



Conceptualising Higher Education Preparation Among Homeschoolers: A Triadic Framework Across Institutional Contexts

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Abstract

Research on homeschooling has grown quickly, but discussions of how home-based education prepares students for higher education are still often framed in terms of outcomes or national policy categories. This paper takes a different approach by developing a triadic analytical framework that treats preparation for higher education as a relational process rather than a single pathway. The framework focuses on three interconnected dimensions. Credentialing practices support the institutional recognition of homeschooling, while parental mediation captures how parents organise learning and support transitions into higher education. Learner autonomy reflects students' capacity for self-regulation and sustained academic engagement. Considered together, these dimensions shift attention away from the question of whether home education “works” and towards how higher education preparation is shaped in different settings. The framework is developed using existing research on homeschooling in the United States and is then applied comparatively to European contexts, where home education operates under a wide range of legal arrangements. Drawing on selected national examples chosen to illustrate contrasting regulatory arrangements, the paper shows how the balance between credentialing practices, parental mediation, and learner autonomy varies across restrictive, flexible parental-responsibility, and decentralised systems. These examples illustrate how similar educational goals can be pursued under very different regulatory conditions, without assuming policy transfer or convergence. The framework contributes to comparative education by distinguishing preparation as a developmental learning process from preparation as an institutionally recognised pathway.

Keywords: comparative education; credentialing; home education; learner autonomy; parental mediation

1. Introduction

Homeschooling in the United States has expanded in recent years, which reflects families' interest in more flexible and individualised educational arrangements (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2024b; Watson, 2024). Commonly defined as parents assuming primary responsibility for their children's education outside formal schooling, homeschooling is commonly described as a purposeful alternative to traditional school-based routes (Zamir, 2020). At the same time, participation in higher education continues to shape secondary-aged learners' expectations of post-school options, reinforcing higher education as a dominant educational goal (NCES, 2024a; USAHello, 2022). The growing connection between expanding home education and established tertiary pathways raises questions about how homeschooling is understood as preparation for higher education.

Despite increasing scholarly attention, there is still limited empirical research directly investigating how homeschooling relates to postsecondary preparation. As Hamlin (2024) notes, much of the existing literature is restricted by small samples, cross-sectional designs, and a lack of longitudinal data tracking homeschoolers' transitions into higher education. Consequently, studies tend to offer partial insights into outcomes or institutional perspectives instead of detailed explanations of how preparation for tertiary study develops over time. To address this limitation, the paper adopts the term higher education preparation, which draws on Conley's (2007) concept of college readiness. Here, higher education preparation is reframed as a process shaped through practice and support instead of a fixed status defined by benchmarks or thresholds.

Building on this perspective, the paper develops a triadic analytical framework to explore how homeschooling families in the United States support higher education preparation through three interrelated dimensions: credentialing practices, parental mediation, and learner autonomy. Rather than treating these dimensions as separate factors, the framework examines how readiness is produced through their interaction across institutional, familial, and learner-level practices. The framework is then extended to European contexts, which show considerable variation in homeschooling legislation alongside broadly comparable tertiary education systems (Hána & Kostelecká, 2022). Europe is used as a comparative field to situate preparation for higher education across different institutional contexts, without transferring U.S. findings. In doing so, the paper advances a relational and non-prescriptive framework for interpreting preparation for higher education among homeschoolers.

2. Methods

This paper takes a conceptual and comparative approach to how homeschooling prepares students for higher education. It uses a targeted literature search because the aim is to develop an analytical framework from selected conceptual, empirical and policy-relevant sources. Searches were conducted through ERIC, Google Scholar and the Monash University Library discovery search. Search terms included homeschooling, home education, college readiness, higher education preparation, postsecondary transition, higher education admissions, United States, America, Europe and European. The initial search was conducted from August to October 2025, followed by an update from late April to early May 2026 to identify more recent and directly relevant scholarship.

Sources were selected when they helped explain how homeschooling connects with preparation for higher education. This included research on postsecondary transition, college readiness, admissions processes, academic preparation, family support, independent learning and regulatory context. Priority was given to peer-reviewed research published between 2016 and 2026, while earlier studies were retained when they provided foundational concepts or

directly relevant evidence not adequately represented in more recent literature. Official policy and institutional documents were used where they clarified regulatory or entry arrangements.

