

Whitepaper

# DECISION-MAKING FACTORS IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLING CHOICES FOR GLOBAL FAMILIES



Advance Consulting for Education

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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When strategically managed, international schooling can provide significant, life- and career-changing benefits for the school-aged children of global families, families who regularly relocate to different countries and cultures for professional and employment purposes. International schooling also provides compelling areas of research for academics who study the effectiveness of efforts to educate children to be effective and successful citizens in a globalized world.

It can't be denied, however, that international schooling presents an added complication for global families, giving them additional factors to consider when plotting the education pathways for their child or children. Effectively managing the complexities of international schooling is crucial to the overall well-being of global families and their success in their international employment and careers.

This whitepaper explores decision-making factors in international schooling that global families need to consider. These factors include: logistical considerations (grade level, single or mixed gender school, school location, school size, and school facilities); using a local public school versus a private international school; language of instruction; teaching and learning systems; delivery modality and school type; supporting special learning needs; and developing global citizenship and a global identity. Different families may weigh these factors differently as they build education pathways for their child or children, however, all factors need to be fully understood in order for the families to make robust and sound decisions.

## ABOUT ADVANCE CONSULTING FOR EDUCATION, INC.

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Founded in 2001, Advance Consulting for Education, Inc (ACE) provides comprehensive, practical, knowledge-based solutions for education institutions, professional associations, non-profit organizations and for-profit education businesses. Our services include: research and policy development; program review and accreditation; educational technology evaluation; curriculum, assessment and resource design; professional development; and English language teacher training.

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# DECISION-MAKING FACTORS IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLING CHOICES FOR GLOBAL FAMILIES

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## INTRODUCTION

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Navigating international schooling experiences to build effective and cohesive education pathways for their children, from pre-primary school through to higher education, is a critical and intricate challenge for global families. Having more than one school-aged child adds to the difficulty; the best international schooling options for each child may be different. Transitioning from one host country to another, or from the host country back to the home country, presents yet another complication. Effectively managing the complexities of international schooling is therefore crucial to the overall success and well-being of global families; not having access to suitable international schooling options can result in global families turning down international employment opportunities.

In this whitepaper, we first introduce education terminology to ensure that a common understanding of the concepts discussed is established. We then explore decision-making factors in international schooling that global families need to consider and navigate with their school-aged children. The most obvious factors in any schooling pathway are the logistical considerations: grade level, single or mixed gender school, school location, school size, and school facilities. For global families, however, there are other factors that make building a cohesive and smooth schooling pathway for school-aged children challenging including: using a local public school versus a private international school, language of instruction, teaching and learning systems, delivery modality and school type, supporting special learning needs, and developing global citizenship and a global identity.

While it is clear that international schooling presents an added complication for global families, international schooling, if managed strategically, can provide significant, life and career-changing benefits for school-aged children. These benefits are introduced and then illustrated with a case study. Finally, we conclude the whitepaper with possible directions for future research on international schooling for global families based upon areas of tension, change and advancement.

## TERMINOLOGY

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For the purposes of our discussion, *international schooling* is defined as an education experience that takes place outside of a student's home country education system, in the host country in which the student's global family is residing. This term needs to be differentiated from the term *international school*, which is a school that does not use the local teaching and learning system

and the term *international education*, which is education designed to prepare students to function effectively across national boundaries. (See Hayden, 2006; Bates, 2011; and Hill, 2016 for further debate on terminology use.)

The education pathway of any student can be divided into levels depending upon student age and a corresponding norm of capability for that age. We use the term *pre-primary education*, which includes nursery school and kindergarten, for students aged 3 to 5 years. This includes nursery school and kindergarten. We use the term *primary education*, also known as elementary education, for students aged 6 to 12 years. We use the term *secondary education*, also known as high school, for students aged 13 to 19. Note that the age of the final year of secondary education varies by country, ranging from 16 to 19 years. We then use the term *tertiary education* for post-secondary or higher education. The discussion in this whitepaper mainly focuses on pre-primary, primary and secondary education. These are the levels of education for which children generally reside at home with their families, and which are thus the most challenging for global families.

Each education system is built around a *teaching and learning system* that encompasses all elements of education delivery, including subject-area specialization, curriculum, methodology, assessments, resources, technology, teachers and school leaders. All of these elements of teaching and learning are intertwined and mutually influencing. There are many stakeholders in the development and implementation of a teaching and learning system: the government, employers, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students. A *curriculum* is a set of documents that describes the objectives, content, timing, materials, activities and evaluation for a course of learning. It is the blueprint or roadmap for those who teach and those who learn. A curriculum can have a small, discrete scope, for a single course or subject, or a large integrated scope for an entire academic level. In discussions of teaching and learning systems, the term curriculum is often used to indicate the entire teaching and learning system. In this whitepaper, we will initially use the term teaching and learning system when introducing this perspective, but after the initial discussion we will use the term curriculum for the sake of brevity and simplicity.

*Public schools* are schools funded and managed by the government, using a curriculum developed by the government to meet the national or regional agenda with respect to education, citizenship and employment. *Private schools* are those funded by parents, donors and investors, and managed as a private corporation. They use a curriculum meeting the needs of their stakeholders, while also being approved by the government as meeting national or regional standards. Recall that an *international school*, is a private school which delivers a curriculum not aligned with the national curriculum of the host country, usually delivered in another language. Public and private schools, including international schools, may include any or all of the three levels of an education pathway (pre-primary, primary and secondary). With respect to global families, the term *home country education system* is used for the education system in the family's country of origin and the term *host country education system* is used for the education system in the country in which the family resides.

*Delivery modality* means how instruction is provided to student: in a classroom, at a distance through hard copy materials, online and blended, which is a combination of modalities. There are also four different *types of schools*: boarding schools, day schools, homeschooling and learning centres.

The words complex and dynamic are frequently used when discussing choices in international schooling that global families face, to emphasize that any decision-making on international schooling is not easy, simplistic or static. The decisions that parents need to make do not exist in isolation of one another. A decision on one factor will impact the choices available for the other factors. The decisions are also dynamic; a decision on one perspective may change over time as a child moves through an education pathway. Finally, the decisions are tied to context, the location in which the global families reside. The context may have many regulations for education, or few regulations. It may have many schools or few schools. It may have a highly competitive school landscape or a landscape in which there is too much supply. These contextual characteristics either complicate or ease the decision-making that global families face.

