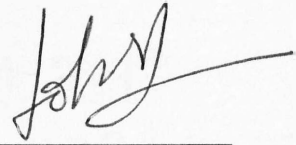


## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material in this dissertation is my own except for quotations, excerpts, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

28 November 2012



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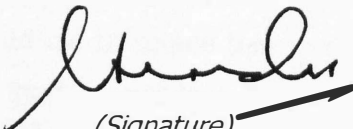
**TITLE** : **PARENTS’ MOTIVATIONS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO HOMESCHOOL PRACTICES**

**DEGREE** : **MASTER OF EDUCATION**

**DECLARED BY**

**1. SUPERVISOR**

*(Name of Supervisor)*

  
*(Signature)*



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

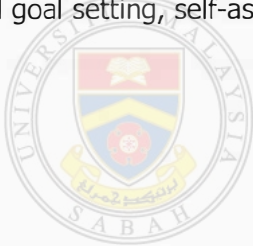
I would like to thank God for His grace and strength for me to persevere through this study. This dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance and the help of several individuals who in one way or another contributed and extended their valuable assistance in the preparation and completion of this study. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Associate Prof. Dr. Christina Peter Ligadu for her patience, guidance and support as I hurdle the obstacles in the completion this dissertation. I also want to extend my appreciation to my sister, Associate Prof. Dr. Loh Su Peng who had helped me to source the reading materials, and always there to listen and talk to me. Last but not least, I want to wish to thank my husband and my three children for their love and steadfast encouragement through the whole process. Thank you so much.



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## ABSTRACT

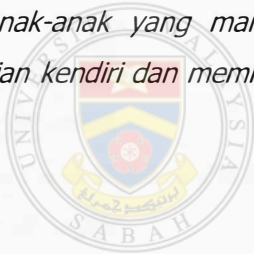
The purpose of this study to investigate the motivations for parents to homeschool their children and to explore how parents' motivations regulate their behaviour that lead to the children learning regulations. This phenomenological study involved parents from four local homeschool families. Their experiences on homeschool were described and interpreted through interviews, observations and document review. Parents decided to homeschool their children due to the difference in between their perception on learning in school and their own learning conception. Their belief on the conception of learning, character building, family values and a great sense of responsibility serve as well-internalized extrinsic motivation that regulate their behaviour in terms of parenting style and persistence. The parents seemed to assume the role of autonomy – supportive and provide structure in homeschooling their children which in turn help to regulate the learning behavior of their children. The children regulate their learning through personal goal setting, self-assessment and adaptive help-seeking.



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## **ABSTRAK**

*Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji motivasi ibu bapa dalam 'homeschool' dan meneroka bagaimana motivasi membawa kepada regulasi tingkah laku sehingga membawa regulasi dalam pembelajaran anak-anak mereka. Kajian fenomenologi ini melibatkan ibu bapa daripada empat keluarga 'homeschool' tempatan. Pengalaman mereka dalam proses 'homeschool' diterangkan dan diinterpretasikan melalui temubual, pemerhatian dan kajian dokumen. Salah satu sebab ibu bapa 'homeschool' anak-anak mereka adalah perbezaan persepsi tentang pembelajaran yang berlaku di sekolah dan konsep pembelajaran mereka sendiri. Kepercayaan tentang konsep pembelajaran, pembinaan watak, nilai keluarga dan rasa tanggungjawab menjadi motivasi ekstrinsik yang dihayati yang mengawal tingkahlaku mereka dari segi gaya keibubapaan dan kesungguhan. Ibu bapa mengamalkan cara 'autonomi-sokongan' dan memberikan struktur dalam mendidik anak-anak mereka. Semua ini membantu dalam regulasi pembelajaran anak-anak yang mana mereka menetapkan sasaran pembelajaran peribadi, membuat penilaian sendiri dan meminta bantuan secara penyesuaian.*



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## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

There are different types schools under the Ministry of Education which follow the national educational system such as National schools, National-type schools , Cluster schools, Smart schools, Sport schools, National religious schools, Fully Residential schools and many more which are set up for specific purposes to improve the quality of education in Malaysia (Ministry of Education, 2008). Apart from the national schools, there are private schools registered with the Ministry of Education. This is one way of providing opportunity for the private sectors in this country to contribute and to involve in education sector (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2012). The availability of different types of schools enable parents to choose the one that can meet their needs as well as their children's.

