A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR IRAN:

AN HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

The Islamic Republic of Iran, established by the Islamic Revolution of 1979, brought social organizations, including the public education system under strict Islamic control, aiming to create obedient subjects who defend and maintain the policies of the regime. The education system reflects an antidemocratic, highly oppressive system in areas of philosophy of education systems, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, class, content and methods of teaching.

Using a socio-historical analysis of specific related literature, and based on a theoretical framework of critical pedagogy, this thesis argues for development of a democratic education system for Iran as an alternative to the present dictatorial education system of the Islamic Republic of Iran. If there is a hope to create a more just society for Iran, the education system must have a fundamental role. This thesis introduces some implications for practice and a number of suggestions concerning how to achieve these goals.

Keywords: Islamic Republic of Iran; socio-historical analysis; revolutionary critical pedagogy; democratic education

DEDICATION

To all people who in some ways have contributed to my
education, I dedicate this work to you.

To all teachers and students who struggle for the creation of
a just society, I dedicate this work to you.

To my mother, father, and my brothers Seddigh and Karim
who were teachers in my life, I dedicate this work to you.

To Jamileh and Rojeh, my wife and my daughter who have
taught me patience, perseverance, and to believe,
I dedicate this work to you.

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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

Education as we know it today is part of the more general activity of socialization or enculturalisation which all human beings undergo as part of their initiation into the particular socio-cultural realm in which they find themselves at birth. This initiatory activity has a crucial effect on our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours; in fact in many ways it forms the very thoughts that we have through language and culture and can be seen as constitutive of our being able to become full participants in a life- world.

A particular form of this educative process initially emerged as part of the development of the modern nation state in Nineteenth Century Europe. This was the creation of public education systems, at least at the elementary levels that were run by the state for the purpose of the creation of mass literacy and patriotic citizenship. Local differences in language and culture were regarded as hindrances to the formation of a single common language and literacy. The intention of such systems was also based on the wish to create a semi-educated class who could more fruitfully take part in the developing industrial economies.

These forms of mass public education spread outside their European beginnings as the result of colonization but were also created by some non-European pre-modern states that in their attempts to resist the imperialist policies of the western powers were intent on modernizing themselves.

The educational system in Iran that is in existence today has its roots partly in the above historical process but also emerged in a unique manner through the continued

influence of local tradition and culture, in particular in the areas of religion and language. This thesis investigates the complex and rich history of the contemporary Iranian educational system for the purpose of both criticizing its present form and then for making some suggestions for its change in order to create the basis for a just and democratic future polity.

My interest in these matters is not just 'academic' as I myself am an Iranian who is also a Kurd and who during his earlier life played a small role in the major political developments that have occurred in Iran since 1979. However, my interest in social justice as a key element in all educational ideas has its roots in my childhood. These experiences form the basis for my deep commitment to this work as a necessary pre-condition for the explanation of the present situation and the justification for making radical change

For the purpose of this paper, a short autobiography may be useful in reflecting on the origins of some of my deeply held beliefs that influence my educational research project. It also helps explain my interest in the relationship between education and social justice, which is one of the underlying themes of this thesis.

My family background. Soltan, my grandfather, was born during the second half of the 19th century in Baneh, one of the Kurdish cities of Iran[1]. My grandfather had three sons: Ali (1890-1950), Aziz (1895-1958) and my father Mohammad (1899-1976). Though it is hard to find exact dates, around 1900 my grandfather and my grandmother, Kheiran and their children left Baneh to Mahmoodjegh, a village of Shahindezh. To me the exact reason for their movement is unknown; all I know is that Soltan was from a wealthy and well known family in Baneh. Perhaps his marital situation had an important

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[1] See Map 1

role in his decision because his wife, Kheiran, was from Mahmoodjegh. Another factor, according to my elder family members was the political nationalistic movements involving Kurds in Baneh which brought retribution from the Iranian regime causing some people to leave the area.

In 1914 when my father, Mohammad, was 16, he married his first wife, Khorshid. In search of a better economic condition, they left Mahmoodjegh and went to Mahabad, another Kurdish city in Iran. At that time, not only was Mahabad an active centre for Kurdish nationalistic movement, it was also growing economically. At the time of their journey they had practically nothing, a donkey and less than one cent! After 20 years of working hard, my father became very successful in his business, which was improving continuously. By succeeding in the wool trade and also frequently winning at gambling, my father became one of the richest people in Mahabad, up to 1960.

However, after 1960 because of losing at gambling, his economic condition deteriorated dramatically over the next ten years and his position as a wealthy bourgeoisie changed to that of a pauper. His loss of wealth affected the economic and educational condition of the family dramatically. Some of us could not continue our schooling and had to find jobs for survival. Others had to marry or move to different cities to find jobs. Then he lost everything and until his death in 1976, he was supported by my brothers, Seddigh and Karim.

My father was a charismatic but contradictory person; he was extremely social, generous, brave, proud, lively and very popular but at the same time he could be very selfish, violent and dictatorial. Even though he was a traditional person he allowed his daughters and sons to marry according to their own decision, and more importantly he

encouraged his daughters and sons to gain an education. Furthermore, although he was illiterate he mastered three languages: Kurdish, Turkish and Persian.

Politically he was a pro Kurdish nationalist and generously supported Kurdish social and political movements including the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad (January-December 1946)

My father married a number of times. I know the names of eleven of his wives, but it is claimed that he may have had as many as forty-two wives during his lifetime, sometimes as many as four simultaneously. Though many of my father's children died thirteen of them survived, including seven boys and six girls. These children were from four mothers.

Soda (we called her Seydzadeh), my mother, was the second wife and came from a middle class peasant family from the Village of Sawzi, Mahabad. Soda was very patient and kind. She was the only wife that did not divorce or separate from my father. My mother was like a slave and this was also true about all the other wives. The main reason for my mother's acceptance of this kind of life was to respect the cultural values of her time. The irony is that my mother always believed that my father was the only real man in our society.

I was born on January 21, 1960, in Mahabad. At that time, my father was still active as a wool and tragacanth[2] merchant. However, within a year the economic position of my father dramatically changed, as mentioned earlier, due to his losses in gambling. Then he established and managed a restaurant. I was about five when we had to move and live in our much smaller house. During elementary school, sometimes I had to go to the restaurant to help my brothers by collecting cigarette filters, cleaning tables, and

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[2] A plant from which tragacanth gum is obtained, a spiny Asian plant with white, yellow, or purple flowers.

serving customers. I was in grade four when my father sold the restaurant and gambled away the proceeds including our small house. He was old, jobless, and did not have one cent. For some years, my brothers were employed as seasonal workers, and we could not even pay our house rent. We had become one of the poorest families in the city.

Sometimes I had go to my oldest brother, Rahim's house to collect the remaining bread from their meal, which was suppose to be thrown away, bring it home and eat it with my family for our meal. Finally, my brother, Seddigh was employed as a janitor in a high school, and Karim, my other brother became a teacher. This period lasted until my father died in 1976; I was 16 years old at that time and studying in high school.

Education. When I began school, as a child I felt ethnic and religious forms of discrimination in the curriculum. One form of discrimination was being forced to study in Persian language, while studying in Kurdish was not allowed. Another form of discrimination that was forced on the students had to do with our clothing. We had to wear Persian (European) clothes not Kurdish ones. A further form of discrimination was being forced to learn Shia (Shi'a)[3] Islamic religious ideas instead of our traditional Sunni[4] Islam.

School was the place where I began to understand my social position. I recognized that some of the students were very rich in comparison to my family. Their clothes, shoes, bags, even colourful pens and pencils were different from mine. They had umbrellas and their own balls to play soccer. Some of them had bicycles and lived in wonderful houses. Moreover, they had enough money in their pockets to buy some candy at the break time. I became aware of these inequities in many ways. It was a formative time in creating my worldview.

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[3] See Glossary.

During the period of elementary and secondary school up to the age of 15, my thoughts were also affected and shaped by movies in the cinema, to some degree. The movies were from Iran, India, and Western societies. The theme of many of the films was the struggle of people against oppressive social relationships.

At the same time, I started to study alternative books which were introduced by some of my friends as well as my older brother, Karim. These books were critical of the inequalities in Iranian society. I also started to read the critical and satirical books of Aziz Nessin, a great Turkish writer. Turkey's social situation was very similar to Iran. Through Nessin's works and other books I came to understand the role of governments in creating and continuing to support inequalities in society. Gradually, I became familiarized with politics. In 1975, when I was in high school, the Kurdish movement in Iraq failed and thousands of Kurdish refugees fled to the cities of Iran, including Mahabad. The regime of the Shah was largely responsible for the Kurds' failure due to a change of policy towards Iraq.[5]

About a year after this failure, my father passed away and my brother, Karim, who was a teacher in an elementary school and also studying psychology in the University of Tabriz, took me in to live with his family until the Spring of 1980. Having developed Marxist ideas, I participated in the rebellion of Tabriz in the Spring of 1978. I graduated from high school and entered the University of Tabriz in the fall of 1978. During 1978, illegal Marxist political parties and organizations were issuing many booklets from the works of Marx, Lenin, and other communists, which I read in great

[4] See Glossary.

[5] The regime of the Shah for a period supported and used the Kurdish movement in Iraq against the Iraqi regime. Later in 1975, Iran and Iraq came to peace over their border disagreements. Then Iran stopped supporting the Kurdish movement.

interest. I also read some Islamic books including the works of Dr. Ali Shariati[6] during this period. At this time, Iran was full of protest and demonstration against the dictatorial regime of the Shah. As a student in high school and university I actively participated in the Revolution. The Revolution was victorious on February 11, 1979.

One of the most important phenomena of this revolution was the inclusion and participation of millions of women in the revolutionary activity. Gender relationships were very structured at that time in Iranian society. Males dominated all aspects of life and the education system promoted this attitude. Politically the king was a male dictator. Economically, males were controlling the society. Schools were gender separated. In our neighbourhood, before I went to school, as children, boys and girls played together. School ended this relationship. All of the students, teachers, assistants and principals of my schools were male. I saw a mixed gender class only when I went to university.

In Iranian society, women have always been looked at as inferior creatures. In our family my mother and stepmothers were extremely dominated by my father, who was regarded as a semi-king, god-like character to the family. During my childhood, many nights I witnessed my drunken father beating or swearing at my patient and kind mother. The hierarchy of patriarchal relationship between genders in my family was obvious.

As I was the twelfth child out of thirteen, it was my 'responsibility' to control my younger sister's behaviour and her homework. My mother encouraged me to make Leili, my younger sister, obedient and a good student through physical punishment, if necessary. During my middle school, while I was helping her in her school work, I did punish her sometimes. Indeed, I followed my teachers' behaviour in this issue. I loved

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[6] See Photo 5.

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my sister, and although I did not punish her as severely as our teachers did and even though such punishment was normative at that time, I now regret having done so.

This dominance of men over women began to change and as the influence of revolutionary and socialist ideas grew, and some of my brothers and I encouraged my mother and sisters to participate in the protests and demonstrations during the 1979 Revolution; and they did. This encouragement broke many cultural barriers about women's roles in our society.

Revolution. Before the 1979 Revolution I had already chosen my ideology, which was a form of Marxist thought. Politically, I supported the Organization of Iranian People's Fadaian Guerrillas (OIPFG)[7] which was a Marxist organization. I believed in changing society in a revolutionary way in order to establish first a democratic society, then a socialist one, which would finally lead to communism. Although leftist forces actively participated in the Revolution, they were weak, and the Islamic forces controlled and conducted the Revolution. Shortly, after the overthrow of the Shah, the Islamic forces established a dictatorial regime, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and gradually suppressed all radical and progressive organizations.

This victory of the Islamic forces led to the Cultural Revolution[8], which started at 1980, and as a result of this I was expelled from university. Then in the Fall of 1982 I was arrested in Mahabad and spent about six and half years as political prisoner in prisons of Mahabad, Uromiyeh, and Tabriz. During this period, I was physically and especially emotionally tortured. The Islamic regime's authorities tried to break down all

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[7] Also known as 'Cherikhaye Fadai Khalgh', and 'Fadaian-e Khalgh', was established on the February 8, 1971 in Iran.This organization has witnessd many splits like the Organization of Iranian People's Fedaian (Majority), the Organisation of Fedaian (Minority) , and so on.

[8] See Glossary.

the political prisoners. In prison, sometimes the students were allowed to continue their education up to the end of high school. I encouraged many of the prisoners and helped them with their education. In addition, in the cells and in the public rooms of the prison, I did not miss any opportunity to study many of the Islamic books that were available. I wanted to understand Islam through studying the books authourized by the regime and pretty well read the entire Koran[9], the holy book of Moslems. In addition, I read other available books of Islamic authors including Tabatabayi, Motahhary, Taleghani, Shariati, Beheshti, Meshkini, Makarem-e Shirazi, Khomeini and so on.[10] I was also involved in many ideological and political discussions with the prison authorities, and defended my ideas and did not repent, which added to my sentence. However, finally in Spring of 1989 I was released.

After my release, it was a painful time for me, even more than the prison period. Dramatic changes in the world were happening; the existing socialist countries were collapsing. I could not approve of capitalism, as I still believed strongly in socialism. However, I knew that I should open my mind to many new ideas while critically looking at the mistakes of the communists. I needed to educate myself further, but due to my political background I was deprived of continuing formal education in university as well as all official jobs. I did not have a penny; so one of my friends got a loan from the bank and gave it to me to buy some beehives. I worked for a number of years as a beekeeper, painter, carpenter, farmer, worker, etc.

Refugee. One year after my release from prison, I married Jamileh Halabi and then in 1992 my daughter Rojeh was born. In 1995, as a result of government pressure

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[9] There are other spellings for Koran such as Qur'an and Quran.

[10] Many of these people had or still have authoritative positions in the current Islamic regime of Iran.

our family had to leave Iran and go to Turkey, but because I had not served in the army I did not have a passport and thus left Iran illegally. I was approved as a political refugee by the UNHCR, and then, Canada accepted us as government-sponsored immigrants. After ten months of living in difficult conditions in Turkey, we finally arrived in Vancouver on September 19, 1996. Once the family was settled, I immediately decided to continue my education. After finishing ESL classes, in Capilano College, I took academic courses and then transferred my credits to Simon Fraser University (SFU) in January 2001. In August 2003, I was awarded Bachelor of Arts degree with a joint major in sociology and anthropology. In January 2005, I started my MA in Education.

This process has not been easy, especially from the financial point of view. Initially my family and I had to depend on social assistance and now we are living on student loans. Also, while we were living at a SFU student residence, I had part-time jobs such as garbage collecting in the residency, which later Jamileh continued, and I worked in the post office for some years. Now, Jamileh is doing the second year of the four-year nursing program. Though the life is difficult, still I hope to provide a better educational opportunity for my daughter, Rojeh, who has many talents and currently is in Grade Nine.

I hope this short description of my life can to explain to the reader why I am interested in education as a progressive force for the creation of a better world, in particular in Iran.

The purpose of the thesis. The most important outcome of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 was the establishment of the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Like other social organizations within Iran, the public education system has been under the strict control of the Islamic regime, which aims at creating obedient subjects who defend and

maintain the policies of the regime. It is an antidemocratic and highly oppressive system in the areas of the philosophy of the education system, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, class, and content and methods of teaching. These represent the major categories used in my analysis and critique of the present educational situation in Iran.

Thus I would like to argue that this form of educational system creates and supports an unjust society. In the process of creating a more just society, the education system must have a fundamental role, and based on a theoretical framework of critical pedagogy, this thesis argues for the development of a democratic education system for Iran.

Research approach of the thesis. The method used for the research is a socio-historical analysis of specific related literature. The books and other documents used in this research are written in different languages, English, Persian, and Kurdish. Some are written in Russian and translated into Persian. I have translated some parts of the Persian books into English. Many original books which are written in Persian, for instance the texts about the education system of Iran and its history, are used in this inquiry. However, one of the limitations of this research is the lack of access to many other original Iranian documents about Iran's history and education.

The rest of the thesis is organized in the following way. Chapter 2 includes a brief history of modern Iran. This is to provide a background to the critique of the present educational situation. The main themes of this chapter are the conflicts that emerged over the past three hundred years as a result of Iran being pressured by external forces, from both Russia and the West, and the internal political and cultural movements that developed partly as a response to them.

Chapter 3 is about the history of recent education movements in Iran. The chapter shows the connection between education and important elements like religion, class, gender, and the continuity and emphases on the culture of obedience during all of these periods. This chapter also occasionally analyses the educational ideas of some intellectuals who were in opposition to the mainstream educational systems in Iran.

Chapter 4 analyses the present education system in the Islamic Republic of Iran and reveals its many fundamental problems. This chapter argues that this education system is anti-democratic and dictatorial, which intends to create obedient subjects in the service of the ruling theocratic capitalist regime. The anti-democratic and oppressive characteristic of the education system of Iran is discussed through analysing the philosophy of the education system as it pertains to the following categories: ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, class, and the content and methods of teaching.

Chapter 5 argues for the creation of a democratic education system in Iran. Using the theoretical framework based on critical pedagogy, this chapter proposes a democratic education system as an alternative to the present dictatorial education system of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Finally, it introduces some implications for practice and a number of suggestions concerning how to achieve these goals.

CHAPTER 2:
HISTORY OF MODERN IRAN

2.1 Introduction

It is not an easy task in a few pages to even provide a brief outline of Iranian history, which has been written for more that 5,000 years. Thus, there is no choice but to outline some important events for the specific purpose of this thesis from the past 226 years to today. The main purpose of this section is to show the historical background to the present political situation in Iran, with its record of conflict, cruelty, war and dynamic economic and social change.

2.2 Qajar Dynasty (1781–1925)

The Qajar Dynasty (1781–1925) was founded by Agha Muhammad Khan. The Qajars were of Iranian Turkmen descent. Agha Muhammad Khan was an extremely cruel person and suppressed his opponents and the Iranian people severely. One example of this cruelty can be seen as a result of Lotf-Ali Khan's failure to capture Isfahan in 1791 and his subsequent escape to Kerman. Regarding this issue, Daniel (2001) states that Agha Muhammad Khan "was so enraged at Lotf-Ali's escape and the assistance the people of Kerman had provided him that he reportedly had the eyes of most of the city's male inhabitants gouged out and handed over the women and children to his troops as slaves"(p. 100). Similarly, Pigolovskay, N. V., Yakubusky, A. U., Petroshevsky, I. P.,

Belnitsky, A. M., and Stroeva, L. V.[11] (1975)[12] claim it was the eyes of 20,000 men (p. 618). Later, "Lotf-Ali Khan was betrayed and captured, Aqa Mohammad Khan ordered the decapitation of 900 prisoners, whose skulls were used to build a pyramid commemorating the event; Lotf-Ali Khan himself was abused, blinded, and sent to Tehran to be executed" (Daniel, 2005, p. 100).

This was just one of the numerous examples of the Qajar rulers' crimes and atrocities that they imposed on people. Pigolovskay et al. (1975) reveal that Agha Muhammad Khan was annihilating his real or imaginary enemies by the thousands. Some of his ways of annihilating people were covering their bodies with wax and setting them on fire (*Sham' Agin*) or throwing some of them into a cage in which were hungry tigers (p. 619).

War. War and invasion of other countries were the regular practices of the Qajars. During Agha Muhammad Khan's invasion of Teflis, according to Pigolovskay et al. (1975), he captured 22,000 civilian Georgian men and women as slaves (p. 619).The conflicts of many of the Qajar Kings with internal opposition and with other countries, such as Russia, destroyed the economy of Iran. The result of the wars between Iran and Russia ended up with two treaties: Gulistan Treaty of 1813, in which Iran lost many territories west of Caspian Sea, such as Georgia and parts of Azerbaijan (Price, 2005, p. 89), and Turkmanchai Treaty in 1828 in which Iran lost Erivan and Nakhchivan (p. 99). Rahaman Hatefi (2001) stresses these treaties, which were signed in the reign of Fath-Ali

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[11] Pigolovskay, N. V., Yakubusky, A. U., Petroshevsky, I. P., Belnitsky, A. M., & Stroeva, L. V. (1975). *Tarikh-e Iran: Az dowran-e bastan ta payan-e sade-ye hejdahom-e miladi* [History of Iran: From ancient time to the end of eighteenth century A.D.] (F. Keshavarz, Trans.). Tehran: Payam. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

[12] The first names of these authors were not cited in the translation version of the book.

Shah, "opened the epoch of political and economic slavery of the country changing Iran to a semi-colonial state" (p. 49).[13]

Religion. One of the most important elements of this period that affected the necessity for reform and modernization for Iran was the social and religious Babi movement. Hatefi (2001) notes that the conservative characteristics of this uprising are its religious interest in heresy and innovation as well as its opposition to the official religion. However, it also proposed some traditional social beliefs like equalitarianism, metempsychosis (reincarnation) ideas, and in some cases the return to a form of Mazdakite communalism related to property. In addition, the uprising's new characteristics included some reformist ideas in favour of the urban bourgeoisie (merchants and traders). The Babi movement reflected the tendencies of the growing bourgeois class and the democratic desires of crafts persons and peasants (p. 127). The Babi revolt also advocated the improvement of the social condition of women, and thus had many supporters among them. The most famous female leader among them was Qurrat al-ain, who was the first woman to throw off the veil in public and lectured to people about their rights. Finally, according to Ravandi (2003), she was arrested and later murdered in Naser-al-Din Shah's time (p. 524).[14] The Babi movement grew fast; however, it was severely suppressed by Naser-al-Din Shah and his minister Mirza Taghi Khan, known as Amir Kabir. Daniel (2001) claims that "...after a failed attempt on the life of the shah in 1852, as many as 3,000 Babis were put to death" (p. 108).

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[13] Hatefi, R. (2001). *Enghelab-e natamam: Zamineh-hay-e siasi va eghtesadiy-e Enghelab-e Mashrooteh-ye Iran* [The unfinished revolution: The political and economical backgrounds of the Constitutional Revolution of Iran]. np: Publication of Tudeh Party of Iran. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

[14] Ravandi, M. (2003). *Tarikh-e ejtemaeeye Iran: Fergheh-haye mazhabi dar Iran* [Social history of Iran: The religious sects in Iran]. Vol. 9. Teheran: Roozbehan. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

Socioeconomic conditions. Price (2005) who investigates the beginning of modernization with its fundamental social and political changes and the impact of Western European powers and Russia on Iran by the end of nineteenth century, points out, "Included in the changes were new concepts of government, group identity, nationalism, and national security based on the attempts to reform government institutions and taxation and the creation of a regularly paid army based on European model" (p. 93). In this period the ideas and the relationships of Western capitalist societies were beginning to increasingly influence Iranian society, in both positive and negative ways.

Amir Kabir was the most outstanding reformist who attempted to modernize Iran through changes to the economy, bureaucracy, military, and education system. However, Hatefi (2001) asserts that Amir Kabir could not fundamentally change the social and production relations of the Iranian society (p. 126). Though Amir Kabir's reforms remained superficial and did not radically change the existence social class relations, he was eliminated from the power by reactionary forces that were supported by Britain.

The trading relationship with imperialist powers, such as Britain, had a very negative affect on the economic development of countries such as Iran. In this period, as Hatefi (2001) points out, "The export of huge amount of industrial commodities of the colonial powers to the colonies and semi colonies, caused the degeneration of the native factories which were unable to compete with the industries of advanced states" (p. 132). The degeneration of feudalism in Iran on the one hand, and the struggle of people to change this system were important causes of the Constitutional Revolution.[15]

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[15] See Glossary.

Constitutional Revolution. One of the most significant events that served as a prelude to the Constitutional Revolution was the Tobacco Movement of 1891-1892. This was the revolt by the people against a concession given by Iran to a British subject, Major Gerald Talbot which would allow him to create the Imperial Tobacco Corporation According to Daniel (2001) the Tobacco Movement "represented the emergence of a coalition of reformist intellectuals and merchants led by an outraged clergy in an urgent effort to mobilize the masses against corrupt government and foreign domination" (p. 116). As a result the Shah agreed to cancel the concession.

The Constitutional Revolution of Iran occurred between 1905-1911. It started when two religious leaders, Ayatollahs "Tabatabai and Behbahani led a group of about 2,000 people to take *bast* [*16*](an Iranian custom of granting sanctuary and protection against arrest to anyone taking refuge in a religious building) at the shrine of Shah Abd-al Azim" (Daniel, 2001, 121). According to the Russian scholar in Iranian history, Ivanov (1977), participators of this *bast* and demonstrators from Tehran wanted the dismissal of the reactionary prime minister, Ayn-al-Dowleh, the dismissal of Belgium employees from the governmental positions, the dismissal of Ala-al- Dowleh the governor of Tehran, the establishment of a "house of justice" (*adalat khaneh*) to look after the people's complaints, and to carry out the law equally and perform justice for all. The uprising which was led by an alliance of clerics and liberal landlords and bourgeoisies, began in Tehran and then spread to other cities such as Shiraz, Mashhad, Isfahan, Tabriz. Later the demands of the revolutionaries extended to the compilation of the constitutional law, the assembling of a parliament, the securing and protecting individual rights, and

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[16] See Glossary.

other bourgeois rights (p. 17).[17] The revolt finally led to the point that as Price (2005) notes, "On December 30, 1906, Muzaffar Al-Din Shah Qajar signed a royal proclamation granting approval for a constitutional monarchy and a national assembly in Iran. The constitution was based on a European model and limited the absolutist powers of the shah" (p. 135). But this sweet period of victory for democratic forces but it unfortunately did not last very long.

After the death of Muzaffar Al-Din Shah (1907), his successor Mohammad-Ali Shah opposed the Revolution. Ivanov (1977) writes that on 23 June 1908 the Iranian Cossack Brigade under the command of the Russian Colonel Liakhov by the order of Mohammad Ali Shah bombed *Majlis* (the Parliament) and the Sepahsallar mosque where the supporters of the Constitution were gathered. The pro-constitution parliament and revolutionary *anjomans* (associations) were suppressed, the newspapers were closed and the reactionary groups mobilized (p. 22). Fadl-Allah Nouri, the religious leader who earlier apparently was in favour of constitutionalism, now supported the suppression of the revolution and as Daniel (2001) states "Nori now praised the monarchy and argued that constitutions were contrary to Islam" (p. 125).

In many places like Azerbaijan, Gilan, and Khorasan, people opposed the royalists. In 13 July 1909 the revolutionary armies lead by Sattar Khan[18] from Tabriz and Eprem Khan and Mohammad-Vali Khan Sepahdar from Rasht, entered Tehran and according to Daniel (2001) "Three days later, a special assembly (*majles-e ali*) deposed Mohammad-Ali Shah, who went into exile in Russia" (p. 126). The same author goes on to say that "With the approval of the Russians and British, Mohammad-Ali's young son

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[17]Ivanov, M. S. (1977). *Tarikh-e novin-e Iran* [History of modern Iran] (H. Tizabi & H. Ghaem Panah, Trans.). Tehran: Tudeh Party of Iran Publication. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

Ahmad was made shah, with the respected head of Qajar tribe, Azod-al-Molk, acting as regent" (p. 126). By this time the foreign powers were interfering in all of the important Iranian issues. Different parts of Iran were occupied by Britain, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire. For instance, as Ervand Abrahamian (1982) points out, the British forces in October 1911 "landed in Bushire and proceeded in haste to Shiraz and Isfahan" (p. 107), and the Russians occupied two cities of Enzeli and Rasht in November 1911 (p. 109). These foreign forces always acted against the revolutionary forces in Iran.

