

'THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS PHENOMENON IN THAILAND AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE'

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INTRODUCTION:

I am delighted to have been invited to share with you my perspectives on the current state of education in Thailand and in particular what I would call the International Schools phenomenon. My experience of education has been and indeed remains interesting and I hope that you find my reflections useful for your research. I began my teaching career as a Year 6 form teacher in Thailand when I was 17 and became the headmaster two years later at the same local Catholic school with 1,100 pupils. I taught for 6 years in three universities in the United States and just before I returned to Thailand in 1981, I was appointed a full time lecturer at University of California -Los Angeles (UCLA). The Regent's School, my latest venture, has been a labour of love. It has afforded me the privilege of running a two-campus international school with 1500 students in Thailand for the past 12 years. These experiences should allow me to give you what could be an insider's view of this fascinating topic. Let me begin my presentation by giving you some background regarding the National Education System of Thailand.

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1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

1.1 The Thai Education System

The current framework for Thailand's education is governed by the 1999 National Education Act and its 2002 amendment. The Act followed the 1997 Constitution's mandates. At this very moment the Constitution is being reviewed and amended by the interim parliament, appointed by the National Security Committee which just came to power on the 19th September 2006. It is expected that the amendment will mainly focus on sections concerning the political system.

The 2002 Education Act Amendment increased the provision of free state education to 14 years, consisting of 2 early years, 6 primary and 6 secondary years of schooling. All children aged 7 to 16 must be enrolled in basic education institutions, except those who have completed Year 10.

According to UNESCO, Thailand's adult literacy rate was 95.5% in 2000, 96.3% in 2005 and is estimated to be 96.8% in 2010.

The 1997 Constitution requires the decentralisation of administrative power to local governments. The 1999 National Education Act followed such a directive by decentralising education management to education service areas (ESAs) throughout the country. The objective was to increase participation from local governing units so that education could be managed effectively towards solving local problems.

The decentralisation is however, limited only to the implementation of policies and mandates set by the Education Ministry. In essence, besides setting the objectives, the Ministry is still responsible for planning, target and standard setting, budget appropriating, teacher training, school inspection and accrediting, performance evaluating and revising objectives,

1.2 Issues with the System

As in any developing country, the education system in Thailand has some weak areas which could be strengthened; in particular, teacher commitment and class size. Some may argue that the lack of quality teachers continues to be an obstacle but once one looks more closely at this whole situation, the lack of total commitment amongst the teachers is, I believe, far more serious. Although long-term benefits such as retirement schemes and medical plans are adequate, the monthly pay is insufficient to meet their day-to-day living needs; this in turn puts additional pressure on the teachers, and prevents them from being able to make a total commitment to their job. Most of them need to seek a second source of income which usually includes the teaching of evening and weekend classes. Although some classes have been reduced in size recently there can be no doubt that 35 to 45 pupils in a class is still too large for effective, interactive teaching. These two

areas of weakness, in particular, have contributed to the fact that the teaching tends to be centred around the teacher – a pedagogical method which is counter-productive to pupils' learning if one looks from John Dewey's perspective. Students have little or no opportunity to express themselves openly; rather they have to follow what the teachers say or instruct them to do. Students' individuality, initiative and creativity expressed through critical, constructive questioning are not generally welcomed by the teacher and are often regarded as offensive. Students have little opportunity to become involved in extra-curricular activities which would otherwise allow them to appreciate and adopt some desirable social values and attitudes. Values such as Internationalism, Democracy, the Environment, Adventure, Leadership and Service (in brief, IDEALS) – a fundamental philosophy of Round Square whose details I will discuss shortly. I honestly believe that it is these particular values that are so necessary for educating the younger generation. It is this set of IDEALS which form the catalyst that will allow our young people to become well-rounded citizens. There can be no doubt in my mind that there is a desperate need for some practical and workable approaches in Thailand that will educate the whole person and foster active, responsible, compassionate citizens.

2 THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS PHENOMENON IN THAILAND

2.1 Definition of International Schools

No simple definition of an international school exists. It is possible to state however that an international school is one whose students and staff are representative of a number of cultural and ethnic origins, where an internationally accepted curriculum is offered and where the ethos is one of internationalism as distinct from nationalism. Such schools: may serve a local and varied expatriate community of business people, diplomats and armed forces personnel;

and examinations of that country only are offered, only local teachers are employed, and where the ethos is national as distinct from international. In essence, these schools: serve principally the students of that nationality without any special support to foreign students; are usually located within the one country where they may be government or private fee-paying schools with a parent governing board; and may be also located overseas to serve their own expatriates such as the numerous American, British, French and Japanese schools,

'international schools' in this script.

