



**PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONCEPT OF TA'DİB: THE  
EXAMPLE OF SEYYİD NAKİB AL-ATTAS**

*İsmail DEMİR\**

**Abstract**

*This article aims to examine "Ta'dib," the fundamental concept of the educational philosophy of Sayyed Muhammad Naqib al-Attas. Al-Attas's thought offers a comprehensive alternative to modern secular educational paradigms by focusing on the Islamic understanding of knowledge and the moral, spiritual, and ontological integrity of the individual. To achieve this objective, the study employed conceptual analysis in a qualitative research design, conducting an in-depth examination of al-Attas's works and the literature interpreting his thought. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of the concept of "Ta'dib" was conducted with related concepts such as "tarbiya" and "ta'lîm," and its theoretical foundation was strengthened by the pedagogical views of classical Islamic thinkers (Ghazali, Farabi). The results of the study demonstrated that modern education, by instrumentalizing and desacralizing knowledge, has dissolved the knowledge-wisdom bond, leading to the ontological and epistemological fragmentation of the individual. Ta'dib-centered education, on the other hand, offers a holistic solution to this crisis, reintegrating knowledge with a moral and spiritual dimension. This model aims to cultivate the individual as a wise and moral being, responsible to God, to himself, to society, and to knowledge.*

**Keywords:** Education, Philosophy, Ta'dib, Sayyid Nakib al-Attas.

**Ta'dib Kavramı Bağlamında Eğitim Felsefesi: Seyyid Nakib el-Attas Örneği**

**Öz**

*Bu makale, Seyyid Muhammed Nakib el-Attas'ın eğitim felsefesinin temel kavramı olan "Ta'dib"i incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. El-Attas'ın düşüncesi, bilginin İslami kavranışına ve bireyin ahlaki, manevi ve ontolojik bütünlüğüne odaklanarak, modern seküler eğitim paradigmlarına kapsamlı bir alternatif sunmaktadır. Bu amaca ulaşmak için çalışma, nitel araştırma deseninde kavramsal analiz yöntemini kullanmış, el-Attas'ın eserleri ve onun düşüncesini yorumlayan literatür derinlemesine incelenmiştir. Ayrıca "Ta'dib" kavramının, "tarbiya" ve "ta'lîm" gibi ilgili kavramlarla karşılaştırmalı analizi yapılmış, klasik İslam düşünürlerinin (Gazzâlî, Fârâbî) pedagojik görüşleriyle teorik temelleri güçlendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları, modern eğitimin bilgiyi araçsallaştırarak ve kutsallıktan arındırarak bilgi-bilgelik bağımlı çözdüğünü ve bu durumun bireyin ontolojik ve epistemolojik olarak parçalanmasına yol açtığını göstermiştir. Ta'dib merkezli eğitim ise bu krize karşı, bilgiyi ahlaki ve manevi bir boyutla yeniden bütünleştiren holistik bir çözüm önermektedir. Bu model, bireyi Rabbine, kendisine, topluma ve bilgiye karşı sorumlu, hikmet sahibi ve ahlaklı bir varlık olarak yetiştirmeyi hedefler.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Eğitim, Felsefe, Ta'dib, Seyyid Nakib el-Attas.

\* Doç.Dr., Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi, Felsefe ve Din Bilimleri Bölümü, Din Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı, [ismail.demir@comu.edu.tr](mailto:ismail.demir@comu.edu.tr), <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9756-1901>

## 1. Introduction

Sayyed Muhammad Naqib al-Attas, one of the leading Muslim thinkers of the twentieth century, is known for his profound and original analyses of the intellectual conflict between Islamic and modern Western civilizations. This distinguished scholar of Malaysian origin is considered one of the architects and most important theorists of the Islamization of Knowledge project. Throughout his intellectual life, he has been noted for his critiques of the epistemological and moral implications of modern secular knowledge. From the 1970s onward, al-Attas aimed to offer philosophical solutions to the identity, education, and civilizational crises of Muslim societies through his works, which redefined fundamental concepts within the tradition of Islamic philosophy. At the heart of his thought is the effort to reintegrate traditional Islamic sciences and modern sciences within a tawhidic (unitarian) perspective. As a fruit of this intellectual endeavor, the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), founded in Kuala Lumpur, has become one of the most important centers for institutionalizing and disseminating his intellectual legacy worldwide. Al-Attas championed the cause of reviving the fundamental values, morality, and wisdom of Islamic civilization in opposition to the fragmented, value-deprived worldview imposed by modern secularism (Tiwana, & Smith, 2024, s. 48).

This article aims to examine Sayyed Naqib al-Attas's philosophy through a multidimensional analysis, focusing on the concept of "Ta'dib," the cornerstone of his entire thought system and the heart of his educational philosophy. For al-Attas, Ta'dib is not merely a simple teaching method or a moral lesson; it is a holistic universe of meaning encompassing human ontological existence, epistemological framework, and moral responsibility. For him, education goes beyond the mere transmission of knowledge, but rather a process of personality and character development that aims for the moral and metaphysical integrity of humanity. In this context, the primary objective of this study is to elaborate on the conceptual and theological construction of Ta'dib, how it differs from concepts such as "training" (tarbiya) and "ta'līm" (ta'līm), commonly used in educational literature, and its central role in Islamic epistemology. The thesis that Ta'dib not only resolves the educational crisis in the Islamic world but also offers the potential for a holistic and meaning-centered solution to a universal crisis of meaninglessness and value forms the main thrust of this study. By analyzing the philosophical depth of this concept, the study aims to demonstrate its points of conflict with modern education and the alternative paradigms it offers. Modern education systems have reduced the purpose of knowledge to merely pragmatic goals and economic efficiency. This approach has divorced knowledge from its spiritual and sacred context, giving rise to an instrumental understanding of knowledge devoid of value. As a result, education exhibits a fragmented structure that leads to serious problems such as loss of values, identity crises, and spiritual emptiness in students (Grant & Grant, 2022, s. 80).