Screening proceeded in stages according to relevance to the paper's analytical purpose. Search results were first examined by title and available abstract or summary to identify sources with a plausible connection to higher education preparation. Potentially relevant sources were then examined at full-text level to determine whether they contributed evidence or concepts concerning transition, admissions, credentialing, parental support, learner autonomy or regulatory conditions. Reference lists of relevant sources were also examined to identify earlier or frequently cited work. The update search applied the same relevance criteria to more recent publications.

Sources fell outside the inclusion criteria when their focus did not contribute directly to the framework, even when they were relevant to homeschooling more broadly. To illustrate the application of these criteria, Green-Hennessy and Mariotti (2023) examined decisions to homeschool, while Govaerts (2020) focused on how educational success in home education is conceptualised and measured. De Carvalho and Skipper (2019) examined the social experiences of home-educated adolescents, but none of these studies addressed preparation for, transition to or admission into higher education. Research focused solely on compulsory school regulation or political debate was also excluded unless it helped explain progression towards higher education. Commentary outside scholarly or official channels was not used as primary evidence, so the selection remained bounded by conceptual relevance rather than exhaustive coverage.

The framework was developed mainly from U.S. literature because this body of research provides the most direct discussion of homeschooling as a route into higher education. Recurring practices, relationships and forms of support across this literature were examined as indicators of how preparation for higher education develops over time. These elements formed the conceptual lens used in the comparative stage. Europe was selected as the comparative context because homeschooling law and governance vary substantially across national systems. Germany, the United Kingdom and Switzerland were selected to illustrate restriction, flexible parental responsibility and decentralised cantonal governance, without representing all European systems.

Several limits follow from this targeted strategy. The analysis is shaped by the stronger visibility of U.S. research, the smaller body of European work directly linking home education to higher education transition, and the use of English-language sources. It may also privilege countries and institutions with accessible documentation of homeschooling regulation and higher education admissions. The framework should not be assumed to travel unchanged to non-European or Global South contexts, where state capacity, examination systems, digital provision and higher education access may operate differently. It should therefore be read as a conceptual tool for clarifying relationships, with further empirical work needed before predictive claims are made.

3. Results

3.1 Conceptual Structure of the Triadic Framework

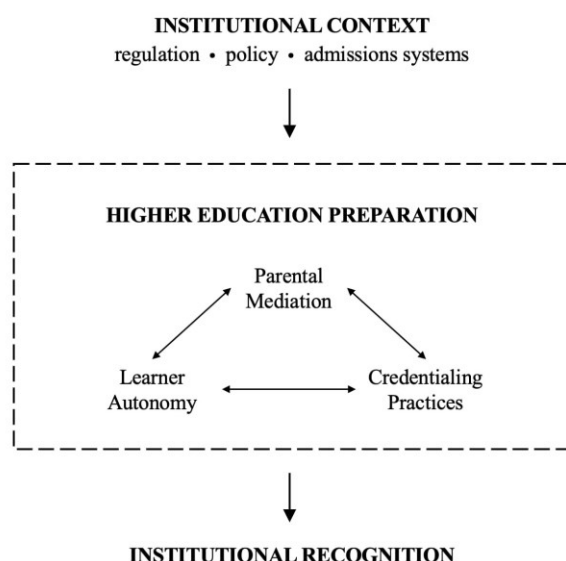


Figure 1: The Triadic Framework for Higher Education Preparation and Institutional Recognition among Homeschoolers

Note. The framework conceptualises higher education preparation through the interaction of parental mediation, learner autonomy and credentialing practices. Parental mediation coordinates preparation, learner autonomy reflects students' growing responsibility for it, and credentialing practices support the institutional recognition of learning. These relationships are reciprocal rather than sequential and are shaped by institutional, socioeconomic and learner contexts.

3.1.1 Dimension 1: Parental Mediation

Within this framework, parental mediation refers to the ways parents organise and support learning as students prepare for higher education. Although it is not directly assessed in admissions decisions, it shapes the conditions under which preparation develops over time. As the first dimension, it captures the coordinating role through which learner autonomy and credentialing practices are supported.

Curriculum Customisation

In homeschooling families, parents play a central role in shaping learning by planning curricula and integrating academic work into everyday family life (Carpenter & Gann, 2015). This involvement allows parents to adjust pace, sequencing, and depth of study in response to individual learner needs, often prioritising understanding over coverage and supporting sustained engagement with academic material (Firmin et al., 2019). Morse (2019) reports similar emphases on active parental involvement in curriculum choice, while showing that these practices frequently extend beyond the household into homeschooling organisations where families collectively support instruction and peer interaction. Collectively, these studies indicate that parental mediation helps maintain coherence across learning pathways in both domestic and collective settings, instead of directly determining academic outcomes.

