

The Relevance of Education Based on Adab According to the Thoughts of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas with the Current State of the Community

Risza Vilianita¹, Muh. Nur Rochim Maksum¹, Mohammad Ali¹ Ma'arif¹

¹ *Islamic Religion Education Master Program, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS), Surakarta, Indonesia*

*Corresponding author. Email: riszavilianita@gmail.com, mnr127@ums.ac.id, ma122@ums.ac.id, maa106@ums.ac.id

ABSTRACT

In mass media Solopos.com on 27th December, 2021 we recently were aware of the news about a well-educated person having high position in society did a disgraceful act that should not be done by that who should play a role as protectors for society. The condition of the moslem who are getting worse is none other than the loss of adab. The concept of adab-based education is a fundamental idea for building civilized human resources or *insan kamil*, which is expected to be able to generate the best civilization. This study aims to describe the concept of adab-based educational thought by Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas, and its relevance to the process of Islamic education today. The method used is a qualitative description, and the discussion used library research (library study). To collect the data used the documentation method in the form of primary and secondary data sources. Data validity test employed the credibility technique. The results of this study are the concept of adab according to Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas and its relevant with the instilling of adab or *ta'dib* which includes gradual human perfection (*al tarbiyah*), teaching and learning (*al ta'lim wa ta'allum*), self-discipline (*riyaadhah al- nafs*), and purification of the soul, and purification of morals (*tahdzib al akhlaq*), where this *ta'dib* is applied in all aspects of moslem life nowadays. Hence, using inductive qualitative data analysis method will result in the implementation of adab-based education nowadays which is still highly relevant with the current condition of the moslem whose morals are increasingly worse. Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas emphasizes education as a process of building appropriate (civilized) attitudes and behavior to realize justice. As for other advice from Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas to teachers and students to instill the nature of sincerity in teaching and intention to learn. The metaphor and story method (*sirah*) are the methods used by Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas in teaching learning materials, where this method is also used by Rasulullah to teach the Al Qur'an, including Al Hadith.

Keywords: *Islamic education, concept of adab, thought of Al Attas*

1. INTRODUCTION

A hit-and-run case happened to two teenagers in Nagreg, Bandung, where their bodies were found far from the scene of the accident in the Banyumas area. According to the confession of one of the three perpetrators, the high-ranking perpetrator tasked his subordinates to cast aside the victim's body in a river after the two victims were hit by his car and were removed from the crime scene (Solopos.com, 2021). This shows that the behavior of someone who is highly educated and has a high position could commit a disgraceful act where he should, according to his status, be an exemplary protector of the community who acts heroically and responsibly.

In addition, the 2016 US election had a consequential global impact on Muslims. America's new and isolationist political narrative has normalized the negative portrayal of Muslims in the United States and beyond. In turn, social Islamophobia is on the rise;

83% of Americans are agitated against acts of extremist violence committed in the name of Islam [10]. Surprisingly, 82% of American Muslims and nearly 90% of Muslim American women share the same affair. Muslims themselves are aware of the social, political, and cultural impact that the violence of marginalized Muslim militants has on Muslims collectively.

The government's language towards Muslims following the 9/11 terrorist attacks also influenced America's preference for Muslims [6]. Prior to the incident, 80% of Americans opposed racial profiling, however, after the attacks, 60% of Americans favored the policy to target Arabs and Muslims [7]. Currently, Moslem children encounter a challenging environment as their peers in the Western context often characterize Muslims as "unintelligent", "poor", and "very strict" [14]. In 2016, of the 34,676 deaths from terrorism, 68 civilians died in the US while most died in Muslim-majority countries; 21,061 died in Iraq, Afghanistan,

and Syria [17]. In the same year, 24.5% of the 1,584 religious-based hate crimes in the US targeted Muslims (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016). These statistics pinpoint a complicated global picture in which Muslims play multiple and branching roles within the larger political and social narrative of extremism; they are simultaneously a feared and targeted religious group.

The perception of Muslims, as violent and monolithic, has played a central role in the global discourse on extremism. However, very little work has been done in the education setting to decipher how historical Islamic conceptions of knowledge and education may have influenced the emergence of radicalization in Islam today [23].

In 2009, Hamza Yusuf, the director of the Zaytuna Institute in the United States, interviewed Al Attas. He acknowledged that many of Al Attas' works have been read. Hamza asked, "Your thought process is the focal emergency, occurring right now in the Muslim world?" Al Attas replied, "I said it is a loss of adab". So "loss of adab" or with other uncivilized individualized organizations. This is an critical point that is embedded in all crucial problems that should be resolved by Muslims as well as the Islamic world in general today. According to Al Attas, if Muslims long for the rise and freedom from the various crises that restrain the people, it is appropriate to understand adab and it is better to teach Muslims today to become civilized individuals [32].