2.3 Purposes of International Schools

As it has been stated international schools usually serve both a local and varied expatriate community of business people and diplomats. Although the majority of students in most international schools in Thailand are local students, some have more international students. Expatriate parents usually choose an international school which has a higher ratio of international students. They also choose only an international



Campus of The Regent's International School, Bangkok

may attract resident students from all over the world; are usually either proprietary schools, or are private schools governed by a board of trustees or directors consisting mainly of parents; and are mostly fee-paying and some scholarship-funded (such as the United World Colleges).

2.2 Multi-Ethnic / Multi-Cultural Schools

Multi-ethnic/multi-cultural schools in the USA and the UK are national schools whose students are predominantly from that one country, where the curriculum

many of which are funded and staffed by the national government at home, and some of which are private.

In Thailand, the American and British systems have predominated within the international school community and they accept all nationalities although other national systems are also represented, e.g. French, German, Japanese, Korean and Swiss but they tend to accept only their own nationality. Thai laws define these transplanted national schools as international schools for the simplicity sake but they are not defined as

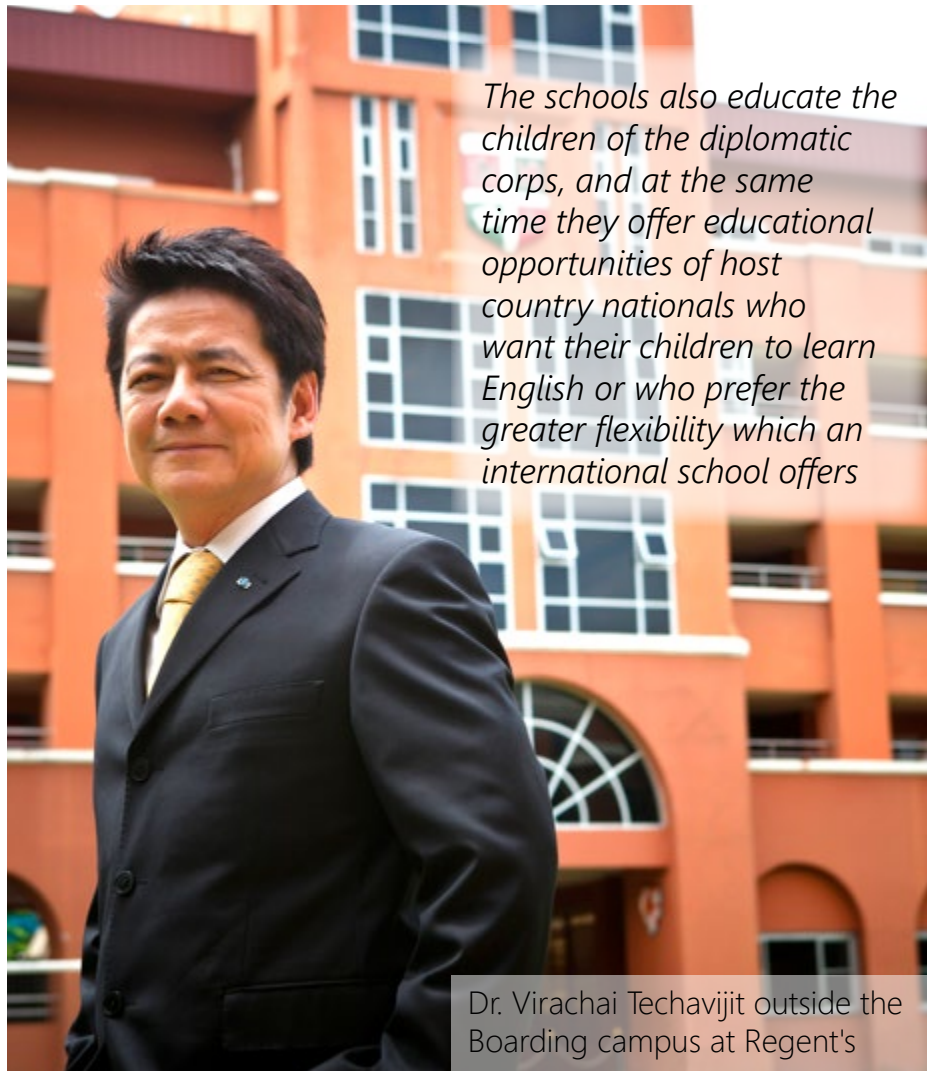
school that has internationally accredited standards, because it offers courses and qualifications that are transportable and equate to having a passport to higher education and because it might seem to be the best alternative within the country in which they have been posted. Parents may be very conscious of the need for their children either to return to a national education system or to transfer to the next international school in another part of the world, and they need to be sure of the appropriate curriculum and the right assessment procedures

