



FARABI'S EPISTEMOLOGY IN THE AL-JAM' E AND AL-HOROUF: THE BASIS FOR THE COMPARATIVE APPROACH IN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Mohammad Hassan MIRZAMOHAMMADI¹, Mohammad Hasan TAJDARY^{2*}, Younes AHMADPOURI², Malek Gheysar SHAHRYARI², Zahra GHASEMABADI KARAMI RANJBAR²

¹Associate Professor in Education Shahed university, Tehran, Iran.

²Phd. Student of Philosophy in Education, Shahed University, Tehran, Iran.

***Corresponding Author**

Email:hassantajdary@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In the present study, the origins of Farabi's epistemology in Al-Jam'e and Al-Horouf are analyzed which paved the ground for the formation of a comparative approach, with an emphasis on studies in the field of philosophy of education. The methods used in this research are analysis and deduction. The results showed that Farabi in Al-Jam'e collected the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, to pave the way for the compatibility of philosophy and religion. Moallem Sani (second teacher) in Al-Horouf, was able to provide compatibility between language and logic i.e. religion and philosophy with a phenomenological approach. At the end part of the study, inspired by the phenomenological approach of Farabi in comparison, this approach is considered in the studies of philosophy of education (especially religious studies in this field) and introduced and reconstructed in the three components of origin, methods, and aim.

Keywords: epistemology, Al-Jam'e, Al-Horouf, comparative approach, philosophy of education, Farabi.

INTRODUCTION

The comparison is the act of comparing, but it does not stay on the level of the putting two or more thoughts and their description in a row, and reaches the stage of understanding, criticism and intuition. Comparison enables compassion and empathy of ideas and provides the context for dialogue between them. Accordingly, in order to make a correct comparison, it is necessary for the comparers to reach a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the two sides and correctly understand the origins and aims of the thoughts of the parties, and should also understand the language used in the two thoughts (Mirzamohamadi, 2014). Based on the above, in the field of philosophy of education (as one of the applied and complementary philosophies), many comparative research and studies are done in the world and Iran. Despite doing this volume of research and studies, nuclear and precise approach is formed in this area and this area suffers from poor methodology. Comparative studies in this area typically lack methodological framework, and sometimes comparison does not take place in its exact sense. These conditions prevail in comparative research in Islamic education (even more intensely). Considering the above, it seems that by using and based on the methodology of the leading Islamic philosophers in their works, a useful approach can be designed and deployed for comparative studies in the Islamic philosophy of education. Accordingly, in the present research, Farabi was chosen as one of these philosophers. He is

essentially a collective and comparative philosopher, and examples of comparison are abundant in his works. During the Farabi's life i.e. the first half of the fourth century AH in the Islamic world, there were five basic flows, namely, Hadith and Commentary, Jurisprudence, Theology, Sufism and Mysticism, and Philosophy (Netton, 1992). In this period, the issue of compatibility and incompatibility of Wisdom and Shariah became a strong struggle. In these circumstances Farabi sought to establish a link between these intellectual currents. He wanted to propose a new theory about thinking in Islam, so that none of the above intellectual. Accordingly, he decides to write the two valuable treatises "Al-Jam`e", and "Al-Horouf" to respond to the intellectual conflicts in the world of Islam. Based on the above, the three questions are posed for the present study as the following:

The first question: What are the epistemological origins of Farabi in Al-Jam`ethesis?

The second question: What are the epistemological origins of Farabi in Al-Horouf thesis?

The third question: How can one formulate a comparative approach in the philosophy of education, based on the analysis of the Farabi's epistemological origins in the Al-Jam`e and Al-Horouf treatises?

Document analysis and deductive methods were used in order to responding to the questions. Thus, first, the two theses of Al-Jam`e and Al-Horouf were analyzed and their epistemological origins were explained. Then, based on those origins, Farabi's phenomenological approach to comparison was analyzed in the two theses. In the following, such approach was reconstructed in the field of philosophy of education, and finally the origin, method, and aim (as the three main elements of the approach), were deduced based on Farabi's perspective in Al-Jam`e and Al-Horouf theses.

FINDINGS

Responding to the first question: What are the epistemological origins in the Farabi's Al-Jam`etreatise?

