

## Iranian Education Modernization Strategy (Iran's Islamic Leader Renewal Movement in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Study of Disclosure of Historical Facts through the Mass Media)

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### Abstract

*The modernization of Islamic education continues to be encouraged by structuring the Iranian education system based on the principles of Islamic teachings, without neglecting the modern education that has developed in the pre-revolutionary government, namely balancing religious education, science and technology. The process of modernization in Iran, especially those related to the modernization of Islamic education, educational renewal strategies, and aspects of being modernized are interesting to study. As an Islamic country that has successfully carried out a modernization revolution, it has made it equal to the western world. In this study, the authors tried to obtain material through information from the mass media, literature literature, namely collecting, reading and studying sources, obtaining material (library research) in the form of books. The method of discussion in this research is: Synthesis Analysis Method, namely by means of rational and abstract logical approaches to the objective of thinking inductively and deductively as well as scientific analysis.*

### Keywords

Islamic education; Iranian education modernization strategy; disclosure of historical facts



## I. Introduction

The idea of modernization has deep roots in Islamic tradition or teachings. So it is not an exaggeration to say that the idea of modernization is actually part of the spirit of Islamic teachings itself. At least there are a number of verses in the Al-Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet that explicitly or implicitly emphasize the importance of modernization or which more or less become the basic value of modernization. Syahrin Harahap stated (2005) that Al-Qur'an and Hadith (as sources of Islamic teachings) are the flesh and blood of modernity. Long before the term modernization was popularized by the West, Islam had already recognized the word *tajdid* which had the same meaning or meaning as modernization / renewal. It should also be noted that modernization according to Islam is not excessive or forced modernization. Updates should only be carried out on non-basic aspects of Islamic teachings (*muthlaq*), including educational aspects. According to Azyumardi Azra (1999) as an agent of exchange, education must be modernized or renewed to be able to carry out its function properly, namely as an agent of reform.

So it is not surprising that around the 19th century or at the beginning of the 20th century several Islamic countries in the Middle East such as Egypt, Turkey and Iran intensively carried out reforms or also called modernization, by imitating various advances that occurred in Europe, especially in the field of science, science and technology. Not a few among Islamic countries with various motives or backgrounds then make West/

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Europe as the center of modernization, some even adopt European secular culture as a whole as a new model of modernization in their country. In this case, Iran is one of the countries in the Middle East which is also affected or affected by the current of modernization even today.

## **II. Research Methods**

In this paper, the theory of technological determinism was introduced by Marshall McLuhan. This theory says, the belief that the development of technology will determine social and cultural change, because this technology hits us from all directions. Media seems to push the ratio of our feelings to how to experience the world. In this study, the authors tried to obtain material from Iranian media information, including the names of the media, namely: Abrar, Alik, Alfarines, Aftab Yazid, Aftab e-emruz, Asr e -Azhadegan, and Entehgab (Alo Liliweri). The author also uses library principles, namely collecting, reading and studying sources, getting library materials (library research) either in the form of books or the realities of everyday life of people related to the issues discussed. The method of discussion in this research is: Synthesis Analysis Method, namely by means of rational and abstract logical approaches to the objective of thinking inductively and deductively as well as scientific analysis. Descriptive method, namely by describing the modernization of education in Iran by describing the names of the characters and their renewal movements.

## **III. Discussion**

From various Iranian media information and some existing reference literature, the modernization movement in Iran seems to be more influenced by the development of science, science and technology as well as the culture that developed in Europe along with the invasion and imperialism carried out by European nations against the Muslim world in various parts of the world, especially in the Middle East (Middle East) such as Egypt and Iran. The existence of demands from within Iran itself to balance developments with other countries such as Europe has encouraged Iranian elites and rulers to immediately carry out reforms and modernization in various fields, including education in general. As a result, to date Iran has become the most respected country in the Middle East region, because it has a military power and weapons system that are not less competitive with European countries, including America.

Shah Iran as well as Iranian intellectuals such as Sepahsalar (prime minister Nasser al Din Shah) and Talibob Tabrizi, considered the maktab and madrasa education model developed by scholars at that time was no longer relevant to respond to the developments and demands of the times. Therefore education, especially maktab, as a basic educational institution, needs to be modernized to create the prosperity and progress of a nation. For Iranian shahs like Abbas Mirza and Reza Shah, the developing education system in Europe is a good example of a new education model in Iran. For this reason, various efforts and efforts were made by the Shah of Iran in modernizing education.

