

Welcome to the latest edition of Educare. This time we are circulating the results of an educational options survey from within WEC. We are including a summary of all of the information plus many of the main suggestions for the MKEA ministry and for improvements in MK care. In response to one of these requests we are including an article on how to assess different MK and international schools. Since these schools still account for our largest single group of children, and also because many others will use them in the future this is of prime importance to our families. A lot of what is in this edition will also be presented in a seminar on international qualifications at the ICEC conference next month in Vienna. As with all editions of Educare, we are welcoming any comments and observations that our readers may have. Please e-mail them to SteveGill@mkea.freeseve.co.uk

Results of the WEC International MK Education Survey

1. Total numbers of children 400 (a very high proportion of our children outside of their "home" country)

2. Responses from 24 fields

3. Countries of student origin represented

Argentina	Finland	The Netherlands
Australia	France	New Zealand
Brazil	Germany	Puerto Rico
Canada	Hong Kong	Singapore
China	Indonesia	Switzerland
Congo	Korea	UK
Fiji	Malaysia	USA

4. Of those who responded, the following educational options were being followed. (In each case the different nationalities of the larger groups of children are added). The apparent discrepancy in total numbers is due to the large number of pre-school children. One or two responses also did not include the nationalities under the various options.

Home Education – 64 (USA 19, New Zealand 11, Canada 10, UK 7, others 17)

Co-operative school - 16 (Korea 4, Germany 4, USA 3, others 5)

Local state school - 51 (Korea 8, Germany 5, UK 3, others 35)

Local private school – 32 (Switzerland 9, UK 6, Australia 3, Korea 3, USA 3, others 8)

International school – 33 (Germany 12, Korea 6, Australia 4, New Zealand 4, Switzerland 3, others 4)

MK school – 69; as day students 38 (UK 15, Korea 5, others 18)

as boarders 31 (UK 10, Australia 9, Korea 4, Germany 4, others 4)

Boarding in passport country – 2

Correspondence – 11 (Germany 4, New Zealand 4, Australia 3)

Internet – 1

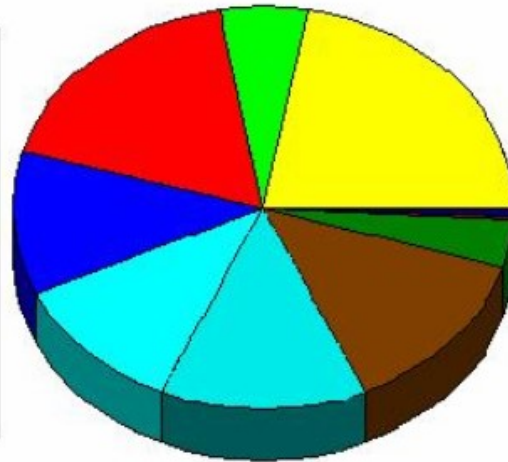
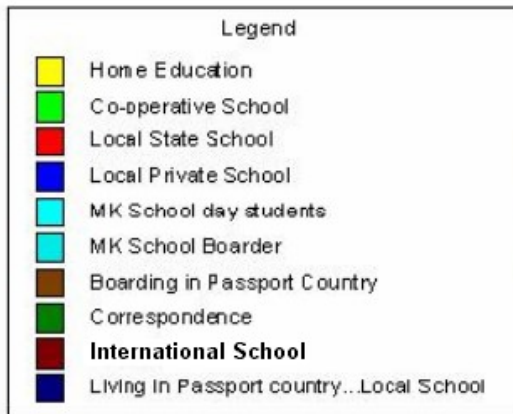
Living with friends or family in passport country to attend local school – 1

It is also worth noting that many responses indicated a mixture of options e.g. use of an English language school combined with correspondence course in the mother tongue. For the figures given above, only the main schooling option has been quoted, but this kind of double response involved between 5 & 10% of our children.

