

**Article History**Received:  
14-07-2024Revised:  
17-06-2025Accepted:  
25-06-2025DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33367/ijies.v8i1.5850>

Available Online: 30-06-2025

**Murtaza Mutahhari: Bridging Tradition and Modernity in Islamic Education Philosophy****Khalid Hussain Mir,<sup>1\*</sup> Md. Rafique Anjum,<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1,2</sup>Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University, Rajouri, Jammu & Kashmir, India<sup>1</sup>khalid6848@bgsbu.ac.in, <sup>2</sup>dranjum@bgsbu.ac.in**\*Corresponding Author****Abstract**

This study investigates the significance of Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari's educational philosophy amidst the challenges faced by contemporary Muslim societies. The study's main objectives are to scrutinize the core principles of Mutahhari's educational philosophy, evaluate its institutional and curricular consequences in post-revolutionary Iran, and discover practical implications for educational reform in contemporary Muslim societies. Using a qualitative approach, the study delineates Mutahhari's and relevant scholarly works to find the integration of revelation, rationality, and ethical construction within the framework of his educational philosophy. The study's findings reveal that Mutahhari's thoughts advocate a holistic approach to education that underscores spiritual growth and critical thinking, critiques materialist principles, and fosters women's education. The implications of this study go beyond academic discourse by providing insights to educators, scholars, and policymakers on the reform of educational objectives and methods. Ultimately, the study affirms that Mutahhari's thoughts can conform to a meaningful, ethical, and trustworthy education framework and contribute to a more comprehensive discourse on Islamic intellectual revitalization.

**Keywords:** Educational System, Iranian Society, Islamic Philosophy, Islamic Revolution, Political Ideologies.

**Citation in APA Style:**

Mir, K. H., & Anjum, Md. R. (2025). Murtaza Mutahhari: Bridging Tradition and Modernity in Islamic Education Philosophy. *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Education Studies (IJIES)*, 8(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.33367/ijies.v8i1.5850>

**Introduction**

In contemporary discussions of Islamic thought and pedagogy, Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari is a pivotal figure whose intellectual legacy continues to shape debates on modernity, governance, and education within the Islamic world (Jung, 2023; Qorbani, 2020; Shamsaie, 2012). His contributions are particularly relevant in the face of enduring questions regarding how Muslim societies can preserve religious authenticity while addressing the demands of globalization, identity crises, and educational reform.

This study does not aim to provide a biographical account of Mutahhari. Instead, it foregrounds the contemporary relevance of his philosophical and educational ideas,

especially in the context of Iran's socio-political transformations and the broader Muslim intellectual discourse. Mutahhari's thought emerged at the intersection of traditional Islamic scholarship and the philosophical currents of the twentieth century (Zolghadr, 2013). His writings offer a unique lens through which to analyze the integration of classical Islamic values with modern educational imperatives.

Amid the ideological tensions of pre-revolutionary Iran, marked by secular authoritarianism, Marxist influence, and Western liberalism, Mutahhari articulated a vision of Islamic education grounded in rationalism, ethical responsibility, and spiritual growth (Dabashi, 2006; Nasr, 2006). The Islamic Revolution 1979 provided a platform for institutionalizing many of his ideals, particularly those related to moral governance and religious education (Foroutan, 2021). Today, as Muslim societies grapple with ethical disintegration, educational fragmentation, and the devaluation of moral leadership, Mutahhari's contributions offer a framework rooted in tradition and responsive to modern realities.

The academic discourse on Murtaza Mutahhari has expanded significantly recently, with scholars recognizing his multifaceted contributions to Islamic philosophy, pedagogy, and political thought. Nasr highlights Mutahhari's deep philosophical roots in the tradition of Mulla Sadra, emphasizing his ability to synthesize metaphysical doctrines with modern rational inquiry (Nasr, 2006). While foundational, Nasr's treatment only briefly considers the educational dimension of Mutahhari's work.

Hamid Dabashi provides a rich ideological account of Mutahhari's role in the Islamic Revolution, framing him as a scholar whose theological concerns were inseparable from his revolutionary activism (Dabashi, 2006). However, Dabashi largely omits the discussion of Mutahhari's educational philosophy and its institutional implications in post-revolutionary Iran. Arjomand focuses on Mutahhari's political thought, particularly his interpretation of *Wilayat al-Faqih* and his emphasis on reconciling Islamic governance with participatory democratic ideals (Arjomand, 1988). However, Arjomand's analysis remains within the political domain, offering little insight into Mutahhari's pedagogy and views on educational reform.

