

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2956-333X/2025-3-2>

HOMESCHOOLING AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL-PEDAGOGICAL EFFECT ON SECONDARY SOCIALIZATION

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Summary. The study analyses the psychological and pedagogical effects of homeschooling on secondary socialization in the Czech-Slovak area and presents a two-year longitudinal survey conducted in the period October 2023 to August 2025 on a sample of 220 families with 330 school-age children. The methodological framework combined repeated semi-structured interviews with online ethnography of parent communities, transcripts were coded using an open, axial and selective procedure, validation was done by triangulating sources, researchers and time with an audit trail to control decisions. The analytical anchoring was based on the ecological perspective of development, the theory of sociocognitive learning and the theory of self-determination, the operationalization followed the psychological, pedagogical, social and organizational dimensions of the effect and captured a hybrid model consisting of homeschooling, community activities and short-term institutional experience before commission exams. The findings show that the deficit picture of socialisation does not correspond to reality and that quality is determined by the density of peer contacts, the regularity of community activities and transparent bridges between family and school, with digital communities serving as a new infrastructure of coordination and support. Risks of selectivity, cumulative parental burden, varying quality of community microschools and digital overload of children have been identified, which can be mitigated by scholarship and transport schemes, rotation regimes, methodological standards and digital wellbeing programmes. Implications for practice include adaptation programs in designated schools, community hubs with microgrants, regular self-efficacy and well-being screening, and light monitoring based on understandable indicators without comparative rankings.

Keywords: homeschooling, secondary socialization, hybrid model, school self-efficacy, community learning hubs, digital communities, pedagogical-psychological aspects.

1. Introduction

Homeschooling in the Czech Republic and Slovakia has turned into a significant topic of professional and public discussion in recent years, as the experience of widespread distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that homeschooling is not only an emergency solution, but a natural and sustainable choice for some families with the potential for long-term stability. Statistical data confirm this shift and document its dynamics, where while in the school year 2019/2020 3,874 children were educated individually in the Czech Republic, in the school year 2022/2023 there were already 6,309 pupils, which represents an increase of 62.8% (rounded approximately 63%), and at the same time a clear signal that this form of education is becoming a visible part of the education system.

Originally a marginal phenomenon, associated in the domestic and international context with religious or ideological motivations, in the past decade it has turned into a pluralistic and widely used practice, in which the main reasons include dissatisfaction with the quality and rigidity of schools, health and psychological factors, the need for individualization of the content and methods of teaching, the requirement for flexible time management and the overall lifestyle of families. The experience gained during the pandemic period strengthened parental competencies in the field of learning organization and contributed to the belief that homeschooling can be effective and at the same time beneficial for development.

Digitization and the related emergence and growth of parental communities on social networks, especially on the Facebook and Instagram platforms, have become a structuring element of contemporary practice, as these communities function as a source of information, as a tool of mutual support and as an organizer of joint educational and leisure activities (Vaľko et al., 2024). In many cases, in addition to the counselling function, they also take on a socialising function, as they enable children to participate in collective projects, thematically focused educational groups and extracurricular activities that cross the boundaries of individual families and regions.

Nevertheless, the issue of socialization remains at the heart of professional disputes and public debates, as supporters of traditional schooling emphasize the irreplaceable role of the school team in the formation

of social skills, responsibility and cooperation, while supporters of homeschooling point to the risks of negative effects of the school environment, the possibility of creating healthier relationships in the family and community, and the benefits of individualized personality development. Recent empirical findings from the Czech and Slovak environments show that the socialization of homeschooled children does not take place to a lesser extent, but along a different trajectory, which is based on family ties, community-organized activities and, increasingly, on the digital environment, which connects children and parents across places, schools and types of practice.

The presented study brings three direct benefits, providing a two-year longitudinal view of secondary socialization in the Czech and Slovak environments based on a set of 220 families, capturing the emergence of hybrid models combining homeschooling with targeted institutional experiences before board exams, and further documenting that digital parenting communities function as a new infrastructure of socialization opportunities and pedagogical support. At the same time, the set of findings offers specific guidelines for the practice of schools and municipalities.

The terminological definition is consistent in the text, while the designation of home education includes legislative institutes of individual education according to the valid school legislation in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and unless otherwise stated, these terms are treated as synonymous and the same phenomenon is described in different administrative and legal frameworks.

2. Theoretical background

Homeschooling in the Czech and Slovak environments is a phenomenon with a relatively short tradition, as it has only been legislated in the last two decades, while in the Czech Republic in 2005 homeschooling was allowed for the first stage of primary schools and in 2016 also for the second level, while in Slovakia the legal framework was established even later. The development in these countries contrasts sharply with the situation in the Anglo-Saxon area, especially in the United States of America, where homeschooling was established as early as the 1970s and 1980s and where it has become a fixed part of the educational offer, recognized by both state authorities and the professional public (Murphy, 2014). The fact that the Czech and Slovak contexts are institutionally young causes increased sensitivity to the whole issue and opens up space for strongly polarized discussions.

The core of these discussions remains the question of socialization, i.e. the child's ability to adapt to the wider social environment, acquire social skills and integrate into peer groups. The traditional argumentation of some experts emphasizes the risk of social isolation, the lack of daily peer interactions and the upbringing of a child in so-called greenhouse conditions, which can lead to a weakening of the ability to resolve conflicts and cooperate (Štech, 2003). The opposite pole of opinion accentuates the positive influence of the family environment, which can protect the child from the negative influences of the school team, such as bullying, uniformity or inappropriate behavioural patterns, and at the same time offer him space for individualized learning and development of personal potential (Mertin, 2003). Vágnarová (2012) adds that the family represents the primary socialization environment in which the child's relationship with society is formed and in which patterns of behavior transferred to other life situations are formed, emphasizing that the process of socialization is dynamic and diverse and that it can take different forms depending on the environment in which it takes place.

Empirical research carried out abroad in the last two decades has brought convincing data that show that homeschooled children achieve results comparable to or even better than their school-educated peers in the areas of social maturity, absence of problem behaviour and development of leadership skills. Medlin (2013) has shown that secondary socialization can be provided in a homeschooling environment through family ties, community activities, and extracurricular activities. Ray (2017) confirmed that homeschooled children are characterized by higher levels of prosocial behavior and social responsibility, while Murphy (2014) pointed to their ability to interact effectively with peers and adults and their developed leadership and collaboration skills.