Political organizations. One of the characteristics of this period of Iranian history was the formation of many different social and political organizations. With the Constitutional Revolution the class struggle of people was represented and led by the political organizations. What is notable is the effect of the Russian Revolution of 1905 and the Revolution of 1917 on the formation of left wing organizations in Iran. According to Kamran Nayeri and Alireza Nasab (2006), "In 1904, the first Iranian social democratic group (Hemmat) was founded in Transcaucasia" (p. 3). Many other parties and organizations, Abdul Hossein Agahi (2006) accounts were: Hezb-e Ettehad va Taragghi (The Party of Unity and Progress); Hezb-e E'tedaliyoon (The Moderates' Party); Democrat Party; Hezbe Ejtemaeiyoon Amiyoon (Edalat) (The Social Democratic Party, or Justice Party); the Iranian Communist Party; the party of Left Democrats (the Group of Sheikh Mohammad Khiyabani) which also known as the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan; and the Group of Mirza Kouchek Khan Jangali (the Society of Islamic Union). Hezbe Ejtemaeiyoon Amiyoon (Edalat) (The Social Democratic Party) was established in May 1917. The Iranian Communist Party was founded in 1920. Later,

[18] See Photo 1.

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Heidar Amou Oghly the general secretary of this Party became one of the important leaders of the Constitutional Revolution.[19]

Gender. In this period, many women's organizations were established and increased participation of women in social and political life of the country. While the ideas about improvement of women's position among the intellectuals were prevailing, in the eyes of the Qajar kings and rulers, like the other previous dynasties, women were nothing but the creatures to satisfy men's desires. Regarding this point, Hasan Azad (2003), claims that perhaps Fath-Ali Shah during his life married more than 2,000 women which the names of 158 of them has been recorded in the books (p. 343) and in Naser-al-Din Shah' harem there were 750 women and slave girls and maids, as well as 750 male servants and 38 eunuchs (p. 368), and he had 85 wives (p. 372).

Struggle. These organizations had a fundamental impact in leading the people's struggle for independence and social justice in Iran. One of the most important of these uprisings according to Agahi (2006) was the Jangali movement under the leadership of Mirza Kouchak Khan. This movement in collaboration with social democrats and other intellectuals established the Soviet Republic of Gilan (northern Iran), which was suppressed by reactionary powers in 1921. Some other important uprisings in this period of time, and a little bit later, according to Tabari (1970) were: the Revolt of Khiabani in Azerbaijan which was suppressed in 1920; the uprising of Khodaverdi in Khorasan which was repressed in 1920; the rebellion of Colonel Mohammad Taghi Khan Pasian in Mashhad in 1921; the revolt of Lahak Khan Bavand that was suppressed in 1926; the revolt of Major Lahooti in Tabriz in 1921; and the revolt of the garrison of Salmas in

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[19] Agahi, A. H. (2006). Tarikh-e ahzab-e Iran [History of parties of Iran]. Retrieved January 27, 2006, from http://www.rahetudeh.com. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

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1926. Again, it is important to say that the 1917 Russian October Revolution and its socialist ideas had affected many of these uprisings.

Tabari (1981) proposes two opposite attitudes in the Constitutional Revolution which were liberalism and democratic. The liberal attitude that was inspired by Malkum Khan, wanted the minimum advantages for themselves. The democratic thought that was encouraged by Akhondof, and Talebof, and the organization of Hemmat, and the social democrats of Caucasus, who were in favour of deepening the revolution. About the result of the conflict between these two attitudes he claims:

> The compromise of liberals with the feudal aristocracy caused the failure of the revolution. The revolution could not solve the land problem, lead the country in the route of industrialization, secure the liberties and democratic rights for people, or obtain political and economic independence for Iran. (p. 160)[20]

Though, the Constitutional Revolution of Iran which was a bourgeois anti-feudalism and anti-Imperialism revolution, it was suppressed by 1911, by the collaboration of the internal reactionary forces with the imperialist forces. As Ivanov (1977) states this Revolution "strongly beat the body of the feudalistic regime and the Qajar Dynasty" (p. 25). After ending the first period of the revolution in1911, in the second stage of this Revolution, the struggle of the people continued in different forms until about 1922.

2.3   Pahlavi Dynasty (1925–1979)

The Pahlavi Dynasty was established by the Cossack Brigade officer, Reza Khan, who became Reza Shah Pahlavi, in 1925 and ended with the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

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[20]Tabari, E. (1981). *Iran dar do sadeh-ye vapasin* [Iran at the last two centuries]. Tehran: Private Company of Tudeh Publication. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

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Reza Khan, on February 21, 1921, along with Seyyed Zia'eddin Tabatabaee staged a coup d'état. Then Tabatabaee became the Prime Minister of Iran and Reza Khan became Minister of War. Reza Khan became the Prime Mister on October 26, 1923, and after Ahmad Shah left the country to Europe, the National Assembly of Iran, known as the Majlis, deposed the Qajar Dynasty in 1925. On December 12, 1925, the Majlis chose Reza Pahlavi as the Shah of Persia.

Though it does not seem that Reza Shah was a puppet of the British, the role of the British in his rise to power is undeniable. In respect to the role of Britain in the rise of Reza Shah, Cyrus Ghani (2000) reveals some detailed documents in his book. He says, in around summer of 1920, Seyyed Zia formed

> (T)he Tehran branch of 'Iron Committee' (Komiteh Ahan), a social political group originally established in Esfahan under British auspices.... Most of the members were fairly prominent in political and social circles and had ambitions of higher office. Almost all were trusted anglophiles and greatly apprehensive of the growing Bolshevik influence. (p. 151)

This committee had a great role in succeeding the coup and other events. Relying on diaries of the British Major General Sir Edmond Ironside, Ghani (2000) writes about the meeting of Ironside with Ahmad Shah on 15 February 1921, exactly six days before the coup, and states that "Ironside seized the opportunity and urged the Shah to appoint Reza Khan as commander of the Cossacks but met with silence" (p. 158). In addition, Price (2005), noting about the position of Britain after the success of the coup claims that "The takeover was welcomed by the British and their military commander in Iran, who was very impressed with Reza Khan's personality and leadership abilities" (p. 167).

Struggle. One of the characteristics of Reza Shah before and after the coup was the suppression of different uprisings. Some of these rebellions that were suppressed by him according to Abrahamian (1982) were the revolt of Major Lahooti in Tabriz in 1921,

Colonel Mohammad Taghi Khan Pasian in Mashhad in 1921, and uprising of Kuchek

Khan in 1921 (p. 119). This was a stable policy of Reza Shah during his reign. According

to the author, Reza Shah also severely oppressed political parties, deprived the workers'

unions of activity, outlawed traditional native dress, forced un-veiling, and replaced the

language used in the schools, newspapers and publications of other ethnic groups such as

Azeries with Farsi (pp. 138-164). Similarly, Daniel (2001) argues that Reza Shah

> .... particularly disliked socialist and communists; they were repressed in
> 1927 and their activities outlawed in 1931. In 1937, fifty-three organizers
> of a new communist party were arrested.... Mohammad Mosaddeq[21],
> one of the four Majles delegates who spoke against Reza becoming shah,
> was imprisoned and then completely excluded from public life (p. 139)

Socioeconomic condition. Regarding the class position of Reza Shah, Agahi (2006)

writes that the government of Reza Shah, in fact relied on the big landlords and the layer

of comprador bourgeoisie (who traded with foreign imperialist countries). Ivanov (1977)

also notes that "Reza Khan relied on the bourgeois-feudal societies in order to control the

government and the state issues" (p. 67). The duty of the dictatorship of Reza Khan was

to complete some of the revolution's promises in such a way that was acceptable for his

supporting classes and colonialists. Tabari (1981) asserts, during that period

"Infrastructure and superstructure of the new society of capitalism in its general lines

appeared" (p.188). Modernization was emerging in Iran.

Reza Shah exploited people and was money hungry. As Abrahamian (1982)

claims, Reza Shah

> ... accumulated enough wealth during his reign to become the richest man
> in Iran.... On his abdication Reza Shah left to his heir a bank account of
> £3,000,000 and estates totalling over 3,000,000 acres. This estates which
> were concentrated in the fertile province of Mazandaran, were obtained
> partly by outright confiscation, partly by forced sales, and partly by

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[21] See Photo 2.

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dubious claims to royal domain that had been alienated during the previous century. (p. 137)

In the process of modernization of the country and creation of the nation state, Reza Shah was also involved in other activities. Many of his programs were influenced by Kemal Ataturk's creation of modern Turkey. Some of Reza Shah's undertakings according to Abrahamian (1982) were: secularization of the country in different ways like employing modern educated lawyers; taking over all religious lands and foundations (*awqafs*); raising the status of women and opening the doors of Tehran University for them; reforming the educational system; developing the economy by projects like Trans-Iranian Railway; developing industries, for example increasing the number of modern industrial plants from 20 in 1925 to 346 by 1941; monopolizing some consumer goods like sugar, tea, tobacco, and fuel by the government (pp. 140-148). Though those activities in some degree had positive influence in the social life of the country, however, a critical look reveals that these were limited reforms, and were mostly in favour of the ruling classes and their agendas. For instance, the establishment of a railway system was mostly aimed to serve the military and strategic plans (Ivanov, 1977, p. 79).

During the last years of the reign Reza Shah's regime, the presence of Germany in the realm of the military, the ministries, the governmental offices and especially in economic life of Iran was significant. Ivanov (1977) claims that the shares of Britain and Germany in foreign trade with Iran in 1937-1938 were respectively 7% and 27%. In 1938, Reza Shah rejected to renew the contract for trade with the Soviet Union, and in 1940-1941 Germany's share increased to 45.5%. Moreover, "Germans monopolized railway equipment, the country's industry and established airways, railways, etc. in Iran"

(p. 91). At that time Iran was considered as a potential member of the Axis[22], and then in 1941 the Soviet and British forces invaded the country. Reza Shah was sent to exile and on September 16, 1941 his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, officially was appointed as his father's successor.

The presence of the foreign forces in Iran and the collapse of Reza Shah's dictatorship caused relative freedom for the country and the proliferation of different political organizations which lasted until 1953. Among them, the most important parties who were struggling for the interests of the workers, peasants, toilers, poor and/or ethnic groups and minorities were the Tudeh Party of Iran[23], Azerbaijan Democratic Party[24], and Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan.[25] There were also some bourgeois parties which were against the dictatorship and were struggling for the independence of the country and the oil nationalization of Iran. These parties formed the National Front of Iran (*Jebhe Melli*) under the leadership of Mohammad Mossadegh.

Azerbaijan and Kurdistan Republics. Among the most important historical events in this period was the formation of the Autonomous Government of Azerbaijan or Democratic Republic of Iranian Azerbaijan on 10 December 1945 under Azerbaijan Democratic Party which was led by Pishevari[26]. Also important was the Mahabad Republic or Kurdistan Republic on 22 January 1945 under Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) led by Qazi Muhammad[27]. These movements were formed in the occupied territory of the Soviet Red Army and received help from the Soviet for their

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[22] Axis Powers in the World War II included Germany, Japan, Italy, Hungary, Romania, Finland, Croatia, Slovakia, and Thailand.

[23] Tudeh Party of Iran, as Iranian Communist Party was established on September 29, 1941 in Iran.

[24] Azerbaijan Democratic Party was founded on September 3, 1945 in Tabriz, Iran.

[25] Also known as Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, was founded, on August 16, 1945 in Mahabad, Iran.

[26] See Photo 3.

[27] See Photo 4.

formation. Though both of these movements were democratic and initiated progressive programs, Azerbaijan had more radical plans. For example, as Ivanov (1977) notes, the Azerbaijan Republic sanctioned and performed the distribution of land among peasants; moreover, for the first time in Iran, the Azeri women could vote to choose the members of the Azerbaijan parliament (p. 109). Both Republics wanted self-determination in the framework of Iran, and in general, had friendly relationships with each other.

These democratic achievements were intolerable for the Shah, so the army was sent to suppress these movements. McDowell (2004) claims that on December 13, 1946, Iranian armies recaptured Tabriz and on December 15, 1946 they entered Mahabad (p. 245). In Azerbaijan, according to Ali Morady Maraghehii (2003), the different sources mention the number of those killed from two thousand to twenty five thousand (p. 457).[28] According to Borhanedin A. Yassin (1995), "Qazi Muhammad, Hussein Saifi Qazi and Sadri Qazi were all judged by a military court-martial in Mahabad and were hung at 5:00 a.m. on March 31, 1947 in Chwār-Chirā circle of Mahabad" (p. 216).

In Kurdistan and Azerbaijan the achievements of the movements were severely destroyed. Archie Roosevelt Jr. (1980) argues that in order to abolish all traces of the Qazi's regime in Kurdistan, the Iranian regime launched a program by which "The Kurdish printing press was closed, the teaching of Kurdish was prohibited, and all books in Kurdish were publicly burned" (p. 149). The same oppression was experienced by Azerbaijan.

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[28] Morady Maraghehii, A. (2003). *Az zendan-e reza khan ta sadr-e Fergheh-ye Demokrat-e Azarbaijan: Barresi-ye zendeghi va ara-e Seyyed Ja'far-e Javadzadeh" Pishevari" ba neghahi dobareh be zohoor va soghoot-e Freghe-ye Demokrat-e Azarbaijan* [From Reza Khan's prison to the secretary-general of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party: Examination the life and views of Seyyed Ja'far Javadzadeh (Pishevary) with a new look at the appearance and fall of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party]. Tehran: Awhadi Publication. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

Among many reasons for the collapse of the Republic of Kurdistan, Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou (2000) the previous Secretary-General of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran asserts that "The main reasons for the failure of the Republic of Kurdistan were the internal weakness of the movement, the inner weakness of the Party and for the most part the weakness of the leadership of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan" (p. 138).[29] It seems that if the Red Army had not left the country, the destiny of the two republics would be different. However, the international condition of that time and political pressures of imperialists, especially the United States, did not allow the Soviet forces to stay in the area.

Oil nationalization. The oil industry of Iran was founded at the beginning of the 20th century. According to Keddie (2003), William Knox D'Arcy, a British subject, was granted a concession for oil in Iran in 1901. Oil was discovered through this concession in the southwest of Iran in 1908. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company was established in 1909, "in 1914 the British government bought a majority of shares in the company holding the concession" (p. 72).

Another important event during Mohammad Reza Shah's reign was the struggle of people for nationalization of Iranian oil. This resulted in nationalization of the British-owned oil industry on 15 March 1951. This struggle led to Mohammad Mossadegh's becoming the new prime minister in April 1951. This struggle by Iranian people against the Shah resulted in him leaving Iran. But he would return to power through the collaboration of the internal reactionary forces with the CIA coup against Mossadegh on

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[29]Ghassemlou, A. R. (2000). *Chil sal khabat la penavi azadi: Kortayak la mezhooy Hezbi Demokrati Kordstani Eran* [Forty years combat for liberty: A brief history of Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan]. np: Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan Publication. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

19 August 1953. After the Shah returned to power, he suppressed the peoples' movement.

Regarding the suppression, Abrahamian (1982) states:

> With the exception of Fatemi [Minister of Foreign Affairs in Mossadegh's cabinet], who was executed, and Lutfi the Justice Minister, who was murdered, the other national front leaders received lenient treatment— often prison term no longer than five years. The treatment meted out to the Tudeh, however, was much harsher. As the Tudeh underground was gradually unearthed in the next four years, the security forces executed forty party officials, tortured to death another fourteen, sentenced some two hundred to life imprisonment, and arrested over three thousand rank-and-file members. (p. 280)

The National Front was defending the national movement, and the Tudeh Party of Iran, was defending the rights of workers, peasants, toilers, minorities, women, and freedom and independence of the country. With the crushing of these organizations Mohammad Reza Pahlavi would rule Iran for about another 25 years.

The White Revolution. The next important occurrence in that era was the "White Revolution". While not technically a revolution, it still resulted in significant reform in Iran. In 1961, the Shah was under pressure form two sources. The internal source was the fear of the regime from the possible movement of the peasants and the external force was the pressure of US liberals like President John F. Kennedy to reform Iran. In January 1963, the Shah held a national referendum which approved the six points of reform that Said Amir Arjomand notes were: "(1) the land reform, (2) sale of some state-owned factories to finance the land reform, (3) the enfranchisement of women, (4) nationalization of forests and pastures, (5) formation of a literacy corps, and (6) institution of profit-sharing schemes for workers in industry" (p. 72). The reform was opposed by the reactionary religious forces. The Grand Ayatollah Brujerdi according to Avery (1965) stated that "Land Reform was contrary to religious law" (p. 505). The opposition by some people against the Shah's reform was led by religious figures and ended in a three-day riot in different cities during June 1963. The role of Ayatollah

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Khomeini in those riots was prominent. After the suppression of the riots, the Shah "arrested the National Front leaders and deported Khomeini into Turkey, from where he went to Iraq" (Abrahamin, 1982, p. 426). The land reform was not a radical action to end the feudal relationship, however, it smashed the feudalistic ownership, and as Ivanov (1977) correctly claims, the result of the reform, and the political and economic influence of the previous big landlords was weakened (p. 235). The White Revolution caused the expansion of capitalist relations in the country.

The foreign policy of the Shah was aimed at expanding relationships with the West; however, the internal policy focussed on suppression of popular foreign movements in the area and suppression of political organizations and political movements inside the country. In this way, Iran participated in the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1955 with Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, and United Kingdom, and later joined by the United States. Also, inside Iran the Shah established security service called SAVAK[30], in 1956.

Struggle. One of the bases which the regime relied on for both its survival in Iran and for service to the imperialists and reactionary forces in the area was its military forces. Daniel (2001) states that the Shah's army was the fifth or the sixth largest in the world; and in "1973 the Shah sent troops to Oman to help suppress a Marxist-oriented insurgency there" (p. 160). While the country needed more freedom the Shah increased the level of oppression to control the people. As a response to this oppression guerrilla organizations were formed. In 1965 the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, with its radical Islamic ideas, and in 1971, the Organization of Iranian People's Fadaian Guerrillas (OIPFG), with its Marxist views, were formed. Price (2005) notes, in 1975 the

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[30] *Sazeman-e Ettelaat va Amniyat-e Keshvar* (Organization for Intelligence and National Security) was the domestic security and intelligence service of Iran from 1957–1979.

Shah dissolved even the pro-regime parties and replaced them with the Rastakhiz Party that was formed by the government (p. 229). The Shah's regime was becoming even more authoritarian. The torturing, killing and executing of political prisoners, continued. Many prisoners imprisoned for political reasons, were interned for long periods of time. Ivanov (1977) writes that in 1974, according to *The Economist*, the number of political prisoners were between 25, 000 to 40,000, and in 1976, according to Iranian officials it was between 3,000 to 5,000, and according to other people who were interviewed by American lawyer, Richard Eden, it was between 40,000 to 100,000. (pp. 308-309). The resulting suppression from a dictatorial regime with its official attempt to hide its crimes creates difficulty obtaining or accessing correct information about many subjects.

2.4   Iranian Revolution (1979) and Islamic Republic of Iran (1980)

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was the most important historical event for Iran in the 20th century. The revolution started in 1978. Within a year, on the 11 February 1979 the monarchy regime of Shah was overthrown by the Revolution, and Ayatollah Khomeini took power. Finally the Islamic Republic of Iran was established. Millions of people from different political strands including leftist, liberals and religious groups successfully struggled to overthrow the regime of the Shah. Some of the most significant strategies used to accomplish this overthrow included, "stopping the salaries of bureaucrats, [and] state employees, and [the strike by] workers in the national oil company, whose strike [was] paralyzing the government and crippling the economy" (Daniel, 2001, p. 171). "On 10 December, [1978, during the ceremony of] Ashura, Taleqani and Sanjabi led an estimated two million people through the streets of Tehran. Army troops began to defect in large numbers, others refused orders to fire on demonstrators, and some turned their weapons on their own officers and royalists" (p.

172). The Organization of Iranian People's Fadaian Guerrillas, and the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran were the most important guerrilla groups to participate in the armed struggle on the victory day of the revolution, February 11, 1979. These groups and other guerrillas along with the Tudeh Party and thousands of armed volunteers, Abrahamian (1982) notes "mounted successful assaults on more police armories, on the barracks of the Imperial Guards, on Evin prison—the notorious SAVAK interrogation center—on the military academy, and on the main army garrison, which they found completely unguarded" (p. 529). Similarly, all over the country millions of people actively participated in the uprisings. In some cities like Mahabad in Kurdistan, citizens along with the followers of some organizations like the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, the Organization of Iranian People's Fedaian, and the Revolutionary Organization of Toilers of Iranian Kurdistan, also known as Komala gained control over the garrison, gendarmerie and police forces.

Gender. One of the characteristics of this revolution in 1979 was the role played by millions of women, who revolted shoulder by shoulder with men, in contrast to their minimal involvement in the Constitutional Revolution and its aftermath.

Causes of the Revolution. The causes of the revolution were varied. Some of the reasons, as Price (2005) states, were "[u]nequal development resulting in a gap between the rich and the poor, the absence of civil and political institutions, violation of the constitution" (p. 279). Moreover, Nikki R. Keddie (1988) claims that the "[p]eople were torn from ancestral ways, the gap between the rich and the poor grew, corruption was rampant and well known, and the secret police, with its arbitrary arrests and use of torture, turned Iranians of all levels against the regime" (p. 305). In addition, Abrahamian (1982) argues that "the revolution came because the Shah modernized on the

socioeconomic level and thus expanded the ranks of the modern middle class and the industrial middle class, but failed to modernize on another level—the political level" (p. 427). To the above reasons many others could be added such as the unequal socioeconomic distribution in different regions of the country, the suppression of ethnic minorities by the regime which was based on a Persian chauvinist ideology, and the growth of revolutionary knowledge as a result of political and guerrilla activity by intellectuals and different leftist, liberal, democrat, and Islamic organizations. In summary, Iranian society was in a social, economic, and political crisis which only a revolutionary change could solve or ameliorate.

Keddie (1988) points out Khomeini became the leader of the revolution because due to "his doctrinal absolutism, his Charisma, and his leadership qualities, Khomeini was the most uncompromising opponent of the Pahlavis, of monarchy, and of foreign control and cultural domination" (p. 311). Although this view about Khomeini's character may be accurate, there is another important reason that gave rise to Khomeini's power which was the historical domination of Islam, especially Shia ideology, in the Iranian society. The complete access by this religious regime to the apparatus of influence was used to infuse their ideological beliefs and ideas among the people. The inability of non-religious political organizations due to the long-term suppression of the regime created an excellent opportunity for the rise of the religious forces under the leadership of Khomeini.

Constitution. The new constitution of 1979 determined the political system as an Islamic Republic. This consisted of several interconnected governing parts. Most of these parts are appointed by the internal structure of governance, all of which are directly responsible to the Supreme Leader. The Supreme Leader of Iran is responsible for

establishing and supervising the general policies of the governing system, and for choosing six of the twelve members of the Council of Guardians[31], which consists of twelve jurists (the other six are appointed by the head of the judiciary). This judicial head is also appointed by the Supreme Leader. The Council of Guardians approves the Presidential candidates and the parliamentary candidates. The President must be elected by universal vote of the citizens. The Assembly of Experts[32], chosen by popular vote, elects the Supreme Leader, but it must be approved by the Council of Guardians. The Expediency Council[33], formed as an advisory group to the Supreme Leader, mediates disputes between Parliament and the Council of Guardians; and City and Village Councils of Iran are chosen by public vote. Given this degree of political nepotism, the political system of Iran can be considered a theocratic dictatorial one.

The most important achievements of the Revolution according to Nayeri and Nasab (2006) were: "[i]t overthrew imperialism's regional gendarme, an ally of the colonial-settler state of Israel, and a supporter of South African Apartheid. It dissolved the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), a regional anti-Soviet military pact" (p. 1). Although there are other achievements, the Iranian people were not able to fulfil the democratic goals for which most participated in the revolution against the Shah. In fact the present regime has severely suppressed the democratic rights of citizens According to Asghar Schirazi (1997), "Democratic freedoms, which are the only means of assuring the proper participation of citizens in political life, are suppressed in the widest sense in the Islamic Republic. Opposition[al] organizations or even independent professional associations are not tolerated" (p. 300).

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[31] See Glossary.
[32] See Glossary.
[33] See Glossary.

Cultural Revolution. The Islamic regime, to stabilize its position in society and especially in academia, imposed the Cultural Revolution of 1980-1987. For this purpose, according to Daniel (2001) between 1980 to 1982 "a wholesale effort was made to Islamize society by closing universities, putting more Islamic content in the school curriculum" (p. 213). As a result thousands of non-Islamic and leftist university students were expelled and many were arrested.

War. One of the important catastrophes in Iranian history was the Iran-Iraq War, which was started by Saddam Hussein on 22 September 1980 and lasted until 20 August 1988. Though in 1982 Iraq proposed a ceasefire, Khomeini insisted on the continuation of war. It was the largest conventional war of the 20th century and according to Daniel (2001), "[i]t was estimated that the total economic cost of the war to Iran approached $1 trillion" (p. 228). While many countries condemned this war, in practice they benefited from it through their participation by the sale of arms, which by extension assisted in the commitment of war crimes against humanity. Both Iran's and Iraq's regimes committed many war crimes in order to gain victory, for example, the use of children in the war by the Iranian regime. Reza Aslan (2005) shows that "...ten thousand Iranian children who were thrown onto the front lines of the war as human mine sweepers wore 'keys to paradise' around their necks and headbands emblazoned with the word *Karbala* to remind them that they were not fighting a war for territory, but walking in the footsteps of the martyrs" (p. 190). Equally horrifying, on the Iraqi side, the cruellest action that the Iraqi regime took, was using chemical weapons in Halabja, a Kurdish town in Iraq, According to *Human Rights Watch* (1990) on March 16 and 17, 1988 "[s]ome 5,000 Kurds and a much smaller number of Iranian soldiers were killed in the gas attack and the Iraqi shelling of the town. Other estimates exceed 6,000 deaths" (p. 84).

Gender. Women were among the first targets of suppression in Iran. While the Islamic regime was set up in January 1979, as Price (2005) states,

> [b]y March women had been barred from becoming judges. The family protection laws were annulled in April. The marriage age for girls was reduced, and married women were barred from attending regular schools. In summer 1980 a new bill introduced compulsory veiling. Family planning was deemed un-Islamic, and many women were forced to, or choose to resign from jobs in government institutions. Segregation of sexes was implemented in schools, and unsuccessful attempts were made to impose such segregation throughout the society as a whole. (p. 334)

Struggle. One of the features of the rule of the Islamic government in Iran has been the widening of class divisions. There are a number of reasons that the present regime maintains significant control and continues to trample the rights of the Iranian citizens. These reasons include, continual adherence to the suppressive policy of the dictatorial regime. The next cause has to do with the people themselves. Many of the citizens have adopted the religious illusions due to the enormous cultural influence of the regime, because of this illusion they support the regime. A further cause is the weakness of internal oppositional groups within Iran. These groups are unable to organize and direct the Iranian people's struggle to change the regime. Another significant cause is the superficial condemnation of Iranian regime by Western and other governments regarding the human right violations of the Islamic regime, while supporting the regime in economic and other ways.

As well as suppressing secular and left wing opposition groups like the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, the Tudeh Party of Iran, the Organization of Iranian People's Fedaian (Majority), and the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan the Islamic regime has also banned many Islamic reformist organizations.

Moreover, the regime has violently crushed the struggle of ethnic minorities such as Kurds and Turkmans. The regime also suppressed and limited the rights of cultural and

religious minorities such as Sunnis, Zoroastrians, Christians, Jews, and especially Baha'is. Furthermore, repressing the struggle of the workers, peasants, students, women and others engaged in civic uprisings have been the regular policy of the regime. In addition, a stable policy of the regime has been the torturing and executing of thousands of political prisoners (Price, 2005, pp. 308-340; Daniel, 2001, pp. 221-257).

