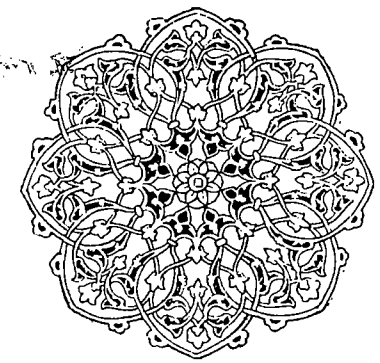
Cultural Revolution and Educational Transformation in the Islamic Republic of Iran



by Golnar Mehran, Al-Zahra University

Introduction

The authorities of the Islamic Republic refer to the 1979 revolution as first and foremost a cultural revolution, aimed at the creation of a new moral order and fundamental transformation of individuals' values.

They believe that a true revolutionary movement cannot succeed unless these fundamental changes take place in the society: the revival of Islamic values and the replacement of secular and Western ways by a religious order.

Thus the ideal member of the post-revolutionary society is "cleansed" of ideological attachment to the West and "purified" of the need to imitate non-Islamic ways.

The model citizen is pious, committed, doctrinaire, proud of his/her Islamic heritage, loyal to the government, and prepared for self-sacrifice for the revolution and the Islamic cause.

As an important socialization agent, especially in a period of rapid change, the school in Iran has been assigned the task of bringing about this transformation of values. The school is referred to variously as a destiny-forming center, a human manufacturing factory, and a "center for modeling human beings." (Bahonar 1985, p. 107)

Given such grave responsibility for shaping human minds, the educational system has assumed a leading role in the cultural revolution as Iranian authorities have attempted to Islamize and politicize the system.

Politicization in this context refers to the effort to create individuals with total ideological and political commitment to the Islamic Republic. Islamization, on the other hand, aims at reviving Islamic values and returning to the Muslim identity.

The purpose of this article is to study post-revolutionary educational transformation in the context of the Iranian cultural revolution.

Six areas that have been most affected are: curricular and textbook content, extra-curricular activities, teacher training, higher education, privatization of education, and female education. (For a detailed discussion of educational reform in the post-revolutionary period, please refer to Mehran 1992.)

Before turning our attention to changes in the educational system, let us take a look at its structure and organization.

Structure and Organization of Formal Schooling

Due to the political-ideological nature of educational transformation in post-revolutionary Iran, there has been more emphasis on changing the content and direction of education rather than focusing on changes in the structure and organization.

The Council for Fundamental Transformation in the Educational System was set up by the government in 1985 to identify major problems and shortcomings and modify the system to fit the needs of the post-revolutionary society.

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The council was comprised of faculty members from theological centers; deputy ministers of the Ministry of Education; representatives from the High Council of Cultural Revolution, the High Council of Education, and the Education Commission of Parliament; experts from the Ministry of Budget and Planning; and "committed" teachers, at least one of whom had to be a woman.

Despite the educators' call for much-needed changes since the early days of the revolution, the planning and administration of education remains very similar to that of the pre-revolutionary period.

A highly centralized system

Education remains highly centralized, with the Ministry of Education in the capital determining the content and structure of elementary, secondary, vocational and special education. The Ministry is in charge of educational planning, financing, and administration, curriculum and textbook development, literacy campaigns and adult education, and extra-curricular activities. Teacher training, grading, and examinations are also the responsibility of the Ministry.

The language of instruction throughout the entire nation is Persian, despite the fact that 37 percent of the population does not speak Persian as its mother tongue.

During the 1990-91 academic year, 15,018,903 students were enrolled in educational centers administered by the Ministry of Education; 9,369,646 attended elementary schools; 3,232,682 were enrolled in guidance cycle schools; 1,589,405 were in secondary schools. The remainder were enrolled in preschools (227,492) and schools for exceptional children (32,794), defined as the intellectually-gifted, the physically, mentally or emotionally handicapped, or delinquents.