An important research line in the Czech environment was opened by a project carried out within the Internal Grant Agency of the DTI University in 2020–2021, in which Václav Šimek, Michal Hanák, Ivana Rochovská, Silvia Dolinská and Jozef Dudek participated, among others. The project focused

on the process of secondary socialization of homeschoolers in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and represented the first systematic attempt at an empirical approach to this issue. The results showed that secondary socialization takes place primarily through family relationships, sibling interactions, community meetings and hobby activities, with compulsory exams serving as an institutional corrective.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought fundamental changes in the organization of education, while accelerating the process of digitization and the formation of new educational practices. Hamlin (2022) demonstrated that subjective perceptions of social isolation can have long-term impacts on the life paths of homeschooled children, and Kallitsoglou, Virk and O'Donnell (2024) showed that parents felt a high psychological and organisational burden during the pandemic, while at the same time gaining the experience of enhanced autonomy and greater confidence in their own ability to manage the educational process. In the Czech environment, Kostecká (2021, 2024) analyzed homeschooling as part of a broader debate on school choice and documented that parents' interest is no longer motivated only by dissatisfaction with the school institution, but also by the search for flexible educational paths that correspond to the family's lifestyle and values.

A specific contribution of the newer Czech studies is a detailed description of the diversity of approaches to homeschooling. Klapáková, Komárková, Kostecká and Kaščák (2024) distinguished two basic lines, one strongly structured, approaching the model of school teaching, and the other looser, inspired by unschooling, both variants complemented in practice by community activities and contacts with traditional schools during compulsory testing. These results show that Czech homeschooling is pluralistic, that it includes a wide range of practices and that it is not possible to reduce them to a single model.

In summary, it can be stated that the process of secondary socialization of children educated at home does not show a deficit character, but a specific form, which is characterized by a combination of family relationships, community cooperation, digital networks and regular contact with the school institution. In the Czech environment, a hybrid model is being created that connects domestic, community, digital and institutional dimensions, which opens up a new field for pedagogical and psychological research and at the same time for education policy, which must look for tools to support and regulate this dynamically developing phenomenon, and although international research has repeatedly confirmed that socialization in home education can be fully functional (Medlin, 2013; Ray, 2017), in the Czech-Slovak environment there is still no longitudinal view that would follow the development of these children over a longer time horizon. The aim of this study is to fill this research gap and analyze the process of secondary socialization within a two-year period.

2.1. Ecological and socio-psychological anchor of the theory

The ecological perspective of human development emphasizes the interconnection of the microsystem of the family, the mesosystem of communities and schools, and the exosystem of local policies, which in the case of homeschooling allows for a more accurate description of how the socialization experience spills over between the home environment, community activities and institutional requirements of schools. Sociocognitive learning and observational mechanisms explain why regular participation in clubs, project groups and micro-schools creates situations in which children learn to manage roles, negotiate rules and develop prosocial behaviors. The theory of self-determination, with an emphasis on the need for autonomy, competence and belonging, provides a framework for interpreting findings on intrinsic motivation, study autonomy and the quality of relationships in the family and community, while post-pandemic Czech evidence confirms the trend towards parent-driven hybridization of learning and towards the interconnection of the home, community and institutional levels, which modifies the conditions for socialization of homeschooled children (Kostecká, 2024).

2.2. Definition of secondary socialization in homeschooling

Secondary socialization is understood in the text as a set of processes that develop social competences outside the exclusive framework of primary family education and that take place in the environment of communities, interest groups, peer networks and in specifically institutional situations of commission exams and short-term school stays. Such a defined field allows for analytical comparison with the school classroom without reducing the variety of ways in which families organize these experiences,

while current Czech knowledge on the expansion of the choice of school travel after the pandemic and on hybrid forms linking home learning with institutional experience directly supports this framework (Kostecká, 2024).

2.3. Operationalization of the psychological-pedagogical effect

The psychological dimension includes the degree of intrinsic motivation to learn, feelings of school competence and self-efficacy, conflict and stress management strategies, subjective well-being during learning and stability of attention. The indicators are based on statements about the joy of learning, willingness to persevere, the ability to self-regulate and descriptions of coping with social or performance situations. (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Bandura, 1997)

The pedagogical dimension monitors the level of individualization and differentiation, the quality of task assignment and goals, the frequency and quality of formative feedback, the development of learning autonomy and work with error. The indicators capture the extent to which teaching reflects the pace and interests of the child, how learning cycles are planned, how progress is evaluated and how responsibility for learning is transferred to the learner (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Hattie, 2009).

The social dimension affects the density and regularity of peer contacts, the breadth and heterogeneity of the child's social networks, opportunities for cooperation and conflict resolution, the quality of community ties and the experience of integration into groups outside the family. The indicators monitor the combination of offline and online interactions, the role of community "micro-schools", involvement in interest groups, and the stability of friendships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Kostecká, 2024, Ludvigh Cintulová, Budayová, 2024).

The organisational dimension captures the rhythm of family learning, the distribution of roles among caregivers, the availability of resources and aids, the time and financial demands, access to specialised premises and the frequency of bridging institutes to school, including short-term school stays before compulsory exams. Indicators include weekly and daily schedules, the continuity of learning with leisure activities, logistics planning and the use of support services (Kostecká, 2024).

Operationalization of the "hybrid model", where in the analysis the hybrid model is understood as a concurrence of three elements: (1) regular homeschooling led by the parent; (2) the child's involvement in community and hobby activities with peers during the month; (3) targeted institutional contact with the school before commission examinations in the form of a short-term school stay. The presence of all three elements forms a framework in which the psychological-pedagogical effect described in four dimensions is manifested (Kostecká, 2024; Klapálová et al., 2024).

The synthetic definition defines the psychological-pedagogical effect of homeschooling as a set of changes in the motivation, competencies and socio-organizational functioning of the child, which arise from a combination of pedagogical procedures in the home environment, the quality of family and peer interaction, and the way of organizing learning and bridges to the school institution. The interpretation of the results further distinguishes between individual dimensions and their intersections and is based on a codebook that assigns specific statements to the indicated indicators (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Black & William, 2009; Kostecká, 2024).

Map indicators to data sources

The psychological and pedagogical dimensions are based on parents' narratives from repeated conversations, descriptions of homeschooling situations and evidence of continuous evaluation of learning in the family, the social dimension draws on frequency data on participation in clubs, on descriptions of community activities and on observations of interactions in online groups, and the organizational dimension is based on timetable charts, descriptions of the logistics of the day and records of contacts with the school, including short-term stays before exams (Hattie, 2009).

Analytical unit and time perspective

The analytical unit is family practice, including all home-educated children, while the time perspective tracks changes across two school years, and it is the framework set in this way that allows us to capture stable patterns and shifts caused by a change in the child's age, curricular demands and the availability of community resources (Kostecká, 2024).