Figure 1 below provides an overview of the complexity of international schooling for global families to serve as a starting point in understanding the international schooling factors that global families need to consider. We will discuss each of these factors in turn throughout this whitepaper, with the exception of school logistics. School logistics, while a practical and important factor, are quite straightforward and therefore don't warrant discussion.

FIGURE 1: INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLING DECISION-MAKING CHECKLIST

*School Logistics*

1. What education level(s) do you need?  
•pre-primary •primary •secondary •tertiary
2. Do you want a single gender school or a mixed gender school?
3. Do you need a school close to your home?  
•Can you drive your children to school?  
•Do you need a bus system (public or provided by the school)?
4. What size of school do you want?  
•large •medium •small
5. What facilities do you want?  
•playing and athletics fields •swimming pool •cafeteria •theatre •library
6. What extra-curricular activities do you want?

*Public Schools versus Private International Schools*

7. What are your public school options?
8. What are your private international school options?
9. What is your budget with respect to tuition if you select a private international school?

*Language of Instruction*

10. What language of instruction do you want?  
•the local language •your first language •English •another language
11. Do you want unilingual, bilingual or multilingual instruction?

### *Teaching and Learning*

12. Do you want subject-area specialization?
  - science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) •liberal arts •creative arts •sports
13. What curriculum do you want?
  - your home country •your host country •American •British
  - other English curriculum (Australian, Canadian)
  - an internationally mobile curriculum (International Baccalaureate, Montessori, etc.)
14. What methodology do you want?
15. What type of assessment do you want? •formative (project) emphasis •summative (exam) emphasis
16. What resources do you want to see used in the classroom?
17. What uses of technology for educational purposes do you want to see in the classroom?
18. What type of teacher do you want?
19. What type of school leadership do you want?

### *Delivery Modality and School Type*

20. What delivery modality do you want?
  - classroom •distance •online •blended
21. What type of school do you want?
  - boarding school •day school •homeschooling •learning centre

### *Special Needs*

22. Does your child have special needs?
  - learning •behavioural •physical •emotional
23. Do you have a recent assessment of those needs?

### *Global Citizenship Education*

24. What underlying approach do you want the school to have with respect to global citizenship education?

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## EXPERIENCES OF REAL GLOBAL FAMILIES

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Short case studies based on real global families have been integrated into the discussion of some of the decision-making factors in international schooling. While the case studies primarily illustrate one particular factor in action, they also involve other factors, further demonstrating that the factors are all interconnected and mutually influencing. The case studies demonstrate how individual global families weigh the decision-making factors differently depending upon their circumstances and needs to make international schooling work for their children.

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS VERSUS PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

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Depending upon the policies of the host country, global families may or may not have access to public schools. If available, public schools provide a cost-effective way for children to integrate into the local culture, build sustaining and accessible social networks, and learn a new language. Challenges may arise, however, if the children are not proficient in the local language and the parents do not want the children to learn it. There also may not be alignment between the teaching and learning system of the home country and host country, resulting in the children struggling to adjust to new curricula, teaching methodologies and assessments. That said, public schools often present a viable option for global families.

### **The Kuiper Family**

*We are originally from South Africa. At the time of our first international move our son, Mark, was 16, our daughter, Lisa, was 14 and our son, Richard, was 6. We accepted a two-year contract with a multinational company in a small city in Sweden. We had no option to enroll the children in our home country curriculum. This was simply not available. But the public school system provided us with really good options. Richard attended the local primary school. The company that brought us to Sweden had negotiated with the school to have embedded classes for the international children. There was a lower level class and a higher level class, so there were multiple grades in each class. Richard was able to continue with his primary education in English, following a British curriculum integrated with elements of the Swedish education system. This worked well for him. Our other son, Mark, was also fortunate. The local high school offered an International Baccalaureate program for both Swedish and expatriate students. Mark really enjoyed the project-based approach in this program. On the other hand, our daughter Lisa thought that spending two years in Sweden would set her back in her high school education. She elected to stay in South Africa to keep the continuity in her education. We were not happy, because it split our family, but we understood her choice.*

*When we returned to South Africa, there were challenges for both Richard and Mark. For Richard, he was moving from a child-development oriented and project-based curriculum to a content-based and exam-centred curriculum. We knew he would struggle with the transition so we put him back one grade. For Mark, there was the same issue of moving into an exam-centred curriculum. And there was also a second language course requirement issue. The education system in South Africa required students to have proficiency in Afrikaans in order to graduate, and he had lost his proficiency while he was in Sweden. So, with him, we put him into a college program to get his high school equivalency.*

*Our second international move, six years later, affected Richard. Mark and Lisa had finished their schooling by that time. Richard was 14 when we moved to New Zealand. In New Zealand public schools, students are placed into grades based upon their age and provided with any required academic support. So, Richard moved forward a grade, negating the move we had made when we returned to South Africa to put him back a grade. He really benefited from the flexibility of the New Zealand system. There were also subject options that he would not have had in South Africa.*

The alternative to public schools is private international schools. International schools vary significantly based upon their tuition price point, size, facilities, language of instruction, teaching and learning, delivery modality, and status and purpose. International schools have traditionally been populated by the children of global families to eliminate the need for the children to transition into the local education system. Increasingly, however, local families are also selecting international schools for their children, if it is permitted by their local governments.

There has been significant growth in the number of international schools worldwide, particularly in schools using English as the language of instruction. The ISC Research 2017 Global Report, based upon 2016 statistics, puts the number of English language international schools at 8,600 with an enrollment of 4.5 million students. This is a 344% increase in the number of schools and a 450% increase in the number of students since 2000. This growth is expected to continue, with estimates for 2026 being 16,000 schools and 8.75 million students. It is interesting to note from the ISC Research report, that while over 2,000 cities round the world have English language international schools, the growth is not evenly distributed. There are 593 English language international schools in the United Arab Emirates alone, with an enrollment of 600,000 students. There has also been significant growth in the number of English language international schools in China and India, as well as the emergence of new markets in Myanmar, Peru, and Colombia. (ISC Research, 2017)

Unfortunately, there is no global statistical tracking of the total number of international schools with languages other than English. Anecdotally, the same rapid growth is not evident in these international schools as has been seen in English language international schools. These schools cater almost exclusively to global families from the countries in which the other languages are spoken.

