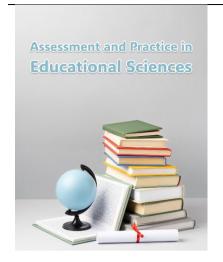# Assessment and Practice in Educational Sciences

A Comparative Study of the Spiritual Education of Children from the Perspective of John Dewey and Allameh Tabataba'i and Its Educational Implications for the Tehran Education System

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to conduct a comparative examination of the spiritual education of children from the viewpoints of two prominent thinkers—John Dewey and Allameh Tabataba'i—and to analyze the educational implications of their views for the Iranian education system. This research was designed using a qualitative approach with a fundamental–applied nature. In the first phase, through the method of documentary content analysis, the primary sources and selected works of both thinkers were identified and analyzed. Subsequently, to determine the dimensions and components of spiritual education in the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral domains, a hybrid deductive–inductive thematic analysis was employed. In the comparative phase, George Bereday's comparative model was used to examine conceptual similarities and differences at four levels: description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison. To extract the educational implications of each perspective, the Franken model was applied, enabling the derivation of key educational elements including goals, content, teaching methods, teacher's role, evaluation, and school environment from each viewpoint. The research population consisted of all authentic, interpretive, and theoretical works related to the two thinkers in the fields of educational philosophy and Islamic–Western education, and the sample was selected using purposive sampling. Data collection tools included structured note-taking and thematic coding. The findings indicated that Allameh Tabataba'i's view is grounded in innate human nature (fitrah), revelation, religious rationality, and moral–spiritual development. In contrast, Dewey explains spiritual education within the context of lived experience, ethical reflection, and social growth. Despite foundational differences, commonalities such as the importance of moral education, the cultivation of responsibility, and emphasis on the role of the environment and teacher were observed in both perspectives. Finally, based on the obtained results, practical implications were proposed for the Iranian education system in areas such as curriculum design, teacher training, educational content, and school environment management.

Keywords: Spiritual education, John Dewey, Allameh Tabataba'i, comparative analysis, thematic analysis, philosophy of education, education system, educational implications.

Introduction

In the contemporary world, societies are increasingly confronted with significant challenges in the field of education. The spread of excessive individualism, a crisis of meaning, weaknesses in social ethics, and the unprecedented growth of communication technologies have necessitated a fundamental re-evaluation of both formal and informal education for children. Within this context, spiritual education has garnered attention among educational theorists as one of the essential pillars for the

holistic development of the child (1). Spiritual education is a process through which an individual, while gaining awareness of the self and the world, is guided toward moral elevation, responsibility, empathy, and alignment with transcendent values. This concept is neither exclusively religious nor merely psychological; rather, it is deeply connected to philosophical, epistemological, and ontological foundations.

In Iran's educational system, the concept of "spiritual education" holds a significant place in official documents such as the Fundamental Reform Document of Education (2011). However, in practice, school curricula often lack an integrated, philosophical, and practical approach to this domain (2). Therefore, drawing from authentic theoretical sources and credible philosophical perspectives—such as the views of Allameh Tabataba'i and John Dewey—can serve as a guiding framework for designing effective models in this area.

Allameh Tabataba'i, grounded in the teachings of transcendent theosophy, considers spiritual education to be based on human nature (fitrah), reason, revelation, and self-purification. He defines its goal as achieving intellectual perfection and inner intuition on the path toward closeness to God (3, 4). In contrast, John Dewey, the founder of educational pragmatism, defines spirituality within the framework of lived experience, moral reflection, social growth, and active engagement with society. He emphasizes experiential learning, agency, and democratic education (5). Analyzing and comparing these two perspectives can reveal shared educational principles as well as methodological and philosophical distinctions—an endeavor that is particularly significant for developing contextually relevant and effective models of spiritual education for Iranian students.

The necessity of this research can be explained from several angles: First, the new generation of students faces crises such as existential anxiety, identity confusion, weak moral coherence, and diminished sense of responsibility. Existing educational approaches, which are primarily cognitive in nature, fail to meet these deep existential needs. Second, to date, few theoretical models with a strong philosophical foundation have been proposed for integrating traditional elements of religious education with the components of modern pedagogy. Third, the findings of this study can be utilized in designing curriculum content, teacher training, teaching methods, and educational assessment. Moreover, the comparative analysis of Islamic and Western intellectual traditions contributes to a more precise understanding of philosophical capacities in spiritual education.