Homeschooling or home education is another alternative to education in this country. The Ministry of Education refers homeschooling as educational process of a child that takes place at home (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2005). Homeschooling is gaining popularity among parents in Malaysia. This is indicated by the reports in the local online newspapers (eg. Augustine, 2004; Lim, 2009; Noor Fazrina Kamal, 2011) and the numerous Malaysian homeschooling websites and blogs. (eg. [www.homeschoolmalaysia.com](http://www.homeschoolmalaysia.com), [coachsha.wordpress.com](http://coachsha.wordpress.com), [Homeschool-Malaysian-Islamic-Homeschool](http://Homeschool-Malaysian-Islamic-Homeschool), [littlekittle.com](http://littlekittle.com), [learningbeyondschooling.org](http://learningbeyondschooling.org), [malaysianhomeschoolingnetwork.blog.com](http://malaysianhomeschoolingnetwork.blog.com), [homeschoolhomefrontier.com](http://homeschoolhomefrontier.com)).

### 1.2 Research Background

The Education (Amendment) Act 2002 Section 29A(2) explains that every Malaysian citizen parents have to ensure that their children who has reached 6 years old in January of the current year must be registered in primary school during that year and continue schooling (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2002). One of the rationales for compulsory education in

Malaysia is to reduce illiteracy and dropouts especially in rural areas (Ministry of Education, 2008).

However, the Education Minister has the authority to exempt any students from compulsory education either absolutely or with conditions according to his discretion (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2002). In the subsequent circular regarding the exemption of compulsory primary education, the ministry will approve homeschooling according to certain conditions as stated in item 18 in the 'Garis Panduan Pengecualian Daripada Pendidikan Wajib di Peringkat Rendah' (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2005).

Chong (2008) indicated a few reasons for parents to homeschool their children in Malaysia. Among them is the inability of the education system and the school to meet the needs of their children and the emphasis on examination in teaching which leads to stress and no interest in learning in their children. Besides, the parents also expressed dissatisfactions with the quality of teaching and the school environment. In fact, Ross (2009) acknowledges that the schools and teachers today, face a great pressure to push students to excel academically, to meet the demands of parents and government, to fulfil the demands of the national curriculum, to cope with different needs of the students. All these create a learning environment where some parents find is not suitable for their children. Furthermore, it is impossible for one educational system to suit every individual child as everyone is different. Therefore, some parents feel that there is a need for them to use a different approach in educating their children according to their needs and interest. Chong (2008) adds that there are also parents who want to take the responsibility of building character, good moral and to instil the love of learning by homeschooling their children. These parents emphasise on strong family relationship and consider homeschooling as a lifestyle whereby they want to integrate work and family life as they learn and live together.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Knowles (1991), Anthony (2009) and Morton (2010) point out that the parents' motivations to homeschool their children will affect the choice of curriculum and the instructional approaches used. Parents will use the most suitable methods and material to instruct their children in a way that suits the child's learning style (Duffy, 2000). McKeon (2007) distinguishes the different methods of homeschooling which range from Unschooling, Eclectic, Classical and Traditional which will be elaborated in Chapter Two. Therefore, homeschool parents may use one of the ways or combine any of them to support their children's learning.

