example of extrinsic motivation. It can be seen as a motivation that is led by an external encounter. Extrinsic motivations derive in response to an eventful or traumatic impulse. Homeschooling then can be seen as a process of seeking a solution to a problem.

In contrast, motivations can also derive from something constructive and intrinsic such as, a fit for family lifestyle. The following anecdote shows how personal upbringing can be a motivation for parents towards making the decision. In Parent B's situation, for instance:

"I have to say that I've known about homeschooling for a long time ... When I got married, I was planning not to have a child, but I also talked with my husband that if there was a child, then we should raise the child on our own, not sending that child to the grandparents because I think that they've done enough raising me."

Parent B found the "offer" long before she had a child. Despite her family lifestyle or structure, her perception of family lifestyle partially was an impulse to find homeschooling. Hence, it translated into her foreseeing how her time was going to be spent. This, as intrinsic motivation, shows that motivations can also come solely from the parent's experience. This contradiction between the two types of motivations is quite important because it contrasts with how homeschooling can be often portrayed as a solution for the traditional schooling problems.

Traditional education as a positive constraint

Homeschool parents experience that traditional education constrains and negatively affects one's development. However, the researcher found these constraints to also carry positive benefits for the parents. Positive constraint, in this case, refers to limitations that benefit a situation into the opposite (positive) direction. As it will be shown later, parents construct their learning methodology that counteracts these constraints.

An interpretation of this theme revealed that homeschool parents experience traditional education as something that denies, and restricts one's opportunity to

effectively learn. Nevertheless, it is perceived by parents that traditional education also demotes sense of identity. Parent A experienced his daughter being denied from what he called "a sign":

"There was an occasion on which the teacher decided to pick my child as a representative in the English-speaking activity. ... she didn't feel like she was having fun with it. I asked her why she could not remember the words, not wanting to speak, or to prepare. She said: 'I actually want to participate in something else, be a representative of another activity, another topic'. ... This is something, an example of something that the teacher would miss."

The researcher found this theme to be more sociological than pedagogical or educational. In a typical classroom, his daughter was denied by the teacher to commit to her desire to learn. Looking at this objectively, it may seem like normal classroom management. However, at this point, it is safe to assume that homeschool parents seek more personalization, and individualism when it comes to their child's learning. Approaching this as a sociological issue, it is likely that parents also carried on some attitudes from their personal experiences of receiving education. Relatively, Parent B experienced that the social norms, others' expectations, and parent's expectation had restricted her from pursuing the desired direction:

"I grew up in a very traditional school. Arts, performance arts, music, these subjects were not offered. My parents were government officials. As I was a child, I liked the subjects that were not offered. My parents didn't like those subjects, so I cooperated, following their course. But my passion was still there, I started homeschooling, taking my child to participate in different activities. That touches on the things that I like. I feel good about it."

To be denied means to be refused access to something, whereas to be restricted is defined as to be limited to a degree. Parent B experienced that she was restricted to a boundary because it was what others expected of her. This means that she was once embracing the social norms. However, she perceived that experience differently when she became involved with her child.

On the other hand, some sociological issues might not be quite sound to some parents. Parent D found that schooling demotes a child's sense of identity, and it is nothing short of problematic:

“She was in an international school. Her behavior changed. We have to accept that it’s a very capitalist-environment. She refused to wear the same clothes even though we taught the value of money. ... The school bag got to be Elsa. Something like that. She possessed this kind of shared value. I thought it was a crisis. It was so bad that her toothbrush, toothpaste, pillow had to be the same.”

Once again, sociologically, these collective behaviors are objectively not unusual, but rather relatable. A little girl of course would want to be nicely dressed, and carry an Elsa bag to school. At young age, a child perhaps truly feels comfortable to behave collectively. However, homeschool parents experience these sociological issues as constraints.

The World of Being Involved

The point of entering into the new life of being involved is not marked by the submission of paperwork, or an enrollment to an umbrella school but rather the time when a parent starts executing their homeschooling practice. This overarching theme presents the researcher’s interpretation of parents’ descriptive experiences in the space and time of being involved.

Wearing two hats and multiple roles

The term: facilitator was often mentioned in the descriptive experiences of parents because homeschool parents commonly incorporate this role with their practice. Obviously, being a facilitator is not the only role that parents are required to play; homeschool parents cannot stop being parents, not even when they are educating their children. The main idea of this theme concerns how parents balance between the “two hats”.

