Moral and Social Development in Education: Islamic Pedagogy and Deweyan Pragmatism

*** Malik Saeed Iqbal, ** Nimra Mubeen**

*** PhD Research Scholar, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)**
**** MPhil Research Scholar, Department of Education, Government College Women University Sialkot (GCWUS)**

KEYWORDS

ABSTRACT

Education has long been a fundamental tool for shaping moral character, social consciousness, and civic responsibility. While differing in their philosophical foundations, both John Dewey's Pragmatism and Islamic Educational Philosophy emphasize the development of ethical, socially responsible individuals through education. Dewey, a key figure in American Pragmatism, viewed education as an experiential, student-centered process aimed at fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and democratic participation. His principle of "learning by doing" promotes moral development through real-world engagement and social interaction. In contrast, Islamic Educational Philosophy, rooted in the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic scholarly traditions, integrates intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth, emphasizing concepts such as Ilm (knowledge), Akhlaq (ethics), and Tazkiyah (self-purification) to cultivate individuals who are both God-conscious and socially responsible. This comparative study explores the similarities and differences between these two educational philosophies, particularly in their approaches to moral and social development, experiential learning, and ethical reasoning. While Dewey's secular pragmatism promotes ethical relativism and democratic participation, Islamic education upholds a divinely guided moral framework emphasizing absolute ethical values and religious accountability. Despite these differences, both philosophies highlight the importance of character formation, social responsibility, and experiential learning. The study also examines how their integration can contribute to a holistic educational model, balancing secular and religious perspectives in shaping well-rounded individuals prepared for the complexities of the modern world. By synthesizing Dewey's experiential learning principles with Islamic moral education, this paper proposes a framework that fosters both critical thinking and ethical responsibility, offering insights for contemporary educational institutions. Such an approach bridges secular and faith-based education, fostering an inclusive learning environment that nurtures intellectual, moral, and civic growth.

Introduction

For centuries, education has been a necessity to inculcate virtues, social consciousness, and a sense of responsibility in people and lay the foundation for personal development and social cohesiveness. It thus carried with itself the twin goals of character forming and preparation for tasks that can positively impact human beings' lives within their communities in the Islamic and Western traditions. John Dewey was a preeminent figure in American pragmatism. He saw education as a dynamic, hands-on process using interaction, critical thinking, and real-world experience to develop democratic and moral citizens. Dewey's philosophy is based on the notion that ethical ideas are best taught through real-life scenarios that promote introspection and active social engagement.

On the other hand, Islamic educational philosophy, founded on religious teachings from the Qur'an and Hadith and academic Islamic traditions, focuses

Title: *Moral and Social Development in Education: Islamic Pedagogy and Deweyan Pragmatism*
Author: *Malik Saeed Iqbal, Nimra Mubeen*

delightfully on moral and social development. Indeed, their ethic and tazkiyah (self-purification) focus helps instill a sense of responsibility in youngsters towards both God and society. In order to ensure that faith and reason do not find themselves pitted against each other, Islamic philosophy provides a comprehensive educational experience that can go on to instil knowledge in people and fortify them for the pursuit of social justice, moral purity, and the general welfare of the community.

This assignment compares the differences and similarities of the Islamic theory of education and Dewey's pragmatism in terms of moral and social upbringing. For the purpose of illustrating how Dewey's pragmatism and Islamic philosophy lay down a proper educational framework which enforces improvement in the personal as well as social level, this comparative study looks at how faith, morality, and pedagogical practices function within both traditions. The connection we therefore seek to establish is that will greatly help us make sense of how these ideas are liable to shape contemporary educational institutions and grapple with the problems of cultivating morally pure, socially conscious beings.

It has always been valued in the development of society as one of the most important bases. Education in both Islamic and Western cultures has been much emphasised on its role in moulding the moral character and social awareness of individuals. Despite their different cultural and spiritual roots, Pragmatism by John Dewey and Islamic Educational Philosophy have the same objectives.

Pragmatism, as believed by Dewey and overemphasising democratic values and process of experiential learning, may afford an appropriate alignment with an emphasis on social justice and practical knowledge pursued in the Islamic educational

philosophy. Dewey's approach of "learning by doing" would encourage active exercise with the environment, thinking critically, and solving problems. Thus, it places it on a harmonious coexistence with the Islamic paradigm when it focuses on the development of good work ethics and ilm acquired through practical application. The two also believe that character-building and moral education are important. According to Dewey, schools are "little societies" wherein children could learn cooperation, compromise, and respect for others' opinions. It attempts to build a strong sense of akhlaq as based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, and community among believers.