Violence. Some of the cruel Islamic actions which are still being practiced as legal punishment in the Islamic Republic are amputation, dismemberment of the body, public whipping for men who have same sex relationships and public stoning (sangsar)[34] as a punishment for adultery. In addition, the violence of this Islamic regime does not limit itself to imprisonment and torture. It has assassinated many key opposition figures among politicians and writers both inside Iran and on foreign soil. Abdol Rahman Ghassemlou the leader of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan was the most famous figure in the Kurdish struggle after the revolution against the regime was assassinated in Vienna in 1989 (Price, 2005, p. 322). Daniel (2001) records other significant figures assassinated by the regime. In Paris in 1991, the last prime minister of Mohammad Reza Shah, Shahpoor Bakhtiar was murdered; in Berlin in 1992, four Kurdish dissidents, including Dr. Sadegh Sharafcandi, the leader of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, were assassinated; in Tehran in 1998, Daryoush Forouhar, the leader of the Iran Nation Party and his wife Parvaneh Eskandary were stabbed to death; also in Iran in 1998, three famous writers, Majid Sharif, Mohammad Mokhtari and Mohammad-Jafar Pouyandeh were kidnapped and assassinated (pp. 233, 242). More recently, in Evin Prison of Tehran in 2006, Akbar Mohammadi, a student leader was killed for his

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[34] See Glossary.

involvement in the uprising of the students in Tehran University on the 18th of Tir (July 9, 1999).

2.5   Conclusion

Iran has a long written history of more than 5,000 years. Examining recent history helps to understand the most significant social, economic and political characteristics of the present time.   The main causes of the present situation can be classed as the following: growing economic disparity, internal and external war, religious conflict and ethnic differences, all of which have themselves been exacerbated by the introduction of foreign influences, such as nationalism, capitalism and socialism.   It is not that these factors acted independently but often acted in together to create a situation of great complexity.

For example, the growth of private ownership of the means of production during the last three centuries, which was one significant cause of continued social injustice of different forms, heightened the division of society into different socially antagonistic classes and the struggle between these classes has greatly influenced recent Iranian history and culture. Furthermore, Iranian involvement with wars, both internal and external, have shaped the cultural, economic and political life of the country. In addition, the impact from different foreign beliefs and selected ideologies on Iranian society are undeniable. The significance of all the above factors in the creation of the present culture of dictatorship, with its oppression, obedience, distrust and injustice is significant. These factors have radically changed life for the majority of people including women, the productive classes, the ethnic, cultural, religious minorities, as well as sexual minorities.

The next chapter will continue this historical analysis by outlining the history of Iranian education over the past centuries. This will set the stage for an analysis of the

present situation in Iranian educational and provide a ground for later critiques and practical suggestions for the encouragement of change. In order to create a just society where all citizens are treated fairly Iran needs to develop a democratic education system that can help ameliorate the root causes of social and political problems and assist in solving them.

CHAPTER 3:
HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN IRAN

3.1   Introduction

This chapter briefly considers the history of education in Iran from Islamic Iran to Islamic Republic of Iran This chapter discusses the most important educational organizations and focuses on the educational thoughts during theses periods. The purpose of this review is to illustrate the connection of education with important cultural elements like religion, class, gender, and highlight the continual emphases on the culture of obedience in Iran during all of these periods. The third period briefly considers the education system in the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, the next chapter attempts more precisely to analyze the current education system under the Islamic regime.

3.2   Islamic Iran

Islamic Iran is a long period that begins from the conquest of Iran by Muslim Arabs and the end of Sasanian Empire (651) to the present time. The most important characteristic of this period is the domination of the Islamic worldview among the Iranian people, which has greatly influenced all aspects of social life including the educational ideas and systems. It is true that at some points of this history other forces such as Mongols had affected the social life of the country by their own beliefs and behaviours, however, even the Mongols later accepted Islam and tried to make it more influential.

After the Arab invasion of Iran (637), though the Academy of Gundishapur[35] survived for about three centuries, the Islamic ideas and teachings rapidly influenced society and became the dominant worldview in academia. In a short time, Islam replaced Zoroastrianism. Though there were many differences in ideas and practices of these two religions it is interesting that there were some fundamental similarities among them. According to Mohammad Reza Fashahi (2004), the most important beliefs of the Zoroaster's[36] religion such as, the archangels, angels, Satan, saviour, revelation, resurrection day, heaven and hell, and punishment and reward, all entered into the cultural beliefs of the Jews and through this culture they entered into Christianity and Islam (p. 106).[37] These similarities between Islam and Zoroastrianism could be a factor which made the acceptance of Islam in Iran easier.

Another important effect of the conquest of Islamic Arabs in Iran was the replacement of the Persian script by Arabic alphabet. Arabic, which was the religious and official language during Umayyad era (661-750), also became the literary and scientific language during Abbasid period (750-1258). Arabic language influenced all languages in Iran. In Samanid era (875-999) the Persian language went through important changes resulting in the Modern Persian language.

The next effect of Islam was its impact on the participation of people in education. Mohammad Taher Moayyeri (2005) claims that the establishment of the Islamic schools broke the class barriers and prepared the opportunity for the public to

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[35] The Academy of Gundishapur rose to fame during the Anushiravan time. Some researchers relate its establishment in Shapur I time in 271 A.D.; however, Ravandi (2003) writes that Anushiravan in 530 inaugurated the School of Gundishapur

[36] See Glossary.

[37] Fashahi, M. R. (2004). *Andishidan-e falsafi va andishidan-e elahi- erfani* [Philosophical thinking and divine-mystical thinking]. Sweden: Baran. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

gain education (p. 10).[38] Compared to the firm class barriers in Ancient Iran, this change

to public access to education is correct in some extent. Nevertheless, the class barriers

existed during all periods of the history of Iran after the Islamic invasion, and access to

education by the majority of people in Iran has always been restricted compared to that of

the privileged groups.

Maktab[39]*and madrasah.*[40] In the early period of Islam, the mosques were also

places of teaching, from which other educational institutions evolved. Two kinds of

Islamic schools were *maktab* or elementary school, and *madrasah* or institution of higher

learning or a college. For centuries, these two types of Islamic schools have shaped the

educational thought of the Iranians. *madrasahs* still have a great influence in Iran. In

respect to the continuity and changes in *maktabs* according to U.S. Library of Congress

(2006):

> *Maktabs,* primary schools run by the clergy, were the only educational·
> institutions prior to the end of the nineteenth century when the first secular
> schools were established. *Maktabs* declined in numbers and importance as
> the government developed a national public school system beginning in
> the 1930s. Nevertheless, *maktabs* continued to exist as private religious
> schools right up to the Revolution. Since 1979 the public education system
> has been desecularized and the *maktabs* and their essentially religious
> curricula merged with government schools.

Baytu l Hikma.[41] When in 832 the Abbasid Caliph al-Mamun founded *Baytu l*

Hikma (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad, the new center emulated the methods of the

Academy of Gungishapur and absorbed some of its staff as the academic activities of the

Academy of Gundishapur were declining. Baghdad became the centre for intellectual

activities of the Abbasid Caliph.

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[38] Moayyeri, M. T. (2005). *Masaele amoozesh va parvaresh* [Problems of education] (15th ed.). Tehran: Amir Kabir. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

[39] See Glossary.

[40] See Glossary.

[41] See Glossary.

Nizamiyyeh.[42] There were different *madrasahs* (colleges/universities) in Iran which represented the variety and diversity of Islamic religious sects such as Hanafite, Shafiite, Shiite, and Karamite. In respect to the establishment of organizations of higher education in Iran during medieval period, the role of Kwaja Nizam al-Mulk (1018-1092), the Persian vizir of the Seljuq Sultans was undeniable. He established some well organized Islamic universities named after himself *nizamiyyeh*. They were located in Nishabur, Balkh, Herat, Isfahan, and the most important was the Nizamiyyeh of Baghdad that was established in 1065. The main academic subjects for these institutions were theology, philosophy, humanities, astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. In comparison with the many academic restrictions imposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran in twenty first century, those nizamiyyeh were really progressive. Some of the students were given residential quarters to live in, and a monthly salary. Moreover, corporal punishment of the student was not as common. Most significantly, the students had the freedom of thought and discussion and the instructors were totally independent in their work (pp. 52-53). According to Vakilian (2002), among the well known professors of Baghdad Nizamiyyeh was al-Ghazali, and the great Iranian poet, Sa'di was educated there (p. 51). The educational beliefs of both of these men influenced Iranian society.

Mongol invasion. The Mongol invasion of Iran (1219) was disastrous. Not only did the Mongols destroy cities and villages and killed numerous people, but most importantly, they burned books which were the scientific and cultural products of centuries of intellectual activities. Safavi (2004) asserts that with the domination by Mongols, the center of Islamic culture was destroyed; the Arabic language limited in use to the language of religion; the death of thousands of scientists, teachers, literary men,

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[42] See Glossary.

mojtaheds[43] (clergymen practicing religious jurisprudence), and writers occurred; the annihilation of *maktabs*, *madrasas*, mosques, and libraries; the expression and writings of Persian inclined toward ambiguity, formality, and abstruseness (p. 34). When the Mongol Ghazan Khan converted to Islam, many *Khaneghahs*[44] (monasteries), mosques, and *madrasahs* were constructed. It was during the Mongol era and before the Safavid period some important educational places were established. Among them were the Observatory of Maragheh which had more than 400,000 books; *Rob'e Rashidi* (Rashidi's Quarter, *Shanb-e Ghazan Khan* (Gkazan Khan's Shanb), and Soltaniyeh. Also for the first time the mobile *madrasah* during the reign of Soltan Mohammad Khodabandeh (1280-1316) was established (Vakilian 2002, pp. 56-57).

Howzah-e Elmiyeh.[45] In the Safavid period (1501-1736) Shia became the official religion of the state of Iran and the numbers of mosques and *madrasahs* were increased. Some of the most important of them were those in the Isfahan region, such as the Mosque of King, *Madrasah* of Chahar Bagh, Sheikh Lotfullah, and the Marrasah of Molla Abdullah. Some of these *madrasahs* educational centers continue today and are also known as *Howzah-e Elmiyeh* (Theological Centre). These present day centres play a great role in training the Shia clerics.

Aside from the *maktabs* and *madrasahs*, other places were also used for educational purposes such as palaces, hospitals, observatories, libraries, bookstores, and Khaneghah (monastery). Beside the Koran and *Hadith*[46] (the narrated words and deeds of Prophet Mohammad), some of the other subjects taught in *maktabs* included the works of: Sa'di, Hafez, Bahaii, Attar, Zakani, Majlesi, and story of Husayn Kurd Shabestari

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[43] See Glossary.

[44] See Glossary.

[45] See Glossary.

(Vakilian, 2002, p. 69). These works were also deeply influenced by and illustrating the Islamic traditions and ideas.

Educational thought. During the history of Iran and before the Constitutional Revolution, there were some important thinkers like Saheb ebn-e Ebad, Avicenna, Nizam-al Mulk Tusi, Nasir-al Din Tusi, Rashid-al Din Fazlollah Hamadani, Amir Alishir Navayi, and Amir Kabir, who have served the Persian and/or Islamic culture. Moreover, there were some poets, writers, theologians, philosophers and gnostics whose ideas about education have greatly shaped the life of people and educational systems. Some of these figures and their pedagogical views according to Vakikian (2002) are briefly introduced. Abu Ali Sina (Avicenna) (980- 1037) was one of the most outstanding Islamic scientists and in his view the five goals of child education are faith, good morals, healthiness, literacy, and art and profession. *Maktab* curriculum, as Avicenna says also should include Koran, moral poems, and sports. According to Avicenna some of the styles of teaching are explanation by teacher and memorizing poems by students. In addition, he recommends that the teacher should sometimes reward the child and sometime threaten the child, however if the teacher does not get a good result by use of those tactics, punishment can be used (pp. 185-187).

Another important person is Keikavus ibn Iskandar known as Unsur al-Mo'ali (d. 1012), a Ziyarid ruler of Gurgan and Tabarestan, whose book *Qabus Nameh* contained pedagogical ideas. Unsur al-Mo'ali's view was useful for the rich families who could employ different private teachers for their children. Aside from the previous subjects recommended by Avicenna, he also suggests the use of weapons, riding, and swimming. About the style of teaching he claims that the teacher should be fearsome, and punish the

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[46] See Glossary.

lazy child, and when the teacher punishes the child, the father should not commiserate with the child. Indeed, even when a father wants to punish a child, he should do this through the teacher, because it is not good for children to harbour a grudge against the father (Vakilian, 2002, pp. 187-189).

The next exceptional person is Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali (Ghazali) (1058-111), who was a theologian, philosopher, mystic, and jurist. He states that the goals of education are: for the child to obtain the happiness of the world and the religion; for the child to be protected from the fire of the hell and obtain heaven and the satisfaction of the god; and for the child to refine his/her morals and make the concupiscence obedient and revitalize the religious laws of the Prophet. Ghazali says that the child should be encouraged to pray at the age of seven; be punished if the child lies, steals, and eats the *haraam*[47] (religiously prohibited) things at the age of ten; and prudently be taught about the reasons for the tradition he/she has learned before reaching the age of puberty. Furthermore, though the encouragement is important, nevertheless, the punishment should be threatening and if threatening did not work then beating is allowed (Vakilian, 2002, pp. 189-191).

A further prominent Islamic character is Nasir al-Din Tusi (1201-1274). According to him the child should be accustomed to hardness, and avoid soft clothing, and should be classmates with the children of nobles, in order to learn elite social behaviour from them. Some of the subjects Tusi promoted include traditions and duties of religion, and memorization of poems, in addition, dignity, modesty, and appropriate arts should be taught to the girls. He also believed that when the student was lazy, the teacher must use corporal punishment. Tusi believed, the goal of seeking science was to get

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[47] See Glossary.

closer to god; praying strengthened the memory, and giving through charity made ones life longer (Vakilian, 2002, pp. 191-195).

The next renowned person is the Persian poet, Muslih-ud-Din Mushrif-ibn-Abdullah, known as Saadi (1184-1283/1291). Saadi credited the idea that goodness and badness are embedded in the human; he was convinced by the effect of heredity in ones ability to be educated and ones behaviour. Although inconsistent, he also believed that companionship with others greatly affects ones morality and behaviour. Encouraging the learner is better than threatening and punishing, however, if the student disobeys, the teacher must use corporal punishment, and the teacher should be seen as a potential threat (Vakilian, 2002, pp. 195-197).

Another famous poet is Auhadi of Maragheh (1271-1338). He suggested that the father and the trainer should not refrain from punishing the child. Due to the ethical degeneration of the Mongol era, he had negative views about girls' education (Vakilian, 2002, pp. 197-198).

An additional famous poet is Nur ad-Din Abd ar-Rahman Jami (1414-1492). He gave prominence to reading and memorizing the Koran, and focused on the religious sciences. Moreover, he stressed memorizing as the best way of learning; and says that punishment might be good (Vakilian, 2002, pp.199-200).

The next well-known Shia person is Molla Mohammad Bagher Majlesi (1616-1690). He refers to Imam Jafar Sadegh, the six Shia Imam, to say that a boy at the age of three should be taught to say *la elaha ela allah* (there is no god but God), at the age of six to be taught to pray, and at the age of nine if he leaves praying, he should be beaten. The aim of education, according to Majlesi is seeking God's satisfaction (Vakilian, 2002, p. 203).

This brief survey of educational thinkers gives an idea of the main themes of educational thought during this period. It was dominated by ideas of preparation of the young for a life governed by a belief in God, by the development of character, however, there is some attention to the preparation of intellectual and social skills. For modern educators it is the ideas of Abu Ali Sina (Avicenna) that may be most significant, as his curriculum and approach to teaching and learning seem to be less restrictive and more attentive to the whole student than the later theorists mentioned.

Modern education. The Qajar period (1781–1925) was the time for when Iranians became familiar with Western societies. The influence by these Western countries included not only politics and economics, but also exposure to different educational ideas. During the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah in 1858, the *Vezarat-e Ulum* (the Ministry of Science) was established which was responsible for all institutions of education in Iran. The name of this organization frequently changed. For instance, the name changed to the *Vezarat-e Ma'aref va O'ghaf va Sana'yeh-e Mostazrafeh* (the Ministry of Science, Endowments and Fine Arts), and then to the *Vezarat-e Farhang* (Ministry of Culture), and finally to the *Vezarat-e Amoozes va Parvaresh* (Ministry of Education).

Dar al-Funun.[48] In Naser-al Din Shah's time, one of the most outstanding educational achievements was the establishment of Dar al-Funun by Amir Kabir in 1851. Throughout the history of Iran, this was the first time that the state initiated an official higher education institution conceived as a polytechnic institution based on the European system and employing Western teachers. The subjects taught included Artillery (Toopkhaneh), Infantry (Piyadeh Nizam), Cavalry (Savareh Nizam), Geometry, Medicine, Surgery, Pharmacy, Mine Science, French, Natural Science, Mathematics,

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[48] See Glossary.

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History, Geography. Later English, Russian, Painting and Music subjects were added. Shavarini (2002) on the topic of the facilities for the Dar al-Funun writes that while the education was free for the students they were considered to be the state's employees. Moreover, each year the students received two sets of official clothing, were given a monthly salary by the government, and received free lunch (p. 73).[49] The institution was planned for training the upper-class students. According to Vakilian (2002) the students who participated in the inaugural year of Dar al-Funun were among the children of the Princes, rulers, and aristocrats (p. 121). The class barriers did not allow ordinary people to use these facilities and it was the privilege of the upper classes to gain from it. It began the creation of Westernized elite.

During the next one hundred year, Dar al-Funun expanded and ultimately became the University of Tehran. Dar al-Funun had an important role in the progress of Western knowledge and ideas in Iran.

Constitutional Revolution. One of the results of the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) was its impact on the people's right to an education. According to Article 18 of the Constitution and it Supplement, "Learning and teaching sciences, knowledge and industries are permitted unless it is forbidden by religious law" (p. 34). According to the Article 19, establishment of schools by state or people, and compulsory education should be regulated according to the law of the Vezarat-e Ulum va Maaref (Ministry of Sciences and Knowledge). All schools and *maktabs* should be under the control of the Ministry of Sciences and Knowledge (Constitution and it Supplement, p. 34). The policies and goals of education in this Maaref Constitution were assigned in 1910. Safavi

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[49] Khalili Shavarini, S. (2002). *Osool va mabani-ye barnameh rizi-ye amoozeshi* [Foundations and principles of educational planning]. Tehran: Homa. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

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(2004) notes some of the most important goals relate to moral, scientific, physical, and industrial education; compulsory common and religious education; and free education for poor people (p. 175). Likewise, Moayyeri (2005) states that Maaref law maintained elementary education which was compulsory for all Iranians (p. 15). In addition, the Maaref law banned corporal punishment in schools and *maktabs*.

By the end of the World War I, in 1918, the number of the schools increased. The government founded forty elementary schools and eight high schools in the capital of Iran, ten elementary schools in Tehran's suburb, and some schools in the other cities.

Another important achievement of this period (1918) was the establishment of the *Dar al Moallemin-e Markazi* in Tehran (the *Tehran Central Teachers Institute*), to train male teachers, and a *Dar al Moalelmat*, to train female teachers. This was followed by establishing other teacher training centers in other cities (Vakilian, 2002, pp. 125-126). The name of the Tehran Central Teachers Institute later changed to the *Higher Institute for Teacher Training*, and now it is called the *Tarbiat Moallem University* (Teacher Education University).

It can be concluded that the principles of the education system in this period, on the one hand reveals improvements of some democratic rights such as access to compulsory and free education, forbidding corporal punishment, and modernization of the education system, but on the other hand, it reveals an elite technicist approach to higher education as part of the process of attempted modernization by the state.

Pahlavi era. Throughout the Pahlavi era (1925–1979), the Iranian education system witnessed many fundamental changes. The most important of these changes was the creation of a Western-based education system, which served the enhancement, and acceleration of modernization. Indeed, education was the both product of modernization

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as well as a tool that assisted in the further modernization of the country. All of the changes were taking place under the influence of Persian nationalism and Shia Islam. Reza Shah established a national public education system, which favoured Persian culture, while suppressing all others. On the positive side, the education system was directed toward more secularization and democratization in the sense of increased participation of masses and increased access for females in the educational processes. As indicated by Safavi (2005), the supplementary Law of Budget for 1933 approved the free education for all the state elementary schools. In 1935, the mixed elementary schools in which boys and girls were studying were initiated. That same year, girls could study in the *Daneshsara-ye Aali* (Institute of Higher Education for Boys) (p. 99). Although, the dispatch of Iranian students to Europe was initiated in Qajar period, during the Reza Shah time this process systematized and expanded.

University of Tehran. The establishments of higher institutes of education were becoming abundant in Reza Shah's reign. In the words of Avery (1965), "by the time Reza Shah abdicated there were thirty six teachers' training colleges to cater for various grades all over the country" (p. 276). One of the important endeavours by Reza Shah was the establishment of the University of Tehran, which is the largest and oldest university in Iran, and officially put into operation in 1934. For the creation of its Faculties the already existing higher education institutions especially Dar al-Funun were used. Due to the important role and effect of University of Tehran on the other universities and institutions of the country, it is called the mother university. Since its establishment, the affect of this university in disseminating the social, political, and intellectual ideas throughout the whole country is undeniable.

During Mohammad Reza Shah's reign, modernization of the Western style education system expanded. The influence of the France and specially the United States on Iranian education system was obvious. Apart from the development of schools, many universities such as, University of Tabriz, Pahlavi University, University of Isfahan, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, The National University of Iran, Aryamehr University of Technology, Tehran Polytechnic University, and Isfahan University of Technology were founded. Due to ethnic discrimination in favour of Persian chauvinism[50], the distribution and access to these institutes was extremely unfair. The great majority of important institutions of higher education and universities were located in Persian-speaking areas.

Azerbaijan and Kurdistan Republics. During World War II, while the Northern part of Iran was occupied by Allied forces, Azerbaijan and Kurdistan were under the Soviet occupation. In 1945 in Azerbaijan and in 1946 in Kurdistan, two autonomous republics were established. Among the democratic undertakings of these republics, cultural and educational systems occupied a central place. According to Maraghehey (2003), some of the achievements of Azerbaijan Republic were the publication of Turkish newspapers and books, and the use of the Turkish language as the official language of the schools alongside Persian. In 1946, the University of Dar al-Funun in Tabriz, Azarbaijan, was established. This was the first university in a city in Iran aside from Tehran (pp. 429-430). This University was later called the University of Tabriz. Likewise, in the Kurdish Republic some important cultural and educational steps were taken. Comparing the pre-modern Kurdish state formation with the Kurdish Republic of 1946, Shahrzad

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[50] According to the Encarta Dictionary, Chauvinism is an excessive or prejudiced loyalty to a particular gender, group, or cause. Also, according to the Columbia Encyclopaedia, it expresses exaggerated and aggressive nationalism.

Mojab (2001), states that the latter is also characterized by "its modern education system, modern media, national army, tax system, national anthem, national flag, national language, and mobilization of women into educational, cultural and political life" (p. 71). By 1947 both of these republics were brutally suppressed by Mohammad Reza Shah and the democratic achievements were trampled. "The Kurdish printing press was closed, the teaching of Kurdish was prohibited, and all books in Kurdish were publicly burned" (Roosevelt, 1980, p. 149).

The modernization of Iran, both in rural or urban areas, needed more technical and social experts. To create these experts for industry, and other skilful workers for agricultural sections, the country needed the elimination of illiteracy among its people. One of the fruits of the White Revolution of Mohammad Reza Shah was the establishment of the "Literacy Corps" or "Corps of Knowledge". The basis of which young men, who obtained the diploma of secondary education, were given four month's training in order to live and teach in the rural districts instead of serving the compulsory two-years military service. The goal was to eliminate illiteracy in rural areas. According to Avery (1965), "primary education was still available to only two out of every ten village children. By 1961, the literacy rate in towns had risen to about 65 percent; it was still under 15 percent in rural areas" (p. 496). Regarding the scope and the impact of the Literacy Corps, Ivanov (1977) states that by January 1973, the number of people who served in the Literacy Corps was 98,500, among them 12,900 were women. By 1972 more than a million children and 500,000 adults became literate as a result of this movement (p. 250). This project lasted from 1963 to 1979, resulting in an increase of the rate of literacy in rural area. This project also threatened the *maktab*'s and mullah's influences in rural environments. Some of the shortfalls of this project were: the minimal

training time for these teachers, so they did not get the appropriate training. Many of these teachers were not familiar enough with the rural social environment and cultures of people in those areas. The living and educational facilities of many of the villages were extremely poor, however it can be regarded overall as an important program for the spread of literacy in the country.

Critics of education. The education system of Mohammad Reza Shah drew critical attentions of many intellectuals. The perspectives of two influential figures, Dr. Ali Shariati (1933-1977) who had an Islamic Ideology and Samad Behrangi[51] (1933-1967) with a Leftist perspective are reviewed.

Dr. Ali Shariati was one of the most important Islamic ideologues whose ideas have intellectually greatly affected Iranian Muslims, especially the youth who participated in the Revolution of 1979. Comparing the education system of Iran with the old-fashioned Islamic school (*maktab*), Shariati (2000) favours the *maktab* over modern school, citing for instance, that in the *maktab* there is no age restriction for the child to begin classes, and there is no time limitation to learn the lessons (p. 17).[52] Moreover, he believes that by supporting and reforming the *maktabs* they could be more effective than the schools in the struggle against illiteracy, because directing *maktabs* requires less of expenditure. Also, he was concerned that the literacy schools trained the villagers in a Western style as heterogeneous individuals. These villagers with their new pedagogy, thought, behaviour, and even religious differences are liable to become incompatible with the conservative village environment (p. 22).

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[51] See Photo 6.

[52] Shariati, A. (2000). *Falsafeh-ye talim va tarbiat* [The philosophy of education]. Tehran: Beasat Publications. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

Unfortunately, Shariati does not notice that the school systems are more complicated, and their curriculums are more comprehensive than that of maktabs. He does not understand that school is also a place for play and socialization of the students, teachers, and families, as well as a tool to bring up students to be productive members of society, influencing social, political, economical, and professional growth. Understanding children's physical, emotional, psychological, and intellectual needs, the curriculum and methods of teaching in the present world are extremely different and are beyond the ability of an old-fashioned *maktab* lead by a mullah. Given these limitations of the *maktab*, it is strongly questioned how could *maktabs* be more effective than the schools in combating the illiteracy? Does any historical experience confirm his idea? Did the existence and the practice of *maktabs* for more than a millennium in Iran eliminated illiteracy in the cities let alone in the villages? According to Moayyeri (2005), 52.5% of the Iranian people were illiterate in 1976. For people age six and over in the urban areas 34.5% of the people were illiterate, in the rural areas 69.5% of the people were illiterate. These results were achieved after many years of the struggle for the elimination of illiteracy. Could the *maktabs* get better results at the same period? Indeed, the *maktab* system is a reactionary system by comparison with the system of education in the Pahlavi era, and it is not compatible with solving the problems of our contemporary world. The *maktab* system was so incompatible with the new world that even the reactionary Islamic regime did not support it. The *maktabs* were dissolved, and were replaced by the school system.

Shariati supports the kind of personality that is in accordance with Shia Islam education. Through defending this homogeneity of individuals in the framework of

religious thought and behaviour the result is a very limited and dogmatic view of the personality of a human being.

Shariati (2000) provides the comparison of two philosophies of education, one from the Western countries and the other from his interpretation of Islam. He concludes that in the West the main subject is "society", in Islam it is "human"; in the West, education searches for "power", in Islam for "truth"; the West is inclined toward "technology" and "benefit", the inclination of Islam is towards "ideology" and "value"; the insight in the West is "realism", the insight in Islam is "idealism"; the West makes a "powerful human", Islam makes "good human"; the West creates "civilized society", Islam "civilized human"; Finally, the West supports and keeps "whatever is" (science expresses), Islam "whatever must be" (religion expresses)" (pp. 114-117). He also concludes that the civilized society of the West creates "wild humans" (p. 120).

