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A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN MUSLIM CULTURE

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Abstract. Education has been a cornerstone of Islamic culture since its inception, deeply rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The first revealed word of the Qur'an, "Read," symbolizes the profound emphasis on knowledge within Islam. The Prophet's directive that the pursuit of knowledge is obligatory for all Muslims further highlights this commitment. Over centuries, Muslims developed a rich educational tradition, establishing libraries, schools, and universities in cities like Baghdad, Córdoba, and Cairo. These institutions advanced science, medicine, astronomy, and philosophy, laying the groundwork for modern academia. Education in the Islamic world was holistic, addressing students' intellectual, emotional, and physical well-being. Scholars like Al-Ghazali advocated for balanced learning, blending academics with recreation. Early learning centers, such as mosques, evolved into formal institutions like maktabs and madrasas, offering diverse curricula that included religious studies, languages, and sciences. The Ijaz system, a precursor to modern diplomas, certified students' mastery of knowledge and ability to teach.

This paper explores the historical development of education in the Islamic world, emphasizing its foundational principles, institutional advancements, and enduring impact on global knowledge systems, illustrating the central role of education in shaping Muslim culture and civilization.

Key words: *islamic education, madrasah, Al-Qaraouin, maktab, the Ijaz system, holistic education.*

Introduction. From the earliest times of Islam, the issue of education has been foremost in the minds of Muslims. Indeed, the very first word of the Qur'an that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was: "Read!"

Likewise, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also said that:

"The pursuit of knowledge is obligatory for all Muslims". (Al-Bayhaqi and confirmed by Al-Albani in his hadith Sahih Al-Jami 3913)

With such a direct command to seek knowledge, Muslims attached great importance to the system of education in order to fulfill this duty imposed by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Throughout Islamic history, education has been a source of pride and an area in which Muslims have always excelled. Thus they built great libraries and famous learning centers in places like Baghdad, Córdoba, and Cairo.

Main text They stood near the first primary schools for children and universities for adult education. They advanced science by leaps and bounds through these incredible institutions, leading to our modern world.

Islamic education for children was not limited to just the information and facts they had to learn. Educators also consider the student's emotional, social, and physical well-being in addition to the information they need to master.

Ash-Shayzari, a 12th-century Syrian physician, wrote extensively on how to deal with young students. He noted that they "must not be treated cruelly, nor should they be engaged in work that will not benefit everyone at the same time." [5]

The great Muslim scholar Al-Ghazali also emphasized "the need for the child to be entertained in games and the risk of constant incessant study which may dull the heart, dull the sharpness of the mind, and become exceedingly difficult." Therefore, he begins to look for ways to completely escape from studies.[1]

Thus, Al-Ghazali believed that students' learning should be mixed with recreational activities such as playing with stuffed animals, puppet shows, or even playing sports.

Ibn Khaldun states in his Muqaddimah: "You should know that teaching children the Qur'an is a symbol of Islam. Muslims practice this teaching in all their cities because it fills their hearts with firm faith (in Islam) and faith derived from the verses of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah. "[4]

Early educational institutions in the Islamic world were relatively informal. Mosques have always been used as a meeting place where people could gather around a scholar, attend his classes, study books with him (or her) and gain knowledge. Some of the greatest scholars of Islam learned this way and in turn also taught this way.

The founders of the four schools of Muslim law – Imams Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi'i and Ibn Hanbal – acquired their vast knowledge by sitting in gatherings with other scholars (usually in mosques) to exchange and learn about Islam law.

Some schools in the Muslim world continue this tradition of informal education. In the three holy mosques – Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, Masjid al-Nabawi in

Madinah and Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem – scholars regularly sit and hold classes in these mosques: these classes are open to anyone who wants to join them and benefit. from their knowledge.[2]

Unfortunately, over time, states began to establish official educational institutions, mainly based on the model of European institutions.

Since the beginning of the 9th century, primary schools, called maktab, have been used by young people. Typically, a maktab was attached to a mosque, where the scholars and imams who resided there held classes for the children. These courses covered subjects such as Arabic reading and writing, arithmetic and Islamic law. Most of the local population was educated in these primary schools throughout their childhood. Upon completion of the maktab program, students could choose to begin their adult lives and find a job, or to continue their higher education at a madrasa, which means "school" in Arabic.

A madrasah was usually attached to a large mosque. This applies, for example, to Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt (founded in 970) and Al-Qaraouin University in Fez, Morocco (founded in 859). Later, the Seljuk Grand Vizier Nizam Al-Mulk established many madrasahs throughout the Muslim world [2].

In the madrasah, students studied, in addition, religious studies and the Arabic language, as well as other sciences such as medicine, mathematics, astronomy, history, geography and many others. In the 1100s, there were 75 madrasahs in Cairo, 51 in Damascus, and 44 in Aleppo. Likewise, there were hundreds of madrasahs in Muslim Spain at that time [3].

These madrasahs can be considered the first modern universities. They had different faculties according to different sciences, where scholars resided, each of whom had expertise in his field. Thus, students chose a specialization and spent a certain number of years studying under the guidance of many professors. Ibn Khaldun clarifies that in Morocco during his time the madrasa had a program that lasted sixteen years. He states that this duration is the "minimum [time] within which a student can obtain the scientific training he desires or can realize that he will never be able to obtain it."

When the student completed his studies, he was given an Ijaz, or license, certifying that he had completed the program and was eligible to teach it on a rotating basis [2]. Ijaz could be given by a teacher who could personally attest to his student's knowledge, or by the institution (madrasah) itself to confirm the student's completion of the program of study. The principle of Ijâza was picked up (much later) in the West and is the equivalent of diplomas awarded by higher education institutions.

Summary and conclusions. The Islamic educational tradition highlights the intrinsic value of knowledge as both a religious and intellectual pursuit. The educational institutions established throughout the Muslim world played a crucial role in advancing civilization and preserving knowledge during the medieval period. The holistic approach to education, which considers the intellectual, emotional, and physical aspects of students, remains relevant today. Furthermore, the formalization of education through institutions like madrasas and the development of academic certification (Ijaz) laid the groundwork for modern educational practices. The enduring legacy of Islamic education emphasizes the need for continued intellectual growth, balanced learning, and the pursuit of knowledge for the betterment of society.

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