



Contents

1. TCK education and welfare. Pg 2

2. New Books. Pg 5

- Home Keeps Moving by Heidi Sand-Hart
- The TCK Experience - The Children of Educators in International Schools by Dr. Ettie Zilber

“A third culture kid is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside their parents’ culture.”

TCK education & welfare - practical guidelines to ask the right mentoring questions

Several years ago in the March 2003 edition of Educare we included a short article on mentoring. This was to encourage caring and responsible accountability structures to help parents realistically assess how their children are doing on educational and welfare issues. This is an important issue and we include a questionnaire that can be used in situations like this. Then, as now, we would strongly emphasise that the clear purpose of any structure like this is to provide support NOT surveillance. Any discussions should not be just a box-ticking and duty-performing exercise: talking with parents about their children is something that is built on relationship and trust. We have a duty of care as an organisation, and a family ethos that we rightly make one of our core values. These factors mean that we must care as best possible for our children, but we do not interfere with the parents' management of their children and normal family life. We can guide and advise, but we cannot and should not prevent parents from making their own decisions for their children, whether we agree with them or not at times. The only exception would be if we sense real danger to the children from careless actions or negligence.

Some of the questions are more relevant when making a decision about a new option, either at the start of a child's formal education or when a major transition is considered. However, it is good to realistically and regularly review progress even when the children are well established in the school or home-based option they are using.

The list below is taken from our own TCK Education & Welfare book (as advertised in Educare June 2010, and available on CD at cost price + postage by contacting mk_tck@yahoo.co.uk). It is neither exhaustive, nor is it a formula. Not all of these questions are relevant every time a mentor or coach discusses this with the family. If the mentor does not feel qualified to discuss some detailed issues, it may be best to focus on the more general questions and refer to outside help. This could come from someone else on the field, specialist organisations such as SHARE, or from our own TCK Consultants.

For all Children

1. What are the impressions of the children's general well-being?
2. If they have recently arrived how well are they adjusting?
3. Do the children have the friends they need? Are the main friends local children, local adults, other TCKs or NGO staff? If the children are isolated, then how can this be reviewed and changed?
4. a) If home leave is coming up, how well prepared are they? How advanced are the practical arrangements for education and other needs?
b) If definitive re-entry is coming up, discuss the same issues with the proviso that sorting out the necessary details now is even more important.
5. If definitive re-entry is coming up, do the parents plan to move directly to one place and stay there? (If not then they should be encouraged to change plans, or find a more permanent location as soon as possible after arrival and temporary accommodation.)
6. How is the children's health – both physical and emotional/psychological?
7. What about physical fitness and exercise, especially if living in big cities? If the children are lacking exercise and play opportunities, and this is having a negative impact what can realistically be done to improve that?

Educational review

For all children

1. How well are they doing compared to norms for their age group?

2. If the answer to question 1 is unknown, what can be done to check up – teachers in home country, education consultants in sending office, AERC, SHARE, Anchor, testing in an international school....?
3. Are the parents & children happy with the current option? If no, what are the alternatives? If there are no realistic alternatives, what can be done to make the option work better?
4. Are the children being issued with adequate educational records?
5. How does the education they are receiving compare with that of the passport country for re-entry?

For Children in Local Schools

1. Are you happy with the ethos of the school? Both the formal stated school policy and the informal classroom and playground sub-culture.
2. Do you have a good relationship with the teachers and school management?
3. Are the children integrated at all?
4. If the answer to number 3 is no, then how do the children cope with this?
5. Is there any evidence of bullying, including name-calling?
6. Are the academic standards good enough?
7. Are the discipline standards good enough and discipline methods fairly used?
8. If the school is in a shame-based culture, are children and/or parents blamed and shamed for poor academic performance?
9. If shaming is being used, even if not directly on the TCK, what impact is this having on the child?
10. Are safety standards good enough?
11. As children progress up the school are they being taught enough critical thinking skills or is the emphasis on rote-learning heavy?
12. Does the school have enough resources and equipment to properly teach at the higher levels?
13. What active measures are you taking to keep up with what the children learn in class and from school peers? If they are learning unacceptable standards and behaviour how do you process this with the child?
14. If the school is struggling is there any way you could help out?
15. What positive things are the children drawing from their school experience – local friends, appreciation of the country and culture, language skills....

For Children Schooling at Home

1. Are the children making enough progress at a relatively normal rate?
2. How is the progress on pure home schooling being assessed? Encourage real objective assessment if not currently being assessed.
3. If using a correspondence school are you happy with the materials, the delivery service and the feedback from tutors?
4. If using an internet based programme, are you happy with the curriculum, speed of marking and feedback from tutors? Is the technology working and reliable?
5. If the answer to 3 or 4 is no, is there anything you can do about this, anything others can do on the family's behalf to help? E.g. the national TCK Consultant to phone, even visit the school if possible.
6. Are costs an issue with the correspondence or internet school?
7. Are the materials portraying a balanced view of life? Are they excessively secular and politically correct or do they give a distorted view of our beliefs (even from sources with similar ethical and philosophical values)? Are the parents open to change if the materials aren't good enough in some way?
8. Do the resources used meet the re-entry needs (short-term and long-term) of the child?
9. Do the resources overemphasise one style of learning – e.g. all on CDs or DVDs, fill in the blanks exercises, rote learning, all reading and no activity.....etc
10. If yes for question 9, what measures could be put in place to improve this?
11. Are the parents under pressure from other strong voices in the host country (including from other organisations) to choose a certain set of resources?
12. What about socialisation, does the child meet enough other children for their well-being?
13. Are the children enjoying learning at home?
14. Are you enjoying teaching at home?
15. How well can the children stay on task – any distractions? If yes, is there anything that could be done to reduce distractions?
16. What positive things are the children drawing from education at home? E.g. less time wasted in classroom crowd control, one to one attention meaning more work can be done faster, strong family bonds...

