



Iran: Nationwide Curriculum for Computer Programming

OE Watch Commentary: Iranian authorities often point to increasing educational standards for both men and women as one of the primary successes of the Islamic Republic. While it is true that literacy and other educational measures have increased, they have simply continued trends that predated the revolution. That said, there is truth to the notion that the Islamic Republic has advanced study and student achievement in engineering and technology. Part of the reason for this is cultural: Iranian society (and broader Middle Eastern society) honors engineering. Engineers



Students at a Shahid Beheshti University computer lab, Tehran, Iran.
Source: Shahid Beheshti University, <http://en.sbu.ac.ir/Faculties/ComputerEngineering/slides/slide3.jpg>

in Iran and elsewhere often receive special salutations, much as doctors or ambassadors do in Western societies. Another important part is simply self-defense against the backdrop of dictatorship. Engineering, math, and science are all fields in which there is a right and a wrong, and so school marks are more objective than they are for more malleable subjects like literature, political science, or even economics. The Islamic Republic's emphasis on indigenous industry and autonomy also increase the likelihood of gainful employment for engineers and technical experts.

It is against this backdrop that the excerpted article from *Gerdab.ir*, an Iranian website specializing in news about computer and cyberspace, is of interest. It outlines secondary school curriculum reforms to add mandatory computer programming courses for freshmen and sophomores. In other countries, such an ambitious coding curriculum might be undercut by a lack of qualified teachers, but the long Iranian embrace of technology—even after the Islamic Revolution—means that finding qualified coding instructors for every high school may be less of a challenge than in other countries. The article claims that one of the main objectives of the reform is to foster “a culture that makes effective use of cyberspace,” though it is unclear how such a curriculum would address cyber security from a regime perspective. A broader emphasis on coding in high schools, however, may have benefit for the regime as they can identify, cultivate, and perhaps even co-opt talent prior to the university admission process and/or military conscription. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“This plan...improves the quality of technology education.”

Source: “Tarh-e Towse’ah Barnameh Nevisi Baraye Daneshamuzan Sarasar Keshevar Ejra Mishavad (A Programming Development Curriculum is being Implemented for Students Across the Country),” *Gerdab.ir*, 3 June 2019. <https://gerdab.ir/fa/news/28572>

A Programming Development Curriculum is being Implemented

The three-part plan entitled “Plan for the development of entrepreneurship and computer programming in the field of information technology for students around the country” is aimed at realizing the objectives of the Iranian Islamic model for progress.... This plan establishes a “a creative system and innovation in education in order to provide material and guidance to managers, educators and entrepreneurs.” It improves the quality of technology education and provides for better infrastructure to foster the development of businesses. Among the main objectives of the plan are: fostering a culture that makes effective use of cyberspace, training and providing support for students’ innovative tech ideas that apply modern technology to the development of the economy.

Some of the other objectives of this plan are...to provide for the advancement of entrepreneurship..., develop information technology, foster creativity alongside coding skills. The practical steps in the plan are to host entrepreneurship events that showcase information technology for students across the country, provide entrepreneurship training, and teach coding to first- and second-year secondary students during the 2019-2020 academic year.