Shariati's conclusion is full of contradictory ideas and concepts; he also mixes the concepts and does not give specific definitions for them. There are many different philosophies of education in western society. Some of them have fundamental differences with the others, but Shariati ignores that fact and homogenizes all of them under the topic of the Western philosophy.

Even if it is true that the Western philosophy of education is inclined toward "technology" and "benefit", these are based on Western ideologies and values. Also, methodologically it is not correct to compare "technology" and "benefit" of the West with Islam's "ideology" and "value". It would be better for Shariati to compare the "ideology" and "value" of Islam with the "ideology" and "value" of the West. However, still it should be noticed that there are different ideologies and values in different Western countries. Moreover, what is wrong with society being inclined toward "technology" and

"benefit" according to Islam? Is Islam against these categories? Does not Islam recognize and encourage technology and getting "benefit" from it as well as exploitation of others in different ways? Indeed, the Islam government approves getting benefit from trade and the economic exploitation of people.

It is also incorrect to compare "powerful human" with "good human", and "civilized society" with "civilized human", because for instance a "powerful human" can be a "good human" or a "bad human" and a "good human" can be a "powerful "human" or a "weak human". Fourthly, it is totally unacceptable und unfair to generalize the claim that the West creates "wild humans". In some of his other works, Shariati reveals his racist attitude; for example, in the testament part of his biography published by his wife, Pooran Shariat Razavi, while he praises Albert Einstein and Albert Schweitzer, he writes that they were from a "dirty race" and the "savage cannibal" continent of Europe (Shariat Razavi, 2004, p. 259).[53] It is noticeable that Shariati himself got his doctorate in History of Islam in France in1964.

Samad Behrangi. Another influential intellectual who criticized the education system of the Pahlavi's was Samad Behrangi (1939-1968). He was a leftist revolutionary and a popular teacher and writer who strived to reveal through his writings, societal problems, especially relating to educational system. He also was practically and actively participating in bringing positive changes and social justice to the environment in favour of the poor masses.

Behrangi (1957) criticized the education system because it was based on the educational and material facilities of Western countries. For instance, he claimed that in

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[53]Shariat Razavi, Pooran. (2004). *Tarhi az yek zendegi* [A sketch from a life] (10th ed. Vol.1.). Tehran: Chapakhsh Publications. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

some villages a teacher had to teach in a class of 50-60 students consisting of three to four different grade levels. Moreover, the translation of the Western psychological and pedagogical books, including John Dewey's works, were useless for the culture of Iran. Instead, he preferred the translation of the books from Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, because they are the neighbours of Iran and they have similar problems. In addition, he stated that in the Teacher Training College of Tabriz, even though they taught according to Dewey's teachings to create a free, happy environment and peaceful class; having hair on ones head, a moustache, or wearing a tie were big sins and the assistants of the College had the right to slap, kick, and even beat offending students with a stick (pp. 5-12).[54] Although, Behrangi rightly criticizes the contradiction between the Western teachings and practical behaviour of the Iranian educators, instead of focusing on positive, humanistic and democratic elements of the Western educators, he inappropriately rejects the whole Western teachings due to his perceived incompatibility of them with the Iranian culture. To the contrary, how was it possible to learn democratic ideas for education system of Iran from those reactionary and dictatorial systems? The answer is negative. At that time Iran could imitate and absorb few democratic elements from Western educational thinkers and the Western education systems were generally much more democratic than those of Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. What the Iranian educators needed was a deep familiarity with the translations of works regarding democratic education from all over the world and an understanding of and comparison with different educational theories including Iranian intellectual perspectives on this

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[54]Behrangi, S. (1957). *Kando kaw dar masayel-e tarbiati-ye Iran* [Search in educational problems of Iran] (10th ed.). Tehran: Shabgir Publications. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

subject. Finally, these teachers needed to argue and struggle for a democratic education in Iran based on all of those experiences.

Behrangi believed that the textbooks and teaching materials which were approved and written by the educators in Tehran for the whole country were not appropriate for rural Iran because the living conditions of the villagers had not been understood by those educators. To some extent Behrangi is right. As Fereshteh (1993) quotes from Behrangi:

> If educators in Tehran have not had any personal contact with the people of the village of Mamaghan or familiarity with the culture and language of the Iranian rural areas, how can they, who are enjoying an extremely comfortable and luxurious life with all kinds of modern facilities, understand the poverty-stricken life of Mamaghan's children who eat only once a day a meal which consists of bread and cheese, bread dipped in sweet-tea, and bread and onions. (p. 7)

Regarding the style and content of the textbooks, Behrangi (1969) states that they offer a handful of vain and old memorized texts. The Farsi reading books kept students distanced from their contemporary poets and writers. Furthermore, the history books were written in a biased and non-scientific way, and they are just the history of the birth, death, war, killing, victory and defeat of certain commanders or kings, and they uselessly fill up the mind of students for a few months (pp. 35-50).[55]

Behrangi (1957) asserts that the schools textbooks, especially, the elementary books should be written in accordance with the regional needs and each province have its own different text. For instance, the Azerbaijan Province should have a special Farsi book which is written in a simple style. He says that if we are interested in our country's culture we should do this (p. 72). It seems that Behrangi's concept of "country's culture" is not comprehensive and it does favour the Persian culture. Instead of recognizing the right of all other ethnic groups including Azerbaijanies to study in their own language, he

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[55]Behrangi, S. (1969). *Majmooeh-ye maghaleh-ha: Samad Behrangi* [Collection of articles: Samad Behrangi]. Tabriz: Shams Publications. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

was merely concerned about the ways in which the education system could more effectively diffuse Persian culture and language among all Iranians.

Another matter that drew the attention of Behrangi was corporal punishment. Bebrangi (1957) criticized the banning of corporal punishment in schools and was against this decision. He wrote that prohibition of corporal punishment was a gift of American education to Iran and no research had been done about the disadvantages or benefits of this prohibition. After explaining the problem in few pages, he claims that the wisest way to treat a student is using a combination of love and freedom accompanied with a stick and beating, and occasional and suitable violence, based on convenience. He believes corporal punishment is not a goal, but a tool. A teacher's anger and violence should be made apparent, and the student should know the reason for the beating, and if he/she is guilty he/she should be aware of the guilt. Behrangi concludes that under these conditions, corporal punishment is not harmful; it is even useful. Of course, the punishment's intensity should be gradually reduced until it reaches to zero (pp. 53-60).

There are fundamental problems concerning Behrangi's view of corporal punishment. As a matter of fact Behrangi had a reactionary view of this issue. He was a long way from the understanding the correct treatment of the students in this matter, and understanding the negative physical and psychological effects of the corporal punishments has on students. Behrangi's perspective was about half a century behind the education system of Iran in this subject. While corporal punishment had been already banned after the Constitutional Revolution, now, he was arguing for its benefit and necessity. During the Pahlavi era, though a dictatorship, even more democratic elements regarding punishment were introduced to the education system, though practically these elements were not observed by many teachers and educational staff. Behrangi, instead of

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focusing on those democratic rights and elements, approved the tool of force to control students' behaviour, a tool through which the Pahlavi's ruled over the people.

In addition, Behrangi's outlook regarding gender and sexuality was not without problems. While he criticized the education authorities for their inefficiency, he also questioned their unethical behaviour, in particular, according to Behrangi's view, their sexual relations with some female teachers. For instance, Behrangi (1957) condemns some village teachers who in order to satisfy their sexual needs use their own body and masturbate, which is bad; or use the students bodies, which is worse; or have relations with other teachers, which is the worst (p. 16). Using sarcasm Behrangi points out that one of the hobbies of an ordinary teacher is to buy a bra for his wife (p. 24). He continues that some of the principals of schools had relationships with some dishonored[56] women teachers (p. 32). He refers to the story of a past master inspector and the scandal with a woman instructor in Tabriz (p. 47). He correctly condemns the teachers' sexual relation with the children. However, he does not offer any reason for disapproval of masturbation and adults' homosexuality; furthermore, he does not say why the teachers' sexual relationship with each other is the worst. His outlook about immoral sexual relationships is in accordance with the traditional Iranian culture. His view in this matter was limited because he did not recognize the freedom of sexual choice and behaviour among adults. In addition, he condemns and humiliates women even more harshly. Even when he tends to humiliate the male teachers, he tries to do this through the teacher's attention to a trivial or unethical sexual matter that relate to his wife. Behrangi's view in subjects of gender and sexuality were patriarchal, anti-homosexual, and limited.

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[56] The original word for "dishonoured" in Behrangi's book is "bi orzeh" which means incapable, but in this context, I think it means "dishonoured".

The next shortcoming of Behrangi's view is about the relationship of the village teachers with the villagers and students. His perspective contains many thoughts which at first glance seem sound but they are not. Behrangi (1957) gives some recommendations to the teachers and calls these recommendations "learning the language of the village". He claims that teachers should pay attention to the culture of the village. Behrangi states "learning the language of the village" encourages the teachers to follow the culture of the villagers, which is based on the Islamic religion, patriarchal, and anti-women. In this regard, he points out that the relation of men and women in a village is based on the possibility of the betrayal of that woman, her incomplete wisdom, her humiliation and her being in the service of the husband. In most Iranian homes, it is customary for a woman to give her husband the right to beat her, or throw her out of the home. The women do not have the right of returning to her father's home and complaining about the situation. Besides, he writes that even if the teacher does not believe in religion, this teacher must sometimes go to the mosque and listen to the preachings of the mullahs (pp. 96-102). Bahrangi does not encourage teachers to struggle against these unjust ideas and traditions that he mentions, instead he recommends the teachers though they are not religious follow those unjust traditions. Do not these teachers become hypocrites? His recommendations certainly embody anti-democratic education.

In his works, Behrangi recommends some alternatives to improve the education system, such as the elimination of discrimination against teachers and administrators (Fereshteh, 1993, p 14); be careful when employing teachers and administrators (Behrangi, 1957, p. 39); and changing the composition of the offices of education and high schools so that the qualified people are empowered (Behrangi, 1969, p. 51). While these suggestions can positively influence the education system, they are just some

reforms and far away from having a radical effect on that system. Among his other suggestion, one is to get rid of many teachers. Behrangi (1957) stresses: "I honestly believe that many of the teachers are incorrigible. They should be gathered and thrown into the Caspian Sea to get rid of them. Even with reassigning and deposing one or two superiors and inferiors and dismissing some teachers, nothing changes. Deep thoughts and deeper plans are necessary" (p. 62). Behrangi (1957) strongly criticizes the middle class employees and their superficial life and calls them incapable, shallow, and conservative and people who do not and cannot think. Regarding what should be done with them, he says he does not know. However, in a sarcastic way he suggested that they should dip needles into their bodies to shake them up; should hold an educational seminar to advise them in rate of 50 *tomans* [57]per hour; or throw a bucket of ice water over them to interrupt their naps (pp. 116-119).

It appears that he is so angry with Iranian teachers that he could not be polite about them in his writing; hence this undermines the rationality of his educational alternatives to the state of education today. Indeed, many problematic views of Behrangi reveal that he was not equipped with a scientific view about theories and practices of education and his knowledge of the education system mostly came from his own limited experiments. A careful study of his works reveals many fundamental shortcomings and anti-democratic beliefs and practices some of which are reviewed. Since he was too young, twenty-nine, when he died, he did not live long enough to deepen his thought and correct many wrong beliefs and judgments, which were reflected in his works. In any case, the important thing about Behrangi is that he honestly loved people and because of this he introduced some just ideals to his society and fought for them.

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[57] Iranian currency.

Still there are some more views which criticize the education system of the Pahlavi regime. Vakilian (2002), describes the characteristics of education before the Revolution of 1979 as: imitation of European programs without connection to the necessary economic, social and cultural needs of Iran; not changing the content of the curricula for many years; transferring knowledge and expanding literacy as the main goals of education; using lecturing as the main style of teaching; memorizing the abstract, and information given as absolute truth; the high gap between the branches of education that was 97.3% studying in theoretical sciences, and 2.7% in technical sciences; and the policies and the methods of teaching were pushing individuals towards emptiness, hopelessness, irreligiousness, jobless, wonderings, and profligacy (pp. 129-130). It is interesting that even the Shah was not satisfied with the education system. In his lecture in November 1972 in Persepolis, he claimed that in Iranian schools the students still are given the 'ignorance diploma' (Ivanov, 1977. p. 251).

Bahram Mohsenpour (1988) who supports the Islamic Philosophy of education of the Islamic Republic of Iran criticizes the philosophy of education in the Pahlavi era. He asserts that "weakening the religious beliefs of students, spreading atheism and polytheistic teachings, presenting the monarchy as a plausible political system, and, finally, presenting capitalism as the best and most suitable economic system were among the major goals of the educational system of the former regime" (p. 77). Regarding the religious policy of the Pahlavi regime it is noticeable that one of the implicit contradiction with the educational system of the Pahlavi era was that on the one hand, its aim was to secularize the educational system, and on the other hand, the curricula contained courses like Arabic, Koran, and Religious teachings which all served and reinforced Shia Islam religion. The Pahlavis, in order to keep their power seemed to be

true followers of Article 39 of the Constitution of the Constitutional Revolution according to which the King should propagate Jafari Shia Islam. This belief was reflected both in the established curricula and in their personal behaviour. Avery (1965), regarding the Mohammad Reza Shah's visitation of Shi'i Holy Places in Iraq notes,

> He was photographed with his fingers on the grill round the sarcophagus of 'Ali, the most sanctioned figure among the saints of the Shi'a; and the picture was to be used extensively in the following years as propaganda for the Shah, along with posters depicting him and the *Quran*, their caption linking 'God, Shah and Country'. (p. 440)

This and many other gestures of the Pahlavi rulers was nothing but actions meant to deceive. Ultimately, these actions were to attract the satisfaction of the both Islamic Shiite leaders and the people who believed in Islam.

Summary. Though the education system in Pahlavi era had some positive elements, the philosophy supporting it was anti-democratic and fundamentally served the interests of capitalist class and the authoritarian rulers of Iran. It encouraged people to believe that the Pahlavi monarchy was a gift from the God, the Shah was the God's shadow, and Persian culture was superior to the other cultures in Iran. In addition, the style of teaching was based on teacher lecturing and student memorization which was a barrier to creativity of the minds. The content of many of the texts were incompatible with the real needs of the society.

Another noticeable matter in the Pahlavi era is that there was a great difference between what were approved in school codes and what actual happened in the schools. For instance, while the school codes banned corporal punishment and humiliation of the students, in reality the students in all levels continued to be extensively punished and humiliated. The range of these behaviours even extended to the institutions of higher educational, like the teacher training colleges. Finally, even though some intellectuals criticized the education system and they offered some positive insights to the system, a

comprehensive democratic and revolutionary alternative was never created. As a matter of fact, some of their ideas and suggestions were strongly anti democratic.

3.3   Islamic Republic of Iran

The Revolution of 1979 of Iran ended the dictatorial monarchical institutions which had usually ruled Iranian citizens since the ancient times. However, the replacement was nothing except a regime that can be characterised as a theocratic capitalist dictatorship.

The purpose of this part of the thesis is to point out some of the main characteristics of the development of the education system in Islamic Republic of Iran, and to provide a context for the larger picture of that system. The next chapter expands this part, providing details and focus on the resulting problems stemming from the education system in Islamic Republic of Iran.

After the Revolution of 1979, a new Constitution was created in which the main goals of education system were determined. One of the goals of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, according to Article 3 of the Constitution, is directing its resources to establish "free education and physical training for everyone at all levels, and the facilitation and expansion of higher education", as well as "strengthening the spirit of inquiry, investigation, and innovation in all areas of science, technology, and culture, as well as Islamic studies, by establishing research centers and encouraging researchers". The following briefly examines the success of some of these goals.

Educational goals. About the final aim of education in Iran, Moayyeri (2005), refers to an official article from the secretariat of High Council of Education in Iran which states that the ultimate aim of pedagogy in Islam, and Islamic Republic of Iran is to facilitate the preliminaries to guide humans in the straight way of worshiping the God

and human ascension to the perfection stage of humanity, and the goal is to be become

each moment closer to God (p. 37). In 1983, the High Council of Education also has

indicated the basic educational goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran which as stated by

Mohsenpour (1988) are:

> The Ideals of Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran should strengthen the beliefs of students with respect to (*a*) oneness to God; (*b*) prophethood and revelation; (*c*) resurrection and its constructive role in the journey of human beings toward God; (*d*) justice of God; (*e*) Imamate and the leadership of the pure Imams; and (*f*) the dignity of humanity, its superior rule, its freedom, and its responsibility before God.
>
> Spiritual goals include (*a*) explaining the principles and the decrees of Islam; (*b*) fostering the moral development of children based on belief in God and virtue; and (*c*) strengthening the spirit of investigation and innovation in the fields of science, technology, culture, and Islamic affairs.
>
> Scientific and cultural goals include (*a*) helping students discover the mysterious of the cosmos; (*b*) discovering the cause-and-effect relations of natural phenomena for the purpose of accumulation of knowledge and technology as well as for utilization of the knowledge and the experiences of human beings;(*c*) maintaining continuous development of schools and technology in the fields of agriculture, industry, and military affairs; (*d*) training committed and skilful manpower for all aspects of the development of the country; (*e*) making students familiar with Islamic teachings; (*f*) nurturing the artistic aptitudes as well as the aesthetic abilities of the students; (*g*) teaching the Persian language and script as well as the Arabic language to familiarize students with the Koran and Islamic instructions; and (*h*) creating a feeling of participation in a continuous teaching and learning process.
>
> Social goals include (*a*) protecting the sacredness of family relations based on the Islamic faith; (*b*) extending and strengthening Islamic brotherhood and cooperation as well as strengthening national unity; (*c*) ensuring the existence of social, economic, and cultural justice; (*d*) building respect for the law; and (*e*) making people aware of the importance and the value of education and its goals.
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> Political goals include (*a*) accepting the absolute rule of God over the world and human beings; (*b*) uniting all Muslim nations; (*c*) struggling against any kind of tyranny and domination and securing political independence; (*d*) strengthening the nation's defense capacity through military training in educational institutions for the purpose of ensuring the independence of the Islamic Republic of Iran; and (*e*) giving careful consideration to physical education.
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> Economic goals include (*a*) training students to participate in agriculture, industrial production, and husbandry to lead the country toward self-

sufficiency; (*b*) creating a spirit of content and avoiding lavish practices in all aspects of the economy; (*c*) creating a spirit of respect for legal ownership; and (*d*) observing the principle of hygienic and protection of the environment as a public duty. (pp. 85-86)

The above principles show that the current education system serves the ideology of Shia Islam, Persian linguistic dominance, the militarization of society and education system, and the support of private property in its dominant form of capitalism. In addition, as Safavi (2004) points out, according to the approved Parliamentary law (1987) Article 1 and its two notes regarding the basic educational goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran, strengthening the basic beliefs of the students is to take place through the Jafari Shia sect; however, in the regions where other Islamic sects are living, the religious teachings could be according to their religion, and also the recognized religious minorities can use their own religious books and teachings under the control of the Ministry of Education. Article 2 requires the creation of the spirit of religious obedience and practical obligation to the Islamic commands (pp. 185-186).

Among the first and most important activities of the regime was the Cultural Revolution which started in 1980. An important part of this Revolution was a huge plan to Islamize the universities. The content and the programs of the higher educational institutions witnessed fundamental changes and also thousands of university and college students, instructors and staff were expelled. The Cultural Revolution and the continued direction of these institutions by the Regime have not solved the old problem of the weak relationship between the curricula of universities and societal needs. Besides, as Yadollah Mehralizadeh (2004), a member of the Faculty of Education and Psychology in University of Shahid Chamran of Ahvaz, claims that universities' planning during the past years has been extensively under the influences of the political trends and the

politicians so that the universities were restricted in their capacity to perform active roles in the planning and the fulfilling of their scientific, social and political missions for the society (p. 280).[58] The control of universities by the Islamic regime has been severe. Historically the universities in Iran had never been independent in their planning, but in this regime, they became even more dependant on the Islamic Regime's policies and control.

Islamic Azad Universities. After the Revolution, the number of institutes of higher education significantly increased, although still there is a great shortage of this kind of educational institution. One of the important institutions of this type is Tarbiat Modares University which was founded in 1982. It is located in Tehran and is a prestigious graduate university.

In addition, the establishment of Islamic Azad University, which is a private university, in Tehran in 1982, was followed by the foundation of hundreds of other private universities under the same name in different parts of the country. In addition to the Islamic Azad Universities, other private institutes of higher education have been developed under other names.

Another form of educational expansion has been the development of long distance universities under the name of Payame Noor University. Established in 1987, this university has many branches which are active in different areas of the country. Furthermore, unofficial education, supported by the growth of Islamic, especially Shia institutions, have been an important part of the regime's educational plan. Moreover, the numbers of private schools all over the country are increasing. However, there is still a

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[58] Mehralizadeh, Y. (2004). *Jahani sazi va nezamhay-e amoozeshi: Ba taakid bar keshvar-e Iran* Globalization and educational systems: With emphasis on Iran]. Ahvaz: Rasesh Publication. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

huge gap between the numbers of available schools and the society's need for these institutions.

Structure of education system. The structure of education system witnessed a big change after the Revolution. Safavi (2004) summarizes the structural changes of the education system as follows. From 1911 to 1955, each primary and high schools required 6 years of education. However, in 1938 by imitating the French system, the high school years was divided into 3, 3, and 1 year. In 1966, the education system was divided to three periods of 5 years of primary school, 3 years of guidance cycle[59], and 4 years of high school, while the high school included to two branches, Nazari (theoretical) and Fanni (technical). Education until the end of the guidance cycle around the age of 14 was free.

After the Revolution (1989), the new structure of the education system was established and approved by The Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution. By 1991, based of this new system, the period of education was reduced from 12 to 11 years; the 4 years of high school were reduced to 3 years. This year removed from the high school term was now assigned as a one year pre-university period. Moreover, the system of "Half year-Unit" and later "Year-Unit" was introduced in high schools. Students are required to pass 96 units to get their diploma (pp. 119-125).

Another important problem with this new system, as was with the previous one, is one of educational loss[60]. Moayyeri (2005) states that in Iran there is considerable amount of the educational wastage which results from students repeating grades or dropping out. In addition, the last 10 years statistics shows that from each 1000 students who register in grade one of the primary schools, after 12 years, only 200 of them get diplomas (pp. 291-

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[59] Middle school.

293). This is nothing but a great disaster for both the education system and the social system of the country as well as the individuals concerned.

Summary. It appears the new system may now be more beneficial to the students, because there are more possibilities and opportunities in the schools to guide and help students choose their educational directions. However, the education system can only help the students to a certain point. After earning their diploma and even after finishing their higher education, students face lots of difficulties in finding proper jobs.

In short, aside from the problems with the philosophy of education in lower and higher educational institutes in Iran, some other problems of the educational system include the following: the high shortage in numbers of these institutions, the poor quality of teaching and facilities, the high number of the private institutions, the high level of educational wastes, and the illogical relationship between the curricula and solving the societal problems. These factors reveal that the education system under the Islamic Republic of Iran has not been successful. For instance, the regime could not provide free education for all people, especially the poor masses.

The educational system under the Islamic Republic of Iran has many fundamental problems. It is an anti democratic and dictatorial system which aims at creating obedient subjects in the service of the ruling theocratic capitalist regime. The task of the next chapter is to reveal and analyze those problems.

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[60] Educational failure.

CHAPTER 4:
EDUCATION SYSTEM
IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

4.1   Introduction

This chapter attempts to consider the education system in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Before focusing on the public education system in Iran, it will be beneficial to give some further background about the country. Iran is a multination or multiethnic country. This means that different ethnic groups like Arabs, Armenians, Assyrians, Balouchis, Georgians, Gilaki-Mazandaranis, Jews, Kurds, Lurs, Persians, Turks, and Turkmans live in this country. Most of these groups basically have their own geographic area. All of these ethnic groups have their own languages. Persians constitute half of the population of Iran, and they dominate the political system of the country which has historically been a monarchic dictatorship, though the form of government since the Revolution of 1979 has changed to an Islamic dictatorship.

Iran may be a multicultural society, but this does not mean that these different cultures openly practice their culture, but it means that a diverse range of cultures live within the borders of Iran. Among these ethnic groups, different religious groups such as Bahaiis, Christians, Zoroastrians, Sufis, and Yarsans exist. In addition, other global cultures, especially the Western, ones are increasingly affecting the lifestyles of people in this country. The notion of being multicultural is associated with a range of other various cultural practices and interests related to the different groups and categories such as class, gender, sexual attitude, age, rural and urban areas, etc,.

In sum, Iran is a multiethnic and multicultural country which is presently ruled by the dictatorship of capitalists following ideological forms of Persian chauvinism and Jafari Shia Islam. In the other words, it is a chauvinist theocratic capitalist dictatorship.

The education system of Iran is an interrelationship that reflects the political and economic systems of the country, as well as impacting them. This is achieved by a highly suppressive education system, which basically strengthens and aids the maintenance of these political and economic systems.

The main goal of this chapter is to show the public education system in Iran is an antidemocratic and highly oppressive system and this begins with the adoption of a distorted philosophy of the education system, specifically concerning ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, class, and content and methods of teaching.

4.2   Philosophy of the Education System

The first aspect of oppression in the education system in Iran is related to its philosophy of education. As was already mentioned in the previous chapter, the final aim of education in the Islamic Republic of Iran is to instil in its people the preparations needed to guide humans in the straight way of worshiping God and human ascension to the perfect stage of humanity, and to be closer to God (Moayyeri, 2005, p. 37). Thus the final goal is the formation of human beings who submit themselves to the will of God. In Iran, the Islamic rulers, supposedly, are the representatives of God on earth; consequently the final goal is to induce the populace to surrender themselves to the will of the rulers and their political system. Numerous Iranian Islamic scholars emphasize of the role of religion in education. Mohammad Hasan Parvand (2001) considers three bases fundamental to education as: Learning concepts and principles instead of hollow text

facts; learning skills; and learning desirable divine, scientific and humanistic attitudes (p. 71).[61]

Some of the basic educational goals indicated by Mohsenpour (1988) are: ideal goals-to believe in the oneness of God, prophethood, revelation, resurrection, justice of God, and Imamate and the leadership of the pure Imam; spiritual goals-- strengthening the moral development of the students based on belief in God; cultural goals--to make student familiar with Islamic teachings, and Persian and Arabic languages; social goals-- to protect the family relationships according to Islam, and strengthening national unity; political goals--to strengthen the defence capacity of the country through military training in educational institutions; and economical goals--to create a spirit of respect for legal ownership (pp. 85-86).

In summary, the focal bias of these goals are on the religious teachings based on Shia Islam, instead of familiarity with the intellectual and cultural heritage of all humans; fostering Persian chauvinist culture, instead of helping the flourishing of all Iranian cultures; protecting the patriarchal Islamic family relations, instead of developing a free and equal relationship among people in the matters of family, love and sexual choices; militarization of the country, instead of advocating the culture of peace; and supporting legal ownership which is dominant in the capitalist system, instead of creating the opportunity to end the all exploitative relations in society.

