

Education support: Costs & benefits

The provision of education support for families relocating internationally can be an expensive item in global mobility policy. However, the cost of providing educational support can be far outweighed by its benefits. Any cost cutting measures must be undertaken very carefully if negative consequences are to be avoided.

SCHOOL SEARCH: ASSIGNMENT ACCEPTANCE OR REFUSAL

Parents are always concerned that their children's education is not compromised by accepting an international assignment. Organisational support to find and meet the costs of appropriate schooling is one of the key benefits that assignees look for under global mobility policy.

When employees have children of school age, especially in secondary education, there is the concern that moving abroad will affect key education stages and examination results. This may cause parents to reject an assignment. This reduces the talent pool for organisations trying to staff up international positions. Support for school search can make the difference between assignment acceptance and refusal.

REDUCING ASSIGNEE STRESS

When assignees agree to take on an international role, finding and accessing suitable schools becomes paramount. Ensuring children settle into their new schools is one of the top stressors for relocating families. So choosing the right school is a big issue.

Parents will not be familiar with local education options and are unlikely to know about curriculum differences. They will also find it difficult to navigate entry requirements and to obtain school places, particularly if their relocation takes place part way through a school year. Specialist advice will be needed to overcome these hurdles. This can make a big difference to the reduction of stress and improving wellbeing for families on the move.

ASSIGNEE PRODUCTIVITY

Assignees need to be productive in their new roles abroad. Spending time worrying about and trying to find suitable schooling will affect employees' productivity. This can prove costly to employers.

If children cannot settle into their new schools and are unhappy, this will also affect assignees' productivity and may cause them to terminate their assignment and return home early. This is a very costly outcome for organisations, both financially and in terms of brand image.

The expense incurred in obtaining support for relocating parents to identify suitable schools locally (international schools, home country curriculum-based schools or local state schools as appropriate) helps to support assignees and their family, raising productivity. The benefits therefore typically far outweigh the costs incurred.

SCHOOL FEE COST CUTTING

School fees in the private sector are an expensive item in global mobility policy. In an effort to reduce costs, employers are increasingly placing limits on how much they are willing to pay for these or are restricting the payment of school fees to secondary education.

Being overly restrictive with respect to meeting education costs can prove to be a false economy. Employees will be resentful if they feel that their children's education is jeopardised through cost cutting measures. This can damage their engagement with their organisation and in turn affect their productivity and willingness to go the extra mile. If employees believe that cost cutting in policy provision negatively affects their family, they are more likely to refuse an assignment, return early or disengage with organisational objectives.



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