

# The Role of Ottoman Rushdiah Schools in the Formation of the Modern Education System in Iran

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## 1. Introduction

Iran went through some political, social, and cultural transformations with the Constitutional Monarchy movement that started during the Qajar period. Following the Western model, the statesmen of the period initiated reforms in many areas in the country. The reforms adopted in the cultural field include the establishment of a printing house, sending students to Europe, the foundation of *Dār ul-Funun* (literally “House of Sciences”, referring to first modern university), the travels of intellectuals and statesmen abroad, and translation activities.

In the same period, also in the Ottoman Empire, Iran’s close neighbor, improvements took place in several fields. Many Iranian poets, writers, and intellectuals found out about these modernization movements through newspapers and magazines, and also thanks to their visits to Istanbul.

During the Qajar period, the developments in the West and the reforms carried out in Iran’s close neighbor Ottoman Empire, caused changes and improvements in political, social, and cultural fields in Iran. Thanks to the activities especially in the cultural field, Iranians had the opportunity to closely follow the reformist movements in the West and the Ottoman Empire. The reform advocates, who got acquainted with modern educational institutions and textbooks, started to criticize the education system of that period.

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The statesman of the period, Amir Kabir, was introduced to the modern education system and new sciences as a result of his travels to Russia and the Ottoman Empire. In order to enhance scientific literacy of Iranians, Amir Kabir supported the idea of bringing the scientific methods and techniques developed by these countries to Iran. During his trip to Russia, he visited several educational institutions in Tbilisi and got acquainted with modern teaching techniques.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Amir Kabir realized one of the most important reforms in the field of education in Iran by establishing *Dār ul-Funun* in 1852.

The developments in the field of education during the Qajar period were not limited to *Dār ul-Funun*. Intellectuals like Mirza Fatali Akhundov, Melkoum Khān, Abdul'Rahim Talibov, Hajj Zayn al-Ābedīn Marāga'ī, Yūsuf Khan Musteshāruddavla, Mīrzā Takī Khān Kāshānī, Mīrzā Hasan Tabrīzī, and Yahyā Dovletābādī also took part in activities such as opening new schools, changing the alphabet and preparing books suitable for children.

One of these intellectuals, Mīrzā Hasan Tabrīzī, opened new schools throughout the country and made significant contribution to the formation of the modern education system in Iran. Mīrzā Hasan Tabrīzī was born in 1851 in the Cherendāb district of Tabriz. His father, Mullah Mahdī Tabrīzī, is one of Tabriz's prominent clergymen. He went to the traditional school in Tabriz for primary school education. Mīrzā Hasan, who was not satisfied with the quality of education and the teacher there, came to the school early every morning and gave lectures to the students and took care of their education personally. After taking grammar, syntax, *fiqh*, Arabic and literature lessons, he started to work as an imam in one of the mosques in Tabriz. After a while, Mīrzā Hasan decided to continue his education in Najaf. However, he abandoned this idea and went to Beirut in 1881 and studied at *Dārulmuallimīn* (literally "House of Teachers", referring to teacher training institute) for two years. Upon his return to homeland after completing his education, Mīrzā Hasan, in line with the knowledge and experience he gained in Beirut and Istanbul, put in considerable effort to open schools

<sup>1</sup> Ikbāl Kāsimī Pūyā, *Medāris-i Cedīd Der Dove-re-i Kācāriye, Bāniyān ve Pishrevān* (Tehran: Dānishgāhī, 1998), 132-133.

that provide education in a modern style in Iran.<sup>2</sup> Although this attempt failed many times, he did not give up and led the drive for the establishment of modern-style primary schools in Iran.