Mutahhari's deep engagement with Western ideologies, particularly his critique of Marxism and positivism (Esposito, 1999; Gleave, 2007). These engagements underscore how Mutahhari positioned Islamic philosophy as a comprehensive alternative to materialist worldviews, a stance with significant implications for Islamic education. However, the

educational consequences of this positioning remain underexplored. Similarly, Firnando draws attention to the fusion of ethics and epistemology in Mutahhari's work but does not provide a dedicated treatment of his pedagogical framework (Firnando, 2024).

Despite these contributions, a significant research gap in the literature regarding Mutahhari's educational philosophy as a self-standing domain of inquiry. Most studies regard his pedagogy as secondary to his political or philosophical insights (Akbarzadeh & Chegini, 2020; Gösken, 2016; Larijany, 2021; Taliaferro & Churchill, 2015; Zarinkolah, 2023). This paper addresses that gap by focusing on how Mutahhari's epistemological commitments to *ijtihad*, rationality, and ethical reform can inform contemporary Islamic educational frameworks. It also examines how his critique of materialist ideologies, advocacy for women's education, and emphasis on spiritually grounded critical thinking serve as tools for broader socio-political transformation.

By situating Mutahhari's educational thought within historical and philosophical contexts, this study contributes to Islamic intellectual renewal, offering theoretical and practical insights for educators, scholars, and policymakers concerned with rethinking education's goals, methods, and ethics in the modern Islamic world. In pursuit of these aims, this study establishes several key research objectives. First, it seeks to explore the core principles of Mutahhari's philosophy of education, emphasizing his unique integration of revelation, rationality, and ethical formation. Second, it aims to evaluate the institutional and curricular impacts of Mutahhari's thought within the context of post-revolutionary Iran.

Additionally, the research intends to identify the practical implications of his educational ideas for reform in contemporary Muslim societies. Finally, it addresses the existing literature gap by thematic analysis of Mutahhari's pedagogical writings, positioning them in dialogue with classical Islamic teachings and modern educational theories. Through these objectives, the study aspires to contribute significantly to the understanding and applying Mutahhari's educational philosophy.

## Methods

This research employs a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in thematic textual analysis of primary and secondary sources. The core texts used in this study include Mutahhari's works (Mutahhari, 1990, 2017, 2022; Mutahhari & Algar, 1985). These works are evaluated within twentieth-century Iran's broader historical and intellectual context. Primary sources include Mutahhari's original writings, sermons, and public lectures,

accessible through published translations and archival materials from the Islamic Propagation Organization and Tehran University Press. Secondary sources, including academic commentaries, biographies, and historical analyses on Mutahhari's (Arjomand, 1988; Dabashi, 2006; Esposito, 1999; Nasr, 2006), offer critical perspectives on Mutahhari's intellectual formation and influence.

This study employs interpretive analysis to identify key themes in Mutahhari's writings, such as the reconciliation of tradition and modernity, the integration of faith and reason, and the philosophical underpinnings of educational reform. The research prioritizes Mutahhari's role in constructing an Islamic intellectual framework that informs pedagogy and governance in modern Iran. This methodology situates Mutahhari's thought within the socio-political context of pre- and post-revolutionary Iran, enabling a deeper understanding of how his ideas continue to shape contemporary Islamic education and public discourse. The approach also allows for analyzing the practical implications for educational systems in the Muslim world.

## Results and Discussion

### Mutahhari's Philosophy of Islamic Education

Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari viewed education as a means of intellectual training and a sacred, transformative process to nurture the totality of the human being, body, mind, and soul. His understanding of education was deeply embedded in Islamic metaphysical, ethical, and spiritual traditions, especially the Qur'anic view of human beings as moral agents endowed with reason, conscience, and free will. In his seminal lecture, "Education: The Basis of Islamic Leadership," he writes, *"The true aim of education is the cultivation of human virtues, and the awakening of moral conscience. Knowledge without ethics is like a sword in the hands of a madman"* (Mutahhari, 2011). This powerful statement reveals his conviction that knowledge (*'ilm*) divorced from moral values (*'amal*) results in imbalance and potential social harm.

