ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY AND FEMALE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In discussing this topic, one has to look at what an Islamic university entails and the proper way to operate it. This includes the rules and regulations governing it, the system of education, those to handle the university, both academic and non-academic staff. The discussion will focus on female education in Islam. Position of female education and its importance to the society will be touched. Women as role models will also be discussed, and the Islamic university will assist in molding her character both morally intellectually and academically for the benefit of the society she belongs. Therefore an Islamic university will be seen as an influential for allowing parents to send their female children to the university with the hope in security of moral behaviours of Islam. As we are all aware immoralities are now rampant in most of the universities and tertiary institutions.

Key Words: University, Islam, Female and Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Islam as a universal religion appreciates and recommends knowledge acquisition for human development and recognition of Almighty Allah as the creator of all. This is why the very first revelation to prophet (S.A.W) was specifically on seeking for knowledge thus:

“Read in the name of your lord who created, He creates man out of a (were) clot of congealed blood.
Read your lord is most bountiful. He who teaches (the use of pen) He teaches man that which he knows not   (Q 96:1-55)”

The above verses command man to seek for knowledge, not by reaching but also by making use of the pen for record purpose. Since the inception of Islam education has been given priority over all other things. This could be evidenced with the fact that the messenger of Allah (S.A.W) was a teacher as he was sent to the whole world to educate them on the essence of life. This is not only on verbal claiming but also manifested in his actions as he was a great teacher that really laid much value on education. Consequently Islam makes acquisition of knowledge compulsory for Muslims irrespective of gender, age, tribe or nation.

2. AN ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY

Universities are define by the Wikipedia, encyclopedia (2000) as institution that Award degrees at the undergraduate or postgraduate level. Until 19th century religion played a vital role in the university curriculum. By the 20th century, there was a shift of emphasis towards science and engineering.
An Islamic University in essence is an institution set under the rules and regulations of Islam that awards degrees at the undergraduate or postgraduate level.

2.1 The Proper way to operate Islamic University
In an attempt to establish Islamic university in an environment, a lot could be borrowed from the trend of evidence from the secular governments owned universities in the country, in order for the initiators to take measures on each of the problems seen on the leaf. Some guiding principles have to be considered. (Usman:2010:6) like all believers know, the entire life of a Muslim is guided by some ethical conduct which enables him to be disciplined and rekindles hope in life. In the glorious Qur’an Allah says:

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\text{Alif Lam Raa. A book which we have revealed to you, in order that you might lead mankind out of darkness into light by the leave of their lord to the way of Him the exalted in power worthy of all praises. (Q14.1)}
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Islam forbids indecent dressing (Q 33:32-35 & 33:59) all forms of illegal social relationship (Q 17:32) injustice (Q5:8) and corruption in general (Q2:188) Islamizing a university require, that the Islamic ideals be embraced in such institution in totality (Q2.208) to this effect strong measures must be taken to avert corruption and indiscipline in the academic environment of the Islamic Universities. The relationship between opposite sex in this environment must be strictly guided by the ethical teachings of Islamic. The authorities of the institutions must out rightly restrict movement of the opposite sex from the hostels of each other. In the recruitment of staff both Academic and non Academic and admission of candidate, the principle of favoritism, tribalism and nepotism must be discarded and staff and student when found compromising ethics with selfish desire must be brought to book. (Usman:2010:7)

3. WOMAN AS A GUARDIAN AND A ROLE MODEL
The shariah or Islamic law has saddled woman with special and specific responsibilities in the society. The Qur’an, therefore in several verses recognizes and speaks of special and specific responsibilities of woman which include, rearing children, taking care of home, nursing the sick, e.t.c. Qur’an also alludes to the care, love, and affection that should be specifically showed on the women. Prophet (S.A.W) followed by his companions equally recognized the special needs and responsibilities of woman folk. The practices of prophet (S.A.W) and his companions (R.A) indicated those women are needed to specialize in some fields of study. In fact our present society is in critical need of women in some specific area. For instance, Allah says:

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The mother should suckle their children for two years (that is) for those (parents) who desire to complete the terms of sucking, but the father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother’s food and clothing on reasonable basis. No father shall have a budden laid on him greater than he can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child, nor father on account of his child..... (Q2.233).\]

The following traditions of prophet are also good examples of the recognition of the special needs and responsibility of woman:

“Narrated Aisha, the mother of the faithful believers, “I requested the prophet (S.A.W) to permit me to participate in Jihad, but he said, your jihad is the performance of Hajj (Sahih Bukhai 4.127, p 84).”
Narrated Abdullah bin Umar: Allah’s Apostle said, “Surely! Every one of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges; the Imam (ruler) of the people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects. A man is the guardian of his(72x322)family (household) and is responsible for his subjects a woman is the guardian of her husband home and his children and is responsible for them and the slave of a man is a guardian of his master’s property and is responsible for it. Surely, every one of you is a guardian and responsible for his changes. (Sahihul Bukhai no 9.252. p. 163.)