This study was conducted with the following objectives: (1) to explicate the foundations, aims, and methods of spiritual education from the perspectives of Allameh Tabataba'i and John Dewey; (2) to analyze their differences and similarities; and (3) to extract educational implications for the Iranian educational system. The main research questions are: How is spiritual education defined by these two thinkers? What principles and methods do they propose? What implications can be drawn from these two viewpoints for Iran's educational system?

Given the qualitative nature of this research, no quantitative hypotheses were posed; however, propositions such as differing anthropological, epistemological, and methodological foundations, as well as the potential for identifying shared educational elements, were considered. The key concepts of the study include: spiritual education (the process of moral–value transcendence in children), comparative analysis (examining similarities and differences between two intellectual traditions), thematic analysis (extracting meaningful patterns from texts), and educational implication (theoretical applications in pedagogical practice).

The literature review affirms the importance of this topic. Nasr (2001) views Islamic education as rooted in divine knowledge and teleological orientation (1). Yousefi (2016) identifies reason, revelation, and self-purification as the foundations of spiritual education in Allameh's thought (3). Mirshafiei (2021) emphasizes intimacy with and adherence to the Qur'an as the main path of spiritual cultivation in this view. Nevertheless, no comprehensive study has been conducted that comparatively examines these two intellectual traditions with a focus on their educational implications for Iran.

Methods and Materials

This study is classified as fundamental–applied research in terms of its objective and as a qualitative study in terms of its nature. The primary aim is to identify the dimensions and components of spiritual education in children based on the views of two prominent thinkers—John Dewey and Allameh Tabataba'i—and to conduct a comparative analysis to extract educational implications for Iran's educational system. To achieve this objective, a combination of documentary content analysis and thematic contextual analysis was employed.

The research population included all original written sources, interpretive works, scholarly books, peer-reviewed articles, dissertations, and other valid documents related to the educational and philosophical thought of John Dewey and Allameh Tabataba'i. Using purposive sampling, the most important primary sources of both thinkers were selected as the research sample. Among Allameh Tabataba'i's works, *Tafsir al-Mizan*, *Nihayat al-Hikmah*, *Bidayat al-Hikmah*, and *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism* were analyzed. Among Dewey's works, *Democracy and Education*, *Experience and Education*, and *The Child and the Curriculum* were selected as key sources. Additionally, reputable secondary sources, including analytical articles and relevant pedagogical commentaries, were utilized.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected through structured note-taking and theme-based coding. Notes were categorized according to major thematic axes such as definitions of spiritual education, philosophical foundations, educational dimensions, methods, goals, and pedagogical roles. The coding process followed a hybrid deductive–inductive approach and was conducted both manually and using qualitative analysis software.

Data Analysis Method

The data analysis process was systematically designed and implemented in three main phases, each of which is detailed below:

Thematic Analysis

In the first phase, to extract the dimensions, components, and indicators of spiritual education from the primary texts of the two selected thinkers, a deductive–inductive thematic analysis was applied. Initially, based on theoretical foundations and previous studies, a preliminary framework was developed comprising three main domains: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Subsequently, through a detailed review of the sources, key statements and meaningful concepts were identified and subjected to initial coding. These codes were then conceptually grouped and organized into spiritual components. These components are as follows:

From John Dewey's perspective:

• Cognitive domain: reflective experience, meaning-making, intellectual openness, existential continuity

• Emotional domain: empathy, internalization of values, motivation for goodness, aesthetic experience

• Behavioral domain: critical thinking, continuous reconstruction of experience, social participation, flexibility

From Allameh Tabataba'i's perspective:

• Cognitive domain: knowledge of God, understanding of revelation, contemplation and reasoning, recognition of the purpose of creation

• Emotional domain: innate servitude, love for divine figures, heartfelt humility

• Behavioral domain: self-purification, engagement in recommended religious acts, major spiritual striving (greater jihad), social commitment

The alignment between the codes and the initial theoretical framework enhanced the validity of the analysis. In cases where new codes emerged, the framework was revised accordingly.