His effort to synthesize spiritual transcendence and rational inquiry distinguishes Mutahhari's educational philosophy from traditional and modern paradigms. Drawing upon the heritage of scholars like Al-Ghazali, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, and Mulla Sadra, Mutahhari argued that education must serve both learners' cognitive and ethical needs. He praised traditional Islamic pedagogy for grounding students in values but was also sharply critical of its sometimes rigid, dogmatic approach. He believed that any education devoid of critical

reflection and engagement with reality is counterproductive. As Nasr notes, Mutahhari sought to "revitalize traditional Islamic thought by connecting it with the rational spirit of modern inquiry" (Nasr, 2006).

In Mutahhari's framework, Islamic education aims not to produce conformists but reflective believers who understand their faith not through blind imitation (*taqlid*) but through deep personal conviction. He asserted: "*A proper educational system must not merely aim at producing believers, but must create thinkers who understand why they believe*" (Mutahhari & Algar, 1985). This emphasis on *conscious belief* aligns with his broader philosophical commitment to freedom of thought within the ethical boundaries of revelation.

Another cornerstone of Mutahhari's educational vision is his understanding of the teacher-student relationship. He rejected the mechanistic model of instruction, advocating instead for the teacher to serve as a moral exemplar (*murabbi*) who actively shapes students' ethical and spiritual lives. He writes: "*The words of a teacher take root only when his actions reflect his teachings*" (Mutahhari, 2002; Mutahhari & Algar, 1985). This concept has enduring significance in seminaries (*hawza*) and university settings in Iran, where educators are still evaluated by their scholarship, integrity, and commitment to Islamic values.

Importantly, Mutahhari was critical of educational systems, especially those imported wholesale from the West, that are value-neutral or technocratic. He believed such systems contribute to moral fragmentation, spiritual alienation, and social disintegration. In his view, education must be teleological, directed toward realizing human potential as defined by the Qur'anic vision of the human being as *Khalifah* (vicegerent of God). Therefore, he advocated a value-based, student-centered, spiritually grounded educational model. Such a model, he argued, fosters *tazkiyah* (self-purification), *fikr* (critical thinking), and *amal-e salih* (righteous action), *thus creating learners who are not only intellectually equipped but also ethically awakened*.

This holistic educational vision lies at the heart of Mutahhari's enduring relevance. His philosophy of education provides a powerful counter-narrative to dogmatic traditionalism, which often discourages inquiry, and materialist secularism, which frequently neglects ethical formation. Through his writings, lectures, and institutional involvement, Mutahhari became one of the chief architects of Islamic educational reform in modern Iran, influencing generations of scholars and educators seeking to develop an educational system that balances reason, revelation, and moral responsibility.

## Faith and Reason as Complementary Pillars

One of the most distinctive aspects of Murtaza Mutahhari's intellectual legacy is his harmonization of faith (*iman*) and reason (*'aql*), a synthesis at the core of his educational philosophy. Unlike traditionalists, who tend to rely solely on revelation and memorization, or modernists, who often privilege rationalism at the expense of faith, Mutahhari firmly rejected any artificial dichotomy between the two. For him, faith without reason was blind and susceptible to fanaticism, while reason without faith was rootless and liable to ethical nihilism.

In his influential text *Fundamentals of Islamic Thought*, Mutahhari asserts: "If faith is not supported by reason, it turns into blind imitation; and if reason is not anchored in faith, it becomes arrogant and destructive" (Mutahhari & Algar, 1985). This statement encapsulates Mutahhari's commitment to a balanced epistemology in which revelation and rational inquiry mutually reinforce each other. In this framework, proper education cultivates the intellect and the soul, ensuring that learners accumulate information and develop insight (*basirah*) and discernment (*furqan*).

Mutahhari's harmonization of faith and reason draws inspiration from classical Islamic thinkers like Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Mulla Sadra, yet goes beyond them by applying this synthesis to contemporary issues. He saw the marginalization of faith in Western epistemology and, conversely, the suspicion of reason in some religious circles as twin failures that educational reform must redress. Mutahhari thus envisioned a system in which students learn to critically engage with religious texts while exploring philosophy, science, and ethics in a spiritually grounded way.

This integration is particularly relevant to curricular design in post-revolutionary Iran, where Mutahhari's ideas have helped shape hybrid syllabi that bridge religious studies and secular disciplines. Nasr observes that Mutahhari "*provided the intellectual justification for rejecting the secularisation of knowledge in Iran while not retreating into obscurantism*" (Nasr, 2006). He encouraged *ijtihad* in jurisprudence and across disciplines, urging scholars and students to reinterpret tradition in light of new challenges without severing their connection to divine guidance.

