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Home-schooling during the lockdown in England

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Abstract

Since the start of the pandemic, schools around the world have closed their doors to children to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. This meant that many parents were forced to start home schooling their children which requiring significant efforts, knowledge, and the right equipment. Home schooling, or 'Elective Home Education', requires parents to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education appropriate to his-her age and ability (Department for Education, 2019). Home schooling has become the new 'norm' during the first and third lockdowns in England. This paper reports on relevant policy analysis, empirical research/literature review and findings from semi-structured interviews with parents who home schooled their primary school aged children. Findings indicate that the habitus of familial environment and the social position of field are significant determinants of education outcomes, in which the cultural and material deprivation have played a part. This paper highlights that home schooling has brought inequalities in educational experience into sharp focus and has shown the importance of embodied preferences and cultural goods in the drive to improve outcomes across the country. Had cultural approaches not been so different, the experiences of children from the North and the South, and from richer and poorer families, would not have been so different. Findings also shows how financial privilege does not provide an escape from stress and how parents' well-being, regardless of their economic background, has been affected by home- schooling.

Keywords: home schooling; social class; cultural capital; cultural deprivation

1. Chronology of the pandemic - March 2020 to March 2021

The first UK confirmed death from COVID-19 was reported on 5th March 2020 (Public Health England, 2020). On March 20th, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID 19 a pandemic and on March 23rd, 2020, implemented a strict lockdown in the country which included schools for most children. Parents were expected to provide education at home for children not attending school. According to government guidelines, if home schooled, a child must receive full-time education from the age of 5, but not necessarily following the National Curriculum. Home schooling, or 'Elective Home Education', requires parents to ensure the child receives efficient full-time education appropriate to their age and ability (Department for Education 2019). The term 'efficient' is used in the guidance but is not definitively defined.

Efficiency is loosely explained as when education ‘achieves what it is intended to achieve’. Likewise, education delivered at home should be suitable; this can be interpreted as age appropriate, enabling appropriate progress, and taking account of any specific aptitudes (Department for Education, 2019). It is against this background that the COVID 19 pandemic struck the UK, and which government policy can be judged on whether it could deliver what it promised. With the COVID-19 pandemic gripping the UK, the government came under increasing pressure to close schools. Roberts (2020) reported that keeping schools closed has little impact on stopping the spread of the COVID-19. This raised concerns as to whether the cost of school closures outweighs the benefits, as it potentially impacts harmfully on the well-being of learners and parents.

On 18th March 2020 the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announced the closure of all educational institutions in England from Friday 20th March 2020 until further notice (the first lockdown). This undoubtedly would have a major impact on teaching, learning and caring for children. Schools were asked to remain open as a ‘childminding’ service for ‘keyworkers’ (listed in the Department for Education, 2020). Meanwhile, parents were given little or no guidance from the government and their child(ren)s’ school on how to home-school. Concerns were raised about child-poverty and health (Musgrave and Payler, 2021) safeguarding issues (Khan and Mikuska, 2021) and the effects on well-being and nutriment when children not getting the only square meal a day, which they would receive if they were still at school. Extraordinary measures were taken by the government and schools to ensure that schools’ vulnerable learners from families on a low-income were still able to benefit from these free school meals (Weale, 2020). Britto et al. (2021) argued that children were the hidden victims of COVID-19, resulting from school closures, a negative impact on their cognitive and socio-emotional development, changes to their nutritional status, and access to basic health services. Primary and nursery schools reopened in June 2020 and remained open through the second lockdown in November 2020. With the ‘R’ (reproductive) rate of the COVID-19 pandemic rising in England, the government took the decision to impose a third lockdown in England, which included a second closure of all schools from 5th January 2021 up until they re-opened on 8th March 2021.