Nevertheless, homeschooling is often criticised for limiting students' social experiences, particularly when learning is assumed to remain confined to the household. Critics argue that reduced external oversight may restrict exposure to diverse perspectives and collaborative learning, with potential consequences for communication and teamwork skills valued in postsecondary education (Dwyer, 2022). Evidence from empirical studies presents a more nuanced picture. Hamlin and Cheng (2022) show that many homeschooled learners participate in sports, arts programs, and cooperative classes that combine academic learning with structured social interaction. Overall, this evidence suggests that social development in homeschooling is shaped by how families engage with wider community networks, not by the setting alone.

Guided Transition

Parents often play a crucial role as students move from homeschooling into higher education. They help students understand new institutional expectations and adjust to unfamiliar academic settings. According to Reynolds (2023), conversations at home about postsecondary pathways can strengthen students' confidence and encourage a shared sense of responsibility for future planning. Through regular discussion of long-term aspirations, families link everyday learning to broader educational trajectories.

Parents' mentoring role is not limited to academic matters. It also involves supporting students as they navigate the emotional and practical uncertainties of entering higher education. Yet, it is noted that students often hold mixed views about this transition (Reynolds, 2023). They recognise the personal and professional opportunities offered by higher education, while expressing concern about potential drawbacks, including financial cost. In supportive families, this ambivalence tends to prompt reflection rather than confusion, which encourages homeschooled students to consider how their aspirations align with practical realities.

That said, setting boundaries around parental involvement is important during the transition to higher education. Broader research on parenting expectations and child anxiety suggests that a sustained focus on achievement can intensify distress when it is experienced as pressure rather than support (Fox & Fleming, 2025). This risk may be heightened in homeschooling contexts, where instructional responsibilities are closely intertwined with parent-child relationships. At the same time, Reynolds (2023) reports that most homeschooled students describe parental guidance as encouraging rather than controlling. Overall, these findings suggest that how guidance is communicated and understood plays a key role in shaping students' experiences during transition.

3.1.2 Dimension 2: Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy refers to homeschoolers' increasing responsibility for directing their own learning. It captures how structured routines and guidance are internalised through self-regulation and academic decision-making. This dimension connects family involvement with students' ability to manage the demands of higher education preparation.

Regulated Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy in homeschooling develops under conditions that balance student choice with structured routines that support consistent effort. Autonomy functions most effectively when independence is paired with competence, as self-direction emerges within clear expectations rather than through unrestricted freedom (Riley, 2016). In practice, students are often given flexibility in how they approach learning while remaining accountable to

schedules and agreed goals. When this balance is maintained, learners can take ownership of their studies without disengaging from responsibility.

At the same time, learner autonomy is constrained when structure or feedback is insufficient. High flexibility combined with delayed feedback has been shown to increase procrastination and undermine concentration, even among motivated learners (Svartdal et al., 2020). Under such conditions, independence may weaken rather than strengthen self-regulation. These patterns indicate that effective autonomy depends on equilibrium, where choice initiates engagement, structure stabilises effort, and feedback supports ongoing regulation. Without this balance, autonomy risks becoming counterproductive.

Contexts for Learner Autonomy

Parental organisation provides an early environment in which learner autonomy can be cultivated. Parents often establish planning routines and progress-monitoring practices that encourage students to manage academic tasks independently instead of relying on constant supervision (Carpenter & Gann, 2015). Through repeated engagement with these routines, homeschoolers gradually assume responsibility for organising their work. These practices often carry forward into tertiary study, where students continue to apply early developed strategies as part of their independent approach to academic demands (Crouch, 2024).

Learner autonomy also takes shape within socially embedded environments beyond the household. Homeschoolers frequently participate in cooperative groups, community projects, or apprenticeships that require initiative alongside accountability to others (Hamlin & Cheng, 2022). Within these contexts, learners organise their work while responding to shared goals, roles, and expectations. Through collaboration, autonomy is strengthened as students practise decision-making, communication, and persistence. In this way, social practices foster forms of autonomy that parallel the collaborative and self-directed demands of higher education.

3.1.3 Dimension 3: Credentialing Practices

Credentialing practices refer to how homeschool learning is documented for higher education admissions. They shape whether that learning can be treated as credible and comparable alongside conventional qualifications. This dimension marks the point at which preparation developed through parental mediation and learner autonomy enters institutional judgement.