The growth in the number of English language international schools has been driven on the supply side by an innovative, robust and well-funded for-profit international education sector. It has been driven on the demand side by growth in the number of global families requiring international education, by the number of local families wanting an international English language education for their children, by governments acting strategically to attract multinational companies, and by multinational companies looking for new markets in which to expand. The lack of quality international schools can be a deterrent to multinational expansion into a host country. To alleviate this deterrent, host country governments and multinational companies strategically invite investors to set up international schools in areas where many global families are located or will be located. (Brown & Lauder, 2011; Taylor, 2015; Walker, 2015; ISC Research, 2017).

Tensions around education may exist in some host countries with large numbers of global families and a correspondingly large number of international schools. (Taylor, 2015) Local parents may want their children to attend international schools, because they see these schools as offering high quality international education, the opportunity to learn another language, and career and social mobility possibilities. (Song, 2013) However, local governments, cognizant of the socializing and citizenship building purposes of education, have varying policies towards local student enrollment in international schools. Some host countries, prohibit local students from attending international schools, in which case international schools are exclusively populated by children from global families. Some host countries have a cap on the number of local students who can

attend international schools. Finally, some host countries, have few or no restrictions on local student enrollment in international schools (Brown & Lauder, 2011; ISC Research, 2017).

There are multiple price points for international schools, catering to multiple global family salary levels, from executive to front line worker salaries. In some international contracts, tuition for school age children is part of the benefits package offered to global families. This is increasingly rare, however, as international contracts become less lucrative and as more people work internationally independently and so have to bear the education costs themselves. At a certain salary level, depending on the cost of living, it is not financially feasible for global families to enroll their children in international schools. In these cases, if access to the public school system is not an option, the global families split, with one spouse accepting the international assignment and one staying at home with the children. Alternatively, the children are left at home with grandparents while the parents work internationally. Family-splitting because of the costs of international schooling is the reality of global families at the low end of the global labour market: manual labourers in construction, manufacturing, agriculture, oil and gas; drivers; child care workers; cleaners; and house keepers. While the costs of international schooling are prohibitive to these global families, the emotional costs of splitting their families cannot be measured.

#### **The O'Reilly Family**

*We are Irish and lived in Japan when our daughter was young. We were very fortunate when selecting her nursery school and kindergarten, because, in neither case did we have to factor cost into our decision. My employer paid the education costs. We were lucky as schooling was very expensive.*

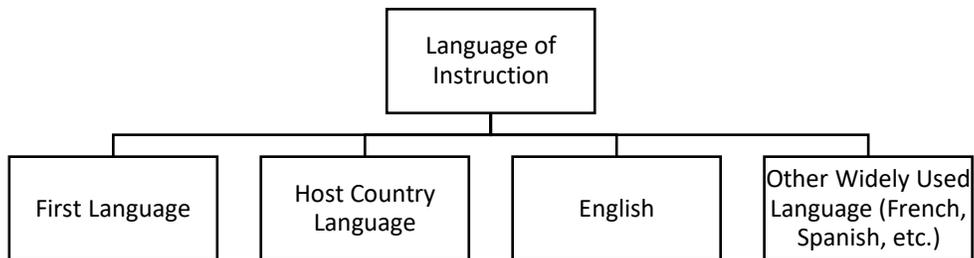
*When we chose our daughter's kindergarten in Tokyo we more or less just went for the best. It was where a member of the royal family had been. It had a good reputation and was a short walk away. It had a good mix of international kids and Japanese kids. We had discussed sending our daughter to a Japanese school but once we opted to send her to an international school the decision about which school to choose was more or less a no brainer. Of course, when we checked it out if we hadn't liked it we would have changed course but that didn't happen.*

*Selecting her play school before her kindergarten was more challenging. We wanted one that didn't have too long a day and didn't overly stress academics. There are plenty of schools and parents in Japan who want kids to start doing calculus in nursery school. We also wanted a school where we liked the feel of the place. There were a number of schools we had trials in before selecting one that really was a play school. It had only about five teachers and maybe 30 kids.*

## LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Language acquisition research has firmly established that literacy in the first language is crucial to the development of literacy in subsequent languages. (See Koda, 2008 for an overview of the research). Subsequent academic performance is then built upon both first and second language literacy. Language of instruction is therefore a crucial perspective for global families to consider in their international schooling decision-making. Unfortunately, access to first language education can be limited for global families, depending upon their first language. If first language education is not available, global families need to navigate language of instruction choices. They also have to support first language proficiency development in the home and outside of school.

FIGURE 2: LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION CHOICES



If the global families' first language is not available for their children's education, the next language of choice is usually English. Recall from the previous section that the number of English language international schools far exceeds the number of international schools with other languages of instruction. These statistics are not surprising given English's current position as a global language and its close relationship with the economic, political, military and cultural forces driving globalization. (See Crystal, 2012 for a good overview of English as a global language.) English language education is attractive to global and local families; mastery of English provides their children with access to more and better jobs upon completion of their education.

Despite the popularity of English language international schools, there are reasons for global families to choose schools with other languages of instruction. Parents may want their children to learn the local language and make friends locally, in which case they will select the host country language as the language of instruction. Or they may have ties to another widely used language such as French or Spanish, which leads them to select one of these languages.

### **The Weber Family**

*We are American and had an international assignment in Italy. When we arrived in Italy, I realized that I wanted my children to have a unique experience while being in a different country. You hear that children pick up languages much faster than adults so I asked about local Italian immersion schools. I figured that because my children were four and almost three at the time, the transition back to the US after our assignment in Italy would be easy for them to manage.*

*I contacted two schools, both of which had a director who spoke English. We visited one of these schools. I felt very welcome. I could see right away that an experience in this school would give my children and family the opportunity to learn the Italian language and culture. I also felt that we could share our language and culture at the same time.*

*My children attended this school, a school that followed the Froebel methodology, for three years. We enjoyed it, all of us! My son Samuel was with more Italian students than my daughter Maria. He actually only read in Italian when we left Italy. He finished the 1st grade there. He received high marks and was one of the best students in his class. His teacher commented that he sometimes understood Italian more than the Italian students! Maria's kindergarten class was 70% American so the children often spoke English to each other but they were solely instructed in Italian.*