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Research on the concept of education based on adab is engrossing research, however, very few have been found. This research used a descriptive qualitative research point of view. In addition, the library research was applied in this research and the primary objects consisted of books, journals, and relevant literature. The related literacy found by the authors is as follows:

This study used a philosophical approach from Al Attas. The primary and secondary data were analyzed in this study. The source as reference material in this study was taken from the main data, in this case, the reference book by Al Attas as the primary data. Meanwhile, the sources of data collected apart from primary sources, such as books and supporting journals related to the material, serve as secondary data.

The object of the research is the concept of Islamic education contained in the literature study with the subject being a scholar figure who initiated the concept of adab, Al Attas born September 5, 1931. In this study, the research on individual life history was conducted, which is related to the material for thinking concept of education based on adab contained in the books of Al Attas. Furthermore, from the thoughts of this figure, the core of the material was taken and analyzed, as well as its reflection on the

present to strive to improve the noble manners of the excellent generation.

This study used the documentation method for data collection in primary and secondary data sources. Subsequently, the data were reviewed and then explained according to the discussion in this study. In this case, collecting data on the concept of moral and ethical education is taken from books by Al Attas.

Validity test of the data administered the credibility test, which is a technique used in this study to achieve credibility of data source techniques, peer discussions, and checking the coverage of references.

After examining and collecting the data, those data were systematically assembled into interrelated facts in an analysis result. At the same time, in the analysis, the authors used an inductive mindset. All the ideas in Al Attas' thought about the theory of adab and its relevance to the condition of Muslims today, would be presented as it is.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education is an important component in building a civilization in a country. The best civilization will be established if the education program in a country is successful. As is the case with educational programs in our country, educational programs will be successful once they refer to the curriculum according to the abilities or potentials of students and according to national education objectives [11].

As we know, in Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, the objectives of National Education are: National Education functions to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in the education context of the nation's life, aim to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe, are devoted to God, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and to become democratic and responsible citizen.

In addition, Article 31 Paragraph 3 of the 1945 Constitution states that the government seeks and organizes a national education system, which increases faith and devotion, and noble character in the context of the intellectual life of the nation, which is regulated by law. Whereas Article 31 Paragraph 5 expresses that the government advances science and technology by supporting high religious values and national unity for the advancement of civilization and the welfare of mankind.

From the contents of the two articles above, it is clearly stated that the educational program is intended to create civilized, pious, and noble students, not those who merely possess character. It aims to create excellent individuals who prioritize noble manners and exhibit noble character, values of justice, honesty, kindness, sincerity, earnestness, and hard work.

As a matter of fact, there is widespread information that people behave less commendably, in which behavior is not following social norms, especially the rules taught in Islam, namely the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Messenger of Allah. This is shown by cases of hitting and discarding victims, corruption, fraud, persecution, murder, and other tyrannical acts.

There are many social cases in society that position adab as the basis for every Muslim wherever they are, which is maintaining the paradigm or worldview of Islam that disobedience is an evil thing, a violating act.

Likewise, the case occurs in other countries, which have succeeded in raising both the dignity and the economy of the country, using the concept of character they adhere to, such as the values of honesty, kindness, and hard work. However, when they do not know the purpose of life after the end of this life and the purpose of life in the worldly context is not as what is expected, they have no other choice but to end their life with a disgraceful act, such as committing suicide. The suicide attempt becomes a solution for them to face the problems of life in the world if it goes against their will. This disgraceful act, which is an uncivilized act, also happens in our country. It is commonly known that this country has the world's largest number of Muslims. Unfortunately, the actions that are forbidden by Allah are often encountered in our society today.

Today's Muslims unwittingly have experienced the erosion of adab. Gradually, the adab that we possess is fading and many are losing their adab under the influence of western culture and through assimilation processes such as transnational marriages. Cultures in certain countries which are favored by the young generation will become a reference for their lives. Although, we understand that Muslims have *Uswatun Hasanah* as the best exemplary of the Messenger of Allah along with his companions and the scholars whom we should emulate, not otherwise. Tragically, the present young generations are not proud of their own identity; the identity of a believer, the identity of a Muslim.

Muslims, especially in Indonesia, have experienced a civil crisis. Adab is eroded due to false knowledge so the knowledge they receive will be useless and meaningless. Principally, education is the absorption of adab that penetrates oneself, namely the process of forming civilized humans [13].

