



EDUCATION IX. PRIMARY SCHOOLS

EDUCATION

ix. PRIMARY SCHOOLS

A movement to introduce modern primary education into Persia began in 1315/1897, when the newly appointed grand vizier, Mīrzā 'Alī Khan Amīn-al-Dawla (q.v.), initiated his modernizing reforms. In that year, under his patronage, Ḥāji Mīrzā Ḥasan Rošdīya founded the first modern primary school in Tehran. Rošdīya had already established the first Persian school in Erevan in 1300/1883 and the first modern primary school in Tabrīz in 1305/1888, though in the latter city he had met with continued resistance from conservative religious authorities (*'olamā'*; Rošdīya, pp. 23, 31-35). His epithet Rošdīya was derived from a term used for primary schools in Ottoman Turkish (Qazvīnī and Reżāzāda Šafaq; Maḥbūbī, *Mo'assasāt* I, p. 376). Amīn-al-Dawla also encouraged a number of enlightened figures like Mīrzā Maḥmūd Khan Eḥtešām-al-Salṭana and Shaikh Yaḥyā Dawlatābādī (qq.v.) to form a private educational group, Anjoman-e ma'āref (q.v.), in 1315/1897, with the purpose of establishing and supervising a number of modern schools in Tehran and the provinces. Foreign schools that had been founded in Tehran and provincial cities in the latter half of the 19th century also served religious minorities and a segment of the Persian population during this period (see xv, below).



At first primary and secondary schools were not distinct, and the primary levels sometimes consisted of only four grades. There were no general instructional materials and no uniform curriculum, each school being under the direction of its founder or principal (Şadiq, 1347 Š./1968, p. 359; Sādāt Nāşerī, pp. 258-59). Nāẓem-al-Eslām Kermānī counted forty-nine modern elementary schools established during the period 1315-25/1897-1907 (*Tārīk-e bīdārī*, ed. Sa'īdī Sirjānī, I, pp. 413-15).

The first primary schools established in Tehran, in 1315/1897, were Roşdiya, with four preparatory and two additional grades (Roşdiya, p. 66); Kayriya (later renamed Fīrūzkūhī), founded for orphans by Mīrzā Karīm Khan Sardār Mokarram Fīrūzkūhī, with Shaikh Hādī Najmābādī as principal; 'Elmīya, founded by Anjoman-e ma'āref with six primary and three secondary grades and Mīrzā 'Alī Khan Nāẓem-al-'olūm as principal; and Eftetāḥīya, founded by Meftāḥ-al-molk. In the following year Şaraf and Moẓaffariya were founded by Anjoman-e ma'āref, with Mīrzā 'Alī-Akbar Nāẓem-al-Aṭebbā' Kermānī and Shaikh Mahdī Şarīf Kāşānī as respective principals, and Dāneş was founded by Arfa'al-Dawla, with Mīrzā Moḥammad Khan, a graduate of Dār al-fonūn (q.v.), as principal. Not all these schools were financially successful; for example, in 1320/1902 the bankrupt Moẓaffariya was incorporated into Şaraf as Şaraf-e Moẓaffarī (Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yahyā* I, pp. 192-97, 215, 240-41).

There were a number of modern Persian schools in Tabrīz, including Dabestān-e Faqr-e Rāzī (1309/1891), Dabestān-e mawlawī (later Eftekar; 1319/1901), Dabestān-e 'Onşorī (1289/1901), and Dabestān-e Rūdakī (1326/1908; Amīn Sobḥānī, pp. 8-16, 17, 21, 28). Similar schools were founded in Shiraz, Zanjan, Dāmḡān, and Kermān (Yaḡmā'ī).

The 1910s. The Fundamental Law of Education (Qānūn-e asāsī-e ma'āref) was enacted by the Second Majles in 1329/1911. Among its provisions was article v, which required parents and guardians to have children educated from age seven years. Implementation of the law was entrusted to the Ministry of Education ("Tārīkča," pp. 531-32), and primary instruction in all public schools was to be free. Under the law two types of primary schools were established: those in villages (*dabestān-e dehkada*) and those in cities (*dabestān-e šahr*), the main difference being the number of years' attendance required and the qualifications of teachers. In smaller villages there were only four grades, and the teachers had normally attended no more than six grades (Şadiq, 1347 Š./1968, pp. 481-82). The appointment of Mīrzā Aḥmad Khan Bader Naşīr-al-Dawla as minister of education in the cabinet of Mīrzā Ḥasan Khan Woṭūq-al-



Dawla in 1336 Š./1918 was a turning point in Persian primary education. He was responsible for establishing forty primary schools in Tehran and a number in provincial towns, as well as a normal school in Tehran (Şadīq, 1347 Š./1968, p. 369; Yağmā'ī, 1350 Š./1971, pp. 57-59). As a result, in 1336-38/1918-20 enrollment in elementary schools rose from 24,000 to 28,600 (Markaz-e āmār, p. 40).

