

Impacts of the Integration of Islamic State with Neoliberalism on Iranian Teachers

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Abstract

Teachers' work in Iran has undergone two determining changes since 1979: The Islamicisation of the education system and, consequently, Islamic teacher education, with neoliberal policies, has accelerated in recent years. The authors believe Islamicisation has been integrated into neoliberal policies and together these have shaped teachers' practice in the last 40 years. This study examines the intertwined impacts of these two forces on teachers' work. To this end, we first present an analysis of economic reforms and the Islamicisation of education which affect teachers. We then review the findings on the impact of these two forces on three dimensions of the teaching practice that resulted from interviews with 16 teachers and studying the historical context: knowledge, autonomy, and teachers' networks.

Keywords: *teacher's work, Islamicisation, neoliberalism*

Introduction

Since the 1980s, the work of teachers has changed in terms of the decline of autonomy (Paufler, 2018), managerialism in schools (Lynch, 2014), the commodification of teacher professionalism (Bartell et al, 2019; Werler, 2016), and the precarization of the teaching work (Oliveira, 2004), which has reduced

the possibilities for a rich quality professionalism for teachers. These changes, which were the result of the global economic crisis in the highly developed countries, were later implemented in other countries through the World Bank and the IMF policies in the early 1980s with the stated aim to develop the economy of these countries (Oplatka 2018, p. 4). After the Iran-Iraq war and with a decade of delay and through the efforts of the post-revolutionary government to integrate with the international community (Abazari and Zakeri, 2019), Iran adopted the principles of structural adjustment reflected in the country's development programs (Alizadeh, 2003) under global sanctions and economic difficulty. After the war, the Islamic Republic of Iran made efforts to integrate more with globalization, including applying to join WTO in 1966, which failed (cited in Anderson, 2019, p. 653).

Initially, the Islamic Republic of Iran, like most Middle Eastern countries (Dalacoura, 2016; Karaman, 2013), had slogans relating to social equality and support for the oppressed groups of society (mostaz'afin). However, with respect to neoliberalism, the Islamic government of Iran did not consider neoliberal values as contrary to Iran's Islamic Revolution's values, in fact neoliberalism became part of its education system. (Noaparast, 2018). The education system in general and teachers specifically are essential in studying the integration of Islamism and Neoliberalism in Iran and other Islamic countries. This is essential because the Ministry of Education is the largest Ministry in Iran, and teachers constitute the largest group of state employees. They are greatly affected by the downsizing policy and have an ideological function for its general policy. Therefore, not only are Islamism and neoliberalism important in understanding teachers' current situation, but also teachers are one of the best groups to study regarding the intertwining of Islamism and neoliberalism. In shifting from a Revolutionary stance toward a neoliberal mode of governance, the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has not

abandoned its Islamic discourse. On the contrary, it has been able to maintain and advance its Islamist program by integrating it into neoliberalism. How does this integration occur regarding teachers?

Since 1979, Iranian teachers have been subjected to the Islamicisation of education. The Islamic Revolution (1979) and the following Cultural Revolution (1980-1983) changed the definition of the teachers as the guidance to implement Islamic society (Ummah) (Shorish 1988, p. 71). The former Teacher Training programs, among other academic centers, were changed in almost every aspect, by elevating faith above any professional characteristics the main character and virtue of teachers –which became the determinant factor from hiring teachers to evaluating them. All schools were announced to be Governmental (1980), making the education system highly centralized in the hands of major decision-making bodies, such as the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution (SCCR) and the Supreme Council of Education (SCE). Four decades of centralism with the absence of a middle level of policymaking and the least involvement of teachers in decision making in the education system (Miri and KhoramiNejad, 2019, p. 82) brought teachers into an unmediated relation with major decision-making bodies, in which educational policies were implemented indiscriminately through Circulars. The ideological centralization of education in the early years of the revolution aimed to limit the influence of opposition parties and groups in the education system in the aftermath of the Revolution (Student mobilization organization, 2021; Razavi, 2009, p. 2). In order to do so, elites of education made teachers' work dependent on 'devotion to the values of the Islamic Republic' and placed faith above professional values (Rajai, 1980; Musavi, 1985).