that will facilitate any future move.

At a philosophical level, international schools are said to serve the purpose of bringing people of different cultures together in an educational environment which fosters social integration and thus promotes international understanding. Whether this hugely positive and tangible consequence of the increasing number of international schools in Thailand could be attributed to deliberate policy planning remains open to question!

2.4 Characteristics of International Schools

While there is undoubtedly a wide variation in international schools, it is true that many of them share a number of common characteristics. They are usually private and fee-paying, given that few countries subsidise education offered through anything other than their own national system. All in Thailand use English as medium of instruction. Other common characteristics really focus upon the fact that these schools serve the children of those international organisations and multi-national companies whose parents are called upon to work in many different countries and who are required to change their assignment at frequent intervals. The schools also educate the children of the diplomatic corps, and at the same time they offer educational opportunities of host country nationals who want their children to learn English or who prefer the greater flexibility which an international school offers over the national system. Another unique characteristic of international schools is their high turnover of teachers.



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Dr. Virachai Techavijit outside the Boarding campus at Regent's

However it has been suggested that the turbulence one finds in an international school with teaching staff coming and going can enhance the delivery of the curriculum, the idea fresh blood brings enthusiasm and a new dimension to learning, an excellent point to debate.

However facilities vary greatly from the lush campuses with their spacious sports fields, swimming pools, tennis courts and athletic tracks to those that only have some converted buildings or limited sports facilities. Some schools have impressive music and theatre facilities and others have digital overhead projectors and interactive whiteboards in most or even all of their classrooms. Some international schools hire a few native English speakers but a few hire only

native English speaking staff. School fees do vary considerably. However from a recent analysis on school fees posted on the web-sites of 7 of the largest international schools, one could be convinced that school fees are not correlated to the quality of education delivered. (Krungthep Turakit, Investment Weekly, 19-25 January 07, p.L5)

2.5 Curricula Found in International Schools

There are international schools of many different guises and styles, and, indeed, there is considerable diversity in international education. Yet there is strong common ground to most national and international schools in terms of the formally expressed curriculum. At the core of the curriculum in most

international schools lie English language teaching, mathematics and science, and beyond these are included the humanities or social studies, the arts and physical education. Information technology is making its way, in some cases, into the core of the curriculum. In most cases the structure of the curriculum is driven by externally adopted syllabuses, whether the nationally based such as the English IGCSE and GCE A level or the American Advanced Placement, or the International Baccalaureate (IB), an increasingly popular curriculum. However the mix of these has become more common as follows:

-English National Curriculum, IGCSE plus A Level or IB

-American curriculum plus AP or IB

-IB from Year 1 to Year 13 (PYP, MYP and DP)

2.6 Organisations International Schools Belong to

The International Schools Association of Thailand (ISAT) was established in 1994. Its principal raison d'etre is to act as a link between its 109-member international schools, on the one hand, and the Ministry of Education and the Office of the Private Education Commission in particular, on the other. Activities have been jointly organised to focus upon tackling problems in local schools, notably training Thai teachers of English. During the past year, ISAT has also been involved with the Department of Export Promotion in a joint effort to establish Thailand as a hub of international education in the region by extensively marketing international education both in Thailand and overseas. In addition to disseminating

information to its members on educational issues, its regular meetings provide a forum for discussion, debate and the exchange of views and information. The organisation of in-service training courses, particularly in the fields of cross-cultural management and Thai language teaching, also features highly on the list of ISAT's priorities. (www.isat.or.th)


The Federation of British International Schools in South and East Asia (FOBISSEA) promotes excellence, high achievement and good practice. It facilitates quality in-service training at reasonable cost to enhance the professional development of staff and provides opportunities for students, staff and parents of different cultures to come together for educational, sporting, artistic and cultural events, celebrating the diversity and the common bond of its member schools. (www.fobissea.org)

The Round Square Organisation (RS) is a world-wide association of 62 schools on five continents sharing unique and ambitious goals.

