



## Contents

### 1. Eurotck 2010 Report. Pg 2

### 2. New Resources. Pg 3

- The Next Chapter (2010 revision of Going “Home”; Re-entry for Younger Children by Carole Steedman)
- TCK Education and Welfare (2010 revision of the TCK Manual by Jean Barnicoat)
- Third Culture Kids.
- Two books in Spanish on multilingualism

### 3. The Mexican Education System and TCKs Pg 4

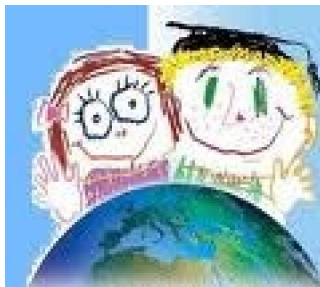
**“A third culture kid is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside their parents’ culture.”**

## Eurotck 2010 Report

Eurotck was held at the end of March 2010 in Peñíscola on the Costa Alahazar in Spain. This was the second recent Eurotck event following on from the one held in Germany in 2007. There were nearly 80 delegates there from across a number of major European cross-cultural agencies and various support organisations. Many of the delegates stayed on from the European Member Care Conference at the same venue just before Eurotck 2010. We also welcomed a number of delegates from Latin America, the USA and various Commonwealth countries who work in Europe or have strong links there. The event was widely appreciated and we were extremely well looked after by the staff of the Hotel Papa Luna.

There were a number of subjects that we covered back in 2007, but tried to develop more this time round, including transition support for TCKs, with specific sessions on pre-departure orientation and debriefing; providing the overall care needed from the first indication of interest by a family through to adulthood; long-term planning; cross-cultural marriage and families; special educational needs, and international education needs such as understanding multilingualism and the international curriculum. There were also a number of “new” areas that we considered. Given the surge in trouble spots around the world, including those where expatriate families serve, we considered children in crisis and the need for crisis debriefing. We also welcomed presenters bringing results from a major TCK survey recently completed in

Norway and another bringing keen to see this ongoing and research with practical included the theory of attachment Additional Language learning on-field support for TCKs using case study.



preliminary PhD research. We are combination of academic study applications. Other new subjects and its impact on TCKs, English as (EAL, often known as ESL), and Operacion Bernabe in Spain as a

What were the personal challenges? Eurotck 2010 helped me sharpen up my focus on TCK care and reminded me of key areas that need to be emphasised. It was very encouraging to hear the contributions from different agencies and where their strengths are in TCK care and education provision; encouragement that I think was mutual. Those key areas included the importance of making long-term plans, something that has been covered in past Educare editions, but one that needs to be consistently reviewed to ensure that good practice is applied. These long-term plans cover both education and welfare issues which are always linked together – hence the name of the magazine – Educare.

It was a great encouragement to meet up with so many people committed to TCK work and to strengthen the network of friends and contacts there. The subject matter we considered was essential for most of our delegates to consider, bringing us either new information or a timely reminder of what we know as good practice. Last, but not least, we enjoyed some uplifting inspirational talks including one from Marjory Foyle, now in her late 80s, but still going strong.

What about future Eurotck events?

During Eurotck 2010 we discussed this and provisionally agreed to set up a cross-European committee to plan the next event as well as consider some wider issues for European TCKs. The details of this have still to be worked out, but future editions of Educare will bring news of developments. Check out the Eurotck website at [www.eurotck.net](http://www.eurotck.net) for more information as well.

## New Resources

### 1. The Next Chapter (2010 revision of Going “Home”; Re-entry for Younger Children by Carole Steedman)

This 2010 revision brings examples and references up to date as well as including some new material included in various chapters. This guide is the only resource of its kind aimed at primary/elementary age children that we know of. It includes a simple explanation of re-entry and the TCK lifestyle for parents, plus a workbook full of activities for the children. The whole guide and children’s workbook is available in either US or British English. It is supplied at cost price on a CD (£1, \$1.50 or €1) + postage.

### 2. TCK Education and Welfare (2010 revision of the TCK Manual by Jean Barnicoat)

This completely revised edition was produced in time for our agency’s international conference in Thailand in May 2010. There are new chapters on Latin American TCKs, child protection, special educational needs, children in restrictive societies, international education and more. There are also expanded chapters on transition, Asian TCKs, cross-cultural families and home-based educational options among many other issues. Colour photos and diagrams have been added, and the examples, references and web links have all been updated making this edition a very different one to the first. This book is our organisation’s official TCK “manual”, but is available more widely for the cost price of the CD (£1, \$1.50 or €1) + postage.

