

## Homeschool Rules KO

**Ross** [00:00:28] Welcome to Renegade Inc. Self isolation, quarantine and the closure of schools has meant a headlong rush into home schooling. But if this Corona crisis is going to fundamentally reshape economies and how we live, what should we be teaching children so they're equipped for a very different world? Joining me to discuss remote learning, the pitfalls and the positives is the author and educator, Graham Brown-Martin. Graham, welcome. So remote learning, the last few weeks it's as if this is a brand new concept. We've never had home schooling before. We've never allowed to teach children at home. This is this brand new? Are we in the new age?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:01:10] I think we're in a new age in terms of this suddenly being thrust upon us without any kind of practise or experience, although, of course, no. Remote learning, you know, if we go back in time to 1870, the Education Act, remote learning was actually where you had to send your kid to school. I mean, school was a creation of something where you sent your child to go and learn. That didn't mean that learning wasn't already happening. Learning was happening at home in that time.

**Ross** [00:01:33] And was that because that education was an addendum to learning, not the learning in and of itself. Have we become sort of topsy turvy?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:01:41] Yeah, I think so. I mean I think there is the assumption that there wasn't any learning happening at home, and that it could only happen in school. But of course we all know from our own lives that's just not true. And, you know, we're all learning at various times. So what we're really talking about here isn't so much rote learning, but remote teaching, because what we're really looking at is is again, we're trying to force kids going through a quite a narrow curriculum that they have at school, which we know is education as opposed to learning.

**Ross** [00:02:06] Right. And so when you start to widen that idea and have it not as narrowly defined, what begins to happen?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:02:13] Well, I think what begins to happen is you start looking at what can we learn and how can we learn in different ways. I think that a lot of the stress that we're seeing at the moment - and it's early days. I mean, I think everyone's actually doing the best they can so let's not be too hard on either teachers or all the parents. But it's this sort of idea that we have to do something different at home because we're replacing school and school must be like this and it must be instruction that it must be remembering all this information because we have to get you through these tests.

**Ross** [00:02:38] And you have to bring that rigidity to....

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:02:40] And there's a sort of a false sense of rigidity because they went to school and therefore they're trying to kind of create that.

**Ross** [00:02:46] Victorian Britain?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:02:46] Well, I think so. I mean it's understandable because it's also - let's face it - for many young people going to school is a sanctuary and everything also. So, I mean, I think there's a lot of different things at play and there's difference between different families and so forth. But there is a sense that we have to adopt a particular kind of rigidity. And I can imagine, you know, that might work if you've got kids that are under ten. But I mean, try it with some teenagers. I mean, I've got a couple of those. They're not having it.

**Ross** [00:03:13] There is a video that's gone out and gone viral, as they say. And it really has caught the mood. Let's have a look at this woman and her view on remote learning/ home schooling.

**Video clip** [00:03:25] Listen, it's not working this Distant Learning thing. It's crazy! Seriously, it's impossible! Straight off in the morning - it's only the 2nd day. Millions of whatsapp messages. I have 4 kids. May they be healthy. Just imagine how many whatsapps, how many teachers for each child. How many subjects per child. I've only got two computers in the house. All morning they're fighting over the computers. One of my daughter's teachers is living in a dream world - thinks she'll get up at 8am to see him on screen. 8am she only just manages to roll over in bed. Where do you get off? The music teacher of my youngest sent over a musical score this morning. What am I going to do with that information? What! Have I got some band in the house? I can't read music! Just one second, let me pull out my clarinet and help my sons with his score. Enough guys. Teachers dial it down and lower expectations! And all day - how's the child feeling? How? He should draw a picture. How's the child feeling? He's spending the entire day on his cell phone. He's fine! Sleeping fine, eating fine - they don't stop eating. How's he feeling? Ask me how I'm feeling! Falling to pieces! I go from one child to another. Here's Science, here's Math - forget it! And how am I supposed to know all those things? Now our children will find out how dumb we are. It's not right. Really, how am I supposed to know how to transform an improper fraction? (mock fraction). And anyway, I want to understand. If it's mock, why bother me with it? It's not real! Leave him alone! What am I saying? You've finished us off - it's only the 2nd day! If we don't die of Corona, we'll die of distant learning! There you go - got it off my chest. Please - turn it down. Foot off the gas. Leave them be. Have a wonderful day.