Although Iran adopted neoliberal reforms in 1989 under the Hashemi Rafsanjani government, the first grounds for the participation of the private

sector in education were rationalized by the traditional right-wing in the political structure from 1983 to 1984. Despite the explicit explanation of Article 30 of the constitution which states that the government must provide all citizens with free education up to secondary school, the chairman of the Guardian Council, in response to the secretary of the SCCR in explaining the Article, rejected the idea that schools and universities should be public and free, and declared that 'if necessary, the interpretation of the Article is negotiable' (The Guardian Council, 1986). The Guardian Council's interpretation of Article 30 made the establishment of non-profit schools possible. With the consolidation of the power of the Islamic Republic Party after the Cultural Revolution and the disappearance of opposition political parties and groups from schools and universities, which had been mainly composed of leftist groups (Ali Akbar, 1999) free education also lost its importance among the elites of Iran.

As mentioned above, in the aftermath of the revolution, the definition of the teaching profession altered. Although this redefinition goes back to Islamic concepts such as pietism (Taghva), it is crucial to mention private schools' pivotal role at the beginning and in the spread of the revolution, and later this became the main reason for the association of private schools with Islamism in education. In the second Pahlavi period (1941-1979), some non-profit schools were religious schools with relative autonomy to implement curricula with Islamic content. Like other religious institutions, these schools became centers for prominent revolutionary figures in the years leading up to the revolution. The students and teachers at these schools -such as the Islamic Education Society, Refah, and Alavi- played a crucial role in the downfall of the Pahlavi dynasty (Keddie, 1995, p. 189). They were able to bring together mullahs and religious elites with students and the younger generation (The Center of Historical Document Survey, 2021). Thus, it is essential to note that private schools were essentially ideological, so after 1979, these schools were

considered special schools that contributed significantly to the religious elites. Teachers were also recognized as agents for its implementation by the government bodies; the slogan 'teaching is the prophets' job' (Khomeini, v 9, p. 291) dominated the entire educational system. The main impact of this attitude on teachers was to establish increasing surveillance and unmediated relation between decision-makers and teachers. In order to consider religious and ideological criteria, an Islamic interview was added to teachers' admission (1982). The Cultural Revolution transformed teachers' practices into ideological disseminators by Islamization of sciences, especially humanities, educational content, and purges of counter-revolutionary groups at universities and schools (Gheissari 2009, p. 45). As a result, professional ethics declined, emphasizing contentment (Ghena'at) and pietism as the code of the prophetic life and, consequently, the life of a teacher instead of proficiency. This historical context changed the definition of the teacher and later facilitated the cheapening of teachers' labor and the temporization of contracts, which will be explored here later.

The Relation between Islamicisation and Minimal Government in the Education System

Article 30 of the Iranian Constitution explicitly states: 'The government must provide all citizens with free education up to secondary school and expand free higher education to the extent required by the country for attaining self-sufficiency.'

Although all schools were declared public and free in the first post-revolutionary governments, the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) and global sanctions (1979 to the present) were the first incentives for widespread privatization of education. Although the straightforward interpretation of Article 30 prohibited

the establishment of private schools, Safi, the chairman of the Guardian Council, reinterpreted the Article and conceded private schools in his reply to the Minister of Education:

Article 30 of the constitution and similar articles determine the system's general policy course. According to the law, the government's purpose is to distribute facilities at its disposal in all fields proposed by the constitution. It should be noted that implied from the 30th Article, public Education and probation of establishing private schools and universities is not according to ordinary law; however, as long as the government does not have the facilities to provide free education, the enactment of the Revolution Council (establishment of private schools) is not unconstitutional.

It was not until 1985 that the Revolutionary Parliament passed the law establishing non-profit schools, which came into force in 1989. It was an appealing decision for a country at war and had a budget deficit, considering that the Cultural Revolution maintained ideological surveillance of the schools and teachers. This phase laid the foundation for the 'Islamist private sector' in the education system after 1979. It showed that privatization with central control was possible; for example, schools like Alavi and Nikan became role models for new schools. The experience of centralized surveillance by decentralization was determinant for later tendencies.