Good practice criterion

A qualitative feature of good practice is considered to be the concurrence of three conditions: regular and varied peer contacts, systematic formative feedback in homeschooling, and existing bridges to school in the form of compulsory exams or short-term stays. The combination of these elements represents the core of the psychological-pedagogical effect, which is reflected in the data by higher school self-efficacy, more stable motivation and more balanced social adaptation (Black & William, 2009; Kostecká, 2024).

3. Research methodology

The research survey, which took place in the period from October 2023 to August 2025, was conceived as a long-term qualitative follow-up focused on the process of secondary socialization of children educated at home in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The methodological approach of this research follows the project carried out within the Internal Grant Agency of the DTI University in 2020–2021, which represented the first systematic attempt to empirically grasp the issue of secondary socialization of homeschoolers in the Czech and Slovak environment. The 2020–2021 project provided valuable insights into the role of family, siblings and community gatherings, but also revealed the limitations associated with small sample sizes, the prevalence of telephone conversations and the limited ability to record respondents' non-verbal expressions.

The current survey was conceived from the beginning as an extension of this basis, with an emphasis on a larger range of respondents, a longer time horizon and the use of more modern methodological approaches, especially in the field of online ethnography. The research group consisted of 220 parents active in homeschooling communities, with Facebook groups playing a key role, which became the main platform for sharing experiences, organizing joint educational activities and providing mutual support, and addressing respondents was deliberately using the **"snowball sampling" method**, when the circle of families involved gradually expanded. The research included families from different regions of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, including families formed by Czech-Slovak marriages, which offered a specific view of the organization of teaching and socialization in the context of two differently legislatively anchored educational environments.

The methodological core was semi-structured interviews that took place in person, by phone or via online platforms according to the possibilities and preferences of the respondents. The interviews were designed as **repeated** in order to capture possible changes in parents' attitudes and experiences over time, to reflect on the dynamics of their approach to homeschooling and to document how their strategies in the field of secondary socialization changed over a two-year period. The length of the interviews ranged between 45 and 90 minutes, in the case of repeated meetings, emphasis was placed on continuity and continuity.

In addition, the interviews were supplemented by the method of ethnographic observation of interactions taking place in closed and public groups on Facebook and Instagram, where parents shared experiences, organized joint educational or leisure activities, and created smaller community forms of education, often referred to as **"micro-schools"**. The study thus works with a working (operationalization) definition, according to which a **"micro-school"** refers to a small group of approximately four to twelve children from several families who meet regularly, who carry out joint educational activities at a pre-arranged time and place under the guidance of parents or invited lecturers, and thus the micro-school expands the repertoire of socialization situations compared to the family itself and creates a bridge between home learning and experience with a team. We anchor this definition in the context of Czech findings on the post-pandemic hybridization of home and institutional learning (Kostecká, 2024) and on community-organized forms of co-education in families (Klapáľková et al., 2024). This procedure made it possible to connect the declared experience with the observed practice and to capture specific manifestations of secondary socialization in the digital environment.

Ethical aspects were consistently ensured through informed consent, data anonymization and transparent communication with respondents, where each parent was informed about the aim of the research, the way the data was handled and the possibility to terminate participation at any time. Consent was obtained in writing or electronically before the start of the interview and reaffirmed when the audio

recording was started. All personal data was anonymized and pseudonyms were used in the analyses. Audit trail keeping, code book versions, and a summary of the decision logs for analysis are stored in the research team's internal repository and are available for anonymized consultation by partner researchers upon request for replication of procedures.

The analytical approach was based on the methods of qualitative content analysis and open coding, where the data was literally transcribed and then categorized into thematic areas including family environment, sibling relationships, digital interactions, experiences with stigmatization and parental motivation. The repetition of the interviews made it possible to monitor the continuity and change of opinions, which managed to capture not only stable patterns of socialization, but also new tendencies that emerged in connection with digitization, the strengthened role of parental communities and hybrid forms of cooperation with schools.

Analytical Quality Assurance and Auditability

The interviews were processed using open, axial and selective coding. The primary coding framework was created inductively from the first thirty transcripts and subsequently underwent iterative revision with each subsequent block of data. Intercode match was verified by parallel coding of a subsample of twenty interviews by two coders; Disputed cases were resolved through a consensual debate over the code book and a revision of code definitions. The analytical process was continuously documented in the form of an audit trail including codebook versions, memes and decision logs.

Triangulation took place across data sources, researchers, and time, with data triangulation combining interviews, online ethnography, and community group documents, analytic triangulation using independent coding and team meetings, and time triangulation based on repeated interviews to capture the transformation of strategies over time. Data saturation was achieved at a time when no new categories were added to secondary socialization or organizational strategies in the final waves of collection. The researcher's reflective recordings captured the possible effects of personal experience on interpretation and served to minimize distortions.

3.1. Characteristics of the research group

The research group included 220 parents aged 25–41 who were actively involved in their children's homeschooling. A total of 330 children aged 7–14 years were included in the research. The age distribution showed that 42 children were 7–8 years old, 88 were 8–9 years old, 79 were 9–10 years old, 56 were 10–11 years old, 22 were 11–12 years old, 12 were 12 years old and 31 were 13–14 years old. The profile corresponds to the period of younger and older school age, which is considered to be crucial in terms of the socialization process.

The family background of the respondents was geographically and socially diverse, with 40 families living outside the Czech Republic, with parents who maintained ties to the Czech or Slovak environment, but had lived abroad for a long time, another 80 families came from large cities, among which centres such as Brno, Plzeň, Ostrava, Ústí nad Labem or Chomutov dominated, 20 families lived outside the city in seclusion, 35 families were located in rural environments, and the remainder of the sample consisted of families from smaller towns. The regional profile described shows that homeschooling is not limited to a particular social environment, but covers the whole spectrum from urban centres to rural and isolated areas.

In terms of parental education, higher education prevailed, which had approximately 90% of participants, while the rest achieved secondary education with a school-leaving certificate, where at least one parent with a university degree was in each participating family, which confirms that homeschooling in the Czech and Slovak environment is associated with a high level of cultural and educational capital.

An important indicator of the level of socialization of children was their involvement in leisure activities, which was extremely high within the entire group. All children regularly attended sports, music or social clubs, which calls into question the stereotypical idea of isolation of homeschoolers. The boys most often attended football clubs, followed by martial arts, swimming, music clubs and ballroom dances. The girls were dominated by music clubs, ballroom dances, gymnastics, swimming and drama activities. This profile shows that homeschooled children had intense contact with their peers and were regularly exposed to situations that supported the development of social competences, teamwork and communication.

The overall picture of the research group shows that homeschooling in the Czech and Slovak environment is not implemented in isolated conditions, but is accompanied by a wide range of leisure and community activities. The parents represented a strong educational group that emphasized the comprehensive development of the child, not only on the academic level, but also in the social and cultural areas.