Treatise on "Al-Jam`e Beyn Al-Ra'y Al-Hakimain" is one of the largest and most significant works of Farabi in Islamic philosophy in which Moallem Sanahas compared and reconciliation the opinions of Plato and Aristotle. Farabi in the introduction of Al-Jam`ethesis posed the following major issues, which according to some is the conflict between Plato and Aristotle, and answers them: lifestyle, manner of writing, essence, scopes and definitions, usagesyllogism, vision, ethics, remembrance in acquiring knowledge, createdness and uncreatedness of the world, ideas, hereafter reward and punishment (Al-Farabi, 1984). Before discussing these issues, Moallem Sanidefines philosophy as: "knowledge of the beings as they are an entity." Then talks about the devices that most people distinguish as the difference between Plato and Aristotle and mentions one of the following three cases for above reasons: either the philosophy definition is wrong, or the votes of most people is false or absurd about Plato and Aristotle, or that the one who says there is a difference between these two philosophers is ignorant. Farabi criticized and rejected the first two cases, then discusses issues that allegedly a point of disagreement between the two philosophers. Farabiuses a particular method in this regard. First, he mentions the opinion of the one considering a major difference between the two philosophers, then rejects It by adducing some works attributed to the two philosophers, and in the absence of such a citation relies on the



rational reasons that are perhaps his own inference, since the presumption of Farabi is that it is impossible to have a fundamental difference between the two leaders of the existing philosophy (Rahimian, 2009: 14-15). Some believe that Farabi in writing *Al-Jam'è*, wrongly introduced the "Theology" (Enneads) thesis as the work of Aristotle and this error led to writing this thesis, while this is wrong. Farabi, in *Al-Jam'è*, has forty times referred to Aristotle's other works and referred only four times to Theology. He has also cited the works of Plato for four times, especially the two treatises of "Phaedo" and "Timeous". As Farabi believes in the oneness of religion, similarly he does so in the oneness of philosophy in the sense that philosophers like the prophets must tell the truth and cannot have fundamental disagreements. In his view, the purpose of philosophy like that of religion is "search of truth". It is said that this action of Farabi is a prelude to collect philosophy and religion together (Mogharebi and Purhassan, 2012 : 25). Farabi considers the prophet and philosopher as two people who are looking for the fact. All the prophets say one fact and there is no difference among them, but it is not true for philosophers and they may have differences. So this issue should be measured. Farabi uses *Al-Jam'è* to show the validity of philosophy and consolidate its position and put philosophers along with the position of the Prophet. Moallem Sani in this thesis examines the relationship between reason (philosophy) and revelation (religion). He wants to reveal the limits of the wisdom in receiving the truth and pave the way for the faith and revelation and identify the role of the Prophet in expressing the truth and guiding people. Farabi determines the limit of reason in *Al-Jam'è*. In his view, the limits of receiving the truth to the Prophet (who was perfect in terms of rational and imaginative faculties) are different from that of the philosopher (who was perfect in terms of rational faculty). We can compare the Farabi's work in this field with Kant's work, who identifies the limits of reason in acquiring knowledge (Hikmat, 2009 : 87-96). Moallem Sani collects reason and religion in this thesis to establish Islamic philosophy. A philosophy that is the pure reason product of humanity and achieved by logical procedures, in terms of knowing the facts exactly offers what is presented to the humans which is taught by the Prophet to the people through revelation.

Responding to the second question : What are the Farabi's epistemological origins in Al-Horouf thesis ?

Al-Horouf is the first comprehensive book of Farabi dedicated to the science of metaphysics. Moallem Sani wrote this more detailed treatise than his other works, after his political writings "Ar`a Ahl Al-Madina Al-Fadila" and "Siass`at Al-Madanie`a". This is also said that Farabi didn't write *Al-Horouf*, but it was made by the notes of his students during teaching. *Al-Horouf* is a source that exponents of metaphysics book like "Avicenna" and "Ibn-e-Roshd" took advantage of it after Farabi in many of their votes in the divine knowledge. This thesis can be useful for those who are looking to find a connection between the development of knowledge and language on the one hand and the society where this knowledge was grown in it, on the other (Mahdi, 2009 : 5240-).

Al-Horouf is written in three parts and thirty-three chapters. The first part, which has eighteen chapters, deals with the names and letters of categories. The second part, which has seven chapters, addresses the emergence of the vocabulary of philosophy and religion. The third part with eight chapters, deals with the question letters (Al-Farabi, 1990).



Perhaps the most significant chapter of Al-Horouf is the first chapter (ب) of the first part of the book in which Farabi deal twith the "existence" indetail . Farabi's and Aristotle's difference can be seen in Farabi's attention to the principle of existence, while Aristotle has paid attention to the being , instead of existence. The existence is of fundamental importance for Farabi. For the first time in the history of philosophy, he deems existence as a granted issueand distinguishes it from the quiddity (Purhassan, 2014).