Familiar ills

The schooling system today suffers from the same ills that plagued it before the 1979 revolution: overcrowded classrooms, multi-shift schools, teacher-centered instruction, recitation, memorization and rote learning. This has perpetuated a rigid system marked by the absence of flexibility and creativity.

Basic structure

Since 1970, the educational system has consisted of a one-year preschool program or *amadegi* (age 5), five-year primary education or *dabestan* (ages 6-10), three-year guidance cycle or *rahnema'i* (ages 11-13) and a four-year secondary education program or *dabirestan* (ages 14-17).

Secondary education is divided into Theoretical-Academic and Technical-Vocational divisions.

The Academic division is further divided into Mathematics-Physics, Experimental Sciences, Literature-Culture, and Socio-Economic branches.

Technical-Vocational education is composed of three subdivisions: Agricultural, Technical, and Business branches.

Change in secondary school

A welcome sign of change, brought about by a realistic assessment of high unemployment rates among high school graduates and the mismatch between schooling and the job market, is the restructuring of the secondary school. Beginning as a pilot project in the 1992-93 academic year, the four-year secondary school has been changed to a three-year program with two major divisions: General Education (divided into the Academic and Technical-Vocational branches) and Professional Education (with an emphasis on teaching specific work-related skills).

Students have to take 96 units, including a common core curriculum as well as specialized courses.

The high school diploma granted to the graduates of each division is of equal value.

Choices for graduates

Graduates of Academic secondary schools have the option of entering a one-year pre-university program that prepares them for entrance to institutes of higher education, or entering a two -year college (e.g. teacher training for elementary school teachers) to obtain an Associate degree. (Two-year college graduates also have the option of continuing their higher education on a part-time basis.)

The one-year pre-university program is administered by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education. Consisting of 32 units, the content is a core curriculum of the program the student will follow at university level. It also serves a remedial function for qualified students from impoverished regions.

Technical-Vocational school graduates may either join the work force or continue on to a Higher Institute of Technology or Technical-Vocational Teacher Training Center.

The ultimate aim is to raise the quality and social status of technical-vocational education, teach high school students specific skills needed in the real world of work, and increase the educational as well as professional-vocational choices of high school graduates.

⌘ Curricular and Textbook Content

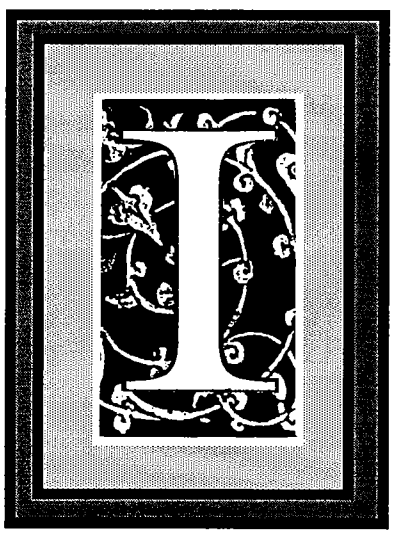
Among the first steps taken by the post-revolutionary government was to change the curricular content of elementary and secondary schools to include more Islamic subjects. A significant portion of pre-collegiate education in Iran now consists of religious studies, Islamic ethics, Arabic, and the study of the *Qur'an*.

Although these subjects were offered before the revolution, the content of other subjects was basically secular. Now, religious subjects and heroes/heroines occupy a significant portion of history, literature, and social studies textbooks.

Religion and ethics is offered three hours per week in the second through fifth grade of elementary school (ages 6-10) as well as throughout the guidance cycle (ages 11-13) and four-year secondary school (ages 14-17), both in the academic and technical-vocational divisions. *Qur'an* is studied two hours per week beginning with the third grade to the end of the guidance cycle.

Arabic language is taught throughout the three years of the guidance cycle for two hours a week.