5. In response to the question posed to home educators of when they expected change over from home education to external education, responses varied; partly depending on the availability of other options and partly on factors related to the parents and children involved, such as nationality, commitment to home education above any other option, ease of parent/child working together etc.

Ages varied from 8 to 18, but by far the most common were in early secondary/middle school years from 11 to 14. A very large number of responses indicated that parents were happy to home educate at the primary/elementary level, but much less so at the senior level.

WEC Educational Options



6. The same question was posed to those using the local school option. Responses varied again, but most commonly were younger than for the home education with most of them between the ages of 8 & 10. Many fields advocate a short period of time within the local school to help integration, before transferring to the MK or international one. Some fields in Europe would view the use of the local school as the norm well into senior school years, sometimes right up to the Baccalaureat or other equivalent qualification.

7. Are fees in international schools, including even MK schools too high?

International schools – yes. The variation is enormous depending on the area of service. The small number of children enrolled in international schools are mostly in locations where the fees are comparatively low (USD 2000 – 3000/child/year). Others are quoting all points up to and beyond USD 12000.

MK schools – usually acceptable, but also sometimes yes. A significant number of responses indicated the struggle to meet the fees, usually quoted as between USD 1500 and 3500, especially with more than one child.

8. Opposed to boarding? A significant minority are opposed to the whole idea. The reasons given are the separation of the parent and child (the most common by far), child rearing is the responsibility of the parents not others, the cost and the island culture of many MK boarding schools. Others were not opposed, but would either not use boarding themselves or only use it as a last resort.

9. Opposed to home education? Few responses indicated this viewpoint, indicating widespread acceptance, but a minority did indicate opposition based on the following – too isolated, especially for older girls but also for teenage boys; too segregated from others, including the local population; time consuming and too demanding on the mother.

10. Does your team have regular educational progress reviews? A 50/50 split; most of those who said yes indicated that this was part of the normal annual or half-yearly formal staff review process, rather than a separate discussion.

11. Would you like to see a more formal procedure for educational progress on the field? Of those who responded, there was a 50/50 split again. Those who would like to see this are definitely looking for a stronger support structure to help them know they are on the right track.

12. Any staff needs other than in the schools? 9 responses indicated the need for home tutors, some of them urgent involving children in isolated areas where the parents were struggling with home education for their young children. Others included conference youth activities and a special needs tutor.

13. What ideas do you have for the MKEA to pursue that would help better serve our families?

a) How to make the best choices of home education materials from the large range of schemes available.

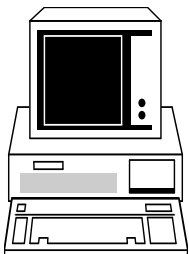
- b) A data base of all of the available home education options around the world, especially from countries where there is no history of home education to date.
- c) Suggestions for testing children using local schools or home education.
- d) Help and advice in maintaining a healthy parent/child relationship when using home education.
- e) Help and advice on broadening social interaction for home educated children.
- f) University and college information to help prepare for re-entry, including details on scholarships and funding.
- g) A data base of MK schools, including those with boarding facilities, along with a brief description of each one, so that parents can make more informed decisions.
- h) Career options information.
- i) Help us recruit MK staff from every sending country. A specific request to help recruit English speaking Korean teachers was also made.
- j) Re-entry information, including MK camps and informal "get-togethers" is needed.
- k) Helping children survive spiritually in a totally secular school culture

Special point L. Remember the non-Anglophones & keep any information circulated in plain, understandable English!

Observations

WEC is so diverse and has its teams scattered all over the world, therefore the picture is very varied.