Sayyed Naqib al-Attas's educational philosophy centered on Ta'dib provides a solid intellectual foundation based on a monotheistic worldview to counter this crisis. Similar studies in the existing literature generally focus on the general framework of al-Attas's project of "Islamizing knowledge" or superficially address the concept of Ta'dib at the level of comparing tarbiya and ta'līm. However, this study distinguishes itself from the existing literature by deeply analyzing Ta'dib not merely as a pedagogical term but as an ontological, epistemological, and moral paradigm grounded in human existential truth. This study's unique contributions are to deepen al-Attas's philosophy in three fundamental dimensions: First, it views Ta'dib not merely as a means of acquiring moral behavior, but rather as a process of raising individuals in accordance with their nature, that is, of discovering their own truth and the purpose of creation. Second, it considers Ta'dib as a key tool in constructing an independent epistemic stance, offering a theoretical framework for bridging the gap between knowledge and wisdom against the hegemony of modern secular knowledge. Third, it analyzes Ta'dib as a philosophical invitation that potentially addresses the meaninglessness and value crisis facing Islamic societies and universal education systems. This in-depth analysis aims to bring al-Attas's philosophy of

education to contemporary academic discussions, revealing its potential for individual moral maturation and a just transformation at the societal level. The modern secular understanding of education, by abstracting knowledge from its metaphysical and spiritual dimensions, has limited the individual's educational process to the mere transmission of cognitive and technical competencies. This situation has led to a fundamental educational crisis, particularly in the Islamic world, leading to fragmented identity structures, a knowledge devoid of moral responsibility, and cultural alienation. This crisis has philosophical and ontological foundations, rather than methodological ones. In this context, how does the "Ta'dib"-centered educational approach put forward by the Malaysian Islamic thinker Sayyid Muhammad Naqib al-Attas offer an alternative, philosophically based solution to the crisis of meaning and value caused by modern education, and how does this solution shape the vision of educating the individual as a being responsible to God, to themselves, to society, and to knowledge? These are the questions of this study (Abdel Haleem, 2004, s. 82).

### **1.1. Purpose of the Study**

The primary objective of this scholarly study is to thoroughly examine the concept of "Ta'dib," which lies at the heart of contemporary Islamic thinker Sayyid Muhammad Naqib al-Attas's educational philosophy, and to analyze the potential alternative solutions it offers to modern secular educational paradigms. To counter the educational crisis that has emerged as a result of the desacralization of modern knowledge and its separation from wisdom, al-Attas proposes a holistic model based on Islamic knowledge and the ontological (existential) reality of humanity. This study aims to consider the concept of Ta'dib not merely as the teaching of morality or etiquette, but as a comprehensive process of personality and character development that integrates the individual's intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions. In this context, it aims to clarify Ta'dib's distinctions from the traditional educational concepts of "tarbiya" (upbringing) and "ta'lîm" (teaching), and to reveal the concept's unique epistemological (theory of knowledge) foundations. Modern education systems, by reducing knowledge to mere utility and economic success, fragment the individual and lead to a spiritual void. The primary objective of this study is to deepen al-Attas's critique of this crisis and to reveal the philosophical vision of Ta'dib-centered education, which aims to re-endow knowledge with sacredness and educate the individual as a being responsible to God, to themselves, and to society.

Ultimately, this research aims to demonstrate how al-Attas's understanding of Ta'dib offers a holistic and applicable solution not only for Muslim societies but also for contemporary education systems experiencing a universal crisis of value and meaning. To this end, the transformative effects of Ta'dib on the ultimate purpose of education, its pedagogical method, and institutional value foundations will be analyzed. This study aims to identify the contributions of a unique educational philosophy, informed by the tradition of Islamic thought, to current academic debates.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Research Design**

This study employs a qualitative research design to address the research problem. The primary method employed is theoretical analysis and conceptual analysis, revealing the innovations, merits, and linguistic depth of the presentation of "Ta'dib," the primary focus of this article. This methodological framework initially encompasses the origins of the concept of being in the Islamic intellectual tradition, its uses by different thinkers, and its layers of meaning in various contexts (Elfenbein & Schwarze, 2020, s. 12). Furthermore, academic literature interpreting Sayyid Naqib al-Attas's fundamental works and thought is examined in detail to illuminate the ontological and epistemological foundations of these concepts. This approach allows us to demonstrate how Ta'dib differs from modern secular educational paradigms and how it has evolved as a holistic educational model (Seers, 2011).

## 2.2. Ethical Considerations

In this study, document scanning and analysis methods were used. Ethical rules were followed to the highest degree in the processes of collecting and evaluating information accessible on the internet that constitutes the data for this study. Furthermore, the sources used in the study were cited in accordance with research and publication ethics rules.