Mīrzā Hasan Tabrīzī attempted to open educational institutions in a modern style, based on an article he read in the *Akhtar* newspaper. In one of his visits to Istanbul, Tabrīzī had the opportunity to closely observe the functioning of the *Rushdiyyah* schools<sup>3</sup> in the Ottoman Empire and the education methods used in these schools attracted his attention. In line with his observations, he focused his studies on the phonetic alphabet as it was easy to learn. He went to Yerevan in 1883 and established a school for Muslim children in the Caucasus where modern teaching methods were applied for the first time. Mīrzā Hasan, who authored many works, published a Turkish book called *Vatan Dili* (Homeland Language) to teach children how to read and write. Naser al-Din Shah Qajar had visited the *Rushdiyyah* school in Yerevan on his return from the European expedition and showed interest in this new school. He invited Mīrzā Hasan to Iran and encouraged him to open a school in Tabriz. Thus, Mīrzā Hasan, with the influence of the *Rushdiyyah* schools in the Ottoman Empire, laid the foundations of new educational institutions in Iran and started to be called as Mīrzā Hasan Rushdiyyah from then on.

While Mīrzā Hasan was conducting some cultural activities throughout the country, he received negative reactions from some statesmen. Mīrzā Ali Asger Khān Atābek ordered Mīrzā Hasan to be sent away from Tehran and his school to be shut down.<sup>4</sup> However, Mīrzā Hasan continued his activities and published a newspaper called *Maktab* (school) to convey his thoughts to the people of Iran. Aynuddavla ordered the Tehran judge Nīruddevle to exile Mīrzā Hasan and two friends of his to Kalat, as the newspaper contained harsh criticism about himself and censorship.<sup>5</sup>

After his release following the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy, Mīrzā Hasan spent the last years of his life in the city

2 Fahreddin Rushdiye, *Zindegīnāme-i Pīr-i Ma'ārif Rushdiye* (Tehran: Hirmend, 1991), 20-21; Muhammed Hādī Muhammedī and Zuhre Kāyīnī, *Tārīh-i Edebiyāt-i Kūdekān-i Irān* c. III (Tahran: Chīstā, 2005), 192; Azer Aslan (Zeytabī), "Tebrizli Mirza Hasan Rūşdiye" (Mīrzā Hasan Rushdiyyah from Tabriz), *Turkic World History and Culture Journal* 162 (2000): 16.

3 Elementary schools of the time.

4 Ikbāl Kāsīmī Pūyā, *Medāris-i Cedīd DerDovre-i Kācāriye, Bāniyān ve Pishrevān*, 197.

5 Rushdiye, *Zindegīnāme-i Pīr-i Ma'ārif Rushdiye*, 114.

of Qom in Iran. He created special classes for the visually impaired and implemented a special education program. Mīrzā Hasan died in Qom in 1945, at the age of 97.<sup>6</sup>

In this study, the establishment and development processes of the *Rushdiyyah* schools in Iran and the Ottoman Empire, two neighboring countries, will be tackled and the effects of the Ottoman *Rushdiyyah* Schools on Iran's modern education system will be examined. In the second part, the historical background of *Rushdiyyah* schools and education reforms in Iran will be explained.

## 2. Historical Background of *Rushdiyyah* Schools in Iran

*Dār ul-Funun*, which was established during the Qajar period, played a very effective role in shaping the primary education of the country. Between the years of 1852-1891, more than a hundred thousand students received education at this institution. People who learned foreign languages and received Western-style education in these schools explored the cultural atmosphere of developed countries and a new education system. Therefore, they felt the need to make changes in the education system in their country and to open new types of primary education institutions, since in that period primary, secondary, and higher education institutions were one single entity.<sup>7</sup>

The state of education in Iran during the Qajar period was reported in the newspapers, as well. In the newspapers of the time such as *Akhtar*, *Sureyyā*, *Hablu'l-metīn*, there were articles on modern teaching techniques and schools providing education in a modern style, and criticizing the education system in Iran. In the newspaper *Akhtar*, schools and teaching methods in Iran were criticized as follows:

No science was popular in Iran, except for *fiqh*, principles of Islamic jurisprudence, and public schools which provided elementary level education. There were a few schools in Tehran and Tabriz where foreign languages were taught, but they were not at the desired level, either".<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Rushdiye, *Zindegīnāme-i Pīr-i Ma'ārif Rushdiye*, 236.

<sup>7</sup> Muhammedī and Kāyīnī, *Tārīh-i Edebiyāt-i Kūdekān-i Irān*, 190-191.

