

Navigating GCC Culture:
Counseling, Recruiting and
Parental Engagement
in a Society Rooted
in Familial Networks



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Middle East and North Africa 2023

Introduction - Kevin Dupont



KEVIN
DUPONT



- Head of University & Careers Counselling at Deira International School in Dubai (UK/IB Curriculum)
- Former Admissions Officer: Cornell, UC Berkeley, Tufts, University of Virginia, and more!
- Evaluator and coach for the MISK Student Development Program, Saudi Arabia
- Mentored students for international university admissions (US, UK, Canada, etc) from all of the GCC states



Introduction - Jacqueline L. Nottingham



JACQUELINE
NOTTINGHAM



- 7th year as College Counselor at the Academic Bridge Program, Qatar Foundation - American based postsecondary program
- Former Admissions Officer with focus on undergraduate, graduate, international, and English language programs with over 30+ years of experience
- Supported admissions for large public and small liberal arts universities including Virginia Tech (VA) and Concord University (WV)
- Mentored students from across the globe for international university admissions (US, UK, Canada, etc.), currently serving as a Khotwa Mentor for UAE students studying at community colleges in the USA/Canada



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Introduction - Reem Ahmadi



REEM
AHMADI



مدرسة ابن خلدون الوطنية
Ibn Khuldoon National School

- 12th year as a Career & College Counselor at Ibn Khuldoon National School - Bahrain
- The school is accredited by MSA and is an IB Continuum School. IB DP since 1992, PYP since 2020 and MYP since 2022
- [School Profile](#)
- 13 years of experience working with GCC students in gaining entry to international universities. Initially started off as an IEC, where I completed UC Irvine's Certification program back in 2012. Spent less than a year doing that before being hired by my former K-12 school.
- 5 year as a Professional Services Consultant at Ernst & Young Bahrain



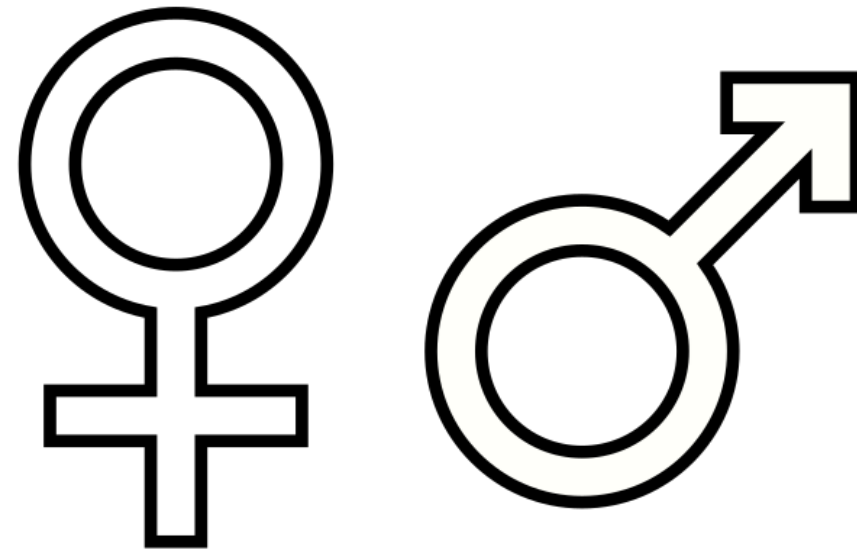
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Cultural Context - Approaching schools, as reps



Know your audience.



