



## An Explanation on Role of Educational System in Ali Shariati Books from the Perspective of Critical Theory: A Comparative Review

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 17 October 2020            Revised: 15 December 2020            Accepted: 22 December 2020            Online: 15 June 2021</p>	<p>The aim of present study is to explain role of educational system in the books of famous Iranian writer and revolutionary Ali Shariati from the perspective of critical theory. The method of research was qualitatively comparative (deductive approach) and method of data collection and analysis was documentary and content analysis respectively. In order to collect data, in addition to Shariati's books and lectures (primary sources), books and articles available in Iranian and international libraries and information homepages (secondary sources) were used. Findings showed that Shariati's thoughts on role of the education system have been greatly influenced by views of critical theory's proponents. There are also similarities between Shariati's views and critical education thinkers on negative role of education system in exacerbating social injustice and inequality and promoting a culture of silence. In addition, the research findings showed few differences. Shariati's attention to Eastern education and Islamic education as an alternative to Western education, the disregard of critical education advocates for the liberating role of religion, and Shariati's low emphasis on role of race and gender in analyzing the performance of educational system can be the most important differences between Shariati and critical theory scholars. The last point is that although the Western countries influenced by theory of critical education were able to establish a critical atmosphere of criticism, questioning, and active dialogue in their schools, but the fulfillment of Shariati's aspirations to change the political system did not lead to a fundamental reform in Iran's education system and challenges such as a centralized structure, a prescriptive curriculum, a passive teacher-student relationship, and a lack of critical and questioning space still persist.</p>
<p><b>KEYWORDS</b></p> <p>Critical Theory            Critical Education            Culture of Silence            Liberator Educational System</p>	

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## 1. Introduction

The Before Iranians became acquainted with the new civilization; education was provided in a limited and scattered manner in cities and villages and in centers called "Maktab Khaneh" (School houses). These schools were mostly founded by a person who served as teacher and principal at the same time, children sitting on the floor in a room and learning topics such as reading and writing, simple math, and content of several religious and literary books (Durrani, 2012). The majority of these founders were clerics who also played role of "imam of the mosque" and religious leaders of the people. They received financial and material assistances from parents for educating their children. From the middle of the Qajar dynasty, Iranians gradually became acquainted with Western civilization and its manifestations such as public education and new schools (Nasiri 2008). In fact, in this process, four groups of Christian missionaries, reformist politicians such as Abbas Mirza and Amir Kabir (first Crown Prince and second Prime Minister), Iranians educated in Europe and a few teachers graduating from teacher training centers (such as Hassan Rushdieh who graduated from the French Teacher Education Center in Lebanon), played a major role in the development of new schools in Iran (Ghasemi Pouya, 1998). In this situation, what happened was the opposition of many clerics to the closure of Maktab Khanehs and establishment of new schools. In fact, many school owners opposed the establishment of new schools on the pretext that new schools were not in line with culture and religion of Iran's society, while their concern about the loss of financial benefits could not be ignored (Tareh, 2014). However, with the political changes such as the fall of the Qajar dynasty and establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty, the process of establishing Western-style schools and following its goals, structure, programs and activities accelerated and Maktab Khanehs - except in some remote areas - were closed (Saffar Heydari &Saffar Heydari 2019).

The demise of Maktab Khanehs and establishment of new schools did not necessarily mean the end of conflict. In fact, the new schools - like any new reform originating in European countries - were again opposed by those who opposed the Pahlavi regime. Indeed, one of the prominent aspects of political struggles during the rule of Pahlavi dynasty (1921-1979) was opposition to any reform that supported by the regime (Katozian, 2010). Therefore, opposition to the new schools and educational system - which was mainly copied from France - was one of the common features of the intellectual, religious, and even communist opponents of the Shah's regime (Ahmadi, 1987). Intellectuals such as the Iranian writer Jalal al-Ahmad were largely dissatisfied with modeling of the

French educational system as a means of promoting "Westernization." The clergy and theologians saw the new schools as centers for anti-religious education, and those such as the Iranian teacher and writer Samad Behrangi, who had an intellectual leaning towards communist parties, considered the education system as a bitter and humorous caricature alien to the realities of people's lives. Ahmadi, 1987:135). Of course, there was another big difference between early critics and new critics. Early critics were generally opposed to establishment of any school in a new style, while new opponents were strongly opposed to prevailing atmosphere in schools, the content of textbooks, teacher-student relationship and type of extracurricular activities (Movassaghi 2006; Remazan Zadeh, 2013). Among this group, Ali Shariati - teacher, writer and revolutionary - rose in a religious family with an Islamic and idealistic attitude and educated at the Sorbonne University of France, was a radical critic of philosophy, goals, methods and functions of new educational system (Peyvandi, 2007).

