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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, which help homeschooling gain institutional recognition; parental mediation, through which parents organise learning and support transitions into higher education; and learner autonomy, which develops 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 toward 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, the paper shows how the balance between credentialing practices, parental mediation, and learner autonomy varies across permissive, restrictive, and internally differentiated systems. These examples illustrate how similar educational goals can be pursued under very different regulatory conditions, without assuming policy transfer or convergence. Overall, the paper presents homeschooling as an adaptive form of educational preparation and offers a relational, non-prescriptive framework for comparative education research.

Keywords: Comparative Education; Credentialing; Home Education; Learner Autonomy; Parental Engagement