Gender division, and perceptions



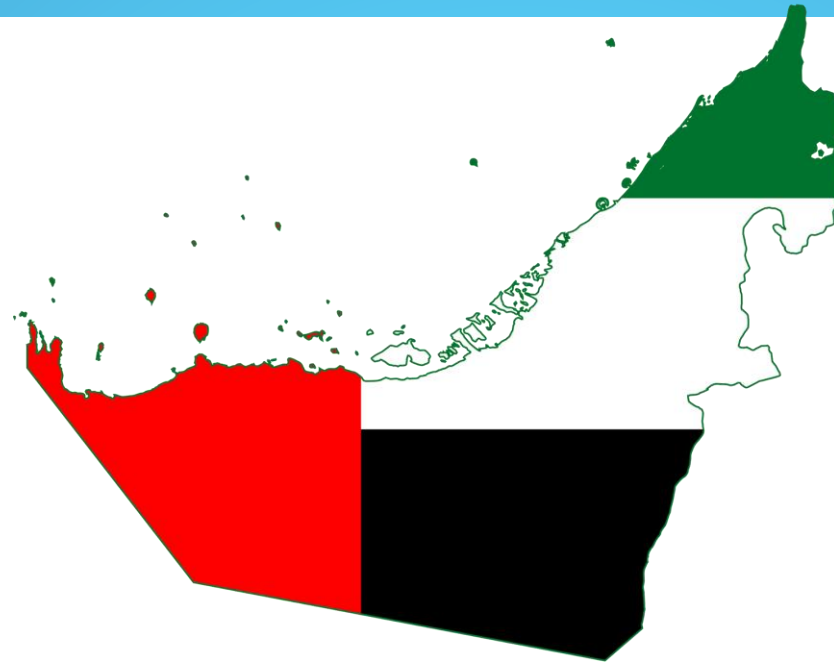
Break the norm!



Shifting Sands: the UAE Context



Familial Networks



Emiratisation and education in the UAE

- Price, Prestige, Protect



Rise & Fall of “the list”



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Shifting Sands: the Bahrain Context



Proximity
North America vs Europe



Male students travel in packs



No culture of saving for education
Scholarship “entitlement”
Ministry of Education Scholarships are mainly to local universities
Other gov’t sponsorships are based on networks / not advertised



Mandatory shared accommodation could be a deal breaker



Spectrum of Muslim students
Halal options on campus
Option to live off-campus



Shifting Sands: the Bahrain Context - Scholarships



برنامج ولي العهد للمنح الدراسية العالمية
Crown Prince's International Scholarship Program

Now in its 25th year.

Vision is to develop young Bahrainis from all walks of life to take key positions in Bahrain's public and private sectors in the future.

All expense paid education up to PhD.

750-800 apply (need 97% + pass psychometric assessment).

Approx 110 qualify for the Candidacy Program.

Was awarded to 10 students, from 2023, now up to 20 seats for Bahrainis only.

Can study in 7 countries around the World

www.cisp.bh



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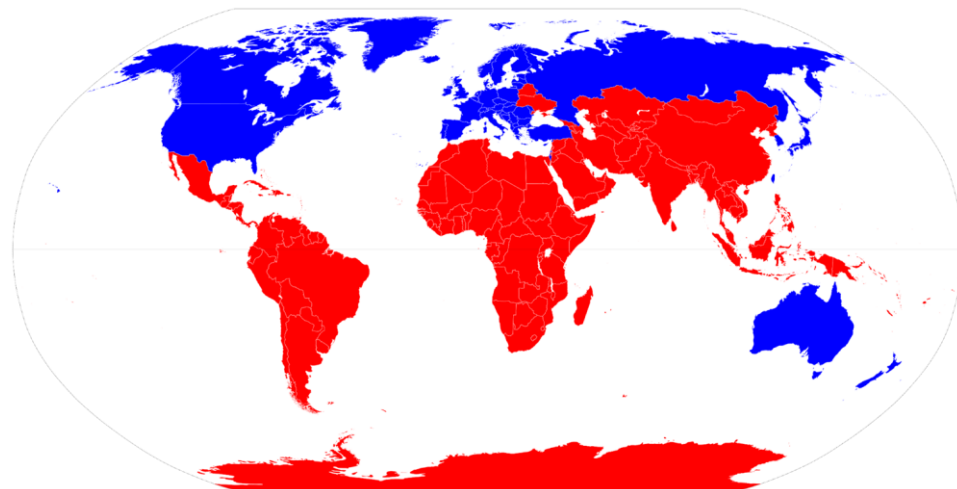
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Current Higher Education landscape: fluid preferences



Rise of UAE, Qatari,
Bahraini universities - price,
global context, security

The world is
their oyster



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Counselling in the GCC, how can we advise differently?



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*Let's talk it out: how can we all amend
our current practice to improve
interactions with students?*

*University to student; counsellor to
student, or even university to
counsellor??*

Two minutes!!