A decision will be made about printing copies for ease of use, but currently it is only available in CD format.

If you are interested in either CD contact us at our sending e-mail address or at [mk\\_tck@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mk_tck@yahoo.co.uk)

### 3. Third Culture Kids by Dave Pollock & Ruth Van Reken

This familiar best-seller is now available in an updated edition from September 2009. There are a number of new sections and updates from Ruth that make this one different from the first edition. Easily available from bookshops and on-line sellers, but I often pass copies on during my travels to more remote locations where mail order would be prohibitively expensive.

4. Two books in Spanish on multilingualism. All families affected by multilingualism should have at least one book to help them better understand the issues that arise.

a) *Guia Para Padres Y Maestros De Niños Bilingües* by Colin Baker and Alma Flor Ada (2001). This excellent resource from university academics and bilingual parents is available in English or Spanish from on-line bookshops – easier from Europe than N America. We have a couple of copies and can access others for anyone who has difficulty finding it.

b) *La Familia Bilingüe* by Harding-Esch & Riley (2003). Another best-seller on the subject available in English or Spanish. This one can be more easily obtained from N America than Europe.



## The Mexican education system and TCKs



### Overall Outline of the system by ages

**Maternelle 1 – 3**

**Kindergarten 3 – 5 (optional although most children attend the final year at age 5)**

**Elementary 6 – 11 (there can be some variation to allow 6 – 12)**

**Secondary 12 – 15**

**Preparatory 16 – 18 (in some areas 15 – 18) up to university entrance with Bachillerato and university set exams with straight competition for the places, i.e. the university places go to those with the best scores in the entrance exams.**

The curriculum is set by the central federal government and schools must follow it. However, faith schools are free to add on their teaching and to teach the curriculum from their ethical perspective. There are plenty of such schools across the country.

### The School System

Mexican schools are comprehensive – i.e. non-selective with the result that children of all abilities are together in the same class. The most common response to this very widely varying ability is to give extra time and tuition to children struggling with material. Differentiation within class activities according to ability is recognised as good practice by educational thinkers, but isn't widely practiced as it is much more demanding on teacher time and exaggerates the long-term differences of ability becoming more difficult to manage as the children go up school grades. Previously it was possible to fail a school year and have to repeat it, but now all children progress up each year and can only repeat by parental request.

On the whole classes in Mexican government schools are large meaning that much creative teaching and innovation are difficult to apply unless the teacher is very gifted.

There are currently major reforms of the school system designed to take it towards a more constructivist philosophy and methodology and away from rote learning. Up to 1968 the system encouraged more critical thinking, but student riots that year led the government to change the education system from the lower grades upwards with more emphasis on rote learning of a set body of information with a view to more control of thinking and behaviour. These reforms are to be introduced by 2011 with all primary grades supplied with new books supplied for all children by that date with an expected change over of educational approach being systematically introduced over the next few years.

Some other elements of these reforms include

1. Grading on the old 1 to 10 scale on the report cards will be removed and replaced with comments about whether the child is competent in different subject areas, what they have learned and what they still need to work on and master.
2. Greater relevance is being emphasised and more practical work such as case studies on environmental issues, where children come up with real recommendations and measures to change behaviour.
3. More integration of the subjects on a thematic project work basis rather than separate subjects.
4. A return to teaching critical thinking skills.

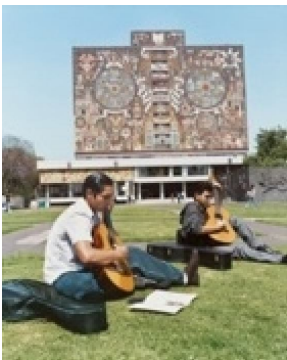
The UNO Pisa assessment of Mexico does not rate it highly in comparative international education tables, hence the reforms are very much needed, but the teachers need to be brought fully on board to make the reforms work. There is some resistance to the changes, as the previous

textbooks have been used for 18 years and the teaching of basic information like this is simpler than more open-ended topic based and critical thinking skill teaching.

In the government schools textbooks are supplied to the students without the need to pay. Private schools need to pay for any extra books they supply to the students.

### Higher and Further Education

Government universities are usually rated as better than the private ones, as they draw in the academic cream who pay low fees, hence competition is strong. At the time of writing (2010) the figure is set at around 600 – 800 pesos (£30 - £40 or \$46 - \$62) per semester for academic tuition. UNAM in Mexico City is one of these government universities, and is rated as one of the highest ranked in Latin America. Private universities vary in quality, but the principle is that they are open to those who can pay the fees. There has been a recent development of internet “Open University” style degrees. This is part of an overall strategy to improve access to education and increase opportunities for those who previously missed out in secondary school.