Comparative Analysis Based on George Bereday's Model

In the second phase, to compare the two intellectual systems (Islamic and Pragmatist) regarding spiritual education, George Bereday's comparative model was applied. This model consists of four main stages:

a) **Description:** Collection and representation of primary data and core concepts from each perspective.

b) **Interpretation:** Conceptual explanation of the data based on anthropological, epistemological, and ontological foundations.

c) **Juxtaposition:** Placement of similar and contrasting components side by side.

d) **Comparison:** Comparative analysis of points of convergence and divergence.

In this analysis, similarities and differences were examined across three levels: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. For each level, the following spiritual components were analyzed:

Cognitive Level:

• Source of spiritual knowledge (revelation–reason in Tabataba'i; experience in Dewey)

• Structure of knowledge (deductive and rationalist in Tabataba'i; inductive and empirical in Dewey)

• Aim of knowledge (divine proximity in Tabataba'i; understanding of experience and social development in Dewey)

• Learning process (based on reflection and contemplation in Tabataba'i; problem-solving in Dewey)

• Role of teacher and educational language (guide and interpreter of revelation in Tabataba'i; facilitator of dialogue in Dewey)

Emotional Level:

• Origin of emotion (divine nature in Tabataba'i; socially constructed in Dewey)

• Purpose of emotional education (development of a spirit of servitude in Tabataba'i; social cohesion in Dewey)

• Method of cultivation (refinement of the heart and divine love in Tabataba'i; aesthetics and empathy in Dewey)

• Teacher's role in spiritual orientation (guide in the path of purification in Tabataba'i; role model and companion in Dewey)

Behavioral Level:

• Origin of spiritual action (worship and religious conduct in Tabataba'i; social experience in Dewey)

• Purpose of action (divine proximity and perfection of the soul in Tabataba'i; moral and social development in Dewey)

• Style of spiritual life (journey toward God in Tabataba'i; democratic living in Dewey)

• Role of action in spiritual growth (medium of inner transformation in Tabataba'i; tool for active learning in Dewey)

Final Phase: Deriving Educational Implications Based on Franken's Model (1973)

In the final step, to practically apply the findings to the educational system, Franken's proposed model was used, which analyzes the structure of education through six key components (6). To enhance the comprehensiveness of the analysis, two additional components—"the role of family" and "the role of society"—were added. Accordingly, the educational implications derived from the views of the two thinkers were extracted as follows:

Table 1. Educational Implications Based on Franken's Model

Axis	Allameh Tabataba'i's View	John Dewey's View
Educational Goal	Divine proximity, intuition, self-purification	Moral development, social participation
Content	Revelatory texts, Islamic philosophy	Lived experience, social issues
Teaching Method	Spiritual conduct, abstract thinking	Problem-solving, project-based, dialogue
Teacher's Role	Moral and doctrinal guide	Facilitator and encourager of intellectual growth
School's Role	Worshipful and moral atmosphere	Active and social learning environment
Curriculum	Morality-oriented, nature-based	Student-centered, flexible
Family's Role	Primary source of spiritual guidance	Collaborating institution in social development
Society's Role	Platform for service and moral struggle (jihad)	Platform for participatory and democratic learning

Findings and Results

This section presents the findings derived from thematic and comparative analyses based on the research questions. The findings are organized separately and integratively through qualitative data and inferential interpretations. Additionally, to enhance scholarly rigor, these findings are compared and analyzed in light of theoretical foundations and prior studies.

✵ **Findings related to Research Question 1: How is spiritual education defined and explained from the perspective of John Dewey?**

The findings revealed that Dewey conceptualizes spirituality within the framework of lived experience, social action, and individual reflection. In other words, Dewey seeks to shift spirituality from a purely transcendental domain to an experiential and practical realm, considering it an integral part of active learning. Thus, from his viewpoint, spiritual education is a process through which an individual attains spiritual growth via participation in social life, ethical experience, critical thinking, and responsibility.