**Ross** [00:04:55] Says it all, doesn't it? And no wonder it's caught the international sort of mood and parents are chiming in with it because ultimately what she's saying is lower expectations.

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:05:06] Well, the delivery was particularly spectacular, wasn't it, really? And I like the fact that she looked like she'd gone and hidden in the car to make the video. So I think that also speaks volumes about what's happening at home at the moment. You know, everyone is in lockdown and in close proximity and so forth. But I think also, yes, it goes viral because I think we all understand something of that frustration and that can be interpreted all kinds of ways. I mean, you know, parents are getting an understanding of the difficulty of teaching. Obviously teaching in that particular way. I think schools caught unawares by this crisis have operated in a sort of fairly standardized fashion, which is 'oh, well, ok this is to be delivered at home. Here it is. Deliver it. Right, you know, like, yeah, I'll bring my clarinet out and so forth. But I think that's, you know, come on. I mean, it's only been a couple of weeks really to get into a rhythm, to get into a routine, to get a way of doing

that work with your child or your particular circumstances, it's going to take a while. I mean, the lady on the video there, she's talking about the fact she's got four kids and two laptops. I mean, this is going to be a problem, isn't it? I mean, it's going to take a while for these things to sort themselves out. But also, I think we're going to have to be thinking about the fact that there isn't a standardized education.

**Ross** [00:06:19] See, this really gets to it, doesn't it? Because one aspect of homeschooling that we're not talking about, is what is the economy going to look like? What's the workplace going to look like on the other side of this crisis because surely it's going to be materially different to whatever we saw up to 2019?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:06:37] I think that that's an appropriate question, because in many respects education and I'm talking about education happens in schools and universities, whether with a desired outcome of providing a workforce. I mean, whether we like it or not is equipping people with skills and knowledge to live a productive life. And that implies part of the workforce.

**Ross** [00:06:59] But it also prepares them to go into that workforce. If that workforce is fundamentally and materially changed. What now?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:07:05] Yes. And that is clearly the point. I mean, yes, what does a post-virus economy look like?

**Ross** [00:07:10] Right.

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:07:10] What does society look like? The kind of scale of economic stimulus, financial stimulus that are going in to maintain the status quo - the pre 2019 status quo - is phenomenal. It's by a long way larger than the 2008 financial collapse, which indicates the economy is going to be somewhat different on the other side of this. But I would also argue that it was going to have to be different anyway. I mean, we had an economic model that came in after the Second World War, which for many of us created prosperity, particularly in the Western world and everything else, and sort of affordances that are, you know, generations behind us could ever have imagined. I don't want to be too mean about that, but the costs of that economy to our environment, to the place that we live on in terms of growing inequality and so forth, that wasn't built into the purchase price. And so our extractive economy which, you know, we take things out of the earth, we do something, we process them, we put them in, say, a phone or something. We use that phone for two years and throw it away. That extractive economy ultimately would have to change. And actually, I think this is in some sense accelerated - catalyzed this thinking about what does the new economy look like because we simply can't have an economy which damages the environment, creates gross inequality, and also ultimately it does lead, or creates the environment or the conditions for a pandemic to thrive. So then the question is, okay, if the global economic model changes after the virus, what does that education look like now? Because the education system that we have at the moment - the school and university based education system - is by and large, predicated by the economic model that we've been operating in since the Second World War, which is industrialized society.

**Ross** [00:08:52] Well, thinking about the economy, there's a very good entrepreneur, Jack Ma, a former teacher, and that's how he started out. And he thinks that now education needs to be reinvented from the bottom up.