*One aspect of the Froebel approach is to embrace the traditions and cultural experiences for Italy, the US and around the world. The students learned songs or completed activities and crafts for holidays in many countries around the world. The school celebrated Italian holidays as well as those important locally in the city we were in. Parents were welcome to observe and help out which was fun for me.*

*Once we knew we were headed back to the US, I sat down with the kids' teachers and school director to review their transcripts and to compare them to what the kids would be expected to know for the US. For Maria it was easy because she was going to be attending kindergarten in the US. Any instruction she had received in Italy was a bonus. For Samuel it seemed the work he completed in Italy would transition well. And it did. And he was reading in English in no time. Of course, English being his first language was helpful! I only needed to make sure that the school here in the US understood that the kids had not attended an international school but a full immersion school. Again, with them being so young, my idea was that an immersion experience would only be helpful and would enhance our time in Italy. It was definitely a good decision!*

In addition to selecting the main language of instruction, global families may have the option of unilingual, bilingual or multilingual education. Unilingual education is self-explanatory. Bilingual education alternates between two languages of instruction, either by subject, teacher, day of the week or time of day (morning versus afternoon). Multilingual education, in three or more languages, can similarly be divided by subject, teacher, day of the week or time of day. Once again in response to globalization, bilingual and multilingual education are increasingly popular. A specific bilingual and multilingual methodology for primary and secondary education in international schools, Content and Language Integrated Learning or CLIL, has been developed to support the systematic and deliberate pairing of subject content study with language study. (See Garcia, 2008, for an overview of bilingual education and Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010 for an overview of CLIL).

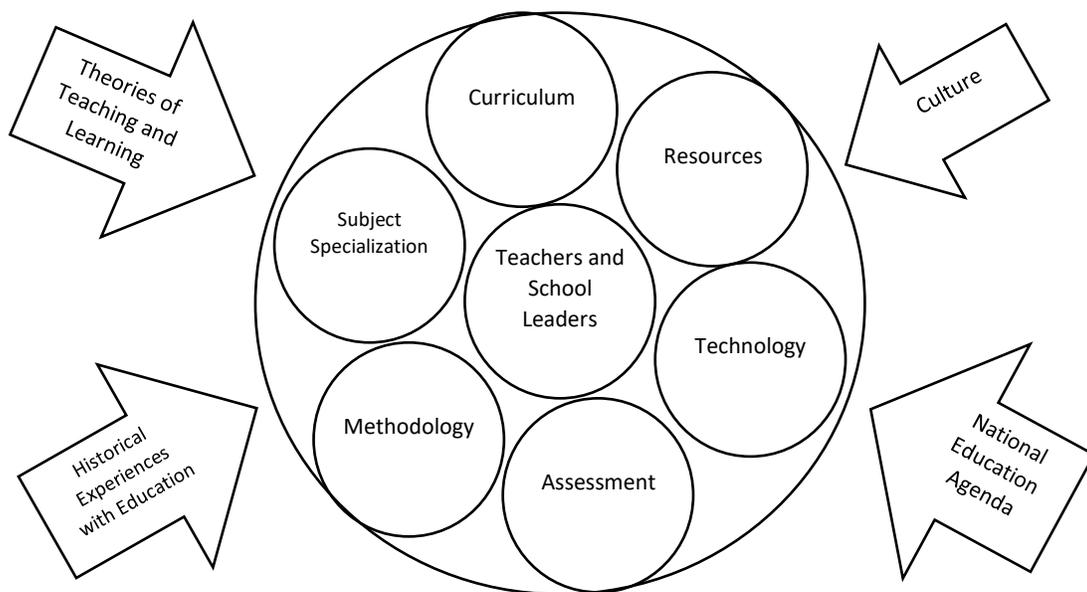
Through strategic decisions around the language of instruction, global families can help their children build proficiency and confidence in multiple languages. They can also help their children become comfortable with the ambiguity of functioning in another linguistic and cultural context.

On the other hand, students who struggle with their first language literacy will need extra support if education in their first language is not available.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING SYSTEMS

Recall that a teaching and learning system comprises all elements of education delivery, including subject-area specialization, curriculum, methodology, assessment, resources, technology, teachers and school leaders. There are also external influences on teaching and learning systems that lead to variation including culture, theories on teaching and learning, a country's historical experiences education, and a country's national agenda with respect to education.

FIGURE 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING SYSTEMS



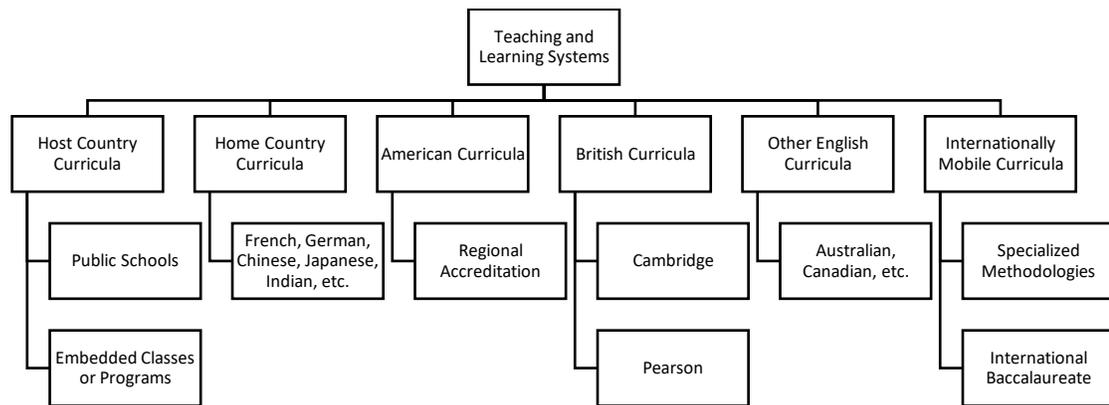
As a result of the internal and external influences on teaching and learning systems, some systems are very similar to each other, while others are significantly different. One perspective global families need to consider, then, when making decisions about their children's international schooling are the contrasts between the teaching and learning systems they are moving from and to. Some key system contrasts they need to consider are: exam-focused versus child-development focused; teacher-centred versus student-centred; knowledge-based versus application or performance-based; STEM-focused versus liberal arts-focused; and rigid education pathways versus flexible education pathways. This list of contrasts is by no means exhaustive.