However, it should be emphasized that the selection of respondents through parental groups on social networks carries the risk of selection bias in favour of families with higher cultural and educational capital and with a more active attitude towards homeschooling, as the predominance of university-educated parents and the high intensity of clubs may overestimate the availability of community resources. **The transferability of conclusions is therefore theoretical and based on detailed contextual characteristics of the sample, not on statistical representativeness. The limitations were compensated by triangulation of sources, repeated interviews, and detailed contextual description.**

3.2. Visualization of the research set

The inclusion of graphic visualization in the methodological part aims to provide a clearer picture of the structure of the research group and to facilitate the interpretation of the key characteristics of the studied group. The table provides a detailed insight into the numbers, while the graphs highlight the relative representation of each category and show their proportions within the whole.

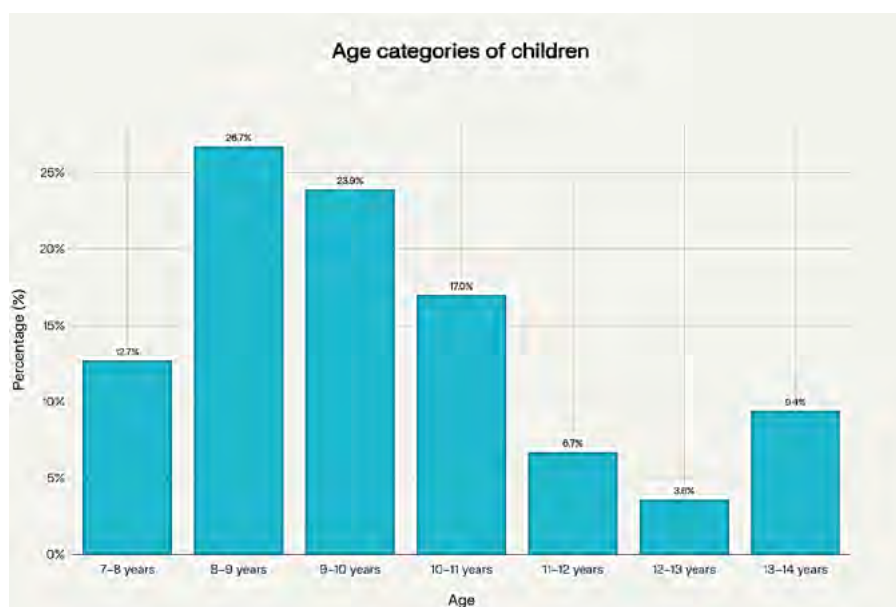


Chart 1. Age categories of children

Source: own

The age structure of the cohort is concentrated mainly in the period of younger school age (8–10 years), while the fewest children fall into the category of 12–13 years, and it is this distribution that emphasizes the focus of the research on the key stage in which basic socialization patterns and attitudes towards the collective are formed (Chart 2).

The graph shows the regional profile of the research set, which shows significant diversity and confirms that homeschooling reaches across the entire residential spectrum. The largest share is made up of families from large cities, where the influence of the availability of cultural and educational resources and a wider range of community activities is evident. Families from smaller towns are also significantly represented, where homeschooling works as an alternative to a more limited school offer and at the same time benefits from closer local ties. At the same time, it shows the proportion of families living abroad who use this form of education to maintain a link to the Czech or Slovak educational framework and to adapt to different cultural conditions. There is also a clear representation of families from rural backgrounds, which offer specific opportunities for socialization through family and neighborhood ties, although there may

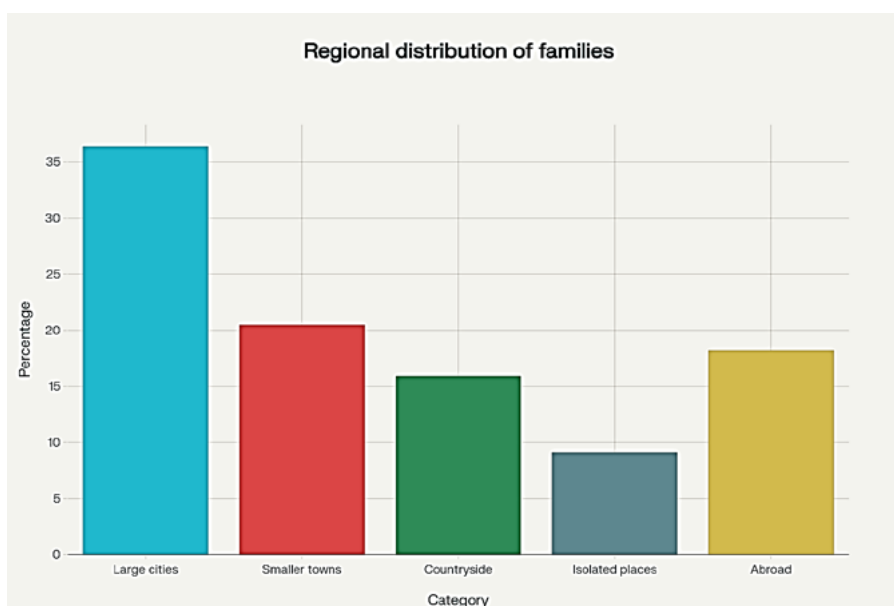


Chart 2. Regional distribution of families

Source: own

be a lack of wider educational infrastructure. The overall picture of the distribution confirms that home-schooling is not tied to a specific regional environment, but represents a pluralistic phenomenon present in different types of settlements.

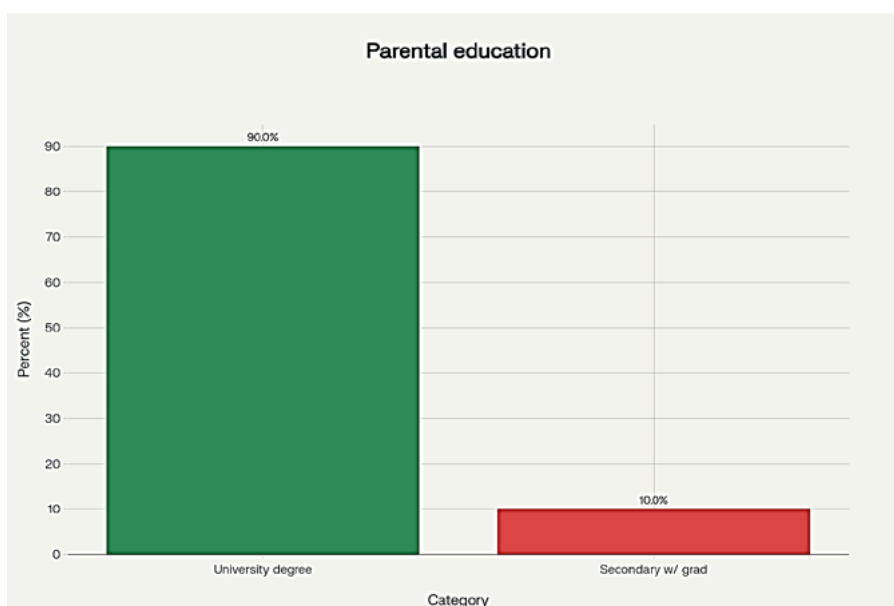


Chart 3. Parental education

Source: own

The graph shows the educational structure of the parents involved in the research set. The largest share is made up of parents with university education, whose representation reaches ninety percent. The second group is represented by parents with secondary education with a high school diploma, who make up ten percent. The difference between the two categories is very significant and shows a clear predominance of university-educated parents. At the same time, it confirms that one educational group dominates in the ensemble, while the others remain only marginally represented. The disproportion found is also reflected in the overall profile of the studied group. University-educated parents not only represent