The first step taken by the Iranian rulers to catch up with the various disadvantages of Iran from Europe was to send students to Europe to explore and study the various advances that Europe has made in the fields of science, science and technology. At least this phenomenon has been going on since the 18th century during the reign of the Qajar dynasty and even continues until now. According to a UNESCO report in 2010 there were around 38,000 Iranian students or students studying in Europe. In 2016 there were about

12,269 Iranian students studying in America (<https://wenr.wes.org/2017/02/education-in-iran>).

Fath Ali was the first Iranian Shah to carry out the modernization movement by sending 10 or some say 11 soldiers to Europe to study, which in the next phase of his policies was followed by Iranian rulers such as Reza Shah and Muhammad Reza Pahlavi. Where in the 1940s during the reign of Muhammad Reza Khan the number of students or students studying in Europe (France, England, Switzerland, etc.) had reached 5000 or more.

Students or students who have returned from Europe then spread the ideas or ideas of modernization in Iran. Students who returned from Europe not only brought technology such as printing machines, telegraphs, but also translated books, especially on the idea of renewal. One of the students sent by Abbas Mirza to England was Mirza Saleh Shirazi, in 1918 on his return from England who brought the first printing press technology to Iran, he also wrote a lot about European culture and government systems in his book *Safarnameh* (travel book).

Through the media or the *Kaqa-z-i Akhba* newspaper he published and the book he wrote, Mirza Saleh Shirazi introduced modernization through European culture to Iranian society (Hirbohd Hedayat, 2019). Iranian ruler Muhammad Reza Pahlavi and intellectual and modernist Islam Ali Shari'ati were among the figures who at his time had the opportunity to gain knowledge in European / Western countries. Some of the reasons why it was important to establish modern universities at that time. First, madrasas as traditional higher education institutions were considered irrelevant in keeping up with the times (John H. Lorentz, 1971). Second, sending students to Europe has often received sharp criticism from some scholars, because they are considered too imitating the West (westernization) or too dependent on Western education, and have almost fallen into the current of westernization (KS Ann Lambton, 1994). Third, sending students to Europe carried out by the rulers of the Qajar dynasty in the early 18th century is considered less significant influence on the modernization of Iran. So for that, Nasser al Din Shah and prime minister Mirza Muhammad Taqi Khan Farahan or better known as Amir Kabir then established an institution. The first modern indigenous higher education is the Dar al Funun Polytechnic (school of science) in 1851/1852 in Taheran, following the modern Austrian curriculum and French, English and Persian as the languages of instruction. In 1919 a first teacher college called Dar-almuallemin was also founded to train prospective educators in Iran.

The lecturers or lecturers who teach at this college come from professors who are imported from Europe. The main concern of this school is the modernization of the army, in addition to other scientific subjects such as mechanical engineering, mining, medicine, pharmacy, music, painting and language (French, English and Russian). Because of that, the teachers were deliberately imported from the Western world, especially from France and Austria. Not too long after that, a second Dar al Funun was established in Tabriz.

In 1934 under the Pahlavi dynasty or to be precise in the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi, the first modern university was also founded by merging several institutes into Taheran University. After World War II universities were established in other major cities, such as in Tabriz, Esfahan, Mashhad, Shiraz, and Ahvaz. Until 1978 there were 243 higher education institutions in Iran, consisting of 21 universities and 149 institutes or academies with a total student population of 160,000 (M. Hussein, Freshtech).

A number of other universities established until the 1970s included: Tabriz University (1947), Meshed University (Mashhad, 1949), Esfahan University (1949), Ferdowsi University, Gondishapour University / Sitas Ahvas University (1955), Pahlavi

University or Shiraz University (1960), National Iranian University (1961), and Aryamehr Technical University (1965), (M. Nooor Fuady, 2016).

The educational curriculum in modern Islamic schools then not only teaches Islamic religious knowledge, but also includes science education materials such as physics, biology, geometry, mathematics, astronomy and foreign languages, and so on in the educational curriculum of modern Islamic schools. In its implementation, maktab and madrasa must also comply with government regulations and regulations with the obligation to follow the curriculum of the ministry of education and Persian as the language of instruction.