4. FEMALE EDUCATION IN ISLAM

According to the Muslim historian Al-Baladhuri (d.297AH/89ce) at the beginning of Islam only 16 muslims men knew how to write. However, significantly, five women did as well, Umme Kulthum bint uqbah, Aishah bint sa’ad and Karima bint al-miqdad.

Significantly, one of the woman Aishah bint Sa’ad Testimony is significant in highlighting not only the informal nature of schooling at that time but also rights afforded by her father.

Aisha bint Sa’ad said:
“My father taught me writing”

In a similar vein another female Muslim Alshafaa bint Abdallah “is reported to have said, prophet (S.A.W) meet me with Hafsa, then he said to me why did you not teach her Ruqya for ant bites the way you taught her the art of writing.(Ahmad and Abu Dawud).

However, writing was not universally sought and remained a skill largely applicable to the public domain. Move over knowing how to write was not equivalent with not knowing how to read. It was reported that Aisha the wife of the prophet (S.A.W) know how to read but not write.

Slowly the culture of reading and writing began to take place in the early Islamic community this lead to new type of formal education.

In Kufah, during the mid 9th century AD there is mention of several instances were maidens were seen in schools it is reported that al-walid ibn Abdulmalik an Ummayyad Caliph (715 AD) once passed a school were a master is instructing boys and among them was a maid Jarriah learning the Qur’an.

Although it has been documented that Muslim women during the life time of prophet (S.A.W) not only know how to write but were commanded by him to learn the art of writing. Thought female education is required in all aspects of human endeavours, personal experience and indeed cursory study of the roles women should play in the society. The women physiology and critical need of the present Muslims societies generally shows that some fields require women attention more than others. This is even more appropriate if the women folk would take their appropriate position and status in the society. Take for instance gynecology and pediatrics Nursing and Midwifery which cater for the specific needs of women in their privacy and those of their children respectively. Women by their nature, do better than their male counterparts in the area of education, particularly children education, because of their patience, perseverance and attachment to the children. Specializing in education will enhance their God endowed talents in teaching. This lends credence to the saying “if you educate a man you educate a person, but if you educate a woman you educate a nation”(Juwairiyya and Usman:2010:9).

Despite the crucial need of a woman education especially in the above disciplines, to enable them carry out their responsibilities in the society. The female education is one of the neglected areas of
educational planning and practices in the conventional and even in the existing Islamic universities. The needs of woman in education here not actually been taken good care of in the scheme of affairs. Islam and indeed Shariah is very explicit about the role of women in the society and of the society obligation to provide the appropriate education to them, hence the need for gender policies and programmes in line with the provision of shariah for implementation not only in Islamic universities but also in the conventional universities to alleviate the woman’s ordeal in their quest for higher education.

5. **ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY AS A FACTOR FOR FEMALE EDUCATION**

Islamic law forbids intermingling between male and female. It is only logical for Islamic law to prescribe separate arrangements for the two sexes in virtually everything including education. This prophet (S.A.W) set aside a day for the women and used to go with Bilal Ibn Rabah who collected charity from the woman during the lessons. Sheikh Usman bin Fodio also set aside separate lesson sessions for woman only. The university system that fails to cater for the psychological and emotional needs of the women is certainly not conducive for any serious and effective leaning activities capable of bringing out the desired talents in the woman folk of the opportunity of actualizing their full potentialities.(Juwariyya and Usman:2010:5).

Moreover, when an Islamic university is properly found and operate based on the rules and regulations guarding the Islamic law, the women folk will have full opportunity to go to school freely. An Islamic university with separate sessions for female student which will fall in line with the practice of our noble prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and righteous predecessor.

In the same vain parent will have the courage to send their female children to the university, because they are sure of moral security.

6. **CONCLUSION**

The need to have an Islamic university that abides by the rules and regulation of shari’a is important in order to provide conducive atmosphere for female education. It is believed if the university is well operated it gives parent the courage to send their female children to school.
REFERENCES