In Islamic education, there are well-known ulama figures who fight for adab education, in which this adab process refers to Islamic teachings. It directly consults to the purification of the soul or *tazkiyatun nafs*, leading to the highest policy which is the fear of the Khaliq, the Creator, Allah Azza wa Jalla.

Education is the cultivation of values or norms or etiquette and decency. Education is the most

appropriate method to teach people about moral values.

Adab is a right action that starts with recognition so it requires introduction or knowledge as well as recognition or good deeds. Hence, with the correct introduction, the desired paradigm will arise and a righteous and appropriate acknowledgment or deed will emerge so any generalization of everything will cease [18].

Education is the foundation for instilling adab within humans so that they become successful in their lives, here and in the hereafter. Therefore, Islamic education is intended as the main tool to instill knowledge that has practical uses and is following human life in general. Meanwhile, according to Al Attas, good deed and adab are comprehensive and inseparable entities [31].

3.1. Biography of the intellectuality of Prof. Muhammad Naquib Al Attas

Al Attas came from an educated family. His father was Ali, even his grandfather was a well-known and highly respected ulama in Bogor, namely Al Habib Abdullah ibn Muhsin Al Atas or better known as Habib Empang Bogor. Meanwhile, his mother, who was a descendant of a Sundanese aristocrat, was named Syarifah Raquan al Aydarus. Her ancestor named Syed Muhammad al Aydarus was a great scholar. In addition to knowledge that Al Attas received such as the basics of a good education during his childhood, and the science of history, literature, and religion in his youth, Al Attas also joined the military service program at Eton Hall, Chester, Wales. Next to the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, England in 1952 – 1955. In this place, Al Attas knew the metaphysical views of Sufism.

In addition to joining the military service program, Al Attas also frequently traveled to other countries such as North Africa, Spain, and Baghdad to visit several well-known places with intellectual traditions of art and Islamic building styles.

3.2. Contribution to Contemporary Islamic Education Thought

Al Attas is very influential in the modern era. The attitude and ideas of Al Attas in encountering Western challenges show a strong stance on protecting Islam. Al Attas' idea of Islamization of knowledge is a solution to the loss of adab.

In addition, the contribution of ideas about Islamic education is very important, especially at the university level. Al Attas was known as the first to create an Islamic university. Meanwhile, according to Al Attas, universities are the most critical institutions, starting with revivalism and arranging educational programs.

From the idea of the Islamic university, an international Islamic campus called ISTAC was built. Al Attas struggled to create a civilized generation that

will improve the education of Muslims through his leadership.

The leadership concept of Syed Muhammad Naquib to realize his noble ideals on the ISTAC campus is to create civilized human beings based on the principle of justice in two forms; the first is in oneself so as to form a commendable character (*husn al-khuluuq*) and leadership competence, and the second is a response to something. (Nur Diana, Diana. Ali, Mohammad Ali, 2022)

3.3. The Nature of Education

Al Attas is a scholarly figure who is known for the concept of *adab* in the modern era that addresses the problems of the people, especially in education issues.

In a First International Conference, on Islamic Education in the Holy City of Mecca in 1977 [28], Al Attas asserted that Muslims are experiencing great challenges:

1. External challenges in the form of strict cultural and sociopolitical challenges from the West,
2. Internal challenges among Muslims, there are three main interrelated and fundamental aspects, namely the disarray of statistics, deficiency of *adab*, and leaders who appear but are unable to carry out the mandate.

To identify the deficiency of *adab*, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas conveyed the character of the loss of *adab*, which is the generalization expositions that are implanted in the mind from time to time and practiced in social life [27].

According to Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas, *adab* is recognition, and acknowledgment of the reality that knowledge and being are ordered hierarchically according to their various grades and degrees of rank, and of one's proper place concerning that reality and to one's physical, intellectual, and spiritual capacities and potential [13]. *Adab* is a discipline starting from the spirit then the soul and finally in the body that strengthens knowledge and practices towards a target that enters the relationship between spiritual, physical, and intellectual.

Adab is closely related to wisdom. According to Al Attas, *adab* is used as the right action that springs from self-discipline founded upon knowledge whose source of wisdom [13]. The term "*Addabani Rabbi Faahsana Ta'dibi*" denotes that the *adab* and *ta'dib* that Syed Al-Attas holds fast to is education based on the words of the Prophet, namely Allah as the God has educated him and with that made it the best education [13]. Meanwhile, in the context of correcting the deficiency of *adab*, Al Attas implies the idea of education based on *adab* or *ta'dib*. According to him, *ta'dib* will generate civilized individuals (*insan adabi*) who are expected to fulfill the goals of Islamic education of real improvement (*ishlah*). If education refers to *adab*, there will certainly be *Adabi* people.