- The MK school still caters for the largest single group of children, but the proportion of children in them is much higher in teams that have them locally, showing that it is probably the preferred option for the majority of parents and that availability is the key.
- Teams in Europe are the main users of the local schools, although the trend is increasing in parts of Asia, whereas no families in Africa are using this option because of the lack of resources and the huge pupil-teacher ratio; there are also some countries where this option is not available by law.
- Home education has grown considerably, and many children using other options now have been taught at home in the past. Support, where it is needed, for our families in home education is essential for the present and future well-being of all concerned. The reservations expressed about home education can be taken to actually promote healthy debate and thought about how to overcome them, rather than just be seen as negative criticism.
- Correspondence is a real option when our families come from countries with good schemes available at a reasonable price. The New Zealand school available to our children from there just for the postage costs is a prime example of this.
- Although only one response indicated correspondence school by internet, this option will surely increase in popularity in the near future. Quality and affordability will be key points.
- Boarding is probably the subject that provokes the strongest reactions, and a future edition of Educare will carry an article on this, to address some of the issues involved in a balanced way. One interesting feature was that opposition to boarding was much lower in the Bourofaye Christian School catchment area, indicating either that our people go there willing to consider it or that they have seen the positive effects of the school; probably it is a bit of both.



Qualifications in the International School

If you had total freedom to create the ideal MK international school, what would it be like? Here are a few insights into what mine would consist of.

Most importantly this would be a Christian school. Having been in Christian education since joining WEC, and having seen the positive results in so many lives since then with the vast majority of our former students actively serving the Lord, this has to be the absolute basic foundation for such a school. This would mean that all of our staff would be Christians and that Christian values would permeate the whole school life in terms of policy making, curriculum choices and classroom teaching as well as the devotional life.

It would also be a place of academic excellence that trained young minds to achieve their full potential and graduate on to become the best that they can be, whether that is a research fellow at Cambridge University, a self-employed gardener, an evangelist or any other imaginable career. However, the pursuit of academic excellence would not be allowed to prevent children from developing aesthetic and sporting skills and nor would it be allowed to turn them in to learning machines who miss out on childhood; the school would provide a fully balanced programme that would produce happy, well-educated and well-balanced graduates. The school would have fees that are affordable to all of the mission community families, including those from less well-supported backgrounds and nationalities. There would also be boarding facilities to make the school available to older children in isolated areas.

The emphasis in this article is on qualifications, so which ones would I choose and what would the school look like academically? In the lower school years there would be sensitivity to the different spelling conventions of the English language, as well as the national use of language and handwriting styles. The teaching would combine the strengths of different national systems using textbooks and other resources from all over the world to deliver the appropriate chosen curriculum. There would be good ESL support and teaching, combined with mother tongue lessons integrated into the timetable to reinforce the extra-curricular learning that our non-Anglophones must have. The policy on foreign languages would cover the entire age range and would normally include the host culture language, but would also be sensitive to the re-entry needs of the various nationalities.

The school would be accredited with an appropriate body from the USA and offer the SAT1; it would offer the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) at 16 and the International Baccalaureate (IB) at 18. To do this it would need to be large enough to have the specialist teachers needed to run the IB programme and also large enough to make it economically viable. Why these qualifications?

Accreditation and SAT1

- The largest single group, although probably not the majority, of children in the school are usually from the USA. For children of above academic ability, the IGCSE and IB system from 14 to 18 would be an excellent programme to follow. It is also worth observing that our international schools are fairly self-selecting in that parents who work in overseas mission are usually of above average ability themselves and so are highly likely to have children who are the same. However, for those of average and below average ability, there needs to be an alternative, less academically rigorous route which could be provided through a basic high school diploma. For this reason, the accreditation is required to verify the standard of what the school is offering. As SAT1 tests are so often required by receiving colleges, it would also be necessary to offer these. SAT1 tests are provided by the College Board in the USA and the tests are taken in English and mathematics. As they are not based on specific taught material, they provide a general indication of ability and potential university performance measured and regulated by an external body.