Ali Shariati (1933-1978), born in Mashhad in northeastern Iran, obtain a bachelor's degree in Persian literature and went to France to study sociology using a government scholarship (Yousefi Mianji, 2001). In Paris he became acquainted with the works of famous intellectuals such as Louis Massignon, Georges Gurvitch and Jean-Paul Sartre. After returning to Iran in 1965 until his death, Shariati began teaching in schools and universities, giving fiery speeches, publishing numerous books, and being arrested and imprisoned by the Iran regime. He died in London a year before the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1978 for unknown reasons. Iranian revolutionaries transported his body to Damascus and buried it there. During the protests against the monarchy in 1979, Shariati's photos were seen in the hands of the demonstrators, and he was described as a "teacher of revolution" and one of the most influential people to overthrow the Shah's regime.

Now that more than four decades have passed since the victory of the revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic, this question naturally arises that "while the Westernist regime no longer exists in Iran, what is the need for this research". To answer this, the present researchers mention several reasons that have rational logic and research support. The first reason is that recognizing the current state and functioning of the Iran educational system cannot be done in a mere time gap. In fact, the evaluation of the current educational system is possible when it can be examined with its past (historical view) or in terms of comparison with other educational systems and theoretical frameworks (comparative view). The second reason is that many of the criticisms made by intellectuals -such as Shariati - against the Shah's education system seem to be

true four decades later, and change of political system - from a monarchy to an Islamic republic - has not led to their disappearance (Roshan, Pourqaz, & MoradZadeh, 2008; Kiani, Mehr Mohammadi, Sadeghzadeh Ghamsari & Nozari, 2016; Al Hosseini, Sajjadi, Sadeghzadeh Ghamsari & Mehr Mohammadi, 2013). Therefore, to understand this lack of change, we need to review and analyze Shariati's thought in a "new historical period." This review allows Iranian educational scientists to evaluate the performance of education system from a non-political perspective. The third reason is based on the idea that to what extent Shariati thoughts on educational system's performance examined through the lens of a social theory such as critical theory could be correct or wrong. Considering these reasons, the purpose of present study is to review Shariati opinions about role of educational system from a comparative perspective. Accordingly, the sub-objectives of the research are:

- Description of Shariati's intellectual framework on role of educational system
- Describe basic principles of critical theory about role of educational system
- Determination of similarities and differences between Shariati ideas and critical theory regarding the performance of educational system

According to these goals, in the next section, we have an overview of research findings at both international and Iran levels.

## **2. Research Literature**

Critical theory or the Frankfurt School and related theories in various scientific fields such as theory of critical education have had rich research support in recent decades. For example, Macrine (2020) while providing basic information on the theory of critical education shows that proponents of this theory believe that neoliberalism has weakened democracy and has changed education. Zebracki (2020) emphasizes role of researcher as a "first-person" from the perspective of critical education theory by examining importance of personal experience in research and teaching. Alfrey and O'Connor (2020) compared traditional teaching and critical teaching in Health and Physical Education and found that teachers are constantly in a purgatory between traditional and critical methods. According to Marx and Marx's mechanisms of social reproduction, Baranowski (2020) introduces the concept of "worthless education" to show the overt and covert consequences of continuous change at many levels of society. In Brazil, Knijnik & Luguetti (2020) hope that critical education can provide a better environment for democratic political struggle - while the public

education system is under severe attack by current right-wing forces. Shih (2018) in his article explains the basic principles of the theory of critical education according to works of Paulo Freire and finally Markham (2019) according to critics' view of the concept of knowledge, proposes three strategic modes for data analysis.