It is worth pointing out that the Iraq-Iran war which lasted from 1980 to 1988 has affected the goals of education system in Iran. Militarization of the educational environment from middle schools to universities was one of the results of this war. The

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[61]Parvand, M. H. (2001). *Moghaddamat-e barnameh rizi-ye amoozeshi va darsi* [Fundamentals of curriculum development] (3rd ed.). Tehran: Khorshid. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

regime initiated a course which was called the *Defence Preparation* and all students had to take this course. The Defence Preparation courses in the middle and high schools during 1989-2002 were part of the curriculum (Safavi, 2004, pp. 349-410). Through this course the students were taught some basic military theories and practice such as using weapons. The Islamic regime also initiated paramilitary organization of *Basij*[62] (Mobilization) which in middle schools were called *Puyandegan*[63] (Seekers) and in high schools and universities were called Pishgaman[64] (Vanguards). Through Basij the students who had joined participated in war. The role of Student Basij was not limited to military activities; indeed the Basij acted as the intelligence service of the regime in society especially in educational places.

4.3   Ethnicity

The second issue to examine is the suppression of all ethnic groups by the dominant Persian ethnic group. As mentioned, Iran consists of various ethnic groups like Arabs, Armenians, Assyrians, Balouchis, Georgians, Gilaki-Mazandaranis, Jews, Kurds, Lurs, Persians, Turks, and Turkmans. These minorities have struggled, to different degrees, to obtain political and cultural rights. Nevertheless, they have been violently suppressed by the Islamic regime. According to Amnesty International Report (2006):

> In June, clashes between security forces and Kurds celebrating events in Iraq led to injuries to police officers and the arrest of dozens of demonstrators. In July, after Iranian security forces shot dead a Kurdish opposition activist, Showaneh Qaderi, and reportedly dragged his body through the streets behind a jeep, thousands of Kurds took to the streets to protest. Security forces reportedly killed up to 21 people, injured scores more and arrested at least 190. In further clashes in October and

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[62] See Glossary.
[63] See Glossary.
[64] See Glossary.

November, at least one person, Shoresh Amiri, was killed, several people were injured and others were arrested.

All ethnic minorities are practically deprived of learning in their own language. According to the Article 15 of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran:

> The Official Language and script of Iran, the lingua franca of its people, is Persian. Official documents, correspondence, and texts, as well as text-books, must be in this language and script. However, the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed in addition to Persian. (Iran-Constitution, 1979)

The first thing in this article is the affirmation of Persian as the official language of school textbooks. The next part which affirms the right of minorities to teach their literature in schools practically until the present time has not been allowed. Ethnic minorities such as Azeries and Kurds are not allowed to learn their native language as one of the subjects in schools, which are taught in Persian. From the first years of primary school the system Persian is the dominant language, though teaching the Koran introduces some Arabic language to the students. Arabic is taught starting in the first year of middle school, and from the second year English as a subject is taught. The reason for teaching Arabic is not to respect the Arab ethnic group who lives in Iran, but to enable the students to read the Koran. The pressure of learning languages in schools for all ethnic minorities aside from Arabs is triple, because they have to learn Persian, too. Whereas students are deprived of learning their own language and culture, they have to learn a language such as Arabic, which they may never learn properly and may never use in their daily life. The large majority of minority students have to study in their second language, Persian; this is a long-term challenge which affects their ability to compete with the students whose first language is Persian.

One of the recommendations by Moayyeri (2005) for children, before starting their official education, is familiarity with the language of formal education, especially if in their family or origin they have spoken with their native language or dialect (p. 54). This means that the ethnic minority children from before starting their official education should be taught in Persian language, and in fact their cultural assimilation in favour of the Persian and in disfavour of their native language should be started earlier. This is the way in which the Persian chauvinists consider the matter of culture in Iran and it is another example of what Florio-Ruane (2001) calls 'educational culturalectomy' in her analysis of the situation of students of colour in US schools. "Educational culturalectomy is most clearly visible in the experiences of students of color and those who speak a first language other than English, who rarely find their images reflected in the texts and contexts of school" (Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 23).

The notion of culturalectomy, although originally used in a US context, well describes the Iranian education practice. It is extremely rare to find something about other cultures in Iranian textbooks. It is useless to try to find a picture of for example a Kurdish child who was dressed in Kurdish clothing in the texts. In addition, the authors, poets, artists, philosophers, historians, scientists, and religious leaders who appear in the educational texts are generally chosen from the Persian culture. Florio-Ruane (2001) notes, "Lack of cultural understanding reinforces Euro-American teachers' sense of "us" as normal (mainstream, White, or colourless) and "them" as abnormal (minority, of color, no-native speaking)" (p. 24). In the context of Iran, "us" reflects the Persian, and "them" includes all other ethnic groups. However, the education system of Iran is much more suppressive than of the United State and any other western countries.

The suppression of the ethnic minorities is not limited to language; actually, it contains the whole cultural realms. Ethnically, the culture which is taught in schools is the Persian culture. The ethnic minority children, during their education do not learn about their native culture or the other minorities. The titles of "Iranian culture", "national culture" and "the Islamic nation of Iran", which used by the authorities, include only the dominant Persian and Shia cultures not the minorities who consist of about 50% of the countries' population. The cultural beliefs and practices of these minorities have no space in school texts. The school education system ignores these cultures and prevents them from prospering by educational tools. The aim of the education system is to undermine the ethnic minorities' cultures.

Another unfair subject related to the ethnic minorities as well as marginalized is the unjust distribution of educational possibilities. Though Moayyeri (2005) supports the philosophy of education of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he has some criticism of the education system. He shows that the rural people have extraordinarily little access to secondary and higher education, due to the lack of high schools. Furthermore, the regional distributions of the educational possibilities are unequal. In some of the provinces, access by the students to education is limited, and a considerable number of the children cannot go to school (p. 253). Kurdistan and Balouchistan are examples of those deprived provinces. According to UNICEF (2006), in spite of existing educational deprivation, Iranian educational improvements exist:

> Developments in education have also been positive. In 2001 the literacy rate of the population aged over six years of age has reached 80.4 per cent (85.1 per cent of men and 75.6 per cent of women). The urban-rural gap has also narrowed to about 14 per cent (86.25 per cent of urban population versus 72.4 per cent of the rural). There are, however, still noticeable differences among and within Iranian provinces. The net

enrolment ratio is above 97 per cent and is almost equal among girls and boys.

However, national averages hide disparities related to gender and area. While the overall enrolment rate for boys is 98 per cent, it varies significantly between provinces. For girls, the range is between 99 per cent in Tehran and 84 per cent in Sistan and Baluchestan.

The reasons for the deprivations may have different roots. For instance, in Kurdistan, historically the Iranian regimes never initiated fundamental economic and educational investments because they have always been worried about the separation and independency of Kurdistan from Iran. In addition, Persian ethnocentrists supported the economic and cultural growth of their own ethnic group. Further, the capitalists of Iran invest their capital in the areas from which they can get more benefits.

Although illiteracy is a problem which exists in all regions of Iran, due to the unjust distribution of educational possibilities, among some ethnic minorities and in deprived areas the rate of illiteracy is higher. Many countries in the world have had successful plans in confronting illiteracy. The model used by Cuba in uprooting the illiteracy is an outstanding example. Ahmad Aghazadeh (2003), an Iranian scholar, points out that Cuba during a few months in 1961 uprooted illiteracy in the country. The model used with the mobilization of more than 120,000 volunteers along with 105,000 students who temporarily left the schools, as well as 20,000 workers, all of whom were volunteers to teach. At the end of the year 700,000 adults learned to read and write and the percentage of illiteracy reduced from 23% to 4% (p. 77).[65] The Cuban agenda for uprooting illiteracy was revolutionary. The Cuban government employed large masses of people and put enough investment in education in order to be succeeded in a short time. In Iran since the Reza Shah's time to the present, the governments have initiated different

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[65] Aghazadeh, A. (2003). *Amoozesh va parvaresh-e tatbighi* [Comparative education] (3rd ed.). Tehran: Sazman-e Motaleeh va tadwin-e Kotob-e Uloum-e Ensaniy-e Daneshghah-ha (SMT). All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

plans for eradication of illiteracy. Since none of these plans have been successful a large number of the people, 19.6 % are illiterate (UNICEF, 2006). The Iranian authorities do not make us of successful international plans in this respect.

The unjust distribution of educational possibilities noted above is a barrier to developing the peoples', especially the students' talents; it oppresses the human intellectual and physical potentials.

4.4   Culture

The third subject to consider is the suppression of culture in the education system. In various ways and degrees the educational system in Iran is trampling on the different aspects of human culture as well as culture of different minorities. For example, there is no room in this system to teach about the customs, traditions, and ideas of different cultures.

According to Article 13 of the Constitution, "Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities, who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education" (Iran-Constitution, 1979). The first criticism about Article 13 is that it does not include all religious minorities such as *Bahais*. The next is, the only religion officially taught is the Shia Islam, though the Sunnis, Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians are allowed to learn their religious teachings. Bahais and other religions do not have any school-based access to information about their religions.

Cultural discrimination is also institutionalized by the regime through some other articles of the Constitution. Article 115 states that one of the quality's the President

possesses is the "convinced belief in the fundamental principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the official madhhab[66] of the country" (Iran-Constitution, 1979). This effectively means that believers of all other *madhhabs* (religions) and beliefs or non-believers, are prevented from becoming President. In educational environments, when the students realize this point, that according to the law the people and the cultures which exist in Iran are not equal, and the Persians and Shias are superior, they get the feelings of humiliation and animosity. Indeed, the education system teaches them that they are inferior, which is why, for instance, they cannot become a President or get many other positions.

Culture includes all material and mental creation of human beings. Some part of culture includes freedom of thought, association, assembly, and publication. Freedom of these elements is the basic to rights of humans. The Islamic regime severely violates these basic rights. According to Article 26 of the Constitution:

> The formation of parties, societies, political or professional associations, as well as religious societies, whether Islamic or pertaining to one of the recognized religious minorities, is permitted provided they do not violate the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, the criteria of Islam, or the basis of the Islamic Republic. No one may be prevented from participating in the aforementioned groups, or be compelled to participate in them. (Iran-Constitution, 1979)

In addition, Article 24 asserts: "Publications and the press have freedom of expression except when it is detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam or the rights of the public. The details of this exception will be specified by law" (Iran-Constitution, 1979). The problem with the Articles 24 and 26 is that the formation of parties, societies, associations, religious societies as well as the freedom of expression should not be harmful to the fundamental principals of Islam, otherwise they are not

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[66] Religion

allowed. In reality, the regime has violently suppressed all the opposition parties and associations and severely curtailed freedom of expression. For example, according to Asad Seif (1997-1998), the Islamic regime tortured Faraj Sarkoohi, an Iranian leftist writer, to a degree that he falsely confessed he was related to the West, which means that he was a spy (p. 8).[67] According to the Amnesty International Report (2006) "Freedom of expression and association remained severely curtailed. Journalists and web bloggers were detained and imprisoned and some newspapers were closed down. Relatives of detainees or those sought by the authorities remained at risk of harassment or intimidation".

Not only are political parties banned and their members imprisoned, tortured and executed, but also opposition at the individual level was violently suppressed. This suppression is still routine in Iran. Amnesty International Report (2006) writes:

> In September, Arezoo Siabi Shahrivar, a photographer, was arrested along with up to 14 other women, at a ceremony commemorating the 1988 "prison massacre" in Evin prison, Tehran, in which thousands of political prisoners were executed. In detention she was suspended from the ceiling, beaten with a wire cable and sexually abused.

The educational system must provide opportunities to the students to read, think, analyze, criticizes, discuss, and express their ideas freely, without fear. However, in general neither the teachers nor the students dare to express their political and ideological beliefs when these beliefs are in opposition with the regimes' imposed views. If they express views counter to the official position, then they are subject to expulsion, unemployment, imprisonment, or even assassination. Because of these effective prohibitions, the system produces a culture of hypocrisy among all.

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[67]Seif, A. (1997-1998). *Eslam nevisi, sonnat va* gharb [Islamic studies, cultural relativism and the West]. *Arash*, 65, 4-8. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

The aim of the Cultural Revolution which began in 1980 was the Islamization of the education system at all levels. Haleh Afshar (1998) claims that

> ... all foreign-run schools were closed down and anyone suspected of un-Islamic tendencies was sacked. But, along with the re-establishment of other civil servants, teachers were allowed to return to their desks. Initially an estimated 40,000 teachers were expelled or compulsory retired. But acute shortages led to many of them being reinstated, some after attending courses on Islamic education. (pp. 65-66)

The Cultural Revolution resulted in expelling of thousands of faculty members and students which the Islamic regime labelled "Westoxicated" elements. By 1983 the numbers of university staff from 8,000 had been reduced to 6,000 and the number of students reduced from 17,000 to 4,500 (Afshar, 1998, p. 70). Regarding the main purpose of the Cultural Revolution, Keiko Sakurai (2004) states that "the real purpose of closing the universities was to expel the militant students, especially the left-wingers who were defying the consolidation of clerical rule by Khomeini" (p. 389).

Another aspect of cultural suppression in the education system is related to the global culture. The education system especially in schools does not reflect the cultures of different parts of the world. The students are not introduced to the rich cultural achievements from other countries. The huge silence about the world culture brings up Iranian students ignorant to the world. If in the texts there are some minimal references to the other cultures, it will be interpreted in a negative way based on Islamic beliefs and ethics. Also silenced in the education system are areas of arts such as music, dance, and song. This silence includes both the arts of different Iranian cultures and the art from global cultures.

Parvand (2001), worried about the undesired non-Iranian and non-Islamic values, patterns of thought and behaviour, especially the ones that come from abroad, suggests

that the "objective and subjective doors" should be closed to this 'roaring and ruinous flood'. He suggests that a preventive way to do this is through use of official education and non official educational tools like books, magazines, films, parks, cinemas, theatres, mass media (especially radio and television), which protect and strengthen the Islamic and Iranian identity (p. 91). The official and non-official educational aim is the closing of student minds through keeping them ignorant about the reality of the world and the life.

One of the aspects of the hidden curriculum through which the Islamic regime influences the educational environment is Islamic prayers. Although the practice of Islamic prayer is not officially mandatory in schools and universities, students, who do not participate in these prayers, reduce their chance to enter universities. The Islamic regime has created a political criterion for the students' admission in universities. Sakurai (2004) states:

> The political criterion was applied using two different methods. The first method was to give preference to devotees of the Islamic Revolution such as war veteran, martyr's families, and members of revolutionary organizations such as the literacy campaign and the construction crusade. In the 1982 *Konkur*[68], 30% of all government university places were allocated to the candidates from this category and this preferential quota was named the "revolutionary quota'. Of this 30%, 25% were reserved for candidates from revolutionary organizations and 5% were for those candidates whose eligibility had been approved by the Marty Foundation.

> The second method was to investigate the moral and political records of each candidate who had passed the written examination, and his or her family. Since the political criterion was applied in the final stage, even those candidates with the highest scores might be rejected. In order to participate in *Konkur*, candidates were required to profess Islam or one of the religions approved by the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, have a spotless moral reputation, and have had no relationship with any former regime or any other anti-Islamic movement. (pp. 392-393)

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[68] National Entrance Exam for admission into universities and colleges in Iran.

This process combined with the pressure of the Islamic forces and intelligence services in educational institutions, pushes many of the students, teachers and staff to unwillingly participate in the prayers and other religious ceremonies. So, even non-believers in Islam have to pretend that they are believers and practice the religion's rules.

Florio-Ruane (2001) claims: "Absent the insight, knowledge, and imagination of diverse educators, we cannot shape a powerful profession that serves a democratic and pluralistic nation" (p. xxvil). To create such educators one of the ways she suggests is the autobiographic method. So, one of the methods of understanding other people's life and cultures is to read, to converse and discuss autobiographies. Florio-Ruane, regarding the importance of autobiography, points out two related ideas and claims:

> (a) autobiography can be a site of teacher learning about culture, and (b) conversation plays an important role in that learning. Thus autobiography and conversation may be useful ways for teachers to construct their own learning about culture and, in so doing, participate in transformation of learning in our profession. (p. xxix)

Autobiography is a useful method to transform the learning environment. It seems that in the context of the Iranian public education system this kind of practice would be utopian. While minorities' cultures are systemically ignored, there is also no room to use the autobiography method to let the teachers learn about other cultures, especially about the minority cultures. In this education system the students only study the dominant Persian culture. Neither Persian students nor non-Persian students can study different cultures. The systemic ignorance of minorities' cultures prevents the minority students from researching and understanding their own cultural roots and practicing in their cultures. While the minority students are suppressed because they cannot learn about their own cultures, the Persian students are also suppressed because they cannot expand

their knowledge about the minority cultures. Moreover, all the students and teachers are suppressed because they cannot learn about the global culture. The lack of free discussion about different cultures prevents both the students and the teachers from enriching their insights. Consequently, the teachers cannot direct a powerful profession which helps the creation of a democratic and pluralistic nation in Iran.

4.5 Gender

The fourth kind of oppression in the educational system in Iran is related to gender. Gender inequality is one of the fundamental principles of Islam.

According to the Koran (4:34)[69], the superiority of men is created by God. "Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other" (Rafiqul-Haqq & Newton, 1996). Regarding this superiority, various reasons have been mentioned in the Koran and by commentators. The different economic reality of men and women is one of the most important factors. As the Koran (4:34) notes, "MEN SHALL take full care of women with the bounties which God has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and with what they may spend out of their possession" (Asad, 1980, p. 109). Famous Koran commentators, such as Ibn Khatir, Razi, Baidawi, Zamakhshari, and Tabari similarly interpret this verse. For instance, Razi claims that "The male's share is that of two females. Man is more perfect than the woman in creation, and intelligence, and in the religious sphere, such as the suitability to be a judge, and a leader in worship. Also, testimony of the man [in the courts of law] is twice that of the woman" (Rafiqqul-Haqq & Newton, 1996).

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[69] It means the Ayah (Verse) number 34 in Surah (Chapter) number 4 of the Koran.

Another area of gender inequality is related to the man's prerogatives in marriage to reprimand, sexually desert, and beat his wife. According to the Koran (4:34), "And as for those women whose ill-will you have reason to fear, admonish them [first]; then leave them alone in bed; then beat them" (Asad, 1980, p. 109). The Koran (4:128) has another measurement for rebellious or ill-treated husband. "If a woman fears rebelliousness or aversion in her husband, there is no fault in them if the couple set things right between them; right settlement is better" (Rafiqul-Haqq & Newton, 1996).

The next aspect of gender inequality is the subordination of wives to their husbands' beliefs. As Dr. Shireen Bayani (1973), an instructor in University of Tehran writes, according to the Mongol laws, the sultans or *Khans* (landlords) not only could possess each girl that they wished, but also if they were interested in married women, their husbands must divorce them and the sultans or Khans would take possession of these women. However, among Mongols, the women in the absence of their husbands were the chief of the family and they had complete freedom in choosing their religion so that they could have a religion that was different from their husbands' religion (p. 159). It can be said that present Khans and Sultans cannot as easily have access to every girl and women, however, the present Muslim wives in Iran have lost their right of freedom in choosing religion. Since the advent of Islam, the wives of the Muslim men had to accept their husband's religion, Islam. Compared to Mongol laws which recognized women's authority in the absence of her husband, women in present day Iran are seen as lesser merit.

An additional aspect of gender discrimination is about clothing. Women, according to Islam should cover themselves with a hejab or a veil when in public places. As the God in the Koran (24:31) orders, "Tell also the women of the Faithful to lower

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their gaze, and they should guard their chastity, and they should not display any of their charms publicly save what is decently observed, and they must draw their veils over their bosoms; and they should not display any of their charms to anyone except their husbands, or ..." (Awde, 2000, p. 46).

After the revolution, despite women's demonstration on March 8, 1979 against compulsory wearing of the hejab, the regime imposed the hejab. Veiling now is a symbol of the Islamic Republic. "[A]lthough in traditional Islamic discourse the veil is related to modesty and morality, its transformation into a central symbolism of power has imbued it with a total religiopolitical significance as well" (Keddie, 2000, p. 410).

Ayatollah Motahhari was a prominent Iranian Islamic scholar who wrote many books before the revolution. He was an Islamic reformist and his version of Islam was more flexible than that of Khomeini and other traditionalists and fundamentalists. However, regarding women's clothing, he had very conservative views. According to Haideh Moghissi (1999),

> Motahhari was not convinced that even wearing the hejab could curb women's sexual and seductive power, for he suggested that female and male students in universities should be separated in classroom by a curtain. Use of curtain[s] to separate the sexes was put into practice in post-revolutionary Iran. (p. 27)

Political gender discrimination has been officially institutionalized for the last century in Iran. The Constitutional Revolution of Iran in 1906-1911 positioned itself against the Qajar Dynasty. The aim of this revolution was to establish a model of democracy based on the Western experience. Though limited, women participated in the movement. However, the constitution of that revolution revealed gender discrimination that continued for decades. For instance, as Mehranghiz Kar (1995) notes, "The

constitution also deprived women to vote and to be the parliament members" (p. 119).[70]

The "White Revolution" of Mohammad Reza Shah removed this restriction.

Gender discrimination is affirmed by the Islamic regime where Article 115 of the

Constitution regarding the qualification of the President asserts: "The President must be

elected from among religious and political personalities..." (Iran-Constitution, 1979).

The word "personality" is not the accurate translation of *rejal,* which means men in the

original text. This Article clearly eliminates half of the Iranian people, women, from

becoming the President. This form of gender discrimination is reflected at the following

report.

> The political stalemate of the previous year [2004] continued until the
> election of a new president in June [2005]. Over 1,000 presidential
> candidates were excluded from the election by the Council of Guardians,
> which reviews laws and policies to ensure that they uphold Islamic tenets
> and the Constitution. All 89 women candidates were excluded on the basis
> of their gender under discriminatory selection procedures known as
> *gozinesh.* (Amnesty International Report, 2006)

The above and other kinds of gender inequalities are reflected in the education

system of Iran, which is a powerful instrument that theoretically and practically produces

gender inequality. The strong superiority of men in educational environments is an

obvious issue. Women must cover their body and hair in an Islamic way so that for

example, males cannot see their hair. In addition, schools are divided by gender. Afshar

(1998) asserts: "In June 1979 the schools were segregated and married girls were barred

from attending high schools. This was accompanied by lowering the age of marriage to

13. This conveniently reduced female participation in secondary schooling. The

curriculum was revised to have more of a home economics orientation for girls" (p. 66).

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[70] Kar, M. (1995). Zanan va enghelab-e mashrotteh [Women: Constitution Revolution]. *Ketab-i Towse'e*
(The Book of Development). Tehran: Nashr-e Towse'e. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by
myself, Nasser Jahani.

Though the systematic discrimination against girls is obvious, Afshar does not give any data about the scope of reduction of females' participation in secondary schooling. The statistics show that the percentages of female participation in schools are increasing (Afshar, 1998, p. 68). Some of the reasons for this increase might be the segregation of the school, and compulsory veiling so that many traditional families have been convinced that they can send their girls to the schools which are not co educational and ruled according to Islamic codes of ethics. As a matter of fact, for the first time in Iranian history, females' participation in universities in recent years has exceeded males. In Iran, the students who want to study in universities have to participate in an entrance examination that is called Konkur. Sakurai (2004) claims: "In the 1998 *Konkur*, 52% of successful candidates were female; this exceeded the percentage of successful male candidates for the first time in Iranian history. In 2002, the percentage of successful candidates reached 61.5% female, 38.5% male" (pp. 399-400).

After the revolution, the officials in some universities tried to divide the classrooms by a curtain so that males and females could not see each other even during classes. The plan failed. Presently, there is a discussion in the parliament about the separation of universities based on gender. The students of the opposite sex cannot comfortably communicate with each other. There are Islamic spies everywhere, who observe the students and also the teachers.

Gender discrimination also exists in the number and types of courses and content areas in which the university students can study. Afshar (1998) points out that "since its inception the Islamic Republic excluded women from 45 per cent of the subjects taught at the tertiary level" (p. 70). Due to lots of opposition, which came from women and other parts of society, the regime had to do some reforms in favour of reducing discrimination

against women in universities. Afshar (1998) states: "In 1994 the High Council of Planning, which had no woman member serving on it, had agreed to remove all bars on women's participation in courses in technical studies, engineering, arts, medicine and humanities" (p. 75). There is also some discrimination against men. Sakurai (2004) notes; "Only a few courses such as obstetrics accept exclusively women" (p. 398).

The culture of male superiority is infused, taught and practiced in all levels of the public education environment. An aspect of this culture is revealed by examining the language which is used in educational environments and texts. Using gendered language is the characteristic of the Islamic scholars. Moayyeri (2005) suggests that the school should be similar to a sincere family environment lucky that teacher who faces the students with fatherly feelings and sentiments and luckier that child who educates under such a teacher and clean environment (pp. 140-141). By using the "fatherly feelings and sentiments", Moayyeri applies a gendered language and ignores that a high percentage of the school teachers and staff are women, and culturally their motherly and womanly feelings and sentiments are deeper, more delicate and humanistic than that of many fathers. The language of the Islamic educational experts is patriarchal.

The gender gap is further evidenced in the rate of illiteracy, which reveals the practical result of discrimination against women in Iran. Whereas the adult literacy rate, 2000-2004, for male is 84%, it is 70% for females (Unique, 2006).

In short, after the 1979 Revolution, aside from minimal progress in women's education, like increasing the numbers of women in educational institutions, in many other areas the Islamic educational system in Iran, in various forms, suppresses women. The obedience of females to males is one of the core principles of the educational goals that are taught through language, school texts and practices.

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4.6   Sexuality

The fifth area of suppression is related to sexuality. The oppression of sexual attitudes, including for instance, heterosexual and homosexual attitudes in the societal and educational environments is a reality. Controlling the men's and especially women's bodies by covering them in the veils, preventing men and women from having love and sexual relations before marriage, legalizing and establishing severe punishments such as stoning for having non-Islamic sexual relations, and forbidding homosexuality and punishing homosexuals are all part of this oppression.

In analyzing the matter of sexuality in the United State's public education, Megan Boler (1999) points out, "Sexuality, from abortion to sexual preference, is pervasively viewed as a "private" matter. Race, gender and social class, on the other hand, have come to be viewed as viable topics for public educational discussion" (p. 184). Discussing sexuality in public education should be viewed as a viable topic because it is an important part of a human being's life. Considering this as a "private" matter prevents the students from exploring their experiences and sharing and using others' knowledge about sexuality. However, comparing the United States with Iran, sexuality has at least been recognized as a private matter in Western public education, but in the education system of Iran, it has not been considered even as a private issue. The education system in Iran is very restricted with regards to sexuality in general; there is a great silence about it as if there is not such an issue in the world. However, the soul of the education system in Iran is the recognition of this subject as a negative matter. In reality, the system directly (through teachers) and indirectly (through myths and stories in the texts) teaches the student that, for instance the homosexual (gay) relationship is a huge sin and it results in social and legal punishment in this world and God's punishment in the next. "A man

from Shiraz sentenced to 100 lashes in 2004 for homosexual activities alleged that he had been tortured and threatened with death by security forces. At least three amputations were carried out. It remained common for courts to hand down sentences of flogging" (Amnesty International Report, 2006). Since the Revolution of 1979, many homosexuals have been punished in this way.

When it comes to the subject of lesbians, the silence is even greater. It is interesting to note that in the famous and the most available dictionary before and after the Revolution, *The Amid Persian Dictionary*, one cannot find many words which are related to sex and sexuality like ass, vagina, penis, homosexual, gay, lesbian and etc,. This example reveals how far the subject of sexuality, is from becoming a public issue in education.