Islamic culture and ideology as well as Arabic are also included in the secondary school curriculum. In the Socio-Economic branch, Arabic language is taught for four hours per week in the first year and two hours per week in the second and third years. In the Mathmatics-Physics branch as well as the Experimental Sciences branch, Arabic is taught two hours a week in the first, second, and third years. The Mathematics-Physics, Experimental Sciences and Socio-Economic branches of the academic division do not offer Arabic in the fourth year. However, three hours per week of Islamic Economy is obligatory during the fourth year of the Socio-Economic branch. Arabic is offered four hours



a week during the entire four-year period of the Literature-Culture branch.

Morning prayers have been included in the school program and performed at the elementary school level as a "homeroom" activity.

The above-mentioned reforms are aimed at Islamizing education by reviving religion and acquainting Iranian pupils with their Islamic heritage.

The three recognized religious minorities of Iran–the Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians–are allowed to teach the principles of their own religion in schools at the time allotted for religion and ethics. (Shorish 1988)

Changing the content of textbooks began shortly after the victory of the revolution and was completed by 1981, with minor additions and omissions since then. The aim was to "demonarchize" the content of elementary and secondary school textbooks and purify them from all "colonial and tyrannical" topics, replacing them with Islamic and revolutionary subjects.

While the physics and mathematics textbooks remained almost intact, those used in history, sociology, economics, religious studies, Arabic, social studies, psychology, art, and Persian literature have been radically changed.

A content analysis of post-revolutionary social studies textbooks indicates that education is openly and avowedly political, reflecting the official state ideology and inculcating in the young the attitudes, values, and beliefs needed to maintain the status quo. Commitment to the Islamic cause and loyalty to the leadership is the ultimate end for which, school children are told, any hardship and even self-sacrifice is justified.

⌘ Extra-Curricular Activities

Ideological training of youth is not limited to the content of formal education. In 1980, an important bureau was established within the educational system known as *Omur-e Tarbiyati*, roughly translated as the Bureau of Educational Affairs.

The stated aim of the Bureau is bringing Islamic culture to the schools and eliminating all remnants of the anti-Islamic, colonial culture of the Pahlavi regime in the educational system.

Yet, the Bureau's activities have been basically aimed at eradicating the ideological influences of dissident groups among young pu-

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pils. The goal has been "to defend the revolutionary culture" against the ideological penetration of "counter-revolutionaries." Their "threat" was thus met by assigning one instructor to every 250 pupils to provide "moral guidance" and revive "ethical values" among school children.

The Bureau has aimed at achieving its goals basically through extra-curricular activities such as after-school programs, morning prayers, classes in ideology, summer camps, and various matches and competitions, among which camps have been most successful in recruiting students.

Since the summer of 1986, directors of the Bureau have organized week-long camping trips during which pupils engage in a variety of activities. The programs include educational, ideological, athletic, and military training along with cultural-scientific matches as well as *Qur'an* recitation competitions. Both girls and boys can participate in the camps, but at different times. Girls' camps are organized and run only by women, and their military training instructors are also female.

The primary purpose of camping trips has been stated as advocating Islamic values, rejecting Western models, and teaching the spirit of martyrdom. As such, the camps are extensions of the formal school curriculum, complementing the daily school routine during the long summer months when the impact of political-ideological training may begin to fade.

⌘ Teacher Training

Another measure taken as part of the cultural revolution has been changing teacher training institutes' admissions criteria so that only *maktabi* (committed and doctrinaire) individuals loyal to the government can enter, and purging teachers labeled as "anti-Islamic" and "counter-revolutionary." The latter includes all those teachers who have been identified as sympathizing with the monarch, the West, and the left, referred to as Marxist, liberal, "Westoxicated," and atheist teachers.

Labelling dissident teachers as "saboteurs" and "traitors," the Iranian educational system has purged many individuals in the name of preventing "intrigue" and "purifying" the schools from "unholy and treacherous" members who instill "poisonous" values and beliefs in children. The number of purged teachers was estimated as 30,000 in 1986.