Although the membership is expanding, the Regent's School is the only school member in Southeast Asia. Students attending Round Square schools make a strong commitment, beyond academic excellence, to personal development and responsibility. This is achieved by participating in community service, work projects, exchange programmes and adventure activities, which can, and often do, take students half way around the world. Round Square is based on the theories of the experiential educational

philosopher Kurt Hahn who together with Alec Peterson -former Head of Oxford University's Department of Educational Studies, would later influence the concept of the IB curriculum. Hahn believed that schools should have a greater purpose beyond preparing young people for college and university. He believed that it was crucial for students to prepare for life by having them face it head on and experience it in ways that would demand courage, generosity, imagination, principle and resolution. As a result, he felt that young people would become empowered and develop the skills and abilities to be the leaders and guardians of tomorrow's world. Round Square schools are founded on a philosophy which embraces a series of six pillars or precepts which can be summed up in the acronym IDEALS. They are Internationalism, Democracy, Environment, Adventure, Leadership and Service. Students at Round Square schools make a commitment to addressing each of these pillars through exchanges, work projects, community service and adventure (www.roundsquare.org)

The International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968 as a non-profit educational foundation and the diploma was created in English and French by teachers at the International School of Geneva with increasing assistance from several other international schools. It is now delivered around the world in English, French and Spanish and sooner or later, Chinese, as was discussed at IB conferences in Singapore (2003) and Perth (2005) (www.ibo.org)

A photograph of a young woman with blonde hair, wearing a black top, holding up a large white sheet of paper. The paper features a hand-drawn mind map with a central cloud labeled 'Kids'. Numerous lines radiate from this central cloud to various handwritten words and phrases, including 'play', 'learn', 'fun', 'school', 'teacher', 'parent', 'friend', 'class', 'homework', 'test', 'exam', 'grade', 'subject', 'math', 'science', 'history', 'geography', 'art', 'music', 'sports', 'clubs', 'activities', 'projects', 'assignments', 'papers', 'essays', 'reports', 'presentations', 'debates', 'discussions', 'lectures', 'tutorials', 'workshops', 'seminars', 'conferences', 'symposiums', 'congresses', 'conventions', 'conferences', 'symposiums', 'congresses', 'conventions'. The woman is smiling and looking towards a group of children in the foreground, who are partially visible. The background shows a classroom setting with colorful decorations on the wall.

International schools are externally accredited to ensure that they meet recognised standards and follow agreed procedures.

2.7 Control and Standard

In Thailand, the Ministry of Education requires that all international schools are externally accredited to ensure that they meet recognised standards and follow agreed procedures. I have no doubt that this is true in other countries as well. Accrediting organisations widely known in Thailand include the Western Association of Schools and/or Colleges (WASC) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) for American based international

schools; Worldwide Education Services (WES) for British based international schools; and the Council of International Schools (CIS) for any international schools.

2.8 Causes of the Phenomenon

The growth in the number of international schools in Thailand has been nothing short of phenomenal after the government legalised Thai students attending international school in 1992. According to the Office of Private Education

Commission of Thailand the first international school was approved in 1959, then four more were approved to cater children of expatriates and Thai diplomats who served abroad. Other Thai children were prohibited to attend these international schools. Then in 1992 Thai Government finally gave the freedom to local parents in choosing schools for their children. Thus the number grew to 10 that year, then 38 schools in 1997, five years later in 2002 there were 67 international

schools, and by the end of 2006, the number soared up to 109. The major factors responsible for this growth are:

English Proficiency

In early days after the government passed the law allowing Thai children to attend international schools in 1992, English language proficiency was the principal reason for choosing an international school. Today it is still a common reason for leaving a local school. If the international school also offers specialist support to those children whose first language is not English then that is a very attractive feature for many parents.

Thailand in securing offers from world's top universities is widely known and has attracted many students from overseas to study in Thailand.

'Student-centred' preference

A value is placed on a western-styled education, particularly student-centred learning with a priority on critical thinking.

Social status

For many Thai parents, they perceive having their children in international schools is a means of either reinforcing social status or improving it. Some genuinely trust that their children will benefit from early networking

the US.