Contextualised and Standardised Evaluation

In the United States, holistic review allows homeschooled applicants to be assessed through a wider set of application materials. It can include grades, course choices, recommendations, personal statements, course descriptions and curriculum summaries, so academic readiness can be presented through several forms of evidence (Liu, 2022). For homeschoolers, these materials can show the curriculum followed, the level of work attempted and the ways achievement is assessed outside conventional school structures. Meanwhile, contextualised evaluation treats an academic record as the product of a particular educational setting, allowing admissions officers to judge homeschool study in relation to its organisation, demands and assessment conditions (Bastedo et al., 2023). This helps homeschool documentation function as evidence of structured academic preparation, even when it lacks the format of a formal school transcript.

External assessment becomes important where homeschool evidence must be made usable for comparison. Admissions decisions often give strong weight to grades and curriculum strength, so materials produced outside schools carry a credibility burden (National Association for College Admission Counseling, n.d.). Standardised admission tests such as the SAT or ACT, along with externally marked subject-based assessments where available,

can reduce this burden by adding independently scored evidence. For homeschooled students, SAT scores also predict first-year college performance more consistently than homeschool grade-point averages (GPAs), making them a stronger reference than family-assigned grades (Yu et al., 2016). The point is not that external tests capture the whole of homeschool preparation, but that they help admissions officers judge whether family-generated academic records can withstand comparison with the wider applicant pool.

Tertiary Alignment

Early enrolment in recognised tertiary programs gives homeschooled students experience with forms of study that admissions offices can readily interpret. Through dual-credit subjects and community-college classes, homeschoolers can complete credit-bearing units before entering a degree. These routes require them to follow schedules, manage workload, meet instructor expectations and produce sustained assessed work. Crouch (2024) shows that such participation can support self-regulation and resilience because students work within structured courses and external standards. In this sense, tertiary-level study strengthens admissions legibility by turning homeschool preparation into recognised performance within accepted institutional formats.

Admissions officers' views provide broader support for the credibility of homeschooled applicants in higher education. Gloeckner and Jones (2013) report that many surveyed institutions have official policies for applications from homeschoolers, suggesting that this educational background has become an established admissions category. More than 78% of respondents also expect these graduates to be as successful as, or more successful than, traditional high school graduates during the first year of college. This confidence extends to expected GPAs, retention and credit hours earned, although views of social adjustment are more cautious. Taken together, these findings suggest that homeschooled applicants can be regarded as legitimate candidates even when their preparation is documented through less conventional routes.

3.1.4 Critical Insights

Research on homeschooling as a route into higher education remains limited by the composition and scope of its evidence base. Much of the evidence used to develop the framework comes from small, self-selected samples, including studies centred on relatively advantaged homeschooling families (Carpenter & Gann, 2015; Firmin et al., 2019). Homeschooling participation and timing are also shaped by socioeconomic and policy conditions, which cautions against treating the practices identified in these studies as equally available across families (Marks & Welsch, 2019). The shortage of longitudinal and comparative research further limits understanding of how preparation develops over time and across institutional settings (Hamlin, 2024). The framework should therefore be treated as an analytical tool rather than a predictive account of homeschoolers' higher education outcomes.

Equity concerns shape how each dimension should be interpreted. Credentialing practices may differ according to families' access to recognised assessments, tertiary coursework and other admissible evidence, while parental mediation occurs under socioeconomic and policy conditions that may affect how learning and educational transitions are organised (Marks & Welsch, 2019). Race and ethnicity can also shape families' reasons for homeschooling, as Black families may choose it in response to racial discrimination and as a means of pursuing self-agency and self-determination (Baker, 2024). Disability complicates assumptions about parental mediation because homeschooling families may need to secure and coordinate special education services, while parental satisfaction does not establish whether students receive equivalent forms or levels of support (Cheng et al., 2016). These differences also

suggest that learner autonomy should be interpreted in relation to the opportunities and assistance available to students, rather than as an individual capacity alone.

These considerations affect how the relationships among the three dimensions are understood. The framework directs attention to whether differences in information, recognised pathways and external support affect how families connect learning with admissible evidence. It also allows the support through which students develop and exercise autonomy to be examined across socioeconomic position, race or ethnicity, and disability. These social positions are unlikely to operate independently, although current homeschooling research does not yet explain their combined effects on higher education preparation systematically. Equity should therefore be treated as a condition shaping the interaction among credentialing practices, parental mediation and learner autonomy, rather than as a separate concern added to the framework.