In Iran, much research has been done in recent decades on critical theory and critical education with respect to the status of issues such as Islamic education and the views of Iranian intellectuals, including Shariati. For example, in their recent article, Hemmatifar, Shabani Varki, Alam al-Huda, & Lakzai (2019) tried to examine unbalanced relationship between political system and educational system from perspective of three theories of virtue-oriented, powerism, and criticism. Hazari and Mohammadi (2018) by defending Shiite Islam and denying Western democracy seek to present "Committed Democracy" as a substitute for democracy. Alborzi (2017) comparing the views of the two Iranian intellectuals Shariati and Akhundzadeh, believes that Akhundzadeh's goal of Islamic Protestantism was to reduce the interference of religion in life, while Shariati wanted to turn religion into a social movement. Ebrahimabadi and Mohammadi (2017) believe that the cultural roots of the Islamic Revolution of Iran should be sought in the developments of the country in the 1960s and 1970s, when Shariati has published most of his books. Rajabi (2017) believes that Shariati's thought reveals the most important challenge of Iranians to the contemporary world in the realization of self-awareness. He seeks to replace the "Eastern self" with the "Western self" in Iranians. Miri and Ali Asghari Sadri (2012) believe that Shariati, while denying some principles of positivism such as empiricism, scientism and value neutrality of science, sometimes uses their method to prove his point. Yazdani, Ghasemi & Shah Qala (2011) while comparing the Islamic Revolution of Iran, international system and critical theory, concluded that the Iranian revolutionaries while opposing discriminatory and oppressive structure of international system and its dominant approach - namely realism, laws, regulations - , see international organizations and human rights as tools of domination.

Dargahi (2010) in his article "Shariati and Islamic Protestantism" tries to show that Shariati has repeatedly resorted to the experience of Western Protestantism in religious revival. Other authors also try to show that Shariati saw Western Protestantism in the service of the capitalists, while the goal of Islamic Protestantism tries to serve the poor (Imam Jumazadeh & Rouhani, 2007; Shariati, 2009;). According to Hosseini (2000) among different schools of social sciences, Shariati thoughts on issues such as freedom, emancipation, colonialism, and justice are very similar to

critical theory. Dinarvand and Imani (2008) indicated that scholars of critical theory introduced new terms into the field of educational sociology. An overview of these studies shows that although critical theory and critical education theory have been discussed in academia for more than half a century, they are still an interesting topic for researchers. In addition, the views of the Frankfurt School of Scientists have strongly influenced the theorists of critical education theory. Finally, less research can be found that examines the views of Iranian intellectuals in terms of compliance with critical theory, and therefore the present study can be a small step to introduce the views of an Iranian intellectual on functions of educational system in terms of Islamic education and theories of educational sociology.

### **3. Research Method**

This research has been done in a qualitative comparative method with a deductive approach. All applied research needs a conceptual framework or model based on which the dimensions of the research subject can be studied (Edwards et al., 2000). In the present study, Shariati's opinions were examined from view of critical theory. For data collection, documentary method was used with main emphasis on reviewing Shariati's books (as primary sources). Also, researchers used Iranian and international databases, publications and books related to critical theory as secondary sources. Directional analysis method was used to analyze the data. The difference between this method and other methods of analysis is the expansion of the conceptual frameworks of a theory (Iman, & Noshadi, 2011). It is also a process for analyzing textual data into rich data using coding (Sterling, 2001). In thematic analysis, first the sentences and phrases related to the research objectives were extracted through purposive sampling and the codes were determined. Also, since in qualitative research, the amount of data is directly related to decision and judgment of the researcher, and according to Borg Vegal (2014), this requires a trade-off between the scope of research and its depth. So in analyzing texts and documents related to Shariati's ideas, the volume of data was done gradually and continued until saturation.

### **4. Findings**

According to the analysis of primary sources, which include only books and lectures published by Shariati, as well as secondary sources, which include books and articles related to the study of Shariati opinions and critical theory, the results are presented in two parts: Description and comparison. In the description section, a brief reference is made to the basic principles of critical theory and critical education, as well as the main views of Shariati views on the subject of research.

The second part is dedicated to comparing Shariati thoughts with the main frameworks of critical theory. In addition, it should be noted that the data related to critical theory has been done through the analysis of library data and data related to Shariati works through the method of directional analysis and coding.