2.9 History / Religious Studies and Sex Education in International Classrooms

As a curriculum subject taught in an international setting, history, religion and sex subjects are undoubtedly three of the most sensitive areas of the curriculum. Blessed by the fact that Thailand has little or virtually no conflict in race, religion and culture, international schools in the country have fortunately had no unpleasant confrontational issues occur among their students. However sex education is different.

In principle, history teachers



Overseas students have the opportunity to appreciate Thai friendliness and hospitality and to learn about Thai culture.

An international environment

Thailand is host to many multi-national corporations, embassies and consulates, as well as regional and international organisations including United Nations related organisations

Regional accessibility

Thailand's geographical location serves as the gateway to South East Asia and the Great Mekong sub-region.

Successful leavers

The record of success of leavers of many international schools in

with other internationally oriented families' children.

Land of smiles

Overseas students have the opportunity to appreciate Thai friendliness and hospitality and to learn about Thai culture.

Affordability

Many Thai and Asian students as well as many European students choose to study in Thailand because the costs of tuition and living expenses are substantially lower than those in the UK and

must teach history in a balanced way and cannot and should not distort history to suit any nationality. In that regard history teachers must deal with, for example, World War I and World War II even when there are Germans and Japanese in the class. The teachers must present the facts. The best approach is to put the sensitivities aside. Americans could be equally sensitive to the Vietnam War. A history department in an international school should select topics which are indeed

international and which also reflect the region e.g. an international school in Southeast Asia would do well to deliver the International Relations course unit in IGCSE and for the regional study selecting the history of China would be appropriate.

Religion can also be difficult as in some countries alternative religions cannot be discussed, in others no acts of Christian prayers/preaching can be taught, but Thailand's constitution guarantees this freedom.

Teaching sex education requires careful consideration as to how open and detailed it should be. Some conservative countries may not even include it in the curriculum until much too late. In Thailand, international schools with higher number of western students tend to be more liberal than others. To some extent, conservative local culture does dictate the extent and openness of the subject, so sensible judgment is important, especially as there are almost always going to be a few Thai or Asian students in that class.

2.10 Parents' Expectations

Parents of international school children are clearly an important group of stakeholders. Parents want high academic standards for their child and the opportunity for their child to be able to receive an education that will be transferable to the next international school or take a set of examinations that will facilitate their passage into higher education. Parents also want their child to be happy, tending to base their choice of international school on 'process criteria' (related to human relationships) and smaller class size rather than on 'product criteria' (including,

for example, examination results) and crowded classroom. Although some Asian parents of children in international schools still prefer academic excellence or just visible improvement in English proficiency, rather than the IDEALS that I mentioned before, they are moving increasingly closer to the attitudes of western parents in wanting their child to become a well rounded person.

Different expectations between expatriate and local parents may be evident in relation to a number of factors including the nature of the curriculum. This is especially true if local parents are paying the fees personally and are less likely to be enthusiastic about, for instance, the resource-intensive sports programmes and school trips than might be the expatriates whose children's fees are being paid by an employer.

2.10 Conclusions

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the rapid expansion of the international school "industry" in Thailand is the fact that economic growth in Thailand and the effects of globalisation are the major factors that have contributed to this phenomenon. There are more expatriates living and working in Thailand who seek an international style education for their children. Also there are a

considerable number of more affluent Thai parents who want what they feel is a better education for their children. Instruction through the medium of the English language is a very attractive commodity for Thai parents who want their children to have the best possible access to the technological world of the 21st century. There are also Thai parents who would like their children to be involved in extra-curricular activities available in international schools. These activities, they now believe, can expose their children to appreciate important social values which will allow the young people to become well-rounded citizens. However, considering the current relatively less affluent economy complicated by many unfavourable social conditions, Thailand's education has done rather well and there are many good Thai schools. But one cannot deny the fact that more and more Thai parents are transferring their children to international schools which, they believe, can provide significant advantages for their children in today's ever more interdependent world.

I would now like to continue by telling you about a curriculum which for many schools throughout the world has become the backbone of their academic programme.



3 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IB CURRICULUM IN THAILAND



They believed that students should share an academic experience that would emphasise critical thinking, intercultural understanding and exposure to a variety of points of view.