For Children in International TCK Schools

1. How well is the school matching up to the long-term academic re-entry needs?
2. How well is the child performing academically?
3. How is academic performance measured? Are the report cards, forms or transcripts easy to interpret?
4. Is the school struggling for staff? If yes, what effect does this have on teaching?
5. Are the teachers adequately trained, are there any who overemphasise certain learning methods? If yes, are these detrimental to the child and are there any issues that require a visit to discuss things?
6. Do the children have enough time for sport and aesthetic subjects?
7. If the mother tongue is not English, is there any provision for that in the timetable? If no, what can be done for them to learn the academic mother tongue?
8. If the school is struggling is there any way you could help out?
9. Are the costs an issue?
10. Are you aware of any tensions towards certain groups of TCKs or parents?
11. What are the positive things they are gaining from their school? E.g. Friends, good relationship with teachers, happy at school.....

If Boarding

1. How are the children coping with separation?
2. How are you coping with it?
3. Do you get enough contact from the school to let you know how the children are?
4. How do the children relate to the house parents?
5. How do they relate to the teachers?
6. Do they have friends there, how long are those friends likely to stay?
7. Are you able to see the children regularly in term time (if living near enough)?
8. Do you see any benefits in the children from the boarding experience?

If Mixing Options

Examples include attending a local school with home-based academic mother tongue learning, English language school and Korean Saturday school, or correspondence mixed with home education.

1. Is the child coping with the workload?
2. Are you coping with the required supervision?
3. Do the children have adequate time to socialise?
4. If using one main school option with supplementary lessons, is the school aware of the extra learning the children do?
5. Does the school make any allowances for supplementary learning? If not, would they be open to discussion if the children are under time pressure?
6. If there are 2 payments to be made, is cost an issue?
7. If the children are struggling to do all of the required work, are there any measures that you could take to relieve this?



New Books

Home Keeps Moving by Heidi Sand-Hart

Heidi's experiences and insights struck a chord with me as they will for many readers. Born to Finnish and Norwegian parents who worked for a large agency in the UK and independently in India, she experienced so much that other TCKs can relate to. The book recounts her family's many moves through the eyes of a TCK. She recounts how she was catapulted from continent to continent constantly, leaving friends and starting all over again, leaving her with an unquenchable search for a "home" and a sense of belonging somewhere. In her own words introducing the book

"Nothing about my upbringing was "normal". I do not come from one country, but four. I have been to nine different schools, more than 42 countries (and counting) and my belongings are scattered across three different continents. My definition of "normal" strays about as far from the conventional mould as it possibly could..."

She currently lives in London with her Kiwi husband, Paul, and views herself as a citizen of the world.

We warmly recommend Heidi's book to TCKs, their parents & other family members and anyone working with TCKs in international schools and agencies.

It can be bought either at <http://www.amazon.co.uk/shops/heidisand-hart> from the UK or at www.amazon.com for N America. Those outside of Amazon territory can order from homekeepsmoving@gmail.com via paypal. She also has a blog site at <http://homekeepsmoving.blogspot.com/> with more information about her experiences and the background to the book.

The TCK Experience – The Children of Educators in International Schools by Dr. Ettie Zilber

This book was written following research on this theme for the author's PhD thesis at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania. Dr Zilber herself has worked at international schools in 6 different countries for more than 30 years and has served on the boards of both the European Council of International Schools and the Academy of International School Heads. Given this experience she knew her theme well before her research, but she gathered information from school staff including teachers, counsellors and heads/principals, as well as from young adult TCKs whose parents worked in international schools. This TCK group that she calls "EdKids" were the subject of her study although she makes many observations pertinent to the parents and other school staff as well.

The book is written from an American perspective. For her research she selected a group of American EdKids aged 18-26 living independently of their parents. In all cases the children were from two-parent families where both had been employed in international school/s with the children having studied there for a minimum of 3 years. The research focus was narrow, but the many interviews and quotations in the book indicate a broader relevance beyond this small sample group.

Some of the sections refer to the disparity of incomes as many international schools educate children of the wealthy elite of the host country and of high-salary expatriates in the business and diplomatic worlds. This is an experience for some of our families and can raise serious issues of different values and lifestyle expectations. Dr Zilber recognises that children of overseas NGO

workers (our voluntary agencies included) are often among the least well-off in the international school.

Most of the findings and comments were ones that I recognised from our own experiences and observations of a wide range of families, from many different nationalities with children studying in international schools around the world. These included

- The clash of interest for school staff between being a parent and working at the school
- Keeping a healthy balance in the family when everyone lives and works at the same place – i.e. learning not to talk about the school and work all the time
- Children having a close knowledge of the lives of other teachers and school staff – for good in seeing positive role models, for bad when things go wrong
- The balance for school staff of not being too hard or too soft on one's own children; the need to be fair and be seen to be fair
- Having the best of both worlds in that working in international schools is very rewarding for the staff and studying there is usually a very positive experience for the children.

On average only around 5% of the students in an international school are EdKids which may make the book subject seem narrow. However, on the staffing side the average is just over 20% who have their children in the school and almost 100% of the international school staff have regular contact with EdKids. Because of this we definitely recommend this book to all of the staff in our international schools whether they have children in the school or not. It is relevant to any team leaders with a responsibility of care for school staff families. Well worth a read!

The book is easily obtainable from www.Amazon or other on-line suppliers.

Educare is a resource designed for all those concerned for TCK education and welfare – parents, staff working for sending agencies and in international schools, any other supporters or colleagues of the family. It can be forwarded on freely, but please check that the recipient wants it before sending – we do not want to add to the unwanted e-mails in anyone's inbox.