During the early days of the revolution, the Islamic Republican Party stated the criteria for teaching to be expertise as well as moral and ethical eligibility. Belief in Islam is regarded as the single most important quality for one whose responsibility includes the formation of thought and value systems. The educational system will utilize skilled yet apolitical teachers, although no compromise is permissible in the case of "corrupt" individuals, regardless of their degree of expertise.

To prepare doctrinaire teachers, the general education curriculum for two-year teacher training centers now requires ideological and Islamic courses that reinforce morality and ethics.

Courses that fit in the required Islamic Ideology and Culture category include history of Islam, Islamic world view, Islamic morality, principles of Islamic education, as well as Arabic and *Qur'anic* studies.

The first year of the teacher training curriculum comprises twenty-six hours of Islamic Ideology and Culture courses per week, while the number drops to sixteen during the second year. (*Two-Year Teacher Training Program* 1984, p. 1)

Participation in political-ideological courses after school hours and during the summer was made obligatory for the experienced teachers who were retained.

The intense political and ideological screening of teacher training institutes' applicants, the purging of many qualified and experienced teachers, coupled with a low and unattractive salary, have led to a serious shortage of teachers, reported as 116,000 in 1990. (Ministry of Education 1990a)

⌘ Higher Education

Post-revolutionary educational transformation in Iran has been most abrupt and visible at the university level.

Pre-revolutionary Iranian universities were criticized by the leaders of the Islamic Republic for serving "foreigners" and propagating Western values. Therefore, through what is known as Cultural Revolution or *Engelab-e Farhangi*, the Iranian government launched a campaign to "purify" and Islamize the content of higher education.

Closure of universities

Beginning in the summer of 1980, universities were closed for a period of three years. (Several medical colleges and nursing faculties were eventually reopened during this period, mainly because

doctors and nurses were needed at the front during the Iran-Iraq war.)

During this time, university professors were either engaged in planning the new curriculum or in writing and translating textbooks.

The content of instruction, especially in the humanities and social sciences, was changed to emphasize Islamic ideology and deemphasize Western norms and values. The core curriculum now includes Islamic ethics, history of Islam, roots of the revolution, and Arabic language. The aim was to create "committed" individuals as opposed to mere experts.

Similar to the duality of "redness" and "expertness" in the Chinese cultural revolution, Iran has also witnessed a confrontation between *ta'ahod* (commitment) and *takhassos* (expertise) that continues today. (Sobhe 1982)

Changing the university curriculum and rewriting the textbooks were only part of the Cultural Revolution, which was also directed at purging dissident students and expelling "anti-Islamic" or "counter-revolutionary" faculty members.

Loyalty-morality checks

A highly ideological university entrance selection system based on commitment to and support of the Islamic Republic was introduced, transforming the Iranian universities from bastions of political activism and dissidence to centers of passivity and quietude.

Public university entrance examinations are designed, administered and corrected by the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education.

The Islamic Republic's policy of "filtering" applicants through the introduction of a highly ideological selection procedure has made university entrance even more difficult. Entering higher institutes of learning has always been a very competitive process for high school graduates who have to take a national unified entrance examination. Today, those aspiring to attend university must pass both the two-phase academic-aptitude examination and "loyalty-morality" checks.

The checks consist of a written or oral examination to determine a candidate's loyalty to the government (non-membership in opposition groups; membership in Islamic, pro-government associations; a lack of "counter-revolutionary" activity; etc.) and his/her Islamic "morality" (fasting, praying, attending the Friday prayers on a regular basis, going to the mosque, proper covering for women, etc.).

As another part of these checks, the local Islamic Council, mosque, shopkeepers, neighbors, school principal and teachers are contacted to report on any "counter-revolutionary" or "anti-Islamic" activity in which the candidate might have engaged.

In addition, the post-revolutionary quota system–ensuring the entrance of eligible candidates who have fought in the Iran-Iraq war, those maimed or crippled in the war, family members of martyrs, and students from impoverished regions of the country–has led to further competition for limited space.