The general policy towards education bureaucracy, policymaking, regulation, and supervision remained thoroughly centralized (Bazangani et al 2015, p. 198). However, while in 1989, there was not a single private school in Iran, today private schools make up 16 percent of the total, which is 17,715 schools (Statistical Yearbook of Education, 2021).

Finally, in 2019, Article 30 was interpreted as follows: ‘I respect Article 30, which means that when one enrolls his child in public school, staff has no right to charge him and Education is free.’ (Fani, 2019)

In addition to private schools, the government has become the largest private employer by signing temporary contracts with teachers. There are seven contracts for the same job in Iran, generally categorized as permanent and not permanent contracts. None of which offer the same salaries or benefits. The following table shows the differences between these contracts and the characteristics of each contract. However, the general classification of contracts to permanent-not permanent does not mean teachers with permanent contracts have a decent salary. There is no formal record but in the following table we have tried to gather all the existing types of contract:

Table 1- Types of teacher employment contractsⁱ

Salary based payment	Pension	Promotion	Wage Parity	Full coverage Insurance	Job security	Type of employment/ contract
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Permanent
✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	Trial-permanent
✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	Contractual
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	Fixed-term
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	Fixed-term based on the basic wage
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	Adjunct
✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	PSO

In 2021, teachers were 61.1 percent of public schools’ administrative and educational staff. The ratio of non-permanent teachers (excluding teachers from

purchased services) to permanent teachers in public schools is 4.23 percent, a total of 21,721 teachers (Statistical Yearbook of Education, 2021). Although there is no firm data for purchased services teachers, a 16 percent increase in the number of students in purchased services in one year indicates an increase in the ratio of non-permanent to permanent teachers. In addition, the total number of teachers working in public schools has decreased despite the total number of students remaining almost the same.

Privatization in education has continued gradually and steadily (Gilouri and Shafieezadeh, 2021), non-governmentalⁱⁱ schools now account for 16 percent of all schools (Statistical Yearbook of Education, 2021), and in parallel, the number of private school teachers has increased.

Labor market deregulation depends increasingly on cultural and legal factors (Giorgos, 2022) - Islamicisation of education was essential to implement neoliberal policies in an Islamic government, providing the required legal framework and rationalization.

Teachers' Identity

The Teachers' Union had significant achievements, such as the appointment of the Minister of Education in 1961, and contributed to the improvement of teachers' situation. In the early years after the Revolution, all teachers' union activities were suspended, and union demands were abandoned with the formation of political groups consisting of teachers (such as the Islamic association of teachers) in a highly politicized society.

With the lack of the social context for a teacher union's revival, teachers' identity as professional members was torn apart. Teachers' Day in Iran was named after Abolhassan Khanali during the teachers' protest against low

salaries, later distorted by renaming it after the Morteza Motahhari, who was the revolutionary council's head at the time.

Before the redefinition of the teaching profession and the 'purge' of teachers during the cultural revolution, teachers' unions and professional networks were also dissolved; therefore, the historical experience was not transferred to teachers during the revolution. In the absence of middle policymaking bodies since 1979, all major decisions for education and teachers have been implemented solely through SCCR and SCE (Miri and KhoramiNejad, 2019). The first professional group of teachers, which were not organic or independent organizations but political organizations, was established 21 years later (1999), so with the decline of the political group, the activity of teachers' organizations has also declined. However, some organizations have improved their professional awareness in the era of political openness (1997-2005). Politicized teachers' organizations related to political groups have led to a fragmentation of collective consciousness rather than the development of discipline and professional ethics. During interviews, most teachers did not know what their activities are or whether they exist. Thus, another result of the Cultural Revolution and the politicization of organizations was the replacement of discipline and professional ethics with ideological interests. In the absence of organic networks, teachers are in an unmediated relationship with major policymakers. Since the early Islamic revolution, the education system has been centralized in educational policymaking and economics. Professional ethics are at the core of an organic division of labor and organic society, and though professional groups may be associated with some parties, they should not derive their ethics from them (Durkheim, 1992).