Given this variation, global families generally seek to limit the number of teaching and learning systems to which children are exposed. With each system change, children's learning can be significantly disrupted as they adjust to new expectations and behaviours. Children may need to be held back a year if the content of a new system is in a different order from the old one, if the new system emphasizes exam performance while the old one emphasized child development, or if the new system has strict education pathway requirements while the old one was more flexible. In

the reverse situation, children may find that their new teaching and learning system is not challenging enough. Challenges aside, however, some global families may actually take advantage of the availability of different teaching and learning systems, to find the system which best suits their children.

A significant driver in the variation among teaching and learning systems is the curriculum, which forms the core of what teachers do in the classroom. Thus, the teaching and learning system choices are often labelled according to the curriculum they are built around.

FIGURE 4: TEACHING AND LEARNING SYSTEM CHOICES BASED ON CURRICULA



The first potential curriculum choice, the host country curriculum, is one open to global families in countries that allow them access to the public school system. Some public school systems also offer embedded classes for global families; the students attend the local school, but take separate classes in a hybrid curriculum that is designed for international students. This curriculum option is usually seen in locations with a strong public education system and a significant presence of multinational companies.

Once global families choose international schools, there is a wide range of curriculum options. The first of these options is a school using the home country curriculum. Interestingly, this option ties in to the original purpose of international schools; they were first designed to provide global families with access to the home country curriculum in a host country. The students can then transition smoothly from school to school when their family moves to the host country and they can transition equally smoothly into the higher education system in their home countries when they graduate. Unfortunately, the home country curriculum choice is only available to students whose home country has the resources to provide international schools for their global families. In addition to American and British schools, which will be discussed shortly, there are international schools based on the French, German, Chinese, Japanese and Indian curricula; these are all countries with a strong global presence and a large number of multinational companies. As an example, there are 495 French curriculum schools in 135 countries, operated by a national public agency, L'Agence pour l'enseignement français à l'étranger (AEFE), either through accreditation, contract or direct management. As another example, there are 140 German curriculum schools, German Schools Abroad, supported by Federal Republic of Germany's Central Office for Schools

Abroad (ZfA). These international schools are located in major urban areas with large numbers of global families from the specified home countries.

### **The Frostega Family**

*I am Hungarian and my husband is French. We have two daughters. We have had international assignments in Morocco and Dubai, with a stay in France between the two assignments. We chose to educate our daughters in French. First, my husband is French and second, our daughters started school when we lived in Morocco, where French is widely spoken. Also, the French international school was the best of the affordable international schools. My observation is that French international schools are very strong, with a very high level of academics, I think because competition is strong.*

*When we moved from one country to another we always chose the French international school, so in terms of academics there were no problems with our moves. The biggest advantage of the French curriculum is that it is the same program everywhere in the world. If you close a textbook on page 78 in Casablanca, you open it on page 79 the next week in Dubai. There is no adjusting to new teaching and learning for the students who move from one country to another. When we moved, our daughters continued with the same program in another country.*

*There are some challenges that my daughters have found with the French international schools. In high school, they believe in providing students with detailed negative feedback to motivate them to work harder. For example, they will say, "You don't work enough", "You will never succeed", and so on. My older daughter had no self-confidence at one point, so we worked with a counselor to help her increase her confidence. My younger daughter, on the other hand, copes well with this type of feedback. She just ignores it all.*

*I don't remember any specific challenges when our daughters were in elementary school. When our daughters moved to high school we found that the teaching of the math and science subjects assumes students will also have private tutoring after school. The expectations in the subjects are very high and the scheduling in the program is very tight. The teachers have no time to teach the concepts at the level of detail required for the exams. My older daughter is very bright so she managed the math and science subjects without private tutoring until the very last year of high school. During her final year of high school, however, we had to have a math tutor for her.*

*We did have one strange challenge here in Dubai with the list of school supplies. The school has a very specific list of supplies required for each subject. Students require notebooks and covers, papers and folders in very specific colours and sizes. These are impossible to find in Dubai. In France and in Morocco it was no problem, but here the items are only available in the French bookstore for five times the normal price. And they are only available at the beginning of the school year. It is a funny challenge to have.*

*If I think back on all the moves we made, the only problems I remember are social. My daughters had to adopt to a new environment and find new friends. The older my daughters were at the time of the move the more difficult it was socially for them.*

*We have run into another problem, however, now that my oldest daughter just finished high school. She wants to study medicine at university. We didn't want her to study in a French university, because we think the challenges with the negative feedback will continue and be magnified. We decided she would do her tertiary education in Hungary. However, she didn't have the subjects needed to get into university in Hungary because those subjects were not a part of the French schooling system. Right now, she is in Hungary to get those subjects that she didn't do and then she will start university.*

When the home country curriculum is not available in the host country, global families have more complex decisions to make. They can leave their children in their home country curriculum by splitting the family up with the children staying in the home country. If they want to keep the family together, global families can homeschool using a distance or online curriculum from the home country. Alternatively, they can choose an international school in the host country that uses a completely different curriculum and then manage their children's transitions between the two curricula. None of these choices are easy to manage.

### **The Takahashi Family**

*I work for a Japanese multinational automotive company. I have had placements throughout Europe, although I am now back in Japan. My wife and I chose to not take the family abroad with my international assignments. When I was first offered an international assignment, our two children were in middle school. My wife and I felt that taking them out of the Japanese school system would negatively affect them all the way through high school and university. Entry into high school is dependent on your performance in middle school and entry into university is dependent on your performance in high school. Disrupting that process would be too difficult to repair. Throughout all of my international assignments, my wife stayed in Japan with our children. This was not easy for us as a family, but we felt that it was the only choice we had for their education.*

When global families choose to use a completely different curriculum, they may have several choices: an American curriculum, a British curriculum, another English-speaking country's curriculum or an internationally mobile curriculum such as the International Baccalaureate (IB). In the total of 9,000 English language international schools cited earlier, approximately 25% follow an American curriculum, 45% follow a British curriculum, and 21% follow one or more of the International Baccalaureate programs (ISC Research, 2017; Council of British International Schools, 2017). The remaining schools follow other English language curricula such as Australian or Canadian.

English language international schools labelling themselves as American may use one of a number of American curricula available for use outside of the United States. American curricula are accredited by regional American accrediting organizations, each with varying levels of status and prestige. The designation of an international school as *American* thus encompasses wide variation in all elements of teaching and learning. There is less variation in the British curricula. At the primary level, there are two main curricula, the Cambridge International Primary Programme from the University of Cambridge International Exams and the International Primary Curriculum and International Middle Years Curriculum from Fieldwork Education. At the secondary level there are also two main curricula: the International General Certificate in Secondary Education (IGCSE) from the University of Cambridge International Exams and the Edexcel IGCSE from Pearson.