Failure to meet demand

Despite the existence of 126 universities and institutes of higher education in the 1990-91 academic year (compared to 26 universities and 50 colleges before the revolution) attended by 312,076 students, taught by 23,376 faculty members (Ministry of Culture and Higher Education 1991), Iranian universities fail to meet the ever-increasing social demand for higher education.

In 1979, only 10 percent of 550,000 applicants were admitted; in 1991, 56,542 out of 790,495 applicants (seven percent) were able to attend university. (*Statistical News* 1991)

Among the solutions offered have been the establishment of institutes of higher learning attached to various ministries; *Daneshgah-e Payam-e Nur* (Distance Learning Universities) since 1987; and establishing private, fee-based universities throughout the country.

Shortage of faculty

Another major problem faced by Iranian universities has been the shortage of faculty members, especially in medicine and engineering. The 1980 expulsion of many faculty members; the unprecedented brain drain that has led to the migration of a considerable number of university professors to the West; and the increase in the student population has led to a shortage of 9,000 full- and part-time instructors at university level.

The same political-ideological selection system used to screen students has been in effect since the 1979 Cultural Revolution for university faculty members. They, too, have to meet certain academic as well as moral criteria. As part of their tenure evaluation, faculty members are given examinations to assess their scientific expertise as well as moral and religious qualifications. In case of "deficiency," university professors have to take courses in Islamic theory and ideology similar to the ones taken by teachers. (Sobhe 1982, p. 278)

To alleviate the faculty shortage, *Daneshgah-e Tarbiyat-e Modarres* (Teacher Training Uni-

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versity was established to train university instructors by offering masters' and doctoral degrees in various fields of study. Candidates are selected from among the most doctrinaire applicants with a guaranteed position awaiting their graduation, without any need for further political-ideological screening.

Graduate students being sent abroad

Sending graduate students abroad to continue their education is yet another attempt by the government to provide specialists. Despite originally condemning education in the West, undeniable realities have led to a reversal in policy such that today, graduate-level married male students are sent abroad on scholarships to pursue their education in needed technical and professional fields. Female students and single male students are not eligible.

Whereas India and Japan are preferred by the authorities due to the "perseverance of tradition" in those Eastern countries, Western Europe, Canada and Australia remain the students' first choices. Government-sponsored education in England and the United States is not allowed. At present, 2,300 Iranian students are studying abroad on government scholarships.

(Editor's note: *Open Doors 1990-1991* reports that the number of Iranian students studying in the United States continues to decline from a peak of 51,310 in 1979/80 to 6,260 in 1990/91. Iranian students, who ranked first among foreign student groups in number in the United States in 1979/80, now rank fifteenth, shrinking from 17.9 percent of the total foreign student enrollment to only 1.5 percent in 1990/91.)

⌘ Privatization of Education

Just as the urgent need for experts and specialists has led to the renewal of international academic exchange, economic shortages and financial restrictions have resulted in a reversal of policy in a controversial sphere–namely, the re-introduction of fee-based, private education at the pre-collegiate and university level.

One of the first steps taken immediately after the revolution was the nationalization of all private and foreign schools in an effort to reduce the gap between public and private schooling and the quality of education provided for the haves and have-nots.

The establishment of "non-profit," private schools since 1988 and the growth of the fee-based Free Islamic University since 1984 are vivid examples of reversal of policy set in revolutionary times in response to post-revolutionary realities.

Despite the allocation of 19.9 percent of the government budget to education, with 3.78 percent of the country's GNP spent on general (primary, guidance, secondary), technical-vocational, and higher education (Ministry of Education, 1990a), statistics indicate that not all school age children are able to attend school.