Most Mexican students expect to study within Mexico, and foreign education is the preserve of the wealthy elite. There are a small number of government scholarships to study abroad at Masters or PhD level in subjects that are deemed to be beneficial to the country. An example of this is in preventive medicine, where students may be sent to Cuba, where the Mexican government recognises that the medical courses have the highest standards in Latin America.

For technical and vocational training the students need to study towards the Bachillerato which includes units that will train them as plumbers, chefs, IT workers etc. It is possible to study these subjects in specialist colleges, but the best route through towards the “maestro” or management levels is via the school-based Bachillerato. It is possible to go back to school if the student drops out early for some reason.

### What issues affect our Mexican TCKs?

A) Our children facing re-entry will be assessed in Spanish and placed in the school grade according to their performance in those assessment tests. That means that there is a possibility that they could well be downgraded by 2 or 3 years if their academic Spanish is weak. How the reforms will affect this remain to be seen as the comprehensive philosophy would suggest that they should be placed in the school grade according to their age and given intensive support.

A recent case study of a Mexican returnee from the USA in Cuernavaca provides a useful illustration. He was placed in the government school and given only limited support. As a result of this he struggled academically. There were also social difficulties making his school experience a trial for all concerned. On transfer to one of the private faith schools he was given much more support and one to one tuition. After this he has settled much better and is making solid progress both academically and socially.

This would suggest that the constructive and supportive environment of a private faith school is likely to be better in most cases for re-entering TCKs than the government schools with big classes, overstretched teachers and patchy application of the reforms.

B) Deliberate teaching of academic Spanish is needed.

- (i) As a result of this language issue, parents will need to teach the children Spanish, unless the school they attend is in Spanish or has a strong Spanish mother tongue teaching policy. A few TCK schools fit the latter category, notably BCS in Senegal and one or two others such as Ukurumpa, but these are the exception. A good home education programme in Spanish is needed.
- (ii) This Spanish teaching is essential to avoid the frustration of ending up back in Mexico on re-entry at a serious disadvantage in the education system. Conversational language may be at an acceptable level, but this is not the same as educational Spanish. Ideally Spanish teaching should come first before the child goes to formal school and starts to learn the educational language there – English or the official national language in the country of service.
- (iii) Basic good practice of teaching early literacy sequentially, rather than simultaneously should be applied. Simultaneous literacy teaching can lead to long-term issues of language confusion and the risk of semi-literacy where no one language is mastered properly.
- (iv) Given that not all parents are teachers, the agency will need to help here by providing some guidelines and tuition in how to teach during the orientation time as appropriate to the families concerned.

C) Understanding cultural and family roots is very important in Latin culture. Therefore any home education programme should not just focus exclusively on literacy and Spanish language, but also on the history and geography of their home country – in this case Mexico. Mexicans should understand the whole background of pre-conquistador Meso-American history, followed by conquest under Cortes, the liberation and independence with Miguel Hidalgo and others, the revolution and more modern Mexican history. Children also need to know the essential geography of Mexico. It was suggested that in schools that are open to the idea, it should be possible to allocate time in lessons to study Latin American history and geography in mixed classes of all Spanish speakers by combining general teaching applicable to all students with project work. Given that Mexico will also be sending from a number of Latin American countries, this is an idea worth keeping for the medium-term future. Where schools are not open to this approach, again it will be the job of the parents to teach this material. There will be practical limits to what parents can do if their children are in high-pressure and high-homework setting schools. However, that should not prevent parents from devising a realistic programme to help set up their children for the future.

D) There is currently no home education programme for Mexico, but there should be one from other countries that can be supplemented with Mexico-specific history and geography books. There has been recent growth in the internet sector of education at higher levels for the Bachillerato as well as at university level. Some of this material could be useful to our older children in the final years of school. We need to find the best sources of home education in Spanish that supply programmes that we can recommend to our families. Ideally we need to find two or three that adopt different strategies and models of teaching given that our children may be very different in their learning styles. At the moment these will need to come from other Latin American countries, but it will be worth keeping up to date with the development of the internet distance education programmes from within Mexico.

Steve Bryant

The article is based on discussions during a visit to Mexico, Oct/Nov 2009 and subsequent consultation.

**Educare** is a free resource for third culture families that can be forwarded and shared among all concerned individuals.