

## Development of Education in Iran with an Emphasis on the Role of Mirza Hassan Roshdiah

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**Abstract:** The present research tries to study the history of development of Iranian education. First, we will study education from the very beginning of Islam up to establishment of Darolfonoon. We will find that no great measures have been done in this period for the fundamental development of education until mid 13<sup>th</sup> century when Darolfonoon School was established. The way for its establishment had been paved before by Amir Kabir, the grand Iranian chancellor. In 1856, the Qajar government of Mozafareddin Shah interfered directly in the old education. He was the first king who sometimes paid attention to the school. After him, the school was always declining. Then, the biography of Mirza Hassan Roshdiah will be studied. He was the first who established a new style school in Tabriz-Iran. The school became the origin of a great development in Iranian education. In order to get the difficulty of the said development, we will study the situation of Maktab (one-room schools) and traditional education in Iran. Next, the difficulties of education system of Islamic countries will be studied. Then, we will study the educational ideas of Mirza Hassan Roshdiah, invention of audio method by him for teaching the alphabets and also the establishment of new schools by him. Finally, education development in Iran will be studied.

**Keywords:** Audio method, education for all, maktabkhane, Mirza Hassan Roshdiah, traditional education

### INTRODUCTION

The history and development of education in Iran shows that education in ancient Iran has had a conservative and classical nature. Private teaching at home was prevalent among the rich families. The education methods and principles were influenced by the Zoroastrian, Avestan rules and military-based principles which themselves included political, cultural, civil and legal regulations. But, there existed no official organization for public education of the common people.

One of the most detailed studies about the education in this period may be found in Gezonfoon works, entitled "Education in Ancient Iran" and "Koroush Style" (Aghazadeh, 2003).

Regarding the above mentioned issues, the present study is going to discuss the education system existing in Iran from ancient times till now.

**Education from beginning of Islam till establishment of darolfonoon:** Analytical study of education development in Iran, from beginning of Islam to 4<sup>th</sup> Hejira century reveals the fact that like other Islamic countries the education centers located in vicinity of religious centers and mosques. The educational goals, principles and duties in this period were similar. The main goal was to socialize the people and his conformity with the social environment and transferring the cultural heritage in the local community (Jamshidian, 1981).

Children were enrolled from 5-6 years old. Maktab mainly provided basic teachings. Except University of Jondi Shapour and schools in Baqdad, Demoscus and Cairo (Alazhar), there was no institute until of secondary or higher education until 4<sup>th</sup> Hejira Century. Meanwhile, type of education provided for the rich children differed completely from that provided for the village and middle class of society, regarding the goals, program and educational facilities (Aghazadeh, 2003).

Since 5<sup>th</sup> Century, the number of theological schools increased as a result of efforts of the Iranian scientists and scholars. Jorji Zeidan announces that no one had built a school in Islamic world except Khajeh Nezamolmolk. And those such great schools may be seen just in Iran.

It is noteworthy that Nezamieh schools trained many jurisprudents, hadith scholars, terminologists, orators, literary men and historians for several generations in Iranian community. As the history witnesses, although the principals of Nezameih schools and the similar schools could create favorable changes in the administration of such educational centers, they could bring nothing other than surface developments in domain of education methods. The methods mainly focused on the memorization and the repetition of the past teachings.

The social, economic and cultural fundamentals destroyed by the Mongols attacks until end of Gorkani dynasty. Disorder in Iranian Social system reached its highest point. Schools, educational places, mosques,

libraries, scientific and cultural and the endowed places were destroyed expansively. All places of knowledge and science destroyed.

It is noteworthy that those Iranian scientists who had influence in the Mongol and Ilkhanian dynasty could somehow save the scholars and reconstruction of scientific centers. They could save many scholars and scientists from being killed by the Mongols. In Maragheh, capital of Ilkhanian dynasty, an observatory was established. Then, Maragheh University established that was the biggest one after Jondi Shapour university and Nezamieh schools. Most of science and techniques of those days were taught there.

Soltan Mohammad Khodabandeh, (985-996) a Mongol ruler who had become a Muslim, initiated a new action which had no counterpart in Iranian Education till that time. He established a mobile school called Soltani Mobile School. The school held in the summer and winter camps. The teachers, students and their relatives could learn science during the ruler's residence in camp (Aghazadeh, 2003).

In this period, public education of common people was studied by a group of scholars. However, developing and expanding public education centers were not possible. The main reason behind this was the vast destruction of schools and cultural & scientific centers by Mongols, immigration of professors and scholars and lack of contact among education-cultural centers in Mongols and Teimours period. As a result, a great part of the past cultural heritage destroyed.