Many studies have been carried regarding homeschooling in other countries such as United States of America (eg. Knowles *et al.*, 1992; Collom, 2005; Anthony, 2009; Ray, 2011a, Ray, 2011b), United Kingdom (eg. Morton, 2010) and Australia (Jackson, 2008; Barratt-Peacock, 2003). One of the most studied aspects is the study of the motivations to homeschool (Collom, 2005; Knowles *et al.*, 1992; Princiotta & Bielick, 2006; Spiegler, 2010; Morton, 2010). In other studies, Anthony (2009), Higgins (2008) and McKeon (2007) investigated the various instructional approaches used in homeschooling.

However, all these studies were based on the western educational and schooling systems in which the social and cultural context are very different from that of Malaysia. Therefore, there is a need to study the various aspects of the local homeschool. To date, despite of its growing trend, there has not yet studies carried out to investigate about the Malaysia homeschool.

#### **1.4 Purpose of Study**

One of the purposes of this study to investigate the motivations for parents to homeschool their children as motivations regulate the behaviour of parents and children (Deci & Ryan, 2000b). This study attempts to explore how parents regulate their behaviour that leads to the learning regulation in their children. Focus will also be given to how the learning process take place as there is no involvement of teachers in which parents play a vital role in facilitating their children learning process.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

Corbin and Strauss (2008) state that the purpose of research questions is to guide the inquiry process with regards to the method used and to establish the boundaries of the study. Therefore, this study attempts to address the central question "How do parents' motivations contribute to homeschool practices?" through qualitative research design.

From this question, sub-questions are designed in order to guide and focus in systematic data collection procedure (Lodico *et al.*, 2010). The sub-questions are

- (a) What are the sources of motivation of homeschool parents?
- (b) How do the parents' motivations regulate their behaviour and the children's learning behaviour?

## 1.6 Justification and Significance of Study

- The findings of this study will provide a better understanding regarding homeschool in Malaysia.
- For teachers, some of the findings on the motivations and practices in homeschool may be adapted to be applied in the classroom setting.
- Parents of school going children may gain insights on some of the ways that can be used to help children to learn at home after school. As Swap (1993) points out, one of the ways that parents and school can work together is through curriculum enrichment where families contribute to expand the school curriculum at home. This is important in encouraging children's learning through the continuity of learning between home and school.

## 1.7 Limitation of study

This study will only involve homeschool families in Sabah, Malaysia. It will only base on the phenomenological account from the homeschool parents.

## 1.8 Operational Definition

Knowles *et al.* (1992) distinguished between the term homeschool and home education, where homeschool refers to the site where home education occurs and home education is the process of parents teaching their children at home. This study will refer homeschool as an education process a person undergoes at home carried out by his or her parents rather than attending a public, private or other type of schools.

Motivation is about the underlying attitudes and goals that cause and drive an action (Deci & Ryan 2000a). In this study, motivational factor will focus on the reasons that cause parents to decide and continue homeschool their children.

Practice is habitual or customary action or way of doing something ('practice', The Free Dictionary). In this study, practices will refer to parenting style and activities that support the learning or educational process in homeschool.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding on various aspects about homeschool. Besides, related learning theories and learning models will be explored which may guide the study on the educational practices that happens in homeschool.

#### 2.1 Concept Of Homeschool

Homeschool is a 'parent-led home-based education' (Ray, 2011b). Ross (2009) states that home education occurs when parents take full responsibility for their children's education without sending them to school. Similarly, Chong (2008) describes homeschool as 'an educational alternative whereby parents take on the role of educating their children at home' (p.95). Chong (2008) further indicates that there are also parents who perceive homeschooling as a lifestyle rather than an educational alternative whereby parents integrate work, learning and family life as they learn together with their children. In both aspects, it requires great commitment from parents as they totally involve in the education process of their children.

Ray (2011b) describes some of the general characteristics of homeschool families in the United States of America (U.S). Firstly, most of the homeschool families will have at least one of the parent either father or mother is always at home with the children. Secondly, the homeschool parents have more formal education and have higher annual income than other parents in the general population. Another interesting feature cited by Ray (2011b) is that most of the homeschool families in the U.S. are large with 68.1% have three children or more. Despite of the lack of study in the characteristics and the demography of homeschooling families in Malaysia, it is generally assumed that at least one of the parents has to be at home to assist the learning of their children.