2. Policy background

The term ‘Red Wall’ was coined by pollster James Kanagasoorium in a Tweet in August 2019 (English, 2021), to describe a number of parliamentary constituencies across the Midlands and

North-East of England and some parts of Wales. These seats have been held by Labour voters traditionally, but in the 2019 general election, lost 20% of seats to the Conservative party. So-called Red Wall voters are characterised by social conservatism and traditional patriotic views, and the voting pattern in the election has been linked to the Brexit vote of 2016 (English, 2021). Children living in these constituencies are the subject of what is referred to as the 'North-South' divide. Differences between the North and South include regional investment, economic growth, earnings, and health inequalities, as well as differential educational outcomes. By way of acknowledging this divide, the support given for the current Conservative government, a new policy initiative was announced; this was coined 'Levelling Up'. As part of the Levelling Up agenda Prime Minister, Boris Johnson promised 'Bold new policy interventions to improve livelihoods and opportunities in all parts of the UK' (Local Government Association, 2021), and to improve among other areas, living standards and education.

Schools in England follow the national curriculum from Year 1 (children aged 5-6). Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 requires parent-carers to undertake that their child, of compulsory school age, attain appropriate education to their age, ability and aptitude, through attending school or otherwise. Hence, home-schooling has always been an alternative to attendance at school in England. Approximately, 48,000 children were home-schooled in 2016-17 in the UK, which was an increase of 40 percent from 34,000 in 2014-15 (Issimdar, 2018). Before the government forced school closures, home-schooling was not widely advertised. Issimdar, (2018) reports that the two leading reasons, given by parent-carers, for home-schooling was to avoid pupils being exclusion due to poor attendance, and mental health issues that are not catered for appropriately at school. Therefore, many parent-carers were forced to home-school even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The quality of education, monitoring safeguarding issues and protecting children from abuse and maltreatment whilst being home-schooled, has always been a challenge endured by local authorities. This was heightened amid COVID-19 school closures (Khan and Mikuska, 2021).

The government released guidance for local authorities and parent-carers, for those who elect to home-school their children (DfE, 2019a). However, amid COVID-19 school closures, further guidance (DfE, 2019b) was released for parent-carers on supporting children through remote education during COVID-19. This guidance appears in the form of a webpage and a short video. There is a strong emphasis on children's mental health and well-being throughout the material. However, the support for parent-carers is sketchy with a prompt to take it easy on yourself.

What formal support has been offered to parent-carers as part of their well-being, whilst they take on the unsolicited role of teachers at home?

3. The literature review

The literature review was carried out on recent articles relating to COVID 19 and the experience of children and families. This ranged from general issues associated around coping with school closures (Del Bono et al., 2021) and children's and parent's experiences during the national lockdown in the UK (Bray et al., 2021), the experiences of online learning (Dimopoulos, 2021), and women and home working specifically (Adisa, Aiyenitaju & Adekoya, 2021). One advantage of reviewing this literature is that, by definition, it is all current being published between 2020 and 2021, but literature is still being published, so this is a study of literature at the time of writing and may have been superseded by more recent articles. However, the range of literature reviewed provided a wide scope of issues on which to gauge the experiences of home schooling and the pandemic, and develop a conceptual understanding which in the event, speaks to classic theory on educational achievement and inequalities. In terms of general perceptions of Covid 19, Williams et al. (2020) found through a UK-based focus group study that many participants felt 'overwhelmed' or 'scared' due to the inability to go to work or the significant restructuring of work patterns. As well as worry over the virus itself participants had difficulty in balancing home working with home schooling. Likewise, Bray et al. (2021) found that the significant changes for children's education led to feelings of anxiety, stress, and sadness. This was due to changes in staying in touch with friends and extended family, i.e., via remote methods, but also the switch to home schooling.