In the thematic analysis, the components of spiritual education from Dewey's perspective were categorized into three domains:

a) **Cognitive domain:** reflection on lived experiences, critical thinking, flexible rationality, and the interconnectedness of experience, learning, and human growth.

b) **Emotional domain:** empathy, compassion, social responsibility, moral development through social engagement, and cultivation of a sense of meaning, hope, and participation.

c) **Behavioral domain:** moral action within society, active participation in democratic learning experiences, experiential learning, and trial-and-error processes.

The analysis of these findings in light of the theoretical framework indicated that Dewey viewed education as a continuous process emerging from the interaction between the individual and the environment (5). Since human experiences are the basis for learning and transformation, every meaningful experience can serve as a foundation for moral and internal growth and thereby attain a spiritual dimension. In *A Common Faith*, Dewey (1934) emphasizes that religion is not an institution but a tendency toward transcendent experience that rescues individuals from self-alienation, meaninglessness, and purposelessness.

Given this theoretical foundation, it can be concluded that Dewey's concept of spirituality, in contrast to traditional views, is not based on belief in metaphysical concepts but on the ethical and internal quality of human experience. An experience that leads a person toward empathy, moral action, and continuous reflection on life is considered a spiritual experience.

The results of the first research question show that in John Dewey's view, spiritual education is an integral part of holistic human education that arises from everyday experiences, human relationships, moral reflection, and conscious action. For Dewey, spirituality is a quality of experience, not the product of accepting a specific faith. This approach, while distinct from religious traditions, endeavors to respond to the human need for meaning, belonging, moral development, and social participation. Such an interpretation of spirituality offers a new model for curriculum reform, especially in diverse and transitional societies.

Findings related to Research Question 2: How is spiritual education defined and explained from the perspective of Allameh Tabataba'i?

Analysis in light of the theoretical framework: As established in the theoretical section, Allameh Tabataba'i, emphasizing reason, revelation, and innate nature (fitrah), views human beings as free, purposeful, and inclined toward perfection. According to this perspective, spiritual education entails nurturing the innate human capacity for divine knowledge—a process that begins with cognition, continues through love and emotional motivation, and ultimately leads to moral and devotional actions (7). In

Tafsir al-Mizan, Allameh repeatedly asserts that the Qur'an is a book for the moral cultivation of humankind, with its ultimate goal being the attainment of certainty (yaqin), servitude ('ubudiyyah), and the goodly life (hayat tayyibah). From this viewpoint, spiritual education finds meaning only within the framework of divine revelation, Shari'ah, and commitment to worship practices.

The findings of this study align with numerous previous works. For instance, Nasr (2001), in his analysis of Islamic philosophy and spiritual education, demonstrated that Muslim philosophers—especially in the tradition of *hikmat-e mota'aliyah* (transcendent theosophy)—consider spirituality the ultimate goal of education, which is explained in relation to divine knowledge and personal spiritual path (1). Yousefi (2016), in his research on the foundations of spiritual education in the thought of Allameh Tabataba'i, concluded that its structure rests on three pillars: reason, revelation, and self-purification, with the goal being the attainment of intuition and certainty (3). Mirshafiei (2021), in his study of Allameh Tabataba'i's exegetical perspectives, emphasized that religious and spiritual education is achieved only through closeness to the Qur'an and acting upon it—not merely through human experience (4).

The analytical findings indicate that in Allameh Tabataba'i's thought, spiritual education constitutes the ultimate aim of human life and is realized through the integration of knowledge, love, and adherence to divine teachings. In contrast to Dewey, who seeks spirituality in individual and social lived experience, Allameh defines it in terms of conscious relationship with God, monotheistic human nature, and a life rooted in faith. From his perspective, spiritual education is not merely an academic or pedagogical process, but a personal spiritual journey and an ongoing connection with the sacred, encompassing all cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of the human being. Accordingly, the educational implications of this view for Iran's educational system include, in particular, the enhancement of the role of the spiritual teacher and the deepening of intimacy with the Qur'an.

Findings Related to Research Questions Three and Four: "What Are the Principles and Methods of Spiritual Education in the Views of John Dewey and Allameh Tabataba'i?"

ϖ Based on the research findings, the principles and methods of spiritual education in John Dewey's thought are rooted in the foundations of pragmatist and experientialist philosophy. Dewey considers education an active, dynamic, and interaction-based process, and instead of relying on the direct instruction of religious concepts, emphasizes creating opportunities for moral experience, critical thinking, and social learning. According to him, spirituality emerges in individuals when they encounter real ethical issues during social life and are able to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and others through meaningful experiences.