The IGCSE

- The IGCSE would provide the foundation for further study after 16 for students not aiming for the basic diploma. Some of the courses could also be integrated into the diploma on the basis of 2 credits for a pass above grade C. The advantage of the IGCSE is that it provides an internationally recognised qualification that is deemed to be a good parallel with other national systems at the age of 16. The IGCSE is provided by the University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) group and so carries with it the accreditation that comes from one of the world's top universities. As such, all European countries recognise it on the equivalence principle, as do all of our Anglophone sending countries. This international credibility, combined with a genuine international ethos in the teaching requirements and assessment make it a highly credible option for our schools. There are some who have expressed reservations about the level of difficulty of the exams and the practical problems of administering them. In response, all I can say is that I administered the IGCSE at Bourofaye Christian School for several years without a single problem. If students find the exams too difficult, it is because they are not ready for them. We had children of a wide range of

academic abilities, from average to well above average, who performed appropriately to their level and have moved on accordingly. How does it work?

- a) The courses should be spread over 2 years and consist of the concurrent study of between 8 and 10 subjects. These normally include English (Language and Literature), Mathematics, Science (usually either 2 IGCSEs in integrated science OR 2 or 3 separate sciences from Biology, Chemistry & Physics), modern foreign language, 2 or more optional (elective) subjects from Agriculture, Art, Child Development, Design & Technology, Drama, Food Science, Geography, History, IT, Latin, Music, Second foreign language, etc. The exact nature of the compulsory and optional subjects varies according to the school.
- b) The 2 year course of study must be unbroken, except in emergency circumstances.
- c) The timetable needs to be arranged according to these needs. An identical day timetable would not meet the requirements of these courses. Also the timetable should be fixed for the academic year, or if change is enforced, the same balance of time per subject must be maintained. The timetable needs to be either weekly, fortnightly or somewhere in between; weekly is the simplest one for organisation.
- d) Children at the age of 14 need to be ready to begin these courses, or they will quickly run into trouble. They need to be able to easily and fairly quickly write 500+ words of English prose; have a solid integrated mathematics foundation; have a good foundational knowledge of a modern foreign language and have completed at least 3 years of cross-disciplinary science study, including laboratory experience. My suspicion is that students who struggled in the IGCSE exam did not have this kind of foundation.
- e) The specifications for teaching given in the CIE documents are not negotiable. The exams cover all of the specified material and if teachers pick and choose, the students are highly likely to fail. This does not mean that CIE dictate HOW you teach, but rather that they specify WHAT material needs to be covered. From a Christian perspective at Bourofaye, this was never a problem, as the specifications are very reasonable and logical.
- f) After all of the coursework and exams have been completed, a grade is awarded ranging from A* to G. Only A* to C are accepted as general university and college entrance requirements and only A*, A or B are of a high enough standard for further study at 17 or 18.
- g) Although many countries will specify minimum requirements at IGCSE as general university entrance requirements, the IGCSE alone will not get students into university – it isn't meant to. It is the appropriate level at the age of 16 and is meant to be the platform for study at the IB level or equivalent.

The IB

- The IB has rapidly gained widespread international acceptance since its creation in 1968 and is recognised as an alternative route into higher education in all developed countries. In many North American universities it is accepted as an alternative to the first year of university and students can gain sophomore standing; in others transfer credit is awarded. If the first year of university can be by-passed then there is the possibility of significant saving on fees as well as the time gain. Another advantage is that it is offered in French, German and Spanish as well as English. It is deliberately designed to be a compromise between the breadth of some of the European and American systems and the depth of many Commonwealth ones such as those in the UK, Hong Kong and Singapore. How does it work?

- a) The IB diploma course lasts 2 years and consists of the concurrent study of subjects from 6 areas; 3 or 4 of which are studied to the higher level and the others at the standard level –
 - i. first language (this could be English, but also one of 80 others)
 - ii. second language,
 - iii. individuals and societies (one choice from anthropology, business and management, economics, geography, history, IT, philosophy and psychology),
 - iv. experimental sciences (one choice from biology, chemistry, physics, technology and environmental systems)
 - v. Maths and computer science
 - vi. EITHER the arts (including visual and performing arts) OR another option from one of the above 5 groups
- b) In addition to study of the above, IB students look at the theory of knowledge as a distinct subject and are also required to submit a 4000 word essay on a specific area of study. The choice of subject for this essay is very wide.
- c) External exams are offered in May in the Northern Hemisphere and in November in the Southern.
- d) The diploma is awarded and a total point score shows the level of achievement. Universities will specify a minimum number of points and may specify certain subjects within the IB, depending on the desired course of study. E.g.
 - The University of Western Australia in Perth requires 28+ points for life and physical sciences