3.1 Origin of the IB Curriculum

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968 as a non-profit educational foundation and the diploma was created in English and French by teachers at the International School of Geneva with increasing assistance from several other international schools. It is now delivered around the world in English, French and Spanish and sooner or later, probably Chinese. The Diploma Programme (DP) seeks to provide students with an unapologetically idealistic and truly international education -an education that encourages an understanding and appreciation of other cultures, languages and points of view.

It was borne of efforts to

establish a common curriculum and university entry credential for students moving from one country to another. International educators were motivated by practical considerations but also by an idealistic vision. They believed that students should share an academic experience that would emphasise critical thinking, intercultural understanding and exposure to a variety of points of view.

The IBO currently works with 1,920 schools in 125 countries to develop and offer three challenging programmes Primary (PYP), Middle Years (MYP) and Diploma Programmes (DP)) to more than 501,000 students aged 3 to 19 years. In the Asia-Pacific region, there are IB World Schools in over

20 countries, from Pakistan in South Asia to Mongolia in North Asia and to Guam, Fiji and New Zealand in Australasia. The Asia-Pacific region covers an area of seven time zones with more than fifteen different languages spoken.

3.2 Development of the IB Curriculum

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, usually referred to as the "IB" is an internationally recognised, pre-university curriculum that offers 16 – 19 year old students an opportunity to study for a diploma based on an integrated curriculum and international standards. There are currently 1443 secondary schools in over 125 countries authorised to offer

the IB Diploma Programme. The growth of the IB programmes has been exponential, especially in recent years and there are now 192 IB World Schools in 23 countries offering the Diploma Programme alone in the Asia Pacific region and another 100 schools offering one of the other IB programmes—the Middle Years Programme (Years 7 – 11) and Primary Years Programme (only around 30 schools so far offer all three). One misconception about IB is its supposedly elitist status. Interestingly, 43% of Diploma schools worldwide are government owned, although there is none in Thailand at the moment.

3.3 Aims of the IB Curriculum

The IB aims to promote the education of the whole person, emphasising intellectual, personal, emotional and social growth through all domains of knowledge. By focusing on the dynamic combination of knowledge, skills, independent critical and creative thought and international-mindedness, the IB espouses the principle of educating the whole person for a life of active, responsible citizenship. The underlying IB philosophy is the concept of education of the whole person as a lifelong process.

3.4 Contents of the IB Curriculum

The Diploma curriculum is traditional and broad: students take six subjects over two years in the major academic areas (native language, second language, social studies, experimental sciences, mathematics and the arts), which are then held together by three core components called Theory of Knowledge (TOK), the Extended Essay, and Creativity,

Action & Service (CAS). Of the six subjects, at least three and not more than four are taken at higher level (HL), the others at standard level (SL); HL courses represent a recommended minimum of 240 teaching hours, SL courses cover 150 hours. Active citizenship and global perspectives are encouraged in each area of the curriculum. 'Theory of Knowledge' (TOK) is a course which looks at how different cultures see things differently and puts (in educational parlance) the 'learner at the centre of education'. It examines different perspectives or 'ways of seeing' and should, if delivered properly, infiltrate the teaching of all six subjects. 'TOK' teaches the student how to think critically and compassionately – for themselves. The course is unique to the IBO, which recommends at least 100 hours of teaching time spanning the programme's two years. The ability to write a 1500-word essay on a philosophical topic and to make a team presentation on a global issue for instance is a major and significant aspect of the TOK course.

The second special component of the diploma is the Extended Essay, (EE) which is a 4000 word project based upon a student's particular area of interest and which is designed to introduce them to the rigours of academic research. The IBO recommends that a student devote a total of about 40 hours of private study and writing time to the essay. The essay permits students to deepen their programmes of study, for example by selecting a topic in one of their higher level (HL) courses. Or they might add breadth to their academic experience by electing to write in a subject not included in their

programme choices.

Thirdly, there's something called CAS, 'Community -Action -Service' in which students have to complete and satisfy internal requirements (externally moderated) in three areas; community work, action (such as team sports) and service (which could be local, regional or global) or they fail their diploma. CAS encourages and nurtures independent thinking skills, creativity, planning, imagination and initiative, all

from a 'giving and sharing' point of view and includes reflection and recording of their experiences. The CAS programme encourages students to share their energy and special talents with others. Students may, for example, participate in theatre or musical productions, sports and community service activities. Indeed, students might be brilliant academics, but if they don't enter into the spirit of CAS, they will fail. So for your most entrenched academic who has difficulty indulging in giving or sharing, or playing, or having fun making things, or making other people happy, the diploma forces them to recognise the importance of the context of their learning.