Principles of spiritual education in Dewey's philosophy: The following principles were derived from thematic analysis as the foundation of spiritual education in Dewey's perspective:

1. **Principle of lived experience:** Education must occur within the context of children's real-life experiences, as learning through experience fosters spiritual growth.
2. **Principle of gradual and natural development:** Spiritual education is a gradual process and should not be imposed. Growth must occur naturally and in accordance with the child's psychological readiness.
3. **Principle of social participation:** Spirituality is formed through social life and interaction with others—not in isolation. Schools must act as miniature societies providing authentic moral situations for students.
4. **Principle of reflection and reconsideration:** The child must learn to reflect on their actions and experiences to achieve moral and internal development.
5. **Principle of freedom in thought and expression:** The learning environment should be open and flexible so that students can question ethical and human matters and arrive at answers aligned with their own experiences.

Methods of spiritual education in Dewey's philosophy: The findings indicate that Dewey advocates for indirect and active methods of spiritual education. Some of the methods identified in the analysis include:

• **Project-based learning:** Through hands-on activities, group research, and interaction with the environment, the child experiences responsibility, empathy, and the meaning of action.

• **Moral and democratic dialogue:** Creating opportunities to discuss ethical and social issues, which promotes critical thinking and empathy.

• **Art and creativity:** Dewey emphasized the role of art as a medium for deep and spiritual experiences; art serves as a window for understanding emotions, values, and human relationships.

• **Self-observation and feedback:** Encouraging students to write, speak, or draw about their inner experiences, decisions, emotions, and values.

• **Group and cooperative activities:** Dewey viewed school as a place to practice social living; thus, collective activities are among the most important tools for spiritual education in his thought.

ϖ The findings from the documentary analysis of Allameh Tabataba'i's works—particularly *Tafsir al-Mizan*, philosophical texts such as *Bidayat al-Hikmah* and *Nihayat al-Hikmah*, and his educational correspondence—show that the principles and methods of spiritual education in his thought are deeply rooted in Islamic philosophy, Qur'anic epistemology, and innate anthropology. In Allameh's view, spiritual education is not a secondary activity but the ultimate aim of teaching and learning. The child is a being endowed with fitrah (innate nature) and is regarded as *khalifat Allah* (vicegerent of God) who must be elevated from the lower levels of animality to the highest levels of humanity and divinity through the guidance of reason and revelation.

Principles of spiritual education in Allameh Tabataba'i's thought: From the thematic analysis of his works, the following foundational principles were extracted as the framework of spiritual education:

1. **Principle of monotheistic fitrah:** Humans are born with an innate inclination toward God, and education must nurture this disposition (as per Qur'an 30:30: *fitrat Allah allati fatar al-nas 'alayha*).

2. **Principle of religious rationality:** Reason is a divine gift for discerning truth from falsehood, and spiritual education must cultivate reason in alignment with divine truth.

3. **Principle of intimacy with revelation and the Qur'an:** The Qur'an is the primary source of spiritual education, and its verses are not only instructive but also tools for self-purification.

4. **Principle of servitude and piety:** The path to spiritual education is realized through servitude, obedience, adherence to Shari'ah, and practical piety.

5. **Principle of self-purification:** Self-discipline, vigilant self-monitoring, self-accounting, avoidance of sin, and inner purification are foundational elements of spiritual education.

6. **Principle of infallible guidance:** The educational role model must be infallible, as infallibility is a prerequisite for true guidance.

Methods of spiritual education in Allameh Tabataba'i's thought: The following methods, derived from his works and the conducted analyses, are categorized accordingly:

• **Method of admonition and remembrance:** Using reminders of divine values, Qur'anic verses, stories of predecessors, and belief in the Hereafter to awaken the child's fitrah.

• **Method of love and intimacy with divine knowledge:** Fostering a deep emotional bond with God, the Prophet, and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) through religious stories, invocations, and supplication.

• **Method of worship and practical exercise:** Enhancing spiritual education through the practical training of religious rituals such as prayer, fasting, and simple devotional practices.