- The University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia in Vancouver give first year credit for each Higher Level subject with a grade of at least 5 (although not all Canadian universities award credit for this; Alberta for example doesn't give it for the IB, but does for A level passes at A or B)
- Trinity College, Dublin requires a score of 32+ for Business Studies with French and French at Higher Level.
- Newcastle University in the UK requires a score of 35+ for Medicine with Chemistry at Higher level

The universities quoted above are only examples, all others state that they accept IB, but would specify the point score required for the desired course of study on request. Some teachers from Commonwealth countries who are familiar with the depth of study required for the A level are sceptical of the IB and compare the two systems unfavourably. The debate will no doubt continue, but IB students are getting into the best universities in the world and they are coping well there, given that they have studied their chosen university course to the higher level at IB.

Who lives in an ideal world?!

What are the problems associated with offering these qualifications? If they are so ideal, why do very few schools offer them? One simple answer lies in the cost. This kind of triple accreditation/registration is expensive. Accreditation with WASC or similar body from the USA costs money in transporting out the assessment team and administration. Registration with CIE for the IGCSE exams costs GBP1000 per year (approx. €1500 or USD 1800 at current exchange rates) unless the school has more than 100 exam candidates. Registration with the IB Organisation costs several times more. Multiple registration is therefore out of the range of most of our MK schools. Another reason is that many of our schools are too small to have a viable academic 16 to 18 programme. Running the IB or an equivalent with only 3 or 4 students from a school of 40 is not practical, because of the huge demands in terms of specialist staff. Others would be suspicious of the curriculum demands of the IGCSE and IB, concerned that if an outside body determines the material to be studied, the Christian ethos of the school would be compromised. All I can say to the last objection is that we never felt in any way compromised as a Christian school teaching to the IGCSE, and that there are few problems for our staff to infuse the material with their own Christian values. The other objections though force us to make some compromises away from the ideal.

If a school is too small for the IB or equivalent at 16 to 18, then it could stop at the IGCSE or aim just for the basic diploma with SAT1, or could integrate the two. This would allow the more academic children to leave at 16 to continue study elsewhere, but would still allow average students to continue for longer to 18 and gain a high school diploma. The IGCSE should still be part of the solution, because of its widespread acceptability around the world and also because it adds fixed academic rigour to the 14 to 16 curriculum.

If the school is big enough to have a viable academic 16 to 18 programme, but can't afford the IB as well, there are alternatives. A logical follow on from the IGCSE is Cambridge's AICE. This is a rival to the IB and is organised in a very similar way. The advantage it has is that once a school has paid for its IGCSE registration, it can have AICE as part of the same package. It is a recognised route into university and many North American universities such as Toronto offer transfer credit (credit towards the degree and possible earlier graduation) for it in the same way as for the IB. The one drawback is that it is not as well known as the IB and therefore not so immediately recognised, meaning that any university application procedure should be set in motion as soon as possible – a general common sense recommendation any way. Cambridge also offer the international A level, which would be another very suitable alternative and again a well-recognised university entrance route internationally, including the possibility of Sophomore standing (moving straight from school into the second year) or transfer credit in North America.

Some schools will only offer the American qualifications largely because of unfamiliarity with any other system. What is required here to match the IB or A level standard? These higher level qualifications are SAT2 and Advanced Placement (AP). These are more subject specific than the SAT1 and the exams are regulated by the College Board in the USA. SAT2 is scored in a similar way to SAT1, but the level is higher with more demanding tests in specific subjects such as Biology or Physics, something that requires teaching to given specifications. AP is offered in a wide range of subjects. The scope of an individual AP course is narrower than the same subject at A-level, IB or AICE as the time allocated to study is shorter, but the depth is the same on what they do cover. The AP is graded on a 1 – 5 point scale with 5 as best.