Farabi puts an end to the conflict between language and logic in Al-Horouf. In fact, the conflict is between the religious (theological) and logical flows. In a debateat Baghdad between Abu Bashar Matalbn Younes (teacher of Logic) and Abu Saeed Sirafi (teacher of syntax), the logical flow prevailed the logical flow. AbuSaeed didn't believe in the compatibility between language and logic and in this debate, sided the language and avoided logic . Farabi wrote Al-Horouf to defend the relation between language and logic to show that these two should be along side one another and no one is independent from one another . Farabi indicated in Al-Horouf that with out a proper understanding of rational thought one cannot defend the Shariah (Purhassan, 2016:13).

Looking at the content of Al-Horouf treatise, it may seem that Farabi in this work deals with letters in Arabic. While this is not the case, Farabi in Al-Horouf the sisnei ther discusses about all the letters, nor even about most of them, but the subject of his discussion is a small number of theses. He argues in this thesis about the letters by which the categories are asked. These letters as called by syntax teachers are types of nouns. But Farabi believed that it can be arranged according to the usage of each letter in the syntax or logic . Al-Horouf thesis does not only deal with words and letters, Farabi in dependently discussed about the terms in the book "Al-Alfaz Al-Most` aMalahfi Al-Mantiq" (1968).

For Farabi, the letters are meaningful. It is true that Farabi describes the letters , but ultimately he deals with the philosophical analys is of being ."In this work, he investigated the relationship of language with logic and thinking" (Davari-E-Ardakani, 2015:8). Some, like "Mahdi" (2009 :40) claim that Al-Horoufentirely describes Aristotle's metaphysics, while this view is not accurate. Al-Horouf is an independent and innovative work on the three areas of Linguistics, Epistemology and Ontology (Purhassan, 2016:19). This thesis deals with the relation of language with philosophy and religion (Mahdi, 2009 :40). Farabi begins with linguistics in Al-Horouf, continues with logic and reaches ontology. In his view, the language is the introduction to epistemology and understanding being. With outlinguistic analysis we cannot reveal epistemological aspects and design metaphysical issues. Words and languages and their analysis are the beginning of thinking . The process of cognition in the Al-Horouf treatise is seen in the Figure below:



Figure 1: process of cognition in the Al-Horouf

For Farabi, syntax is a function of logic. Logic is the origin of syntax. The end of the language (syntax) and logic (reason) is the being that is summed up in the existence. Farabi has put

together the three do main soflanguage, epistemology, and ontology entangled in each other in al-Horouf. This entanglement is shown in the Figure below:

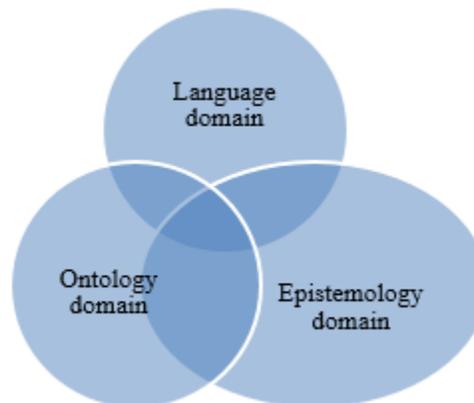


Figure 2: three domains in al-Horouf

Responding to the third question: How can one formulate a comparative approach in the philosophy of education, based on the analysis of the Farabi's epistemological origins in the Al-Jam`e and Al-Horouf treatises ?

Considering the above, the question is whether Farabi in Al-Jam`e and Al-Horouf theses could establish compatibility between the two ideas? What are those two thinking? How did he establish compatibility? What are the results and achievements? Is it possible, based on Farabi's perspective, to achieve a compatible approach in the philosophical studies and philosophy of education? How is this process reconstructed? The following is an attempt to answer these questions.

In the era of Farabi, in the Islamic world, there were three approaches regarding the relation between language and logic (religion and philosophy): incompatibility, reconciliation, compatibility. Based on the incompatibility approach, language, which is a means of expressing religion, is different from the logic that is a tool of philosophy work, and with one, there is no need for the other. For example, Sirafi in debating Abu Bash sided language and left logic. In the reconciliation approach, it is also believed that language and logic (religion and philosophy) are two independent domains, but they can be related to each other. This connection, however, should not lead to compatibility between the two. One of the advocators of this approach is Abu Ishaq Kendy. In the compatibility approach with Farabi as its founder, in the relationship among language and logic (religion and philosophy), we should neither speak of incompatibility nor reconciliation, but they are compatible with one another. But what does compatibility mean and how did Farabi invent this approach?