### *Description*

#### *A) Critical theory*

The critical theory or Frankfurt school inherits three theories: First, the theory of ideology and repressive and exploitative image of capitalism influenced by Marx's views. Second, the theory of skepticism in rationalism and emphasis on the extreme rationalization of modern culture and science influenced by the ideas of Max Weber and Third, the theory derived from Sigmund Freud's views according to which the social system operates through psychological repression (Mir Ahmadi, 2010). However, these theories can be considered as a critical reaction to the structural aspect of the relationship between social institutions such as the government, educational system, cultural system and relations and interactions between them. Among the theorists of this school in the field of education are Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple, Martin Carnoy, Henry Levine, and Ivan Illich (Honneth 2004). In the critical theory, there is a pessimistic view of relationship between structure of economic and political power on the one hand and educational system on the other, which is negatively referred to as domination, exploitation, colonization, repression in these relations (Shrestha, Williams, Al-Samarrai, Van Geldermalsen, & Zaidi, 2019). According to educational critics, the dominance of the political system over the educational system is sometimes obvious and sometimes hidden (Kentli, 2009). There are also two general views among critics in analyzing the education system performance: Proponents of the first view believe that because education is dominated by military, industrial, and political complexities, schools and universities will naturally become a space for reform or revolution and opposition intellectuals will also be part of the output of education system (Raja'i, Javidi Kalateh Jafarabadi, Sadeghzadeh Ghamsari & Shabani Varki, 2019). In support of this view, people like Brazilian educator Paulo Freire support the idea of a Cultural Revolution and awareness, and Giroux and Apple support the theory of resistance. The second view supported by scholars such as Ivan Illich (1972), believes in "death of school", prevention of formal education, and formation of a network parallel to formal education. The important point is that in both views, the dependence of the education system on State has

been assumed. In addition, the common aspect of all critics can be considered as an attempt to eliminate the domination of national and international political systems over the education system or to reduce and weaken this domination (Carnoy 1992). Meanwhile, people like Szkudlarek (2013) believe that today both the political and educational systems have been subjugated by the domination of the economic system. Like Shariati, he emphasizes the "de-identification" of the role of politics in education. Of course, in the meantime, the opinions of Freire are more thought-provoking. Freire mentions the two principles of justice and freedom as human principles and wants it to be realized in all social systems (Shih 2018). By attacking the dominated educational systems, he uses terms such as objectification, oppressive relationship, consciousness, cultural revolution, dialogue, and liberation terms that are also abundant in Shariati's books. In a brief summary, the main principles and rules of critical theory can be stated according to the educational system function as follows:

- Attention to criticism, reform, and rationality as valuable educational goals,
- Attention and design of concepts such as enlightenment, liberation, peace, freedom, empowerment, humanism and culture of silence in the critique of systems of domination,
- Emphasis on role of ideology and culture to dominate educational goals and practices,
- Emphasis on ideological dimension of language in the construction of class norms and continuation of cultural domination,
- Emphasis on role of educational system in cultural reproduction,
- Emphasis on denial of knowledge and teaching materials as sacred and immutable texts,
- Emphasis on role of teacher as a liberator and transformative intellectual,
- Emphasis on role of curriculum as a political document and deny its neutrality.

### *B) Shariati Opinions*

Before expressing Shariati's views on the role of education system, it is necessary to mention a few issues: First, in the conventional sense of the word, Shariati was not an educational scientist, or an educational sociologist, although he had teaching experiences in rural primary schools, secondary schools, and universities. Also, since Shariati's grandparent and father were educated in seminaries (Islamic schools), Shariati also benefited from this type of education. Thus, it can be said that Shariati was quite familiar with the atmosphere of the Iran educational system during the four decades of 1920 to 1950. The second point is that although Shariati books and lectures are more

than 100 titles, but he has published only one book about education entitled "School of Islamic Education" and compares the seminary with new schools and universities (Shariati 2010). Therefore, most of Shariati's opinions about educational system should be found through the chapters, paragraphs and scattered sentences in his various books. The third point is that Shariati in analyzing the social systems functions mainly pays attention to political and religious dimensions and therefore his opinions about educational system is strongly influenced by his political and religious perspectives. After reviewing Shariati's books, the selected items that were more in line with the objectives of the research were reviewed and analyzed to extract the basic, organizer and comprehensive themes. The output of this step was the extraction of 271 themes. Table 1 shows an example of themes:

Table 1: Topics related to the objectives of research in Shariati works

Basic Themes	Organizer Themes	Comprehensive Themes
Colonialism, colonization, political / cultural self-destruction, educational imitation	Colonialism	The perfect human
Western self, negation of capitalism, anti-Westernism, Westernization, negation of consumer culture	Western Studies	
Islam, religious identity, Shiism, Islamic identity, ideology, culture, Islamic Protestantism, Ummah	Islamology	
Fighting aristocracy, social libertarianism, misconceptions of the adult generation, fighting against the determinism of nature, fighting against social prejudices, desecration of sources of knowledge	Intellectual struggle	
Self-awareness, self-return, alienation, selfless man, intellectual man	Return to Self	
Oriental education, mystical education, Islamic education	Islamic education	

According to these points, the following can be mentioned with more explanation:

1. *Colonialism*: The first aspect of Shariati's thought is to analyze the unhealthy situation of third world countries - such as Iran - and try to find the causes of backwardness. The intellectual and political climate of Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, the presence of intellectuals such as Sartre, Bertrand Russell, Fanon, Massignon, and events such as the Cuban Revolution, the Arab-Israel War, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Algerian Revolution helped him to see colonization, and cultural - political self-destruction as main causes of backwardness of the third world (Shariati, 1988). In this regard, Shariati believes that the educational system helps the colonial process and continuation of backwardness by educating those who suffer from intellectual and cultural self-destruction (Shariati 2011).
2. *Westernology*: Political events such as the coup against Mossadegh's national government in Iran, presence of countries such as Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal and Spain as colonizers, and Christian missionaries' role in perpetuating cultural domination made Shariati strongly believe in the idea that one of the first steps in compensating for backwardness and decolonization is to know the West. Accordingly, one of the most important commonalities of Shariati's works can be his constant emphasis on Westernology and issues such as knowledge about West self (as opposed to the East self and the Islamic self), the rejection of Western ideologies such as capitalism, liberalism, and Marxism, and anti-Westernism through the denial of consumer culture - in the economic dimension - and Western values - in the educational dimension - (Aysha 2006).
3. *Islamology*: In the third step and to deny colonialism, Shariati tries to offer another alternative. This is not a philosophical school such as modernism, neoliberalism, Russian or Chinese Marxism, existentialism or religions such as Buddhism. Shariati, as a Muslim - who grew up in a purely Shiite environment - takes a fresh look at Islam, its principles and foundations, Shiite beliefs, and Islamic Protestantism (Saffari 2015). Accordingly, he insists on distinguishing culture from ideology by rejecting the educational theories of Western educators, and the content of Western educational textbooks and activities. In this way, Shariati tries to take a new look at the role of educational system in raising children with Islamic identity (Shariati, 2009).

4. *Struggle*: According to Shariati, we must fight for the abolition of colonialism, for the rejection of Western domination, and for formation of Islamic Ummah (Madadlou 2019). For Shariati, this struggle does not necessarily mean an armed struggle, although he once joined the Algerian Liberation Army to fight against France. However, Shariati sees the main stage of struggle as educational environments that cultivate tomorrow's generation. Thus, by teaching subjects such as the struggle against aristocracy, social libertarianism, misconceptions of the adult generation, the struggle against social prejudices, and the desecration of knowledge sources, the rebellious and revolutionary generation of tomorrow can be nurtured in schools. Also in the struggle phase, Shariati tirelessly insists on the role of elements such as freedom, independence, and justice. According to Shariati, "we see in all social and political movements that freedom is a great motivation for struggles and martyrdom. Therefore, seeking freedom is the greatest factor that saves man from stagnation "(Shariati, 1979: 62) .
  
5. *Returning to Self*: Shariati believes that Westernists have forgotten their true identities. They have become alienated from themselves.

"A person who thinks he has a past, history and culture, has personality and self-awareness. Such a person has human competencies, can build and choose (Shariati, 1982: 341) .

Shariati believes that self-discovery and belief in own's human potential does not mean ignorant selfishness, but a conscious return to human values. In this situation, Shariati uses concepts such as selfless man, alienation, self-awareness, self-return, and intellectual man to show that the only way to return to the real self and achieve a perfect human being is to use Islamic education for Iranians (Shariati, 1979).