The core of sexual relations in Islam is sexist and based on discrimination against women. Satisfying man's sexual desires is one of the aspects of sexual inequality in Islam. According to Rafiqul-Haqq and Newton (1996), quoting from Bukhari, Prophet Muhammad said: "Whenever a man calls his wife to his bed and she refuses, and then he passes the night in an angry mood, the angels curse her till she gets up at dawn". This statement, on the one hand, reveals the required obedience of a wife to her husband, and on the other hand, the importance of satisfying the male's sexual desires. In Islam, there is not such emphasis in satisfaction of woman's sexual desires. In Islam, women are looked on as sexual objects to satisfy men's desires. The tradition of polygamy in the form of having wives and concubines reveals cultural support for this inequality. Historically this tradition was exercised among the Arabs before the appearance of Islam. Professor Geoffrey Parrinder (1980) states that,

Muhammad is usually said to have had fourteen wives, or nine wives in the strict sense and five concubines. His polygamy was undoubted, by friends or foe, but it was the custom of the time and country. It was and is common for great men in many eastern lands to have several wives, and political alliances have been strengthened by marriage. (p. 151)

Many new Islamic scholars claim that some of the Prophet Muhammad's marriages were based on political observations. Even if it is true, still the women were used as political and sexual objects. Those marriages were not based on the mutual love between two partners. Polygamy, which is still being practiced in Islamic Iran, is one of the forms of sexual oppression used against women. In Iran, legally, men can have up to four wives simultaneously whereas women are not allowed to have more than one husband.

The hierarchical discrimination, which is one of the characteristics of patriarchy, is revealed in Islam. One aspect of this inequality is related to the number of the wives, which men can marry. While Prophet Muhammad can have many wives, other men may have up to four. So, inequality has been reflected in the Koran and institutionalized by the Islamic authorities practice since the beginning of Islam. The education system of Iran infuses these Islamic views of sexuality, which are extremely suppressive.

Although rarely some Islamic scholars have superficially addressed the matter of sex education, but there continues to be no sex education as a part of the educational curricula in Iran. Ghulam Husayn Shukuhi (1991) points out that it is necessary for the parents as well as the teachers and educators of middle school to be taught in sexual matters. He indicates the importance of getting information about these matters to children, by the father or another trusted person, before the girls have their first menstruation, and the boys have their erection and nocturnal pollution. However, he suggests that these matters should be discussed in a cautious, correct style, and probably

an indirect way. Moreover, these teenagers should sleep on a hard bed. Finally, he directs

that light physical activities and continuous work and struggle are the best antitoxins for

those who are under the danger of sexual temptations (p. 184).[71] One of the problems

with Sukuhi's recommendations is that the scope of sexual education is extremely

limited, for instance, he does not talk about sexual relationships; instead, he just mentions

two biological changes that occur during adolescence. In addition, he focuses on

teenagers and ignores all other people. He does not even recommend that this education

should be taught in schools, but by a parent figure (father) and confidant, and using an

indirect style. Moreover, from his passage it may be concluded that he considers sexual

activities, such as 'nocturnal pollution' or masturbation as dangerous and unethical

activities. That is why he recommends a hard bed and physical activities to prevent

teenagers from the danger of sexual temptations. The goal of his education is to suppress

the students' sexual desires.

4.7   Class

The sixth kind of suppression in the education system in Iran is class related.

Comparing Islamic economy to capitalism, Mohsenpour (1988), an Iranian Islamic

scholar asserts: "According to Islamic teachings, a Muslim should strive in order to

increase his wealth, but the increase of wealth should not lead to the separation of man

from god" (p. 83). Indeed, Islam is very compatible with capitalism, so that it is possible

to exploit others and become a billionaire without "being separated from the god". The

existence of social classes such as capitalists, workers, and middle class, and the

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[71]Shukuhi, G. H. (1991). *Taalim va tarbiat va marahel-e an* [Education and its phases] (10th ed.). Mashhad: The
Astan-i Quds Press. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

exploitation of the majority of people by a minority in a limitless scale are the characteristics and practice of capitalism as well as the theocratic capitalist regime of Iran. According to Abrahamian (1993), after 1982, Khomeini "equated Islam with respect for private property, described the bazaar as an essential pillar of society, and emphasized the importance of government as well as law and order" (p. 133).

Iran is a deeply class divided country. A small minority basically controls and shapes the economy of the country, whereas the majority of people, especially the workers and the peasants have a very difficult life. The middle class though has access to some economic and social resources but it does not have the power to ensure economic stability. The widening gap between rich and poor has caused numerous revolts, demonstrations, and strikes by different sectors of society. The increased cost of living and reduction in the real purchase power has caused many riots in Iran. The riots of workers in some large cities in 1992 were ruthlessly repressed by the government; also, in 1994 and 1995, the violent riots continued in Tabriz, Qazvin and Zahedan (Daniel, 2001, p. 232).

The existence of a huge class gap in the country influences the educational environment in different ways. The existing realities of the political, social, and economic context within Iran impact the educational experience of families, students, and teachers. These social realities suppress the intellectual abilities of the poorer students. The poor do not have the proper educational tools. Many low-income students, due to financial hardships, have to drop out from schools and universities.

It is true that the teachers' methods of teachings can also affect the quality of the students' learning, nevertheless the political, social, and economic situations of students

and their families can greatly complicate the affect and the students' educational quality and outcome.

The Iranian regime does not support the free public education at an appropriate level. Private schools and universities have been flourishing throughout the entire country. Privatization of the schools and universities further suppresses education in two ways; on the one hand, it deprives poor people from access to the educational institutions, and on the other hand, benefits the capitalist class and the Islamic rulers. In addition, through privatization, the theocratic regime strictly controls the curriculum and permeates the Islamic values into the educational environment.

Among the private institutions of higher education, the Islamic Azad University is the most important one. Established in 1982 it now has at least 289 branches in different cities. The co-founders of Islamic Azad University were among the Islamic rulers of Iran: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (now the Supreme Leader of Iran), Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (now the Chairman of the Expediency Council)[72], Dr. Abdollah Jasbi (the chief president of Islamic Azad University), Ahmad Khomeini (son of Khomeini), Ayatollah Mousavi Ardebili (was the head of the Judicial system of Iran) and Mir Hossein Mousavi (the former Prime Minister).

According to official Iranian statistics during the study year of 2004-2005, 45% of the students were studying in state universities, 55% were in the private institutions (Ministry of Science, Research & Technology, 2005). Likewise, the private schools under the title of *madares-e gheyr-e entefaei* (non-Profitable Schools) are growing. The tuition fees for both the private universities and schools are very high and low income families

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[72] The Expediency Council resolves legislative problems between the Parliament and the Council of Guardians in Iran.

cannot afford to pay. Mir Mohammad Seyyed Abbaszadeh[73] (1995) in his research about public and private schools in Iran concludes that the private schools are more effective because they have a better management, offer more subjects and courses and have more educational tools which result in better educational environments. Consequently, this inequality is in favour of the children of the rich in their admission to the universities (pp. 205-206). However, these private schools further ingrain the class gap and damage social justice through unequal educational opportunities.

Moreover, the current government policy results in the unjust distribution of the educational tools and facilities among ethnic groups, different rural and urban areas, as well as the rich and poor areas of the cities. Access to education for the children of workers, peasants, middle classes, and bourgeois are different. So, under the current social and political system in Iran, there is no hope to overcome the educational problems which are related to the social class.

4.8 Content and Methods of Teaching

The seventh form of oppression in the education system in Iran occurs within the development and teaching of the curricula. While the curricula has been established in an authoritarian way and defends and reproduces the ideology of the dominant group in Iran, the ways of teaching and organizing the classes and the relationship between teachers and students are also anti-democratic and highly suppressive. In Iran, in most cases, lectures and textbooks are the main tools of educating. This kind of curriculum reinforces

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[73] Seyyed Abbaszadeh, M. M. (1995). Moghayeseh-ye asar bakhshy-ye madares-e dowlati ba madares-e ghaer-e entefaei [Comparison of the effectiveness of public schools with non-profitable schools]. *Magazine of Faculty of Literary and Humanity Sciences of the Ferdowsi University of Mashad, 28* (1 & 2), 205-230. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

stereotype. McDiarmid believes that in the undergraduate level, the curriculum does not encourage educative discussion. He claims,

> Lecturing appears to dominate instruction at the university level as it does at the secondary level, students rarely are forced to state, much less to examine, defend or justify their beliefs or ideas... Their [own] deeply rooted beliefs and conceptions...remain untouched by the words of text or teacher. (Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 58)

In Iran, the teachers and the texts are believed to contain the embodiment of the whole knowledge and truth needed by the students. It is assumed that the source of knowledge is the teacher, and this requires a specific relation between the teacher and the students. Paulo Freire (1970), states: "This relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and a patient, listening object (the students)" (p. 57). This author continues, the "teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable" (p. 57). Parvand (2001) asserts that in Iran, the educational plans and teachings are concentrated on the "delivery of knowledge" rather than the integration and understanding of knowledge, from kindergarten to university (p. 136).

Though "delivery of knowledge" as a method of instruction is not always appropriate, the forms of knowledge which are delivered in the Iranian education system also can be criticized. Indeed, from the kindergarten to university the students must learn only Islamic teachings which affect the students to become dogmatic and narrow minded in confronting real life. Safavi (2004) provides many tables of data which show the curriculum of the education system in Iran from grade one to pre-university. In Grade One religious teaching is taught as part of the Persian language, and in Grade Two Religious Teaching is taught as a course. Since Grade Three, the Koran is introduced as a course. Moreover, during pre-university, students have to take courses like Islamic

Knowledge, Ethics, the Principles of Beliefs, Arabic Literature, and the Principles of Jurisprudence (pp. 340-356).

In Iran, after the Revolution, due to increased levels of religious teaching in curricula, the authority of the teachers has been strengthened even more. Students have to accept and memorize religious teachings without questioning those ideas; to do so would have social and political consequences for them. Freire (1970) criticises what he calls the "banking" concept of education in which the teacher is a depositor and students are the depositories; this is a concept "in which the scope of action allowed to student extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store" (p. 58). This happens at all levels in the education system of Iran. Memorization of the verses of Koran in Arabic language by the Iranian students who do not understand the meaning or the historical and social contexts on which these verses have been constructed is one of the explicit examples of using their brain for storage. Freire (1970) believes that oppression which is one of overwhelming control, is necrophilic, "love of death", likewise, the banking concept of education is necrophilic and it "attempts to control thinking and action, leads men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power" (p. 64). The concept of "necrophilic" is specifically applicable to the Iranian education system. This system has been planned to kill the creative abilities of both the students and the teachers.

Moreover, the highly hierarchical structure in educational system negatively affects the students. Teachers have real power in the classrooms. Humiliation, swearing, and unjust punishment, even physical punishment of the students are an ordinary routine. Verbal, physical, and even sexual abuses of the students are not rare phenomena, though compared to past decades the rates of these kinds of abuses have slowly decreased.

Bahrampouri and Sabzyan (2004) point out that in Iranian education system the teachers cannot have friendly and respectful relationships with the students and most of the teachers have to have an authoritative attitude to the students in order to restrain the students from misbehaviour (p. 24).[74] The relationship between the teacher and the students, rather than being one of friendship, is one of fear.

The recent Islamic intellectuals relying on the new advancements in the science of psychology reject corporal punishments and humiliations of the students. Nevertheless, these kinds of punishments still occur. According to United Nations (1993):

> The newspaper Jahan-e-Islam of 27 May 1993 reported that the principal of Doroshti elementary school in Karaj questioned an ill-disciplined student for unjustified absence and pulled off his fingernails as a physical punishment. Mr. Alizadeh, the student's father, stated: "After the nails of my child were pulled off, several members of the neighbourhood's Islamic Council, of the Evaluation Unit of Educational District 2 of Karaj and of the school's faculty came to my house and asked me not to complain to the authorities."... On 27 October 1993, the Government informed that: "In connection with this allegation, those responsible at the Ministry of Education investigated the case, fired the delinquent party from his post and referred the complaint by the parents of the student and all related documents to the courts for adjudication of the case.

Recently, Farah Rostami, an Iranian teacher who has 30 years of service in schools, claims that when his son was in grade four the assistant of the school, in front of the whole student body, grabbed his sons ears and lifted him up so that the ears became swollen and red and his son had come home crying; when his son was in grade seven another assistant ordered him and some other students who had forgotten to cut their hair, to put their hands under water and then repeatedly beat the palms and backs of their

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[74]Bahrampouri, A. & Sabzyan, H. (2004). *Naghdi bar na karamadi-ye amoozesh va parvaresh* [A critique of inefficiency of education] (2nd ed.). Tehran: Be'asat. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

hands with a ruler which had a metal edge to the degree that splits were observable in his

son's hands and he could not even hold a spoon (Rostami, 1998, p. 21).[75]

The next problem regarding teaching in Iran is the limitation of the texts and

resources which students may use. Moayyeri (2005), points out that relying only on the

texts content result in limiting the intellectual growth of teenagers (p. 147). The

restriction of the textbooks in Iran is not confined to teenaged students; indeed, it

includes all ages from the kindergarten stage to the university.

The further problem regarding the style of teaching is linked to stagnation of the

methods, tools, and content. Khalili Shavarini (2002) asserts that in Iran if a teacher slept

for fifty years, after waking up this teacher could go to the class and properly perform the

educational duty (p. 94). This is due to the relatively fixed methods of instruction,

educational tools as well as the content of the texts. Hosein Khanifar (2005) states some

problems with regard the educational management in Iran such as using the traditional

and non systemic styles (p. 69)[76], moreover, in Japan there are 367 educational tools

such as videos, maps, musical instruments in primary schools as well as 312 tools for the

first part of secondary schools (p. 162). In Iran, the usage of educational tools is

extremely limited. This limitation restricts the scope of exploration and creates a barrier

to the intellectual and physical potential of the students. It suppresses their potentials,

capacities and creativities.

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[75] Rostami, F. (1999). Interview with Farah Rostami. *Rahe Kargar*, 158, 19-22. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

[76] Khanifar, H. (2005). *daramadi bar estandard sazi dar amoozesh va parvaresh* [An introduction to standardization in education]. Tehran: Chapkhaneh Daneshghah Tarbiyat Moa'llem. All subsequent citations from this text are translated by myself, Nasser Jahani.

Khalili Shavarini (2002) correctly concludes that in Iran still the educational planning has not been able to provide solutions to the present problems and the future needs of the society. Content of most of the educational texts is not relevant to the real lives of the students in the global world. The education system has trained enough experts for the needs of Iranian society. However, the numbers of unemployed are increasing; the education system acts in seclusion from society, and the graduates cannot be absorbed by the market (p. 30).

Another aspect that makes the instructional methods of teaching oppressive is considering it from the angle of ethnicity. Like the education system, the instructional methods are centralized and homogenous for the entire county. While the country consists of different ethnic groups and languages, all of them are taught using the same instructional methods. Indeed, it would be more beneficial for them to use different style of teaching and learn according to their own cultural characteristics. For instance, in Azerbaijan, when Persian is taught in primary schools, it would be better if the Turkish teachers were able to explain some parts of the lessons in Turkish.

In short, this chapter has examined the public education system in Iran. The chapter looked at suppression and oppression of education system in the areas of philosophy of education, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, class, and content and methods of teaching. In this chapter I have argued that the Iranian education system is anti-democratic and oppressive, which aids in the maintenance of the existing Iranian capitalist system and its ideological representative of Islamic theocracy and Persian chauvinism. The task of the next chapter is to discuss the characteristics of an alternative democratic education system for Iran.

CHAPTER 5:
DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE
EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR IRAN:
REVOLUTIONARY CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

5.1   Critics from Within

Before discussing an alternative education system for Iran, it is useful to look concisely at some of the problems of the present education system in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Abolhasan Bahrampouri and Hasan Sabzyan (2004), Iranian Islamic scholars, strongly defend the Islamic view of an education system, yet they have some critique of the education system in the Islamic Republic of Iran. One of their critiques is related to the negative influence of the education system over the Iranian society. They emphasize that the continuation of the present system of education in Iran causes the country to fall behind in different aspects (p. 13). They maintain that with the existent system of education, from 1941 to 2002, it is not unexpected to have the present problems such as inflation, unemployment, administrative corruption and slipshodness, and so on in the country (p. 17).

Another critique by Bahrampouri and Sabzyan (2004) concern the methods of teaching and the students' view of the educational environment. The tests used in schools, for example, are mostly based on memorization, which after a while are forgotten and have no special application (p. 22). The school environment is also not conducive to education because students consider the principal as the head of the court, the assistant as lawyer, the teacher as executioner, the janitor as the prison keepers, the

students as the innocent accused, and the school as prison which functions based on coercion (p. 25).

Mismanagement of the education system is another problem. Some of the educational responsibilities are given to people based on political party affiliation and political observations not according to merit and abilities (Bahrampouri & Sabzyan, 2004, p. 54). This mismanagement also occurs throughout the whole political system of the country. Whereas the political representatives of the country are not chosen based on their merits but according to the inclination of the Islamic rulers in positions of power, especially, *Valiy-e Faqih*[77] (the guardians of the religious jurist) who is now Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Kamenei. Indeed, the Islamic rulers do not seem to solve many of the fundamental problems which the country is facing like the educational deficiencies. Regarding some of these shortcomings Bahrampouri and Sabzyan (2004) claim that while in the advanced countries there are more than 2,000 researchers for each one million population, in Iran in the year 2003 there were 320 researchers for each one million population (pp. 62-63). In addition, while the country has 220,000 classrooms, it needs another 300,000 classrooms in order to have a desirable educational space (p. 77).

All of these deficiencies have brought Bahrampouri and Sabzyan (2004) to the conclusion that the schools are unable to attract students to science and religion and those young students, instead, are absorbed in mischief and corruption (p. 13). These statements accurately reveal the failure of the Iranian education system. In reality, despite the extensive control of the schools, the Islamic rulers have not been successful in creating the ideal Islamic individual.

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[77] See Glossary.

As Islamic scholars Bahrampouri and Sabzyan (2004) strive to find some answers to the shortcomings of the education system in Iran, they provide the following rationale and solutions. "Since Islam is the most perfect religion, its pedagogical system should be the most progressive system" (p. 99); and to overcome the educational problems "the best and the most beautiful rays of hope in the present education system are the existence of a breeze of the religious culture in Islamic society" (p. 163).

Although these authors correctly but superficially identify some of the problems of the education system in Iran, their recommendations and alternatives rely more on the religious Islamic culture, which indeed is one of the fundamental roots of the existing problems in the education system and by extension society. Their solutions remain superficial and ineffective.

Moayyeri (2005), another Iranian Islamic scholar, understands the scope of the problems in the Iranian educational system, and cries for God's help to solve the educational problems (p. 294). Indeed, the problems of the Iranian education system are so big that for the Islamic scholars there seem to be no other way but to rely on the help of God to solve them. These scholars have forgotten that the Iranian education system like its political system "is guided" by the "Islamic representatives" who interpret and apply this interpreted will of God. The problems basically come from the same source. Only an earthly force may present an alternative to this highly problematic education system.

5.2   Alternative

The next issue to be examined is an alternative of the present Iranian education system that now exists. This alternative, I will argue, can lead to the transformation of an oppressive system to a democratic and liberating form of education. This alternative

democratic education is based on critical theory and may be called by a number of names, such as: revolutionary critical pedagogy, revolutionary critical education, revolutionary education, liberating education, or socialist education. A brief review of some perspectives in scope of critical education is offered in the following.

Critical theory originated in the early 1920s with the works of the Frankfurt School for Critical Theory. Among the most important members of this group were Max Horkheimer[78], Theodor Adorno[79], and Herbert Marcuse[80]. Critical theory was conceived as a discipline that led people to seek the "intellectual and material conditions for emancipation" (Phillips, 1994, p. 3871). Nicholas C. Burbules (1994) claims that the theory of historical materialism "has influenced most social theorists to see the effects of 'material conditions' (the process of production and consumption in society) as crucial to social explanation" (p. 3621). This influence has been felt by theorists of critical education. The different strands of critical analysis of education try to find causes of educational inequalities and the ways to overcome these inequalities. Terry Wotherspoon (1998) writes: "Critical pedagogy aims to overcome the gap between understanding educational reproduction and taking action to provide social and educational transformation" (p. 37).

The effect of Marx's approach in social science is undeniable. According to Michael W. Apple (1990), a prominent critical educationalist, Marx stated that "the

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[78] Max Horkheimer (February 14, 1895 – July 7, 1973) was a Jewish-German philosopher and sociologist, a founder and guiding thinker of the Frankfurt School/critical theory.

[79] Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund Adorno (September 11, 1903 – August 6, 1969) was a German sociologist, philosopher, pianist, musicologist, and composer. He was a member of the Frankfurt School along with Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas, and others.

[80] Herbert Marcuse (July 19, 1898 – July 29, 1979) was a prominent German and later American philosopher and sociologist of Jewish descent, and a member of the Frankfurt School.

ultimate task of philosophy and theory was not merely to 'comprehend reality' but to change it" (p. 103). There are some perspectives, which emphasize radical changes to education. June Beynon and Parin Dossa (2003) state: "A range of anti-racist/feminist (Minh-ha 1991), identity (Hall, 1996), and sociocultural theories of discourses and dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981) help us to discern how pedagogies might contribute to human emancipation (Freire, 1968)" (p. 250).

Rishma Dunlop (1999) develops a critical pedagogy, to deconstruct dichotomizing attitudes of thinking about differences, then to find a 'third space' for thinking: "My goal is to suggest how third-space positioning and pedagogical aims can destabilize entrenched ethnocentrism, leading to cross-cultural understanding in classroom communities" (p. 57). The role of dialogue between the teacher and students as well as among students is crucial in finding this third space.

Another kind of educational perspective is called "progressive pedagogy" which according to Daiva Stasiulus includes critical and feminist pedagogy (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2000, p. 37). Expanding the definition of this kind of education, Henry Giroux, a critical education thinker, writes: "In addition to 'democratizing' and increasing the 'inclusiveness' of the curriculum, progressive pedagogy aspires to several other objectives. These [objectives] include struggling against oppression and 'empowering' students, especially those who have traditionally been excluded or marginalized within schooling" (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2000, p. 37). Some feminist educators, while struggling to bring gender equality to educational environments, at the same time focus on other barriers to emancipation like social class and race as factors that influence discrimination against some students.

Paulo Freire (1970) who is an outstanding figure among educational critical thinkers, rejects the banking kind of education, adopts the problem-posing method. "Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness; the later strives for the emergence and critical intervention in reality" (p. 68). bell hooks (1989), a feminist activist, in response to Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, asserts that education is not a neutral process, and as Richard Shaull claims, education either "facilitates the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes "the practice of freedom," the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of the world" (p. 64). In Freire's view, change is possible because individuals understand their own situation. This understanding helps them to change the world. Joyce Barakett and Ailie Cleghorn (2000) state: "Freire believes that individuals have the power to come to an understanding of their own situation in the world. He refers to this as critical consciousness..." (p. 72). Consciousness means a constant struggle between critically thinking of people and the hegemonic power of ideology. "This struggle within our consciousness is revealed through dialogue.... By critiquing our thoughts through dialogue, we begin to carve out a path towards becoming critically conscious actors engaged in the construction of a more human world" (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2000, p. 73).

A critical approach assumes teaching is a political act. Apple (1990) also argues "strongly that education was not a neutral enterprise, that by the very nature of the institution [which is political], the educator was involved, whether he or she was conscious of it or not, in a political act" (p. 1). That is why educators, while engaged in

dialogue in classroom, should claim their own positions. This point is controversial because this position clashes with the position of educators as facilitators. In this regard Paulo Freire and Donaldo P. Macedo (1995) point out, "the risk of perceiving facilitators as non-directive...[is] deceitful discourse; that is, a discourse from the perspective of the dominant class. Only in this deceitful discourse can educators talk about a lack of direction in teaching" (p. 387). The critical educator is not a simple facilitator; he or she is a conscious person who understands the existing social problems, the historical conditions which have led to the creation of problems, and the ways to overcome them. Using a dialogical method, the educator exposes his or her beliefs. The educator deepens his or her understanding of the world. Reciprocally the students are given the opportunity to reveal and argue their ideas, and in turn both the students and the educators are involved in the production of knowledge.

The goal of critical education is to prepare the students to engage in social problems and social solutions, which favour freedom and justice. The obligation for educators is to participate actively in the process of producing this social knowledge for the purpose of social changes. Giroux (2005) emphasizes that the obligation of the educator is not limited to expanding the margins of knowledge and abilities of the students. It also means using knowledge in more than a narrowly instrumental way— such as preparing for a job—it also means critically embracing knowledge as a means of self-development tide to modes of learning and intellectual work that address matters of human freedom, equality, and social justice. Learning in this instance, is linked not just to understanding, but also to social change, to those modes of moral witnessing necessary to transform the underlying systemic condition that produces human suffering. (pp. 189-190)

The extension of teachers' obligation in this way is a political act because to create a democratic and liberating style of education requires political struggle. Apple (1990) claims the educators' awareness of political influence is essential. Antonio Gramsci also called for an *organic* intellectual who actively participates in the struggle against hegemony (p. 166). Understanding the situation of oppression is necessary to transform the conditions in which the oppression takes place; however, it is not enough. Freire (1994) says

> A more critical understanding of the situation of oppression does not yet liberate the oppressed. But the revelation is a step in the right direction. Now the person who has this new understanding can engage in a political struggle for the transformation of the concrete conditions in which the oppression prevails. (pp. 30-31)

Shahrzad Mojab (2001) introduces a new generation of Marxist activists in the area of education. They include Paula Allman, Diana Cohen, Peter Mayo, Peter McLaren, Peter Leonard, Mike Cole, Dave Hill, and Glen Rikowski. This new generation of Marxist theorists attempts to use the theories and methods of Marx in solving the educational problems of the present time. Mojab (2001) claims that the new generation of Marxist theorists have a formidable task in establishing a revolutionary critique of the present social theory and "they have to meet the standards of scholarship established by Marx: dialectical thinking, passion for justice, rigor, depth, universalism, and optimism". Richard Brosio (2003) states: "Marxist analysis of schooling-education is based upon seeing it as part of the larger socio-economic, political, and cultural whole. Furthermore, these forms of inquiry are historically and concretely grounded" (High-Stakes Tests section, para. 1). Marx never claimed that the economy is monocausal, furthermore, he argued that the economy is also social, political, and cultural, i.e., not just a separate

sphere where work and money exchange are carried out. The following offers some views of other significant Marxist theorists in the sphere of education.

Paula Allman is a Marxist critical educationalist. According to Marc Pruyn and Luis Huerta-Charles (2005), the notion by which Allman distinguishes her critical education is "revolutionary critical education" (p. xxxi). This notion is based on the works of Karl Marx, Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci. According to Allman (2001), the revolutionary critical education "is capable of preparing people to take part in the creation of what I call authentic socialism: a society engaged in revolutionary social transformation and the development of the type of communist social formation advocated by Karl Marx" (p. 162).

In her work, Allman carefully presents various dialectical contradictions inherent to capitalism such as "that between productive labor and capital and that between production and exchange" (p. 123). According to Marx, Allman, and other Marxian thinkers, to overcome the capitalist contradiction the "favourable solution is to overcome capitalism and replace the system with a moral economy that is genuinely decided upon and run by the great majority of the people who are members of the various collar colors that constitute the working class" (Brosio, 2003, Reasons to Strive for Better Marx section, para. 11). Allman is advocating socialism and her version of critical education serves this goal.

Allman used the notion of "critical /revolutionary praxis". This notion is based on Marx's theory of consciousness that is a theory of the unity of thought and action. More precisely, Allman (2001) explains

> Praxis—is a theory of the dialectical unity—the internal relation—
> between thought and action. In other words, we do not stop thinking when

we act, and thinking itself is a form of action; therefore, even when we engage in the type of sequence referred to before, thought and action should not be dichotomized or thought of as being separate and distinct— to reiterate, they are internally related. (p. 167)

This revolutionary praxis leads to new social relations among people, and with collective effort through institutions such as education, it may bring about a new society in which people live without exploiting each other. Peter McLaren in Allman (2001) asserts that for Allman

> ... schools must become theaters for social action, political precincts in which a broad struggle for bringing about a new society can be waged, a society free from exploitation, free from want and from its historical role of training students to be servants of abstract labor. (p. xxiii)

Glen Rikowski (2002), another Marxist critical educator, observing different forms of oppression through the lens of social class states that "Marxist theory affords potentialities for articulating a multitude of forms of oppression in relation to people of color, woman, gays and lesbians, and other social groups de-valued by capitalist society" (p. 16).