In Saffavid dynasty, the religious beliefs of that time education overrode the education. Religion was the strongest factor of national and cultural unity of people. Although, in these periods, the fine arts were encouraged and policies were made to teach medicine, mathematics, astrology and natural sciences in addition to old sciences such as jurisprudence, history, syntax, expression and semantics, common people education did not grow.

During the kingdom of Nadershah, Karim Khan Zand and Fathali Shah (first Kings of Afsharieh, Zandieh and Qajar dynasty), education declined as a result of the 13<sup>th</sup> desire of Nadershah for conquest and the turbulence in social-political systems thereafter. From 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Hejira century, the western countries developed their elementary, secondary and higher schools as a result of emergence of new sciences and industries. Their governments did everything for creating modern national education systems. But, no important action was done in Iran in this period for fundamental development of education system until mid 13<sup>th</sup> century when Darolfonoon was established by Amir Kabir. The way for its establishment was paved before by this Iranian powerful chancellor.

**One-room schools (maktabkhane) and traditional education:** Maktab is the most common Iranian educational organization which existed before the new schools. It differs greatly with the new schools regarding its physical shape, manner of treating the

students, diversity in lessons, teaching method, educational facilities, teacher's ability and education, education levels, girls education, etc.

Most owners of Maktab (one-room schools) were literate and had not passed the higher education courses. Sometimes, they had hardly finished the maktab course.

Maktab education was provided for a limited number of people for various reasons, including little number of education centers, lack of teachers (Maktabdar), necessity of children's employment in economic sector, theoretical teachings and lack of its direct application in personal and social life, difficulty of supplying educational costs. From this limited number, a limited number went to higher levels that are the theological schools.

The spiritual influence of the first class clergymen was another factor that limited the interference of the politicians in system of Maktab and theological schools. The age for entering the school, beginning season and duration of studies were not so regulated, though the educational-ethical dimension written later in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Hejira had some importance.

It is worth mentioning that in ancient Iranian education, the children started schools in 6-7 years old. There is no sign of this age after development of new system until 1950. Since then, Article 1 of the Constitution defines the "scientific and ethical education". Note 2 of Article 10 define that the building of private or unofficial schools must conform the standards of ministry of education. Also, those schools administered by the endowments must be supervised by the said ministry regarding the ethical points and that the lessons must conform somehow with the purposes stated by the donor.

Clearly, Maktab teachings were not so much successful because of several reasons including: irrelevant discipline of the principals and teachers of Maktab and their lack of knowledge about the education principles, a big age difference between the students and teachers, ability differences between the students, employment of students after the classes, insufficient time for students for reviewing and studying the lessons, limited facilities, lack of suitable learning environment, etc. Another cause of failure in Maktab education in Iran or other Islamic countries was the use of Abjad alphabets in elementary education.

The aforesaid difficulties and the hurts suffered by students due to the teacher's behavior were so great that rescuing the students from such teachers was considered as a great pleasing. These cruel conditions and sufferings and their few results were among the factors that inspired Roshdieh to make a change in Iranian education system (Habibi, 1986).

**History of development since establishment of darolfonoon (qajar dynasty):** Amir Kabir established Darolfonoon at the beginning of 1887. It should be considered as one of the most important cultural works

in history of education in Iran. It should also be declared that it was for the first time that the central government had established such a school in secondary and higher level. This was the first step toward education. So, establishment of Darolfonoon must be considered as the turning point in Iranian education development. After that, several schools were made based on the old rules. National publication houses were established and the old books were reprinted. Scientific and textbooks were translated and easily available for the students. Therefore, a movement though small began in old education. In 1897, the government interfered officially in the old education.

Mozafareddin Shah sometimes paid attention to the school. After him, the school was declining as a result of bad economic and cultural situation (Jamshidian, 1981).

**Studying and comparing the education methods of Islamic countries:** Roshdieh went to Beirut in 1878 in order to study the alphabets education method abroad. He studied for two years in the teachers center (Darolmoallemin) that was established by the French and was famous round the world. French universities methods had a positive influence in education in said country. Some schools in Beirut were administered with the same methods. These schools were Islamic as well as modern schools. He left there about 1921 and went to Egypt and then Istanbul. But, after studying their education methods, he found that none of them will be suitable for Iran. Therefore, he started a deep study of modern education methods and finally invented the "Audio Method" in education. Then, he went to Iravan decisively in order to establish a school and apply his new method. He established his first school in association with his adopted brother there. After a while, it was welcomed by people.

