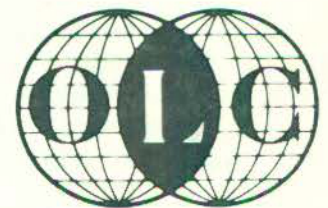


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An Analysis of US-Iranian Cooperation in Higher Education



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system of Iran at that time, they were, in effect, more in the nature of specialized vocational training institutes than they were institutions of higher learning. The practice then established -- of elite educational institutions serving training functions -- has had marked implications for the contemporary system. With the rise to power in 1921 of Reza Khan, the father of the present monarch, the educational system was the subject of major attention. Devoted to the rapid development of Iran, the ruler, called Reza Shah Pahlavi after his assumption of the throne in 1925, built a network of modern primary and secondary schools under the direction of a Ministry of Education. And in February of 1935, Reza Shah inaugurated construction for the new University of Tehran.

The fledgling university received something of a quick start by incorporating as its faculties a number of the technical schools already established by the various ministries. As a result, in its second year of operation, the University of Tehran could boast a student body of some 1,300. With other non-military schools, Iran then had a total of 1,550 students studying in institutions of "higher learning" in 1935. With direct pressure from the ruler, considerable funds, and the general expansion of primary and secondary education, the student body at the University grew some 15 percent per year for the first decade after its inception. Despite this quantitative expansion, however, the qualitative aspects of higher education failed to keep pace. As one observer has concluded:

Traditions and standards of scholarship, academic integrity, and intellectual discipline had been non-existent in Persia for so long that...intellectual short-sightedness, coupled with the attendant vices of exclusiveness, jealousy, social and personal rivalries and political ambitions, prevented the University from attaining a high academic standing.^{1/}

^{1/} Amin Banani. The Modernization of Iran, 1921-41. Palo Alto, Calif: Stanford University Press. 1961. pp. 100-1.