This implies the cultivation of *adab* and its practice in each individual, where the subsequent realization of a civilized society and civilization, will be born.

According to Al Attas' thought, *ta'dib* covers four important characteristics of education, namely:

1. *Al – tarbiyah*, the process of gradual refinement
2. *Al-ta'lim wa al-ta'allum*, the process of teaching and learning that consider aspects, intellectual, cognitive, and student thinking.
3. *Riyaaadhah al-nafs*, self-discipline which includes the body and mind.
4. *Tahdzib al-akhlaq*, the process of purification of morales

The term *ta'dib* to show the meaning of Islamic education is more acceptable since it implies a process that is more focused on fostering and perfecting morals, in other words, *ta'dib* is focused on growing religious and moral spirit [16].

3.4. Educational Purposes

It is critical to understand that the purpose of Islamic education is to realize faithful, devoted, and knowledgeable Muslims so that they can devote themselves to serving before the Creator with a complete attitude and personality, which refers to the desire to submit to Him, in all aspects of life, both worldly and *ukhrawiyah* aspects [22].

According to Al Attas, the purpose of instilling the value of goodness or the value of justice, meaning that education emphasizes more the formation of civilized attitudes, while the behavior is a process to achieve justice. Education is beyond teaching or gaining insight. Education must have the impact of changing the right attitude and behavior that comes from the right knowledge [13].

Moral education according to Al Ghazali is human nature at the core of his knowledge and the morality concept is a middle way doctrine, in which the purpose of moral education is to produce *zuhud* (detached) human beings and love their Creator [2].

The term *ta'dib* according to Syed Al-Attas is a moral education that instills etiquette in every human being. He mentions that the ideal role model for civilized human beings is Prophet Muhammad PBUH, therefore Al-Attas placed the name of Rasulullah Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wassalam in the middle of the institute's logo, namely ISTAC in Kuala Lumpur [5].

3.5 Educational Method

The metaphor and story method (*Sirah*) is the teaching method used by Al Attas in teaching his learning material, which is also the method used by the Prophet in teaching the Qur'an and Al-Hadith. Metaphor is a direction that symbolizes the theological nature of this world and it is often repeated by Al Attas. According to him, the direction that must be followed and the distance to walk down to the place in this world requires a road sign that will allow the

travelers to follow him; if the signs are clear with written words that can be read, then the travelers can understand the signpost and followed it without any obstacles.

The monotheism method as a method of Islamic education and epistemology is precisely explained and practiced by him. According to Al Attas, the monotheism method can solve the problem of the wrong dichotomy [24].

According to Syed Al Attas, the monotheism method is very important because it will form a true person. He felt disturbed by those who have Islamic concepts and principles when they are supposed to understand Islam, even asking how to implement these Islamic concepts and ethics in real life and in a work setting to become civilized persons (*insan adabi*). Syed Al-Attas emphasizes that if individuals have understood the concepts and ethics of Islam, there is no longer dualism between what is considered theory and practice.

3.6. Educators and Students

Al-Attas advises teachers to cultivate sincerity in providing knowledge and the intention to study together between students and teachers. As in Islam, all actions or deeds must be preceded by an intention that is expressed in the heart and consciously within oneself, all of that includes education. Syed Al-Attas suggests more attention when seeking knowledge and sincerity when delivering knowledge. Honesty is the essence of all speech, which is in accordance with external facts and realities as enforced by Syed Al-Attas. In addition to the first type of correspondence, there is a second type of correspondence, what is said and what is in mind. External behavior, including spoken or written oral, and factual behavior can be pseudo if the actual is not according to the intentions of the heart and mind. Students are required to apply perfect *adab* in this science, which cannot be taught to anyone without *adab*.

In higher education, parents and students must understand and practice perfect values in teaching and educational activities. [29]. Al-Attas underlines the principle that students and educators (teachers) must seek and teach knowledge together because of the obligation and love of science in Islam, and understand Islamic teachings and their history in order to apply them in their direction and goals [5].