Pensiero, Kelly & Bokhove (2021) found that virtually all school children were provided with schoolwork, and this increased throughout 2020. Also, better family engagement with schoolwork, as well as school provision, improved total hours of schoolwork completed at home. However, the amount of home schooling carried depended on family background and parental occupation. Children of service class parents where both parents worked from home spent persistently more time doing schoolwork than other groups compared to children in families where the main parent was in a routine class occupation. This was more pronounced where child shared a computer in the household and where the parents did not work regularly from home. Sinha, Bennett, and Taylor-Robinson (2020) make broad comments about children and poverty and the effects of Covid. They compare health and other social issues to the influence on survival on the sinking ship, the 'Titanic'; those with wealth survived and those

without wealth were left behind and died disproportionately. They also make the point about lack of resources for children in poverty during Covid suffer ‘toxic stress’. They commend the efforts of teachers for developing online resources in difficult circumstances but point out that for those children with no access to the internet, necessary electronic devices, and quiet space at home to study, the result will be to further exacerbate inequalities in educational outcomes. This they state, will contribute to the toxic stress of the lives of children living in poverty (Sinha, Bennett, & Taylor-Robinson, 2020). Tropiceanu et al. (2021) point out wider sex differences and cite home schooling as one of the extra responsibilities that females have undertaken, and Sallie, Ritou, Bowden-Jones, et al. (2020) found that the extra burden of home schooling contributed to higher levels of alcohol consumption as a form of stress relief. Although they found that having children was associated with a greater increase in drinking behaviours during quarantine, depression and anxiety scores were lower than in those without children. This they suggest, is because the additional burden of childcare and home schooling contributed to the tendency towards drinking, possibly in the context of stress relief, even though depression or anxiety did not feature (Sallie, Ritou, Bowden-Jones, et al, 2020). Research carried out by Khan and Mikuska (2021) also highlighted the anxiety from teacher’s perspectives in terms of how to effectively communicate with parents and their children raising an important issue of safeguarding children.

In general, parents working from home were able to provide more support for children. However, there were regional differences. The hours of schoolwork provided by schools were similar for primary schools, the mean for the North being 2.4 hours and the mean for the Southeast being 2.5 hours. However, the differences were great for secondary schools than primary schools being 2.2 and 2.8 respectively. In terms of schoolwork completed by children, London, the Southeast, and Southwest completed the most with the North completing less than average. As Pensiero, Kelly, and Bokhove (2021: 28) state ‘areas that are doing well improve, and those doing badly fall further behind’, which could have catastrophic consequences.

Access to ICT was a feature in inequalities of home learning. Dimopoulos, Koutsampelas, and Tsatsaroni, (2021) found that students from weaker socioeconomic backgrounds had limited benefits from digital schooling, and this also depended on parents’ familiarity with ICT use, but also conditions of overcrowding within the household. This led to alarming levels of educational inequality. According to Andrew et al (2021), children from poorer backgrounds were less likely to have access to ‘learning resources’ eg, computers/tablets and dedicated study space. This was not restricted to the home environment. These children were less likely to be

supported by the school with online classes or video conferencing, and more likely to be provided with assignment learning packs, and therefore less able to benefit from more ‘active’ learning than richer students due lack of computers and internet access. Pensiero, Kelly, and Bokhove (2021) also found that parental occupation was significant and magnified with access to computers as well as family circumstances and working patterns. They also found that better school provision and better family engagement with schoolwork improved total hours of schoolwork completed. However, there is some discussion on this topic. Del Bono et al (2021) found that parents and children from a variety of social and economic backgrounds generally engaged with schoolwork in similar measure. They found that children with more educated parents or higher household income spent slightly more time on schoolwork than children from less educated or lower-income households- but not the main driver. Gender and prior attainment may have been a factor, improved provision of online lessons in primary schools reduced differences between socio-economic backgrounds spent on schoolwork and a higher number of online lessons offered to secondary school children resulted in a decrease of parental time spent helping with schoolwork. They explain this as structural differences across families as affecting parents’ ability to help children effectively. Likewise, Pensiero, Kelly, & Bokhove, (2021) found that children of single parents working from home were able to reduce the gap in primary schoolwork when compared with the most advantaged socio-economic group, but overall inequalities between socio-economic groups remained stable between the two closures. This is confirmed by Fensham-Smith (2021) who states that pre-existing structural inequalities have enabled some learners to access, adapt to home schooling. Not only this, but it also extends to social and emotional welfare; some were able to sustain their well-being while others were not. To summarise, inequalities may have actually worsened during lockdown between poorer and more well-off families (Andrew et al., 2021). Bubb and Jones (2020) make a useful comparison with a municipality in Norway where the digital communications structure is more well-equipped and digital skills were improved, learning was more creative and feedback was more useful, and pupils and parents reported positively about their experiences with home learning where they could work at their own pace with more independence, even if pupils felt they had learned more than at school itself.