**Video clip (Jack Ma)** [00:09:04] If we do not change the way we teach, 30 years later, it will be trouble, because the way we teach, the things we teach our kids over the past 200 years is knowledge based. And we cannot teach our kids to compete with machine who is smarter. We have to teach something unique that is that machines can never catch up with us in this way. Thirty years later, our kids have the chance. I hope I answered your question.

**Video clip** [00:09:39] It's a very difficult one to answer, but what are those skills that you think we need to teach? If it's we're moving away from knowledge, what are the key things that....?

**Video clip (Jack Ma)** [00:09:52] Believing. Independent thinking. Teamwork. Care for others. These are the soft parts. The knowledge may not teach you that. Folks, that's why I think we should teach our kids our sports. And to take the music, the painting, art to make sure humans should be different. Everything we teach should be different from the machine. If the machine could do better you have to think about it.

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:10:27] Even before the current crisis, you know, we were talking about the fourth industrial revolution and the impact of the fourth industrial revolution, characterized by artificial intelligence, machines, self-driving cars, gene editing and so forth. I mean, potentially a fantastic new world pandemic aside. But it also comes with significant challenges. And those significant challenges are quite simply the jobs of the future are the ones that machines can't do. And I think that's what Jack Ma - I mean, who after all knows a bit about this. I mean, he was the founder of Ali Baba, one of the one of the world's biggest companies - he would know this, I think. So if we think that the jobs of the future are the ones the machines can't do, then how do we expand and nurture what it is to be human? Now, that doesn't suggest that knowledge of things, inculcation of facts or procedures, doesn't have any use. Of course it does. Actually, having foundational knowledge is very valuable. I think there's often this argument gets separated into two. It's like, well, you're either skills or your knowledge. No, actually, all of those things. I mean, I write books. I love books. So, I mean, having some knowledge is very useful. I mean, otherwise, how do you know how to spot a lie and so forth? So having that is useful but how do you know it's real until you do something with it, until you make something. And there are a number of areas where human beings beat machines, where, you know, the uniqueness of being human is valuable. Creative thinking, for example, it is part of that. And creative thinking. I'm not just thinking in terms of traditional art, although I do think of that. But I'm thinking about entrepreneurship, creative writing. How do we communicate. And communication is becoming valuable. Mobility and dexterity is, you know, millennia of walking up hills and dancing and swimming and so forth means that we are uniquely adapted to the planet that we live in now. Yes, you've got the Boston dynamics robots and things and they are fantastic, but they are, of course, going to be the single use type robots and they will be replacing warehouse workers, blue collar workers. White collar jobs will disappear from that. Scientific thinking is also another area. I mean, again, machines, AIs don't make scientific discoveries. They don't create new businesses and so forth. Also, you know, social interaction - jobs of the future that require everything from counselling to to teaching actually - really has to be done by a human

being. And I think what Jack Ma is talking about is what can we do that it doesn't mean that we can meet with machines. And he's talking about those things. How do we develop an education system that expands and nurtures and grows and allows what is to be human to flourish? Because we have had an education system actually that was going to some extent in a different direction and an education system that was geared towards producing a level of consistency in output for an industrial economy, which was predominately offices and factories and so forth. And that's a gross simplification.

**Ross** [00:13:13] But that economy no longer exists?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:13:16] That economy no longer exists and won't exist.

**Ross** [00:13:17] So this is an incredibly hopeful situation?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:13:19] Yes. I mean, look, the situation that we are going through globally at the moment is horrific. You know, there's all kinds of videos and memes going around trying to be super positive and everything else. Look, I can often find those nauseating. And I don't want to put this kind of a shine on this, but we will get through this as a society. And if we're smart about this, we can come out as a stronger society in some form. At least looking at what the future might look like, we had to make these decisions anyway - you know, about the environment, about climate change, about population growth, the impact of population.

