

3 trends impacting SA's homeschool environment

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Homeschooling in South Africa has undergone tremendous change, with the Covid-19 pandemic accelerating trends by months, rather than years.



Image source: August de Richelieu from [Pexels](#)

At South African homeschooling provider, Impaq, we saw our learner numbers jump by almost 60% during 2020 and 2021 as lockdowns forced many families to live, work and learn from home. Today, we have over 30,000 registered learners.

Now that we're shifting to a 'new normal', the demand for homeschooling is naturally changing, especially with all schools returning to full timetables.

However, this period has fundamentally reshaped the homeschooling landscape in three ways, which I'll outline below.

1. More familiarity

Prior to the pandemic, the perceptions of homeschooling were that it was an 'outlier' in our education landscape, typically for families who go against the grain of conventional schooling.

The reality, though, has always been more complicated. Homeschooling has always been a good fit for those living in far-flung areas, for children who pursue professional sports or even families who travel a lot. Historically, homeschooling has also appealed to those looking for more individualised attention.

When the pandemic hit, all families had to become familiar with homeschooling. As a result, perceptions changed with many realising that homeschooling works for them.

As a result, the pre-pandemic stereotypes of homeschooling don't hold sway any longer, and more South Africans are open to the concept of this form of education.

2. Greater regulation

Greater regulation and legislation of both the homeschooling and online schooling spaces in South Africa is another factor that could spur on growth. This is because increased oversight will result in more trust.

In this regard, there are two areas to watch: the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Bill and the government's online or virtual schooling draft framework.

The BELA Bill is set to place higher expectations on how homeschooling operates in South Africa by placing a greater emphasis, for example, on the need for learners to follow a curriculum equivalent to the national curriculum. Other requirements of the BELA Bill include that parents will need to submit proof of end-of-phase results (for Grades 3,6 and 9), and that these results must be signed off by a competent assessor.

Amid these changes, we can expect more providers to emerge who will need to meet these requirements.

With the draft framework for online schooling in the works, this is also expected to place requirements on online school providers to be registered with the Department of Basic Education. Again, this will engender greater trust and transparency.

3. The rise of online schooling

During the pandemic, we also saw the rise of a number of local online schools in South Africa, marking an evolution in the homeschooling space.

It's important to note that even though both online schooling and homeschooling fall within the distance learning realm, the methods of teaching can be quite different.

Homeschooling is more self-directed, with parents or guardians taking on the role of teaching subjects to their children, allowing learners the flexibility to study at their own time, at their own pace.

Online schooling is different insofar as it is like a traditional school, but in a virtual sense. Your child is placed in a 'class' where they interact with the same children and teachers, just in a virtual setting. Timetables are fixed and qualified teachers guide learners through their work. The teachers ensure that learners are on track and give regular feedback to parents. There is also collaboration among learners as they do group work.

Online schooling is in its early phases, but with advances in technology, we can expect it to grow and, in turn, provide a spotlight on homeschooling as well.

All in all, these three trends could be the key drivers for homeschooling and online education in a post-pandemic world.

There's no doubt that education has irrevocably been changed for the better during this time, as it's adapted and advanced in ways we could only have dreamed of before.

ABOUT LOUISE SCHOONWINKEL

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