Another important element of home schooling was to address mental health for both children and their families. The Mental Health Foundation was established 70 years ago, in the UK. Mental health issues and well-being have been taboo subjects for many years. People have shied away from the topic and denied themselves from seeking much needed help, in fear of being

stigmatised (Bharadwaj, Pai and Suziedelyte, 2017). Association with mental health problems was thought to represent a ‘spoiled identity’ which deviated from social norms and led to an individual being discredited, or undesirable, by society (Mahajan et al., 2008). Bharadwaj, Pai and Suziedelyte (2017) argued that the fear of stigma did not change behaviour, but instead created a smokescreen that hid certain behaviours and action.

The launch of the World Mental Health Day in 1992, followed by the Mental Health Awareness Week in 2001, signified a shift in the discourses surrounding mental health. These annual events encouraged individuals to talk opening about mental health issues and understand it as a disorder/disease, seek a diagnosis and access treatment. In the last 20 years, slogans like ‘no health without mental health’ have attempted to deconstruct the damaging portrayal of mental health and overcome harmful associated barriers. One method has been to expand the discourses surrounding mental health and reconstruct this as ‘well-being’, which appears to be more acceptable within society, such as techniques of mindfulness. Well-being encompasses many dimensions, comprising of several multi-disciplines, such as, fitness of the body, mind and spirit (Dodge, 2012). Though out the COVID-19 pandemic the emphasis has been on monitoring the well-being status of children (Britto et al., 2021) and their nutritional health (Musgrave and Payler, 2021). Gender inequalities was highlighted by Collins et al. (2021). Their study entailed a comparison across the United States of America of the impact of school closures. Collins et al. (2021) argued that the sporadic school closures and opening affected the well-being of mothers more than fathers, as mothers were the main caregivers. Killewald and Zhuo (2019) suggested that COVID-19 has impacted the maternal employment sector, hence, women’s psychological well-being. The consequences of having to stay at home to care for their children has led to a loss of economic independence, possible lifetime occupational attainment and earning for women. This sacrifice had negatively impacted on maternal-caregivers’ well-being.

4. Theoretical understanding

The empirical evidence has illuminated a range of issues with home schooling, during lockdown, in terms of inequalities. These include access (or lack of) to computers and sharing of computer with other family members; the occupation and education of parents; familiarity with ICT systems; and home circumstances and engagement with schoolwork. Also illustrated through the evidence is the differential benefits that children from different backgrounds can derive from digital home schooling; how children from disadvantaged backgrounds can fall

even further behind; and reflects pre-existing inequalities. This situation reflects poorly on inequalities in education in the 21st century. Classic theory on educational outcomes has been used to explain inequalities for decades and a review will be carried out to determine if ideas surrounding cultural capital can be applied to this most recent educational challenge.