Internationally mobile curricula are not associated with a specific country's education system. This type of curricula can be divided into two groups. The first group are those whose specialized teaching methodologies, based on specific theories of child development and learning, have been spread globally through schools bearing the name of the methodology. Examples of curricula in this group are Montessori, Waldorf and Froebel. These curricula are usually delivered in the host country language, by teachers trained in the methodology. Methodology-based schools are a good choice for global families who want to take a child development approach to their children's education, particularly at the primary school level, and who are flexible with the language of instruction.

The second of group of internationally mobile curricula are those focused on international education; their purpose is to graduate students with the knowledge and competencies needed to be successful in a globalized world. These programs are generally delivered in English, but are also available in other languages. The most widely known curriculum in this second group is the International Baccalaureate or IB. The IB was developed by a non-profit educational foundation, to provide students with project-based education to build the capability to function effectively in different cultural contexts. There are four levels of IB curricula, covering the entire education spectrum from primary to secondary. Most schools only offer the higher level Diploma Programme covering ages 16 to 19 years rather than the entire suite of curricula (Bunnell, 2011). Schools approved to offer the International Baccalaureate are called IB World Schools. There are currently 4,783 IB World Schools, offering 6,395 programs. In the five years from 2012 to 2017, the number of IB programs offered worldwide grew by 39.3% (International Baccalaureate, 2018). Interestingly, the IB is no longer the exclusive domain of international schools; public schools are increasingly offering the IB to prepare local students for success internationally (Bunnell, 2008; International Baccalaureate, 2018).

Given the range of teaching and learning system options available to global families selecting the system that best matches the needs of students can be difficult. In addition to the above pure systems, some schools offer multiple options or hybrid options, to provide global families with even more choices. Many families start with the end in mind with the teaching and learning system, and its corresponding curriculum, that is going to allow the students to pursue their educational and career goals.

### **The Murray Family**

*We have a son, Connor, who was going into Grade 10 when we accepted an international assignment in Oman. A significant factor in our school decision for Connor was the end point of the schooling. We needed him to be able to transition from his Oman high school into a Canadian university. We talked to Canadian universities about which high school diplomas, other than Canadian diplomas, they would accept. Then we looked at schools that offered those diplomas.*

*The school we decided on has an American curriculum as a base, so every student finishes with an American high school diploma. However, students also have the choice of taking an IB or an International GCSE. This gives students a lot of flexibility in terms of their outcomes and therefore their university choices. Connor is taking some IB courses, but not all of them. As he has made his course choices each year, we have been in touch with the Canadian universities to which he wants to apply to make sure that they accept what he has. Connor's school has a guidance counsellor assigned to each grade to liaise with students about their higher education plans, to make sure they stay on track with their end goals. The school brings in recruiters from universities all over the world to talk to students. The two universities Connor is considering now were among those that sent representatives.*

*We also factored logistics into our school choice. First, we needed a school with suitable extracurricular activities. Connor was into curling back in Canada but that obviously was not an option in Oman. He was also into music, so music was the extracurricular activity we prioritized.*

*The second logistical factor we considered was a school bus system. We couldn't commit to driving Connor to school every day, given the distances that some of the schools are from our home and the university where I work. There needed to be a bus he could take. The school we chose is a 30-minute drive from our home but it has a bus. Interestingly a new high school just opened next to the university at which I work. They offered tuition discounts to staff and faculty at the university. While it would have been easier having Connor closer to my work, we did not want to disrupt his schooling again after one year by transferring him to a new school.*

## DELIVERY MODALITY AND SCHOOL TYPE

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Recall that delivery modality is how the actual education is provided to students. School types, are how the educational institutions are organized for that delivery. Standard education delivery modalities available to global families include classroom delivery through a boarding school or day school, distance learning through homeschooling, online learning also through homeschooling or blended learning through either boarding school, day school, homeschooling or a learning centre.

FIGURE 5: DELIVERY MODALITY AND SCHOOL TYPE

Delivery Modality	School Type
Classroom delivery	Boarding school Day school
Distance learning Online learning	Homeschooling
Blended learning	Boarding school Day school Learning centre Homeschooling

Classroom delivery in a boarding or day school is straightforward; this is the standard modality and type of school for international schools. Distance learning through homeschooling is also quite straightforward. Parents select a curriculum, usually the home country curriculum, and supervise their children’s education at home. The curriculum provider mails hard copies of the documents and required textbooks to the parent. The parent manages the learning schedule and ensures students complete the work. Student work is corrected by the parent, when students are younger, or by an instructor via mail, when students are older.

Online learning is a subset of distance learning that is also delivered through homeschooling. Rather than transacting the education process through the mail, which is slow and unreliable, online learning provides much faster transactions through an online learning management platform. This platform may include: digital copies the education materials or links to these materials, a testing system, an assignment submission system, a discussion board, recorded lectures, and a way for the teacher to connect with the students in real time. Like homeschooling through distance learning, online learning requires full-time parent involvement. Although there is a virtual teacher, parents ensure the students can access the learning management system, spend the required hours studying, stay focused, remain on schedule, and complete assessments. The parental role decreases as students get older; older students stay connected to their instructors online, but have the self-discipline to manage their own learning. (Claver & Geraghty, 2017; Finnigan, 2017)

Both distance learning and online learning through homeschooling currently represent only a small percentage of total international school student enrollment. (Finnigan, 2017) However, online learning in particular presents an expanding and flexible option for global families. Students can complete their education from anywhere that has an internet connection. They can work at their own pace, taking either an accelerated or decreased workload. They can also work at their own capability level, up to two years behind or ahead of grade level. There are multiple dates throughout the year. Students can follow an irregular schedule, due to sports training and events, arts presentations, or health issues that require frequent appointments. They can access highly specialized subjects, particularly at the secondary level, which are not available through other delivery modalities. As with other international schooling options, the students' classmates are from all over the world. Finally, students work with technology that connects them both educationally and socially. (Claver & Geraghty, 2017; Finnigan, 2017)