One of Mutahhari's most quoted insights into the relationship between science and religion appears in his work *God and the Universe*: "Science tells us what is; religion tells us what ought to be. The two are not rivals but allies. Without religion, science becomes soulless; without science, religion becomes stagnant" (Akbarzadeh & Chegini, 2020;

Golshani, 2004). Here, he refutes the notion that scientific inquiry opposes religious understanding. Instead, he calls for complementarity, in which scientific rigour is tempered by ethical direction and religious belief is informed by intellectual clarity.

Furthermore, Mutahhari strongly criticized *taqlid* (blind imitation), which he saw as a barrier to intellectual and spiritual development. He advocated for *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) as a scholarly duty and a pedagogical tool. He believed every Muslim, especially youth, should be taught how to think critically about their faith rather than absorb inherited dogma. He wrote: "Islam has no fear of rational inquiry. The Qur'an itself challenges the intellect, and it is only through understanding that belief becomes truly sincere" (Mutahhari & Algar, 1985).

In educational terms, this translates into a pedagogy of engagement: classrooms must allow space for questioning, reflection, and applying reason to moral and theological problems. Rather than focusing on producing compliant students, Mutahhari's vision sought to produce critical believers who can reason through complex issues while remaining grounded in their faith. This balanced approach has continued relevance in today's pluralistic and highly secularised environments, where Muslim students often find themselves navigating multiple epistemologies. Mutahhari's work offers a model of intellectual integrity in which neither revelation nor reason is sacrificed, and the student emerges informed and spiritually awakened.

### **Relevance of Mutahhari's Educational Vision in Contemporary Iran**

Murtaza Mutahhari's philosophy of education did not remain confined to theoretical discourse. It became deeply integrated into post-revolutionary Iran's institutional, curricular, and ideological foundations, reflecting his commitment to transforming education into a tool for individual moral cultivation and national spiritual revival. His influence was particularly pronounced in the early years following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, when the new state undertook sweeping reforms in higher education to align knowledge production with Islamic values.

Mutahhari's conception of "educational Islam" played a crucial role in shaping the vision of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, the key body responsible for reorganizing Iran's educational institutions in the early 1980s. His view that education must simultaneously preserve Islamic identity and promote rational autonomy inspired curriculum reforms and institutional restructuring. Mutahhari's education model functioned as both a

transmitter of divine values and a critical site for cultivating ethical responsibility and rational autonomy (Larijany, 2021).

His emphasis on *tawhidi ta'lim wa tarbiyah*, a pedagogy rooted in the unity of God, called for the integration of ethics, spirituality, and reason across disciplines. Mutahhari explicitly critiqued secular models that treat ethics as optional or external to the learning process (Zolghadr, 2013). He insisted that disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, and even the natural sciences should be taught in a way that highlights their moral and spiritual dimensions. In a 1978 pre-revolutionary address, he warned against the uncritical adoption of Western educational systems: "*Our greatest mistake would be to imitate the West's intellectual system without transplanting its moral conscience, or better yet, without first strengthening our own*" (Mutahhari & Algar, 1985).

This critique became a rallying point for the Islamization of knowledge projects in Iran, especially within universities like Imam Sadiq University, which were founded explicitly to fuse Islamic teachings with Western academic disciplines. One of the most enduring legacies of Mutahhari's thought is evident in teacher education and textbook reform. His belief that teachers must be models of spiritual integrity led to policies emphasizing character and ideological training for educators. Across the *hawza* (Islamic seminary) and state-run universities, instructors must undergo workshops and evaluations focused on pedagogy, religious ethics, and cultural literacy. Mutahhari's belief that "*the teacher's conduct teaches louder than his words*" influences faculty development programs (Mutahhari, 2002, 2011).

Mutahhari's relevance also extends to gender and educational equity, a domain in which his position was both traditional and reformist. While upholding gender complementarity from an Islamic perspective, he was unequivocal about the right of women to pursue education. In *The Rights of Women in Islam*, he declared: "*A woman has the same right as a man to develop intellectually, spiritually, and professionally... Education is her jihad*" (Mutahhari, 2017). This emphasis on women's intellectual empowerment represented a radical departure from the more conservative interpretations that dominated some segments of the pre-revolutionary religious establishment.

Indeed, Mutahhari's gender discourse laid the foundation for a wave of female participation in Islamic higher education in Iran. By the 2000s, women comprised over 60% of university students in the country, a development that many scholars attribute to the legitimizing influence of reformist thinkers like Mutahhari, who framed women's education

as an Islamic duty rather than a Western import. Beyond policy, Mutahhari's writings inspire intellectual debates on educational justice and identity formation in the Islamic Republic.