These are demanding courses and some US teachers still normally equate them with university level work as many universities will offer them during the freshman year in the US (as they may do with the IB). If an American student in high school successfully completes SAT2 and AP courses he or she should be able to go into the second year in many American universities.

Around the world various universities view these 2 qualifications as university entrance level e.g.

- Australia – SAT scores AND High school diploma AND at least 2 AP tests with a minimum aggregate of 9 in the relevant subjects for the desired course of study. (University of Sydney; some other universities have slightly lower entrance requirements)
- Hong Kong – requires High School Diploma AND SAT1 minimum score of 1100 AND SAT2 in at least 3 subjects one of which should be English writing AND AP in at least 2 subjects
- Singapore - requires SAT2 in writing, Mathematics IIC and another subject relevant to the desired study course. All exams have to be taken at one sitting. (It is taken as read that there will be good scores at SAT1 and in the graduation diploma)
- United Kingdom – High School Diploma AND SAT1 at 1200+ AND SAT2 at 1100+ AND appropriate AP tests at 3, 4 or 5.
E.g. Manchester University for Computer Science requires
High School Diploma with overall and grade 12 GPA of 3.0 AND SAT1 1250 or more (650 or more for Maths) AND Grade 5 in AP Calculus BC + grades 4,4,4 in three further APs to include Physics or Computer Science
This is typical of the requirements for different subjects in this university. Some universities are less demanding, but the principle of SAT2 and AP being needed holds good.
- Other European countries – follow a similar pattern to the UK and would require SAT2 and AP for university entrance. European countries tend to work to defined principles of equivalence; hence what applies as a standard for one country should (in theory) apply equally to another.

The French Baccalaureat

This is becoming an increasingly popular option; especially in the former French colonies of Africa and Asia where French is still widely used and the standards in some of the international/private schools are high. The Baccalaureat qualifications there, if they are passed in the appropriate subjects to a high enough grade can be viewed as an international equivalent to the IB, AICE, A-level or SAT2 & AP combination.

The same applies for Spanish or other major world language qualifications offered in international schools.

Choosing an International MK School for your children

The English saying is “the proof of the pudding is in the eating”. In other words, judge the school by the results that they produce rather than how well they project their image or sing their own praises in their own promotional literature. In judging the academic performance of schools look at the following

1. How well do the students perform in externally regulated examinations?
2. Does the school offer a balanced curriculum and a balanced spread of academic qualifications?
3. Do those students who are capable of going on to good universities go there?
4. Do the students who have graduated from the school still follow the Lord and are the children there being spiritually nurtured?
5. If the school claims that 90+% of its students go to college after graduation, treat this claim with scepticism. Probe a little further and ask **which** colleges and universities? In some cases large numbers of the students move on to sympathetic Christian colleges or even community colleges where entrance requirements are not so demanding. This is not a problem in itself if that is the correct level for the academic ability of the students. What is a problem is if students capable of going to Ivy League universities or Cambridge or Oxford end up in such colleges by default because of school policies and limited academic achievement.

Resources – Are you working with Korean children? A resource to help us understand their needs and culture better is available in an easy to read cartoon format in “Korea Unmasked” by Rhie Won Bok ISBN 89349 11786 and published by Gimm Young International. As far as I can tell this is only available in Korea, so ask a friend there to “mail order” it for you if you live outside of Korea. Price 9900 Won (about GBP5, €7.50 or USD 9 at current exchange rates) Well worth the money.

Comments – please send them in on any issue relevant to the articles in this or other editions. Comments on home education systems or on boarding are also welcome for future editions. E-mail them to SteveGill@mkea.freeseve.co.uk or if you receive Educare by post at 67 Budbury Tynning, Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire, BA15 1QE, United Kingdom.

Educare is a ministry of WEC International – reaching the unreached for Jesus.