Although both share many similarities, the assumptions and methods which are the base of Dewey's pragmatism differ from those in the Islamic educational philosophy. Dewey's philosophy is based upon secular ideas, while that for Islamic education is based on religious thought. However, all the ideologies do realize that ethical development and social responsibility go with learning by doing.

Actually, a comparison of these two theories can be very educative to us on how education really influences moral and social growth. What is beneficial for us is how Islamic ideas on education and Dewey's pragmatic model might be married with each other to develop a holistic educational system that is aimed at helping prepare the student for the challenges that face this modern world.

Overview of John Dewey's Pragmatism
John Dewey is a quintessence of pragmatism: a philosophical school established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Pragmatism stresses actual-life experience and active participation, for through it, education serves people in their struggle to meet vital needs and solve important life problems. Dewey conceived of ideas and beliefs in relation to

Title: *Moral and Social Development in Education: Islamic Pedagogy and Deweyan Pragmatism*
Author: *Malik Saeed Iqbal, Nimra Mubeen*

their experiment with things as a way to offer the principles of ethical individualism and critical reflective judgment. (Akpan & Kennedy, 2020)

Dewey's conception of education was unlike the more conventional approaches that bore the characteristics of passive learning, which primarily depended upon rote memorisation and was an activity-centred phenomenon rather than mere knowledge. His philosophy was student-centred or dynamic learning processes. He held that learning was a participatory, empowering process. Dewey proclaimed that the objective of education went beyond just passing down knowledge and in fact included educating thoughtful, resourceful, and responsible human beings. For him, schools are "miniature societies"; school children exercise democratic values through collective and reflective activities.

Dewey considers knowledge as a tool for creating a just society. His adaptation of pragmatism is instrumentalism, a philosophy that values ideas as instruments to be used to improve society and a philosophy that connects knowing with action. (Chamisah, 2024)

The most important principle of "learning by doing" with Dewey is that it involves the most significant activities that just repeat the life for the students to experiment and hypothesise and reach conclusions. This experience-based education method helps the students make the best out of their education and practice those skills they use daily.

Dewey also brought in pretty heavy implications of morality and society into his educational statement: schools are communities in which students learn civic engagement, social responsibility, ethical practice, and how to treat others in a just manner. His concepts of community with collaborative problem-solving really produce

moral growth through the consideration and respect for justice, compassion, and dignity in all other persons. Dewey's pragmatic, secular perspective shines a spotlight on the universal moral principles of justice. (Sikandar, 2015)

Overview of Islamic Educational Philosophy

The Islamic educational philosophy is derived from the teachings of the Qur'an, the Hadith-the recorded sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad-and a long tradition of Islamic scholarship. Such a framework emphasises development in intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth to guide its people toward living moral rectitude, citizenship responsibility, and a profound love for God. Bottom line of Islamic education is the development of wholesome personality which rests on moral and spiritual values and not mere knowledge.

Islamic Education does not separate between humanism and citizenship. It indicates the humanism but not mentioned citizenship, because it is including in largest circle. There no question that the Muslim being had to behave the same behavior everywhere as well as education for reconciliation between Individual and community. (Chamisah, 2024)

At its core, Islamic education does value knowledge. Ilm is the pursuit of knowledge and that too a moral obligation and also a gift from God. The Qur'an encourages learning to understand God's creation and fulfill human purpose. For instance, the first revelation to Prophet Muhammad, "Read" (Iqra), lays a great importance on education for Islam along with a way towards enlightenment within the growth of faith and inspire towards moral practice; it embeds the background religious and secular that enhances one's life and society.

Title: *Moral and Social Development in Education: Islamic Pedagogy and Deweyan Pragmatism*
Author: *Malik Saeed Iqbal, Nimra Mubeen*

Pursuit of knowledge must go with moral and spiritual development is believed in Islamic education. There is an emphasis on growth of akhlaq and tazkiyah so that the knowledge may be used for promoting justice, compassion, and respect. Tawhid unifies knowledge and action because it reminds the person that all their efforts should reflect the guidance of God.