Besides, it is important to instruct students not to rush the knowledge acquired from any teacher. They should find a good teacher in their field and students can take the time to decide which teacher they like. It has become a tradition to have teachers with a good reputation to a certain degree of importance. As Al-Ghazālī emphasizes that students should not be arrogant and should focus on any teacher who can encourage them to achieve wisdom, success, and happiness, not only those who are favorable [1]. Students must respect and trust their

teachers as well as be patient with their teachers if there exhibit any shortcomings and put the teacher in a reasonable view. Students must master both theory and practice in order to obtain truly balanced knowledge. The level of knowledge a student that is usually pleasing is the mastery of the student that satisfies the teacher [5]. Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas directs that teachers should accept inputs or suggestions from students and should allow them to process along with their abilities. Teachers must be able to appreciate the differences in the abilities of their students and with a sense of sympathy and provide corrections. In Islamic education, a teacher has an influential authority and an important role in the freedom of creativity of students, which means not focusing on individuality.

In education theory, the educational factors that are under the control of teachers are operation, such as how to teach, teaching materials, and tools for learning, which operation is very dependent on teachers. Given the notion, that in empowering education to face competition, teachers hold the most important key [29]. Therefore, the teachers become a very important element in education because they are the moderator of all educational activities, especially the teaching process.

In this discourse, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas teaches that it is proper if a student makes a mistake. The teacher must show his displeasure and even show anger at that time. However, the educator's soul must always be controlled during the teaching process [26]. In this case, the teachers or educators are similar to fathers or leaders, who must provide corrections, such as weak spirituality, intellect, attitude, and behavior.

Likewise, well-known teacher in Islamic history, Syed Muhammad Al-Attas taught that the teacher-student relationship is very important to be loyal and sincere as well as to practice it [26].

4. RELEVANCE IN TODAY

Holistically, in this case, the government should be able to consider the concept of *adab* Al Attas because it is in line with the national education system, which in the end can be included in the formulation of national education as an effort to improve the Islamic education system in Indonesia [3].

In Islamic education, the idea of *adab* taught by Syed Al Attas is not a new concept. The concept of *adab* is the core of Islamic education which has been applied since the time of the Prophet (PBUH), his companions, the *tabi'in* period, *tabi'u't tabi'in* period, and the scholars after that. In the context of education, Syed Al Attas was instrumental in reminding the importance of the concept of *adab* in the problems of Muslims. Islamic education in the current period is deemed equal to the time of Imam Al Ghazali when 90 years later the extraordinary generation of Saladin Al Ayyubi appeared [19].

Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas' concept of adab is not only theoretical but also an applicable concept, which is very philosophical and pragmatic. He has provided evidence of the application of adab manifested in everyday reality as in the case of ISTAC (The International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization) which was founded in 1987. The educational curriculum taught is classified into obligatory (*fard 'ain*) and obligatory act (*fard kifayah*). The two classifications of knowledge are applied to produce adequate Islamic individuals, in which the quality of adab and level of knowledge can be found in several scientific fields. The essence of education is not to produce individuals who are merely knowledgeable, it is to instill the best manners into these individuals, known as *ta'dib*.

In Indonesia, educational institutions that apply the concept of adab have also emerged, such as At-Taqwa College Depok in 1998, a university that teaches the concept of adab under the guidance of DR Adian Husaini. There is also a high school or equivalent with the name of the school, Pesantren for the Study of Islamic Thought and Civilization or PRISTAC for short. Meanwhile, there is currently an elementary school-level adab school called the Insan Adab Mulia School (2019) which was established in Depok and Lampung and managed by Dr. Wido Supraha. Formal schools have already included the concept of adab as one of the compulsory subjects. This is proof that the concept of adab is a solution for Islamic education in Indonesia.

5. CONCLUSION

Education based on adab is an absolute requirement if Muslims wish to rise from adversity. The fall and rise of this *ummah* are largely determined by the extent to which the *ummah* understands and applies the concept of adab in life so that improvements are needed in the education process in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, in the context of refining the problems of the people at this time, an idea was conveyed by a prominent ulama, Al Attas. He states that the solution for "loss of adab" is an effort to instill adab or *ta'dib*, which includes individual perfection in stages (*al tarbiyah*), the teaching and learning process (*al ta'lim wa ta'allum*), self-discipline (*riyaadhah al-nafs*), soul purification, and moral purification (*tahdzib al akhlaq*), where *ta'dib* is applied in all aspects of life.

The idea presented by Al Attas is very relevant if it is applied in educational expositions in Indonesia today because the problem of the people stems from the "loss of adab". In addition, Al-Attas suggests teachers and students cultivate the nature of sincerity in teaching and the intention of learning together. As we know, intention and sincerity are actions before engaging in activities, especially in the educational aspect. Al Attas emphasizes the value of

honesty, intention, and sincerity in gaining knowledge and teaching it.

Syed Al Attas used metaphor and story (Sirah) methods in teaching all material. This imitates the way the Prophet did when he taught the Qur'an and Al-Hadith.

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