During the 1989-90 academic year, only 79 percent of the 6-10 year-old population attended school, with boys (83.8 percent) faring better than girls (74.2 percent), and higher enrollment rates in urban centers (87 percent) than rural regions (70 percent). (Ministry of Education 1990b)

Economic hardship, the need for child labor especially in rural areas, and socio-cultural restrictions specifically aimed at the education of girls are some of the reasons for the inability of school age children to attend school. Yet, lack of adequate educational facilities, shortage of teachers, and the overall inability of the government to meet the increase in school age population and the rising demand for education remain important obstacles to universal access to basic education.

One of the solutions has been the delegation of responsibility to the private sphere. In an effort to reduce public expenditure on education and make use of the community's physical, financial and manpower resources, the establishment of non-profit private schools (*madares-e ghayr-e entefa'i*) was approved by the Parliament in 1988.

An unequal status

Non-profit schools operate at the primary, guidance cycle, and secondary school level, and follow the same curriculum and examination schedule as all government schools. The textbooks are the same as well as other instructional materials. The advantage lies in the recruitment of the most skilled and experienced teachers, a low pupil/teacher ratio, and the use of laboratory facilities, audio-visual equipment, and computers.

Non-profit schools are highly selective. Eligible students are accepted based on a high grade point average, written examination, and interviews with the candidate and his/her immediate family members.

Although quantitatively speaking, only 15,000 out of 8,896,000 primary school pupils were enrolled in non-profit schools during the 1989-90 academic year, what is important is the continued policy of

higher quality education for the advantaged children of wealthy families–an unequal status that the revolutionary government had initially aimed at destroying.

Nationalization of universities reversed as a policy

The establishment of the Free Islamic University (*Daneshgah-e Azad-e Islami*) is another example of the re-privatization of higher education. The original nationalization of all universities immediately after the revolution gradually gave way to the establishment of fee-based, private universities, initially in Tehran in 1984 and expanding throughout the country ever since.

Private universities, theological centers, and institutes of higher learning attached to various ministries are allowed to design, administer and correct their own entrance examinations. The timing of these examinations, the number of students admitted, the loyalty-morality screening device and the proficiency level required all differ from criteria used by public universities.

The Free Islamic University began its activities as a non-degree conferring institute of higher learning, claiming to provide education for the sake of knowledge. Today, it offers bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. degree programs in experimental sciences, mathematics, engineering, medicine, social sciences, humanities, and the arts. While it has a separate entrance examination, grading and examination procedures are similar to those at public universities. Due to the attractive salaries offered to full- and part-time faculty members, the Free Islamic University has been able to recruit the most capable instructors.

Despite controversy over the high tuition charged and the validity of the degrees conferred, the Free Islamic University has thrived, with its branches mushrooming all over the country.

Furthermore, the "diploma disease" that characterizes Iranian society at the present time and the growth in the number of the young population has led to unprecedented demand for university education, regardless of the continuing mismatch between higher education and employment.

The above factors have led to unquestioning acceptance of private education in a revolutionary society, the leaders of which have gained legitimacy partly for their policy of defending the dispossessed and the underserved.

⌘ Changes in Nomenclature

In addition to changes in curriculum and entrance procedures, names for degrees were changed in the mid-80s as shown at right:

Award	Former name	New name
post-diploma	*fogh-e diplôme*	*kardani*
bachelor's degree	*license*	*karshenasi*
master's degree	*fogh-e license*	*harshenasi arshad*
doctorate	*doctora*	*doctora*

Many university names also were changed. For example, *Daneshgah-e Melli* (National University) became *Daneshgah-e Shaid Beheshti* (Martyr Beheshti University); *Daneshgah-e Farah Pahlavi* (Farah Pahlavi University) became *Daneshgah-e Al-Zahra* (Al-Zahra University); *Daneshgah-e Aryamehr* (Aryamehr University) became *Daneshgah-e San'ati Sharif* (Sharif University of Technology); and *Daneshgah-e Pahlavi* (Pahlavi University) became *Daneshgah-e Shiraz* (Shiraz University).