Bourdieu (1978) used the concept of cultural capital to explain differential educational outcomes. Bourdieu developed the concepts of habitus and field to explain social differences. Habitus refers to the intellectual dispositions inculcated through the family environment and by social interactions with other people in daily life. Field signifies how people settle into a social position as a result of society's resolution over what is considered valued and worthy culture. Although ultimately this resolution can be arbitrary, the result is that culture can be legitimate or illegitimate (Bourdieu, 1978). Thus, people will defer, through a process of social construction, to what cultural artifacts and practices are more valued by society as opposed to those which are less valued. This presents culture in three forms: objective, embodied and institutionalised. Objective refers to cultural goods, books, and works of art; embodied refers to language, mannerisms, preferences; and institutionalised refers to qualifications, education credentials.

So, how can Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital explain the findings of research on differences in home learning during lockdown? In terms of habitus, there is evidence that family situation. Del Bono (2021) found that children with more educated parents and higher family incomes spent more time on schoolwork than those with less educated parents and lower incomes, and structural factors affected parent's ability to help children. Pensiero, Kelly & Bokhove (2021) also found that parental occupation, sharing access to computers and parents working patterns was a significant determinant in the volume of schoolwork completed. Also, familiarity with ICT was a factor (Dimopoulos, Koutsampelas, & Tsatsaroni, 2021) contributed to inequalities with home schooling. This is confirmed by Sinha, Bennett & Taylor-Robinson (2020) who found that children of lower socio-economic status were disadvantaged.

In terms of field, it may be the case that some parents view education as more worthy and valuable than other parents, and this is transmitted to their children. Pensiero, Kelly and Bokhove (2021) found mixed results for single parents working from home, and this depended on parental occupation, but overall inequalities remaining. Del Bono et al. (2021) found that the more educated the parents, the more time was spent on schoolwork. In addition, Pensiero, Kelly and Bokhove (2021) found that better family engagement improved total hours of schoolwork completed, and it may be the case that parents who consumed more alcohol due to

the stress of home education (Sallie, Ritou, Bowden-Jones, et al, 2020) can be attributed to the cultural values attached to education and the effort involved. These differences could be explained by aspect of cultural capital as outlined by Bourdieu (1978), as preferences and educational qualifications of groups with higher socio-economic status. However, Bourdieu cannot fully explain the recurring themes of access to computers and family situations. This is not exclusively about values it is about resources.

In the 1960s, Douglas (1964) developed the concept of cultural deprivation. This refers to the differences in physical resources available for home learning, both at home and by the school. A more contemporary concept of material deprivation (DCSF, 2009) also refers to lack of educational resources eg a desk and suitable environment i.e. one that is quiet, in the home, as a factor that determines the ease with which children can complete their homework. Material deprivation also refers to parental involvement (DCSF, 2009) and interest and confidence in being able to help their children with homework (Sharp et al. 2001). Cultural deprivation and material deprivation can be used to explain the situation some children found themselves in. The unavailability of computers or other electronic devices to work on at home, and crowded conditions that do not allow for quiet study time were recurring themes in the literature (Pensiero, Kelly & Bokhove, 2021; Sinha, Bennett & Taylor-Robinson, 2020; Dimopoulos, Koutsampelas, & Tsatsaroni, 2021; Andrew et al. 2021). Also, the inability of parents to help their children with ICT was a factor (Dimopoulos, Koutsampelas, & Tsatsaroni, 2021).

There were also findings that go beyond the scope of cultural capital, cultural deprivation, and material deprivation. For example, these concepts cannot fully explain differences between poorer and better-off families in terms of better school provision (Pensiero, Kelly & Bokhove, 2021), differences between support from the school with online lessons and video conferencing between richer and poorer families (Andrews et al., 2021). They also found that children from more deprived backgrounds were more likely to experience home learning through more passive means, as supplied by the school, e.g., assignment of learning packs, and experience home learning of a 'less active' nature. This may be about resources, but also expectations of children from such backgrounds. However, much of the research here that was carried out in 2020-21, fits the concepts as well today through home learning as it has in the past through more conventional learning. Although in a different form, large numbers of disadvantaged children falling ever further behind, students from weaker socioeconomic backgrounds have derived limited benefits from digital schooling and confirm pre-existing structural inequalities in education.