the majority, but in fact determine the character of the entire sample. The share of parents with secondary education is expressed in the graph only by a short column that emphasizes their minority status. The overall distribution thus shows a significant imbalance and emphasizes the dominance of a single category of parental education.

4. Research results

The analysis of respondents' testimonies and observations of interactions in the online environment showed that the secondary socialization of homeschooled children takes place in several interconnected contexts, the basic axis of which is family and sibling relationships. It is the family that provides the most intensive framework for everyday interactions, creates space for practicing cooperation, sharing and conflict resolution, and fulfills the role of the primary source of support and correction. This axis is followed by parent groups and community "micro-schools", where children meet for joint educational and leisure activities, creating opportunities for peer learning and development of social skills. Hobby clubs, sports clubs and leisure centres also play an important role, expanding the horizon of contacts outside the family and homeschooling community. The digital environment is now reflected in the socialization process, especially social networks, whose function is no longer just a space for sharing parents' experiences, but increasingly also a platform for organizing projects, coordinating educational activities and creating online peer groups of children, which to some extent replace or complement personal contact.

The testimonies of parents confirm that homeschooling brings not only significant benefits, but also specific risks. The main benefits included the closeness of the family, the possibility of an individual approach, a high degree of flexibility in the organization of teaching and the creation of a psychologically safe environment that supports internal motivation to learn and enables the development of creativity and personal potential. The ability to respond quickly to the specific needs of the child and to adapt the content and methods to the child's individual pace and interests was also positively evaluated.

In addition, however, there are also limits that touch on the area of socialization, the psychological and organizational burden on parents and, last but not least, academic challenges. In the thematic area of socialization, there is a limited possibility of daily interaction with peers within the school team, which is an environment where children usually develop the ability to resolve conflicts, learn to cooperate in a wider group and establish long-term friendships. Some parents reported that their children have difficulty asserting themselves in a larger group or tolerating different opinions, while during adolescence some children develop a sense of difference and awareness that their life experience is different from that of most of their peers, which can lead to deepening isolation.

A very important finding is also the high burden that homeschooling places on parents, where, for example, the time required for preparations, the actual implementation of teaching and subsequent control takes up a significant part of the day and often means the need for one of the parents to leave his or her job, as well as the long-term responsibility for the child's education, the lack of time for rest and the combination of parent and teacher roles has led to mental exhaustion in many cases frustration, burnout syndrome and tension in family relationships. The high workload also increased in connection with the professional component of teaching, especially in subjects of the second stage of primary school, such as mathematics, chemistry or foreign languages, where parents often encountered their own limits. The financial dimension was manifested by the loss of one income and the need to cover the costs of textbooks, aids, courses and leisure activities, which could significantly burden the family budget. However, the financial aspect was not associated with the study.

Academic and development challenges form another important circle, because while homeschooling often produces above-average results, it also encounters structural limits. The home environment is difficult to replace specialized classrooms or laboratories, and the absence of natural competition with classmates can weaken the child's motivation for higher performance, and there are also concerns about the one-sidedness of education formed by only one teacher, parent, and about more difficult adaptation when transitioning to secondary school or university, where independence and the ability to function in a large team are required.

The results thus confirm that homeschooling in the Czech and Slovak environments does not create a deficit in the area of secondary socialization, but shapes its different form, which is anchored in the family and community, complemented by a digital dimension and accompanied by a high level of parental involvement. Current research shows a significant shift compared to the conclusions of the IGA VŠDTI project from 2020–2021, when secondary socialization was described mainly through family and community ties, while today the essential role of digital platforms, hybrid models combining homeschooling with weekly school attendance before compulsory exams, and an overall wider diversity of family strategies is confirmed. The proportion of families using short-term school stays just before the commission exams reached approximately 90%, where the estimate is based on repeated interviews and validation in online communities across collection waves. This development over a time horizon of less than five years suggests that homeschooling is undergoing a dynamic transformation and that its form is increasingly pluralistic and adaptive to social and technological changes.

Findings from interviews and observations of online communities show that homeschooling brings a wide range of benefits and risks that are reflected in different levels of family and child life, and in order to illustrate this diversity, a summary table was created that classifies individual aspects into four basic dimensions, namely social, psychological, pedagogical and organizational infrastructure.

Table 1

Benefits and risks of homeschooling in relation to secondary socialization

Dimension	Benefits	Risks
Social	Intensive ties in the family and between siblings, the possibility of community activities, support from parent groups and online communities	Limited daily contact with peers, lack of experience of the school team, feelings of difference and isolation
Psychological	Creating a psychologically safe environment, supporting intrinsic motivation and creativity, eliminating stress from the school environment (e.g. bullying)	Psychological exhaustion of the parent (burnout syndrome), transferring tension in the family to the child, risk of one-sided formation of opinions.
Pedagogical	Flexibility in the choice of methods and content, the ability to adapt teaching to the child's pace and interests	One-sided view given by one teacher and parent, limited access to expertise and specialised aids
Organizational	Adaptation of teaching to the family rhythm, the possibility of linking education with leisure activities	High time demands, the need to sacrifice one job, the financial burden associated with aids, courses and loss of income

Source: own

The table illustrates that homeschooling is not a one-sided phenomenon, but a complex process in which, in addition to strengths such as family closeness, individual approach or flexibility in education, there are also challenging factors in the form of the risk of social isolation, high demands on parents or limited access to specialized resources. The overview thus makes it clear that the process of secondary socialization in a homeschooling environment takes place differently than in a school environment, and that its quality depends on the balance between the benefits and difficulties that parents and children experience in everyday practice.