## 3. Finding

### 3.1 Ta'dib as the Fundamental Concept of Sayyid Nakib al-Attas Understanding of Education: A Conceptual and Theological Construction

Sayyid Naqib al-Attas is known as one of the leading Muslim thinkers of the 20th century for his profound and original contributions to the philosophy of education in the Islamic world. The concept of "Ta'dib," at the heart of his system of thought, is not merely a teaching method but also a holistic universe of meaning encompassing the ontological existence, epistemological framework, and moral responsibility of human beings. According to al-Attas, the fundamental purpose of education is to free the individual from their role as a passive recipient of knowledge and to engage them in the *"process of discovering their own truth and proper place."* This profound definition aims to enable human beings to understand their purpose of creation in the universe, discover the meaning of their own existence, and, by attaining moral maturity in accordance with this understanding, to assume the proper position in individual and social life (Viersen, 2023, s. 225).

Considering the origins and terminological development of the term "Ta'dib," the diverse levels of meaning in the Arabic language and its diverse uses in the Islamic tradition of thought are striking. The word "Ta'dib," which is closely related to the term "Edeb" in its origin, encompasses meanings such as "to correct," "to improve," "to train," and "to teach manners." Its main feature, which distinguishes it from other commonly used terms such as "training" (tarbiya) and "Ta'lîm" (ta'lîm) in the educational context, is its comprehensive approach, which aims not only at developing a person's intellectual abilities but also at strengthening their moral character and deepening their spiritual depth. While "training" refers to the natural process of growth and development of an organism, "Ta'lîm" focuses on the systematic transmission of specific knowledge and skills. According to Al-Attas, "Ta'dib" is a deeper and transformative process that encompasses both dimensions but goes beyond them, aiming to discipline the human soul, enlighten the mind with true knowledge, and endow it with spiritual virtues. In this context, Ta'dib provides a moral framework that governs the individual's inner harmony as well as their relationships with family, society, and the universe (Wong, 2011, s. 53).

In Al-Attas's educational philosophy, "Ta'dib" is inextricably linked to the principle of moral responsibility, which forms the basis of Islamic epistemology. According to the Islamic understanding of knowledge, knowledge is not merely a theoretical accumulation of knowledge or the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity; on the contrary, it is a dynamic force that supports the individual's moral development, guides them toward correct behavior, and makes them aware of their responsibility to the Creator. True knowledge should positively influence the individual's character, transcending worldly desires and illusions and turning them toward eternal truth. At this point, ta'dib plays a central role in realizing this moral and transformative potential of knowledge by fostering the spiritual maturity of the individual and encouraging them to live a life in accordance with divine guidance. According to Al-Attas, in contrast to the modern secular understanding of knowledge, Islamic epistemology does not accept knowledge as an objective, value-independent phenomenon; on the contrary, all knowledge has an ontological source, a moral basis, and an ultimate purpose. This purpose is for the individual to attain the consciousness of servitude to Allah and to live a life worthy of His approval (Abdel Haleem, 2004, s. 75).

The rich and deep meaning of the concept of "ta'dib" is nourished by the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah, which are the fundamental texts of Islam, as well as by extensive discussions in different disciplines of the Islamic thought tradition that has developed over the centuries. The concept has a close and interactive relationship with the understanding of "tazkiya" (purification of the soul, spiritual cleansing and spiritual maturation) in the Sufi tradition. In their spiritual journeys, Sufis aim to purify the soul from evil tendencies, fill the heart with divine love and bring the soul closer to Allah, which contributes significantly to the purpose of ta'dib to perfect individual morality, raise spiritual consciousness and purify the heart. Similarly, the emphasis on moral advice, behavioral examples and character development in the education and training methodology of the Prophet (PBUH) and the moral training of the companions in the hadith literature provide valuable information about the practical applications of ta'dib. In classical Islamic philosophy, the in-depth analyses of thinkers such as Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Miskawayh and Ghazali on the virtuous society, moral virtues, the discipline of the soul and the moral responsibility of knowledge strengthen the philosophical and ethical foundations of ta'dib. Therefore, ta'dib is a basic concept that expresses the human effort to reach moral perfection at the individual level and to establish a just, virtuous and peaceful order at the social level, as a common ideal in different areas of Islamic thought.

### **3.2. The Ontological Position of Man and the Natural Purpose of Education According to Al-Attas: Journey to the Perfect Man through Ta'dib**

One of the cornerstones of Seyyid Nakib al-Attas's educational philosophy is his profound view of humanity. According to al-Attas, his understanding of education is based on a correct understanding of humanity's ontological position and the design of education according to this understanding. His view of humanity emphasizes that humanity is not only a being with biological and psychological dimensions, but also possesses metaphysical and spiritual depth. In this context, humanity consists of the integrity of fundamental elements such as nature (innate natural inclination and creation), mind (rational reasoning), heart (center of intuitive understanding and spiritual perception), and soul (center of ego and desire). According to al-Attas, the most fundamental purpose of education is to establish a balance between these elements and ensure that humanity develops according to its nature. In al-Attas's understanding of education, the natural purpose of education is to maximize a person's innate potential and orient them toward the ideal of an "insan-i kamil" (a mature and complete human being). This ideal encompasses not only the possession of knowledge, but also the connection of this knowledge with wisdom, moral virtues, and just action. According to al-Attas, education is the process of training the soul with the knowledge of truth that corresponds to nature. The mind is used to understand and analyze correct information, while the heart grasps the spiritual depth of this knowledge, and the soul is brought under control through the proper guidance of nature. Education is therefore an effort to harmoniously develop these various dimensions of a human being and to make them a being that corresponds to their own truth and the purpose of creation (Wong, 2011).