• **Method of gradual spiritual development:** Spiritual education must proceed step by step, in alignment with the child's capacity, to avoid rejection or coercion.

• **Method of moral exemplification and storytelling:** Using Qur'anic narratives and moral teachings to strengthen the reflective faculty and distinguish between good and evil.

• **Method of spiritual role modeling:** Introducing sanctified and spiritually developed figures such as Imam Ali (AS), Imam Husayn (AS), and Lady Fatimah (SA) as spiritual role models.

✱ **Findings Related to Questions Five and Six: What Are the Differences and Similarities Between the Two Views on Spiritual Education?**

ϖ **Differences:** In ontology, Tabataba'i refers to a transcendent and divine reality; Dewey emphasizes experience and the dynamic nature of the mind. In epistemology, Tabataba'i's foundation lies in revelation and reason; Dewey is a pure empiricist. In anthropology, Tabataba'i views the human being as innately God-seeking (*fitrah*-based), while Dewey sees the individual as a product of environmental interaction.

ϖ **Similarities:** Both emphasize moral development, active participation, and social responsibility. The role of the teacher, educational environment, and active learning processes are prominent in both perspectives. Positive emotion, a sense of meaning, and life orientation are also central in both views.

Findings Related to Questions Seven and Eight: What Are the Educational Implications in Dewey's and Tabataba'i's Views?

Based on Franken's model, the educational implications were identified across the following dimensions:

1. **Findings Related to Question Seven: Educational Implications of Spiritual Education in the View of Allameh Tabataba'i**

An analysis of Allameh Tabataba'i's philosophical, exegetical, and pedagogical works revealed that spiritual education is not a component of education but its very foundation and ultimate aim. Accordingly, broad educational implications can be extracted across areas such as goal setting, content, teaching methods, the role of the teacher, the role of the school, evaluation, and curriculum design. These implications, grounded in reason and revelation, define education as a continuous, spiritual, individual–social, and theological journey.

Educational Implications in Various Dimensions of Education:

1. **Educational Goals:** The ultimate goal of education is *divine proximity* and attaining the *goodly life* (*hayat tayyibah*). Intermediate goals of spiritual education include intellectual development, self-knowledge, and realization of servitude, while practical goals consist of cultivating divine ethics, monotheistic knowledge, familiarity with the Qur'an, and practicing piety.

2. **Curriculum Content:** Educational content must be directly connected to Qur'anic concepts, religious knowledge, and divine values. Lessons should be designed to awaken *fitrah*, develop reason, nurture faith, and purify the soul. Topics such as the lives of prophets, Islamic ethics, critical thinking, and self-awareness should form the core of spiritual education.

3. **Teaching–Learning Methods:** Use of indirect methods such as *tadhkir* (reminders), Qur'anic storytelling, reflective dialogue, and spiritual questioning. Employing daily acts of worship (prayer, fasting, supplication) as tools for internal

cultivation. Emphasis on practical exercises like self-accounting, ethical vigilance, and respectful social interaction. Stressing heartfelt connection with divine knowledge rather than purely cognitive instruction.

4. **Role of the Teacher:** In this view, the teacher is not merely a transmitter of knowledge but a spiritual guide and role model. They must be personally disciplined, pious, morally upright, and intimately connected to the Qur'an. The teacher–student relationship must be built upon love, respect, and mutual spiritual growth. The teacher should also nurture the student's capacity for reflection and contemplation.

5. **Role of the School:** The school, in Tabataba'i's perspective, must be a *spiritual journeying ground* and a *workshop for moral cultivation*. The school environment must be filled with spiritual calm, collective ethics, divine remembrance, and practical spirituality. Rather than competition-driven, it should promote cooperation, honesty, piety, and personal and social responsibility.

6. **Evaluation and Assessment:** Evaluation should not be limited to knowledge acquisition but must also assess behavior, intention, piety, and moral development. Recommended methods include qualitative assessments such as moral performance portfolios, self-assessment, spiritual interviews, and reflective journaling. More important than grades are the degree of inner transformation, behavioral change, and growth in love and spiritual insight.