One of the areas that Rikowski criticizes is the post-modern perspective in education. He says that the postmodernist critique of capitalism does not question deeply enough to initiate change. He believes the works of Elizabeth Atkinson, a post-modern educator, is abstract and does not radically question the capitalist system. According to Rikowski (2002), post-modern thinking "yields no dangerous consequences for informing actions and struggles that threaten to practically disrupt the constitution of capitalist society, as this is left unexplored; capitalism remains an enigma safe from any amount of post-modern question-posing and deconstruction" (p. 25).

Dave Hill argues for a democratic Marxist manifesto for schooling. He criticizes the strategy of the capitalist class and its business plan for education. This plan includes

privatization of school systems through different ranges of "parental choice". The purpose of moving toward markets in education is related to the project of transnational multinational capital. His second critique is that the governments employ policies in education that focus in making the world safe for global capitalism (Hill, 2005, p. 151).

While in the schools the perspective of market capitalism is introduced, other alternatives and choices like socialism are ignored. According to Hill (2002), "Schools, and further and higher education, can and should be arenas for the encouragement of critical thought, where young people engage with a number of ways of interpreting the world, not just the dominant form" (p. 185). Schools and other educational places do not provide the opportunities for the learners to think critically and not unidimensionally.

Mike Cole (2005) points out that the world under capitalism and globalization is becoming polarized into central and peripheral economies, and the gap between rich and poor continues to widen. He notes that "the 300 largest corporations in the world account for 70% of foreign direct investment and 25% of world capital assets....At the same time, the combine assets of the 225 richest people is roughly equal to the annual incomes of the poorest 47% of the world's population" (p. 115). Capitalism and globalization which have created this unjust and racialized world are not inevitable. The struggle against racism should be widened as part of the struggle for socialism. According to Cole (2005), "Socialism can and should be conceived of as a project where subjective identities, such as gender, 'race', ability, non-exploitative sexual preferences and age all have high importance in the struggle for genuine equality" (p. 115). While Cole agrees that socialism, when separated from the trend of democracy, lost its way, he suggests that "a truly *democratic* alternative to capitalism" is democratic socialism (2006, Notes section, para. 31).

In order to identify and combat against racism Cole identifies institutional racism and relates it to historical, political, and economic factors as the reason for its existence. Understanding these relations is important. Cole (2006) defines institutional racism as:

> Collective acts and/or procedures in an institution or institutions (nation-wide, continent-wide or globally) that intentionally or unintentionally have the effect of racialising, via 'common sense', certain populations or groups of people. This racialisation process cannot be understood without reference to economic and political factors related to developments and changes in local, national and global capitalism. (Institutional Racism section, para. 10)

When it comes to the area of education, though Cole (2005) recognizes the power limitations of the teachers in schools, he also realizes their important roles in the struggle against inequalities and "raising consciousness in the quest for a more egalitarian economic, social and educational system" (p. 113).

Another distinguished Marxist educationalist is Peter Mclaren. David Gabbard and Karen Anijar Appleton (2005) state that "Peter Mclaren is arguably the most important educational theorist (critical or otherwise) alive". These authors also point out that McLaren fearlessly has questioned the greatest threats to democracy in our era, which are market fundamentalism, rising militarism accompanying imperialism, and rising authoritarianism. McLaren has "most fully articulated a Marxist critique of the antidemocratic forces plaguing education and democracy, including and especially market fundamentalism" (Gabbard & Anijar Appleton, 2005). Marxist analysis observes the education system in relation with the larger society, Peter Mclaren and Ramin Farahmadpur (2005) provide a Marxist critique of the education system: "Capitalist schooling participates in the production, distribution, and circulation of knowledge and social skills necessary for reproducing the social division of labor and hence capitalist relations of exploitation" (pp. 50-51).

McLarens's critical education is called revolutionary critical pedagogy which focuses on class. This kind of education further integrates the subjects of race, gender, and all other elements that affect social injustice of society in general and educational environment in particular. Nevertheless, the followers of revolutionary critical pedagogy draw a clear border with other schools of thought, like postmodernism, in these issues. Mclaren and Farahmandpur (2005) assert:

> While both Marxism and postmodernism address the 'interlocking triumvirate' of race, class, and gender, Marxist theory attempts to reveal how all of these forms of oppression are linked to private ownership of the means of production and the extension of surplus labor. In other words, they are not coprimary. (p. 23)

According to the revolutionary critical pedagogy, class is the primary source of oppression in a capitalist society.

Revolutionary critical pedagogy presents the alternative by creating a democratic multicultural curriculum in order to bring social justice into educational environments. It is a pedagogy that is meant to bring about social change. "Outfitted with the fundamental principles of Marxism, class struggle, and historical materialism, the objective of Mclaren's revolutionary critical pedagogy is to prepare the critical educators as the revolutionary agent of class struggle in the battle against capital" (Farahmandpur, 2005, p. 135). Moreover, Mclaren and Farahmandpur (2005) point out that "our task as organic and committed intellectuals is to create the conditions for the development of a revolutionary consciousness among the working class in general and teachers and students in particular" (p. 184). Indeed, humans are agents of social change, and within the limitation of their historical and social conditions, they are always making their new history. The fundamental changes which bring equality into a specific society are only possible when all democratic, radical, and revolutionary forces in that society are united.

The power of this unification can then turn its collective eye to the population supporting the creation of new society.

In short, critical education is a broader concept which embraces different kinds of educational theories and interpretations. In general, these theories have a common goal which is struggling to end all kinds of oppression and suppression in society and in the educational environment. Most of these theories emphasize class, gender, and race as the fundamental forms of oppression. However, they also combat other forms of oppression in terms of ethnicity, sexuality, disability, age and size. It seems that evolution of humanistic thought toward being and acting more humane and removing all inhumane barriers that oppresses humans' bodies, feelings, emotions, and intelligences is a never ending process. Perhaps in the future some other forms of oppression will be recognized which has not existed or been noticed before. For instance, it is possible to claim that the reaction to physical appearance, such as beauty or unattractiveness of some people, can be a site of oppression.

The various Marxist' perspectives among critical education thoughts are fundamentally in agreement with each other. They may offer different practices and paths and forms of organizations to end the exploitation of humans by humans, and aim to create a justice society. Sometimes these theorists use different terms to express the same ideas. More collaboration of the educational activists and theorists can help the development of a more coherent language among them. This also brings more unity and helps to improve the struggle for educational goals. While this paper fully recognizes the significance of the theoretical and practical values of these Marxists, and the fundamental agreements and similarities among the Marxist educational theorists and activists, it may suggest that the revolutionary critical pedagogy of McLaren and his coherent works can

provide a common useful base through which to construct and improve the Marxist educational theories and practices.

Having completed a short background of critical education the next part of this thesis, employs the theories of critical thinking, and, more specifically-- revolutionary critical pedagogy. Focus will be on the alternatives of the education system in Iran in seven areas: philosophy of the education system, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, class, and content and methods of teaching. At times, synonyms for revolutionary critical pedagogy may be used interchangeably, such as revolutionary critical education, revolutionary education, critical education, democratic education, socialist education, and liberating praxis.

5.3   Philosophy of the Education System

The purpose of education is not limited to acquiring knowledge. The purpose is to struggle to change the world for the better. The changes need to be directed towards a step by step elimination of all kinds of human oppression, as well as creation of a just society in which all humans live in dignity, liberty, freedom, and happiness.

The former reformist President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mohammad Khatami reminds school officials that education is not about force, suppression, punishment, imposition, domination, obedience, and control. Rather, education is most effective when it is based on mutual respect and understanding, two way communication between teachers and students, and active participation by pupils in the learning process as opposed to passive reception of information; tolerance; and dialogue (Mehran, 2003a, p. 323).

Indeed, Khatami has in a concise way expressed some of the most important characteristics of the education system in Islamic Iran, which includes force, suppression, punishment, imposition, domination, obedience, and control.

Iran is ruled by a theocratic chauvinist capitalist system. The education system in Iran supports this dominant political and ideological system and provides a defence of the Islamic ideology. This is also the philosophy shared by the dominant capitalist class. This ideology is based on the beliefs of the supremacy of Shi'ism; the ethnocentrism of Persians; the superiority of males; the recognition of heterosexuality and the condemnation of homosexuality; and the legitimization of exploitation. The philosophy of education in Iran is moulded by this ideology and by extension endorses different kinds of oppression and suppression.

One of the results of this ideological education in Iran is the creation of alienated students, teachers and administrators (from one another) in the educational environments. The tragedy of the creation of the obedient student is that it kills intellectual creativity of the learner. The tragedy of the creation of an obedient teacher is that it separates the teacher from any decision over the curriculum and how it is to be taught, turning her or him into a labourer. The tragedy of the creation of the obedient administrator is totalitarian enforcement creating an oppressor.

Geoff Whitty (2002), in discussion the notion of alienation cites Bowles and Gintis who state: "Alienated labour is reflected in the students' lack of control over his or her education, the alienation of the student from curriculum content, and the motivation of school work through a system of grades and other external rewards" (p. 100). They are alienated because they have no control over the programs that shape their identities. The

effects of schooling in students' alienation can best be summarized as Joel H. Spring (1972) does: "[w]hat the school accomplishes is the alienation of man's ability to act or create his own social being" (p. 153). However, it is obvious that as students have increasingly less voice in educational environments, they become more alienated from that environment. In Iran, due to the lack of freedom and the existence of the severe dictatorial environment, the students have almost no voice in their educational issues.

The alternative to this dictatorial philosophy of education in Iran is a democratic philosophy of education based on a revolutionary critical pedagogy. Carlos Alberto Torres (1994), in respect to the main themes of the Freire's educational view, states that the "notions of education for social participation, conscientization, and empowerment are central to Freire's political philosophy of education" (p. 187). This philosophy, instead of bringing up the obedient subject, produces students and teachers who are conscious of the world, empowered by knowledge, and are active participators in social life and fight to construct a world without oppression or exploitation. It is an education which creates liberation. Freire defines the education for liberation as one that "sponsors the conscious and creative reflection and action of oppressed classes about their own process of liberation" (Torres, 1994, p. 199).

A democratic philosophy of education for Iran would recognize full access to education for all oppressed groups, such low income social classes, ethnic and cultural minorities, women, and homosexuals. Moreover, it would prepare the conditions necessary for people in educational environments to discuss, learn, practice, improve, research and struggle for their individual and social interests.

The alternative democratic education gives an opportunity to students and teachers to scientifically explore different thoughts, social systems, and social movements. It helps them to consciously investigate the historical conditions in which these systems and movements have appeared, developed and changed. The students and teachers through a dialogical relationship deepen their thought and, in the process, consciously construct their own interpreted version of the world. It is a process which never ends.

5.4 Ethnicity

Alan Sears (2003) argues that everyday racism is embedded in the liberal education system, which recognizes this way of knowing the world as universal and inclusive. Historically, imposition of this system on the colonies by European powers had the following results. "The core curriculum was simply transplanted, so that students were taught from an explicitly European perspective, without regard to their own geographical locations or cultural experiences" (p. 135). Liberal education teaches certain forms of knowledge; it also silences others. This education strives to create a kind of "cultural amnesia" in students of minorities, "radically disconnecting them from their own people. This strategy of dislocation was abundantly clear in the residential schools developed for aboriginal people in Canada by church and state" (Sears, 2003, p. 137). In respect to the assimilating direction of liberal education, bell hooks (1989) claims: "Embedded in the logic of assimilation is the white-supremacist assumption that blackness must be eradicated so that a new self, in this case a 'white' self, can come into being" (p. 67).

In a capitalist society, the education system is not neutral, it is ideological. One of the aspects of this ideology is ethnocentrism. The application of ethnocentrism in Iran is

reflected by Persian chauvinism or Persian ethnocentrism, despite the fact that Iran is a multiethnic country. The education system in Iran strictly oppresses the ethnic groups like Balouchis, Kurds, and Turks, A democratic alternative education system for Iran which should be a multicultural education, guarantees the rights of all ethnicities in Iran. Geneva Gay (1997) states that an effective multicultural education

> ... teaches students how to be critical thinkers and sociopolitical analysts, to challenge all presumptions of absolute truths, and to be moral agents and socially conscious activists committed to making society model the principles of democracy for diverse people. It confronts and deconstructs some of the deeply-held assumptions and practices about the values, rights, and responsibilities of powerful and powerless, marginal and mainstream, majority and minority groups and individuals in society. These goals cannot be accomplished without personal and social struggle. This is a definitive attribute of multicultural and democratic education agendas. (Similar Missions section, para. 10)

The ideal democratic and multicultural education system in a democratic federal Iran would allow all ethnic groups to create their own curriculum in the framework of the federation. This curriculum, for instance, would be produced in the ethnic language of each location. This would enable minority cultures to flourish in a broader Iranian state. In Kurdistan, for example, literature, social science, science, mathematics, music, and other subjects in the ethnic language would be taught in Kurdish language.

Moreover, all ethnic groups in Iran may have an official language for communication together which might be Persian. In addition to this, each ethnic group may choose one or more international language to use to communicate with the outside world. In the situation of Kurdistan this language might be English. A democratic multicultural education does not impose the mandatory study of Arabic in educational environment, as it does now in Iran, taught as a tool to serve the Islamic purposes.

A revolutionary multicultural education system as it applies to Iran would require that ethnic groups should not only study their own culture, but also study other Iranian

cultures that live in Iran. This is because, as peoples who live within the political framework of Iran, they need interactions with each other. Through these interactions they can construct respectful relationships with each other, and also through such a process the struggle for and creation of a democratic society is more likely.

While Persian is the official language in Iran, it may be suggested that a democratic education would encourage the Persian students to learn one of the other languages of Iran according to these students' choices. For instance, some may choose Turkish, or others may choose Armenian, or choose Kurdish languages.

An important matter is that all of the above and the following suggestion for a revolutionary critical education in Iran only make sense in the framework of a secular federative Iran. Also, it is not suggested that the ideal framework for all ethnic groups is the secular federative Iran. Ethnic groups have the right to construct their own state.

Within geographic areas, where an ethnic group constitutes the dominant group, other ethnic and cultural minorities may exist. The full cultural rights of these minorities should be reflected in the education system. For example, if there are some Turkish or Assyrian students who live in Kurdistan, they should have the opportunity in schools and universities to study all subjects in their own language, while they may learn the Kurdish language as a subject.

However, preparing all of these opportunities for these minorities depends on resources. These minorities, even if they study in Kurdish schools, they should at least be given a course in their own language. The efforts of the democratic state and education system should be preparing full educational opportunity for all students including ethnic and cultural minorities.

5.5   Culture

According to Antonio Gramsci, the education system in any capitalist society is not value-neutral. It serves the ideological function of the existing social system. The education system through its schools has become a tool used by the dominant class for the purpose of supporting the dominant ideology. Gramsci suggests a critical element in enhancing the ideological dominance of certain classes is the control of knowledge preserving and producing institutions of a particular society (Apple, 1990, p. 26). Apple explains "the study of educational knowledge is a study in ideology, the investigation of what is considered legitimate knowledge...by specific social groups and classes, in specific institutions, at specific historical moments" (p. 45). Providing that knowledge produced in schools is ideological in content and not value neutral.

Another aspect of ideological influence in the educational environment is related to the silencing of knowledge in these institutions. For example, the education system may be silent regarding issues such as sexuality, minority cultures, dancing, and music to name a few. Wotherspoon (1998) states that "[silencing] exists when particular issues are excluded from or discouraged in the classroom... silencing also occurs when the lives, interests, and experiences of particular educational participants are made irrelevant to the schooling process" (p. 95). Silencing of knowledge serves as an ideological tool for those in power. The reason is that the ruling class silences certain information and gives voice to other information which also serves as propaganda, to further its own power structure. Silencing prevents opposition and development of opposing ideas or values.

The culture of religion in the Iranian educational system is one of the most successful examples of silencing. Shia Islam is the official religion in Iran. All other religions are either silenced, like Zoroastrianism, or persecuted, like Bahaiism. Shia Islam

is strongly presented in education but other religions are either silenced or merely mentioned.

Through the moulding of philosophy and the culture of silence within the educational system of Iran the dominant ruling class's ideology is supported, thus only capitalism, Persian chauvinism, heterosexuality and the Shia religion have a voice. In contrast to the Islamic education system which indoctrinates Shia religion into students' mind, a revolutionary education would introduce different religions to the students and provide opportunities for them to investigate about those religions. Ruth Mantin (1999) states that the aim of religious education "includes helping students appreciate that there are many different ways of seeing the truth, expressed through many different stories" (p. 281).

A revolutionary multicultural education would be a secular education in which the religion is separated from the education system. However, the history of religions and the relationship of religions with other aspects of life can be taught, without imposing any particular religious bias or other philosophical, political, and social thoughts or social systems on students. Deep and correct familiarity by the students with different thoughts from different parts of the world can be a fundamental part of the curriculum. Some of these thoughts and social systems include Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Liberalism, Capitalism, Marxism, Socialism, Feminism, Gay and Lesbianism, Environmentalism and so forth. In addition, this curriculum should include the art and literature of other countries.

A democratic multicultural curriculum in Iran would not impose a specific cultural view on the students and not silence other cultural perspectives, but would

provide opportunities for the students to investigate a vast range of global cultures including different Iranian cultures. McLaren and Farahmandpur (2005) state: "A democratic multicultural curriculum encourages students to interrogate the multiple meanings of race, class, gender, and sexuality in a society that playfully and seductively inverts and reverses the true meaning of social equality" (p. 115). Through questioning the different elements that affect the construction of culture, the students, in the process make their own cultural values.

5.6 Gender

Gender inequality is an important part of Islamic ideology which is the dominant ideology of the Iranian regime. This inequality results in severe oppression of women in different areas. Some of the examples of this oppression are the obedience of women to men, compulsory veiling of women in public spaces, and excluding of women from some social and political position such as Presidency of Iran.

The educational environment in Iran is dominated by and produces Islamic and patriarchal values and practices which endorses and strengthens gender inequality. The segregation of schools, compulsory veiling of women, exclusion of women from taking some courses in higher education institutions are examples of gender discrimination in the education system of Iran. According to Golnar Mehran (2003b): "Female students and teachers were among the first to be affected by the veiling order that required the veiling of all women in Iran, regardless of religion and nationality....[Since] the summer of 1981, girls from the age of 6 have to wear Islamic uniforms and head covers to school" (pp. 226-227). In contrast to the Islamic segregated educational environment for females and males, a revolutionary critical pedagogy advocates for co-educational places at all levels of education from kindergarten to university. Among many, one of the reasons is

that educational places provide more opportunity for the development of humanistic emotions and feelings between different sexes.

Mehran (1997) writes that gender inequality in education is rooted in different cultural, economic and educational factors. This gender inequality in deprived provinces of Iran, especially Kurdistan is more observable. "The literacy rate in Kurdistan was 59% in 1991, and women comprised 37% of the total literate population in the province.... [Also] in primary school in Kurdistan, during the 1993-1994 academic year, 44% were girls, compared to 56% boys" (Mehran, 1997, Research Methodology section, para. 1).

The oppression of women is also related to the exploitation of the working class by capitalists. Then capitalist class of Iran supports gender inequality for different reasons. For example, women are paid less than men and they are being exploited more than men.

A revolutionary critical pedagogy encourages a curriculum which would not include any kind of gender discrimination. This curriculum would encourage teachers and students to investigate and find different roots of gender inequality such as patriarchy and capitalism. Moreover, the curriculum would encourage the educators and learners to combat for elimination of this inequality in educational places.

Gender inequality is a big problem in Iran. Elimination of gender inequality requires revolutionary teachers and students to join their struggle with other combatant organizations for the elimination of gender oppression. As Jane Kelly (2002) claims, to struggle against the oppression of women, alliances have to be forged between women as well as between women and men (p. 223). Only a nation-wide struggle which

encompasses combating to eliminate all injustices including gender inequality would guarantee a non-gendered education system and society.

5.7   Sexuality

Although in Western countries sexuality is taught in schools, still, in some of these countries this subject is taught under biases. In addition, as Sears (2003) claims, the "school atmosphere combines official asexuality with an aggressive, indeed punitive, heteronormativity" (p. 185). While the liberal education in some degree silences sexuality in the West, in the Iranian education system there is an absolute silence about this subject.

In Iran, although there is no official course that teaches sex education, nevertheless through inference from Islamic content of other courses and exposure to Islamic ethics, as well as through hidden curriculum, the patriarchal Islamic value about sexuality are taught in the educational environment.

Some of these Islamic values include controlling men's and especially women's physical appearance by Islamic dress codes; rejecting sexual relations before marriage;, looking at women as sex objects who serve men's desires; and forbidding homosexuality and other non-Islamic sexual engagements and harshly punishing people who are involved in these relationships. The goal of this form of education is the suppression of sexual desires of the students; however, the patriarchal Islamic sex values suppress women more than men.

Sex education should include much more than teaching about the methods of birth control, prevention of sexual diseases like HIV, and issues of sexual abuses. Kathy Bickmore (1999) stresses that the "assignment of sexuality education to physical/health

education, and not to such areas as social studies or literature, exacerbate the tendency of educators to emphasize abstract clinical information rather than human diversity, social justice, and democratic principles" (p. 6). Sex is strongly related to human emotional development. In this case, the sex education should emphasize the matters of respect and love between those involve in a sexual relationship.

The goal of a democratic education system is the creation of respect and love among people. Whereas the general notion of love can be applied to a specific relationship between all people, a romantic love, which may include sexual relations, is restricted between specific people. All concepts of love, romantic love, and sex, in all their diverse forms, would be part of sex or love education in an education system which is based on revolutionary critical pedagogy.

A democratic education would also embrace sexual attitudes and pleasures. The capacity of human beings to relate to each other emotionally and physically is not restricted to the other gender. More than fifty years ago, as James T. Sears (1991) states, "Alfred Kinsey and his associates found that nearly half of the adult population engaged in both heterosexual and homosexual activities—a finding that still troubles many Americans" (p. 54).

An ideal revolutionary critical pedagogy advocates for a curriculum that helps the students to create and recreate their sexual identities. Helen Lenskyj (1990) who supports a feminist approach to education claims that sex education program "would validate the full range of human sexual preferences and practices: heterosexuality, bisexuality, lesbianism, homosexuality, celibacy, genital sex, nongenital sex, and so on" (Looking Forward section, para. 1). Such a curriculum would provide full information about diverse sexual attitudes, past and present, and let students investigate human sexuality

and relate forms and barriers of sexual relationship to the historical, political, social, economic, and cultural conditions of societies.

Caroline Ray argues that "sex education should be of high quality in terms of learning experience" (Chitty, 1999, p. 312). Whereas an ideal revolutionary critical pedagogy accepts the importance of students' personal and collective experiences in all sciences like chemistry and physics, it also advocates the students' personal experience and practice in realm of sexuality. The curriculum should provide the whole condition for the diverse range of experiments. An ideal curriculum would provide the most comprehensive possible opportunity for students to be exposed to different forms of sexual experiments.

Due to the deep negative cultural backgrounds, ethics, values and practices about sexuality in many parts of the world including even Western countries and especially Iranian society, a revolutionary curriculum about sexuality is predicted to be very strongly opposed. However, this opposition has perhaps long postponed Iran from having such a curriculum. One cannot reject the unquestionable value of practice in understanding the world.

5.8   Class

A capitalist system includes many different kinds of institutions such as political, economical, and educational subsystems. According to the Marxist perspective, these subsystems are in accordance with the whole system, the capitalist mode of production. They are part of the whole system and serve to maintain it. The capitalist ruling class, which controls the political and economic institutions, also dominate the institutions of education. " The importance of Marx's thought to the field of education can be seen in

present day theories relating to the question of power and how those who are in important positions in economic and political institution control the structure of the educational system" (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2000, p. 26). Regarding the relationship between schools and other institutions, Apple (1990) claims that "schools exist through their relations to other more powerful institutions, institutions that are combined in such a way as to generate structural inequalities of power and access to resources" (p. 64). In respect to the purpose of this domination, Bowles and Gintis argue that "capitalism, in common with totalitarian political systems, restricts democratic participation in order to maintain material and ideological conditions to generate profit and ensure a productive labour force" (Wotherspoon, 1998, p. 31).

One of the important functions of the education system in a capitalist society is integrating the students into the market system. Sears (2003) points out that it is "to prepare students to take their place as commodities in a world of commodities. Self-commodification is accomplished when an individual is seamlessly integrated into the market, both as seller of labour-power (one's own capacity to work) and as buyer of consumption goods and services to fulfil needs and wants" (p. 211). In contrast to a capitalistic education, a revolutionary pedagogy realizes the real value of the students as humans who consciously create their destiny and participate in the social life of the country (in this case Iran) as well as the world, not as alienated subjects or the future commodities for the social system.

The education system in Iran has served as the provider of the workforce for the dominant mode of production. The capitalist system of Iran which embraces the existence of different social classes is an important factor in bringing both educational opportunities as well as inequalities. The rich have more access to education than the

poor. One of the manifestations of this inequality is the existence of private schools and universities where members of low-income classes like the working class cannot afford the high tuition fee in order to study in these institutions. In summary, the political, social, and economic situations of students can greatly affect the students' educational quality and outcome.

The kind of education system, that I propose involves the teachers and students in dialogical discussions about the history of human beings, and the conditions in which the social classes appeared, and the steps which could be taken to create a more just society in which humans are being not being exploited by each other. Also this critical pedagogy struggles for preparing conditions under which gives the student more equal opportunities in education. Moreover, this democratic pedagogy advocates for a just distribution of educational tools and facilities among different ethnic groups, rural and urban areas, and rich and poor locations of the cities in Iran.

5.9   Content and Methods of Teaching

In Iran, mosques serve as sites for the dissemination of official regime ideology, which affect the people's ways of thinking on the one hand, and also affect the educational system on the other hand. Moreover, there are many Islamic religious schools, which are also supported by the state. Among them the most important is Howze-e Elmie-e Khom, which alongside with other Howzehs produces thousands of Shia 'mollas', Islamic priests, yearly. These Islamic institutions strongly influence the educational systems at all levels from elementary to university in the country.

In the Islamic Republic the ideal is to produce the 'Islamic human' through the educational institutions. Both the curriculum, for instance the texts, and the hidden

curriculum, for example, the Islamic prayers, in the educational environment shape the participants -- students, teachers, and other staff--toward this kind of identity ideal. For the successful creation of the favoured identity, the state uses both the published curriculum and the hidden curriculum. "The operation of the hidden curriculum and the informal interactions among educational participants also serve to construct and reinforce identities both within and beyond schooling" (Wotherspoon, 1998, p. 84).

Both the content and methods of teaching in the education system of Iran serve the creation of an Islamic human being. The unquestioned style of teaching is focused on the delivery of knowledge to students who memorize this content. This method restricts and destroys the creative capacity of the people. Joel Westheimer and Joseph Khane (2002) state: "Critical thinking is commonly understood to be the use of reason in reaching judgments, while indoctrination is a process whereby ideologically committed instructors constrain reason in an effort to lead students to particular conclusions" (p. 104). The revolutionary method provides the opportunity for the student to critically and freely investigate and analyze different thought and perspectives and independently construct their own ideas and judgments.