⌘ Female Education

Women, who represent half the population, have traditionally been an underserved segment of society. Yet, major achievements have been recorded in the realm of female education in the post-revolutionary period, which may be attributed to two major factors. First, one must look to the family as playing a significant role in emphasizing and supporting education for girls.

Although the dominant model of womanhood prevailing in contemporary Iranian society is one of a wife and mother, the active presence of women in the social, economic, intellectual, cultural, literary, and artistic fields has provided an alternative image, encouraging families to seek education for their daughters.

Second, education in the Islamic Republic of Iran is used as a tool of politicization, Islamization and socialization in training the New Muslim Woman–the ideal female citizen of Iran. (Mehran 1991)

Iranian authorities, in accordance with the dominant religio-political ideology, have assigned a dual role to the New Muslim Woman. She is to be educated as a wife and mother and praised for her female virtues while being trained for active participation in

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the social and political affairs of her society. This duality between forces of tradition and revolution is clearly reflected in the education of females.

Based on the authorities' understanding of the "appropriate" role and function of women in society and the dictates of contemporary Iranian politics, the Islamic Republic has aimed at directing and channeling the academic pursuits and future professions of women. As a result, shortly after the revolution, male-female segregation was enforced in schools. Co-education is now banned at every level except at the universities and remote rural/nomadic schools where a shortage of teachers has led to integrated classes. There has also been an attempt to segregate teaching so that only female teachers can teach in girls' schools and the teachers in boys' schools are all men.

Since the declaration of compulsory veiling for all women in the summer of 1981, girls from the age of six have to wear uniforms and headcovers to school at all times.

Furthermore, female university students have been barred from entering certain "male-oriented" fields of study. For example, at present specializations that demand extensive fieldwork such as mining and petroleum engineering are closed to women, while male students cannot apply for admission to obstetrics-gynecology.

As early as June 1979, women judges were expelled; female law students can no longer aspire to become judges.

The curriculum is the same for girls and boys throughout the educational system. However, the Ministry of Education has attempted to direct pupils toward "suitable" studies and professions at the guidance cycle level by preparing different sets of the Study of Professions textbooks for girls and boys at that stage. Tailoring, nursing, and teaching are emphasized in girls' books, while boys learn about the various fields of engineering and mechanics.

Despite such academic and professional redirection, Iranian women have been able to maintain high levels of educational enrollment and attainment, mainly due to the encouragement of girls by their families and the government to pursue their education within limits dictated by Islamic norms. As a result, there has been an increase in the enrollment of girls in formal schools since the revolution.

Girls' education still lags behind that of boys' throughout the nation, but the percentage of girls enrolled in school increased from 37.99 percent in 1978 to 43 percent in 1988. Among rural girls, the percentage increased from 31.79 percent to 40 percent in the ten-year period.

There has also been a change in the specializations elected by female pupils at the secondary school level. Traditionally, girls chose the Socio-Economic and Literature-Culture branches of the Theoretical-Academic division. Within the decade following 1978, however, there was an increase in girls' enrollment in the Mathematics-Physics branch from 4.84 percent in 1978 to 7.87 percent in 1988, and from 32.52 percent to 45.46 percent in the Experimental Sciences branch. Despite generally low female enrollment at technical-vocational schools, the percentage rose from 18.3 percent to 20.5 percent between 1978 and 1988.

Statistics indicate that although the total enrollment rate of girls is below that of boys at all levels of schooling, their completion rate is higher at every stage. During the 1987-88 academic year for example, 88.81 percent of girls succeeded in completing primary school compared to 85.03 percent among boys. At the guidance cycle level, the gap widened to an 85.11 percent achievement rate among girls as opposed to 78.42 percent among boys.

Male pupils' completion rate was reduced systematically as the grades go up, leading to only a 73.87 percent completion rate at the secondary school level compared to 90.20 percent for girls.