The national system of primary education. In the 1920s and 1930s a national system of primary education was established in Persia. In March 1922 the Majles granted the Supreme Council of Education (Šūra-ye 'ālī-e ma'āref) authority over all education, and in 1303 Š./1924 the law governing elementary education was revised. The government also undertook to supervise Persian schools in such neighboring countries as Iraq, Turkey, and the Soviet republics in the Caucasus and Turkestan, providing funds and teachers and in some instances even establishing schools (Şadīq, 1347 Š./1968, p. 370; "Tārīkča," p. 533; see below). An article in the supplement to the annual Persian budget for 1933 provided that all state primary schools be free of charge to students. New textbooks, compiled and printed at the order of the Ministry of Education, were sold to pupils at low prices (Şadīq, 1347 Š./1968, p. 371). On 10 March 1934 the Majles passed an act establishing a secondary school for training primary-school teachers (see xviii, below). Primary schools were thenceforth to be known as *dabestān* and the teachers as *āmūzgār*. Previously there had had been a one-year class preparatory (*tahīya*) to first grade (see viii, above); the Ministry of Education abolished it (*Ta'lim o tarbiat* 4/10, 1313 Š./1934, p. 637). In order to encourage foundation of private schools, in 1934 the Majles provided that private primary schools with six full grades and more than 180 pupils would be entitled to government financial assistance in proportion to the number of pupils passing final examinations (*Ta'lim o tarbiat* 4/11, 1313 Š./1934, p. 702). In 1935 the first coeducational primary schools were officially recognized in Persia. Pupils studied in the same classrooms until age ten years (Şadīq, 1347 Š./1968, p. 373).

The Universal Education Act (Qānūn-e āmūzeš o parvareš-e 'omūmī) was adopted by the Majles on 28 August 1943 at the urging of 'Alī-Akbar Sīāsī, minister of education (Sīāsī, I, pp. 126-36). By this act the government undertook to extend compulsory primary education to the entire country. It was to last six years, and it was envisioned that the curriculum and textbooks would vary according to the needs of different areas. Under this act the Ministry of Education was authorized to declare fifth and sixth grades optional



until sufficient facilities were available. Education in state schools throughout the country was to be free of charge.

In the Municipalities Law adopted under the discretionary power of Prime Minister Moḥammad Moṣaddeq in 1953 5 percent of municipal revenues in each district were to be earmarked for the construction of elementary schools, which led to a great increase in such facilities (Şadīq, 1347 Š./1968, p. 376). In order to encourage the spread of elementary education, an act permitting establishment of private four-grade elementary schools was passed in 1956 (*Majmū'a-ye qawānīn*, 1335 Š./1956, p. 89). Accreditation standards were set for elementary schools, and measures to encourage private schools were adopted, including assumption of financial responsibility for teachers and principals. Subsequently many new private schools were established, at both elementary and secondary levels, in Tehran and other major cities. In 1958 the offices of primary and secondary education were made independent branches of the Ministry of Education (Sādāt Nāşerī, p. 272).

Educational reforms in the 1960s. In 1964 a detailed code regulating primary schools was issued. Under its provisions the principal of each elementary school was made responsible for enforcing the regulations (“Ā'in-nāma”). Beginning in 1966 the twelve years of public education were divided into elementary, middle (*rāhnemā-ī-e taḥşīlī*), and secondary phases. Attendance at elementary school was to be both free and obligatory throughout the country; there were to be five grades for ages six to eleven years, and graduation was contingent upon passage of final examinations (Şadīq, 1356 Š./1977, p. 231). The curriculum was geared to reading, writing, arithmetic, and general knowledge (“Nezām-e jadīd,” pp. 45-46). In first grade the curriculum consisted of reading and writing in Persian, elementary science, and arithmetic; in second grade Persian, elementary science, arithmetic, and religion; in third grade Persian, elementary science, arithmetic, religion, and social studies; in fourth and fifth grades Persian, elementary science, arithmetic, religion, social studies, and the arts.