Parents literally live to see their children grow, and develop. Therefore, when they are involved with the child’s learning, they definitely expect to see the results of their outputs. Parents themselves are possibly the worst person to determine the reasonability of those expectations. For them, there are too many factors in play, namely, personal feelings, peer pressures, or comparison to the other families. This by all means is the nature of being a parent. However, homeschool parents experience that it is absolutely important to be able to acknowledge when the wrong hat is worn in the wrong situation. Parent A further elucidated on this point:

“For me, it has to be separated once we are too parent-like. We seek control. We want our child to be

good in our way, and that in itself is a conflict. It can be clearly seen if we push it as parents. You can expect conflict. There are emotions. Fighting. Getting mad. ... But once it happens, it needs to be noticed and addressed. It can be confusing.”

On the other hand, a facilitator focuses on the objectives. The job is to guide and direct the learners towards the set objectives while ensuring that the necessities are provided. Being a parent, on the other hand, has an intimate and a biological relationship with another person, which naturally dictates them to desire for the child’s growth, and instinctively reject any unwanted behaviors or attitudes. It is comparable to a therapist who consults their own spouse for marriage problems. It is indeed a conflict of interest. An improper balance or separation between the two is really problematic, as was once the case for Parent D:

“In the first month [of homeschooling], I just let her live her way. I observed how she was. She woke up late. Went to bed late. Some days, she only showered once ... Just drawing cartoons. So, in the second month, I reduced the painting time. ... She felt like she was forced into something. ... Everything just exploded around the third or fourth week [of the third month]. She said she was not okay. She cried while she was talking. I listened and I was angry because I believed that I had good intention. I cried because what she was doing was not okay. She was crying. I was crying.”

Wearing the two hats can be considered as the main obligation that requires homeschool parents to know their placements in different situations. Hence, inside each hat, there are *subsets of roles* that they also fulfill. The interviewed parents emphasized differently about the parts they fulfilled. Parent C “... tell everyone that I’m a school director. Running a homeschool.” Parent D was simply an observer of her artistic daughter:

“Nowadays, I just wait. I won’t say much. I talk a lot, but with her I won’t say much. I Keep it short, and I just say exactly what I feel. For example, if she’s just sitting there [doing nothing]. ‘I’m worried about you.’ I’d just say that. ‘What are you doing?’ She would tell me that she was thinking about something. When she says so, I would just step back and get out of there. She would just be sitting there for three or four hours. I just let her.”

Parent F “played” with his son as if they were friends, “We more like play together. When he’s with me there is

no ‘Good morning teacher.’ I just play with my son. Being his friend. Making him feel that mommy is also his friend”. Thus, these roles are only a few from many roles which parents had implied, namely, organizer, coach, role model, observer, or classmate.

Balancing between nature and nurture

In regard to the amount of freedom and fluidity in homeschooling practice, it was often described by parents that freedom was given in response to a child’s natural interest in learning. Under the assumption that complete freedom is an incomplete idea, the researcher investigated this matter and found that homeschool parents nurture their children by establishing some degree of control and influence onto the child’s nature. There are two major dimensions in this theme: child showing natural interest in learning, and parent establishing control.

Natural curiosity is practically synonymous to learning. It is a naturally-given presupposition to the modern definition of learning. Homeschool parents experience that a child is naturally driven to learn things. It is expressed by the child and ideally to be seen by parents. To this instance, parent C’s anecdote showed how her child was driven by enjoyment:

“All of a sudden, he told me that he wanted see it. I saw that it was Khon. It is Thai performance art, so I took him to see it. After that, he asked me to take him time and time again. He stayed in the theater until the end of the show. He enjoyed it even though I’d never taken him to a movie theater. I was afraid that we wouldn’t be able to stay. Three months went by, and he asked me about where he could learn to perform Khon.”

These natural drives can be a sign to further expect personal relationships in learning. However, the fact that homeschool parents are facilitating those drives already suggests that parents, to some degree, are influencing or establishing control over their children. Parents surely hold subjective opinions in their mind when looking upon or observing the child. They, therefore, shape it to an extent which to them seem appropriate. As proof, establishing control onto an artist can be such a bizarre idea. Parent D, in her way, did just that to her artistic daughter:

“We train her. There was a time that she was hired to paint something. The client specified the colors that needed be used in this piece. That was a huge deal for her. ‘I won’t take it. I won’t do it.’ Then I told her that sometimes you can’t just really choose the job. So, we sat

down and talked, but she just kept saying no. ... At that point, I stopped saying anything and just backed off. I knew that was the limit, and that was where I backed off. Then she reflected on it, and she decided to do it.”

Parent D oversaw her daughter to a degree then backed off. She expressed her disagreement to the child’s subjective attitude, and influenced her to take back her objective actions and subjectively reflected on it. She granted her child with a generous degree of subjective freedom to be naturally driven. Hence, to an extent, she established control of her daughter’s objective actions to be socially conformed. In sum, homeschool parents experience, as part of their involvement, to preserve this balance between given freedom and control.