The concept of "ta'dib" is closely linked to al-Attas's view of humanity and the natural purpose of education. Ta'dib refers to the discipline and training required for a human being to be educated according to their nature and achieve the ideal of a perfect human being. According to al-Attas, one of the main goals of ta'dib is to make a person "learned, wise, and just." To be learned means to possess correct and true knowledge; to be wise means to understand the wisdom and spiritual depth of that knowledge; to be just means to make the right decisions and act justly in accordance with that knowledge and wisdom. The process of ta'dib aims not only to develop the individual's intellectual faculties but also to promote their moral and spiritual maturity, transforming them into a person with these three basic qualities (Yablo, 2023, ss. 205–248).

An important dimension of Al-Attas's educational philosophy is his effort to position the human being as truth-centered rather than world-centered. Arguing that the modern secular approach to education generally orients the individual toward goals such as worldly success, economic prosperity, and personal satisfaction, Al-Attas explains that the primary purpose of Islamic education is to orient the individual toward eternal truth and enable them to understand worldly life from the perspective of that truth. In this context, ta'dib balances the individual's relationship with the world, protects them from being a prisoner of worldly attachments, maintains their awareness of the hereafter, and directs them toward a more meaningful and purposeful life. According to Al-Attas, true education prepares the individual for ultimate salvation by endowing them with the ability to distinguish between the transient and the permanent, the illusory and the real (Abdelnour, 2019, ss. 238–243).

The concept of nature is central to Al-Attas's view of humanity. Nature is defined as the innate inclination toward Islam, the pure soul, and the moral potential of human beings. The primary purpose of the educational process is to protect and develop this nature, ensuring its development in the right direction. False knowledge, bad habits, and secular worldviews can corrupt human nature and distance them from the purpose of creation. Therefore, Ta'dib aims to protect the individual from such negative influences, encourage their natural inclinations, and guide them toward natural goodness (Piamenta, 1983).

The role of reason is also crucial in Al-Attas's view of humanity. Reason is understood as the ability to acquire, understand, and analyze correct information. However, according to Al-Attas, reason alone is not enough to attain the truth. For reason to function properly and attain the truth, it requires revelation and spiritual guidance. The Ta'dib process aims to maximize the mind's potential by providing it with accurate sources of information and stimulating critical thinking (Lawson, 2005).

The heart, on the other hand, is a central concept in El-Attas' view of humanity and indicates that knowledge has not only an intellectual but also an intuitive and spiritual dimension. The heart is the center for direct perception of truth, spiritual experiences, and connection with God. The Ta'dib process aims to purify the heart, freeing it from spiritual illnesses and transforming it into a place where divine light manifests.

The soul is the source of a person's desires and longings. According to El-Attas, the soul is a dimension that must be controlled and disciplined. The Ta'dib process aims to control the soul's excessive and harmful tendencies and subject it to the proper guidance of nature. In this way, people are freed from the slavery of worldly desires and lead a more balanced and moral life. Al-Attas's view of humanity therefore emphasizes that humans are multidimensional beings and that education should be provided according to their nature, taking all these dimensions into account. Ta'dib, the fundamental tool of this holistic understanding of education, takes people on a journey toward the ideal of the perfect human being and leads them beyond a world-centered perspective to a truth-centered existence.

### **3.3. The Islamization of Knowledge Project and the Epistemological Foundations of Ta'dib: Educational Reading on Al-Attas's Theory of Knowledge**

The project of the "Islamization of knowledge," which plays a central role in Sayyid Nakib al-Attas's thought, forms the epistemological basis of his educational philosophy. Al-Attas argues that the secular understanding of knowledge prevalent in the modern world should be reassessed from an Islamic perspective and reconciled with the fundamental principles of Islam. In this context, al-Attas's famous distinction between "true knowledge" and secular knowledge is crucial for understanding his epistemological stance and his understanding of education. According to him, "true knowledge" is knowledge derived from revelation that enables humans to correctly understand the purpose of creation, their relationship to the universe, and their moral responsibility. Secular knowledge, on the other hand,

is independent of metaphysical and religious references, focuses exclusively on explaining worldly phenomena, and is generally value-free. Al-Attas states that the fundamental difference between these two types of knowledge profoundly influences people's worldview and, thus, their understanding of education. In Al-Attas's epistemology, the classification of knowledge is based on wisdom rather than utility. While in secular thought, knowledge is usually evaluated based on its practical utility, technological application, or economic return, according to Al-Attas, the true value of knowledge lies in its relationship to wisdom. Wisdom means correctly understanding knowledge, placing it in its proper place, and applying it within a moral framework. In this context, the goal of Islamic education is not only to impart knowledge to students, but also to enable them to combine this knowledge with wisdom and apply it correctly in their own lives and in society. Al-Attas's approach emphasizes that knowledge is not only an intellectual tool but also a spiritual force that shapes the character of the individual, transforming them into wiser and more virtuous people (Khan, 2008).

The concept of "Islamization" in Al-Attas's thought does not simply mean reformulating the existing body of knowledge in Islamic terms; On the contrary, it expresses the search for deeper epistemic independence. Al-Attas argues that Muslim societies must break away from the hegemony of Western-centered secular knowledge systems and develop an independent understanding of knowledge based on their own epistemological foundations. This epistemological independence requires the development of an epistemology that draws on the Quran and Sunnah, the fundamental sources of Islam, balances reason and narrative, and takes metaphysical reality into account. Al-Attas' project aims to restore the dominance of Islamic principles not only in academia but in a broad range of areas such as curricula and social life (Nicholson, 1914).