The Holy Book, the Qur'an, and Hadith even preach development in moral and social terms wherein honesty is a bit discussed, compassion, fairness, and justice. This means that Islamic education aims at helping the production of enlightened, spiritually sensitive, and socially conscious persons who may contribute toward a just and compassionate society. (Booth, 2018)

Comparative Analysis: Dewey's Pragmatism vs. Islamic Educational Philosophy

John Dewey is the icon in American Pragmatism, who redesigned the concept of education from being an apparatus of transmission to be an experience that promotes democratic involvement. Education has to lead to 'doing something' about one's place within the community rather than just staying an inert receiver of knowledge. He supported the idea of "learning by doing" and demonstrated practices that might provoke independent thought and practical know-how. Classrooms must be imagined as political spaces where democratic practice gets exercised, cooperation is practiced, respect for difference is practiced, and collective decision-making to orient human beings toward adaptability, creativity, and collaboration geared toward participating better in a democratic society. (Dewey, 2024)

The values of spiritual consciousness, moral uprightness, and social responsibility have been instilled in the Islamic educational philosophy since the Qur'an and Hadith. In an

Islamic pursuit, 'ilm or knowledge integrates intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth. This blends tazkiyah or self-purification with akhlaq, or a moral character, to make a person more mindful of accountability to God and commitment to the common good. Education also draws virtue embodiments of deep commitment to the values of Islam. (Sasmita, et al., 2024)This pragmatism by Dewey, it depicts experiential learning as citizen gives to the secular world an adaptive citizen who looks at problems in society with a critical eye. In contrast, Islamic education is aimed at providing a moral and spiritual social foundation through faith and developing individuals meant for service for God and to society. Even if the actual frameworks are drastically different, both philosophies point to the importance of teaching education ethics and accountability in society. (RYDENFELT, 2019)

In spite of the emphasis on experience in both Dewey's pragmatism and Islamic education, Dewey's "learning by doing" promotes reflection and flexibility; practicing religions in an Islamic education further aim to teach good manners as well. Education may be transformative for either but has the ability to change the individual for intellect and morals.

Islamic philosophical views about education bring forth social and moral development on one hand, while Dewey's pragmatism from a different point of view points to the same conclusion. The former tradition envisages the human society in moral development as guided by the divine guide; whereas, the latter focuses its social constructivism vision on the principle that because it is developed among human beings interacting in community, this establishes the morality. Consequently, both traditions underlined the production, in the educational endeavour, of morally upright, responsible human beings. (Thoilliez, 2019)

Title: *Moral and Social Development in Education: Islamic Pedagogy and Deweyan Pragmatism*
Author: *Malik Saeed Iqbal, Nimra Mubeen*

According to Dewey, social connection is needed for development in morals and society. Indeed, he holds the view that through democratic processes, teamwork, and community involvement in education, moral values are enhanced. Real life experiences provide values like respect and collaboration that can bring flexibility to thought processes as reflected in the area of moral reasoning. (Hickman, et al., 2020)

In this regard, Islamic educational theory bases moral development on instruction from the book, the Qur'an, and views morality as absolute and objective. Through akhlaq and tazkiyah, it assists students build toward life instituted upon divine principles in both public and private life.

The moral system of the Holy Qur'an is based on divine commands and the relationship between man and God. Human being is guided and takes the right path with gratitude for divine guidance, or steps on the path of abomination. (Tohidlou, 2022-2023)

Dewey's pragmatism and Islamic educational theory vary in the conceptualization of religion and secularism. Dewey approach is secular, human-centred, and focused on social interaction and lived experience, while the religion is considered to be one influence. The Islamic philosophy comes before the moral education, which is guided by divine principles, and incorporates supernatural direction into personal development.

Dewey advocates for a rich ethical discourse because he asserts that moral standards find basis in human experience. He argues that education leads to ethical participation and practical and critical thought, making people capable of developing their ideals through democratic discourse. (Auxier & Shook, 2018)

This approach strengthens Islamic education because it will have a stronger moral background in that their ethics are anchored on God's will because they accept education as a tool for disseminating religious values, and those values have impacts on social relationships and individual behaviour. On the whole, Islamic philosophy of education is based on divinely led moral development, whereas the theory of pragmatism through Dewey emphasises more learning through experience that falls within a secular framework. Both approaches value ethical education as an avenue for responsible citizenship through the attempt to build people who contribute constructively to their communities. (Suparjo, et al., 2021)

Combining Secular and Divine Perspectives

This juxtaposition of the Islamic philosophy of education and pragmatism by John Dewey has taken notice of differences yet complementary views in terms of the stance that religion may take about its role in social life and growth. Dewey's human-centred, secular ethics focuses on ethical reasoning as a collective, developing enterprise encouraging moral pluralism founded upon human experience. However, what Islamic philosophy can grant is a static and located moral framework founded on religious doctrine by giving humankind the divine grounding of ethics.