His insistence that students must be trained to reconcile tradition with modernity informs how Iranian scholars approach controversial topics, such as religious pluralism, secular sciences, and critical pedagogy. In sum, Mutahhari's educational philosophy provided the ideological and ethical infrastructure for post-revolutionary Iran's reimagining of the university and the school. His vision of Islam as a dynamic, intellectually rigorous, and morally grounded educational framework continues to influence institutional policies and pedagogical models in the Islamic Republic, making his legacy historical and enduringly relevant.

### **Addressing Modern Challenges Through Islamic Pedagogy**

Murtaza Mutahhari's educational thought was not developed in isolation from the contemporary world. Instead, it was constructed with a clear awareness of the intellectual, ethical, and socio-political challenges facing Muslim societies in the modern era. He regarded education as a key battleground for shaping how Muslims respond to these challenges, particularly concerning scientific progress, moral decline, ideological confusion, and cultural dislocation. His emphasis on *ijtihad*, creative, context-sensitive reasoning, served as a foundation for an Islamic pedagogy that is neither stagnant nor reactionary. Mutahhari viewed *ijtihad* as a method of educational renewal, enabling educators and institutions to reinterpret Islamic teachings in light of evolving social realities. In his words:

"The vitality of Islam rests in the continued renewal of its understanding through reasoned interpretation... Without *ijtihad*, the faith becomes static and defensive" (Mutahhari & Algar, 1985).

This conviction moved Islamic pedagogy beyond rote learning and dogmatic instruction, encouraging learners to engage deeply with their time's moral and intellectual questions. Mutahhari believed critical thinking, contextual judgment, and adaptive reasoning should be central to Islamic education. He challenged educators to cultivate students who are not just passive recipients of tradition but active agents of renewal, equipped to think through contemporary dilemmas in light of Islamic values. This principle was crucial in three major domains where he believed modern education must be Islamically reoriented.

### ***Scientific Advancement and Modern Knowledge***

Mutahhari insisted that Islam was not opposed to scientific progress; it demanded intellectual excellence in all fields of knowledge. However, he cautioned that if left unguided

by ethical and spiritual principles, scientific inquiry could become morally blind. *"Science without spirituality is like light without direction. Islamic education must not oppose science, but must guide it"* (Mutahhari, 2002).

In post-revolutionary Iran, this outlook has inspired educational reforms that encourage the integration of Islamic ethics into scientific disciplines such as medicine, engineering, and environmental studies. Institutes like the Islamic Research Centre for Culture and Social Sciences continue to develop curricula inspired by Mutahhari's vision (Guessoum & Bigliardi, 2023), striving to align technological advancements with Islamic values.

### ***Gender Justice and Human Development***

Mutahhari's discourse on gender and education offered a compelling critique of patriarchal traditionalism and Western feminism. He emphasized that women's education is not a concession but a divine obligation within Islam. He argued: *"No human society can progress while half of it is intellectually subdued... Islam not only allows women to learn, it commands them to"* (Mutahhari, 2017). This progressive approach challenged cultural customs that limited women's access to education while grounding his argument firmly in Islamic theology. Today, many educational institutions in Iran and beyond cite his work advocating for gender-inclusive, faith-based education that respects spiritual equality and ethical responsibility (Khalili et al., 2022; Moinipour, 2021; Tohidi & Daneshpour, 2025).

### ***Pluralism and Interfaith Coexistence***

A particularly forward-looking aspect of Mutahhari's pedagogy is his commitment to dialogue over dogma. While rooted firmly in Shi'a theology, he acknowledged the need for Muslims to engage constructively with other religious and ideological traditions. Mutahhari stated: *"Truth is not threatened by dialogue. Islam has always welcomed discourse because truth needs no fear"* (Mutahhari, 2002). This perspective is especially relevant in an era of global connectivity and ideological pluralism. According to Mutahhari, Islamic education must prepare students to live ethically and confidently in a diverse world without compromising their religious integrity.

In summary, Mutahhari's educational vision is both defensive and creative: defensive in safeguarding the Islamic worldview from the disintegrating effects of secularism and consumerism and creative in formulating responses rooted in revelation but adaptable to new realities. He laid the intellectual groundwork for an Islamic pedagogy that is bold,

compassionate, and forward-looking, capable of nurturing spiritually grounded thinkers for the modern world.