Ross (2009) stresses that homeschooling requires a great commitment from the parents in terms of time and energy. Some may have to give up their career or choose to work from home in order to homeschool their children (Chong, 2008). In short, parents



have to put in effort and time in facilitating the learning of their children in terms of planning, monitoring and providing the suitable learning environment at home. On another hand, Ross (2009) points out that parents need not be an expert in every subject or possess high academic qualification in order to homeschool their children. She suggests that the most important is the interest and motivation in finding out and to have the skills in sourcing the information and knowledge. Therefore, homeschool parents have to be very resourceful in supporting their children's learning.

## 2.2 Motivations to homeschool

Van Galen (1988) who distinguished the motivation to homeschool among the parents into two main domains: ideological and pedagogical. In fact, most of the studies regarding motivation to homeschool fall into these two categories. (Princiotta and Bielick , 2006; Spiegler, 2010; Basham, 2001; Knowles, 1991; Knowles *et al.*, 1994; Collom, 2005). Ideological home educators emphasize both family and conservative values and are motivated by a disagreement with schools in terms of value (Van Galen, 1988). Parents transfer the activities of the public school to the home with the removal of undesirable values and replacing them with the values and beliefs that they consider important (Knowles *et al.*, 1992). In short, ideological homeschool parents are those who desire to incorporate their beliefs and values in their children through education.

Pedagogical homeschoolers centered on the process of education and practice more desirable pedagogic approaches (Van Galen, 1988; Anthony, 2009; Beck, 2010). This group of parents seems to disagree with the education system and the pedagogical activities in the public school. For instance, Knowles *et al.* (1992) indicates that some of the parents believe that education should be in a less structured environment and students should engage in more experiential learning. Because of that, there is a great difference from public schools both in content and operation as the child will direct the learning without any systematic curricula.

In the similar way, Knowles (1991) also group the motivations to homeschool into four categories which are (1) family experiences as children; (b) school and learning experiences in childhood; (c) perceptions of conflict with public school practices, beliefs and environments and (d) the beliefs that the home is a better place to learn than schools in terms of pedagogy. In a more recent study, Morton (2010) concluded that there are three

groups of parents emerged from the reason to homeschool – natural choice, social choice and last resort. He indicated that not all the home educators fit into one category there is some degree of overlapping between the groups. Parents who choose to homeschool because of 'natural' choice view home education as a lifestyle. They believe in the freedom of the individual and practice a child led approach to education. Morton (2010) continues to describe parents who view home education as social choice as those who are committed to transmit certain moral and social values and behaviours to their children. Finally, Morton (2010) also identifies parents who decide to homeschool due to untenable situations such as children health problems, emotional breakdown and suicide attempts. This indicates these parents choose to homeschool as a last resort.

There are some similarities in terms of the reasons formulated by Van Galen (1988), Knowles (1991) and Morton (2010) whereby all of them identify that homeschool parents desire a better learning opportunities and environment for their children. The motivations to homeschool for parents here may be different as the findings are based on the education system and school contexts in the western society which are different with that of in Malaysia. However, Chong (2008) indicates that one of the reasons for parents to homeschool in Malaysia is that the inability of education system to meet the educational needs of their children in regards to the over emphasis of examination and the quality of teaching in the school. This is similar to the pedagogical reason proposed by Van Galen (1988), Knowles (1991) and Morton (2010).