Learning methodology

In this theme, it was found that their learning methodologies hold conceptual relationship with the positive constraints, or their attitudes towards traditional education. These descriptions show that parents intuitively construct and enforce their learning methodologies by counteracting those constraints. There are four aspects that explain this theme: fluid curriculum, real-life learning, interest-based learning and human-centered learning.

Firstly, fluid curriculum refers to a learning structure that reinforces personalized learning, and flexibility in learning. Having a fluid curriculum is the foundation of homeschool parent’s learning methodology. Homeschool parents experience that fluidity or adaptability in their curriculum/learning is rather not insisted, but very much needed, the reason being that they cling to the child’s natural drives (e.g. enjoyment) as one of their main pillars of being a parent. An anecdote from parent F’s description illustrated this point:

“I not only organize the environment, but I have the entire year planned out. Like what we do every week. Our strength is that we can improvise. For example, if there is a plan, everything is prepared. All can be possibly removed, and we don’t use anything from it.”

On top of the fluid curriculum, it lies that different learning methods are dependent on the flexibility of such. Real-life learning is one of the methods that homeschool parents adopt into their practice. It can be defined as a method of learning through the direct exposures of supposedly an unfabricated life. This may include hands-on activities, self-exploration, or learning outside. Parent D described a good example of this method, which some might consider to be radical:

“She wouldn’t eat any meat because she feels sorry for animals. I’m not so sure if it was something that I taught or what ... I’ve never forced her or talked her out of it. One day she had too little protein and she just collapsed. It was like she fainted and fell. I let it happen. If it wasn’t that dangerous, I’d just let it happen. ... Then, that’s where I explained the importance of protein. I didn’t teach her first. I’d let it happen then she would be very interested because it related directly to her.”

The second learning method that is dependent on a fluid curriculum is interest-based learning, a learning method that proceeds based on the child’s natural interest. The education provider then facilitates and assists the learner by providing an appropriate path. This method serves purposefully to the mentioned child’s natural desire to learn. Parent A described:

“For example, right now, she is interested in Egypt. It began with her interest in mummies. As a child, she saw them, and then she was interested in it. So, we looked into the process of making a mummy. Watching videos about mummies. Then we went to books. When we started with books, it referred to something else, it referred to the gods, and the sphinx. It just started expanding. This and that. After the history of the gods, there was something else that also linked to that.”

Lastly, another learning method that lies on top of homeschool parents’ fluid curriculum is human-centered learning. This method promotes the intrinsic value of humans that concerns learning about oneself and others. It emphasizes how one can learn to understand oneself and others for the purpose of self-development. Homeschool parents encourage their children to learn and understand about themselves as they are going through life. If a child, at one point, is convinced that he would like to be a dinosaur, then so be it:

“If I was with parents that I knew well, I would encourage their child to behave naturally. Like go for it a hundred percent. ‘That’s nice. That’s really funny. Are we playing dinosaur?’ There was one child who liked to act like a dinosaur all the time. Making noises. He would speak slowly, and he liked to act like dinosaur so much. ... I let him pick things up by his mouth, and he liked it. His natural behavior was awakened. That made him really happy. Others saw him, but no one told him to stop. He was having fun. I believe every child has his own nature, and it’s very special.”
[Parent F]

On the other hand, another part of this method requires the child to learn from interactions with other human beings. While self-awareness develops oneself in term of their sense of identity, interaction with others allows an individual to understand the magnitude of external influences. Parent C’s account illustrates this aspect:

“There was this recent incident that I found that he could manage it. The younger one went to his Khon class and was physically pushed by a friend. They were probably fighting. ... I asked him how he felt. He said ‘I was very angry. Then I walked off. And didn’t talk to him.’ In response to that I said ‘You did very well by being in that kind of position and not reacting. ... I admire you. You did very well.’ And I gave him a hug.”

Parent’s expectations

The role of being a parent dictates homeschool parents to have the desire to see growth and development of a child. They observe and seek different qualities as a result of their outputs. Homeschool parents look for signs of progression in a child. These signs are observed and noted mentally rather than formally assessed. They experience and expect different types of quality or outcome of their children. These types of quality are real-life quality, learner quality, and human quality.

Firstly, real-life quality concerns how homeschool parents expect their children to show progress in having an acceptable approach to life. Homeschool parents want their children to be able to considerably handle interactions in the world. It is not a complicated expectation, yet this area of experience is meaningful and rich to homeschool parents. As Parent E described:

“Every day, we just do as we please. And our son would follow. And he did. The other day I threw some clothes in the laundry basket, and some were hanging out of the basket. My son walked by, and out of the corner of his eye, he saw that the clothes were not in the basket. He walked back and put them in then continued walking. It was delightful because we didn’t actually need to teach him.”