**Ross** [00:13:49] The pandemic has just forced our hand?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:13:51] The pandemic has forced a hand, but the pandemic is also a result of the way we live. I mean, there was one joke that was going around is that this is Mother Nature's way of sending us to our room to think about what we have done. And I think in a way that's absolutely right. To some extent we've yet to see what was the actual cause of this pandemic and where it started. But some scientific community looking at, well, you know, this is what happens when you encroach on ecosystems. This is what happens when you live in that particular way. And I think that, you know, this gives an opportunity for us to think about how we live after this moment. And, of course, that will reflect on education systems, because the education that we have and we're trying to institute into the home at the moment is probably not going to be the economy of the future. I mean, one situation I mean, you look at your kids at the moment, they've had, in the UK, they've had their GCSEs, their high school exams and their A-levels cancelled. So if we're not actually educated to pass those tests. What are we educating for?

**Ross** [00:15:00] Welcome back to Renegade Inc. Before we talk more about the new rules of home school for a very different future with Graham Brown-Martin, let's have a look at what you've been tweeting about in this week's Renegade Inc index. First up, we got a tweet from Lindsay Titus: 'Since I changed my own mindset from home schooling to home learning, I've learned ballet from my daughter. She learned how to do laundry for me. We went on a scavenger hunt. We laughed so hard our bellies hurt. Remember, learning can happen in so many ways. This really gets to the crux of it, doesn't it because suddenly you've taken that dynamic away. I'm going to teach something here that you're going on a bit of a journey together?'

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:15:36] I think that's beautiful. Hats off to Lindsay there for that tweet. I mean, I think this is at the crux. It's learning and teaching. It's about co-learning. Actually, this goes back to a theorist called Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed*. He talked about the fact that you know, learning and teaching is relational. It's what's happening in the space between two people or people. And so each time a teacher, for example, goes into that relationship, they're also a co-learner.

**Ross** [00:16:02] Next from Nassim Nicholas Taleb's *Wisdom: 'Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg didn't finish college. Too much emphasis is placed on formal education. I told my children not to worry about their grades, but to enjoy learning. And that comes from Taleb himself. On point, isn't it?*

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:16:20] I think it is, definitely. I think but we've also got to be mindful that it's slightly sort of middle class insofar as, you know, all of those people - Steve, Bill and Mark - white and male. So I think that we have to be aware of what happens in the world and why we thrive at grades. I think now to contradict myself, I think that we can put the grades before the enjoyment of learning. And I think, if anything, what we need to be able to do is young people - all people - actually need to learn how to learn. And that becomes a habit of mind because the things that we learn will change over time. It's not calcified in the same way maybe in the past.

**Ross** [00:16:58] Next from Shane Abell: 'Teacher Challenge: Watch a fifteen minute YouTube clip about something you are not totally interested in, and then think about how long your next video conference with your class lasts - hashtag, Home Learning. Is that fair?'

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:17:14] Yeah, I think so. I think it's kind of interesting, actually. This goes back to a point that I made earlier, I suppose, in that we're seeing sort of a deck of PowerPoint slides sent to people at home.

**Ross** [00:17:25] What has anyone done to deserve that?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:17:26] I know. And then it sort of dawns on you that some of our children are going into situations where they're spending, you know, hours in class being presented with PowerPoint slides. And I think yes, of course, I think that, you know, long sessions like that, but also delivered online, where you don't have the social interaction and so forth, it can be incredibly tedious. How do we re-think that?.

**Ross** [00:17:48] Finally from Jamie Innes: 'Parents, you are your child's primary educator. You always have been. Don't get hung up on trying so hard to be a teacher. They've learned so much from you already and will continue to do so.'

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:18:02] Learning is what we're talking about here as opposed to education. I mean, learning, teaching and education are mutually exclusive. And I think it's about what do you think you mean when you mean a teacher? I think that's what we're striving to be, something that perhaps is artificial. You know, we all want to be better, I suppose. We may be our fiercest critic. But, you know, there's such a thing as a good enough

parents. And I think that's the point. I think if you're good enough is what's needed at the moment.

**Ross** [00:18:28] On that note, we caught up with the former headmaster, Martin Stephen, of St. Paul's. And this is what he had to say.

