

The Rights of Women to Higher Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Fatemeh Ebrahimi Varkiani

P.h.D In Public International Law, Tehran University



From the viewpoint of Islam, education is considered one of the natural and innate rights of every human being; the principle that has been seriously taken into consideration by the legislators of the Islamic Republic of Iran, recognizing equal rights for men and women.

Right after the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Iranian women regained their original identity and human rights and got out of the state of being an object and a tool at the service of consumerism, and while fulfilling the important duty of motherhood preserving their human dignity they were able to go through different fields of scientific growth and progress and play influential social roles in Iranian society.

This growth and progress of Iranian women, which is a manifestation of the goals and objectives of the Islamic Revolution - based on Article 3 of the Constitution regarding free education for all at all levels and the facilitation and generalization of higher education - grant equal access to girls and boys and women and men regarding educational opportunities and ensures educational justice in the Islamic Republic of Iran. But unfortunately, despite the remarkable progress over time, the correct and realistic picture of this important issue has not been presented to the world.

After the revolution, and owing to the blessing of appropriate foundation and opportunities, Iranian women have been able to shine in various fields, including education, science, and knowledge, and have been able to benefit from and enjoy the right to education as one of their important human rights.

The repeated guidelines provided by the Supreme Leader and his emphasis on the role of women in the three fields of personal, social, and family life and the need to provide opportunities for growth and promotion in all three fields for all women are the causes for acceleration and facilitation of the progress made by the Iranian women in various fields, including higher education. The Supreme Leader has also repeatedly considered the presence of educated and scholarly women in the Islamic Republic as a source of pride and honor. In his own words: "The presence of women Islamic scholars in various fields - such as the presence of wise and knowledgeable female academic scholars who are religious - has a great impact on the world; it is an honor for the Islamic Revolution."

According to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution respect for women means that they should be given the opportunity to use the outstanding and great powers and talents that God Almighty has deposited in every human

Blessing of appropriate foundation and opportunities, Iranian women have been able to shine in various fields, including education, science, and knowledge, and have been able to benefit from and enjoy the right to education as one of their important human rights.

being - including the talents that are specific to women - that can appear at different levels like family, community, and international levels in academic and research areas.

Keeping in view these obligations, the “Charter of Women’s Rights and Responsibilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran” - inspired by the comprehensive and moderate Islamic Sharia - was drafted and approved in 2004 in order to create a balance between rights and responsibilities and a context for the development of material and spiritual dimensions in the life of individual and society and with regard to the human dignity of women.

The foundation of the charter is based on the fundamental belief that in Islam, men and women are equal in essence and innate nature, the purpose of their creation, in their talents, etc., and the possibility of acquiring values, and they can only have an advantage over each other through all-round human development, knowledge, piety and their role in creating a commendable society.

Based on this approach, the following rights have been declared for women and girls in the field of higher education:

- ▼ The right to public literacy, to educational advancement and to benefit from educational and training facilities
- ▼ The right to enjoy higher education up to the highest scientific level
- ▼ The right to master expertise in special fields, both quantitatively and qualitatively, up to the highest levels
- ▼ The right to participate in policymaking, decision making and management of academic and scientific affairs; and to active participation at national and international scientific and cultural gatherings

▼ The right to recognize, support, and benefit from the capabilities of women with outstanding talents and their responsibility to help meet the country’s needs

▼ The right to enjoy necessary support in the field of education, access to higher education, and technical and vocational training for women with physical and mental disabilities proportionate to their talents and extent of disability

▼ The right to carry out research, author, translate and publish books, articles in general and specialized publications while observing authenticity, honesty, and the interests of the community

▼ The right to benefit from support for scientific and research work and to develop research centers under women’s management

Another important document is “Policies to Promote Women’s Participation in Higher Education”, passed by Iran’s Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution in the year 2005 some of the most important objectives of which include improving the cultural level, creating fair opportunities and facilities and eliminating unfair discrimination in the training of female specialists in order to take advantage of their expertise in the development and excellence of the country, the quantitative and qualitative development of women’s higher education in obtaining high degrees, the promotion of the participation of female specialists at different levels in managing the country’s higher education, increasing the ability and acquiring the necessary skills for women to more effectively fulfill the cultural, family and social responsibilities of women.

Creating equal educational opportunities between women and men at all levels, planning and taking the necessary measures

to promote women's higher education at all levels, elevating the quality and quantity of women's educational competence and skills in diversified academic fields with the view to enhancing their role in different areas of life, adopting appropriate measures for the education of female university students in the universities of their hometowns, quantitative and qualitative development of higher education facilities for girls in deprived areas to enable them have access to higher education, comprehensive and strategic planning with regard to training women specialists, providing fair opportunities by emphasizing the principle of commitment and expertise in using the capabilities of women specialists in the management system as faculty members in universities, the participation of female faculty members in educational and cultural planning and the development of women universities and centers of higher education such as Shariati University, Al-Zahra University, and Hazrat Masoumeh University are considered some of the important measures taken by Islamic Republic of Iran in the field of women's education.

As a result of these measures the share of female university students in the country's state universities has increased to 56%, female university faculty members has gone up to more than 33.3%, the share of academic faculty members in medical universities has reached 34%, the of share women specialized medical doctors has reached 40%, the number of women subspecialist medical doctors has increased to 30%, and there are more than 9500 female authors and 840 female publishers in the country. These successes are only a part of the realization of the ideals of the Islamic Revolution, which need to be highlighted.



According to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution respect for women means that they should be given the opportunity to use the outstanding and great powers and talents that God Almighty has deposited in every huma being - including the talents that are specific to women - that can appear at different levels like family, community, and international levels in academic and research areas.