7. **Role of Family and Society:** Tabataba'i emphasizes that the family is the primary environment for spiritual education and must be governed by love, faith, order, and moral upbringing. Society should serve as a facilitator—not a barrier—to spiritual development; therefore, media, institutions, and public spaces must work toward reinforcing divine values.

Theoretical Contextualization: As stated in the theoretical framework, Allameh Tabataba'i, drawing on *transcendent theosophy* (*ḥikmat-i mutaʿāliya*), views the human being as possessing a monotheistic nature, practical reason, and the potential for divine proximity. Accordingly, the entire education system must be designed to facilitate this path for the child. The aforementioned educational implications are rooted in this philosophical, Qur'anic, and anthropological vision.

Yousefi (2016) categorized the educational implications of Tabataba'i's thought into four dimensions: goal, content, method, and teacher's role, emphasizing his focus on ethics and monotheism in education (3). Mirshafiei (2021) also emphasized that Tabataba'i's view of schooling is mystical and spiritual, capable of transforming a school from a merely educational space into a center for purification and inner growth (4).

Findings Related to Question Eight: Educational Implications of Spiritual Education in the View of John Dewey

Based on the content analysis of Dewey's educational and philosophical works—especially *Democracy and Education* (1916) and *Experience and Education* (1938)—significant educational implications concerning spiritual education were identified. Dewey does not understand spirituality in its traditional sense (i.e., dependent on organized religion), but rather as a deepening of human experience, a sense of belonging, moral responsibility, and inner growth within a social context. In his view, the school should be an environment where the child develops spiritual growth through experience, participation, reflection, and interaction.

Educational Implications Across Different Dimensions

1. **Educational Goals:** The aim of education is the development of personality, social responsibility, and the cultivation of human capacities for a meaningful life. It involves nurturing individuals who can actively, ethically, and consciously participate in a democratic society. Education should foster a deep understanding of the self, others, and society through the educational process.

2. **Curriculum Content:** Curriculum content must be relevant to students' everyday lives; concepts should emerge from their experiences rather than being imposed. Emphasis should be placed on topics such as empathy, cooperation,

ethical problem-solving, and understanding pluralism in society. Projects and activities should be designed to stimulate social participation and moral reflection.

3. **Teaching–Learning Methods:** *Experiential learning:* Learning should occur through activity, trial and error, and reflection. *Problem-solving method:* Presenting real moral and social situations to strengthen moral judgment and decision-making. *Democratic dialogue:* Encouraging open discussion, listening to diverse perspectives, and collective thinking. Using art, storytelling, and collaborative games to deepen children's emotional and moral understanding.

4. **Role of the Teacher:** The teacher acts as a facilitator of experience and a motivator for the child's personal and social growth. They must be able to bring real-life situations into the classroom and create a safe space for dialogue and reflection. The teacher should be an active listener and a companion in the child's journey of discovering life's meaning.

5. **Role of the School:** The school should function as a miniature society that actively practices democratic and moral values. It should be a space where concepts like mutual respect, responsibility, cooperation, and social justice are lived experiences. The school is not merely a site for knowledge transmission but a space for inner growth, self-awareness, and the pursuit of meaning.

6. **Evaluation and Assessment:** Emphasis should be placed on process-oriented, qualitative, participatory, and reflective assessments instead of standardized testing. Methods such as portfolios, individual progress reports, reflective journals, and group projects are recommended. The focus should be on growth in moral understanding, problem-solving abilities, and the depth of the child's human relationships.

7. **Role of Society:** Spiritual education does not occur solely in schools; society, family, and cultural environments must also provide the context for nurturing human and social values. Media, public spaces, and social culture should work to reinforce humanism, dialogue, and justice.

According to the theoretical framework, Dewey considered education to be a function of experience and defined spirituality not as a fixed metaphysical doctrine but as a quality of lived experience. From this perspective, the educational implications in Dewey's approach focus on creating opportunities for deep experiences, social responsibility, and reflective practice. Dewey viewed the purpose of education not as the transmission of content but as the growth of personality within social life.