Homeschooling through either distance learning or online learning is a good choice for global families whose international placement is short term, who relocate frequently, or whose home country teaching and learning system is very rigid in its subject requirements and exams. It is also beneficial for students who find the constant social upheaval of changing schools emotionally stressful. In all of these situations, students can stay in step with their home country teaching and learning system with minimal disruption. Unfortunately, both distance and online learning require one parent to stay home and supervise the students full time. Homeschooling parents must also find alternate ways for the students to interact with peers their own age. Depending on the host country legislation with respect to education, parents choosing to homeschool may be required to register their homeschooling choice with the local education authority. (Claver & Geraghty, 2017; Finnigan, 2017)

Unfortunately, because of the high cost of creating and maintaining a comprehensive online teaching and learning system, and the still small number of students enrolled in these systems, the range of curricula available online is limited. (Finnigan, 2017) The majority of these are American curricula offered through for-profit organizations such as Connections Academy, EdVector, and iCademy Middle East. The IB Diploma Programme has also recently become available online. (Walker, 2015)

Blended learning is the final delivery modality that may be available to global families who have their children in any type of school. Blended learning is a combination of classroom and online delivery modalities. Some work is completed in a classroom and some is completed online. The classroom-online balance may be divided within subjects, in other words, students learn some of the subject material at home, and then apply that material to specific tasks in the classroom. The work may also be divided by subject, in other words, students complete some subjects in the classroom and some online. A blended learning model allows students to take specialized subjects online, in order to meet subject matter requirements of a home country teaching and learning system, while taking general subjects in an alternative teaching and learning system.

Learning centres are a type of school specifically for a blended learning delivery modality. Learning centres have computer labs in which students work independently to complete their individualized online education under the supervision of a learning coach. At any point in time, there are students in different grades completing different subjects, all going at their own pace. The learning

coach helps students stay focused and manage their time. They also answer questions to which students need an immediate answer. The learning centres provide students with a structured day, peer interaction and some extracurricular activities. Learning centres are found in cities with large numbers of global families who need the flexibility of an online delivery modality but who do not have a parent who is able to take on a full-time supervisory role. (Claver & Geraghty, 2017)

## SUPPORTING SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

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Supporting children with special needs, whether those needs be physical, intellectual, emotional or behavioural, presents significant additional international schooling obstacles for global families. Global families need to do their research on the assistance available in a host country prior to accepting an international assignment; they should not assume they will have the same level of assistance as in their home country. They need access to cost effective, comprehensive and quality educational and psychological testing in their first language to accurately identify the learning needs. If they have an accurate diagnosis, they have to find a school that can support the specific learning needs identified with trained staff, flexible scheduling options, and smaller classes. This is not easy because it is challenging for private schools to offer sufficient support for special needs students under any for-profit business model; the supports required are often cost prohibitive. (Nolan, 2017)

Very few global families with special needs children follow the above ideal scenario. They don't arrive in their new location with complete assessments. Once in their new location they can't access effective testing in their first language. They don't understand the diagnostic terminology used in the new education system. They blindly hope that a new schooling environment will alleviate struggles their child had in the previous environment. They don't want to admit to a new school that their child has special needs, because they don't want their child to be labelled. These are the realities of global families with special needs students. (Nolan, 2017)

Language of instruction is one further ingredient to the challenges of special needs students. If global families cannot find a school that uses their first language, they are forced to enroll their children in a school with a different language of instruction. In addition to managing their special needs, the children also have to learn a new language. If their special needs are centred around language acquisition, the children don't have access to learning support to master the first language and simultaneously can't learn the additional language needed to access the education system. (See Brown & Bell, 2014, for a case study on dyslexic students in international schools as an example.) The children may thus fail to develop language proficiency and literacy in any language. (Nolan, 2017)

## DEVELOPING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

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There is a final, less tangible, but equally important perspective that global families need to consider with the international schooling of their children. With international schooling there is the hope that students will develop knowledge and a set of competencies that will enable them to function effectively in a globalized world, or, in other words, be good global citizens. Networking is an obvious component of global citizenship; global citizens have relationships with other global citizens and international schools provide students with the opportunity to form these relationships. But there is more to being a global citizen than building an international network. International schools all grapple with the question of how to develop global citizenship, a mandate that is central to their educational *raison d'être*.

The dialogue thus far on the goals of global citizenship education has been wide-ranging. For Bates (2011) global citizenship education is seen as having one or more of the following goals: students who can function economically and socially across cultural and national borders; students who are aware of global inequalities and injustices; or students who appreciate cultural diversity and understand the complexity and interconnectedness of the economic and social inclusions and exclusions produced by globalization. Noddings (2005) has a similar viewpoint, with global awareness as a legitimate end goal. Marshall (2011) sees a more instrumentalist goal at play in global citizenship education; creating citizens who can serve a globalized economy. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has jumped into the debate by adding global competence to the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), its international standardized test of science, mathematics, reading, collaborative problem solving and financial literacy. OECD defines global competence as having four components: “the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others, to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development.” The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) similarly places importance on global citizenship education, defining it as empowering learners “to assume active roles to face and resolve global challenges and to become proactive contributors to a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure world.”

The challenge with this dialogue on global citizenship education is to translate the goals above into classroom practice. How are the above goals taught? What activities and resources do teachers use? How can the learning be assessed? Research conducted in this direction on the International Baccalaureate provides some positive results. For example, Wright (2014) found that two IB components, the Learner Profile, and Creativity, Action, Service, fostered intercultural understanding with students in China. Keßler, Krüger, Schippling, & Otto (2015) found strong world citizenship orientations in students in an IB program in Germany. Hayden & Wong (1997) found intercultural awareness in graduates of IB programs attending a British university. Clearly, the IB is delivering on at least some of its promise to educate global citizens. Outside of the IB curriculum, Walker (2006) provides a good foundational overview of ideas for the development of global citizenship.

Interestingly, the exposure to multiple cultures through international schooling is not always seen as advantageous. The concept of a Third Culture Kid (TCK) puts a less positive spin on international schooling experiences. A Third Culture Kid is an international schooling student who is able to function in many cultures, but who does not fully belong to any of them. These students become wanderers, unrooted in any culture and therefore lacking a strong sense of identity. (Van Reken, Pollock, & Pollock 2010) Other researchers argue that international students develop strong composite cultural identities, which they can advantageously access at different points in time as required by the context, and thus do not feel that they have a fragmented identity. (Pearce, 2011; Young, 2017) Regardless, the Third Culture Kid concept points to the need for international students to find a healthy balance between global citizenship to function effectively across many cultures and local rootedness for a sense of belonging and a strong identity.

