Parental Perceptions of Services for Homeschooled Children: A Phenomenological Investigation

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Introduction

Lack of data on homeschoolers with disabilities. 21% of parents homeschool due to child’s “special needs”

HOMESCHOOLING - Children receive majority instruction within home (Klein, 2006). Includes home-based education, home education, home-schooling, unschooling, deschooling (NHERI, 2009)
- 1 to 2.4 million children homeschooled in U.S. (Klein, 2006; Leiding, 2008)
- 15% of homeschool families are non-white (NHERI, 2009)
- Homeschoolers may score higher on U.S. standardized tests (Rudner, 1999; Leiding, 2006; NHERI, 2000; NHERI, 2009)
- Home pupils more likely to be known by social services and unemployed (Shepherd, 2009)

Purpose

Investigate lived experiences or “lifeworld” of parents who homeschool child with speech/language impairment

How do home-educators access speech/language services?

How do home-educators perceive professional speech/language services?

Method

Qualitative Research Design
Phenomenology focus on perspective of home educators
Ethnographic interviews

PARTICIPANTS
7 homeschooling parents whose child received speech-language therapy

Data Analysis

Steps followed as outlined by Giorgi & Giorgi
1. All interviews recorded and orthographically transcribed
2. Researchers read and re-read transcripts
3. Meaning units of individual interviews identified
4. Descriptions synthesized & generalized into labels created by the researchers
5. Common experiences organized into themes
Emergent design required ongoing analysis and refinement of themes

Results

Evolving Journey - Complex academic journey for whole family
Multiple Reasons for Homeschooling
“We almost felt like homeschooling was our last…option cause we had no other choices” – AT
“One of my big issues about sending my kids to school is that it seemed like it was lord of the flies where I went to school.” - LC

School Perceptions - Schools viewed negatively due to lack of responsiveness
Compartmentalizing vs. Individual Needs
“We could instantly see this classification and you know cubby-holing” - LC

“Private schools seems to have a box that they wanna put that child in. And if you don’t fit to their criteria they somewhat don’t want you there, and I felt like that’s where A.’s learning disability started.” - SP

Reconciling School Paradigms - Have to reconcile traditional school paradigm with home school; may seek special services to make homeschooling work
finding Special Services
“I felt like the University [speech-language clinic] was a Hail Mary.” – AT
“A certified teacher would come and tutor and she was tutor/teacher but I also homeschooled.” – SP
“I’d be more than happy to pay somebody to homeschool my child for four hours a day.” – VO

Conclusion

Lack of individualized education may lead parents to consider homeschooling.
Service providers should employ team approach to increase collaboration with home educators.

References