5. Discussion

A comparison of current research with data from the IGA VŠDTI project (2020–2021) reveals a fascinating development in the field of secondary socialization of children, where the basic axis formed by strong family and community ties remains stable, but there is a significant shift towards more organized and hybrid models of education and socialization. Earlier surveys put emphasis mainly on the family environment, sibling interactions and rather only episodic contacts with the school system, and current data confirm that these "bridges" to schools have become a regular and rhythmic affair, typically before compulsory exams. At the same time, the development of community micro-schools and the use of online platforms for coordinating activities is evident, which indicates a growing level of organization. The fundamental difference from the past is not just an increase in social contacts, but in their well-thought-out density and rhythmization, and it is this organized structure that is now becoming the determining variable for the quality of socialization in these communities.

The aforementioned more detailed insight was also made possible by the more robust methodology of the current research, where the limitation of the previous survey lay in a smaller sample of respondents and in the predominance of telephone conversations, which by their nature limited the capture of non-verbal expressions, where the current extension of the current research to 220 parents, the use of repeated interviews and the method of online ethnography brought a significantly more detailed picture of the dynamics of ongoing changes and made it possible to map a more varied typology of parenting strategies. A comparison with the international literature confirms that the long-term fears of social isolation do not apply universally and that the quality of socialization depends on the conditions that families actively create, and other, review and empirical studies show that homeschooled children achieve comparable or better results in social maturity, leadership and prosocial behaviour than their peers from schools, if they have regular opportunities for contacts outside the family and if they are involved in social development. structured activities (Medlin, 2013; Ray, 2017; Murphy, 2014).

The results of the current survey confirm this picture in the sense that family and community facilities represent a functional substitute for the everyday classroom environment, but only if it is supplemented by clubs, project cooperation and institutional experience.

Digital communities are gaining extraordinary importance in the Czech and Slovak environments. Parent groups on social networks substitute information and organizational infrastructure, mediate the creation of community **"micro-schools"**, coordinate thematic projects and create stable opportunities for peer meetings, thus taking over part of the socialization functions of the school team. Analyses of the home environment after the pandemic show a shift towards flexible, parent-driven forms of learning and to connecting the home, community and school levels, which corresponds to the observed diversity of approaches between the structure close to the school and the freer forms inspired by unschooling (Kostecká, 2021; Kostecká, 2024; Klapáková et al., 2024).

Hybrid organization of contacts with the school represents another key shift. Approximately 90% of the surveyed families include short-term school stays just before the commission exams so that children gain real experience with the peer group, with the rhythm of teaching and with institutional expectations. This practice acts as a bridge between the home and school worlds, strengthening the curricular certainty of parents while responding to the traditional objection of **"absence of a class"** in a less confrontational and more pragmatic way, and the observed trend corresponds to international knowledge about post-pandemic family strategies, where flexibility and a combination of regimes replaces the former dichotomy of **"school versus home"** (Hamlin, 2022; Kallitsoglou, Virk, & O'Donnell, 2024).

Stressful factors are concentrated in the psychological and organizational level of parenting, where long-term responsibility for education, high time demands and the need to manage more demanding subjects of the second grade lead to fatigue and the risk of burnout in some families. Foreign findings from the pandemic period document similar accumulations of emotional and logistical pressure, underscoring the importance of support networks and shared resources (Kallitsoglou, Virk, & O'Donnell, 2024).

Current data show that the quality of results is not explained by the philosophy of homeschooling itself, but by the density of peer contacts, the regularity of community activities and the availability of professional support in critical subjects.

Comparison with the cases of families living outside the country confirms the transcultural nature of socialization strategies, with families settled in the United States, Southeast Asia and other destinations applying similar combinations of family relationships, community gatherings and clubs, suggesting that differences between environments are more related to the accessibility of communities and institutional conditions than to cultural difference. Selection through parenting online groups increases the likelihood of representation of families with higher cultural and educational capital and with a more active approach to the organization of learning. The intensity of the circles may in turn overestimate the availability of community resources in less served regions, and so the transferability of conclusions is conceptual and based on the detailed contextual characteristics of the set, not on statistical representativeness. These limitations were mitigated by triangulation of sources, repeated interviews, and auditability of coding decisions.

The final framing of the period of the last five years shows a shift from the dispute over **"isolation"** to the question of the conditions for good socialization in home education. A hybrid model is becoming a stabilized feature of Czech and Slovak practice, in which family background, community infrastructure, digital platforms and short-term institutional experience are interconnected; therefore, the implications for practice are aimed at systematic support for community centers, accessible bridges between family and school, and targeted professional assistance to parents in challenging subjects (Kostecká, 2024; Klapálková et al., 2024; Medlin, 2013; Ray, 2017).

Future research should monitor the long-term impacts of hybrid organization on the transition to secondary school and university, on the stability of peer networks and on the sustainability of parental engagement, while the follow-up to the previous IGA VŠDTI project remains key to capturing the developmental trajectory of the phenomenon (Bočková et al., 2021).

6. Implications for practice and education policy

The analysis carried out in the previous chapters has shown that homeschooling represents not only a pedagogical but also a significant socialization challenge. The quality of this experience is conditioned by the interconnection of the family environment with the wider educational and community framework, where, for example, the lack of peer contacts, weakened community infrastructure and the absence of institutional bridges to schools can lead to a limitation of the development of key social and cooperative competencies necessary for further educational career and professional career. The knowledge gained from the previous analysis forms the basis for the formulation of practical recommendations for the main actors involved in creating the conditions for homeschooling. The following subchapters therefore present proposals for measures relating to individual levels of the education system, from schools in charge of commission examination through municipalities, non-profit organizations and counselling facilities to families and educational policy makers. The aim of the whole chapter is to show the way how theoretical knowledge can be translated into concrete steps supporting the quality of the educational experience and at the same time contributing to the reduction of inequalities between individual groups of pupils.

6.1. Schools in charge of commission examination

The adaptation program before the commission exams should last 3 to 5 days in the range of 15 to 20 hours. The main goal of such a program is to introduce pupils to the rhythm of classroom functioning, to learn the rules, to engage in group cooperation and to get acquainted with the methods of assessment, which significantly reduces the stress arising from the institutional environment. The content of the program should include a morning circle associated with the creation of class agreements, 2 to 3 blocks of cooperative tasks per day focused on language, science and project activities, peer-mentoring in the form of pairing with a selected school pupil and guided reflection at the end of each day.

Outputs for families can take the form of a formative sheet with a definition of the child's strengths and recommendations for further learning, supplemented by a brief profile of the pupil describing the adaptation dynamics.

Continuous bridges during the year can be provided through regularly organized open laboratory days in the subjects of physics, chemistry, information and communication technologies or workshops, where the frequency should be at least once a month. Conversation clubs in foreign languages operating in small groups with a duration of 45 to 60 minutes can also be recommended. Thematically focused project Saturdays, such as simulations in the field of civic education, are also useful. It is important that a transparent schedule of all activities should be publicly available on the school's website, supplemented by a registration system and a capacity limit.

