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EDUCATION X. MIDDLE AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Modern secondary education in Persia was originally based on the 19th-century European humanistic system, which was focused on general knowledge and building character, rather than on professional or vocational training. This basic European philosophy dominated the Persian secondary-school system until the 1960s, when reforms were introduced by American advisers.

The incipient phase. Until the 1890s secondary-school courses were offered in the four-year preparatory program at Dār al-fonūn (q.v.) and in certain foreign schools. The first general secondary school in Persia was Madrasa-ye ʿelmīya (q.v.), founded in 1315/1898 by Mīrzā Maḥmūd Khan Eḥtešām-al-Salṭana (q.v.), a leading constitutionalist, statesman, and chairman of Anjoman-e maʿāref (q.v.; Daw-latābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā* I, p. 194). The curriculum of the Faculty of Political Science (q.v.; Madrasa-ye ʿolūm-e sīāsī), founded in 1317/1899, included a two-year preparatory program for its students. In 1320/1903 the Supreme Council on Education (Majles-e ʿālī-e maʿāref) decreed that, in addition to ʿElmīya, three schools in Tehran, Adab, Ṯarwat, and Šaraf-e Moẓaffarī, should offer three-year secondary-level courses (Dawlatābādī,

Ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā I, pp. 303, 310, 331).

During the period of political instability in the 1900s and 1910s secondary education in Persia was precarious. For example, in 1329/1911 the preparatory programs at Dār al-fonūn and the Faculty of Political Science had only eighty-six and sixty-eight students respectively. In 1334/1915 Saʿīd Nafīsī, Ḥosayn Āzmūda, and Ḥabīb-Allāh Āmūzgār founded Madrasa-ye Sīrūs in Tehran, and the next year a secondary-school program was instituted in Mašhad ("Tārīḵča," pp. 531-32). In 1337/1918 the cabinet of Mīrzā Ḥasan Khan Woṯūq-al-Dawla established eight six-year public elementary schools, which also offered seventh- and sometimes eighth-grade courses (Ṣadīq, 1347 Š./1968, p. 369). These new schools included Madrasa-ye solṭānī and Madrasa-ye jadīd al-taʾsīs in Tehran. Meanwhile, a number of elementary schools in Tehran and provincial towns offered one- or two-year secondary-school courses; they included three *ḵoṣūṣī* or *mellī* (private) schools (Tadayyon, Aqdasīya, and Tarbīat; see xi, below) and eight *dawlatī* (public) schools in Tehran; Moḥammadīya in Tabrīz; Šefāʾīya in Shiraz; Aḥmadīya in Kermān; and Aḥmadīya in Mašhad (Wezārat-e maʿāref, pp. 63-66). As a result, enrollment at the secondary level rose from 2,300 in 1337/1918 to 2,900 in 1339/1920 (Markaz-e āmār, 1355 Š./1976, p. 40).

The formative period. In the 1920s and 1930s a national system of secondary education in Persia was established. More than 300 modern schools (reaching a total enrollment of about 27,000 students in 1941) were founded in Tehran and provincial towns, and the teachers' college in Tehran was expanded (see xix, below). By the late 1930s more than eighty textbooks had been published for these schools (see xvi, below). In 1302 Š./1923 a six-year secondary program divided into two three-year phases was adopted for boys; for girls the second phase was only two years.

The curriculum established by the Supreme Council on Education in 1928 for the first three years of secondary school for boys included courses on Persian language and literature, religion, Arabic language and literature, a European language (French, English, German, or Russian), geography and history, mathematics (including algebra and plane geometry), general sciences, drawing and calligraphy, and physical training; students spent thirty and a half hours a week in class in the first year, thirty-two and a half in the next two. The curriculum for girls included similar subjects (though sometimes at less advanced levels), with the exception of science, but also training in morals, hygiene and child care, and household skills. Curiously, whereas boys

did a half-hour of physical training a day, girls did two hours. They spent a total of twenty-nine hours a week in class the first year, thirty-one the second, and thirty-two the third (Sadiq, 1931, pp. 63-66).

In the second phase boys could choose one of three channels: letters, sciences, and commerce. Students of science or letters took courses in Persian language and literature, foreign languages, and drawing. Those in the science section also studied mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, mechanical drawing, and history (in the first year only). Those in the letters section studied Arabic language and literature, history, geography, philosophy, and in their final year literature in the appropriate foreign languages. The total number of hours spent in class ranged from twenty-four to twenty-nine a week, depending upon the year and the program but generally higher in the science section. Girls in the second phase could choose between general education and teachers' training. Both groups studied Persian and Arabic language and literature, history and geography, algebra and geometry, physics and chemistry, biology, European languages, and in the first year sewing and calligraphy, for a total of twenty-seven hours a week in the first year and twenty-one in the second. Those in the teachers'-training section also took psychology in the first year and principles and techniques of teaching in the second; the second-year program included twelve hours of practice teaching a week as well. Girls in this program thus spent twenty-nine hours a week in school in the first year and thirty-five in the second (Sadiq, 1931, pp. 67-69).