As already stated that before modernization 95% of Iranian society could not write and read (illiterate). Traditional Islamic education such as maktab and madrasa managed by traditional scholars could not reach all Iranian society. After the enactment of the education law, the Qajar and Pahlavi governments carried out a broad movement to eradicate illiteracy. By forming a team (Literate Corp) consisting of soldiers and alumni of existing colleges, the targets are teenagers and adults who are not yet able to read the al-Qur'an. According Hasbullah (2019) Al-Quran is a revelation by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad through the Angel Jibreel, to be conveyed to Muslims, and the Al-Qur'an is as a guide and rule of life for Muslims that are historical and normative. Al-Qur'an is the main source in Islamic teachings and in the Qur'an itself contains several functions including, some of which function as syifa '(antidote from illness) and some that function as dhikr (Sinaga in Rahman, 2016: 50). According to Nirwana (2020) Although the Al-Quran and Hadith in Arabic, but it was not intended for Arabs only, but to all human beings.

Along with the modernization process the need for knowledge, especially those of a non-religious nature such as accounting, language, law, technology, and pharmacy, is increasing. On the other hand, modern thinkers see that the progress of a nation cannot be separated from education, thus according to them education must be given nationally to all Iranian society. So after the constitutional reform (1905-1907), on the suggestion and support of a number of intellectuals, a national scale primary and secondary education system was formed, one of which was mandated by the importance of establishing new elementary level schools under the supervision of the Ministry of Education Iran (Wizarat e Ma'aref).

To realize the modernization of education in Iran, in 1906-1907 the Qajar dynasty rulers then issued a number of laws related to the education system. The implementation of education has thus been regulated in a statutory system which, among other things, is related to issues around compulsory basic education which is provided free of charge, modernization of basic education and the establishment of universities.

Education in Iran is managed centrally (centralized). Through the existing education system law, rights and obligations between the government and the community are regulated, both regarding financing, management, the curriculum, especially issues related to equality between men and women in obtaining education.

The Madrasah education system includes curriculum, systems, and teacher competencies, post-modernization is regulated in a law called Neẓām-nāma-ye makāteb-emaḥallī issued by the Higher Education Council in 1924. The overall implementation of madrasas as traditional Islamic educational institutions is regulated in the statute.

The education budget then receives attention from the government, including private schools also receive government assistance or subsidies for education salaries and education personnel, in addition to assistance from parents or community users of education services.

Kuttab and madrasa are the only models of education that developed in Iran around the 18th century or before the modernization era. The authority or implementation of kuttab and madrasah education which is entirely in the hands of the ulama is considered to be no longer relevant enough in responding to development demands. So in the Qajar dynasty or in the government of Nasser al Din Shah and continued by his son Muzaffar al-Din Shah, with the input of his prime minister Mirza Ali Khan Amin al-Daulah he then expanded the establishment of primary and secondary schools to the village level by reforming or modernizing the maktab system. and existing traditional madrasas.

Haj Mirza Hasan Rushdiya with the support of Mirza Ali Khan has founded the first modern Rushdiye madrasah in Tabriz. Besides a scholar named Mirza Muhammad Tabataba'i also founded the modern Islamic Madrasah-yi along with his son Mirza Sayyid Muhammad Sadiq Tabataba'i who is also a scholar. By 1898 there were 17 modern elementary schools established in Iran, including 11 in Taheran and 6 in several cities such as Rasht, Mashhad, Tabriz and Bushihr which are generally private and for the Muslim community (Soli Shavhar).

During its development, the modern schools built by Rushdiya became a model for the establishment of existing public primary and secondary schools. By implementing compulsory basic education, as well as recognition of women's rights in obtaining education, it has significantly reduced illiteracy rates, as well as an increase in the number of students, especially female students, who receive education. For example, from 120 female students in 1923 to 1346 in 1929.

Pre-modern Islamic schools did not recognize a level or class system. In the era of modernization of education, schools are organized into several levels of classes consisting of:

1. Elementary School (Dabestan) 5 years
2. Junior High School (early Dabiristan) 3 years
3. Senior High School 3 years
4. Higher Education (University)

The efforts to modernize / renew education that were carried out in Iran during the period 1797-1979 under the rule of the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties have made a positive contribution to the progress of Iran in general. Even though the modernization program did not completely run smoothly, at least Iran was able to catch up with the European world, just like other countries in the Middle East in general. This is none other than because the new contact with the European world has led to the birth of a number of new Iranian thinkers who have pushed for modernization / renewal, especially in the education sector.