### **A Critique of Materialist Education Systems**

Murtaza Mutahhari's critique of modern education is most forcefully articulated in his analysis of materialist ideologies, which, in his view, have profoundly distorted the true purpose of education. His primary concern was that materialist epistemologies, such as Marxism, positivism, and secular liberalism, reduce human beings to economic, biological, or functional units. In doing so, they strip education of its ethical, spiritual, and metaphysical dimensions.

In *Man and Universe*, Mutahhari condemns such reductionism in stark terms: "*The view that man is nothing more than a social animal driven by appetite and utility turns education into a factory, not a sanctuary. It produces efficient machines, not ethical beings*" (Mutahhari, 1990). Here, education is depicted as an industrialized, depersonalized process, focused on productivity but indifferent to its purpose. For Mutahhari, this is the central failure of modern education: its inability to pose fundamental questions about meaning, morality, and the ultimate aims of human life.

Mutahhari believed that Marxist educational models, emphasizing class struggle and economic determinism, failed to appreciate the transcendent nature of the human soul. He argued that such ideologies, while perhaps successful in mobilizing labour or reforming institutions, destroy the spiritual fabric of individuals and societies. A school that teaches man to see only with the eye of utility will close his eyes to justice, mercy, and transcendence (Mutahhari & Algar, 1985).

It was not a blanket rejection of Western thought or science but a critique of systems that disconnect knowledge from values and reason from revelation. Mutahhari was equally critical of liberal secular education, particularly its claim to neutrality. He argued that the so-called "value-free" education found in many Western contexts was an ideological stance that subtly privileged material success, individualism, and moral relativism. In this context, education becomes a tool for producing consumers and specialists, not reflective moral agents. The consequence, he warned, is not only spiritual alienation but a society that is ill-equipped to deal with ethical crises.

A prominent thinker expresses this caution holds significant relevance in a contemporary context characterized by an educational landscape shaped by neoliberal

ideologies, prioritizing market outcomes over ethical development. In this light, Mutahhari's thought serves as a theological reflection and a cultural diagnosis, offering insight into the emotional and moral vacuum that can emerge from technocratic learning models. In contrast, Mutahhari proposed an integrative education model rooted in *hikmah* (wisdom), in which knowledge acquisition is always tied to ethical purpose and spiritual orientation. He wrote: *"The goal is not to fill the brain but to awaken the heart. An educated person in Islam knows right from wrong and chooses the right, even when it costs"* (Mutahhari, 1990, 2002).

This conception of education aligns with the Qur'anic emphasis on *tazkiyah* (self-purification) and *ta'allum* (learning as a sacred duty), combining intellectual rigour with spiritual depth. Such a vision challenges both Muslim and non-Muslim educators to reconsider the goals of education. What are we trying to produce, technocrats or moral leaders? Workers or ethical citizens? Mutahhari's critique is therefore not nostalgic but reformative: he does not call for a retreat from modernity but a reconstruction of educational priorities, rooted in Islamic epistemology yet aware of global challenges.

Today, this critique resonates strongly in debates on the decolonization of knowledge, the Islamization of curricula, and the recovery of ethical traditions in global education. In these discussions, Mutahhari's work presents a comprehensive and morally grounded critique of materialist paradigms while suggesting practical alternatives for developing spiritually attuned and socially responsible educational systems.

### **Implications for Islamic Educational Reform**

Murtaza Mutahhari's thought provides a profound and actionable framework for reforming Islamic education, encompassing its content and methodology. His vision moves beyond the superficial integration of religious symbols or vocabulary into curricula; it proposes a transformation of the philosophical foundations of education itself. In doing so, it serves as a blueprint for Muslim societies that seek to reconcile their religious traditions with the demands of modern life. At the heart of Mutahhari's educational philosophy lies a rejection of two extremes: rigid traditionalism, which clings to the past without adaptation, and uncritical Westernization, which imports educational models without moral scrutiny.

Instead, Mutahhari advocated a middle path rooted in *ijtihad*, reasoned engagement with Islamic sources in response to contemporary needs. *"The Muslim world does not need to imitate the West or retreat into nostalgia. It needs to rediscover its treasures in the light of reason, ethics, and courage"* (Mutahhari, 2022). This approach places responsibility on

scholars, educators, and policymakers to formulate curricula that are faithful to Islamic epistemology and capable of addressing real-world issues.