#### **BIOGRAPHY OF MIRZA HASSAN ROSHDIEH**

At the time of Nasereddin Shah, spread of political thoughts, establishment of newspapers, social-political campaigns that finally resulted in constitutional revolution expanded the desire for freedom and equality everywhere. Here, the role of Roshdieh is admirable.

He was born in a middle class family in 1858 in Tabriz-Iran. He went to Maktab at 6-years-old. Because of his intelligent, he became the caliph of Maktab soon. From young age, he made himself ready for an important work. When he was 17, he became the prayer's leader of a mosque in Tabriz. But, the bitter experience of Maktab and harsh behavior of teacher annoyed him and he was attracted by the new emerging phenomenon in the world. He started reading the newspapers. He studied the developments made in education, establishment of schools and scientific centers and universities in other countries. Then, he

went to Beirut to continue his studies there. After graduation, he traveled to turkey, Egypt, Syria, Middle Asia countries and Caucasia and after visiting their schools, he went to Iravan. In 1922, he established his school for the Muslim children of Iravan based on the new method (Yaghmaei, 1944).

Administration and teaching method of the school attracted Nasereddin Shah in his journey from France. So, Roshdieh was invited to Iran to establish new schools in Tehran and other cities. But, the traditionalists disagreed from the very beginning. In his return to Tabriz, Roshdieh got familiar with Aminoddoleh who later became the Iranian chancellor. This encouraged him more to extend the new teaching method. He believed in development of education and makes a change in old system of education. Therefore, he established the first new style school in Tabriz in 1927. A few later, it was closed by the traditionalists. However, he did not stop the study and opened another school one year later. This was also destructed by the traditionalists. The students and Roshdieh were hit and injured.

Traditionalists continued their disagreement with establishment of any type of school and considered it as expansion of paganism. Finally, Roshdieh changed Sheikholeslam Tabrizi mosque of Tabriz in to a school by the vote of Najaf scholars. The school was also destructed after a while. Mirza Hassan escaped to Caucasia. Then, he went to Egypt. This travel was the beginning of another way that made him more desirous than before. Thus, he returned to Tabriz and established another school. This time, the people had found the importance and influence of his schools and his new school was welcomed by the people.

In 1895, Aminodolleh became the chancellor. As he already knew Roshdieh, he invited him to establish a school in Tehran. Roshdieh went there rapidly and established Roshdieh Elementary school there. This was the first school with modern method in capital who educated the common children.

This was simultaneous with the constitutional revolution. In addition to school administration, Roshdieh started his political activity. He was one of the famous activists. First, he established "Enlightening Association" in association with some of his comrades. He became a member of some secret centers. In order to promote his membership in secret centers, he published Maktab newspaper. At the same time he wrote secret notes.

Describing his cultural-political, social and secret life would be out of scope of this essay. In short, he is one of the influential and pioneering figures of constitutional revolution in Iran as well as being the father of modern education method in Iran. He cooperated seriously with the constitutionalists.

He wrote many books (about 38 books) mainly in field of education. One of his famous works is "Kefayato-l-talim". He was a teacher who familiarized his students with historical, political, cultural and religious points as well. He succeeded in all his studies because of his belief in himself and his own way. One of his important works was publication of two newspapers, Maktab and Tehran newspapers that publicized enlightenment and described the importance of education.

He did all his best to develop the education of Iran and even the world. At that age of chaos he established a new school for any reason. Therefore, he established Roshdieh schools in Rasht and Bandar Anzali based on the suggestion of education employees of Gilan. In order to expand the schools he dispatched his relatives and children to various cities in order to establish schools there.

Roshdieh, father of education in Iran, did great efforts in field of education for several years. He passed all his long life in developing the education. He lived in Qom until Sept. 1941. He taught until his death time. He passed away in Qom in Dec. 10, 1984 when he was 97 years old. According to his will, he was buried in front of school's door so that children walk on his tomb and make his soul happy.

**Educational beliefs of roshdieh:** Maktab-based learning was a very difficult and unbearable for children. Also, it was not an applied method. Therefore, it needed correction in different dimensions. Mirza Hassan Roshdieh changed these educational tips into short and comprehensive sentences. In addition to encouraging the students to look into their environment curiously and carefully, he taught them better ways of life.

He also reminded the children about ethical teachings such as avoidance from tattling, betrayal, overhearing, gossiping, interfering in other's businesses, telling lies and other bad deeds. He encouraged them to think and avoid the said deeds. He created in them a sense of humanity and sociability that prepares the child for the acceptance of present norms and values. He taught them to be patriot. He taught them to treat their family, friends and others kindly and respectfully and be aware of the enemies of their country. He classifies the enemy into two groups including internal and foreign and describes their specifications. These are among his creativities mentioned in his book named "Akhlaghiat" (Moralities).

