Perceptions of children of international school (IS) educators: An exploratory study of third culture kids

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What can be learned about the life experiences of Third Culture Kids (TCK) children of IS educators who have been raised in IS outside their home country? Perceptions of Adult TCK were explored as they reflected on their experiences as children of IS educator parents. A public call to professional associations resulted in a database of potential participants from which six were selected according to: age 18–26, North American nationality, two parents employed in IS during child's adolescence, and current enrollment or graduation from university. Qualitative methodology elicited responses through guided interview and follow up questions which were sent and received via email. Four counselors with rich experience in IS were interviewed, for triangulation.

Four themes emerged from the six case studies: (a) extremely tight bonds and relationships within educator families; (b) ambivalence about life experiences; (c) sensitivity to multiple and intersecting roles in IS community; and (d) positive achievement, attitudes and adjustment.

Findings: (a) the plurality of roles is omnipresent; (b) the management of role plurality develops sensitivity to role diversity; (c) the intersection or blurring of roles causes ambivalent feelings, such as well being, advantage, security and happiness, and, confusion, awkwardness, angst and frustration. The higher the visibility of the parent the greater the negative feelings of the child, particularly in secondary school; (d) this family bond has a deeper dimension than for other expatriate families; (e) the participants are proud, aware and appreciative of their parents' careers; (f) the relationships forged with other educators function like a surrogate extended family; (g) the adjustment to university relocation may be due to a combination of factors; (h) attitude toward the host nationals comes from parent modeling and school profile; (i) the participants are high achievers and active in extra-curricular activities; 33% chose a career in education; (j) the IS orientation for new families has a long term impact on attitudes toward the sponsoring group.

Implications: Findings may help educators make informed decisions about an overseas career. They may potentially impact recruitment, retention of educators in international schools and orientation and counselling of all members of the international school community. They may help administrators, counsellors and colleagues better understand the

educator-family unit. Conclusions and recommendations may help inform relationships within the IS community constituents.

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Being intercultural: Young people, experiencing change and developing competence in an international school
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Despite the increasing mobility of some families, it is rare to find studies that examine the intercultural competence of young people within changeable and culturally diverse settings. The seventeen participants in this qualitative study attended an international school in south-east Asia that caters predominantly for multinational, multicultural and mobile families. The young people were interviewed about their perceptions of being international and intercultural. Analysis of the data focused on the intercultural competences used by the young people, and the social integration processes in which they are situated. It identified knowledge, attitudes and/or behaviour components that demonstrate their intercultural competences. These were abstracted and labelled as *change management, fitting in* and *perspective taking*.

The research also analysed the young people's perceptions of the processes they use to initiate and manage social relationships. The result is a model of social integration in a south-east Asian international school. It reveals the functions and interrelationship of these intercultural competences, and highlights the role of mindfulness and locus of control within this social framework.

The study presents two major findings. First, that change can bring about conditions, and operate as a process, that may create competence under certain circumstances. Second, that social integration processes may become more predictable and intercultural competences increasingly embedded, with multiple intercultural experiences. This research emphasizes that schools can support young people in managing challenging and difficult circumstances. In particular, operational conditions embedded in both the formal and hidden curriculum can nurture competence, even in dynamic situations. The findings have implications for existing theories of change and mobility, intercultural competence and cross-cultural adaptation.

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