

Professor Juhaina Sultan Saif Al-Issa:

The First Qatari Faculty Member at Qatar University

Higher education in the State of Qatar began with the establishment of the College of Education for males and females in 1973, which is considered the first nucleus upon which Qatar University was founded pursuant to its founding law issued in 1977. At the graduation ceremony of the first cohort of students from the College of Education, which was held on June 11, 1977, the graduates' certificates were issued in the name of Qatar University, in a symbolic and institutional indication of the transition of the educational project from the stage of independent colleges to the stage of the national university. In the press conference held by Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Kazim, Dean of the College of Education at Qatar University at the time, on September 26, 1978, he explained that in its sixth year the University would receive around 550 male and female students, bringing the total number to approximately 1,800 male and female students, in addition to nearly 400 male and female graduates.

Qatar University began its first academic year in (1977/1978) with four colleges: Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Science, and



Prof. Ahmed Ibrahim Abu Shouk,

Professor of Modern History, Department of Humanities College of Arts and Sciences – Qatar University

Sharia, Law and Islamic Studies. Within this foundational academic context, Juhaina Al-Issa joined as a teaching assistant at the College of Education, and later at the Department of Sociology in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, beginning an academic and

professional journey that became closely associated with projects of social modernization in the State of Qatar and with the study of the structural transformations witnessed by Qatari society during the modern developmental boom. Since the 1970s, the name of Juhaina Al-Issa has emerged as one of the pioneers in the field of sociology and social studies in Qatar and the Arabian Gulf, as she contributed to the establishment of academic social research and linked sociological studies to issues of development and social and cultural policies, in addition to her institutional role in developing higher education and strengthening the presence of Qatari women in the academic and research fields.

Academic Background and Establishment

Juhaina Al-Issa belongs to the Qatari generation that witnessed the beginnings of the modern educational and cultural transformation in Qatar. She chose early on to specialize in sociology, which at that time was considered one of the rare specializations for Gulf women, giving her experience an early pioneering and intellectual dimension. She obtained a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Cairo University in 1968, then earned a master's degree in 1975, followed by a doctorate in the Philosophy of Sociology in 1978 from the same university. This academic formation in Cairo, which at the time was considered one of the principal incubators of Arab social thought, provided a solid intellectual foundation that later contributed to shaping her research project related to the study of Qatari society and its modern transformations.

Academic Journey

Dr. Juhaina Al-Essa joined the College of Education as a teaching assistant in 1973 and then as an Assistant Lecturer in the Humanities and Social Sciences Program. In 1978, she was promoted to a Lecturer in the Department of Sociology, College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Qatar University. She was subsequently promoted to a Professor of Sociology in 1990. In 1997, she assumed the position of Head of the Department of Sociology and contributed significantly to the establishment and development of social studies within the University.

She also held several important academic and administrative positions, including:

- Academic Affairs Advisor for Qatar University in Washington.
- Head of the Social and Economic Research Unit at the Center for Documentation and Human Studies.
- Head of the Department of Sociology.
- Member of the Qatar University Council.
- Chair of the Scholarships Committee at Qatar University.

She also worked as a visiting professor at Georgetown University (1980) and George Mason University (1994), which allowed her to engage with Western sociological schools and connect local experience with global contexts in the social sciences. In her speech delivered at the graduation ceremony of the fifth cohort in the 1981 academic year, Dr. Juhaina stated that achieving the University's mission requires that "the University be an instrument for development, and the citizen be a member of society, not merely an individual seeking self-actualization. Loyalty is only one aspect of the citizen's sense of belonging to this homeland, and an attempt to invest their energies in serving their society. In conclusion, the University's mission must be associated with the idea of development; that is, the University's mission is a developmental one. When we develop the human being, we help them achieve self-realization in service of their country, and the human being is, in fact, the most important factor in comprehensive development."

Contributions to the Study of Qatari Society

Juhaina Al-Issa's intellectual project was closely linked to an effort to understand the social transformations experienced by Qatari society during the oil boom and the emergence of the modern state of Qatar. Her work focused on issues such as:

- Social modernization.
- Urbanization and urban growth.
- Value and cultural transformations.
- Qatari social identity.
- Social development.
- Labor and localization (Qatarization) issues.
- Family, women, and education.

Amongst her contributions:

- Modernization in Contemporary Qatari Society, Kuwait: Kazma Publishing, Distribution and Translation Company, 1979.
- Qatari Society: An Analytical Study of the

Features of Contemporary Social Change, Cairo: Sijill al-Arab, 1982.

- Doha: The City-State: A Field Study on Urbanization in the City of Doha (co-authored), Doha: Qatar University Center for Documentation and Humanities Studies, 1985.

These studies and others alike were characterized by an attempt to bridge theoretical analysis with fieldwork, with a focus on the specificity of Gulf society and the rapid transformations imposed by economic development.

Women's Leadership and Community Engagement

Professor Juhaina Al-Issa represents a model of the Qatari academic woman who combined scholarly work with institutional and community participation. She participated as a member in several national committees and bodies, including:

- The Supreme Council for Education.
- The Preparatory Committee for the elections of the Central Municipal Council.
- The Women's Affairs Committee at the Supreme Council for Family Affairs.
- The Board of Directors of the General Retirement and Pension Authority.
- The American Sociological Association.
- Vice President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs.
- Vice President of the Qatar Social Work Foundation.

Her name was also associated with issues of women's empowerment, education, and social development. She was among the voices calling for expanding Qatari women's participation in public life, within a framework that preserves the cultural specificity of society. She expressed this orientation early in her speech delivered at the graduation ceremony of the fifth cohort of the 1981 academic year: "Today, what the Qatari woman needs is for us to cultivate in her an aware mind, develop in her an open conscience, grant her confidence, and deepen in her a sense of responsibility, so that, God willing, through her many of the achievements we hope for this society may be realized"

Intellectual Approach and Sociological Orientation

Juhaina Al-Issa's work can be classified within the developmental sociological school, which focused on analyzing the relationship between economic modernization and social transformation in Gulf societies. Her academic discourse was characterized by several features:

- A focus on the structural transformations of society.
- Linking development with cultural identity.
- An emphasis on field-based studies.
- Employing sociology to understand public policy.
- Openness to comparative approaches in the study of Gulf societies.

Her writings contributed to the formation of an important knowledge archive on Qatari society during its transition from a traditional to a modern urban society.

Awards and Scientific Recognition

Professor Al-Issa received several awards and honors, most notably:

- Ideal Woman Award, General Authority for Youth, Doha Youth Center, 1996.
- GCC-level Community Service Award, Umm Al Mu'minin Women's Association (Ajman), 2002.
- State Award for Scientific Excellence in Social Sciences, State of Qatar, 2006.

This recognition reflects the scientific and social standing enjoyed by Professor Juhaina Al-Issa as one of the founding figures of social research in Qatar.

Impact on Qatari Intellectual Life

The importance of Dr. Juhaina Al-Issa is not limited to her academic production; it extends to her contribution to establishing institutional traditions of social research in Qatar and linking the University with issues of society and development. She is also considered part of the generation that contributed to building women's academic presence in the Gulf and opening the way for subsequent generations of female researchers and academics. She was described by the program On the Shores of Doha (Qatar Radio), in an interview conducted with her on August 24, 2024, as having "an unlimited passion for knowledge. She captured the beauty of every turning point in life and embraced it, casting the shadows of modernization over Qatari society," in reference to her intellectual and social role in keeping pace with the country's modern transformations.