The concept of "ta'dib" plays a central role in establishing the epistemological foundations of Al-Attas' project of Islamizing knowledge. The fundamental function of ta'dib is the process of "transforming the person through the reconstruction of the meaning of knowledge." In this process, the knowledge imparted to the student is aligned with the fundamental beliefs, values, and worldview of Islam. Potential misunderstandings and ideological deviations inherent in secular knowledge are eliminated through reinterpretation from an Islamic perspective. Ta'dib shapes not only the content of knowledge, but also the learning process, the role of the teacher, and the learning environment in accordance with Islamic principles. In this way, the student not only acquires knowledge but also grasps the ontological and moral dimensions of this knowledge, becoming a more conscious and responsible individual.

In al-Attas's epistemology, the source and validity of knowledge play an important role. According to him, revelation is the most reliable source of knowledge. Although reason and the senses are also paths to knowledge, they require the guidance of revelation. According to al-Attas, the fact that secular epistemology is based exclusively on reason and experience results in knowledge remaining incomplete and limited. In Islamic education, these three sources of knowledge are used in a balanced way, and revelation forms a fundamental reference point for the correct interpretation and understanding of other sources of knowledge. The process of ta'dib aims to equip students with the ability to correctly use these different sources of knowledge and understand their relationship to one another. al-Attas's classification of knowledge is not limited to distinguishing between "real knowledge" and secular knowledge. He also divides Islamic sciences (translated sciences) and rational sciences into different categories, emphasizing their hierarchical relationship and complementary roles. While the traditional sciences encompass fundamental knowledge from the Quran, Sunnah, and Islamic tradition, the rational sciences encompass reason-based disciplines such as logic, philosophy, mathematics, and natural sciences. According to Al-Attas, these two types of knowledge should be taught in a balanced way in Islamic education, and the epistemological foundations and limitations of both should be accurately

conveyed to students. Ta'dib enables students to understand these different fields of knowledge, establish their relationships, and evaluate them within the framework of an Islamic worldview (Goodman, 2003).

Al-Attas' project of Islamizing knowledge and the epistemological foundations of Ta'dib therefore form the foundation of his educational philosophy. Al-Attas emphasizes the need for an original educational model based on Islamic epistemology by offering a critical perspective on the secular understanding of knowledge. Ta'dib plays a central role in implementing this model by reconstructing the meaning of knowledge and transforming students morally and spiritually. The aim of this process is for the student not only to acquire knowledge, but also to combine this knowledge with wisdom, to evaluate it within the framework of an Islamic worldview and to apply it correctly in his life (Lawson, 2005).

### **3.4. Education as a Moral Obligation: Virtue, Responsibility and the Nurture of the Soul in Al-Attas' Ta'dib Approach**

In Sayyid Naqib al-Attas's educational philosophy, the moral dimension stands out as a fundamental and indispensable element of education, transcending the transmission of knowledge. According to al-Attas, "ta'dib" is not only a process that develops intellectual abilities, but also an art that prepares the individual for a virtuous life. In his view, true education aims to impart correct knowledge to the student and ensure that this knowledge is linked to moral principles and manifests itself in virtuous behavior in the student's character. In this context, ta'dib is perceived not only as the acquisition of knowledge but also as a moral obligation (Abdelnour, 2019, ss. 238–243).

When considering al-Attas's moral outlook, the profound influences of Farabi and Ghazali, two important figures in Islamic thought, become clear. As Farabi emphasizes in his ideal of the "Virtuous City," the idea that individual morality forms the basis of social order also resonates in al-Attas's understanding of education. Al-Attas's thought was shaped by the importance of moral virtues, the discipline of the soul, and the close connection between knowledge and morality in Ghazali's work "Ihya Ulumiddin." Al-Attas, who inherited the legacy of these two great thinkers, placed moral virtues at the center of Islamic education. According to him, education should not only impart knowledge to the student but also equip them with moral virtues such as justice, honesty, compassion, courage, and humility. These virtues enable the individual to act correctly and in a balanced manner both in their inner world and in their relationships with others (Uthman, 2022).

In al-Attas's understanding of education, the crucial factor is not to impart knowledge, but to represent it. An educated person is not only someone who possesses knowledge, but also someone who embodies this knowledge in his or her own life and behavior. According to Al-Attas, true knowledge is knowledge that transforms a person's character and makes them morally mature. Therefore, the educational process should train not only the student's intellectual abilities, but also their heart and soul. The student should not only memorize the learned information but also deeply grasp its meaning, relate it to their own life, and strive to present it in the best possible way. Teachers bear a great responsibility in this regard. They should not only impart information to students, but also serve as role models, teach them moral values by living them, and encourage them to live virtuous lives.

The main purpose of Ta'dib is to combine knowledge and morality. According to Al-Attas, knowledge and morality are inseparable. True knowledge allows a person to mature morally and leads them to right behavior. Knowledge without moral values can make an individual arrogant, selfish, and cruel. Therefore, in the Ta'dib process, the student should not only be given knowledge but also Moral values are taught. The student should both discipline his or her own soul and be useful to society through the application of the information learned. This approach of El-Attas emphasizes that Islamic education

encompasses not only individual but also social responsibility. An educated person feels responsible to society, defends justice, resists oppression, and works for the good of humanity (Kozah, 2015).

