

Mohammed Al Maraghi

operator, Omar bin Al Khattab
Complex for Boys



**Omar Bin Al
Khattab School
is a leader
in shaping
a successful
generation**

Known for its scientific focus, Omar Bin Al Khattab Educational Complex for Boys was among the first Qatari institutions to convert to an Independent school. In this interview, Mr. Mohammed Abdullah Al Maraghi, the school's operator and director, discusses the school and education in Qatar. He emphasizes importance of community involvement and explains how teaching values and Qatari culture creates a balanced curriculum.

What is the philosophy of this school?

Our philosophy comes from our vision and our mission to:

- Prepare a generation that is capable of taking advantage of opportunities
- Improve our students' knowledge and capabilities
- Foster student creativity and enhance self-confidence
- Direct our students' energy to the service of their country

The school, which offers classes from kindergarten through grade 12, focuses on mathematics, science and technology, and instills in its students the necessary skills to participate not only in Qatar but in the world at large.

How do you maintain communication with parents, a vital component to a successful school?

Our school emphasizes the importance of parents as partners in the educational process. We communicate with parents through short message service (SMS), Knowledge Net (KNet) and scheduled monthly meetings to discuss their children's progress. Our doors are always open to parents even without prior appointments, and we seek their advice and suggestions.

Your Web site plays a major role in this regard. How is it used?

Our Web site, which is open to all, is both an important communications tool and a vehicle for self-evaluation. We receive feedback and post reports and some of our plans. We hope to develop it further.

What role do partnerships with community organizations play in your school?

Partnerships with community organizations have been one of our priorities from the beginning. They are not only beneficial to our children, but they also help realize our mission and vision. We are very appreciative of all our partners in success: Qatar Petrochemical Company, the Qatar Vinyl Company, Aqar real estate, the Education City institutions and universities, as well as other ministries and entities.

What is the role of the Board of Trustees?

The Board of Trustees is very important, and we hope they take on a more prominent role. Board members are not full-time; they are volunteers, but we are lucky to have such a helpful and responsible group that takes part in everything from planning to implementation.

What is the relevance values education and culture to a 'scientific' school?

We provide an education to boys and young men from the age of four to 17. Each age group has different needs and concerns, and all can benefit from important teachings on values and Qatari culture that emphasize the importance of family and encourage honesty good morals, and respect for others.

What is the role of the academic counseling center for the secondary stage?

Students often do not have a clear vision for their future after completing secondary school and sometimes receive confusing suggestions from their families, community or friends. Our dedicated specialist provides a link between the school, the students, their families and universities. The specialist follows students' academic performance and provides information on different universities. We hope to extend the academic guidance to support younger students, particularly those who are talented and gifted as well as those with learning disabilities.

There is a shortage of qualified teachers in the Independent schools. Recruiting and retaining teachers is a problem.

Yes, this is true; the shortage is universal. We work to retain our staff by offering extensive professional development and training. Once the national professional standards for teachers and leaders are in place, I believe this problem will, by and large, be solved.

Do you believe that professional development programs provide sufficient training?

No. The training is too limited, considering the number schools

opening annually. The Office of Professional Development does its best to provide teachers with professional development. We hope Qatar University will take on the role of graduating qualified male educators.

What is your opinion about the development of learning resources like textbooks?

Textbooks are great, but variety is important to students, teachers and the educational process. Frankly, this concept was not traditionally important in our society. Even though I think this is changing, it's time for people to accept that multiple learning resources are better for students.

After 5 years of 'Education for a new Era' what do you believe are the most important achievements and challenges?

Qatar has made significant strides over the last few years, but I believe that the more the achievements, the bigger the challenges will be. What this country has achieved over the past few years would take many nations decades. This certainly demonstrates the leadership of His Highness the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Heir Apparent, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and the consort of His Highness, Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al-Missned.