Through CAS, the IBO has formally recognized that 'learning that goes on outside the classroom is just as important as learning that goes on inside' and has placed that understanding at the centre of their academic programme. This is a critical point of divergence between the IB diploma and other pre-university courses. Students can (and have) achieved excellent scores academically, but have failed to receive their diploma because they have failed to satisfy the criteria of CAS.

The assessment of IB diploma performance is rather unique. The highest score for each of the six subjects is 7, thus the highest is 42. Performance in the central components Theory of Knowledge and the Extended Essay is measured by a matrix and up to 3 further points are available. The maximum point total possible is therefore 45. IB diploma students must also successfully pass CAS (Creativity Action, Service) and obtain no less than a total of 24 points if they are to be awarded the diploma.

charges. Great IB teachers will become great friends with their students and bridge the gap of mistrust created by a hundred and fifty years of intransigent and insular educational thinking. Instead of basing their approach on fear and distance, the ideal IB teacher are to demonstrate love, bravery, compassion and above all, integrity as any top quality teacher would. Schools flying the IB World School flag will be proud to do so and will celebrate and encourage excellence in their staff and faculty and cherish their parent body. In

should be a sense of unity and understanding from the earliest years to junior high school and senior high. If a school is new to the IB there is room for patience. If there is in-school resistance to any of what have just been described above, well the head of school will have to be really serious about it or the school benefits less from the full potential and the students suffer.

3.6 Comparative Perspective: the IB and the A Level

If you are a parent or a student looking at the variety of pre-



The IB curriculum demands teachers to be bold, innovative, imaginative and creative; fully committed to their students and always willing to go that extra mile.

3.5 Teachers and the IB curriculum

Now: What about the teachers? So much, as in all schools, depends on the quality and nature of teachers, but with the IB programmes, even more so. In principle, the IB curriculum demands teachers to be bold, innovative, imaginative and creative; fully committed to their students and always willing to go that extra mile. They need (and the IBO authorization recognises this as well) to be believers in the IB doctrine and be excellent role models for their

an IB school, teachers should not be afraid of telling each other, "Hey, well done!" or even sharing their own good practice with others. 'Showing off' -that ancient idea -doesn't come into it. Pele, the soccer legend, was once (allegedly) asked by the journeyman footballer, Peter Storey, "Why do you show off?"; "Because I can!" replied the master. You should see the IB philosophy shining through all aspects of an 'IB world school' culture. The school's own mission statement should reflect the IB mission statement and there

university offerings, then 'A' levels can make real sense. 'A' levels allow you to focus on specific areas of interest, persuasion and excellence at a reasonably mature age – usually 'A' level students are 16 when they begin their two year programme. For some students (and 'A' level advocates would point to this as a significant advantage over courses like the IB diploma) the opportunity to study their favourite subjects intensively is something that they have been waiting for since age 11. No longer are students

forced to study subjects they feel uncomfortable with, no longer are students with no inclination towards or propensity for a second language forced to study a subject that makes them uncomfortable and unhappy. No longer are students forced to engage in breadth of study at the expense of depth. No longer do students have to maintain a pretence towards some kind of ideological philosophy which maintains a bias towards liberal or socialist politics. If anything, 'A' levels are unashamedly student, parent and market-orientated. If they had a slogan other than being 'proof of academic ability', then maybe it would be something like 'we do what we say'. Naturally at the age of 16, do they really need to concern themselves with global politics? Is it a good idea to spend all their waking hours 'learning'? Why should they devote the best years of their pre-university life to community service? Getting into University is hard enough and surely the biggest argument in favour of 'A' levels is that they get the children where they want to be, where their parents want them to be, it costs less and they are not completely overwhelmed by additional and conditional aspects to the course. The student takes three, four, five 'A' levels and provided that they get high enough grades, they go to the University of their choice. It has been traditionally recognised that students who receive A's at A level are very much more prepared for university courses than IB students because they have specialised more in those particular courses. There is no doubt at all however, that academically the IB Diploma Programme is tough, with students having to take 6