El-Attas's understanding of morality also includes important criticisms of modern educational systems. According to him, secular educational systems generally ignore moral values and focus exclusively on developing the individual's intellectual and professional abilities. This leads to moral crises, social problems, and individual unhappiness. El-Attas argues that Islamic education can be a solution to these problems. According to him, Islamic education accepts the individual as a moral being, supports their spiritual and moral development, and prepares them for a life in which they will be happy both in this world and in the hereafter (Kozah, 2015).

The concept of moral responsibility is central to Al-Attas's approach to ta'dib. Every person bears a moral responsibility toward Allah, themselves, their family, society, and all of humanity. The educational process aims to ensure that individuals become aware of this responsibility and fulfill it to the best of their ability. In this context, students should learn not only about their rights but also about their responsibilities. They should use the acquired knowledge to protect their own rights and respect the rights of others. Al-Attas' approach emphasizes that Islamic education aims to transform the individual from a passive recipient into an active and responsible citizen (Zatari, 2023, ss. 303–310).

Educating the soul also represents an important dimension of Al-Attas' approach to ta'dib. According to Al-Attas, man is not only a mind and body, but also a spiritual being. Educating the soul involves purifying the individual's heart, freeing him from spiritual ailments (arrogance, envy, anger, etc.), and instilling good moral values (love, compassion, mercy, etc.). The educational process should promote the student's spiritual development, provide him with opportunities for spiritual experiences, and encourage him to engage in practices that bring him closer to Allah (prayer, dhikr, contemplation, etc.). Al-Attas' approach emphasizes that Islamic education should satisfy not only the mental and moral needs of the individual, but also their spiritual needs (Jaffer, 2017, ss. 85–106).

Thus, moral obligation is considered a fundamental element of education in Al-Attas' approach to ta'dib. Ta'dib is an art that prepares the individual for a virtuous life, teaches them their moral responsibility, supports their spiritual development, and orients them toward a life in which they will be happy both in this world and in the hereafter. This approach of Al-Attas contains significant criticism of modern educational systems and argues for the need for a more holistic and meaningful educational model by emphasizing the moral dimension of Islamic education (Wilberg, 2013).

### **3.5. The Crisis of Secular Education and Al-Attas' Critique of Education: An Alternative Paradigm Based on Ta'dīb**

With the spread of modern education, the nature, purpose, and impact of knowledge on humankind are increasingly being discussed intensively. Scholars, particularly from the Islamic tradition of thought, have critically assessed the effects of the secularization phenomenon in education. In this context, the educational philosophy of Sayyid Muhammad Naqīb al-Attas offers a comprehensive and original alternative to the problems considered a crisis of modern secular education. Through an in-depth analysis of the fragmented, instrumental, and spiritual nature of secular education, al-Attas presents a holistic vision of education based on the concept of "ta'dīb" (Yazaki, 2013).

One of the fundamental characteristics of modern education is the separation of knowledge into different disciplines and the focus on specialization within these disciplines. This fragmented structure makes it difficult for students to understand the world and knowledge from a holistic perspective. Various fields such as natural sciences, social sciences, mathematics, and languages are often presented in a disjointed and incoherent manner, leading to problems in the utilization and application of knowledge. Modern education also often views the individual as a means to achieve economic and

technological goals, thus alienating the true goal of education from broader dimensions such as personal development, moral maturation, and spiritual deepening (Rahman, 1981, ss. 220). This instrumental approach encourages students to acquire only certain skills and prepare for a competitive job market, disregarding the value of knowledge in itself and its relationship to moral and spiritual responsibility.

According to El-Attas, secularization essentially means the "desacralization of knowledge." In this process, revelation and religious teachings are excluded as sources of knowledge, and only forms of knowledge based on human capacities such as reason and experimentation are recognized as valid. Secular educational systems also build on this foundation, and the religious and spiritual dimensions are displaced from the educational sphere (Banani & Vryonis, 1977). El-Attas argues that this situation weakens the ontological foundation of knowledge and eliminates the moral and spiritual framework necessary for the correct understanding and application of knowledge. An understanding of knowledge without sacred references leads to the relativization of value judgments, the loss of a moral compass, and ultimately to the meaninglessness of education.

Another frequently observed problem of modern secular educational systems is the increasing mechanization of education and the deepening spiritual emptiness. While the imparting of knowledge and the acquisition of skills are given priority, the inner worlds, values, and spiritual needs of students are neglected. Education is reduced to a process that merely conveys a wealth of information and teaches specific techniques. Insufficient emphasis is placed on the students' search for meaning, existential questions, and spiritual development (Boysen, 2018, ss. 225–242). This situation can lead to a sense of meaninglessness, alienation, and dissatisfaction among students. While material success and worldly gain become the sole goal, the search for deeper meaning and values remains in the background (Dhanani, 1994).

El-Attas's response to these problems is a holistic vision of education based on the concept of "ta'dib." Ta'dib literally means "to discipline," "to educate," "to moralize," and "to place in its proper place." In El-Attas's educational philosophy, ta'dib is a comprehensive process that encompasses not only the transmission of knowledge but also the moral, spiritual, and intellectual development of the student as a whole (Frankl, 2006). Ta'dib focuses on the sacred origin of knowledge and emphasizes that the primary purpose of education is to instill in students an awareness of servitude to Allah and to enable them to understand the world from an Islamic perspective.