In Parker's study (2018), it is stated that Dewey equates spirituality in education with "exalted moral experience," which gains meaning through a sense of connectedness to the community, compassion, and moral reflection (8). The educational implications of John Dewey's thought demonstrate that spiritual education in this framework is a humanistic, social, experience-based, and reflective process. This approach seeks to assist the child in developing a sense of responsibility, moral growth, active participation, and the pursuit of meaning. Although this perspective departs from religious foundations, it can, at the methodological and goal-setting levels, inspire humanistic and ethically oriented transformations in the educational system—especially in areas such as cultivating empathy, dialogue, collaborative learning, and practical ethics.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study, based on thematic and comparative analysis of two approaches to spiritual education in the views of John Dewey and Allameh Tabataba'i, indicate that although the Western and Islamic intellectual traditions rest upon different ontological, epistemological, and anthropological foundations, they share important points of convergence in terms of practical educational implications. This section presents an analytical discussion of the results with reference to the theoretical framework, previous research, and the specific needs of the Iranian education system.

1. **Integrating Spiritual Rationality with Educational Experientialism:** Within the framework of Islamic philosophy, Allameh Tabataba'i views spiritual education as grounded in *fitrah* (innate disposition), reason, and revelation, and defines it as a purposeful process aimed at attaining divine proximity through self-purification and intuitive knowledge. In contrast, Dewey, as a representative of the pragmatist school, sees spirituality not merely as part of religious experience but as an integral component of moral reflection, social development, and aesthetic engagement.

2. **The Key Role of the Teacher as Guide and Facilitator:** Both thinkers consider the teacher a central figure in the process of spiritual education. In Tabataba'i's view, the teacher is a guide who must have personally undergone a path of self-discipline and philosophical reflection to lead students toward perfection and divine knowledge. In Dewey's view, the teacher is a facilitator of experience, providing the conditions for participation, dialogue, and the continuous reconstruction of experience.

3. **Alignment Between Educational Aims and Curriculum Content:** In both views, spiritual education requires curriculum content that aligns with educational goals. For Tabataba'i, this content should include Qur'anic teachings, Islamic philosophy, and moral–mystical traditions. For Dewey, it should emerge from lived experiences, social issues, and children's existential questions.

4. **Attention to the Three-Layered Structure of Education: Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral:** One of the strengths of this study is its three-layered structure for analyzing spiritual education, encompassing the cognitive domain (understanding meaning), emotional domain (feeling meaning), and behavioral domain (acting on meaning). This structure allowed for a more precise analysis of both approaches.

Practical Recommendations for the Education System

Based on the findings and conducted analyses, the following actionable recommendations are proposed for the Iranian education system:

1. **Curriculum Goal Revision:** In light of the integrated perspectives of Dewey and Tabataba'i, curriculum goals should move beyond mere knowledge transmission toward fostering spiritual development, moral living, and intellectual and social growth in children.

2. **Development of Spiritual Education Packages:** Using the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of spiritual education, educational content suitable for primary school can be developed that integrates lived experiences, religious teachings, moral practices, and social projects.

3. **Redesigning Teacher Training Programs:** In teacher education programs, in addition to theoretical and religious instruction, skills in dialogue, empathy, reflective thinking, and problem-solving should be emphasized so that teachers can effectively serve as facilitators of spiritual education.

4. **Creating Spiritual Education Spaces in Schools:** Schools should be transformed into environments for aesthetic experience, moral purification, and collective growth. Open reflective spaces, dialogue circles, collective rituals, and participatory programs can be effective in this regard.

5. **Strengthening the Role of Family and Society:** Family and society must be recognized as key pillars of spiritual education and connected with schools. Designing educational workshops for parents and involving social institutions can enhance educational cohesion.

Suggestions for Future Research

To continue the research trajectory in this area, the following suggestions are offered:

1. **Empirical Field Study:** Conduct field research to assess the impact of spiritual education programs designed based on this study's findings on students' moral and social development.

2. **International Comparative Study:** Conduct comparative studies of spiritual education approaches in other Islamic education systems (e.g., Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey) and their parallels with Western models.

3. **Design and Validation of a Local Spiritual Education Model:** Develop and validate a contextual spiritual education model for primary education by integrating Tabataba'i's philosophical teachings with Dewey's methodological framework.

4. **Policy Analysis:** Analyze Iran's national educational policy documents with a focus on the concept of "spiritual education" and the extent to which it has been implemented in official programs.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adheried in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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