**Video clip (Martin Stephen)** [00:18:32] Homeschooling presents three different types of problems - problems for parents, problems for children and actually problems for schools. It is interesting that a lot of the children I was speaking to at the moment, including my grandchildren, love homeschooling because they actually love being away from school and love being with their families. The real problem comes with parents who are far too concerned and far too worried. And the best advice I've ever heard from a headmaster is you have a unique opportunity to spend quality time with your children. Use it because years from now, just like the famous advert, you know. Daddy, what did you do in the war? These children are going to be asking, what did you do in the pandemic crisis? The answer is that really if the answer is we took them out into the garden. We built dams. We had a hell of a time. Or we played games. If you don't have a garden. That's the key. The key is to parents to enjoy this. The problem, of course, is if you've got both parents working, glued on a computer screen all day, you know, there's a top flight sort of customer at the other end of the computer, doesn't want a screaming child in the background. I had a lovely example of it the other day with a very, very sort of powerful head who I was talking to, who smiled at me. They were sort of vague noises off screen and they had smiled at me and said, excuse me, there's a fight outside the door, went off, sorted her children out and then came back. And what we have to do is we have to generate a new attitude to these sort of conversations. So we've got to be more relaxed with the parents or the parents have to be more relaxed. And we have to be more relaxed with them.

**Ross** [00:20:15] What's your view on that? I mean, seasoned headmaster knows what he's talking about. Lot of wisdom in that is there?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:20:20] I think it's brilliant. I mean, absolutely right. I mean, I think to the point about children appearing on webcams and all that stuff and people getting stressed. When did we become that society?

**Ross** [00:20:29] Right.

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:20:29] When children, you know, you had to deny the fact you had children. Again, I've been fortunate enough to sort of run some of my own companies and so forth. But I remember, you know, changing my kids nappies in the middle of board meetings. That used to be standard. I mean, you know, we're seeing this and this is back to sort of pre virus economy, isn't it? You know, why were we operating in such a way? I mean, it was, you know, prejudicial against, for example, women in the workplace and so forth. I mean, you know what? We're now getting concerned and stress because our child what's our attention because we're on a webcam meeting to a client? I mean, this is daft, isn't it? I mean, we need to be beyond that. So I'm completely with him on this.

**Ross** [00:21:03] What happened? Why did we switch? Because you're very clear on pre-virus and post-virus economy. You really put that line in the sand. Why did we get so het up pre-virus? And how is it going to look different post?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:21:16] So I think the pre-virus economy was business as usual. Even though we were aware - I mean we were painfully aware for decades about the damage that that particularly economic model was having on our home, on the planet, on society. So we would have to change at some point. But it's very hard to change an economic model for the simple reason that the structures which support the economic model are, you know, if you've benefited from the economic model, you know that the status quo, in effect, you don't really have much motivation to change. I mean, I'm not even suggesting that this is necessarily conscious. It's what you do to maintain that way of life.

**Ross** [00:21:55] But that isn't there now, is it?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:21:57] It is there now and a lot of what what's happening in terms of government stimulus and so forth is to support that. You know, you talk to people at the moment, you know, they're in lock down and I can't wait for this to be over so we can get back to normal. Well, I don't think there can be a return. We don't know. Everything we do is anticipating what might happen. Nobody knows the actual future. We can speculate about what can happen. I mean, we can look at the fact, OK, this stimulus, financial stimulus, has been going on by governments all over the world to maintain business as usual or some semblance of an existing economy. You know, we've had some debate about political leaders are saying, actually, let's protect the economy and there's some collateral damage. It doesn't matter. It's worth paying because we've protected an economy. What we're doing is protecting a way of life, but it's difficult to imagine what a different way of life could be, because we've all been embedded within this system to a greater or lesser degree.

**Ross** [00:22:47] So within the crisis, there are the seeds for the renaissance, if you like. I mean, there's a satirical article in the US saying don't let the children be at home for too long because they're going to start thinking for themselves. You know, get them back into government education because we need more cogs to go into the capitalist system. But you can see what that person is getting at?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:23:03] But yes, it also means that, you know, there's a famous political saying, don't waste a crisis. And so flipping that again is that this is an opportunity, isn't it, for society at large to have a global conversation about, well, what kind of society do we want to have and do we need to have because there's want and a need, isn't there? Maybe there's a want that says we all just want to return to normal because that's what we know. What we need for a planet which doesn't go into recurring pandemics, doesn't end up with air that we can't breathe. It doesn't end up with sudden and cataclysmic environmental events, then we have to make some changes.