### **2.3. Advantages of homeschooling**

One of the benefits of homeschooling is the flexibility in learning. (Chong, 2008; Patterson *et al.*, 2007; Weena Noppakunthong, 2007; Ross, 2009). Chong (2008) describes that most of the methods that homeschool parents choose allow flexibility in learning as parents focus and develop the interest and passion of their children. Therefore, many homeschool parents plan meaningful learning activities in which they and their children enjoy such as painting, cooking, gardening, reading, field trips and many more. Ross (2009) states that 'the best type of education anyone could have would be tailor-made to suit their needs and their personality' (p.22). Homeschool is able to provide 'tailor-made' education whereby parents have the flexibility to educate their children according to their learning speed, learning styles, personal interest and passion. The learning flexibility in homeschool will help the children to enjoy learning itself, to be resourceful and independent (Chong, 2008). Besides, the home

itself provide comfortable learning environment not only physically but emotionally whereby homeschool children receive the love, support, encouragement and attention from their parents during learning. All these lead to self-motivation and a positive self-esteem in the children (Ross, 2009).

The flexibility in learning also leads to flexibility in time. Chong (2008) describes that homeschool children have more time to rest, eat and play which leads to a healthier physical, mental and emotional development. Apart from that, parents can plan family holiday, field trips and other activities when it suits (Ross, 2009).

Therefore, the flexibility in learning and time are two of the advantages which may motivates many parents to homeschool their children. These flexibilities ultimately will bring the family closer as parents and their children spend more time together.

## **2.4 Challenges in homeschooling**

The challenges in homeschooling may differ among homeschool families. It may depend upon personal circumstances, family's reason to homeschool and the children's characteristics and preferences. Ross (2009) describes one of the biggest challenge in homeschooling is the amount of time and energy of parents have to put in. One of the parents may need to give up their career in order to stay at home which means the potential loss of an income. Apart from that, they need to be resourceful in providing learning opportunities for their children. Parents have to plan meaningful and interesting learning activities for their children. Besides that, the cost of homeschooling may be expensive (Ross, 2009). Parents in Malaysia may have to subscribe to homeschool curriculum which most of them are from other countries, purchasing various books, computer, internet and other resources. In addition, Chong (2008) indicated that some homeschool parents do not receive support from families and friends when they decide to homeschool their children. They are often misunderstood as they take the children away from the mainstream education system.

Perhaps one of the major concerns in homeschooling is the socialization of the homeschool children (Chong, 2008; Ross, 2009). Due to the nature of homeschooling, many would assume that learners may not be able to learn with friends, and may not be able to associate and congregate with their peers. However, many homeschool parents do not feel that their children would lack of socialization skills just because they do not attend

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public schools. Chong (2008) and Ross (2009) argue that homeschool children are able to interact better with people with all age groups and not only their peers due to the nature of the homeschool. Homeschool children have more opportunities to relate with other age groups as they interact with their siblings, extended family members, neighbours, church and family friends. Therefore, parents play a vital role in this aspect in providing the environment and opportunities for their children to socialize with various groups of people.

Ross (2009) acknowledges that homeschooling is a very personal decision and the advantages and challenges may differ between families. As for parents who decide to homeschool their children, they are most probably motivated by the advantages which outweigh the disadvantages or the challenges.

## **2.5 Methods of homeschooling**

There is no fixed method in homeschooling (Clements, 2002; McKeon, 2007; Chong, 2008). Clements (2002) states that in choosing curricula and teaching methods for homeschooling, parent need to take into account the instructor and the child characteristics. Therefore the instruction is being individualized according to the instructional style of the parents as well as the learning style and abilities of their children. McKeon (2007) placed homeschool methods along a continuum which consists of Traditional, Classical, Eclectic and Unschooling.

### **2.5.1 Traditional Homeschooling**

This approach is a school-at-home model where it replicates the public school experience at home. Higgins (2008) describes that in this model, parents are the teacher or tutor using textbooks, workbooks and a grade-based curriculum. Textbooks, workbooks, teacher's guides, tests, schedules, grading and record keeping materials are purchased as a complete curriculum. Parents direct the learning of their children in a conventional and structured way emphasizing high academic performance and strict behavior discipline (The Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents, 1996).

