

Home education and inclusion: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in the UK

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Introduction

- Who are the Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT) in UK?
- Educational experiences of GRT in UK
- Elective home education and GRT groups
- Issues of racism, discrimination and bullying
- EHE is not a ***choice*** for GRT groups
- Inclusive education must be collaborative to reach goals of social justice

The Research

- Funded by local authority to examine the situation of EHE in one county in the South of England
- Interviews conducted with 20 parents who home educated, educational officials working on EHE and members of the Traveller Education Service
- Interviews tape recorded (although some parents did not want their interviews taped), data transcribed
- Data analysed by using grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, 2006)

GRT groups and education

- Low levels of achievement and attendance has been well documented since Swann (1965), Plowden (1985) and more recent research (Bhopal et al, 2000; Bhopal and Myers, 2010)
- Racism, bullying and overt discrimination a key reason for parents not wanting to send their children to school (DfES, 2004; Myers et al, 2010)
- Fear of cultural erosion (Ivatts, 2006)

Legal aspects of home education in UK

- Education Act 1996; a ‘suitable education’
- No legal requirements for home visits
- Parents do not have to follow national curriculum
- Tensions between *Every Child Matters Agenda* and home education
- Badman report (2009) national (rather than local) legal guidelines crucial

Reasons for home education

- Dissatisfaction with school education due to racism, discrimination and bullying
- **Positive benefits of receiving home education, ‘appropriate to the needs of the family’**
- Home education was about ‘keeping the Traveller culture alive’

What sort of home education?

- Scope – little or none; tutors and wide range of subjects;
teaching practical skills useful for ‘life’
- Quality – varied and hard to assess
- Support – little shown by authorities in how education was taking place
- Comparison made with religious schools

Views of educational practitioners

- **Children getting 'lost' in the system**
- Cultural expectations and family traditions
- Lack of support for parents who home educate
- Value of support

Conclusions

- How can schools contribute to a social justice and inclusive agenda when parents from marginalised groups choose to home educate?
- GRT home educate due to *lack of choice* in formal educational structures
- *Working with* marginalised communities rather than against them

Key References

- Bhopal, K and Myers, M (2008) *Insiders, Outsiders and Others: Gypsies and Identity*. University of Herts Press.
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