

Dhia partnership building teaching excellence throughout Qatar

Maersk Oil Qatar and Texas A&M supporting teacher development in schools across the country

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DOHA, Qatar — More than 140 teachers and principals from independent schools from Doha to Dukhan and Al Wakrah to Al Shamal completed a series of rigorous professional development workshops last week to sharpen their skills in delivering science and math education.

The workshops, which are part of the *Dhia: Engineering Leaders* partnership between Texas A&M University at Qatar and Maersk Oil Qatar, taught teachers with new skills and tools for integrating problem-based learning exercises and activities into science, math and engineering teaching.

Dhia delivers strategic educational outreach programs to motivate young Qataris to choose educational pathways for careers in fields related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and supports both teachers and students through a broad portfolio of programs and workshops.

Dr. Johannes Strobel, lead facilitator for the recent workshops and an internationally recognized researcher in the field of STEM education, said the enthusiasm of teachers and administrators from Qatar's schools reflects the nation's deep commitment to quality education as a foundation for a knowledge-based society.

"Qatar is uniquely positioned to become a global leader in innovative STEM education," Strobel said. "The national development goals highlight the importance of science and engineering education, and through this professional development we are providing teachers the latest tactics for integrating those disciplines."

Strobel said numerous research studies have identified elementary school as a critical crossroads for students' attitudes toward STEM disciplines. "Students are motivated to learn as they see how science and math relate to real-world problems," he said. "We are helping teachers connect those ideas in their classrooms."

Dr. Ann Kenimer, interim dean of Texas A&M at Qatar, said teacher professional development was an essential component of academic outreach efforts to support human and social development toward the Qatar National Vision 2030.

"Qatar's schools are preparing young people to enter universities that will educate this country's future leaders," Kenimer said. "We are proud to partner with Maersk Oil Qatar to support high-quality teaching and learning for high-tech fields, and are grateful to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education for their continuing support for our activities."

Lewis Affleck, managing director of Maersk Oil Qatar, said the company was investing in teacher development through the *Dhia* portfolio to build capacity for Qatar's technical workforce.

"At Maersk Oil Qatar we are committed to supporting the realization of Qatar's National Vision 2030 for generations to come. Human development is at the heart of building a knowledge-based economy," Affleck said. "Through educational initiatives such as *Dhia*, we are equipping schools and importantly teachers with the skills and expertise to inspire and create the scientists and engineers of the future in Qatar."

Affleck noted that the geographic range of schools represented in this week's workshops ensures that students throughout Qatar will have access to cutting-edge teaching techniques to promote learning in math and science.

Nouf Al-Kaabi, assistant director of the training and educational development center in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, emphasized the importance of building teachers' capacity in STEM education in order to enable students' development of critical 21st-century skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking.

"Realizing the importance of partnership in providing schools and educators in Qatar with quality professional development programs, the Training and Educational Development Centre in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education is delighted to work jointly with Texas A&M University to provide public school teachers with cutting-edge professional development programs in STEM education," she said.

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