5. What the study tells us?

The themes that emerged in the study relating to the first school closure in March 2020 conceptualised parent's responses into meta narratives of excitement of trying something new coupled with the concern how to manage the unknown.

For the first school closure in March 2020, parents reported being excited by the prospect of having their children at home for the extended period and having the opportunity of home-schooling. They had often wondered what it would be like to home-school. The concept of home-schooling being a novelty was a common thread throughout the narratives (Khan, 2022). During this period, some parents chose to teach their children life skills such as cooking and sewing. Things they could not always find the time to fit in normally but were more comfortable teaching. One participant explained:

“When lockdown began, the concept of home schooling was fresh and energising, the idea of being able to play a bigger part in my children’s learning. We didn’t know how long they would be off school, and the school had not set work, so there was no time pressure on their learning. I use the time to teach them alternative practical skill, such as haberdashery and cooking.”

This illustrated how some parents did not attempt to take on the role of a mainstream schoolteacher. Whilst little or no direction was provided by schools, these parents took control and created their own curriculum. They chose to spend more time on other complimentary life-skills which are more aligned to parental teaching. When comparing socio-cultural, Hannon, Nutbrown and Morgan's (2020) study highlighted how teacher-family interaction increased gains in children's literacy. However, children with less educated mothers engaged in alternative family activities and had greater, and longer lasting, gains. Some parents took a pragmatic approach to home-schooling and accepted it was a situation that they had no control over. Therefore, their approach was to tackle the issue head on, with the attitude of all being in this together. This position entailed stepping into the role of teachers. Parents stated:

“I was comfortable with home schooling. I was not alarmed or distressed. Teaching is a joint effort between parents and teachers. Lockdown just meant I did a bit more than usual, and teachers did less. It was like an extended weekend”

Another parent commented “...Need to find your feet. Once you get into it, it wasn't easy, you just get on with it.” While these parents took on the responsibility to fulfil the role of a schoolteacher at home, with the intention of making the process seamless and minimise

disruption to learning and progression. Other parents revealed that they were petrified by the announcement of home-schooling. For example:

“I am terrified. Really difficult when you are trying to understand what home-schooling is going to mean and then trying to do that on top of working full-time and how we were going to juggle that. All the unknown. The first 2 weeks were a challenge, a steep learning curve. It was terrifying. “

“I’m terrified. I don’t even know what it means to home-school. Then I need to work out how to manage a full-time job simultaneously with home-schooling. All this uncertainty. The first two weeks were difficult to navigate through and comprehend.”

The shifting of positions from a full-time worker and full-time parent, to now include a full-time teacher as well, was overwhelming for some parents and triggered their insecurities. This materialised in several forms, from having doubts to whether appropriate resources were available, to questioning their ability and competence to teach children aged eight and under.

Parents reported being overcome with fear upon the announcement of the second school closures in January 2021. Parents were concerned about how difficult it was to juggle work or running a home, with home-schooling. An example shows the shift from enthusiasm to fear.

“When the government announced the January 2021 lockdown and the return to home-schooling, my reaction was totally different. I felt overwhelmed with a sense of fear. I think I felt this way because I knew what to expect. The schools are much more organised this time around and are sending through so much work online. It’s impossible to cope with the additional home-schooling pressure along with work and daily routines.”

When the enthusiasm and novelty of home-schooling wore off, a decline in well-being was reported. Parents struggled to grasp the teaching methods which varied from their childhood. For example, it was reported that

“Learning the school’s method of teaching, stuff I was unfamiliar with, like acronym such as SPAG and BIDMAS. This contributed to my growing anxiety about learning the work and delivering it to the children in such a way not to complicate or baffle them.”