Mutahhari's vision of reform was neither utopian nor purely theological; it was institutional, aimed at fundamental change in how knowledge is taught, who teaches it, and toward what moral ends (Jahanbakhsh, 2021; Takim, 2022). He understood that philosophical ideals would remain inert without structural reform in schools, universities, teacher training programs, and educational policy. As such, he advocated a comprehensive strategy of curriculum revision, educator empowerment, and intellectual pluralism within an Islamic framework.

His reformist vision finds practical expression in the post-revolutionary educational institutions of Iran, many of which continue to implement policies inspired by his teachings. For instance, several universities incorporate integrated modules that blend philosophy, ethics, and religious studies, moving away from compartmentalized knowledge structures that isolate religious thought from contemporary disciplines. Moreover, the Islamic curriculum models currently being developed in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey reflect many of the principles articulated by Mutahhari decades ago, particularly in their emphasis on *hikmah* (wisdom), *adab* (discipline), and *fikr* (critical reflection).

Beyond national contexts, Mutahhari's educational philosophy offers transnational relevance. The crises he diagnosed, spiritual emptiness, educational fragmentation, and ethical confusion, are not limited to Iran. These global concerns confront educational systems in the Muslim world and beyond, highlighting the need for effective solutions; in this context, Mutahhari's philosophy offers a pedagogical roadmap for Muslim societies that seek to integrate ethical monotheism with scientific modernity (Laabdi & Elbittioui, 2024; Larijany, 2021).

For policymakers and educators seeking practical guidance, Mutahhari's framework encourages the development of institutions that: 1). Encourage open inquiry rooted in tawhid, where questions are welcomed, and knowledge is unified around divine purpose; 2). Promote gender-inclusive education without sacrificing ethical rigour or Islamic identity; 3). Integrate the sciences and humanities under a moral canopy, ensuring students are professionally competent and spiritually aware; 4). Reject materialist utilitarianism, replacing it with ethical intentionality and a focus on human flourishing.

These are not vague ideals but concrete principles that can shape syllabi, teaching methods, student assessments, and institutional goals. Mutahhari's model demands that

education answer not only *what* and *how*, but, more importantly, *why*, a question often neglected in modern educational systems. Perhaps most importantly, Mutahhari emphasized the formative role of education in cultivating a moral society. He wrote: "*Education must make the believer more believing, the thinker more thoughtful, and the human being more humane*" (Mutahhari, 2011). This holistic vision is as urgent today as ever. In an era of global crises, ethical, environmental, and epistemic, Mutahhari's philosophy reminds us that the purpose of education is not just knowledge acquisition but also moral and spiritual elevation.

## Conclusion

Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari's contributions to Islamic educational philosophy offer significant insights that resonate deeply in today's intellectual discourse within the Muslim world. His insistence on synthesizing reason and revelation, moral development, and holistic human cultivation presents a compelling vision for educational renewal that addresses the challenges of secular modernity, Marxism, and materialist ideologies. By promoting ijтиhad, rational inquiry, and ethical responsibility, Mutahhari provides theoretical frameworks and practical tools that can help reform Islamic education. His legacy is evident in the educational reforms in post-revolutionary Iran, where his ideas have inspired curriculum development and pedagogical methods to harmonize Islamic identity with contemporary knowledge systems.

The implications of Mutahhari's thought extend beyond mere educational reform; they call for reevaluating how knowledge is imparted within Islamic frameworks. For scholars and policymakers, his work serves as a vital blueprint for transforming Islamic education, emphasizing the cultivation of virtue, critical thinking, and social consciousness among students. As we move forward, it is essential to explore further research avenues that examine the practical applications of Mutahhari's philosophy in diverse educational contexts and its potential to foster just, ethical, and enlightened societies. Continued exploration of his ideas can lead to innovative strategies that address the contemporary challenges faced by Islamic education and reaffirm its pivotal role in shaping future generations.

## References

Akbarzadeh, M., & Chegini, S. (2020). The Relationship between Science and Religion in Mutahhari, based on the Theory of Transformation of Types. *Hekmat Sadraei*, 8(2), 55–64. <https://doi.org/10.30473/pms.2019.45091.1683>

Arjomand, S. A. (Ed.). (1988). *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism*. State University of New York Press.

Dabashi, H. (2006). *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran*. Transaction Publishers.