Therefore, both traditions foster education in the upbringing of a morally responsible individual who has positively contributed to society. This Islamic philosophy brings stability and guidance through divine guidance, while Dewey's secular-religious interaction enhances tolerance and flexibility in arguments over morality issues. It is this secular religious interaction that has progressed the discussions of moral education toward ethically comprehended interaction in a multicultural, globalised world. (Rodriguez & Stokke, 2019)

Title: *Moral and Social Development in Education: Islamic Pedagogy and Deweyan Pragmatism*
Author: *Malik Saeed Iqbal, Nimra Mubeen*

Educational Methods and Pedagogy: Comparative Analysis

Experiential Curriculum Designed to Promote Critical Thought and Responsible Moral Behaviour. Experiential learning for Dewey called for the business of inquiry, problem-solving, and co-education more intensively than the transmission mode. A classroom should be a mini-communitas democratic where students learn to cooperate, respect each other, and address relevant issues in their society through active participation and reflection. Such an approach will always help cultivate responsible citizens engaged in the handling of various challenges in society.

The conventional Islamic educational philosophy is based on traditional methods like memorisation, reflection, and moral modeling. It insists that one memorise the Qur'an, which then helps to enhance linguistic skills and spiritual apprehension. Reflection makes the students think totally about morals introduced by Islam and to act accordingly in real life, thereby internalising the moral lesson. Moral modeling, therefore, plays a vital role in character building of the students, qualities like honesty, responsibility, and social ethics in teachers and parents. In this approach, there is total development, and spiritual values and moral values are also included. (Rehman, et al., 2023)

Synthesis and Implications for Modern Education

Therefore, from the above discussion of Islamic educational theory and John Dewey's pragmatism, one can gain solid insight into how education provides for moral and social development.This synthesis may then be used to work toward the development of an appropriate pedagogy for today's multicultural, diversified setting by combining these philosophies. In this synthesis the strengths of both philosophies are identified with the thrust that the principles being shared may be interspersed to help students acquire social responsibility and ethical acumen.

This marries the Islamic moral theory into Dewey's experiential teaching that is, enrichment of modern education. Dewey's "learning by doing" encourages active involvement and critical thinking with means of getting participants to work on real-time problems, including tackling them collaboratively. Experience-based learning opportunities bring about an environment where students are in charge of their learning. (Synytsia, 2020)

This is further supported by incorporating moral modeling, reflection, and community service from Islamic values. This would be the avenue for the service learning projects to support students in instances such as that created by the ethical dilemma of theft: Is that right or wrong? They should be able to gain a personal sense of social responsibility. Mixing the emphasis in Dewey on experience with rich teaching on moral development gives both practical experience and the strong moral foundation.

Dewey's principles are very applicable in modern multicultural classrooms. His acknowledgment of diverse perspectives, cooperation, and cultural sensitivity create an environment in which the learning process comfortably takes place. The curriculums can be developed on understanding diversities. Ethical and critical thinking, as well was emphasised, prepare these students to face even more complex social situations. These skills form the pillar from which informed, responsible citizens are fostered for the changing world. They can encourage them to reflect upon the values that they impose and work together for a resolution that will most likely benefit each of their respective communities. (Synytsia, 2020)

Title: *Moral and Social Development in Education: Islamic Pedagogy and Deweyan Pragmatism*
Author: *Malik Saeed Iqbal, Nimra Mubeen*

Conclusion
Though originating from distinct foundations and approaches, both systems share a common goal, fostering the development of active, morally responsible members of society. Dewey's pragmatism emphasizes learning through interaction with experience, where knowledge is shaped by reflection and active engagement. His focus on social values such as social responsibility, critical thinking, and democratic principles encourages students to actively participate in their communities and address real societal challenges. By emphasizing pluralistic ethics, this approach inspires individuals to contribute meaningfully to the public sphere.

On the other hand, the Islamic philosophy focuses more on moral character and responsibility towards the community, supported by self-purification-tazkiyah-based on instruction from the Qur'an and Hadith. Its approach is much in the search for principle through memorisation, introspection, and moral modeling as a vital source for reaching a strong feeling of individuality as well as a high level of ethical responsibility among pupils.

