

Diploma in demand as schools go global

EXCLUSIVE

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The number of Australian secondary schools offering an internationally recognised diploma program for university entry has doubled in the past 15 years as parents demand a more globally focused curriculum, an education expert says.

The number of students studying for the academically rigorous International Baccalaureate Diploma has tripled to almost 2000 over the same time as they broaden their options for increasingly competitive university places, said University of Melbourne education policy researcher Glenn Savage.

While student numbers are small in comparison with those in state-based school certificates, Dr Savage expected the take-up of the diploma, now offered by 70 Australian public and independent schools, to grow in line with demand for the program in Asia.

He said perception of the “watered-down” quality of non-exam-based Year 12 subjects in Australian schools meant parents were “voting with their feet” in choosing the diploma, while more independent schools were offering it as they saw it as a marketing edge. “There’s more of a demand for a globally oriented curriculum, which has increased in popularity as globalisation has intensified,” Dr Savage said.

Adelaide independent school Walford Anglican School for Girls has offered the diploma



KELLY BARNES

School captain Abeny Kuol

since 2004, one of only two girls’ schools in Australia to offer a continuum of the program from primary school.

While more than half of the school’s students were consistently placed in the top 10 per cent in Australian Tertiary Admission Rankings, principal Rebecca Clarke said the diploma focused on nurturing attitudes in learners and had an intercultural focus which assisted students in life beyond school.

Sudanese refugee and Walford school captain Abeny Kuol, who has been in the diploma program for the past 18 months, said she felt more prepared for university. She harbours an ambition to study medicine interstate next year. “That’s not to say SACE or any other state certificate aren’t (worthy) but ... IB students are taught to work hard. A lot of students strive to be the best, not just academically,” she said.

“Whether I study interstate or in South Australia, I hope the IB will keep my options open.”