Esposito, J. L. (1999). *The Oxford History of Islam*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Firnando, H. G. (2024). Murtadha Muthahhari Ecological Vision: Unveiling the Spiritual Foundation of Harmony Between Humans and Nature in Islamic Ecology. *HUMANIKA*, 30(2), 198–207. <https://doi.org/10.14710/humanika.v30i2.59354>

Foroutan, Y. (2021). Institutionalization of State Religion in the Islamic Republic of Iran: A Socio-Demographic Perspective. *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 22(1), 84–102. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2021.1877668>

Gleave, R. (2007). *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbari Shi'i School*. BRILL.

Golshani, M. (2004). Mutahhari's Encounter with Modern Science. *Islamic Studies*, 43(2), 293–303.

Gösken, U. (2016). Perception of Western Modernity from the Gaze of Ṣadraism: Muhammad Husayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī's and Murtadā Mutahharī's Critique of Modern Western Philosophy. *International Journal of Persian Literature*, 1(1), 142–163. <https://doi.org/10.5325/intejperslite.1.1.0142>

Guessoum, N., & Bigliardi, S. (2023). *Islam and Science: Past, Present, and Future Debates*. Cambridge University Press.

Jahanbakhsh, F. (2021). Different forms of religious thought in modern Iran. In *The Routledge International Handbook of Contemporary Muslim Socio-Political Thought*. Routledge.

Jung, D. (2023). *Islamic Modernities in World Society: The Rise, Spread, and Fragmentation of a Hegemonic Idea*. Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781474492652>

Khalili, S., Kallioniemi, A., & Bagheri Noaparast, K. (2022). Characteristics of human agency in liberal and Islamic religious education based on the national core curricula of Finland and Iran. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 44(1), 53–65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2021.1874874>

Laabdi, M., & Elbittioui, A. (2024). From Aslamat al-Ma'rifa to al-Takāmul al-Ma'rifi: A Study of the Shift from Islamization to Integration of Knowledge. *Religions*, 15(3), Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030342>

Larijany, S. A. (2021). *Mutahhari and his approach to women's social life: With special reference to political participation and issuing fatwas* [Phd, University of Birmingham]. <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/11380/>

Moinipour, S. (2021). The Islamic Republic of Iran and Children's Right to Education: Acceptability and Adaptability. *Human Rights Education Review*, 4(2), 26–48. <https://doi.org/10.7577/hrer.3930>

Mutahhari, M. (1990). *Man And Universe* (M. A. Ansari, Trans.). Islamic Seminary Publications. <https://al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/120651>

Mutahhari, M. (2002). *Understanding Islamic Sciences: Philosophy, Theology, Mysticism, Morality, Jurisprudence*. ICAS Press.

Mutahhari, M. (2011). *Training and Education in Islam*. Islamic College for Advanced Studies Publications.

Mutahhari, M. (2017). *The Rights of Women in Islam*. World Organization for Islamic Services (WOFIS).

Mutahhari, M. (2022). *The Revival of Islamic Thought* (M. Limba, Trans.). Independently Published.

Mutahhari, M., & Algar, H. (1985). *Fundamentals of Islamic Thought: God, Man, and the Universe*. Mizan Pr.

Nasr, S. H. (2006). *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy*. State University of New York Press.

Qorbani, Q. (2020). Religion and National Identity in Martyr Mutahhari's View; an Analytical Review. *Acta Universitatis Danubius. Communicatio*, 14(1), Article 1.

Shamsaie, M. (2012). Two Iranian Intellectuals: Ayatollah Morteza Motahari and Dr. Abdol-Karim Soroush and Islamic Democracy Debate. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(2), 29–34. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-0122934>

Takim, L. (2022). *Shi'ism Revisited: Ijtihad and Reformation in Contemporary Times*. Oxford University Press.

Taliaferro, C., & Churchill, T. (2015). Is Strategic Thinking Desirable in Philosophical Reflection?: Honoring Morteza Mutahhari, a Martyr to the Practice of Philosophy without Strategy. *Philosophia Christi*, 17(1), 213–221. <https://doi.org/10.5840/pc201517114>

Tohidi, N., & Daneshpour, M. (2025). Will the Women's Movement in Iran Grow into a National Liberation Movement? *Social Sciences*, 14(5), Article 5. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14050272>

Zarinkolah, E. (2023). Critical Analysis of Sunni Theological Schools' Views on Divine Justice from the Perspective of Shahid Motahhari. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 10(12), Article 12. <https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v10i12.5402>

Zolghadr, K. (2013). *Contemporary Gender Thought in Islam and Judaism: The Position of Women According to Ayatollah Morteza Mutahhari and Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik* [Phd, Concordia University]. <https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/id/eprint/977495/>



Copyright © 2025 by the Authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0).