In ta'dib-based education, although knowledge is divided into different disciplines, a connection is established between these disciplines from a monotheistic perspective. All types of knowledge are viewed within a single unity of meaning, which ultimately points to the existence, unity, and proof of Allah's creation. While science teaches us to interpret natural phenomena as verses from Allah, social sciences help us understand the purpose of the creation of humans and society. While language and literature are considered tools for expressing good morals and wise words, mathematics and logic contribute to understanding the order and laws of the universe (Faruque, 2021). This holistic approach enables students to perceive the world in a meaningful context and establish meaningful relationships between different fields of knowledge.

Ta'dib also emphasizes the moral and spiritual dimensions of education. In addition to imparting knowledge, students' character development, the acquisition of moral virtues, and spiritual deepening are integral components of education. Teachers are not only those who impart knowledge but also those who set an example for students, guide them toward moral values, and provide spiritual guidance (Shihadeh & Thiele, 2020). The educational environment is designed to help students internalize fundamental Islamic values such as respect, responsibility, justice, and mercy (Lumbard, 2015, ss. 1–23). Ibadah, dhikr, and religious discussions help students strengthen their spiritual ties and deepen their relationship with Allah (Eaton, 1985).

In summary, Sayyed Muhammad Naqeeb al-Attas's paradigm of ta'dib-based education offers a powerful alternative to the fragmented, instrumental, and spiritually empty nature of modern secular education. Ta'dib, with its holistic, sacred-centered vision of education, aims to restore the ontological foundation of knowledge, strengthen the moral and spiritual dimensions of education, and ultimately instill in students a sense of devotion to Allah. This approach is an important guide for Muslim societies grappling with the effects of secularization in today's world (Goodman, 2003).

### **3.6. The Function of the Teacher and the School in the Ta'dib Process: Al-Attas' Educational Environment Construction**

Sayyid Muhammad Naqib al-Attas's ta'dib-based educational philosophy not only provides a vision of the nature and purpose of knowledge, but also defines in detail the educational environment in which this vision is implemented, as well as the roles of the key actors within that environment. According to al-Attas, the teacher and the school (educational institution) are crucial in the ta'dib process for the correct transmission of knowledge, the internalization of moral values, and the understanding of wisdom. In this context, al-Attas's concept of teacher and school, while shaped by the traditional Islamic understanding of education, also reflects a critical perspective on the deficiencies of modern educational systems (Zatari, 2022, ss. 1–11).

In al-Attas's educational philosophy, the teacher is not merely a technician who imparts knowledge, but has a much deeper and more comprehensive role. The teacher is primarily a "murshid," a person who shows his students the correct path and guides them along it. This guidance not only encompasses academic knowledge but also aims at the moral and spiritual development of the student. The teacher serves as a role model who reminds the student of their responsibility to Allah, instills correct values, and encourages them to be a good person. Second, the teacher is a "guide"; they help the student discover their potential, develop their talents, and determine their areas of interest. They offer appropriate learning methods, taking into account the student's individual differences, and prepare them for the future. Most importantly, according to El-Attas, the teacher should be a "moral role model." The teacher's own life is the most effective teaching tool for their student. With their honesty, fair behavior, patience, tolerance, and respect for knowledge, the teacher instills moral values in their student by living them, rather than just teaching them in words. This multifaceted role of the teacher is essential for the success of the Ta'dib process (Akerlof & Shiller, 2010).

In El-Attas' educational framework, the school (educational institution) is not only a physical place where instruction takes place, but also a sacred place that is "the bearer of knowledge, manners, and wisdom." The school is a center where students not only acquire knowledge but also learn manners (morals and discipline) and attain wisdom (the ability to correctly understand and apply knowledge). Therefore, every element—from the physical structure of the school to the learning materials and atmosphere to the teacher-student relationship—should be designed to serve these fundamental goals. The school should provide an environment that teaches students respect, discipline, cooperation, and responsibility (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). At the same time, it should be a place where students are encouraged to think, question, and develop a critical perspective. A school where knowledge, manners, and wisdom are imparted together prepares the ground for the intellectual and moral maturation of students. Al-Attas's understanding of school allows for important comparisons between the "knowledge circles" (madradas and similar educational institutions) of the traditional Islamic world and modern school systems. In traditional knowledge circles, knowledge transmission is typically based on a master-student relationship, with the student actively pursuing knowledge and developing a deep bond with the teacher. Moral and spiritual development is an integral part of education, and the student not only acquires knowledge but also seeks to achieve a "hal" (spiritual state) (Diagne, 2018). Modern school systems, on the other hand, generally feature a more centralized structure, standardized curricula, and a

mass education approach. The teacher-student relationship can be more distant, and the moral and spiritual dimension often takes a back seat. While recognizing some advantages of modern systems, Al-Attas also emphasizes the importance of depth, integrity, and spiritual orientation in traditional knowledge circles. A Ta'dib-based educational environment should aim to combine the positive aspects of these two models, creating an educational approach that meets the needs of the modern world without deviating from Islamic values (Jaffer, 2017, ss. 85–106).

The ontological responsibility that Ta'dib imposes on educational stakeholders (teachers, students, and school administration) is profound. "Ontological responsibility" is an existential obligation and, in this context, means that educational stakeholders are aware of their own existence and role and act accordingly. Teachers should be aware that they are not merely practicing a profession but also assume the sacred duty of shaping future generations. Students, on the other hand, should respect knowledge, actively participate in the learning process, and assume responsibility for using the acquired knowledge effectively. School administration also bears the responsibility to create an educational environment according to the principles of Ta'dib, to promote the development of teachers and students, and to ensure that the school is a center of knowledge, decency, and wisdom. Awareness of this ontological responsibility ensures that the educational process is no longer merely a technical activity but has a deeper meaning and purpose (Parsania, 2016).