3.1.5 Implications for Research and Practice

The triadic framework provides a basis for examining how higher education preparation develops over time and across institutional contexts. Longitudinal studies could follow homeschooling families from later secondary education through application and higher education entry. They could trace when credentialing decisions are made and how parental mediation changes. They could also examine how students assume greater responsibility for learning.

Comparative research could examine whether similar preparation practices become more or less recognisable under different regulatory and admissions systems. Mixed-method designs could combine documentary evidence with parent, student and admissions-level data. This would allow researchers to examine how the three dimensions interact within particular contexts. It would also test whether those relationships change over time or across systems. Table 1 provides an illustrative operationalisation of the framework.

Table 1: Illustrative operationalisation of the triadic framework

Dimension	Concrete indicators	Illustrative data sources
Parental mediation	Curriculum selection and adaptation; establishment of study routines; guidance about higher education pathways and transition planning; arrangement of external courses, examinations or learning opportunities	Parent interviews; curriculum plans and schedules; family learning records; records of participation in external programs
Learner autonomy	Independent planning and completion of academic work; management of schedules and deadlines; goal setting; use of feedback; increasing responsibility for study and academic decisions	Student interviews; learning diaries or study logs; observations; course records
Credentialing practices	Preparation of transcripts and course descriptions; participation in external or standardised assessment; acquisition of recognised qualifications; completion of dual-enrolment or tertiary coursework; submission of academic evidence for admission	Homeschool transcripts and portfolios; examination and test records; qualification records; tertiary transcripts; university application materials; admissions policies; admissions-officer interviews

Note. The indicators and data sources are illustrative rather than fixed or prescribed measures. Their relevance and form may vary across regulatory and higher education admissions contexts.

For higher education admissions, the framework highlights the value of making entry and evidence requirements explicit for homeschooled applicants. Admissions offices could specify acceptable qualifications and assessments. They could also explain what academic documentation applicants should provide and what alternatives are available when conventional school references are unavailable. Dedicated guidance or a knowledgeable contact could help applicants with non-standard educational records navigate institution-specific requirements (Graham et al., 2025). These measures would clarify existing requirements without implying different academic standards for homeschooled applicants.

For homeschooling advisors, the framework supports planning backwards from likely higher education destinations. Advisors can help families identify prerequisite subjects and recognised qualifications early in secondary-level planning. They can also clarify examination requirements and the forms of academic evidence accepted by relevant institutions. Where standard credentialing routes are difficult to access, advisors can help families identify feasible alternatives that meet the requirements of the intended pathway. Advisors can also encourage parents to transfer greater responsibility for scheduling, academic decisions and application preparation to students as higher education entry approaches.

3.2 Higher Education Preparation in European Contexts

European comparison is useful because national regulations shape whether homeschooling can be connected to formal educational pathways. The paper uses homeschooling as the umbrella term, although European sources more often use home education or related labels such as private teaching or individual tuition (EACEA, 2018; Hána & Kostelecká, 2022). Across Europe, homeschooling may be available through parental choice, limited to exceptional cases, or governed through regional procedures (EACEA, 2018; Hána & Kostelecká, 2022). These arrangements affect the school-level conditions attached to homeschooling, including permission, educator qualifications, progress review and examinations (EACEA, 2018). Higher education admission then raises a further question: whether these school-level arrangements produce qualifications, records or application evidence that universities can use within their own entry systems (Hoareau McGrath et al., 2014; Orr et al., 2017).

Against this regulatory background, three cases are selected to apply the triadic framework across contrasting systems. Germany illustrates a restrictive model, the United Kingdom a flexible parental-responsibility model, and Switzerland a decentralised model governed through cantonal rules. Together, they show how the relationship between family-directed learning and formal progression can be tightened, loosened or interrupted. Other European arrangements, including systems based on parental notification or approval by local authorities, remain part of the wider field but are not selected as cases here.

Germany illustrates the restrictive end of this regulatory continuum because homeschooling is permitted only in narrow circumstances, while unauthorised homeschooling persists as a contested family practice. Officially permitted provision is mainly tied to children who cannot attend school for health reasons, and it remains attached to the formal school system through teachers, curriculum aims and examinations (EACEA, 2018). Outside this limited arrangement, regular homeschooling is treated as a breach of school law and may lead to legal sanctions, including fines, police enforcement, custody consequences and, in some states, criminal penalties (Spiegler, 2009). Despite these risks, some families continue to homeschool because they view school as too rigid, insufficiently responsive to individual learning, intrusive in value formation or harmful to children's wellbeing (Spiegler, 2009).