The 20 modern primary and secondary schools for children from lower middle class families have been established in Taheran and other large cities. Private schools which had tended to run their own curriculum and government schools were then organized under a national education system. And last but not least, the modernization of education has been able to reduce illiteracy and disparities / discrimination in education acquisition among Iranian society, with the issuance of a number of regulations on compulsory basic education for 8 years.

The free and compulsory education provided to citizens has increased people's participation and awareness of learning every year, which in turn also encourages the birth of new intellectual classes in society. Dependence on outside experts can be minimized by having a large number of educated human resources (undergraduate) who are ready to fill various vacancies or positions in both government and in the business and industrial sectors.

Efforts to reform Islamic education in Iran cannot be separated from the role of several figures, including Nasser al-Din, Amir Kabir, Malkum Khan, Spahsalar, and Tabrizi and others.

### **3.1 Nasser al Din Shah Qajar**

Nāṣer al-Dīn Shāh, also known as Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh (born 17 July 1831, near Tabrīz, Iran and died on 1 May 1896, in Taherān). He was appointed ruler of Iran from 1848-1896, after the death of his father Mohammad Shah. He is known as a reformist and modernist who was very instrumental in the modernization of Iran. Nāṣer al-Dīn Shāh continues the reform and modernization efforts made by his predecessor. Together with Mirza Taqi Amir Kabir, founded the first modern Iranian school Dar al Funun in 1851 in Taheran, he also sent 100 people back to study in Europe and sent 42 alumni of Dar al Funun to Europe (1858) - then gave the government a strategic position in Persia.

In carrying out Iran's modernization mission, Nasser al Din tried to limit the authority or intervention of the ulama in government, including in the education sector which for centuries was in the authority of the clergy. In the hands of the clergy at that time, science was stagnant and did not develop. Nasser al Din was the first Shah to visit Europe. Together with his advisors he carried out bureaucratic reforms and opened new modern schools. During his reign, a completely new western scientific and technological discipline was introduced to Iranian society. Therefore, during his reign, he received a lot of opposition from the ulama because of his policies that were considered too imitating the west / Europe.

He also played a role in the establishment of a number of new colleges, including establishing two new military colleges and expanding the Dar al Funun in Tabriz. During his time foreign missionary schools were also established in Iran. In his time also stood the first printing press and translation school. In his leadership 160 foreign language books have been translated into Persian.

In this era, the Constitutional Law and Ministry of Education institutions were formed whose purpose was to coordinate and ensure the implementation of education in Iran nationally, killing education to reach all Iranian people, where every village must have a school, besides education must also be provided free of charge and compulsory, and eliminating the egalitarian aspect of the world of education which has been dominated by men.

### **3.2 Mirza Taqi Khan (Amir Kabir)**

Mirza Muhammad Taqi Khan Farahani or better known as Amir Kabir (1806-1852) was the most accomplished vizier (greatest prime minister) in the "Qajar dynasty". He is known as the first father of reform and modernization in Iran. Within 3 years he has succeeded in laying a number of basic foundations in the modernization process in Iran. she started her career as a secretary and worked with the crown prince. He concluded that important and fundamental reforms are necessary if Iran is to survive as a sovereign state.

As Prime Minister, Mirza Taqi Khan (1848-1851) on several occasions he visited Europe such as Russia to observe the life and development of institutions including factories, hospitals, companies and education. He later became prime minister in the government of Naser al-Din Shah, and because of his expertise, Shah later gave him the title Amir Kabir.

In 1848, when Naser al-Din became Shah of Iran, he chose Mirza Taqi Khan Amir-e Nezam as chief minister, with the title Amir Kabir. As a prime minister, he did very well, almost no aspects of state life escaped his observation, including education. At that time a



number of factories, trade facilities, were built, and the most important thing was to initiate the establishment of the first modern school of the Dar al Funun polytechnic in Taheran in 1853 and it was started by employing teachers and technicians from Europe, inaugurating the modern postal system, establishing a modern translation and press bureau. , founded the first newspaper Vaghayeh Etefaghiyeh, restructuring the judicial system, eliminating the sale of office, and it also limits the authority of clergy from interfering in government affairs including education.