Methodology: Data Collecting

This study aims to examine the change in the concept of the teaching profession in contemporary Iran followed by neoliberalism and Islamisation; therefore, the historical method concerning changes in teacher's practice applied. The need to elaborate on the experience of those teachers who could view their work from a critical view and be familiar with different aspects of the teacher's problem suggested the qualitative method and semi-standardized interview, which is a specific method of semi-structured interview used to develop the existing knowledge. The semi-standardized interview is an individual data collecting method that allows interviewees to articulate their subjective theory on a particular subject (Flick 2009, p. 156). The interview with 16 teachers allowed the interviewees to discuss their complicated opinions and express their thoughts on teachers' practice in Iran. Communication with different generations of teachers and interviewing teachers with various contracts were necessary to explain the changes in professional experience. Due to personal experience, access to a wide range of teachers was possible, and determinants such as age, gender, contracts, education, and work experience were considered to cover teachers' diversity. The interviews ended by approaching theoretical saturation.

The duration of each interview was approximately one hour. The interview was also conducted by telephone or video call, given the pandemic situation.

Findings

Thematic analysis and thematic coding (Flick, 2009, p. 318) allowed the finding section to be shaped by most instructive themes derived from interviews with teachers.

Teachers Knowledge: What and How

Teachers work in Iran in three ways with different skills and knowledge levels. The first is Farhangian University (Teacher Education University), including four-year theoretical studies and an internship. The second is employment for all graduates with a one-year education in the Teaching methods. These first two are permanent employees. The third pathway, which is ascending, requires no prior teaching programs or any specific education.

FU, the main and only center for teachers' education, has established in its new format in 2011, centralizing around 68 branches throughout the country. FU is a highly Ideological center with a strict dress code for men and women along with an emphasis on Islamic ethics; nearly one of the three-course materials is Islamic content. Fateme is a student-teacher in FU, described:

The quality of teacher education is disappointing; clearly, professors stress ideological content more than content related to our specialty. Here is nothing like other jobs like nurses or engineers, which are not very ideological.

The Superficial nature of teacher education has led to widespread criticism of FU's performance, which subsequently has led to schemes to reduce its scope in favor of increasing other forms of teacher employment and even outsourcing its tasks in the future.

Teachers' Continuing Professional Development also has serious issues, including non-educational courses/quality and increasing monetization of in-job courses. According to interviews there is a general dissatisfaction with CPD courses, which makes teachers reluctant to participate even though CPDs are necessary for promotion. Almost all interviewees mentioned that they do not

attend the CPD course by themselves but pay someone to do so or get the key answers and just insert them.

Ahmad stated:

For more than three years, I did not participate in CPDs since I believed I would learn nothing from them, but it negatively affected my wage over time, so I started to take it. Honestly, sometimes they hold some specialized courses that I participate in and learn from, but most of them are unrelated, even political content, history, and religion. I enroll them all but pay one of my colleges to take the exam for me.

Finally, regarding teachers' higher education persuasion, two main obstacles make teachers unwilling to expand their knowledge properly. Changes in human resource management policies have greatly diminished higher education opportunities for teachers. According to State's Management and Planning Organization (2015), only one higher degree once they were hired is used to calculate their salary. As a result, teachers are less motivated to pursue further professional education. The repeal of the circular that allowed teachers to spend fewer hours teaching during their university studies and the decree's implementation that made teacher training subject to administrative approval has deprived the majority of teachers of the opportunity to pursue qualified higher education. Also, teachers now can pursue education only out of office hours and working days (2015).

Sara describes her experience as a "difficult path that I decided to resign from my job after facing too many obstacles and instead focus on my studies."