Farabi's approach in the Al-Jam`e and al-Horouf is privileged. In this treatises, Farabi was able to create a common language (metalinguistic) between religion and philosophy by which we can speak about philosophy and religion, and fit both of them into a harmonious whole. Farabi's innovation in the Al-Jam`e and Al-Horouf is in the common areas created in the language and that in the light of it the door of dialogue between religion and philosophy is opened releasing it from relativism and dogmatism (Mogharebi and Purhassan, 2012 :31).

Farabi in Al-Jam`e collected the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, to pave the way for the compatibility of philosophy and religion. In this treatise, he bases the unity of religion to reach the unity of



philosophy and sees the ultimate goal of both seeking the truth. Farabi in the *Al-Horouf* defends the nexus of wisdom and law. In this regard, he uses the term "Al-Sel`a" (Al-Sel`a between Al-Falsaf` a and Al-Mell`a). Farabi's work in *Al-Horouf* created a systematic compatibility between the rational (logic) and the language (religion) flows. "He with a phenomenological method considersthe relationship between logic and material "(Davari-E-Ardakani, 2015:8). Farabi believed that the relationship between religion and reason (syntax with logic) was misunderstood in his time. This misunderstanding began by "Kendy" and continued in the thoughts of some Farabi's contemporaries such as "Abu-SoleimanSajestani". They oppose with the compatibility of religion with reason.

With a clear understanding of the relationship between philosophy and religion (logic and language), Farabi proposes an epistemic device forthe compatibility theory. The achievement of Farabi's endeavor in adapting philosophy and religion is laying the ground for understanding the "existence" which is the ultimate aim of his philosophy. In this process, the share of each of the two fields is observed in such a way that the faculty of eason operates to get discursive aspects of recognizing being, and the faculty of imagination operates to get persuasive aspects of It. The most complete understanding in the opinion of MoallemSaniis dedicated to the Prophet and the Imam (religious leader) the faculty of the reason and the imagination of them is in the highest order of perfection (the necessity of being). Farabi's theory of knowledge in this field can be displayed in the Figure below:

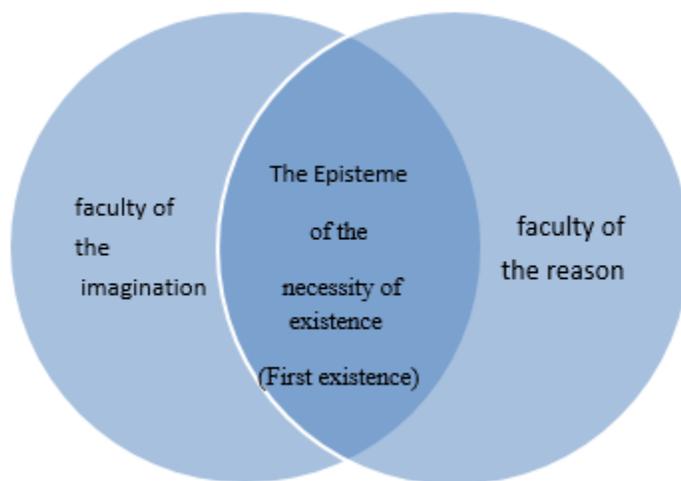


Figure 3: Farabi's epistemology in the necessity of existence

The valuable efforts of MoallemSaniin establishing the compatibility theory of wisdom and Sharia and his phenomenological model in adapting these two areas can be a fertile ground for the "reconstruction of the comparative approach in the field of philosophy of education "especially in religious studies. For this purpose, three components of origin, method, and aim are considered:

- A. Origin: The source of comparative studies in philosophy of education should be focused on the compatibility of thoughts approach. In such context, it is possible to discover and formulate the sharing aspects among different ideas. Otherwise, by accepting the

incompatibility approach, ideas and different philosophies in education as the remote and isolated islands from one another, each going on with different conditions, and have no defined relationship with each other. Of course, it must be said that establishing compatibility is not compulsory and fictitious. The comparative researcher should not touch, distort, and ideas through formalism and unrealistically close them together. Basically, two ideas must have the capacity to dialogue with both in the imperative arena and the researcher use this capacity to make them compatible.