## BENEFITS OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLING

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While it is clear that international schooling presents an added complication for global families, we would be remiss if we did not consider the significant benefits that international schooling, if managed strategically, can provide the children in global families. Students can build a network of friends from all over the world. This network can last a lifetime and can help students tap into international career opportunities. Students can learn the knowledge and skills required to adapt to different cultural contexts. Students can learn new languages experientially. Students can become comfortable operating in the complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty of a dynamic globalized world. Students can simply enjoy the adventure of new experiences with their families. When navigating international schooling for their children global families thus need to mitigate the challenges while exploiting these clear benefits. The final case study below illustrates a global family balancing multiple decision-making factors, through multiple moves, to provide enriching education experiences for their children.

### **The Coehlo Family**

*We are originally from Brazil. Due to my husband's job we have had international assignments in Mozambique, Australia, then back to Mozambique and then to Canada. The first time we were in Mozambique we didn't need to access the education system because our daughters were too young for school. In Australia, my oldest daughter was three years old, so we enrolled her in pre-school. We primarily wanted her to play and to learn English. We found a nice preschool close to our house and close to a park. It had a friendly environment. The children did cooking, and drama, and learned other languages and just played.*

*When we went back to Mozambique we needed to find a private school for her to start kindergarten. We had a choice between an American school, a Canadian school and a French school. Originally, we wanted to put her in an English-speaking school, so the American or Canadian school, because we wanted her to continue learning English. But then we found out that the French school was taught half in English and half in French. We thought this would be good. All of the schools had waiting lists, however. We were really happy when a place became available in the French school.*

*The French school was really good. It had small classes and a lot of outdoor space. She could keep up her English but also learn a new language. She is good with languages. We were really happy with our choice.*

*When we came to Canada, we had access to the publicly funded school systems, so we did not need to look at private schools. We had the choice of an English public school or an English Catholic school. We also had the choice of French immersion in an English public school, but we didn't realize this initially. We chose an English public school because we wanted a religiously neutral school. We wanted to make the choice about what faith our children were taught and to do that in our home. When we learned about the French immersion option we decided against it even though*

*our daughter had previously been in a French school in Mozambique. She was really happy in her school and we didn't want to change her again. We put her in after school French programs so that she remembers some of her French.*

*With my younger daughter, we put her in a YMCA daycare for the rest of the school year so that she could learn English and learn about Canada before she started kindergarten in the fall. I volunteered at the school so that I could learn about Canadian culture along with my children.*

*When we were considering schools in all of the countries we didn't consider things like standardized test scores, or school rankings or anything like that. Here in Canada we liked how the school is very important in the local community. We see our neighbours in the park. There is a real sense of community because we all live near the school. I like that the school is very multicultural.*

## IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

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How global families navigate international schooling is an area rich in potential for future research. Each of the decision-making factors discussed in this whitepaper merit further investigation, along with the impact of new technologies, particularly social media, on the international schooling experience of global families.

The relationships at the macro level between host country governments, multinationals, and international school investors, with respect to public versus private international schools, deserves exploration. Stakeholders seek to provide accessible and quality international schooling to attract global families, while also maintaining a solid, citizenship-building local education system. There is an obvious link between a strong international school system and an economy's ability to attract international talent, and subsequently create vibrant global cities.

Given that English is the language of instruction in the majority of international schools, the experiences of parents, students and teachers in these English language international schools deserve attention. Studies can focus on student retention of their first language, student development of English language proficiency, and whether the promise of greater opportunity when graduating from an English language school actually comes true for students in international schools.

Teaching and learning systems, with a focus on curricula, is one of the most complex decision-making factors for global families. The International Baccalaureate is the most researched of the curriculum options. The other curricula, however, remain under-researched. The transfer of students from one teaching and learning system to another, and the need to bridge the differences in order to achieve academic success, is another area of potential research. Finally, the decision-making processes of global families as they navigate the curricula choices would yield insights into what they value in all aspects of the teaching and learning systems.

The delivery modality that most merits future research is online learning, given its promise of increased accessibility, flexibility and affordability as technology tools continue to improve. Online learning has the potential to expand the reach of home country curricula for global families, decreasing the need for students to change curricula. Similarly, the efficacy of learning centres, as the newest type of school, should also be researched.

Special needs and international schooling is an area that needs attention. There is very little research on how special needs are managed in an international schooling context, from assessment through to the development and delivery of individualized education programs. Of particular interest are special needs students who have to function in an alternate language other than their first language, and how this affects the development of their first language literacy. The validity of psychological and educational testing not conducted in a student's first language is also an interesting topic to explore.

The final perspective, of global citizenship education, points to a number of research questions. There is still a lot of work to be done to understand the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that should form the foundation of global citizenship education. There is even less understanding of the activities and instruction that should be used to bring these into the international school classroom. Finally, linkages between global citizenship education and the different teaching and learning systems available through international schooling should be established.

An additional area of future research, outside of the decision-making factors discussed in this whitepaper, is the role of communications technology and social media in the international schooling experience of global families. Anecdotally, communications technology and social media appears to have alleviated some of the isolation that global families used to experience when navigating international schooling for their children. Host countries and home countries that have a significant number of global families have social media platforms on which to families can search for schools, read school ratings and reviews, purchase second hand uniforms, and also access any kind of transitional information required. The role of social media in building supportive international schooling communities for global families, and thus enhancing their experiences, should be researched.

Social media can also be used to alleviate the social stresses experienced by students as their global families move from one location to another. While students in international schooling have always made international friends, staying connected to those friends when moving from one country to another has always been a challenge. The international ties that global families perceived as a benefit of international schooling thus weakened over time and distance. Social media now allows students to stay connected, regardless of the country moves their families make. Researching the effect of social media on student connectivity is another worthwhile avenue to pursue.

## CONCLUSIONS

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The challenges that international schooling presents to global families should not be underestimated, nor should the impact of the corresponding stresses of this challenge on the health and wellbeing of the global families be underestimated. There are areas of important future research that will help global families overcome these challenges and build a rewarding internationally mobile lifestyle for themselves, meeting their career and employment needs and the needs of all international business stakeholders.

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