Female pupils at Technical-Vocational school also fared better with an 89.74 percent success rate, while boys lagged behind with only 65.97 percent passing the final examinations. (Ministry of Education 1989)

At the higher education level, there were more male university students (226,751) during the 1990-91 academic year than female stu-

dents (85,325). There were also fewer female faculty members (4,050) than male (19,326). The rank order of female enrollment in the various fields of study is an important indicator of the academic and vocational choices of women. During the 1990-91 academic year, the highest number of female university students selected medicine and health-related sciences (31,836), followed by education and teacher training (17,058); humanities and theology (11,331); natural and physical sciences (6,450); social and behavioral sciences (5,805); engineering (2,847); business administration and management (2,456); fine arts (1,190); agriculture and forestry (743); law (559); media and communication (481); architecture and urban planning (387). (*Statistical Yearbook* 1992)

One may state that despite various legal, economic, social, and professional limitations imposed on them, Iranian women have remained active recipients of and contributors to academic, intellectual, and scientific endeavors.

⌘ Conclusion

In "Schools in Revolutionary and Conservative Societies," Anthony Wallace has classified societies as either reactionary, conservative, or revolutionary, noting that what a person is expected to learn depends on the value orientation of the society in which he/she lives.

According to Wallace, in a revolutionary society that is "deliberately and forcibly replacing old institutions with new ones," the learning priorities are morality, intellect, and technic in descending order. (Wallace 1961)

The classification of learning priorities in Iran leads one to the conclusion that morality is of prime importance, just as Wallace's model for a revolutionary society indicates. Yet, morality in this case includes both Islam and political values, a combination that cannot be separated.

In choosing to address such issues as segregation of boys and girls in schools, increasing the number of hours allocated to the study of religion, ethics, Arabic, and the *Qur'an*, and implementing a highly ideological screening system for teacher and student selection, the Iranian authorities convey the message that ideological, political and Islamic issues are now of first and foremost priority. Grave problems such as unequal educational opportunities, high dropout and failure rates, lack of adequate educational facilities, and a shortage of qualified teachers are not being addressed.

The aim is to render education more in tune with the political requirements of the time. In contemporary Iran, education is for shaping morality. The training of a skilled labor force will come later, similar to the priority accorded to redness over expertise during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

Yet, a nation that aims at gaining independence through self-reliance in the economic and scientific fields cannot but pay attention to the need for experts and technicians. The exclusive concentration on moral transformation in the Islamic Republic today and the distrust of expertise and technology might prove to be costly in the post-war reconstruction of the country. ❐

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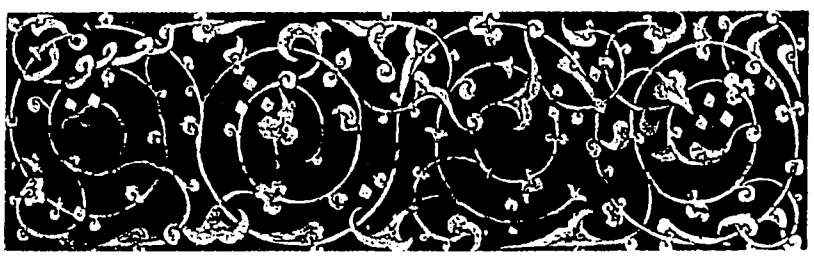

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Addresses of Key Offices in Iran:

Center for Educational Research
Organization of Research and Educational Planning
Ministry of Education
Iranshahr Shomali Avenue, Building No. 4
Tehran, Iran

Office of International and Scientific Cooperation
Ministry of Culture and Higher Education
Ostad Nejatollahi Avenue, Building No. 1
Tehran, Iran

A complete list of the 61 public universities and 65 institutes of higher education administered by the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education, as well as the private universities, theological centers and institutes of higher education attached to the various ministries may be obtained by writing to:

Center for Statistics and Information
Research and Planning Organization of the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education
Building No. 1
Ostad Nejatollahi Avenue
Tehran, Iran

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