What to Think About International Schools by Nvid Lada

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When allowing for a child's education in a foreign land most countries offer three alternatives: state schools, private schools and international schools. This article concentrates mostly on the potential benefits and drawbacks of international schools even though some thought is also known to the state school option.

Classes in international schools are typically trained in English and academic results are generally brilliant. The prospectus is most often British or American in style with the use of high school grades and SAT marks or International GCSEs at age 15/16 and A Levels or the International Baccalaureate at 17/18, the final being known by universities worldwide. Subjects taught are also similar to those taught in the US or UK.

Approximately all international schools are fee paying (although grants and scholarships may be available) and fees can be wide. Average fees for a day school are just about EUR 10,000 per year but it should be borne in mind that fees in general increase as the student grows older. For example, the typical fees for children aged 12 or over are around EUR 20,000 per year. Furthermore, fees for boarding (as opposed to day) schools are much higher. In addition to yearly fees it may also be wise to consider the other expenses which are likely to be incurred while sending a child to an international school. These expenses might contain a registration fee, purchase of a uniform, insurance, activity fees and transport.

Given the high-priced cost, why do some exacts choose international schools for their children's education? From time to time they are the only choice if foreigners are not permitted to attend local state schools (as is the case in the United Arab Emirates) or if the state schools are full. Lots of parents are also worried about the effect learning a new language and adapting to a new culture are likely to have on both their child's education and happiness. Typically young children take these challenges in their stride but older children can struggle or feel alienated. Another benefit of attending an international school is that it gives the parents a chance to meet other expats!

However, not all expats decide international schools and the state school option may in fact be preferable in some cases. Apart from the obvious charge savings a local state school is a superb place for a child to study the new speech and many expats find that their children are often fluent in the local lingo within a very short period of time. Speaking the language and adapting to a new culture are not only of abrupt benefit but may also be useful in the longer term if the family decides to stay in the new country.

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Nvid Lada - About Author:
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