<sup>8</sup> Māshāllāh Ādjūdānī, *Meshrūte-i Irānī* (Tehran: Ahterān, 2003), 260.

Mīrzā Hasan Tabrīzī read another article in *Akhtar* newspaper criticizing the education system in Iran, and as he was studying in traditional schools and facing some problems at first hand, he strove to launch modern educational institutions. The article in the newspaper stated that while ten out of every thousand people abroad were illiterate, only ten out of a thousand people in Iran were literate. As a result, Mīrzā Hasan gave up the idea of going to Najaf and went to Beirut in 1881 to do research on the state of education in countries other than Iran and the alphabet teaching techniques used.<sup>9</sup>

After finishing the school, he left Beirut with the intention of initiating a school in Iran, and went to Istanbul to visit the schools there. In the same period, Iranians living in Istanbul also established a school there for their children, based on the model of the Ottoman administrative schools.<sup>10</sup> Mīrzā Hasan Tabrīzī, who had the opportunity to familiarize himself with the *Rushdīyah* School in the Ottoman Empire, was deeply interested in the educational methods applied there. As a result of the observations he made in the *Rushdīyah* School, he focused on the phonetic alphabet as it is easy to learn and set his mind on the idea of opening a modern school. However, since Iran was in a socially complicated period, he implemented the idea of opening a school by going to Yerevan in 1883 and established the first modern school for Muslim children there and received the nickname *Rushdīyah*.<sup>11</sup> The first transformation Mīrzā Hasan *Rushdīyah* made in the teaching methods was to teach children how to write in Turkish instead of teaching the words in the *Amma juz* for easy learning. Writing in Turkish was not very popular in Yerevan and the Turkish-speaking regions of Iran at that time. Turkish-speaking children were introduced to Persian texts like *Gulistan* after learning the Quran. Consequently, Mīrzā Hasan *Rushdīyah* published the book *Vatan Dili* (Homeland Language) in Turkish to teach children in Yerevan how to read and write.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Rushdiye, Zindegīnāme-i Pīr-i Ma'ārif Rushdiye*, 20; Ājūdānī, *Meshrūte-i Irānī*, 260; Rahīm Reīsnīyā, *Irān ve Osmānī Der Āstāne-i Karn-i Bīstom* vol. I (Tabriz: Sutūde, 1995), 401; Ahmed Kisrevī, *Tārīh-i Meshrūte-i Irān* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1978), 40.

<sup>10</sup> Reīsnīyā, *Irān ve Osmānī Der Āstāne-i Karn-i Bīstom* vol. II, 825.

<sup>11</sup> *Rushdiye, Zindegīnāme-i Pīr-i Ma'ārif Rushdiye*, 20.

<sup>12</sup> Mes'ūd Tāre, "Shīve-i Novīn-i Āmūzish-i Ibtidāyī Der Dovre-i Kācār", *Mecelle-i Tārīh-i Ilim* 2 (2014): 167.

Naser al-Din Shah Qajar visited the *Rushdiyyah* school in Yerevan on his return from his European expedition and met with the founder of the school, Mīrzā Hasan. During the meeting, Mīrzā Hasan requested such schools to be established in Iran so that Iranian children could benefit from these schools. Thereupon, Naser al-Din Shah Qajar invited him to Iran and Mīrzā Hasan entrusted the school to his brother and set out for Iran with the Shah. However, Mīrzā Hasan's conversation with the Shah about the school and the Shah's interest in the ideas of Mīrzā Hasan frightened those around the Shah. As a consequence, they put pressure on the Shah claiming that establishing a modern-style school in Iran would endanger his reign and that it would be a mistake to support Mīrzā Hasan on this issue. Unable to withstand the pressure, the Shah ordered one of the people with him to host Mīrzā Hasan in Nakhichevan in order to prevent him from coming to Tehran until the Shah reached there. In fact, it is told that Mīrzā Hasan commented "اسما قوناق رسما دوستاق", that is "nominally a guest, but de facto a captive" about this situation.<sup>13</sup>