- B. Method: comparison in the philosophy of education requires the method by which we could deeply penetrate different ideas and understand and interpret them. It lays the ground work for the discourse of ideas and the comparative researcher can be an organizer and supervisor of this bilateral dialogue. Given the wide range of philosophical studies in education and the existence of great time and space difference in these studies, it is necessary to use the phenomenological methods in comparative studies in this field. Using this method, the history (and location) will not be a barrier to close-up thoughts in the philosophy of education. For example, in the study "Comparative study of educational aims from the Plato and Farabi point of view" (Mirzamohammadi, 2004) it is seen that Plato as one of the comparison parties, belongs to the fourth century BC in Greece, and Farabi as the other party belongs to the ninth century (Third and Fourth AH) in Iran. It seems that only by using the phenomenological method we can go beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of these two philosophers and compare their thoughts. This approach can be used in studies of the philosophy of education. Adoption of the comparative approach is a clear manifestation of this benefit by using the phenomenological method for a deep understanding of the parties in the philosophy of education.
- C. Aim: The ultimate aim of comparative studies in the philosophy of education should be the exact and complete recognition of the parties to the comparison. Farabi believed that the aim of comparing religion and philosophy is recognizing the existence, and the aim of comparing ideas of Plato and Aristotle is the exact understanding of those thoughts and dispelling misconceptions in their understanding. Accordingly, the aim of comparing the philosophy of education is using the ideas and thoughts of philosophers and thinkers in improving the current educational system. This ultimate aim may then take place in the axis of deep understanding of those thoughts and the careful and wise critique of them. Comparison, if properly done, can underlie the success of development programs in the educational system of a country. One of the most pivotal activities done in the comparison is "Adaptation". For example, in the criteria No. 6, of the intended criteria in methodology of theoretical studies "document of philosophy of education" in Iran reads: "Enjoyment of the successful experiences of other educational systems in the world by avoiding mere imitation or discordant combination" (Sadiqzade and et al, 2009:10 Footnote). Adaptation, modeling the experiences and measures of an educational system by another educational system and its support is other theoretical and philosophical grounds. This activity can be successful if the conditions and philosophy of both the educational systems of origin and destination are well understood and criticized. The true meaning of adaptation depends on the fact that the adopter first specifies what are the dominant values, hidden meanings, functions and purposes in the two educational systems. Given the above facts, the components of the



comparative approach in the studies of philosophy of education can be found in the Figure below:

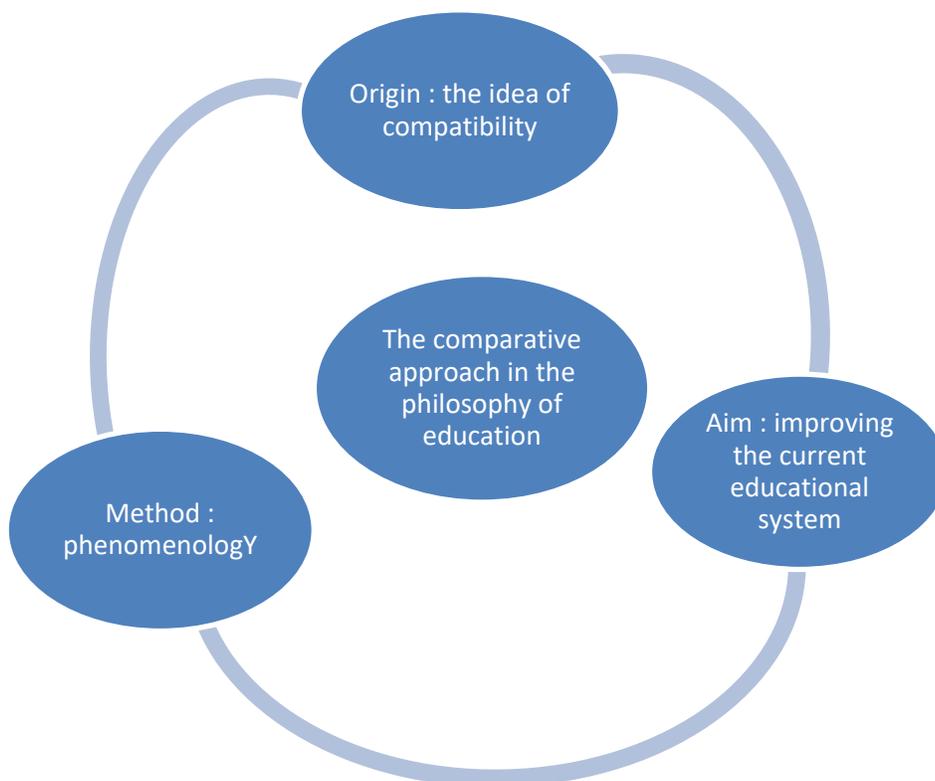


Figure 4: The components of the comparative approach in the philosophy of education