Assessment and communication require a systematic approach, where a standardized formative feedback checklist provides parents and pupils with a clear picture of the progress made and areas for further development. An important part can also be the opportunity to look into the pupil's reference portfolio, which includes a selection of works, self-reflection and confirmation of participation in community activities. Documentation kept in this way strengthens the transparency of the entire process and supports cooperation between the school and the family.

6.2. Municipalities and non-profit organizations

Community education hubs can play a key role in enhancing socialization and educational opportunities for homeschooling children. Shared spaces, which include libraries, children's and youth homes or cultural centres, can be equipped to allow for laboratory and craft days as well as makerspace activities. The already mentioned calendar of events accessible to families through the home education information system provides an overview and facilitates the involvement of the wider community, where, for example, microgrant programs designed for microschools can support the purchase of materials, the payment of tuition fees or the rental of rooms. It is important that the administrative burden remains as low as possible and that equal conditions and accessibility for all interested parties are ensured.

The position of the coordinator for home education at the municipal level is an important tool for mapping local capacities and connecting families with the activities offered, where the coordinator's task is not only to ensure the effective use of available resources, but also to support the inclusion of children from less stimulating environments. Support can take the form of scholarships, fee reliefs or secured transport for activities. It is in this way that inequalities are minimised and conditions are created in which children can participate in educational and community activities, regardless of their economic or social background.

6.3. School counselling facilities

The diagnostic and counselling package implemented twice a year enables systematic monitoring of the needs of children educated at home, where the package includes a screening of school self-efficacy, subjective well-being and executive functions, which provides a basic overview of the level of study and psychosocial competences. A possible short interpretation of the results supplemented by recommendations for parents offers specific suggestions for working with time-management, developing self-regulation skills and supporting motivation. The aforementioned regular diagnostics contribute to the early detection of problems and enable targeted intervention.

Subject support for second-level pupils is a form of systematic supplementation of knowledge in key areas such as mathematics, science and foreign languages, and the possibility of regular online consultation ensures access to professional guidance regardless of geographical barriers. Shared syllabi prepared with regard to commission examinations define minimum expectations and contain type tasks that facilitate orientation of pupils and parents in the required scope of the curriculum. It is the transparency of syllabi that increases the predictability of exam situations and reduces the burden associated with their preparation.

Digital well-being as a separate area of care is becoming an essential part of the services of counselling facilities, for example, workshops for children and parents focus on healthy online work, safety when using digital environments and solving social dilemmas that arise from participation in online groups. Promoting digital literacy and at the same time conscious regulation of time spent in the digital environment strengthens not only cognitive efficiency, but also overall well-being and lifestyle balance.

6.4. Leisure Activity Providers

The inclusion of open slots for homeschooled children in the club schedule contributes to the strengthening of their socialization opportunities. The schedule should ensure age heterogeneity and the presence of a permanent core of the group, which promotes the formation of strong social bonds and natural learning across age categories. By setting up this regime, children are also enabled to develop adaptability and the ability to cooperate in an environment that is closer to real social situations.

The buddy system for newly arrived children is an effective tool for integration into a group, where pairing with a peer who already knows the environment and rules facilitates adaptation and reduces the stress associated with entering a new social situation. Social reflection at the end of each cycle, during which mutual support is evaluated and the strengths of individuals are identified, strengthens the capacity for self-reflection as well as collective cohesion.

Monitoring of participation in activities, which includes attendance, role in the group and participation in project cooperation, provides valuable data on the quality of the socialization experience, and these aggregated outputs can be used as evidence of the degree of children's involvement in collective activities and can serve as evidence for schools and families as evidence of the fulfilment of socialisation goals.

Transparent records are important, which contributes to increasing trust between providers of leisure activities, families and schools.

6.5. Families (practical recommendations)

A weekly socialization plan is a basic framework for maintaining regular peer contacts, where the optimal volume includes 6 to 8 hours per week devoted to interactions with peers, which can take place through clubs, micro-schools or leisure centers. Their stability and predictability are also supported by a fixed community day, which creates space for several families and children to meet at the same time.

The child's portfolio serves as a comprehensive document of learning and social participation, where its output is project outputs, diaries, self-reflection and confirmation of participation in community activities, and documentation kept in this way provides an overview of individual progress and facilitates communication with schools or counselling facilities.

Prevention of parental burnout requires a systematic approach, where the rotation model within micro-schools, where parents share roles and share responsibility for the organization of teaching, becomes a highly effective tool. In addition, so-called co-op days can be introduced, where several families participate in teaching at the same time. Rest blocks and the use of outsourcing for particularly demanding subjects should also be part of the planning, and this is one of the ways to reduce the pressure on individuals while maintaining the quality of education.

Transitions to secondary school require preparation well in advance, where an adaptation plan started at least half a year in advance may include the development of work habits, training in group cooperation, managing time limits and simulation of exam situations. Regular and dysthematic preparation supports a smoother adaptation of the child to the new environment and increases the chances of successful entry into a higher level of education.

6.6. Education policy (state/Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports)

The methodological framework for board examinations should provide a uniform and transparent basis on which schools can build their own practice, for example by means of model syllabi, sample exercises and recommended formative tools that will increase the predictability of examination situations while allowing for fairer assessments. Voluntary adaptation weeks with a clearly defined organization will offer children the opportunity to transition from the home environment to the institutional context with less stress and higher preparedness.

Support for community infrastructure is another key level of education policy, as some subsidy titles intended for municipalities, children's and youth homes or libraries can finance laboratory days and the operation of a makerspace, and it is by supplementing financial support that a targeted scholarship scheme for disadvantaged families becomes a targeted scholarship scheme that allows for the reduction of educational inequalities. These measures expand access to activities that strengthen not only academic knowledge, but also social and practical skills.

Quality monitoring is a necessary prerequisite for the long-term sustainability of the proposed measures, and light data collection for schools entrusted with commission examination may include the indicators described in subchapter 6.7.

The aggregation of these data at the regional and national level will provide an overview of the effectiveness of individual steps and enable timely adjustments to education policy. At the same time, the publication of aggregate indicators increases transparency and strengthens public confidence in the fair set-up of the entire system.

6.7. Measurement, monitoring and evaluation (KPIs and tools)

The system of measuring and evaluating the quality of homeschooling can be based on clearly defined indicators that make it possible to capture both educational and socialization aspects. Peer contact density can be tracked through the average number of hours per week spent with peers, with a target range of between 6 and 10 hours. The regularity of community activities can be expressed as participation in micro-schools or clubs at least three times a month.