6. *Islamic education*: After passing through these five stages, Shariati mentions three types of Eastern education, mystical education and Islamic education versus Western education. According to Shariati, educational systems in the West - bourgeoisie or socialist - are in a crisis of lack of morality and meaning of life (Shariati, 1981). He rejects education based on materialism and nihilism:

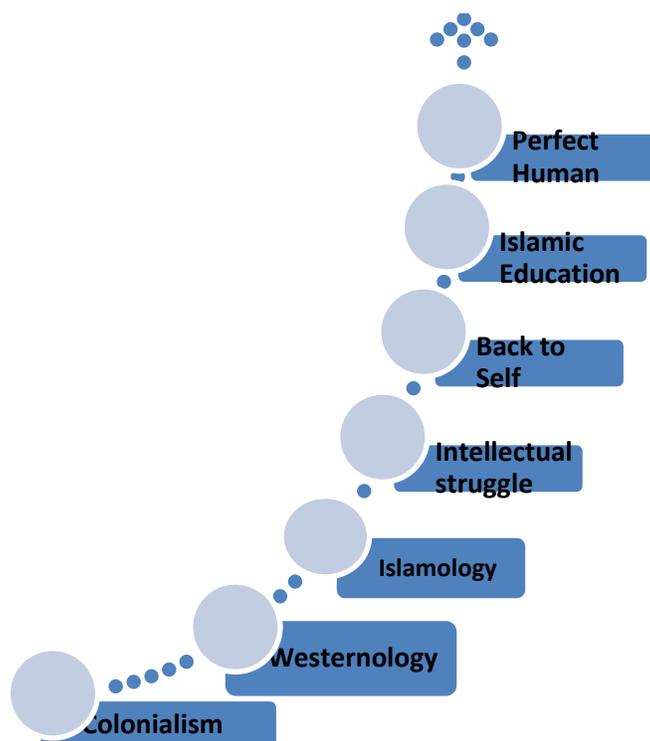
"The spirit of the Western bourgeoisie has deprived education from philosophy and transcendent and idealistic direction of man, and has mechanized it... the only factor that can give transcendent goal, a philosophy beyond material and beyond the individual to morality and education is a human ideological foundation and a divine worldview" (Shariati, 1984: 509).

On the one hand, he focuses on mystical education, a mysticism that denies Western consumerist human beings who are luxurious, aggressive, and self-centered. Shariati considers the main goal of the educational system to be humanization. According to him, man is guided by the three basic existential dimensions of "mysticism and love", "freedom" and "justice" - all of which express his ideals, and justify all historical events, motives and missions (Shariati, 1979: 62). On the other hand, by passing the proof of the superiority of Eastern education and mystical education, Shariati takes the next big step and mentions the superiority of Islamic education (Khasto 2011). According to him, Islamic education is in the service of God for the benefit of freedom, justice and perfection of all human beings. In fact, the first point that can be deduced from the analysis of Shariati's opinions is that he should be considered an intellectual who bases his ideas on a religious ideology. He is concerned about the spiritual bewilderment of contemporary man and believes that:

"In the evolution of societies towards modernism, human beings become lonelier from within and more social from outside" (Shariati, 1984: 519)

He also defines his intellectual framework within a specific religious field (Islam and Shia) and seeks the training of committed and virtuous people for the formation of the Islamic Ummah. In fact, for Shariati an ideal education system is one that helped to form the "Islamic Ummah" and nurture the "perfect man." In addition, Shariati considers the transcendent values of self-awareness, creativity, science-friendliness, honesty, forgiveness, kindness and modesty that the educational system should cultivate in the young generation (Shariati, 1978: 62).

Thus, we encounter an evolutionary process in Shariati thought that moves him from analyzing the function of economic system (exploitation) to the role of political system (government), explaining the necessity of the religious system (modernity and renaissance) and the revolutionary function of educational system (perfect man) (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Evolution of Shariati thought to determine the function of educational system**

In this evolutionary process in which Shariati tries to get rid of colonialism and become a perfect human being, he realizes that the structure of educational systems in the third world countries has caused alienation of individual in various ways. For this reason, in many of his works, Shariati draws cruel criticism on the situation prevailing in formal education system of Iran (Shariati, 2010). In this critique, Shariati's view focuses on three different goals :

His first goal is to criticize the educational system of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi regime. As a dissatisfied intellectual, he criticizes the performance of all social systems of this regime, although his sharp point is the education system. Shariati believes that the education system is a tool in the service of authoritarian rule and therefore follows the characteristics of an authoritarian political system, such as authoritarian and repressive relationship between teacher and student, lack of questioning, lack of creativity, rule of fear, and the same Intellectual development through a single curriculum for all students regardless of their geographical, cultural, social and individual

differences. Shariati also tries to show that the educational system instills oppression and suppresses freedom (Shariati, 1982). Shariati, like educational critics, considers instinctive education to be one of the roots of oppression (Freire, & Faundes, 1985). The student's role in this mechanical learning is simply to memorize, recall, and retell what is in the school textbook.