CONCLUSION:

Al-Jam'e and Al-Horouf are the two unique works of Farabi in the field of comparison. MoallemSani in these two treatises paved the way for empathy and dialogue between the comparison parties. Based on the above, the point of issue here is how can we use a pure philosophical work (with ontology axis), as a theoretical sphere, for the comparative studies in philosophy of education as a sphere impregnated with action, and localize the approach of a philosopher (Farabi) in the localization of education. In this case, the problem of "Is", and "Ought", (theory and action) arises. In response, it must be said that though education is an action and depends on various economic, social, biological aspects and so on, but comparison in such practical sphere needs enough attention to philosophical and theological foundations and without attention to the origins of formation of educational actions, carrying out comparative studies in this area will remain without any result. On this basis, attention to the study approaches of philosophers can be useful in comparative studies education. This issue also finds it necessary when the philosophy of education in Islamic countries is based on the Islamic philosophy and that attention to the thoughts of the Muslim philosophers in the development and reconstruction of the study approach is vital in this field.

References

- Al-Farabi, Abu-Nasr, (1968). *Al-Alfaz Al-Most` aMalah fi Al-Mantiq*, by Mohsen Mahdi, Beirut: Dar-El-Mashreq.
- Al-Farabi, Abu-Nasr, (1984). *Al-Jam` e Beyn Al-Ra'y Al-Hakimain*, by Alber Nasri Nader, Beirut: Dar-El-Mashreq.
- Al-Farabi, Abu-Nasr, (1990). *Al-Huruf*, by Mohsen Mahdi, Beirut: Dar-El-Mashreq.
- Davari-E-Ardakani, R. (2015). Commentary, in the *Al-Huruf, Abu-Nasr Al-Farabi, translated by TayebeSaefi and Somaea Masteri Farahani, Tehear*: Shahid Beheshti Publication. [In Persian].
- Hikmat, N. A., (2009). Al-Farabi weird and single. philosopher: The report fima gination role Book in the Farabi's philosophy, *Ketab-E-Mah-E-Falsafeh (Monthly Book Review on philosophy: special issue: Abu-Nasr Al-Farabi)*, 2(4), 87-96. [In Persian].
- Mahdi, M., (2009). Al-Huruf: The interpretation on Aristotle metaphysic, translated by: Mohammad Baher, *ketab-e-mah-e falsafe (specialized in formative and critical monthly book review on philosophy: special issue: Abu-Nasr Al-Farabi)*, 2(4), 40-52. [in Persian].
- Mirzamohammadi, M. H., (2004). Comparative study of educational aims from the plato and Farabi point of view, *Journal of psychology and education, Tehran University*, 33 (2), 201-225. [In Persian].
- Mirzamohammadi, M. H., (2014). *The introduction to comparative research methodology in philosophy of education*, Tehran: Aeeizh publication. [In Persian].
- Mogharebi, N. & Purhassan, Qh. (2012). Al-Farabi's innovation concerning the relationship between religion and philosophy: the hierarchical theory of religion language, History of philosophy, *Quarterly journal of the international society of the history of philosophy*, 3 (1), 9-37. [In Persian].
- Netton, R. I., (1992). *Farabi and his school*, London: Rutledge and kegonpaul.
- Purhassan, Qh. (2014), Al-Farabi and distinction theory between existence and essence, History of philosophy, *Quarterly journal of the international society of the history of philosophy*, 5 (3), 63-90. [In Persian].
- Purhassan, Qh. (2016), Al-Farabi and a philosophical reading of Al-Huruf, History of philosophy, *Quarterly journal of the international society of the history of philosophy*, 7(2), 7-29. [In Persian].
- Rahimian, S. (2009). The analytical introduction in the presentation of Al-Farabi's Treatises, in *Al-Farabi's philosophical Treatises, translated by Saeed. Rahimian*, Teheran: Scientific and cultural Publication. [In Persian].
- Sadeq Zadeh, (2010). *The report of finding integration of the oretical studies in the philosophy of education*, Tehran: Ministry of Education, Publication. [In Persian].