**Ross** [00:23:38] From a practical point of view, what can we start to do day to day to rethink how we go about education and let's say, shift this economy, this society?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:23:50] So from a learning and education perspective, if we think about the economy shifting, that means the kind of things, skills and knowledge that we

we need in order to thrive within the new economy, what will have changed? Now, my argument is, is that we're shifting from an extractive economy, which is taking things out of the earth, processing them, turning them into plastics and throwing them away into a circular or regenerative economy, which means we're designing waste and pollution out of products because these are manmade problems. You know, we design the waste in the pollution into the actual products. We stick a battery into a mobile phone and not let you change it so that you can throw it away. Those sort of design practices aren't useful anymore. What this means as we move towards a regenerative economy is that we enter actually into a golden age of creativity and innovation. So far from this kind of idea, the fourth industrial revolution, there won't be enough jobs, there will be far too many jobs because we are going to have to redesign and reimagine every single product and service that we have on the planet. And that's what we can do is think about what skills and knowledge do we need to equip present and future generations to redesign everything with this idea of how do we design things for a regenerative economy.

**Ross** [00:25:00] So bringing that back to home schooling. The most valuable lesson, if you like, is to teach these kids how to think critically, look creatively at the problems that, you know, that surround them. How do they solve them? Think about our culture. Think differently about these things. Engage in a different way, because ultimately education has been very narrowly defined.

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:25:22] That's absolutely right. I think what we have with the education system has been operating and is and is being seen in this. You know, as we say, remote learning, which is really remote teaching is teaching as instruction and instruction only. Now, some instruction is very useful. But if it's only instruction, if it's only instruction to inculcate facts and procedures to them, vomit them out, an exam that no longer exists, then we're in lots of problem.

**Ross** [00:25:44] But the Decare bit, the bringing forth bit, this is the golden moment to do this?

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:25:48] This is the golden moment to do this and to ensure that whatever we're doing with our children at home at the moment is that they're also applying that knowledge into making things, making things that they are passionate about that meet their own interests and so forth. I mean, you can learn maths from music. I mean, it's just finding that thing. People of all ages, we have passion and have interest and so forth. And it's when we apply that knowledge to making something that it really sticks and becomes valuable to you. And I think what we have is, is, you know, I like to think about the education system as a sort of iceberg where the tip of the iceberg is what you can see from the grading system. That's the evidence of learning and so forth. But there's so much more under the sea in terms of the iceberg. And what we're seeing in home, what's happening outside of the school is all that stuff. Now how do we surface that so we can see that.

**Ross** [00:26:37] Within this pandemic there's hope, there's optimism because what we've had throughout this conversation we've highlighted all those areas where those green shoots will come and we'll have pushed society into a qualitatively different place.

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:26:50] Well, I hope so. I mean, I think this does give the opportunity for parents to revisit what's happening to their child at school, what their children are doing. And it gives us a national, global, debate about what education is for as we consider what our economies are going to look like at the same time. So I think there is room for some optimism. Look, I don't want to put a shine on something which is a terrible situation for an awful lot of people around the world, ourselves included. But we'll get through this. And if you think carefully and we participate in the conversation, then we can come out of this in a positive way that we'll have a better society. I mean, I am optimistic for that.

**Ross** [00:27:27] Graham, thank you very much for your time.

**Graham Brown-Martin** [00:27:28] Thank you.

**Ross** [00:27:28] That's it from Renegade Inc. this week. You can drop the team a mail - [studio@renegadeinc.com](mailto:studio@renegadeinc.com) or you can tweet as at Renegade Inc. Join us next week for more insight from those people are thinking definitely. But until then, stay curious.