The institutional bridge can be measured by the proportion of children who complete a short-term school stay before the commission exams, with a target value of at least seventy percent.

School self-efficacy is another key area of monitoring, with short scales applied twice a year to monitor the change over time and identify shifts in children's self-confidence.

Subjective well-being can be captured by simple wellbeing scales that are filled in by both children and parents.

The portfolio indicators are based on the number of project outputs and self-reflections recorded during the semester, thus documenting the quality of learning and the degree of involvement in collective activities.

The academic minimum is expressed in the degree of mastery of the syllabus for commission examinations, the aim of which is not to create comparative rankings, but to ensure a basic level of knowledge and skills.

The method of data collection combines several levels, where, for example, schools and activity providers keep anonymized records of participation, families complete the child's portfolio and counseling facilities ensure the application of scales in a voluntary mode, and the outputs are published in an aggregated form with an emphasis on privacy protection, which strengthens the transparency of the system and at the same time prevents stigmatization of individuals. The concept of this monitoring provides important data for decision-making at the level of municipalities, schools and state administration and allows for timely response to identified trends.

6.8. Risks and their mitigation

The process of introducing support measures in the field of home education is accompanied by a number of risks that need to be identified in time and reduced in a targeted manner, for example, selectivity and social inequalities may lead to families with higher cultural and economic capital benefiting the most from the proposed measures. Effective prevention is the introduction of scholarships, the provision of transport, the provision of free slots in community centers and the active search for families who would otherwise not participate in the activities.

The burden on parents poses another major risk, as long-term overload can lead to burnout and a decrease in the quality of educational support, and measures to mitigate this problem are rotation regimes in micro-schools, sharing of lecturers, recommended workload limits and systematic planning of rest.

The varying quality of micro-schools is related to differences in the competences of individual parents or teachers, which can lead to an uneven level of education provided. A minimum standard of safety, methodological sheets for group work and regular supervision or mentoring create a framework that helps mitigate these differences.

The digital environment brings with it specific risks, which include not only safety issues, but also the overload of children with excessive online activities, and digital well-being programs, clearly formulated group communication rules, parental agreements and trained moderation of online meetings are functional tools for preventing these problems.

6.9. Roadmap

Short-term steps in the horizon of 0 to 6 months include the launch of a pilot program in 10 schools with the implementation of an adaptation week, where this period includes the publication of sample syllabi and a formative checklist, as well as the systematic mapping of local community centers and the opening of the first round of microgrant calls, and it is this phase that serves to verify feasibility and to obtain the first feedback from all involved actors.

Medium-term steps in the horizon of 6 to 12 of the fourth month include the extension of the pilot programme to the regional network of schools, the stabilisation of diagnostic and counselling packages within counselling facilities and the continuous evaluation of key performance indicators, and it is possible to adjust methodologies and procedures based on the results obtained. This phase also includes the introduction of scholarships and the provision of transportation, which will promote the availability of educational and community activities for children from less stimulating backgrounds.

Long-term actions with a horizon of more than 34 months include standardising best practices, integrating monitoring into regular annual reports, and systematically supporting research into secondary and higher education transitions. Longitudinal monitoring will allow to capture the long-term effects of measures and provide data for strategic planning of education policy.

7. Conclusion

The study anchors homeschooling in the Czech-Slovak area as a pluralistic and stabilizing practice, which, under appropriately set conditions, generates a comparable, in some aspects higher psychological-pedagogical effect in relation to secondary socialization than regular school attendance. The hybrid model combining family learning, community infrastructure and targeted institutional experience before board exams has proven to be the supporting organizational logic of contemporary practice. An ecological perspective, the theory of sociocognitive learning and the theory of self-determination have provided a framework in which it is possible to explain why the density of peer contacts, the regularity of community activities and transparent bridges between family and school are decisive factors in the quality of the socialization experience.

The contribution of this study lies in the long-term monitoring of family strategies, in the connection of narrative data with online ethnography, and in the operationalization of the four dimensions of the effect, which allow the discussion to be transferred from value disputes to verifiable indicators. The results confirm that a stable weekly rhythm of peer interactions, continuous formative feedback in homeschooling and short-term school stays before exams combine to create an environment that increases school self-efficacy, strengthens intrinsic motivation and maintains balanced social adaptation. Digital parenting communities are emerging as a new infrastructure that reduces the transaction costs of coordination, expands the repertoire of socialisation situations, and ensures the sharing of best practices.

The implications for practice and education policy arise directly from measurable quality parameters, where schools in charge of testing can implement short adaptation programs, continuous laboratory days and transparent portfolios, municipalities and non-profit organizations can develop community hubs with microgrants and coordination, counseling facilities have space for regular screenings of self-efficacy and digital well-being, providers of leisure activities can guarantee age-heterogeneous groups with structured And families benefit from planned socialization, role-sharing, and early preparation for the transition to secondary school. The political level calls for a methodological framework for commission examinations, targeted support for community infrastructure and light monitoring based on understandable indicators without comparative rankings.

Risk areas remain associated with the selectivity of access, the accumulation of psychological and organizational burden on parents, the varying quality of community microschools and the digital burden on children. The proposed mitigations show a realistic way to mitigate risks through scholarships and transport for disadvantaged families, rotation regimes and mentoring in communities, minimum safety standards and methodological sheets for group work, and digital well-being programs with trained moderation of the online environment.

The limits of the research result from the targeted selection of respondents in online communities and the predominance of university-educated parents, which increases the likelihood of overrepresentation of families with higher cultural capital. The conceptual transferability of the conclusions was ensured by a detailed contextual description of the sample, triangulation of sources and auditability of coding decisions, but statistical representativeness was not the intention. Future research should follow up with mixed methods, extend monitoring to underserved regions, and systematically examine the long-term impacts of hybrid organization on the transition to secondary and higher education, on the stability of peer networks, and on the sustainability of parental engagement, and experimental verification of pre-exam adaptation programs, evaluation of community centers, and testing of digital interventions focused on well-being and self-regulation seem to be a very appropriate direction.

The final synthesis confirms that the quality of secondary socialization in home education is not determined by the ideological choice of the family itself, but by the specific architecture of relationships and processes that surround the child's learning. Practically graspable indicators, described organizational steps and the proposed roadmap create a usable guide for schools, municipalities, counselling facilities and policy makers, and the sustainability of further development will depend on whether it is possible to expand community infrastructure, maintain the availability of bridges between family and school, and cultivate public debate so that it moves from stereotypes to evidence and cooperation across actors.

The study was not funded by a commercial entity. The author does not report a conflict of interest that could affect the interpretation presented. Primary data is sensitive interview transcripts and records from online ethnography, they are not freely accessible for privacy reasons; Anonymised excerpts and a complete codebook can be provided upon request.

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