When the Shah arrived in Tehran, Mīrzā Hasan was released and he returned to Yerevan, only to see that his school was closed. As a result, he got permission to go to Iran with the help of his friends and went to his home town Tabriz. Despite countless difficulties he faced in Tabriz, he opened the school in 1886 in the mosque located in Sheshgelan district. However, this school was seen as a danger by the people who gave education in the traditional-style schools called *maktabhane* and Iranian people were provoked against the new school.<sup>14</sup> Opponents of the newly-founded school accused Mīrzā Hasan Rushdiyyah, who taught the alphabet with a new method, of converting Iranian children to Christianity. Following a fatwa Āyetullāh Seyyid Ali Yezdī issued stating "They gave money to Mīrzā Hasan Rushdiyyah to convert children to Protestantism." the school was shut down.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Rushdiyye, *Zindegīnāme-i Pīr-i Ma'ārif Rushdiyye*, 21-22; Kāsimī Pūyā, *Medāris-i Cedid Der Dove-i Kācāriye, Bāniyān ve Pishrevān*, 191.

<sup>14</sup> Rushdiyye, *Zindegīnāme-i Pīr-i Ma'ārif Rushdiyye*, 28; Huseyn Mahbūbī Erdekānī, *Tārīh-i Muessesāt-i Temeddōnī-yi Cedid Der Irān*, vol. I (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tahrān, 1991), 376.

<sup>15</sup> Gaffār Abdullāhī Metnek, "Mutalaa-i Tatbīkī-yi Islahat-i Āmūzishī-i Mīrzā Hasan Rushdiyye ve Ismail Gaspīralı," *Tārīhnāme-i Irān Ba'd Ez Islam* 10, (2015): 110.

Mīrzā Hasan went to Mashhad due to the criticism he received for his attempts to open a school. Mīrzā Hasan returned to Tabriz after a short while and launched the school for the second time in the district of Bazaar. Mīrzā Hasan used the traditional education methods similar to *maktabhane* in this new school because he was afraid of objections, which he eventually received from opponents of modernity.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Mīrzā Hasan sought to open schools in other districts of Tabriz such as Cherendāb and Novber, but these attempts failed every time.

Mīrzā Hasan Rushdīyah founded a school this time in Mashhad due to the problems he experienced in Tabriz, but a few months later the traditionalist educators of Mashhad plundered the school. Consequently, Mīrza Hasan Rushdīyah returned to Tabriz again and established a school in Leylā Ābād which continued its activities for three years. The school offered classes to both adults and children and provided ninety hours of literacy lessons, as a result, Rushdīyah gained the support of the people. However, this school was also plundered and destroyed by the opponents. Mīrzā Hasan Rushdīyah went to the Caucasus to meet with Tālibof until things calmed down.<sup>17</sup>

When Mīrzā Ali Khan Eminuddavla was appointed as the governor of Azerbaijan, he invited Rushdīyah to Tabriz and established a big school in Sheshgelan district by taking him under his protection. He provided course materials and clothing to approximately sixty students.<sup>18</sup> When Mīrzā Ali Khan Eminuddavla was appointed as the grand vizier by Mozaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar, he persuaded the Shah to establish a new school in Tehran under the rule of Rushdīyah, and with the support of Eminuddavla, Mīrzā Hasan succeeded in opening the school in 1897. Steps were taken to establish the Education Council in the same school. Eminuddavla provided scholarships to forty orphans in this school, therefore the *Rushdīyah* schools became officially under the auspices of the state. In a short time, the interest for the school increased, the children

<sup>16</sup> Kāsimī Pūyā, *Medāris-i Cedīd Der Dove-i Kācāriye, Bāniyān ve Pishrevān*, 192.

<sup>17</sup> Muhammedī and Kāyīnī, *Tārīh-i Edebiyāt-i Kūdekān-i Irān*, 193; Rushdīye, *Medāris-i Cedīd Der Dove-i Kācāriye, Bāniyān ve Pishrevān*, 30.