Secondly, learner quality refers to a group of characteristics which indicate the child’s tendency to see the importance of learning, and sustain this quality throughout their life. Homeschool parents expect their children to see learning as a major part of life. In a way, homeschool parents expect their children to have a relationship that is not short of love with learning. For instance, Parent A’s daughter was having a “loving relationship” with the gods, and perhaps meet dad’s expectation:

“Seeing her very happy with the process of learning in a way that I don’t have to convince her. She learns when she is ready. Then I give her support. For example, now she is reading on her own. When she’s reading by herself, she has a lot of interest in it. It is happiness, and there is no forcing involved. She has a deep understanding of what she is interested in. Like the names of the gods, which are very confusing. It goes beyond Ra, Isis, or Anubis. ... Results being she loves her learning.”

Lastly, human quality concerns a set of characteristics, which allows an individual to fulfill their life as they are living it. Its importance lies in human intrinsic values and relationships with others. For homeschool parents, their expectation is to see that their child knows how to be happy. This is a matter of how a child individually values themselves with or without the relationships with other humans. How to be happy, a simple concept that yet remains in discussion for as long as it can be remembered. Parent B’s account made a relatable note to this point:

“I want him to be happy with whatever he chooses. I believe that you have to be happy and satisfied with the thing you choose. For me, I didn’t pick the thing I like but according to the social trend. I managed to be satisfied with it, you know. And, the things I like became my hobbies. I want him to know that once you accept something, you have to be satisfied with it. And, if you can be happy with it also, then that’s a plus.”

Discussion

In this study, the “driver” components of parental involvement in children’s homeschooling can be summarized into three groups: personal philosophy (understanding, and traditional education as a positive constraint), role construction (wearing two hats and multiple roles), and control (balancing between nature and nurture, learning methodology, and parent’s expectations). Some of these components or the themes are found to be consistent with the past literatures. In regard to personal philosophy, parent’s educational philosophy was shown to have influence on parent’s decision to homeschool their children (Hurlbutt, 2011; Jolly et al., 2012; Lange & Liu, 1999). Relatively, some studies had reported that homeschool parents objected to the traditional schooling, or rectified by their past experience with traditional schooling (Montes, 2006; Neuman & Guterman, 2017). In terms of role construction, Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) found that homeschool parents were “motivated

by an active role construction”. In contrast, control has not been mentioned as a dedicated finding/theme in the past literatures.

Relatively, the phenomenological essence of parental involvement in children’s homeschooling is the parent’s act of acquiring the freedom to control. Homeschool parents decided to homeschool their children essentially because they want their children to be free from the systematic and sociological restraint. Hence, they then attain the full control over the children’s growth and development. Control, in such matter, is not given back to the children but rather the opposite, it is transferred from the traditional education system to parents.

This essence could bring about new discussion surrounding this doctrine. The results, on the other hand, initiate a new avenue of parental involvement in children’s homeschooling. As this study has shown, there are areas of this phenomenon which are rich and unprecedented, yet unexplored and unfounded. Thus, it should also be theoretically considered to further explore this phenomenon in a holistic manner in order to compare, and possibly challenge the comprehensiveness of the parental involvement model (originally developed in traditional school setting) used in framing the homeschool-related studies.

This study was geographically limited to one country. Thus, its methodology was not designed to answer to the homogeneity of its samples.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Homeschooling undoubtedly relies on parental involvement. It is, in fact, a determiner of a child’s outcome. Homeschool parents could use this study or other parental involvement models to personally assess their involvement with the child’s education. Such action would help parents to paint a clearer picture of their involvement decision and involvement forms. It does not necessarily need to be formulated as a formal evaluation. The findings from this study or the pre-existing variables can be conveniently formulated into questions for the homeschool parents to answer. It would allow them to clearly recognize their involvement and potentially observe their efficacy and effectiveness of their involvement at a personal level.

On the other hand, in Thailand, homeschool parents are obliged by the laws to report to the governing body. Their children are subjected to being evaluated and reported. These evaluations pay most attention to the curriculum, and the child’s progress. Parents, on the other

hand, are only subjected for their readiness to manage education solely based on their educational level, and livelihood. They not being evaluated for the effectiveness of their involvement. Therefore, the researcher encourages and recommends the governing body concerning homeschooling to consider developing a method to periodically evaluate parents, and their involvement alongside the child's learning.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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