

Guide to International schools

Growing trend. International schools are among the biggest success stories of the early 21st century, with their reach now extending to almost every corner of the globe.

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Jackson Taban is a 12th year student at Vienna College, Namugongo, an international school in Kira Municipality, Wakiso District.

Taban joined Vienna College in Year Eight after leaving one of the ordinary secondary schools in Kampala.

He says he was enticed to switch to an international school by friends who always intimated to him about the spacious and conducive environment in the international schools.

Taban, now guild president of Vienna College, says he has not been disappointed by what he has found at the school.

"I was told that in international schools, students interact with teachers like they are talking to friends and peers. I have experienced this because our teachers are like our brothers and sisters. We interact and challenge each other on several issues," he says.

Taban adds that they sit less than 25 in a class that would otherwise be occupied by more than 50 students in local schools.

Besides, he says, every classroom is set with both visual and audio facilities such as projectors, screens and speakers.

Taban's story and experience is what has continued attracting many parents and students to international schools.

Mr Mohammed Kakiika, the head teacher Vienna College Namugongo, says international schools make learning interesting by offering a unique environment for students.

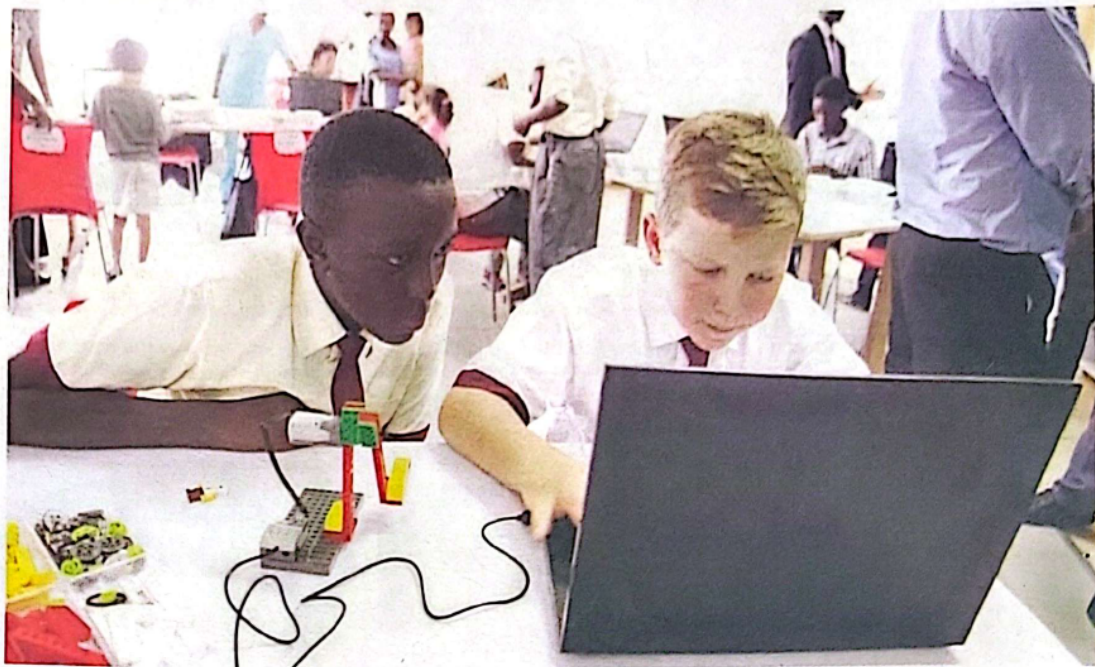
Benefits

"International schooling continues to gain a reputation for offering children a unique form of education that is characterized by self-discovery and innovation," Mr Kakiika says.

"We encourage at most 25 students per class where a teacher can be able to interact with them on a one-one approach. There are also lessons we take out of class to break the monotony and follow-up lessons usually after school. Our junior classes are usually attractive with students' own projects displayed in many colours," he adds.

"There is no issue of giving notes. But there is self-discovery. Even the kinds of assignment we give make a student to main research. A student is given points and encouraged to do research. A student is encouraged to bring

The rising demand for international schools



Students of GEMS Cambridge International School in Kampala in a robotics lesson. Many parents are turning to international schools because of diverse opportunities they offer. PHOTO BY RACHEL MABALA

new things."

He says since the classes are well organised, students learn by simulation of different parts of the heart. You can clearly see. As a teacher you must be able to find out new things. If you used my notes for four years ago, there is a possibility that your children will fail."

Mr Harunnah Setyabule, a teacher of Chemistry and Physics at Kabojja International School, says such schools ensure holistic development of children.

"There is a lot of flexibility in the choice of subjects up to A'Level. It is possible for a student to take a combination of subjects from sciences and humanities but with a focus on a future profession," he says.

Mr Mathew Okumu Ongwen, the head of academics, says there is a lot of interactive learning.

"When there is a discussion they just change tables; It is no harm for a student to learn from a colleague. If the two of you pass because you have discussed, it is well," he says.

"We may all be in Senior Four when my paper is for one and half

hours while the other is for three hours. If I want to be an engineer I should not be subjected to the same paper with the other who wants to be a journalist. You can specialise when you are in Senior Five."

"Learning in international schools is conducive because you can sit for your papers when you are ready. For instance, if you are doing seven subjects, you can sit for three and do the others when you are ready," Mr Ongwen adds.

Mr Kakiika says: "You miss a paper, the examiners can come back at the school and they get records of what happened and the student would be given full grade. We must recognise the circumstances."

Unique features

He adds that the learning environment is spacious and conducting in international schools because we give a variety of skills. A student doing sciences will also have knowledge on economic and project planning. That is why today you find doctors are being managed by students who were poor

performers because they did project planning.

"At Vienna College, we offer a conducive study environment because a child goes back home every time they feel like. We are not so strict like it is the case in local

schools. A child may be homesick and needs just to spend a day with the parents," Mr Kakiika says.

Citing an example of Vienna College where classes end at 3:20pm, Mr Kakiika says the learning format in international schools also enables students to have time for activities such as chatting on social media and engaging in co-curricular activities.

The conducive environment enables the learners have time for leisure. Because there are few students in a class room, the lessons end early. "You come to study after lunch and lessons end at 3:20. You may go to the dormitory and change for sports or go pick your phone and spend some time on social media," Mr Kakiika says.

Like Taban explains that he has never been scolded by the teachers or caned, Mr Kakiika says teachers are friendly.

"You do not need to be rude. You do not need scold at a student because of bad handwriting but you have to take time and read what has been written because you a few students."

THE NUMBERS

The 2017 Global Report indicates that, as of December 2016, there were almost 4.5 million students attending over 8,600 international schools in virtually every country of the world, with the vast majority of student enrolment being local children aiming for higher education in the West. In Uganda, there is an estimated 3,000 students studying in international schools. All over the world, there are about 5,700 international schools teaching more than 2.5 million students, and by 2020 the prediction is for more than 11,000 international schools with over five million students.