The new elementary-school program was put into effect in 1966 and the middle-school program in 1971, when the first class of elementary-school graduates entered (Rahrow, p. 252; “Nezām-e jadīd,” pp. 434-42). In 1974 the Act Providing Educational Facilities for Persian Children and Youth (Qānūn-e ta'mīn-e waş'el wa emkānāt-e taḥşīl-e atfāl wa javānān-e Īrān) reaffirmed that all children of appropriate age were to attend elementary school (Şadīq, 1356 Š./1977, p. 232).



Quantitative growth of elementary education. The growth of elementary education in the period 1926-92 can be measured by number of schools, number of pupils, percentage of female pupils, ratio of pupils to teachers, and percentage of the appropriate age group enrolled in elementary schools (Table 1). In 1926-37 the ratio of pupils to teachers increased sharply, because there were insufficient teachers to keep up with the increase in enrollment. The generally rapid growth of elementary education slowed in the period 1936-47 but accelerated rapidly in 1946-67. Problems in recruiting sufficient qualified teachers persisted. From 1966 to 1992 acceleration continued, but the pupil-teacher ratio declined significantly.

Laboratory schools (dabestānhā-ye pišgām). As it became easier to establish elementary schools, many experimental or laboratory schools were founded, especially in Tehran. The Pišrow School, under the direction of Dr. ‘Alī Jalālī, professor of psychology at Tehran University, and the private Namūna-ye Bāmdād School, under the direction of Badr-al-Molūk Bāmdād, were opened in 1951 (*Sapīda-ye fardā* 4/7-8, 1336 Š./1957, pp. 51-63). The Raveš-e NowSchool was established in 1955 under the direction of the poet and composer of children’s songs ‘Abbās Yamīnī Šarīf and the Farhād School in 1957 under the direction of Tūrān Mīrhādī (*Sapīda-ye fardā* 3/3-4, 1335 Š./1956, p. 79; 3/5, pp. 96-106; 4/7-8, 1336 Š./1957, pp. 51-63).

Persian schools abroad. Persian schools have been operated in other countries since before the Constitutional Revolution (q.v.). For example, in 1328/1910 2,750 *qerāns* (rials) from a total budget of 1,191,540 *qerāns* were allocated for financial assistance to such schools (“Tārīkča,” p. 533). As a result of such assistance Persian schools were established in Iraq and Istanbul on behalf of the Persian government (Komīsīūn, II, p. 1205); by 1925 Persian schools were in operation in Baghdad (Šarāfat, established in 1336/1917), Kāžemayn (Oḳowwat-e Īrānīān, 1325/1907), Najaf (‘Alawī-e Īrānīān. 1326/1908), Karbalā’ (Ḥosaynī, 1327/1909), and Bašra (Aḥmadīya, later Pahlavī, 1340/1921) in Iraq and Ashkhabad and Baku in the Soviet Union (*Ta’līm o tarbīat* 1/2, 1304 Š./1925, p. 30).

Early in the reign of Reżā Shah (1925-41) all these schools were brought under the jurisdiction of the Persian Ministry of Education, and their budgets were guaranteed by the government. At the same time groups of interested Persians began establishing private schools abroad. Ḥājji ‘Abd-al-Raḥīm established the Mortažawī school in Najaf, and Malak-Moḥammad Dezfūlī founded the Aḥmadīschool in ‘Amāra in Iraq (*Ta’līm o tarbīat* 1/2, 1304 Š./1925, p. 30). By



1971 more than 9,000 pupils were studying in Persian elementary schools abroad (“Neẓām-e jadīd”; Table 2, Table 3). Owing to strained political relations, however, all Persian schools in Iraq were closed in 1979, and they have not been reopened. Since the revolution of 1979 schools have been opened abroad both by the Persian government and by Persian communities in Europe, the former Soviet Union, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States. In 1988 there were thirty-three Persian elementary schools in other countries (e.g., Turkey, Pakistan, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Bahrain, the Azarbaijan Republic, and the Republic of Turkmenia), with a total of 5,980 male and 3,512 female pupils (Wezārat-e āmūzeš, 1368 Š./1989, p. 2).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(For cited references not found in this bibliography, see “Short References.”)

“Ā’in-nāma-ye dabestānhā,” *Majalla-ye āmūzeš o parvareš* 34/4, 1343/Š.1964, pp. 43-62.