These ideas go along quite exceptionally in a comparative study. Islamic ethical principles merged with Dewey's experiential learning would bring about an all-embracing frame of education that will nurture intellect along with morals. It invokes social activity and invokes thought by a strong base in ethics built from concepts of shared responsibility and community values.

Knowing Dewey's philosophy and Islamic philosophy sometimes gives educational systems some guidelines but changes with reality of globalisation. Educators can help the students to come together with moral and cultural development side by side respecting people from various cultural origins as they face issues of the world with honesty, empathy, and commitment towards social justice. Eventually, it will be required to search for these varied philosophies to give rise to the production of morally upright leaders and responsible citizens in the coming years.

.

Title: *Moral and Social Development in Education: Islamic Pedagogy and Deweyan Pragmatism*
Author: *Malik Saeed Iqbal, Nimra Mubeen*

References

Booth, A. R., 2018. *Analytic Islamic Philosophy.* UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Akpan, B. & Kennedy, T. J., 2020. *Science Education in Theory and Practice.* Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

Auxier, R. E. & Shook, J. R., 2018. *Idealism and Religion in Dewey's Philosophy.* London: Oxford University Press.

Bhatia, D. J. K., 2020. *Critical Reflection of Naturalism and Pragmatism School of Thought on Present Education Scenario.* Raleigh: LULU Publication.

Chamisah, 2024. *Dewey's Philosophy and Thoughts: An Analysis of the Compatible Applied on Islamic Education.* Banda Aceh Malaysia: FTK Ar-Raniry Press.

Dar, R. A., 2021. *Educational Philosophy of John Dewey and His Main Contribution to Education. International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Scientific Research,* pp. 12-19.

Dewey, J., 2024. *Democracy and Education.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Fatah Yasin, D. R. F. B. & Jani, D. M. S., 2013. *Islamic Education: The Philosophy, Aim, and Main Features. International Journal of Education and Research.*

Hermanto, M. & Jayana, T. A., 2023. *John Dewey's Constructivist Learning Theory and Its Implementation in Islamic Religious Education Learning. BESTARI,* 20(1), pp. 23-32.

Hickman, L. A., Neubert, S. & Reich, K., 2020. *John Dewey Between Pragmatism and Constructivism.* New York: Fordham University Press.

Rehman, H. J. U., Farooq, A. & Ismail, M., 2023. *A Comparative Study on Educational Ethics: Insights from Islamic Educational Philosophy and Western Literature. AL-IDAH Bi-Annual Research Journal,* pp. 12-22.

Rodriguez, M. C. & Stokke, C., 2019. *Taking Spiritual Experiences Seriously in the Religious Education Classroom: A Transrational Approach. International Journal of Children's Spirituality,* pp. 243-249.

Rydenfelt, H., 2019. *Democracy and Moral Inquiry: Problems of the Methodological Argument. JSTOR,* p. 15.

Sasmita, M., Fudholi, A. & Zainuri, R. D., 2024. *Islamic Education as the Spiritual and Moral Foundation of the Young Generation. Indonesian Journal of Education (INJOE),* pp. 857-871.

Sharma, S., Devi, R. & Kumari, J., 2018. *Pragmatism in Education. International Journal of Engineering Technology Science and Research,* pp. 1549-1554.

Sikandar, A., 2015. *John Dewey and His Philosophy of Education. Journal of Education and Educational Development,* pp. 191-201.

Singh, D. M. K., Singh, D. A. & Srivastava, D. U., 2023. *Philosophical and Sociological Foundation of Education.* Bhopal: AGPH Books.

Suparjo, Hanif, M. & Senja, D. I., 2021. *Developing Islamic Science-Based Integrated Teaching Materials for Islamic Education in Islamic High School. Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction,* pp. 282-289.

Synytsia, A., 2020. *Education as a Means of Affirming Democracy Values in John Dewey's Pragmatism: Modern Perspective. The Journal of Education, Culture, and Society,* pp. 30-41.

Thoilliez, B., 2019. *Dewey in Transition: Towards a Pragmatist Ethics of Recognition in Schools. Journal of Philosophy of Education,* pp. 759-772.

Tohidlou, A., 2022-2023. *Comparison between Qur'anic Ethics and Pragmatic Ethics. Biannual Journal Quran and Religious Enlightenment,* 3(2), pp. 143-155.

Zainuri, R. D., Masruroh, S. H. & Fudholi, A., 2023. *Comparative Study of Children's Education Concepts According to Imam Al-Ghazali and John Dewey. Edutran Journal of Educational,* pp. 43-48.