<sup>18</sup> Rushdīye, *Zindegīnāme-i Pīr-i Ma'ārif Rushdīye*, 34; Kāsimī Pūyā, *Medāris-i Cedīd Der Dove-i Kācāriye, Bāniyān ve Pishrevān*, 195.

of the notable people of the time enrolled and the number of the students reached three hundred and thirty-three. The intellectuals with the support and assistance of Mozaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar and Eminuddavla, took initiatives to open other schools and spread education. Thus, the number of schools providing education in a modern style increased day by day in Iran.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Educational Innovations in *Rushdīyah* School: Phonetic Alphabet and Course Contents

The phonetic alphabet was one of the greatest conveniences provided to students by the *Rushdīyah* schools. Traditional methods used in alphabet teaching caused retardation in the learning process, while with the phonetic alphabet method in 3-4 months students could read and write. In this context, Mīrzā Hasan explained the reason why *Rushdīyah* schools became widespread in Iran as follows:

The reason why students preferred this schools and others that provide education in a modern style was that the teaching methods used in these institutions were more student-friendly. According to the parents, the children learned how to read and write in less than 4-5 months. After these changes in teaching techniques, many other schools were opened.<sup>20</sup>

His son Shamsaddin conveys the views of *Rushdīyah* about the development in the education system thanks to the phonetic alphabet as follows:

The most valuable service I have done is not to establish a school in Iran. If I had not done this job, sooner or later somebody else would have. The most valuable service I have done is to create a phonetic alphabet that is easy to teach and save those poor students from the difficult ways and troubles. With this method, the slow learners learn how to read and write in sixty days.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ājūdānī, *Meshrūte-i Irānī*, 260; Rahīm Reīsniyā, *Irān ve Osmānī Der Āstāne-i Karn-i Bīstom* vol. I, 407.

Isfendiyār Mu'temedī, "Muallimān-i Bozorg-i Irān Mīrzā Hasan Rushdiye," *Rushd-i Muallim* 243 (2009): 41.

Rushdiye, *Zindegānāme-i Pīr-i Ma'ārif Rushdiye*, 40; Kāsimī Pūyā, *Medāris-i Cedīd Der Dovre-i Kācāriye*, 288.

<sup>20</sup> Kāsimī Pūyā, *Medāris-i Cedīd Der Dovre-i Kācāriye, Bāniyān ve Pīshrevān*, 288.

<sup>21</sup> Shemseddin Rushdiye, *Sevānih-i Omr* (Tehran: Tārīh-i Irān, 1983), 23-24.



Instead of teaching how to read words or letters as in the *maktabhane*, Rushdīyah first taught the sounds of the letters and then expressed the sounds of the letters that made up the words one by one with the help of Arabic diacritics. For example, in teaching of the word راب, the sounds /b/, /a/, /r/ possessed by the letters ب, ا and ر were emphasized and it was stated that these sounds came together to form the word راب. So, the children were writing the sounds separately in order to recognize the letters of each word.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the change in the alphabet teaching method, there were changes in the course contents and materials, as well. Mīrzā Hasan Rushdīyah prepared primary school textbooks for the first time in Iran. Rushdīyah wrote approximately twenty-seven books, and published these books by his own means. One of them, *Bidāyatu't-Ta'lim*, is a three-volume work written for the first grade of primary school. The first volume is for the first two months of first grade, the second and third volumes are for the last five months of the school year. The first volume of *Nihāyetu't-Ta'lim* is about Persian grammar and the second volume is about scientific issues. He also has works titled *Kifāyetu't-Ta'lim* on Persian orthography, *Hidāyetu't-Ta'lim* where teaching methods are explained to teachers, *Sad Ders* written for second graders, *Shar'iyāt-i Ibtidāyī*, *Sarf-i Fārsī*, *Terbiyetu'l-benāt*, *Te'dibu'l-benāt*, *Ahlāk*, *Usūl-i 'Akāyid* consisting of 6 volumes, and *Tabsīratu's-sibyān*.<sup>23</sup>

In the Ottoman Empire and Iran, books covering religious and literary knowledge were taught in institutions that provided education in traditional style. Although these books are not excluded from the schools that offer education in a modern style, their curriculum includes courses covering new sciences.