In 1938 Persian authorities adopted a version of the French educational system: Secondary education was divided into a general five-year program and a one-year program in science, mathematics, or literature. This structure remained in force until 1955, when the previous arrangement of two three-year phases was reinstated. ʿĪsā Ṣadīq believed that the adoption of the French system represented a setback; it eliminated the students' option to select courses in the tenth and eleventh grades, and the general curriculum met neither the needs of students nor those of a modernizing nation (Ṣadīq, 1347 Š./1968, p. 374).

Subsequent growth. The period 1946-66 was characterized by accelerated absolute growth of enrollment in secondary schools, from about 35,000 to 600,000; the percentage of the age group thirteen to eighteen years enrolled rose from about 2 percent to more than 20 percent (see Table 1). Since the turn of the century secondary education had remained the weakest part of the Persian national educational system, however. In the 1960s planners,

educators, politicians, foreign advisers, and even the shah began to criticize the underlying philosophy (for critical comments, see Menashri, pp. 186-90). The third Persian development plan (1962-67) provided for slowing the pace of quantitative expansion in favor of qualitative improvement: “Secondary education will be regarded as a preparation for economic and social life and not primarily as a preparation for the university” (Plan Organization, p. 93). Drastic reform of the secondary schools thus headed the agenda for educational planners.

The American high school was adopted as the model in the period 1966-78. Secondary education was divided into a three-year program (*dawra-ye rāhnemāʾī-e taḥṣīlī*), or middle school, for students aged ten to thirteen years, a period of guidance in which individual aptitudes and academic potential were to be determined, and a four-year period(*dawra-ye motawasseṭa*) for students aged fourteen to seventeen years, during which education was to be diversified and specialized. In the latter program students would be able to choose either an academic curriculum in preparation for higher education or vocational training in preparation for immediate employment as middle-level technicians.

The new middle schools were inaugurated in 1971, when 259,000 graduates of the recently established five-year elementary schools entered 3,312 middle schools (Table 2; see ix, above). In the first year there were courses in Persian language and grammar, mathematics, sciences, religion, social studies, history, geography, the arts, reading and writing English, French (optional), introduction to crafts and vocations, and reading the Qurʾān; in the second more advanced levels of the same courses, except that industrial arts replaced crafts and vocations and there were additional courses in Arabic, agriculture, and business skills; in the third, more advanced levels of the courses taught in the second year, except that French was omitted.

The student’s future course of study was determined on the basis of his or her average grades in three main areas: technical and vocational studies, human services like teaching, and arts and sciences. It was expected that the new structure would encourage a large number of middle-school graduates to continue their education at vocational schools (Menashri, p. 197). From the beginning, however, the middle schools were divided into a large number of private institutions (48 percent), in which students were trained for academic secondary schools en route to universities, and public schools (52 percent), in which some students were prepared for vocational secondary schools. The

percentage of students at vocational schools increased from 2.8 of total secondary-school enrollment in 1963 to 8.5 percent in 1973 and 14.5 percent in 1983, then dropped slightly to 12.4 percent in 1993 (see xii, below).

There were three types of four-year secondary schools: general or academic, technical and vocational, and teachers'-training schools (for recent enrollment figures, see Table 3). The first year of the academic secondary school was divided among humanities, mathematics, physics, and natural sciences. From the second year students chose one area each from arts and letters, social studies, mathematics and physics, and natural sciences. Here the curriculum in mathematics and physics is presented as an example. In the first year there were courses in Persian language and literature, religion, English, shop, physics, chemistry, social studies, arithmetic and algebra, new mathematics, and biology; in the second Persian language and literature, religion, English, Persian geography, mathematics, physics, chemistry, arithmetic and algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and biology; in the third Persian language and literature, religion, English, Persian history, contemporary Persian literature, physics, chemistry, arithmetic and algebra, trigonometry, geometry, biology, and geology; and in the fourth Persian language and literature, religion, English, composition and rhetoric, physics, chemistry, biology, geology, and mathematics. In Table 4, distribution of secondary-school graduates is given by field of study for 1983-84 and 1990-91.

The rapid development of middle and secondary education in 20th-century Persia has thus shown mixed results. The main achievement of educational planners has been a substantial growth in the percentage of the relevant age groups enrolled in such schools, as well as improvement in educational opportunities for women, rural and tribal populations, and people living in less developed regions of the country. Efforts to increase vocational and technical enrollment have not been very successful because of the continuing appeal and social prestige of white-collar careers. Furthermore, the continued operation of private schools, which are preferred by the middle and upper classes to the inadequate public schools (characterized by too few qualified teachers, high student-teacher ratios, lack of educational materials and recreational facilities, insufficient space, etc.), has divided the secondary-school system into schools for the masses and schools for the elite. The latter provide relatively high-quality education and easier access to higher education (see xvii, below). Finally, the increasing number of secondary-school graduates who seek to enter universities has created serious social and financial

problems for the government and the students' families. In 1990 the enrollment in institutions of higher learning was only about 20 percent of that in the academic secondary schools, and secondary-school graduates' chances of admission to the universities were correspondingly limited. There have been approximately 1 million applicants for the college-entrance examination each year, though only about 100,000 have been admitted.

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