One of the benefits of this method is the security of knowing all necessary material is being covered, and there will be no gaps in learning. Children will have no problem to readjust to re-enter the school system if and when the time comes (Homeschooling

Unlimited, 2007). However, this model may not meet the child's social and emotional needs and may put a great strain on parents and their children. This is because parents have to be equipped similar to that of a school teacher and their children are expected to perform academically as those attending public school. Moreover, the structured curriculum may be too rigid and may not meet the learning needs of the learners.

### 2.5.2 Classical Homeschooling

The foundation of a classical education is a three-part system of learning called the trivium. In Trivium Model of Child Development by Bluedorn (1994), there are several developmental stages or levels of learning which are the early knowledge level (before age ten), later knowledge level (age ten to twelve), understanding level (age thirteen to fifteen) and wisdom level (age sixteen to eighteen). The early knowledge level, children need more training than teaching in learning the language, building vocabulary, and filling up their basic understanding of the world. They are trained in self-discipline and filled with useful information. In the later knowledge level, the children develop the capacity for more abstract thinking. Youth from age thirteen to fifteen begin to develop their reasoning skills. They should be more inquisitive and analytical. Lastly, in the wisdom level, children begin to develop their skills in communication and application. They want to creatively and effectively express what things they have learned and to put things into practice.

Bluedorn (1994) describes that The Classical Approach encompasses the three formal subjects: Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric which complements the proposed Trivium Model of Child Development. These are the three formal tools which students then use to teach themselves. Bluedorn (1994) further relates the Classical Approach to The Principle Approach. The Principle Approach involves a student researches a subject (knowledge), reasoning them by looking for a theory, understanding or logic (understanding) and finally relating and recording which involves practical application (wisdom). Therefore, the Classical and Principal Approach are introduced at different level and adapted to the different levels of the child's developmental ability.

In short, the focus of The Classical Approach is producing thinking children and proficiency in their language. The approach takes into account their developmental stages of a child as it incorporate various learning and thinking skills. Apart from that there is a combination of teacher-centered instruction and learner-centered instruction. Teacher-centered instruction is evident when the children are under 12 years of age where as the instructional approach gradually change into learner-centered from age 13 onwards.

### 2.5.3 Eclectic Homeschooling

Eclectic homeschooling does not follow a single teaching method or learning philosophy, but selects a variety of tools from a diversity of approaches according to the needs of the children (The Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents, 1996). Therefore, eclectic parents have to be innovative and flexible in choosing and designing the best curriculum from various methods to complement the temperament, interest and learning style of their children. For example, there may probably be emphasis on reading classical books and other quality literature as in the Classical Approach, Grammar study may be learned from a textbook or workbook, or incorporated into writing assignments, nature studies may be incorporated during family field trips.

Therefore, this approach is more flexible than the Traditional homeschooling approach but more directive than the unschooling approach. It uses the combination of teacher-centered instruction and learners-centered instruction. However, it may take more time and effort of the parents in discovering their children's learning needs and interests, planning and designing activities and curriculum that suits the family.

### 2.5.4 Unschooling

This approach is based on the unschooling concept of John Holt (1977) who states that schooling is not necessary in learning. It is entirely a child-directed and paced where learning is initiated by the child according to his interests and needs with the parent as facilitator. This is also known as 'natural learning', where there is no set schedules and without any specific curriculum or courses of study. The starting point is the child's natural curiosity and the child chooses how, when, why and what he or she needs to learn. The role of the parents is to provide an environment full of resources, support and the opportunities to experiment and explore (Homeschool Unlimited, 2007; Witmond 2011). Unschoolers emphasises 'how' to learn rather than learning any specific subjects and to encourage the love of learning in a child (Homeschool Unlimited, 2007)

However, according to Witmond (2011), this approach may not be suitable for every homeschool parent or child as parents can sometimes be anxious as whether their children are learning enough. Besides, parents may be concerned about the gaps in their children's education and have to deal with criticism and disapproval from public and home educators. In short, unschooling is an extreme to traditional homeschooling. Unschooling practices a