In Ottoman *Rushdīyah* schools, classes of religion, Ottoman grammar, spelling and writing, Arabic and Persian in the new style, mathematics, bookkeeping method, *tersim-i hudūd*, the basics of geometry, general history and Ottoman history, geography, and gymnastics were taught. In addition, the students learned

<sup>22</sup> Kāsimī Pūyā, *Medāris-i Cedīd Der Dovre-i Kācāriye*, 201.

<sup>23</sup> Kāsimī Pūyā, *Medāris-i Cedīd Der Dovre-i Kācāriye*, 211.  
Isfendiyār Mu'temedī, "Kitābhā-yi Dersī Der Irān Ez Te'sīs-i Dāru'l-funūn Tā Inklāb-i Islāmī 1230-1357", *Tārīh-i Mu'āsīr-i Irān* 27 (2003): 10.

the language most frequently used in the place where the school is located, and those who wished could take French lessons in the fourth year in places where trade activities are intense.<sup>24</sup>

When we take into consideration the schools in Iran, we see that the course contents are similar. Religious sciences dominated the course contents of the first *Rushdiyyah* in Tabriz. The underlying reason was to prevent possible negative reactions from those who favor traditional education. In the *Rushdiyyah* schools in Tabriz, the translation of the Qur'an, translation of the prayers, *fiqh*, religious issues, *Gulistan*, *Ebvābu'l Jinān* that includes hadiths and the words of the imams written by Muhammed Vāiz Kazvīnī were taught. Later on, among the lectures taught, reading and writing by using the phonetic alphabet, *Sharia*, calculus, calligraphy, spelling, Persian grammar, (Persian textbook by Mīr Seyyid Sherīf Jurjānī called *Sarf-i Mīr* was used) syntax, geography and arithmetic lessons were included.<sup>25</sup>

Mīrzā Hasan Rushdiyyah prepared the curriculum in accordance with the age groups of the students and gave great importance to mother language learning. The curriculum applied in the first year of the *Rushdiyyah* schools he established in Tabriz was as follows: 150 hours of Turkish phonetic alphabet, 100 hours of Turkish reading, 50 hours of Turkish grammar, 50 hours of Persian grammar, 50 hours of Persian reading, 100 hours of new-style Arabic grammar, 50 hours of the Qur'an and the Qur'an verses, 20 hours of principles of Islamic jurisprudence, 50 hours of religious duties, 100 hours of calculus, 30 hours of history, 30 hours of geography on Tabriz map, 40 hours of calligraphy, 100 hours of Turkish, Persian and Arabic dictation, 40 hours of painting, 50 hours of physical education.<sup>26</sup>

The curriculum of the *Rushdiyyah* school in Tehran included courses such as the Qur'an, *Gulistan*, spelling and writing, ethics, grammar and syntax, history, *fiqh* and geography. After the *Rushdiyyah* schools

<sup>24</sup> Bayram Kodaman, *Abdülhamid Devri Eđitim Sistemi (Education System in the Hamidian Era)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), 94-94; Ayşegül Altınova Şahin, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Rüşdiyye Mektepleri (Rushdiyyah Schools in the Ottoman Empire)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2018), 236-237.

<sup>25</sup> Kāsimī Pūyā , *Medāris-i Cedīd Der Dove-re-i Kācāriye*, 288.

<sup>26</sup> Umīd Kanberī, *Zindeđināme ve Hidmāt-i İlmī ve Ferhengī-yi Zindeyād-i Mīrzā Hasan Rūshdiyye* (Tehran: Encumen-i Āsar ve Mefāhir-i Ferhengī, 2007), 11.

were put under the auspices of the state and the number of schools increased, geography, calculus, geometry, and different languages such as French and Russian were included in the curriculum.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4. Duration of Education, Administrative Staff, and Examination System

When *Rushdiyyah* schools were first opened in the Ottoman Empire, the education period was 4 years. After *Darulmaarif* (a modern education institution) was founded in 1850, it was extended to 6 years, in 1863 the education period was decreased to 5 years, and in 1869, it became 4 years in the education regulation.<sup>28</sup> The education period of the *Rushdiyyah* schools for girls, which was established in 1892 as a preparatory school for teachers' training school for girls, was determined as 6 years<sup>29</sup>. The duration of education at the *Rushdiyyah* schools established in Iran was 6 years.<sup>30</sup>