Shariati's second goal is to criticize Iran's political system by attacking the Western educational system. Shariati believed that educational system of Western countries is in conflict with the social realities, culture and traditions of Iran society. At this stage, under the influence of people like the French-speaking intellectual from, Martinique Frantz Fanon, he pays attention to the negative role of educational system in "de-identifying" Iranians. According to Shariati, the imported education system causes students to become the object of Western culture and values and to forget their national and religious values. According to him, colonialism introduced a new culture to the world called modernity by mirroring people of the Third World. This desire to "modernize" was the greatest blow that Europeans could inflict on the people of other countries. He considers modernization to be similar to Europeanization (Shariati, 1988). According to Shariati, the capitalist system sought to eliminate cultural differences through the educational system. In Shariati's view, the West, by denying culture and history of the Third World, turns them into rootless and alienated human beings (Mirakhori and Shojaei, 1998). In this situation, Shariati, like Paolo Freire (1977), believes that a student who grows up in an authoritarian, Westernized educational environment will be nothing more than a repressed and alienated human being.

Shariati's third goal is to provide an alternative to authoritarian education. This alternative, as mentioned before, initially draws his attention to the history of education in the East and civilizations such as India and China. Influenced by people such as Massignon and Annemarie Schimmel, he then pays attention to Iranian mystical education and the views of people such as Al-Hallaj, Suhrawardī, and Ayn-al-Quzāt Hamadānī in the process of education (Solaymani Khosahli, Hamzaeyan, & Esfandiar, 2019). In the third stage, he finds that although mystical education can be an alternative to Western education but does not resisting tyranny and authoritarian education. For this reason, Shariati turns to Islamic education (or, in the strict sense of the word, Shiite education). Thus, he tries to introduce the characteristics of this educational system from both theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically, Shariati tries to introduce behavioral patterns to the young generation of Iran by re-reading the events and historical figures of early Islam. This is how Shariati constantly mentions the lives of Shiite historical figures such as Fatima (daughter of the Prophet of

Islam as a model for girls), Ali (the first Imam of the Shiites and fourth caliph of Muslims), Abu Dharr, Salman, Ammar and Bilal (companions of the Prophet Muhammad) and Hussein (the second Imam of the Shiites). Recalling the lives of these Shiite figures, he emphasizes aspects of their behavior, all of which indicate struggle, denial of oppression, liberation, criticism, questioning, and revolutionaryism (Shariati 1972). In practical terms, he tries to show that the seminary and Maktab Khane system of education - because of its features such as freedom of time and place of education, freedom to choose the textbook and teacher, and avoidance of documentarianism - are better than the authoritarian and western education systems.

### *B) Comparison*

Shariati's views on the role of educational system can be examined and analyzed from the perspective of similarities and differences with basic principles of critical theory and its sub-branch of critical education. Shariati, like the scholars of critical theory, focuses his critique on the totality of capitalism, Western culture, modern civilization, colonialism, Western human crisis, and oppression. The following similarities can be noted:

- Denial of bourgeois system and capitalist rule
- Denying domination of political system over other social systems
- Emphasis on fundamental role of intellectuals in the process of social awareness
- Denial of colonial relationship of Western countries with third world countries
- Emphasis on negative role of new civilization in promoting emptiness and consumerism

We can also point out the similarity of Shariati's thoughts with theories of critical education scholars such as Paulo Freer, Michael Apple, Henry Giro, and Douglas Kellner, which are mainly focused on criticizing the cultural and political functions of educational system. The main similarities are :

- Emphasis on negative role of authoritarian education system in exacerbating social injustice and inequality
- Emphasis on negative role of authoritarian educational system in promoting a culture of silence in schools to institutionalize this culture in society
- Emphasis on instrumental role of educational system and its ideological dimension

- Critique relationship between knowledge and curriculum with power sources
- Emphasis on liberating role of education system
- Emphasis on importance of critical education
- Emphasis on role of dialogue, creativity, questioning and group learning
- Sloganism and presentation of idealistic ideas

