

21st CENTURY EDUCATION FOR A 21st CENTURY ECONOMY

FORBES MIDDLE EAST GUIDE 2017

Middle East

Forbes

AL BLOOM

PSYCHOLOGIST, LINGUIST
AND VICE CHANCELLOR OF
NYU ABU DHABI

GUIDE 2017 EDUCATION

INNOVATION AND
GLOBALIZATION
ARE CHANGING
HOW WE TEACH
AND LEARN

BUILDING LEADERS

NYU ABU DHABI IS DEVELOPING STUDENTS CAPABLE
OF CONNECTING A CHANGING WORLD.

OTHERS.....\$8 QATAR.....QAR 30 BAHRAIN.....BHD 3 UAE.....AED 30
OMAN.....OMR 3 KUWAIT.....KWD 2.5 SAUDI ARABIA.....SAR 30



RAISING THE BAR TO SWISS STANDARDS

Omar Danial, Founder of the Swiss International Scientific School in Dubai, set up the institute when he found an international gap in the local education system. SISD now has 650 students from 58 nationalities, and is preparing to open state-of-the-art boarding facilities.

BY CLAUDINE COLETTI



Why did you set up SISD?

When I moved to Dubai in 2010 I wanted to set up an educational facility for the hospitality industry. However, as the father of six children, it quickly became evident that Swiss education built on the International Baccalaureate curriculum was lacking. Mainland Europeans were starting to arrive en masse, but with many of them unable or unwilling to enrol their children in French or German schools, their only solution was the standard British or American curriculum.

I reached out to my personal contacts from the Swiss educational landscape, starting with Institut Florimont in Geneva, EPFL the world famous École Polytechnique de Lausanne, and Francis Clivaz, founder and owner of many prominent boarding schools in Switzerland, among which College du Lemman. In 2012 I initiated and founded SISD with the solid backing of experts and advisors.

Attracting investment was a long process, but having invested a large amount of my personal wealth in the project I was able to persuade a few contacts and a local bank to take the risk with me. Local banks did not succeed in raising any equity for the project, but we were very happy to secure a few select high profile families that had a keen interest in offering Dubai something unique, and understood Switzerland and its mentality. Among SISD's prominent families and co-founders are the Seddiqi family, precisely Abdul Hamied Ahmed Seddiqi and Osama Seddiqi, who made this possible in the end. Having the Seddiqi family on our side was strategic, as they are important influencers in Dubai while at the same time having strong ties to Switzerland.

What are you offering that's unique?

We will offer full and weekly boarding from September 2017, making us only the second boarding school in Dubai. What sets us apart is both the standard of our facilities and the approach to pupil care and learning. The design of the boarding houses, the multi-talented staff and how it follows the Swiss tradition are all new to the Middle East. We are particularly committed to developing a multi-lingual school community. We learn languages, we learn through languages and we learn about languages. We are committed to early immersion, which research has shown helps children to have command of more than one language at a highly functional level.

What are the benefits of bilingual education?

Two thirds of the world's population can speak and understand two or more languages. If you only speak one language, you're actually in the minority. Communication is essential to all relationships, professional, peer and family. Having the ability to communicate in all situations can only serve to strengthen a child's ability to form strong and long-lasting relationships. It has also been found that children who know several languages have a profound advantage in terms of memory.

Multilingualism greatly enhances the part of the brain that supports activities like planning, impulse, focus and learning to discard irrelevant information. The bilingual brain shows more flexibility because it is required to switch back and forth between two languages. At a young age, children can master multiple languages, allowing them to think and speak in each language, versus constantly translating back and forth in their heads. 