According to the instructions published on the administration of Istanbul *Rushdiyyah* schools, the management and teaching staff consist of a principal, an adequate number of teachers, a supervisor for each class, a doorman, and a janitor.<sup>31</sup> In addition to textbooks, Mirzā Hasan Rushdiyyah prepared a regulation covering the roles of principal, deputy principal, teacher, janitor, bookkeeper, parents, students, and school administration. Similar to the staff of *Rushdiyyah* schools in Istanbul, the staff specified by Mirzā Hasan for *Rushdiyyah* schools in Iran consists of a principal, a vice-principal, a teacher for each course, a doorman, a bookkeeper, and a librarian.<sup>32</sup>

Two exams were held in the Ottoman *Rushdiyyah* schools, namely, special examination and general examination. The special examination was a mid-term exam and was given by the teacher of the course every three months. General examination was carried out at the end of each academic year by the *mumeyyiz* (proctor) appointed by the administration of *Rushdiyyah* schools or middle

<sup>27</sup> Rushdiyye, *Sevānih-i Omr*, 67.

<sup>28</sup> Altınova Şahin, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Rüşdiyye Mektepleri (Rushdiyyah Schools in the Ottoman Empire)*, 236.

<sup>29</sup> Süleyman Tenger, "Rüştiye Mekteplerinin Tarihi Gelişimi ve Din Eğitimi ve Öğretimi" ["Historical Progress of Rushdiyyah Schools and Religious Education"] (Unpublished master thesis, Ankara University, 2005), 128.

<sup>30</sup> Kāsımī Püyā, *Medāris-i Cedīd Der Dovre-i Kācāriye*, 202.

<sup>31</sup> Tenger, "Rüştiye Mekteplerinin Tarihi Gelişimi ve Din Eğitimi ve Öğretimi" 75.

<sup>32</sup> Kāsımī Püyā, *Medāris-i Cedīd Der Dovre-i Kācāriye*, 207-210.

schools. *Mumeyyiz* were usually made up of teachers from other schools and did an oral exam.<sup>33</sup> At the *Rushdiyyah* schools in Iran, students were tested at the end of each academic year. Exams were held orally in the presence of parents and state officials.<sup>34</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

During the Qajar period, the schools that provided education in the traditional style could not meet the needs of the people. Students had problems in reading and writing, especially due to the traditional methods and course materials used in alphabet teaching. Iranians discovered the developments occurring in many areas in the West and the Ottoman Empire thanks to the newspapers published in this period. In addition, the travels of Iranian writers and intellectuals to the Ottoman Empire strengthened the cultural bonds between the two countries. One of these intellectuals, Mīrzā Hasan Rushdiyyah, in addition to the education he received in *Dārulmuallimīn*, visited the *Rushdiyyah* schools in Istanbul. In the light of the experience he gained there, he launched a *Rushdiyyah* school in Iran, and became the founder of the new education system of the country.

Mīrzā Hasan Rushdiyyah tried to minimize the problems encountered in education by using the phonetic alphabet and preparing textbooks. Although he experienced some obstacles and failures in his attempts to establish new schools, he pioneered the opening of modern-style schools at the primary school level throughout the country.

When we take the *Rushdiyyah* schools in the Ottoman Empire and Iran into consideration, the similarities of the course contents, teaching methods, administrative staff, and the duration of education are considerable. However, the establishment processes of these schools in the two countries differ. While the *Rushdiyyah* schools were opened with the support of the state in the Ottoman Empire, the schools in Iran were launched thanks to the efforts of an ordinary person named Mīrzā Hasan, and only after great struggle, they came under the state protection.

<sup>33</sup> Tenger, "Rüştiye Mekteplerinin Tarihi Gelişimi ve Din Eğitimi ve Öğretimi" (Historical Development of Rushdiyyah Schools and Religious Education), 126.

<sup>34</sup> Kāsımī Pūyā, *Medāris-i Cedīd Der Dovre-i Kācāriye*, 207.

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