In 2017, the pupil-teacher ratio in primary schools in Iran was 28.5 percent (World Bank, 2017), though policymakers strongly emphasize avoiding hiring

new teachers and instead ‘manage’ existing teachers, one way of this “management” costs teachers’ higher education. Also, the government pursues a dual policy of management: increasing the temporalization of teachers (in both public and private schools) along with privatization of schools, as well as reducing permanent employment, postponing retirement age, and increasing working hours. On the one hand, FU, which has a capacity of more than 20,000 students, is hiring less than a quarter of its capacity; on the other hand, the ‘full-time teacher’ scheme –which increased teachers’ working hours from 24 to 30 hours per week- was introduced.

Education funding cutbacks as one of the main principles of neoliberalization has led to a decline in number of teachers. We argue here that education funding cutbacks when there is a need for more new teachers (World Bank, 2017) has led to these measures to limit current teachers’ time and opportunities to improve their knowledge.

Inefficient education in the form of Islamic/Ideologic universities has led to further temporalization by making professional knowledge less important. One accountable case for the ever more disqualification of teacher education programmes was the aggregation of branches into an umbrella institution- FU – and then its later separation from the Ministry of Science (SCCR, 2012) which was a departure from previous university-based teacher education in Iran; since the Ministry of Science was responsible for higher education. With this separation, teacher education became more centralized and ideological than before. Furthermore, there is a strict Islamic dress code and gender separation (Mahdi 2003, p. 57)

Inefficient Network

Our research indicates that existing teacher networks are affected by funding cutbacks in schools as well. We argue that neoliberalism has entered into teachers' networks, thereby prioritizing managerial purposes. Based on our interviews, the tendency to stress implementing educational circulars and managing schools' budget deficiency has a role on making teachers have a narrowed understanding on their professional networks. The following lines explore this. The parent-teacher association functions to make up for the budget deficit (Omidi, 2019). In most cases, teachers' associations in public schools have become sessions for better implementation of circulars. On the one hand, the teachers' network struggles within a school or subject department with what was described as 'superficial education' by teachers and the reduction of supporting networks - such as subject departments; on the other hand, these networks are merging into the assessment system. Although this may vary in different schools and regions, this is one of the characteristics of the Iranian education system concerning teachers. Due to the shortage of teachers, de-skilling, rationalization of knowledge, and lack of an integrated information system, many teachers have experienced teaching subjects other than their specialty.

Arash highlighted the lack of a professional network:

I have little contact with sociology teachers. Many teachers do not teach their subjects. It does not seem to matter what you have studied. For example, at my current school, someone teaches history whose specialty is counseling. How can I communicate with him about social studies? Occasionally the head of the social studies department comes to visit the class, he observes and evaluates my teaching, and that is it.

The dysfunction of a professional network in schools and departments is mainly due to the change in the application of these networks, resulting in teachers' narrowed understanding on these networks' natural and intended purposes. Although some teachers are confused about this situation, what has happened in this regard has been a hidden change in the function of professional networks to assessment means and centralized monitoring.

It happened to me that the head of the planning department in District 18 of Tehran said that they had extra literature teachers, so they put them in other subjects, like geography or elementary school. There are no specific criteria for distributing teachers.

At the teachers' union level, the cohesion of teachers' bodies was weakened by the multiplicity of contracts and working conditions and the lack of mutual benefits and losses. Additionally, the teachers' union -and professional identity- was weakened by three other elements: the failure to transfer the historical experience of the teachers' union to teachers in post-revolutionary governments, the politicization of the existing union, and the creation of political organizations for teachers by political circles. Ironically the lack of a professional body has made it unnecessary for some teachers. Mahdi stated: 'I do not know any of these organizations in particular,' he continued, 'I do not think their concerns affect me'.

A fixed-term teacher said:

When the public school teachers went on strike before the Ministry of Education and Congress, the private school teachers were indifferent to them, and not only did none of us join them, but total ignorance prevailed.

Since the era of relative political openness from 20 years ago, there have been social movements against restrictive monetary policies, including a teachers' movement. We argue that there are mechanisms inside the education system that limit teachers' awareness and participation. We will explore these mechanisms here according to our interviews.