subjects, three at higher level and three at standard level. Higher levels are equivalent to 'A' levels or 'AP' and there are the three central components of TOK, CAS and EE. As mentioned earlier, in order for students to successfully complete the programme, they have to obtain a minimum of 24 points put of the maximum of 45. Each of their six subjects is marked through a combination of internal and external assessment to a maximum of 7 points per subject. Then there's a matrix of marks for TOK (Theory of Knowledge) and Extended Essay that can provide a maximum of 3 more marks. CAS is pass/fail. There are a few other failing combinations – basically a student cannot afford to get under a '4' in any subject. It's tough, and students really have to 'Learn to Live to Learn'. It should be pointed out that if the diploma programme is too tough for some students, IB certificate programme offers flexibility.

Students can opt to take 'certificates' in a convenient number of subjects at either standard or higher level depending on ability and inclination and thereby forego the pressure of having to combine them all for the diploma qualification. A number of 'Certificates' are by no means unacceptable for entry to Universities around the world. With the competent delivery of the subject and the way the curriculum is designed, the programme should and does, foster a love of learning. For the school's part, their commitment is to bring a student through this rite of passage.

3.7 Round Square Curriculum

There are some international

schools including one in Thailand who, having already adopted the IB curriculum, needed to have stronger dose of educating the whole person for a life of active, responsible citizenship. They found the Round Square values that have fulfilled their need.

Both the IBO's and the Round Square's goal is to educate the whole person and foster responsible, compassionate citizens. But if I had to create the ideal profile for a young person, then he or she would be a fully immersed Round Square student, i.e. culturally sensitive, politically and internationally aware, generous, kind, courageous, and the sort of person you would definitely want as your prime minister or your MP. There is a credible explanation for that. Students follow the IB curriculum because they are required to do so or they will not graduate successfully, but students of Round Square schools follow the IDEALS values with pure interest and commitment without any demand for academic points and scores. Round Square's 6 pillar values, in my personal opinion, are the keys to solve Thailand's social issues as well as the world's global issues I will have to leave the detailed discussion of the Round Square for another time. For those who would like to study this unique approach to producing truly well rounded leaders, please visit www.roundsquare.org

3.8 Conclusions

Many international schools have opted to do the IB as they see it as an effective mechanism for offering a more international education and also a broader education than either the English A level or the American College Board Advanced Placement (AP)



courses. Many parents certainly believe that the IB Diploma Programme successfully incorporates the best elements of national systems, without being based on any one.

In our experience, the sixth formers at the Regent's School that we have come across, worked with, advised and chatted informally with, think that the IB is an extremely worthwhile course of study. They enjoy the challenge of the IB and the fact that it is a comprehensive programme that allows them much more flexibility than either A level or AP. They especially value the TOK, CAS and Extended Essay elements of the programme. Similarly, university students who recall their IB experience often make the comment that it was the IB that prepared them so effectively for university. The fact that they not only had to study a wide variety of courses, but also had to do a rigorous research project prepared them extremely well for all the challenges that university has presented them with.

I have met and worked with IB students from many parts of the world and over a period of time, one is struck by a marvellous realisation. The majority of them invariably have a wonderfully insightful, compassionate global perspective, combined with burning intellect and a great sense of humour, united by a common educational experience. When schools, organisations and businesses talk about creating 'Tomorrow's Leaders Today' and advertise that 'Anything is possible' or other such over-used homilies, the simple fact of the matter is that the IB Diploma Programme really supports these slogans – or at least we hope so! Now that the diploma is in its thirties, we have not only seen but continue to see the very positive outcomes of this remarkable programme. Having said all positive aspects about IB curriculum, I cannot help reflecting on the fact that there are still some educationists, school administrators and parents who would argue that A levels with the Duke of Edinburgh Award alongside is more than a

match for IB academically – and it costs much less to run! This point is particularly pertinent for parents whose child expresses a desire to specialise from the age of 16, and it is also an important pragmatic consideration for school administrators whose number of 6th formers is small. Before closing, may I suggest that further investigation, either qualitative or quantitative research, might usefully be undertaken, comparing the IB Diploma and A Level curriculum with Round Square 'Ideals' in order to explore which is "more effective" in producing "well rounded citizens". It should be noted, of course, that Dr. Kurt Hahn's educational philosophy is common to both IB and Round Square movements. Another related and important research topic might explore the impacts, both positive and negative, of international schools on local culture and values.

Thank you very much,
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