Under these conditions, higher education preparation depends largely on whether learning outside school can be redirected into accepted examinations, qualifications or other institutionally usable evidence.

The United Kingdom contrasts with Germany through a more flexible legal approach, under which parents are responsible for ensuring that their children receive a suitable education. Administrative arrangements differ across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, but these systems generally leave families with substantial responsibility for organising home education (EACEA, 2018). This flexibility can support self-directed learning and independent study while also requiring families to plan how learning will be documented for later progression (Graham et al., 2025). For students seeking higher education, the key issue is therefore how family-directed learning can be converted into recognised qualifications and evidence that admissions institutions can interpret.

In England, home-educated learners seeking General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level or Advanced level (A level) qualifications need an examination centre to enter them for the relevant assessments, and centres can decide whether to accept private candidates (Ofqual, 2026). Preparation can occur through family instruction, tutoring, distance education or independent study, but a centre accepting a private candidate must also accommodate any required non-exam assessment (Ofqual, 2026). At the higher education application stage, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) commonly places home-educated applicants in its independent-applicant category. Referees for these applications must be able to comment from an academic or professional perspective and cannot be relatives (UCAS, n.d.). These arrangements show how legal flexibility in home education can coexist with reliance on external organisations to make learning formally recognisable for higher education entry.

Switzerland occupies a conditional middle position because homeschooling is legally available, but its regulation depends on the canton (EACEA, 2018; Hána & Kostelecká, 2022). This reflects Switzerland's decentralised system, in which responsibility for compulsory education lies with the cantons, which set curricular content, teaching resources and subject time allocations (Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education [EDK], n.d.-b). At the next stage of the formal pathway, cantons also set entry criteria for Baccalaureate schools, using school performance, entrance testing or combinations of these measures (EDK, n.d.-a). These arrangements show how progression from compulsory education towards a recognised university-entry qualification can vary according to cantonal requirements.

Switzerland also provides an external route to the gymnasial Matura outside attendance at a recognised Baccalaureate school. Candidates can obtain a Baccalaureate by taking the Swiss Baccalaureate Examination, preparing either independently or through a private preparatory school (EDK, n.d.-a). A Baccalaureate generally entitles the holder to enrol directly in cantonal universities and the Federal Institutes of Technology (EDK, n.d.-a). For homeschooling, this provides a concrete example of how preparation developed outside a conventional school pathway can become institutionally usable through an externally recognised credential. The Swiss case therefore illustrates how decentralised educational governance can coexist with a nationally recognised route to higher education entry.

Overall, the cases show that regulation does more than provide background for homeschooling because it changes what can count as preparation for higher education. Similar forms of family-directed learning may carry different educational value depending on whether homeschooling is restricted, flexibly accepted or conditionally regulated. This

qualifies the framework developed from U.S. literature by showing that parental mediation, learner autonomy and credentialing practices do not always align smoothly across education systems. Where official acceptance is limited, parental commitment and learner autonomy may support learning, but they remain weakly visible to higher education institutions unless they are converted into accepted qualifications, records, examinations or application evidence. The European discussion therefore reframes the framework from an account of how homeschooling develops readiness into an analysis of how readiness becomes usable across different education systems.

4. Conclusion

This paper develops a triadic framework of parental mediation, learner autonomy and credentialing practices for analysing higher education preparation among homeschoolers. The framework treats preparation as a relational process shaped by family support, students' growing responsibility for learning and institutional requirements for recognising that learning. Its central contribution is to distinguish the development of preparation from the recognition of that preparation within higher education pathways. These processes are connected, but they are not equivalent. Substantial learning may therefore remain difficult to use for progression when it cannot be represented through evidence accepted by admissions systems.

The European comparison shows that these relationships are shaped by institutional context. Regulatory arrangements influence the conditions under which homeschooling occurs, while qualification and admissions systems shape how learning can become usable for progression. Similar forms of family-directed learning may therefore acquire different institutional value across education systems. This shifts comparison away from broad legal classifications or outcome differences and towards how preparation is developed, documented and recognised under different arrangements.

The framework should be read as an analytical tool rather than a predictive model, particularly given the concentration of evidence in U.S. research and the selective use of European cases. These limits constrain how broadly the relationships proposed by the framework can be assumed to apply across homeschooling populations and education systems. Even so, the framework provides a comparative lens for identifying where parental mediation, learner autonomy and credentialing practices reinforce one another or become disconnected. Higher education preparation among homeschoolers is therefore best understood through the relationship between educational development and institutional recognition, and through the contexts that shape that relationship.

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