The hidden political criminalization of union activity in Iran has made teachers reluctant to participate or even be aware of it. The demand for the integrity of professional identity has been distorted under the influence of this political behavior. Under the Ministry of Intelligence, the security department in the Ministry of Education has the task of personnel and physical protection, though it played a key role in politicizing and preventing teachers' union activitiesⁱⁱⁱ.

As a result, some teachers referred to teachers' unions as something respectable that is lost or unnecessary. Moreover, the diversity of political organizations attributed to teachers has made teachers distrustful of their professional integrity and function.

The political criminalization of union activities is mainly related to the resistance economy, which calls for the country's development under global sanctions and external aggression based on Islamic, national, and revolutionary values (Anderson, 2019) to resist the West's economic war. (Khamenei, 2014). As a union member explained, these economic circumstances intensify the politicization of collective activities and demand for salary increases.

Heteronomy

Autonomy is a central concept for professionalism, but it would violate professional ethics for teachers to have autonomy without professional knowledge and network. Here, the issue of teacher autonomy is explored.

Teachers in Iran are at the bottom of the top-down school organizational chart. Teachers deliver the national curriculum and implement the circulars. The role of the teacher's practice is determined by upstream documents (mainly the Fundamental Transformation of Education) as the delivery of Islamic education. In addition, in the absence of policymaking organizations, educational administrations circulate educational, religious, and political content to schools for implementation daily, usually without regard to cultural, geographical, and religious diversities. There is a system of assessment and evaluation of schools and teachers' performance in implementing circulars. This assessment assures that teachers and other staff who do not practice the circulars will remain peripheral.

The principal of a public school stated: 'You can only achieve the 100 assessment points if you implement the circulars. And most of the circulars have been the same for several years'.

Though teachers address it as one of the superficial characteristics of education, it has created a situation that does not allow too much autonomy. In other words, the low performance of the centralized education system based on circulars should not be mistaken for teachers having autonomy.

The rapid privatization of education since 1989 was accompanied by the promise of decentralization which served as a justification. We argue that what happened was actually keeping the centralized system while economically decentralizing educational institutions. Privatization has increased significantly since the 2020s, emphasizing stakeholder participation, including teachers, parents, students, and managers in education. Although the increase in the share of the private sector in education and later the outsourcing of educational services in the form of participation projects accompanied by the promise of

decentralization of the education system (third development plan, 2000), the Iranian education system is centralized in terms of policymaking, goal setting, and management, except for the economic and executive dimensions (Bazangani et al., 2015). According to interviews, teachers' autonomy is still affected by centralized bureaucracy and school management. Mana explained:

It is possible to teach a little more than the curriculum in primary schools, but especially in high school, it is quite impossible to teach more. You have to stick to the set content and methods. I have worked in public and private schools; there is no significant difference.

Though the stress has decreased considerably, the Professional autonomy in the process of teachers' admission is struggling with ideological criteria being involved and essential to evaluating teachers according to Islamic and political criteria.

The case of outsourced teachers

With the end of the Iran-Iraq war and the introduction of neoliberal policies, the employment of teachers on non-standard contracts increased, as did the growing number of private schools. As privatization of schools was rationalized in Islamic terms in the early years of its legitimacy, the government itself has become a private employer. Monopolization is the common interest of the ideological organization and neoliberal policies in which teachers are heteronomous and cheap. Former government employees in Service Purchase Order (SPO) are employed in schools. SPO as a form of outsourcing (State Services Management Act 2012, 22nd clause) was first introduced in 2014 when the government transferred public schools to private parties and hired teachers from the private sector. However, SPO was initially meant for the

private sector to hire teachers in underprivileged areas. However, soon after, SPO teachers were hired by private agencies to work in public schools too.

The SPO was implemented following the government's financial regulation (2015), emphasizing the private sector, stakeholder participation, and decentralization. The public participation scheme in education defines stakeholder activities by Islamic terms such as ta'avon (meaning mutual assistance) and shura (council), implying stakeholder participation in schools as a kind of a "jihad" (Rostami poor et al, 2009). At the same time, hidden privatization encourages and legitimizes the employment of teachers at minimum wages, in some cases up to 15% below the basic salary; the scope of participation remains limited to the executive and funding levels, and policymaking and management remain central.