These parents were confident in the subject matter yet lacked confidence when transferring their knowledge to their children using the methods they had learnt through. Even though parents had successfully learnt through those methods, they did not think that their children should learn in the same way that they had, despite the end results being identical. This

discourse surrounding learning and teaching the “right way” and “the same as the teachers” produced unnecessary pressure on parents for simple tasks connected to teaching and learning. Nutbrown et al. (2017) argued the importance of families’ roles in developing children’s literacy and the failures between the home-school partnership to ensure a successful relationship in developing literacy. This troubled relationship is illustrated in the data. It was evident that the parents were concerned about the detrimental, long-term, effect their teaching techniques may have on their children. Parents worried that their teaching techniques could result in unnecessary confusion and possible setbacks in their children’s educational development. A lack of resources, such as laptops, to facilitate home-schooling alongside working from home, unsettled the prospect for both activities running concurrently and smoothly. A parent reported that:

“We have never had a printer at home, never needed one. However, with the amount of material coming through online, from the school, that needed to be printed out, I bought a printer. I’m glad I did, then there was another lockdown and home schooling started all over again. This brought with it another set of problems. I could not get the ink cartridges for the printer, they were sold out online and in the shops!”

The most challenging aspect of home-schooling that the parents expressed was maintaining the work-teaching balance.

“The most difficult aspect of home schooling was the schools not working as a team with parents. I felt as though I was drowning with the amount of schoolwork I had to get through with the children. I worked early mornings and late nights to fit my work around the children, and still it was not enough.”

These examples demonstrate unprecedented challenges for parents resulting from the COVID-19 virus pandemic. School closures at short notice created severe disruption for parent-carers. They were comfortable expressing that their well-being had been affected by home-schooling, with the increase of stress levels. However, parents reframed from defining this as a mental health issue and seeking help. Some of the participants admitted that participating in the project had acted as therapy for them, as it gave them the opportunity to evaluate their behaviour, vent their anger, fears and concerns of home-schooling. It also gave the parents the sense of self-acceptance and validation that the quality, quantity and method of home-schooling they engaged in was acceptable and appropriate. Also, that they were not failures, and their children were not being damaged or falling behind by being home-schooled by them. This research

supported the view that maternal carers were impacted more by the home-school experience than paternal carers (Collins et al., 2021). It was mainly the mothers that took on home-schooling in addition to their existing roles. The rationale provided by some mothers included the lack of confidence they had in the children's father to engage and complete the home-schooling properly. Other mothers felt the teacher role 'naturally' fell upon them to fulfil.

The literature (Cullinane & Montacute, 2020) suggested that children from poorer families were least likely to have the equipment for home-schooling, widening the attainment gap (Bubb and Jones, 2020). This research highlighted that even affluent families struggled with obtaining equipment for home-schooling, not so much because of financial reasons, but due to a lack of supply. Where poorer families would receive help and support for such challenges, middle-income families became invisible, unsupported and fell through the cracks. This contributed to their stress. Some children cannot be home-schooled because they do not have the equipment or help, they need at home.

6. Conclusions

Overall, the 'Titanic' metaphor where the better-off are far more likely to survive, seems appropriate to all this research. As Fensham-Smith (2021) outlines the situation, structural inequalities have enabled some learners to access, adapt to, and sustain their social and emotional well-being during lockdown, while others have not. This reveals the differences that were first written about decades ago as still being the case today. Because of cultural capital, cultural deprivation, and material deprivation, educational differences remain.

The study tells us, that almost two years on from the first UK lockdown and two school closures later, school organisational skills for moving to online platforms for learning and teaching had improved. However, pressures and stresses had shifted from teachers to parent-carers. An equitable and resilient blended education system could be a way forward that enables children to learn continuously both in schools and at home, interchangeably and seamlessly, without the involvement of parent-carers, and with an alternative choice to remote learning. However, it appears that the habitus of familial environment and the social position of field are still significant determinants of education outcomes, and the cultural and material deprivation still have their part to play.

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