The content for teaching social sciences in Iran is strictly influenced by the Islamic Shia literature and worldview. In contrast, a revolutionary critical pedagogy encourages a curriculum that provides the opportunity for students and teachers to investigate a variety of thoughts and world views as well as social, political, economic, and cultural systems, organizations, and social movements. Some examples of the above include Judaism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Mazdakism, Islam, Bahaism, Liberalism, Racism, Colonialism, Sexism, Gayism and Lesbianism, Neo-

conservatism, Marxism, Feminism, Postmodernism, Environmentalism, Capitalism, Imperialism, Globalization, Socialism and Communism.

An important matter which a critical education should focus on is the subject of peace and war. Historically, wars in Iran have caused greats disasters in loss of cultural development, loss of tolerance, and loss of people. These wars were to benefit of those in power; these wars strengthened the culture of patriarchy and suppression. In recent years, many imperialist countries, especially the United States of America, gained huge benefits from the Iran-Iraq war. The US is still continuing war in Afghanistan and Iraq for its own economic and political benefits. All of these wars have given golden opportunities to the Islamic rulers of Iran, strengthening their ideological, political and cultural legitimacy. Through these elements, the Islamic regime of Iran reinforces its hegemony over the Iranian society and militarizes the country. An example of this militarization is teaching the course of Defence Preparation in schools. The goal of this course is indoctrination of the youth into a culture of war. In contrast, while a revolutionary education does not ignore and respects the war of the oppressed masses for their liberation, it focuses in the value and culture of peace to construct a new society. James Collinge (1993) states that "issues of peace and war and related environmental and social questions ought to form part of curriculum of a truly democratic education system" (p. 3). Critical education would encourage students to research about the roles and the benefits of capitalist and imperialist countries in creation of the wars. It encourages students to struggle to bring permanent peace to the world.

A critical pedagogy not only introduces students to various perspectives and worldviews, but also encourages students to solve social problems with a goal of a just

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and better world. Anand R. Marri (2005) states that "Critical pedagogy engages students in social problem solving by enabling them to think about which problems are worth solving, according to whom, to what ends, and in whose favor" (p. 1038). A revolutionary education in Iran, like other kinds of education systems, will be biased. This critical education method focuses on understanding the problems of the most disadvantaged social group, the working class. In addition, it also focuses on understanding the problems related to the peasants, children, women, elderly, disabled, intellectuals, ethnic and cultural minorities, as well as environment, peace, and sexuality and so forth. Solving problems requires action. A revolutionary critical pedagogy encourages students and teachers to understand the problems and take social action to solve them. This struggle for elimination of individual oppressive and suppressive problems cannot be done in isolation, but all must be addressed simultaneously. A critical education would also address the important world problems created by other capitalist and imperialist countries. Specifically, understanding policies of neo-liberalism and globalization strengthen the power of transnational corporations and make the life of millions of people in Asia, Africa, Latin America, even in advanced Western societies miserable.

5.10   Transformation to a Democratic Education system in Iran

This part of the thesis focuses on the transformation of education in Iran. What I am suggesting is the creation of non-violent cooperative educational activities which can be initiated at a local or school level that will gradually introduce democratic changes in Iranian education. Building a real democratic state and society requires access to enough information about the problems facing that democratic society, and solutions to those problems. It is necessary to prepare the opportunity in which people have full access to

information about the social, political, economic, cultural realities from the perspectives of these diverse groups and individuals. Creating this opportunity requires struggle. Furthermore, together, people should have enough time to discuss these issues in a dialogical way and learn from each other's experiences. These discoveries lead to a collective state of social and political consciousness. Only these conscious people can construct a real revolutionary democratic society.

Teachers and students have fundamental roles in creating a democratic society in Iran. Freire (1970) states that for leaders of revolutionary social change access to educational leaders rather than power is needed. "While only a revolutionary society can carry out this education in systematic terms, the revolutionary leaders need not take full power before they can employ the method.... They must be revolutionary—that is to say, dialogical—from outset" (p. 74).

If real changes happen only when people can independently think and act autonomously, then teacher and students should be active agents in raising the awareness of the people. The radical teachers and students should not wait to participate in creating a democratic education and society until after a political revolution. They should actively participate in the process of creating necessary changes in their educational environment today.

Democratic education can only come to true reality through the actions of the educators, students and other people who struggle for this ideal. Some implications for practice are now briefly introduced. Because the educators are fundamental through their roles in bringing about educational changes, these implications are focused on the educators' actions. The following areas are important: Pedagogy; democratic organizations and publications; academic interconnection and contact with Iranian

educators; access to networks outside Iran especially with Western countries; and UNESCO.

Pedagogy. One of the most important areas on which educators can focus for change is their methods of teaching. Using dialogical method in the classrooms provides opportunity for students, to critically engage in discussion of educational problems and other social matters. This struggle for the creation of democratic classes and schools are necessary tasks for Iranian educators.

Democratic organizations. Another key area of practice is bound with establishing educational organizations to empower and strengthen democratic educational activities by Iranian educators and students. These organizations can be small and local, such as within a school, district, or city, or can be large within a province or even the country. An example of students' activity would be creation of wall posters or newsletters which reflect and disseminate democratic ideas. Through these organizations, the educational activist can relate to each other and together in an affective way, struggle for their democratic educational and other social goals.

The next aspect to be undertaken by educators and students' social activity is their inter-connection with other social movements in Iran. One of the most important current Iranian social movements is the struggle of Iranian university students for freedom and social justice.[81] The struggle to create a democratic society by school educators[82] and students is an indivisible part of the struggle by Iranian people.[83]

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[81] See Photos 7, 8 and 9.
[82] See Photos 10 and 11.
[83] Se Photo 12.

Publications. Educators should not limit their struggle for expansion of educative freedom by using only the current legally recognized educators' organizations such as *Khaneh-ye Moallemin* or *Kaneh-ye Farhangian* (The House of Teachers). While these institutions can be of use as important sites of educational activities by the educators. Educators are advised to expand their use, for instance, within these institutes, teachers can build friendly relationships, exchange their teaching experience, create a local educational magazine or newspaper, organize lectures for the public about democratic education, and discuss the social problems related to education.

Academic contacts with Iranian educators. The next main activity by the educators is related to the creation of systematic relationship with the educational experts and organizations within the Iranian society. These educators can establish strong connections with the education departments in universities and through these connections gain access to the latest educational research and ideas, especially the research that deals with social justice. In addition, these educators through their organizations can invite the educational researchers and experts in educational and social problems, to their cities and provide the opportunity for these experts to lecture to the public. By providing opportunity for the public to be exposed to these experts, and continuing to reflect democratic ideas, the educators promote the value of democratic education among people. Moreover, the educators within an area are best able to suggest to the experts the important areas of educational problems that need research. Some important areas of these researches include class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, content and methods of teaching, educational facilities, teachers' economical condition, and the educational gap between urban and rural areas.

Networks outside Iran especially with Western countries. Establishing strong relationships with the educational experts and organizations outside Iran is crucial. There are many Iranians who live in other countries, especially Western societies. This Iranians can act as important factors to introduce Iranian educators to the outside educators and educational organizations. These connections improve the scope and enrich the democratic educational knowledge and experiences of the educators within Iranian society.

Another central practice available to educators and students is using legal social activities to put forward their democratic educational and social rights. The area their activity can focus on is continuously enforcing their needs by pushing the parliamentary members and city and village councils. An example of this kind of activity would be concentrating on the right of ethnic groups to learn their own language in schools, which is recognized in the constitution of 1979 of the Republic Islamic of Iran. Another example is active participation of the educators and students in political electoral campaigns of the country.

UNESCO. Another aspect of the legal activities of educators and students is connected to the human right organizations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Educators and students can inform these organizations, about their educational problems and lack of rights, and through these organizations push the regime of Iran to recognize their human rights.

In conclusion, this chapter argued for development of a democratic public education system in Iran. First, it reviewed some different views of critical thinking in education. Second, this chapter applied the revolutionary critical pedagogy to the areas of the philosophy of education system, of ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, class, and

content and methods of teaching. Third, the paper argued for the development of a grassroots revolution demanding to build a democratic and liberating education system in Iran. Finally, this chapter suggested some implications for change to the practice of the Iranian educators.

Ideas become material forces if and when they are received and practiced by people, that is, they are no longer inert (Whitehead. 1953). Thus the ideas about education and the principles for the development of a democratic educational system for Iran as outlined in this thesis become a source for educational and social changes only when they are understood and practiced by the Iranian people. There is a great hope that these proposals will not fall on barren ground in Iran, but hope is not enough. At times Iran is viewed as a monolithic theocratic country, however, despite the fact that the state has a great deal of control over official ideas and structures and has used oppressive measure to silence some opposition voices there are in fact groups in existence who are critical of present state policies concerning education.

This is in great part due to the existence of a strong cultural left in the country, which manifests itself in the activities of many educational, social and political groups and individuals throughout Iran who consciously have struggled for the creation of a democratic society. Some of these organizations include the Iranian Writers Association, and other kinds of informal associations organized around literary or social magazines and websites such as Adineh, Arash, Nameh, Negah-e No, and the Iranian Progressive Students (Daneshjouyane Pishgame Iran). Also, there are many literary and intellectual figures who are institutions on their own right, such as, Ali Ashraf Darwishian, Mahmood Dolatabadi, Simin Behbahani, Mostafa Rahimi, Nasser Zarafshan, Reza Barahani, Ebrahim Younesi and Erfan Ghaneifard. In addition, there are many illegal leftist and

democratic organizations and parties that are sympathetic to the democratic changes in education system of Iran.

Thus, I maintain, that while the ideas proposed in this thesis are not likely to directly influence Iranian education in the short term they do make a contribution to a growing discourse about the relationship between education and democracy that is ongoing.

From my earliest experience of schooling and the realization that schools were sites for injustice I have struggled to help create an educational system in Iran that can help in the development of a just and fair society. This has been a long journey and this thesis is one more example of my life's work that still continues.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Glossary

Assembly of Experts	learned and virtuous individuals, chosen by people's vote, completed the task of framing the Constitution and elects the Supreme Leader of Iran
Basij (Mobilization)	Paramilitary organization which established by Islamic Regime of Iran
Bast	An Iranian custom of granting sanctuary and protection against arrest to anyone taking refuge in a religious building
Baytu l Hikma (House of Wisdom)	Islamic university which the Abbasid Caliph al-Mamun founded in Baghdad in 832
Constitutional Revolution	The Constitutional Revolution of Iran occurred between 1905-1911.It was a bourgeoise anti-feudalism and anti-Imperialism revolution that was suppressed by the collaboration of the internal reactionary forces with the imperialist forces
Council of Guardians	Supervises the general policies of the governing system. It includes 12 jurists, six of them are appointed by the Supreme Leader, and the other six are appointed by the head of the judiciary.
Cultural revolution	Cultural Revolution started in 1980. This Revolution was a huge plan to Islamize the universities base on which for instance, the content and the programs of the higher educational institutions witnessed fundamental changes and also thousands of university and college students, instructors and staff were expelled
Dar al- Funun	In Naser-al Din Shah's time, one of the most outstanding educational achievements was the establishment of Dar al-Funun by Amir Kabir in 1851.
Expediency Council	This Organization resolves legislative problems between the Parliament and the Council of Guardians in Iran.
Guard-e Javidan (Immortal Guard)	Was one corps of the army consisted of ten thousand elite Iranian foot soldiers in Emperor Darius the Great reign
Hadith	The words and deeds of Prophet Mohammad
Haraam	Things that are according to Islam forbidden by God such as, drinking alcohol or eating pork
Harem	The women or wives belonging to a rich man, especially in some Muslim societies in the past. The separate part of a traditional Muslim house where the women live.

Howzah-e Elmiyeh	Means Theological Center. Islamic educational centre
Khaneghah	Means Monastery. A house designed for gatherings of Sufis and is a place for spiritual retreat
Madrasah	Islamic institution of higher learning or a college
Majlis	The Parliament
Maktab	Primary Islamic school
Mazdakites	The followers of Mazdak. The Mazdakites riot that started at the reign of King Kavad 1 (488-531) was a very powerful movement against aristocrats and landlords. This movement shook the foundation of feudalism in Iran.
Mojtahed	clergyman practicing religious jurisprudence
Nizamiyyeh	Well organized Islamic universities, which were established by Kwaja Nizam al-Mulk, the Persian vizir of the Seljuq Sultans Nizamiyyehs were located in Nishapur, Balkh, Heart, Isfahan, and the most important was the Nizamiyyeh of Baghdad that was established in 1065.
Pishgaman	(Means Vangards). Paramilitary organization which established by Islamic Regime of Iran in high schools and universities
Puyandegan	(Means Seekers), Paramilitary organization which established by Islamic Regime of Iran in middle schools
Sangsar	Means stoning. Publicly stoning to death adulterous man or woman.
Shia	The minor branch of Islam. Shii Muslims believe that the position of Caliph is hereditary and Ali (the Fourth Caliph), the cousin and son in law of Muhammad was the first and true successor of Muhammad. This hereditary succession has passed through Muhammad's daughter, Fatima, who was the wife of Ali. The subsequent Imams came from this marriage.
Sunni	(Also called Sunnite). The major branch of Islam. The Sunnites recognize the 'Four Rightly Guided Caliphs' who were Abu Baker, Umar, Uthman, and Ali as Muhammad's rightful successors.
Valiy-e Faqih	The guardians of the religious jurist, who is now Ali Kamenei
Zoroaster	The founder of the religion of Zoroastrianism

Appendix B: Timelines

A.D. 224-651	Sasanian Empire. The Academy of Gundishapur rose to fame during the Anushiravan time. Some researchers relate its establishment in Shapur I time in 271 A.D.; however, Ravandi (2003) writes that Anushiravan in 530 inaugurated the School of Gundishapur
637	The Arab invasion of Iran
661-750	Omayyad Dynasty
875-999	Samanid Dynasty
1781–1925	Qajar Dynasty
1851	In Naser-al Din Shah's time, Dar al- Funun established by Amir Kabir
1904	The first Iranian social democratic group, Hemmat, was founded in Transcaucasia.
1905-1911	The Constitutional Revolution of Iran
1908, June 23	The Iranian Cossack Brigade under the command of the Russian Colonel Liakhov in the order of Mohammad Ali Shah bombed Majlis (the Parliament)
1909, July 13	The revolutionary armies lead by Sattar Khan from Tabriz and Eprem Khan and Mohammad-Vali Khan Sepahdar from Rasht, entered Tehran
1917, May	Hezbe Ejtemaeiyoon Amiyoon (Edalat) (The Social Democratic Party, or Justice Party) was established
1920	the Iranian Communist Party was founded in which later Heidar Amou Oghly one of the important leaders of Constitutional Revolution, was chosen to its general secretary
1925–1979	Pahlavi Dynasty
1934	Establishment of the University of Tehran
1941, September 29	Tudeh Party of Iran, as Iranian Communist Party was established in Iran
1945, September 3	Azerbaijan Democratic Party was founded in Tabriz, Iran.
1945, August 16	Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, also known as Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran was founded in Mahabad, Iran
1945, December 10	Democratic Republic of Iranian Azerbaijan was founded under Azerbaijan Democratic Party which led by Pishevari.

1945, January 22	Mahabad Republic or Kurdistan was founded under Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) led by Qazi Muhammad
1951, March 15	Nationalization of oil industry in Iran
1957	Sazeman-e Ettelaat va Amniyat-e Keshvar (Organization for Intelligence and National Security) was the domestic security and intelligence service of Iran from 1957–1979.
1963	White Revolution was launched by Mohammad Reza Shah
1965	The People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, also called Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran, was established in Iran.
1971, February 8	The Organization of Iranian People's Fadaian Guerrillas (OIPFG) also known as 'Cherikhaye Fadai Khalgh', and 'Fadaian-e Khalgh', was established in Iran.
1979, February 11	The Iranian Revolution against Mohammad Reza Shah was victorious
1980–	Islamic Republic of Iran established
1980	Cultural Revolution started
1989, July 13	Assassination of Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou the leader of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan by Islamic Regime of Iran in Vienna, Austria.
1991	The last prime minister of Mohammad Reza Shah, Shahpoor Bakhtiar was murdered by the Islamic Regime of Iran In Paris.
1992, September 17	Four Kurdish dissidents, including Dr. Sadegh Sharafcandi the leader of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, were assassinated by the Islamic Regime of Iran at the Mykonos Restaurant In Berlin.
1998, November 22	Assassination of Daryoush Forouhar the leader of Iran Nation Party, and his wife Parvaneh Eskandari, in Tehran by Islamic Regime
1998, November 24-December 9	Assassination of Iranian writers, Majid Sharif, Mohammad Mokhtari, Mohammad Jafar Pouyandeh, by Islamic Regime of Iran
1999, July 9	Suppression the uprising of students known as the 18th of Tir Uprising, by the Islamic Regime of Iran in the Tehran University
2006, July 30	Akbar Mohammadi was imprisoned in Evin Prison of Tehran, and was killed for his involvement in the uprising of the students in Tehran University. This uprising came to be known as the 18th of Tir (July 9, 1999)

Appendix C: Maps

Figure 1: **Map of Iran**

Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/iran_ethnoreligious_distribution_2004.jpg

Appendix D: Photos

Photo 5:   **Ali Shariati**

Source: Courtesy of Morteza Paki

Photo 6:   **Samad Behrangi**

Source: http://shahrgone.com/index.php?month=9&
day=&year=2006&pg=3 Courtesy of Hadi Ebrahimi

Photo 7:   Students' Protest for Freedom in Tehran, 18th of Tir, 1378 (July 9, 1999)
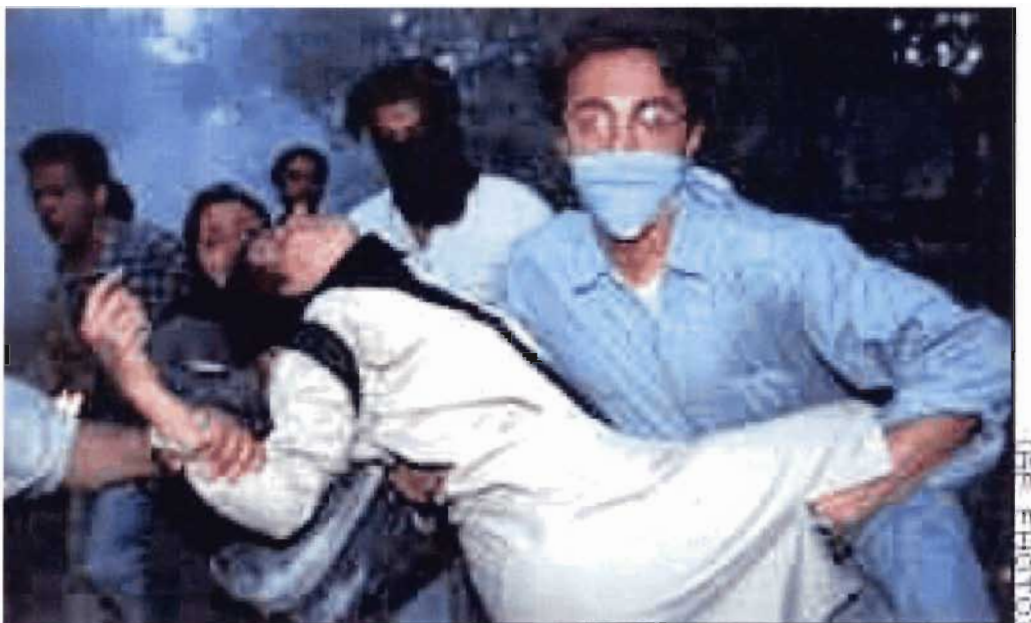
Source: http://freethoughts.org/archives/2004_07.php[84]

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[84] Thanks to the many Iranian who have posted news and photos of oppositional events in Iran at great personal risk.

Photo 8:   Student Protest in Amir Kabir University, Tehran, Iran

Students burned pictures of President Ahmadinejad and set off firecrackers
during a speech by the Iranian president today at Amir Kabir University (Dec. 11, 2006)
Source: http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.iran.org/images/ganji-
2.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.iran.org/&h=300&w=440&sz=45&hl=en&start=
11&tbnid=JZx2awsJIsl5NM:&tbnh=87&tbnw=127&prev=/images%3Fq%3
Diran%26gbv%3D2%26svnum%3D10%26hl%3Den

Photo 9: **Student Demonstration for Freedom in Tehran, Iran (December 6, 2006)**

Some 2,000 students at Tehran University took to the streets, also protesting the regime and the lack of freedom. Here, they exhibited photos of President Ahmadinejad in derision, upside down. Source: http://www.iran.org/

Photo 10: **Iranian Teachers' Demonstration in Tehran (March 6, 2007)**

Iranian teachers in many cities, including Tehran, protested against low wages and poor working conditions. Source: http://71.18.210.116/News/news00501.htm

Photo 11:   Iranian Teachers' Demonstration in Tehran (March 8, 2007)

Iranian teachers in many cities, including Tehran, protested against low wages and
poor working conditions. Source: http://www.etehadefedaian.org/?page=article&nid=1416

Photo 12:   Iranian Women's Demonstration for Social Justice in Sanandaj (March 8, 2007)

Source: http://www.kar-online.com/

Appendix E: Tables and Figures

Table 1:   The Subjects of the First Grade of Primary Education in the Year of 1923

No.	Subject
1	Persian Language
2	Religion
3	Science
4	Health
5	Ethics
6	Mathematics
7	Sport

Source: Safavi, 2004, p. 331

Table 2:   The Subjects of the Second Grade of Primary Education
in the Year of 1923

No.	Subject
1	Koran
2	Religion
3	Ethics
4	Persian Language
5	Historical and Geographical Reading
6	Handwriting
7	Science
8	Health
9	Geography
10	Mathematics
11	Sport

Source: Safavi, 2004, p. 331

Table 3:   The Subjects of the 3 year Guidance Cycle

3-year schedule by number of hours per week				
No.	SUBJECTS	1st	2nd	3rd
1	Arabic Language	2	2	2
2	Art	1	1	1
3	Foreign Language	3	3	3
4	History and Geography	3	3	3
5	Mathematics	5	5	5
6	Natural Sciences	5	5	5
7	Persian Language and Literature	5	5	5
8	Quran	2	2	2
9	Religion and Ethics	3	3	3
10	Social Studies	1	1	1
11	Sports	2	2	2
12	Vocation and Technical Studies	4	4	4
TOTAL	36		36	36

Source: http://www.salamiran.org/Embassy/Embassy/StudentAdvisory/
Iran_education/Appendix%20A.html

Table 4: The Subjects of Academic Secondary Education (Mathematics and Physics Branch)

| no	SUBJECTS	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
	4-year schedule by number of hours per week in each grade				
1	Algebra	3	3	3	4
2	Arabic Language	2	2	2	-
3	Biology and Hygiene	2	-	-	-
4	Chemistry	2	3	3	4
5	Foreign Language	3	3	4	4
6	Geography	-	2	-	-
7	Geometry	2	2	3	3
8	History	-	-	2	-
9	Lab Work	2	1	2	2
10	Mechanics	-	-	-	2
11	Modern Mathematics	2	2	2	4
12	Persian Composition	-	-	-	-
13	Persian Language and Literature	4	4	5	5
14	Physics	3	3	3	4
15	Religion and Ethics	3	3	3	3
16	Social Studies	2	-	-	-
17	Sports	2	2	2	2
18	Trigonometry	-	2	2	-
	Total	32	32	36	36

Source: http://www.salamiran.org/Embassy/Embassy/StudentAdvisory/

Iran_education/Appendix%20A.html

Table 5: The Subjects and the Weekly Hours of Academic Secondary Education (Second Grade of Experimental Science Branch) in Academic year of 2001-2002

No.	Subject	Unit	Hour
1	Religion and Quran (2)	2+1	2+1
2	Persian Language(2)	2	2
3	Persian Literature (2)	2	2
4	Arabic Language (2)	2	2
5	Foreign Language (2)	2	2
6	Physics and Lab	3	4
7	Chemistry (2) and Lab	3	4
8	Mathematics (2)	4	4
9	Geometry (1)	2	2
10	Biology (1) and Lab	4	4
11	Geography (General and Province)	3	3
12	Sports (2)	1	2
13	Defence Preparation	2	2
Total		32	36

Source: Safavi, 2004, p. 370

Figure 2 **Numbers of Students Admitted to the State Universities and Higher Education Institutes, by Gender (1976-2007) in Ira**

Source: http://www.iranwomen.org/zanan/english/charts/education/high/state/ed4.htm
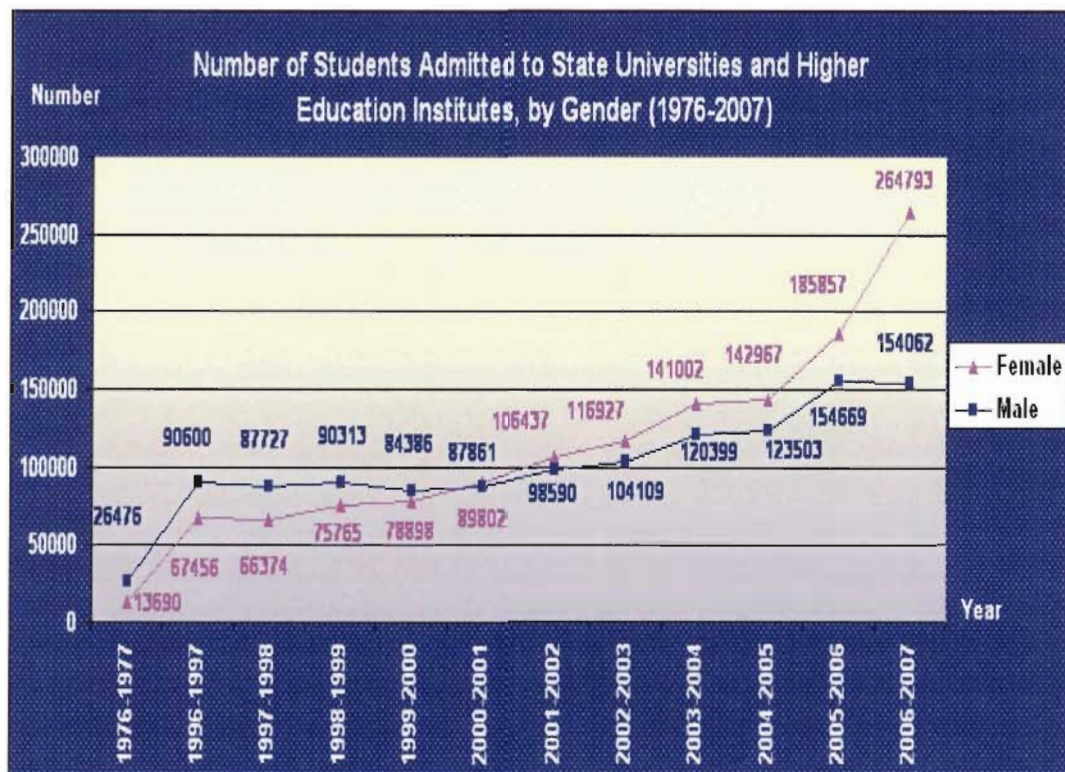
Table 6: **Iran's Percentage s of Literacy by Gender, and Urban/Rural Areas in (1956-2004)**

Year	Urban		Rural	
	F	M	F	M
1956	29.66	70.34	8.37	91.63
1966	36.27	63.73	13.81	86.19
1976	40.37	59.63	28.15	81.85
1986	43.48	56.52	36.84	63.16
1996	46.65	53.35	44.62	55.38
2004	46.84	53.16	46	54

Source: http://www.iranwomen.org/zanan/charts/Education/k-12/ep3-1.htm

Table 7: **Iran's National Literacy Goals**

Year	2005	2010	2015
Total adult literacy rate (%)	85.2	89.1	92.1
Female adult literacy rate (%)	82.6	87.7	91.7
Male adult literacy rate (%)	87.7	90.5	92.5

Source: http://www.accu.or.jp/litdbase/policy/irn/index.htm

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