Unemployed graduates accounted for 40.2% of the unemployment rate in 2020 (Office of Population, Labor, Census, 2020), and a large number of fixed-term teachers, especially in private schools, are university students and retirees; in conclusion, supply and demand do not work in the interest of teachers because of the availability of a reserve army of educated unemployed. On the other hand, fixed-term contracts have not led to flexible salaries based on efficiency. Except for rare cases, the salary is the same for all teachers in the same province, as there is a hidden arrangement.

Conclusion

'Not only do we want teachers' wages to be increased, but we have always prioritized educational quality and equality,' one union member explained in an interview, illustrating some inherent contradictions and tensions.

Though teachers' rights activists and organizations have vanguard demands, we argue here that the decay of teachers' professional ethics guaranteed by the state

has led to the decay of organic solidarity. Teachers' apparent reluctance to be aware of their shared situation and the sometimes general indifference to professional identity can turn them into isolated objects that try to make a more stable employment contract by compromising with the existing authorities. The lack of a professional body among teachers with non-standard work suggests that constructing a union as an independent alternative is unlikely due to security and loss of professional ethics. We found that teachers with non-standard work were unable to organize due to the dispersed nature of their population, politicization, and the lack of common interests.

In the absence of middle-level decision-making in education, the government's general policy is implemented through circulars and letters, resulting in the discipline of teachers being Procrustean and not internalized. On the other hand, the view that education is a profitable market has forced teachers to become more compatible with the competitive structure. Many teachers have second and even third jobs or introduce teaching as their second and third jobs, increasing teacher de-professionalization. With professional ethics not being internalized, teachers lose the sense of being related to each other and become isolated subjects.

Earlier, the fragmentation of work, which eliminated the need to employ skilled people as teachers, has been reinforced in Iran by the Ideologic factor. The change in the definition of a teacher at the beginning of the 1979 revolution, which emphasized the delivery of religious and revolutionary values instead of educating children, changed the teacher's nature in Iran from independent practice to an ideological one where being professional was not the first priority. It is hard to get a minimum score in teacher evaluations without implementing circulars and gaining the principal's consent in both types of

schools. Teachers' autonomy in schools is severely limited without a real teachers' association and an organized teacher union at a higher level.

Seven different contracts and the 47 different types of schools (Education terminology, 2013) make it quite impossible for teachers to develop a shared understanding of their profession.

Harris (2013) argues that privatization in Iran turns the state into a subcontractor while ideological hegemony remains. As in the case of Iranian teachers, the de-professionalization of the teacher is not merely the result of neoliberal policies, but its integration with Ideological centralism influences the teachers' work. The intensity of this integration through more than 40 years of the Islamic Republic had ups and downs. However, two main characteristics can be identified: cheapening the teacher labor through economic decentralization and maintaining ideological hegemony through the centralization of the education system.

The rapid growth of private schools made them a magnet for the proliferation of private schools and the subsequent parallel growth of non-standard employment. While the Ministry of Education budget was in deficit in the second decade of the revolution, many of these schools became special schools with high tuition and limited admission, allowing only a specific group to attend, which led to the branding of these schools. The dramatic increase in the number of non-profit schools (renamed non-governmental schools in 2007) and the possibility of transferring multiple schools to a single individual provided an exceptional opportunity for the Islamist private sector to establish school chains.

It is too early to reach a verdict on the integration of Iran's Islamist government into neoliberalism, or more exactly its quality or nature of this integration.

However, according to our study and interviews, it can be concluded that there are certain mechanisms inside the Iran's education system that serves to the common interests of both neoliberalism and Islamism. In this study we tried to explore those certain mechanisms that at the same time is leading to deprofessionalisation of teachers.

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Note

Governmental schools mean public schools, and non-governmental schools are established by the private sector.

Notes

ⁱ This reference can be helpful on the topic: <https://women.ncr-iran.org/2020/10/05/teachers-in-iran/>

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