The schools made in 1930s and later were very larger than the past schools. The teacher-based modern education method facilitated teaching a noticeable large number of students by one teacher. So, classrooms could be built larger. These helped the schools to teach a larger number of students by a few number of

teachers. Roshdieh schools were among this type of schools.

**Design and invention of audio method in alphabets education:** Roshdieh studied the education method in Beirut, Cairo and Istanbul and other countries. Soon, he found that the main problem in writing and reading education in the children is the teaching method. The teachers at Maktab forced the students just to memorize the letter's names. The method was called Abjad method. The method of Roshdieh was called audio method.

Regarding the teaching, the importance of Roshdieh's work lies in the development and change he made in teaching the alphabets. Education authorities of that time declared the priority of his method compared with other common methods. They applied this method in the schools where they used to teach in. Presently, the new alphabets methods follow the method of Roshdieh.

**Editing textbooks for different levels:** Roshdieh wrote more than 38 books which are mainly textbooks. By "Vatan Daily" book as the first textbook in Turkish, he started teaching the 1<sup>st</sup> grade elementary students. The book tries to teach the alphabets based on the common literature. Another advantage of the book was that it was written in a simple and fluent language. The sentences are short, simple and comprehensible and this simplicity is an important factor for learning and stimulating the student's interest in the lesson. In fact, by the new alphabets method, he moved the education system from old Maktab style toward modern school education style. His other measures include classifying the schools, developing higher levels, removing age-limits and creating new establishments in education.

**Education for all:** Upon the efforts of Roshdieh, the 4-year Elementary Education Course of Studies was approved by Culture Supreme council in 1918. Mandatory free elementary education for 6 years in towns and villages was claimed in 1933. The age for starting the elementary education course was 6 year-old.

The steps taken by Roshdieh in establishing new schools in Iran encouraged other education authorities to do their best in this regard as well. So, new schools were established simultaneously with Roshdieh School. Rasht, Bandar Anzali, Tehran and Tabriz are oldest towns with the new schools. In 1920, Mandatory Education Law was approved by National Consultative Assembly. It was decided that public mandatory education must be executed for two years throughout Iran. Those interested in education were encouraged to establish schools. In Feb. 1933 Teacher Training Law and then in 1934 University establishment Law were approved, respectively.

Thus, efforts of Roshdieh resulted in public education in Iran within less than two decades (Roshdieh, 1983).

### CONCLUSION

By taking all the above mentioned issues into account, the following conclusion can be mentioned:

- Historical evidences show that public education for different classes of Iranian society has been growing very slowly, in such a way that there had been no noticeable event within it during the past 13 centuries.
- What is known as the development in Iranian civilization is the result of efforts of scientist's indifferent times that have created rich, scientific and civilized works in past centuries.
- Nearly none of the past Dynasties and governments of Iran have had a pedagogical policy. Any educational event has been more in the best interests of the rulers other than the National Education of Iran.
- Historically, the pedagogical thoughts have formed from the Qajar dynasty and at the time of Constitutional Revolution.
- Audio method brought a great revolution in Iranian education process in such a way that it enabled the students to read and write in 2 months rather than 6 years. Teaching in Maktab was a very long and slow process which discouraged the students.
- Pedagogical thoughts of Roshdieh that caused great changes in education system of Iran during the constitutional revolution had a great influence in education of other countries from Caucasia to Ottoman Empire (Roshdieh, 1944, 1945 and 1991). Easy and suitable textbooks that conformed the student's abilities caused great interests in learners and growth of education, in such a way that his books were translated to Arabic, English and especially French.
- In spite of the deep influence of his pedagogical modern thoughts in education in Iran and other countries, unfortunately his name is not mentioned much in the world's scientific community as a

great education developer. This is a special case that his name is not mentioned in three ages including the Qajar, Pahlavi and Islamic Republic.

- The present essay tries to introduce Mirza Hassan Roshdieh education as one of the great developers of education, through studying the history of education development in Iran.
- His educational thoughts may be formed in to a comprehensive pedagogical theory so that his rich and comprehensive ideas may be applied in the world.

In summary, the most important factor of development of public education in Iran include the following: establishing new style schools, separating the education level, creating equal employment opportunities for all classes of society, creating educational opportunities for girls, editing the textbooks, teacher training, creating administrative establishments in education domain, public education at national level, mandating the public education. All these occurred during the constitutional revolution. Iran education owes nearly all the said items to the permanent efforts of Mirza Hassan Roshdieh. So, he may be called as the father of modern education in Iran.

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