In addition to these similarities, one can also find differences between Shariati's thoughts and the views of critical theory and critical education scholars. Before pointing out these differences, it is important to note that Shariati seems to have been greatly influenced by the theories of scholars of Frankfurt School in explaining the instrumental role of educational system in serving colonialism. In addition, Shariati seems to be a pioneer in explaining the liberating role of education system to critical education scientists and has a broader horizon. According to this point, the differences between Shariati's views and those of critical theory thinkers are:

- ❖ Shariati emphasis on Eastern education and Islamic education as an alternative to colonial education
- ❖ Shariati emphasis on Religious Education and Ignorance of Proponents of Critical Education on the Liberating Role of Religion
- ❖ Denial of critics' analysis about superstructure role of educational system by Shariati
- ❖ Shariati's slight emphasis on role of race and gender in analyzing the performance of education system

## 5. Conclusion

Ali Shariati, an Iranian teacher and sociologist, wrote dozens of books and delivered hundreds of speeches during the three decades of cultural and social struggle against the monarchy of Mohammad Reza Shah. Shariati's main goal was to establish a political system based on Islam and Iran cultural traditions. To achieve this goal, Shariati faced two main enemies: the authoritarian system and domination of Western culture. These findings have been repeatedly emphasized by Iranian researchers (Alborzi 2017; Ebrahimabadi & Mohammadi, 2017; Hazari & Mohammadi 2018; Hosseini, 2000). For this reason, Shariati tried to attack and criticize the ideological principles, foundations and tools of these two enemies. According to Shariati, one of the tools of Shah's authoritarian and pro-Western system was educational system. For this reason, Shariati used two important sources to attack this tool: First, the views of Western scholars, which mainly

included the works of disaffected intellectuals, Marxists, and academics, and second, refer to Islamic sources and especially Shiite beliefs. The first findings of the study show that although Shariati severely attacks the education system for following Western model, he himself mainly uses theories of Western scholars to critique it. Therefore, it can be said that Shariati's view on the critique of educational system is greatly influenced by critical theory and ideas of people such as Max Horkheimer, Massignon, Fanon, Russell, Sartre, and Georges Gurvitch. This finding is support by research results of Payvandi (2007); Yazdani, Ghasemi & Shah Qala (2011); Mir Ahmadi (2010); Mirakhori & Shojaei (1998). The second finding is that the solution of Shariati as well as educational critics to reform the educational system is not very precise and coherent and they have not made much effort to present a clear and objective practical model. This finding has compatibility with research by Hemmatifar, Shabani Varki, Alam al-Huda & Lakzaei (2019); Yousefi Meyaneje, (2001) and Ahmadi (1987). Of course, it can be said that Shariati's actions and programs to provide an alternative education system are more clear compared to scientists of critical education theory. Shariati took two important steps to provide an alternative to the Western model: First, comparing Islamic education with Western education and showing the superiority of the former over the latter, and Second; comparing teaching-learning methods in Maktab Khanes and seminaries with modern schools and universities. However, Shariati's idealistic and Islamic education differs in many respects from present educational institutions.

Another finding of the research is proving the similarity between Shariati thoughts and critical theory regarding the two conflicting roles of educational system. Both critical theory scholars and Shariati believe that the education system can be repressive or liberating. Other researchers confirm this similarity (Hazari & Mohammadi, 2018; Ebrahimabadi & Mohammadi, 2017; Alborzi, 2017; Aysha, 2006; Saffari, 2015; Szkudlarek, 2013). Another finding of research is difference between Shariati and scholars of critical theory in the geographical scope of the critique of educational system. While critical theorists have focused mainly on positive and negative functioning of educational system in developed societies, Shariati critique is not limited to the Iran educational system only and criticizes the function of this system in both groups of developed and developing societies. This finding has received less attention from previous researchers. The last point to note is that although it seems educational systems in Western countries, influenced by critical theory and critical education's scholars, have been able to create a relatively favorable atmosphere of criticism, questioning, and active dialogue in schools, but the Iran educational system - Despite the change of political system from the monarchy to an Islamic Republic, which

was Shariati's dream - still faces challenges such as a centralized system, ignoring the individual, ethnic and cultural differences of learners, inactive teacher-student relationship and lack of critical and questioning climate.

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