“Aḳbār-e farhang-e kešvar (Sāzmān-e āmūzešgāhhā),” *Majalla-ye āmūzeš o parvareš* 30/7, 1338 Š./1959, pp. 58-59.

R. Amīn Šobhānī, *Tārikča-ye wajh-e tasmīya-ye madāres-e Tabrīz*, Tabrīz, 1337 Š./1958.

Ḥ.-A. Āmūzgār, “Madāres-e Īrān dar 45 sāl-e qabl,” *Sāl-nāma-ye donyā* 21, 1344 Š./1965, pp. 99-101.

R. Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran*, Leiden, 1969.

“Eḥṣā’īya-ye madāres o moḥašṣelīn-e madāres-e dawlatī, sāl-e taḥṣīlī-e 1305-6,” *Tālīm o tarbiyat* 3/11-12, 1306 Š./1927, pp. 545-58.

Eḥtešām-al-Salṭana, *Ḳāṭerāt-e Eḥtešām-al-Salṭana*, ed. M.-M. Mūsawī, Tehran, 1366 Š./1987.

A. Ḳāqānī, *Barrasī-e āmār-e āmūzeš o parvareš-e Īrān*, Tehran, 1352 Š./1973.



- Komisiūn-e mellī-e Yūneskū, *Irānšahr*, 2 vols., Tehran, 1943 Š./1964.
- Markaz-e āmār-e Īrān, *Bayān-e āmārī-e taḥaw-wolāt-e eqtešādī wa ejtemā'ī-e Īrān*, Tehran, 2535=1355 Š./1976.
- D. Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, Ithaca, N.Y., 1992.
- “Nezām-e jadīd-e taḥšīlī,” *Majalla-ye āmūzeš o parvareš* 39/2, 1348/1969, pp. 45-47.
- Moḥammad Qazvīnī and R. Reżāzāda Šafaq, “Dabestān o dabīrestān,” *Majalla-ye mehr* 2/1, 1313 Š./1934, pp. 10-13.
- F. Rahrow, “Dawra-ye rāhnemā'ī-e taḥšīlī,” *Majalla-ye āmūzeš o parvareš* 42/4, 1351 Š./1972, pp. 251-56.
- Šams-al-Dīn Rošdiya, *Sawāneḥ-e 'omr*, Tehran, 1367 Š./1988.
- Ḥ Sādāt Nāšerī, “Tārīkča-ye kūšešhā-ye farhangī-e Īrān,” in *Sāl-nāma-ye kešvar-e Īrān*, Tehran, 1346 Š./1967, pp. 258-59.
- I. Sadiq (Ī. Šadīq), *Modern Persia and Her Educational System*, New York, 1931.
- Idem, *Tārīk-e farhang-e Īrān*, 4th ed., Tehran, 1347 Š./1968.
- Idem, *Dawra-ye moḳtašer-e tārīk-e farhang-e Īrān*, Tehran, 1356 Š./1977, pp. 182-83, 188-89, 197, 220, 229-37, 262.
- 'A.-A. Sīāsī, *Gozāreš-e yak zendagī* I, London, 1366 Š./1987.
- Tārīk-e farhang-e Ādarbāyjān* I, Tabrīz, 1332 Š./1953, pp. 29-30, 46.
- “Tārīkča-ye ma'āref-e Īrān,” *Ta'līm o tarbiāt* 4/7-8, 1313 Š./1934, pp. 462-64; 4/9, 1313 Š./1934, pp. 530-37.
- Wezārat-e āmūzeš o parvareš, *Ḳolāsa-ye āmār-e āmūzeš o parvareš 1367-68*, Tehran, 1368 Š./1989.
- Idem, *Āmār-e āmūzeš o parvareš, 1372-73*, Tehran, 1373 Š./1994.
- Wezārat-e ma'āref o awqāf, *Sāl-nāma*, 1336/1918, pp. 51-53, 65-66, 70-75, 100-10.



Idem, *Sal-nāma*, 1307 Š./1928, p. 24.

E. Yağmā'ī, "Gūša'ī az tārīk-e farhang-e jadīd-e mā," *Yağmā* 20, 1346 Š./1967, pp. 443-48, 485-88.

Idem, "Mīrzā Aḥmad Khan Naṣīr-al-Dawla Bader," *Majalla-ye āmūzeš o parvareš* 41/1, 1350 Š./1971, pp. 56-62.