In the course of his career he also founded a newspaper called Rūz-nāma-ye waqāye‘-e ettefāqīya in Persian language. He wants to provide enlightenment or education to the Iranian people through the media he publishes. No more than two years of his leadership, in 1853 Amir Kabir was later killed in Kashan due to incitement from his own family (his mother-in-law) who wanted to usurp the throne from the crown prince.

### 3.3 Haj Mirza Hasan Rushdiya

Haj Mirza Hasan or also known as "Rushdiyyih" is an Iranian reformist and modernist. he was the first Muslim to establish the first modern secondary school in Iran (Tabriz) in 1887/1888. Inspired by European schools, he founded the modern madrasah ye-Rushdiya in Tabriz. However, the establishment of modern schools by Rushdiya turned out to be challenged by scholars who had long monopolized education in Iran. He was even labeled as an apostate or disbeliever, he was also labeled as a Baha'ist, because of that the school founded by Rushdiya was eventually destroyed by the ulama in Tabriz and groups who opposed the establishment of modern schools, modern facilities such as blackboards, tables and benches were destroyed (Soli Shavhar, 2009).

Rushdiya then left Tabriz for Egypt, after he saw the great confrontation of the scholars against the establishment of the modern school. When Amin al-Daulah became governor of Tabriz he then sent a telegraph to Haj Mirza Hasan Rushdiya, asking him to return to Tabriz and re-establish a modern school in Tabriz. After Amin al-Daulah became the Prime Minister of Iran, Rushdyih then established a modern school in Taheran in 1898 with the full support of Mirza Ali Khan Amin al-Daulih with 400 students as the first registrants.

To support the continuity of the school founded by Rushdiyyi, he then formed Anjuman Ma'arif, a kind of organization that cares about education (school committee or board of trustees). After Amin al-Sultan was appointed prime minister replacing Amin al-Daulah he then formed Shura-yi 'Aali-yi Ma'arifas the highest advisory board in the field of education. but one thing is certain, that Rushdiya has encouraged the opening of several modern schools at a later date. Pera teaching staff who once taught at the Rushdyi school later founded modern schools in Iran. Simultaneously with the establishment of the modern Rushdiyya school, a number of enlightened Shi'i scholars such as Sheikh Hadi Najmabadi and Mirza Sayyid Muhammad Tabataba'i also established a modern Islamic school called Madrasah-yi Islam.

## IV. Conclusion

In general, the modernization of education in Iran was motivated by the development of science and technology in European countries and the defeat of the Iranian army against the Russian army which invaded parts of Iran (1804 and 1826). The initial steps taken by Fath Ali Khan as Shah of Iran and son Abbas Mirza's crown in renewal (modernization) in his country is to improve diplomatic relations with European countries, one of which is by sending troops to study in Europe as well as bringing foreign educators/trainers to Iran.

Despite the opposition of most clergy who are conservative (traditional), the Iranian government, supported by reformist and modernist Iranian intellectuals, has carried out modernization programs in various sectors/fields, especially in the field of education, including Islamic education. Traditional religious schools such as kuttab and madrasa which have long developed in Iran, although managed privately but are subject to government authority by implementing programs or regulations that have been established by the government through the Ministry of National Education.

*Dar al Fununis* the first modern school in Iran which in its development Dar al Funun alumni then played many roles in spreading the idea of modernization, filling strategic positions in government, as well as being part of a new intellectual group in Iran. Through new ideas and thoughts of intellectuals, especially through books. the books they wrote, and the newspapers they published, the modernization process in Iran was carried out.

The process of modernizing Islamic education in Iran reached its peak during the reign of the Pahlavi dynasty with the widespread distribution of state schools and new Islamic modern schools established by Islamic figures in almost all regions of the country. Among the modernization programs carried out especially during the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasty governments were: 1) eradicating illiteracy, 2) expanding the establishment of modern schools, 3) building educational systems or institutions, and 4) modifying the primary and secondary level curriculum and 5) helping education financing, 6) increasing women's participation in gaining access to education and 7) establishing higher education institutions, and building a national education system that regulates the implementation of education both public and private.

After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the modernization of Islamic education continued to be encouraged by arranging the Iranian education system based on the principles of Islamic teachings, without neglecting the modern education that had developed in the pre-revolutionary government, namely balancing religious education, science and technology.

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