As a result, the functions that Sayyed Muhammad Naqib al-Attas ascribed to the teacher and the school in the process of ta'dib differ significantly from the modern understanding of education. While the teacher, as a master, guide, and exemplary moral role model, is responsible for the holistic development of the student, the school is a sacred place where knowledge, decency, and wisdom are imparted together (Dhanani, 2021). Ta'dib, which seeks to combine the depth and holistic nature of traditional knowledge with some of the advantages of modern systems, also imposes profound ontological responsibilities on educational actors. This perspective offers an Islamic solution to the problems of today's educational systems and demonstrates that a more meaningful, purposeful, and value-oriented understanding of education is possible (Bhat, 2016, ss. 61–74).

### **3.7. Is it possible to establish a Ta'dib-based education model today based on Al-Attas's educational philosophy?**

Seyyid Muhammed Nakib al-Attas's Ta'dib-based educational philosophy offers a comprehensive and original alternative to the problems considered a crisis of modern secular education. Is it possible, then, to develop an applicable educational model in contemporary Muslim societies based on this profound and deeply rooted philosophy? Answering this question requires considering the potential of al-Attas's thought in the current context and the associated difficulties. It is important to develop concrete proposals for curriculum, teacher training, school culture, and pedagogical approaches inspired by al-Attas's legacy and to evaluate the potential advantages of this model over contemporary pedagogies.

The applicability of a Ta'dib-based educational model in Muslim societies first raises the question of how the basic principles of this model are reflected in the curriculum. A curriculum should be developed that combines traditional Islamic sciences with modern sciences and focuses on a monotheistic worldview (Açıkgenç, 1993). This curriculum should include not only the transmission of knowledge but also content that promotes the moral and spiritual development of students. Moral values, shaped under the guidance of the Quran and Sunnah, should permeate every phase of the curriculum, and pedagogical approaches should be pursued to ensure that students internalize these values (Bernard, 1980: 59–105). Teacher training also plays a crucial role in the success of this model. Teachers should not only possess subject-matter knowledge but also possess the qualities of a "mentor," "guide," and "exemplary moral role model" described by El-Attas. In addition to pedagogical training, teachers'

knowledge of Islamic sciences, their spiritual maturity, and their ability to serve as role models for students should also be fostered. The school culture should create an atmosphere that reflects the principles of ta'dib. An environment should be created in which values such as respect, love, justice, and responsibility prevail, which promotes learning, supports spiritual development, and in which students feel safe. The school structure, its activities, and the relationships between teachers and students should also be designed to support this culture (Zatari, 2022, ss. 1–11).

The ta'dib-centered educational model offers important advantages over modern pedagogies. Its most significant advantage is its holistic approach, which imbues knowledge with sanctity, in contrast to the secularized and fragmented knowledge structure. The awareness that the source of knowledge is Allah and that all knowledge is a tool for understanding His verses imbues the learning process with deep meaning and significance. This paradigm promotes an understanding of education that seeks not only the question of "how" but also the questions of "why" and "what for." Another important advantage of the Ta'dib model is its meaning- and value-centered approach.

In contrast to the problems of worthlessness and meaninglessness often observed in modern education, Ta'dib places moral and spiritual values at the center of education. The goal is for students not only to acquire knowledge but also to become good people, act fairly, assume responsibility, and develop spiritually. This approach can help students grow into more balanced, happier, and socially useful individuals (Abul-Fadl, 2024). Furthermore, Ta'dib can promote pedagogical approaches that view students as active learners and thinkers rather than passive recipients of information. The interaction between teacher and student not only enables the transmission of knowledge but also allows students to express their thoughts, ask questions, and take responsibility for their own learning process (Fuller, 2014).

Al-Attas's legacy holds the potential to impart a new vision of education to future generations. An educational approach that sanctifies knowledge and is focused on meaning and value can provide an important counterbalance to the secular and materialistic tendencies of the modern world. Ta'dib-based education can help young generations become aware of their moral and spiritual responsibilities, rather than focusing exclusively on worldly success. This vision can help Muslim societies meet the challenges of the modern world while preserving their own cultural and religious identity. Al-Attas's philosophy emphasizes that education is not only a process of individual development but also a social responsibility. Well-educated, moral, and conscious individuals will play an important role in building more just, peaceful, and developed societies. Therefore, developing a ta'dib-based educational model that is relevant to the present and inspired by Al-Attas's educational philosophy will mean leaving a more meaningful and valuable legacy for future generations (Buchman, 1998).

However, implementing a ta'dib-based educational model can also present some challenges. The cultural, political, and economic conditions of different Muslim societies may require different approaches to implementing this model. Furthermore, the established structures and practices of modern educational systems can generate significant resistance to radical change. A transformation process based on the principles of ta'dib therefore requires a patient, planned, and participatory approach. Collaboration and the development of a shared vision among educators, academics, policymakers, and other societal stakeholders are crucial for the successful implementation of this model (Parsania, 2016).

In summary, it is possible to establish a ta'dib-based educational model today based on the educational philosophy of Sayyid Muhammad Naqib al-Attas. This model has the potential to provide important solutions to many problems facing modern education. The restructuring of the curriculum from a monotheistic perspective, the comprehensive consideration of teacher training processes, the establishment of a school culture that reflects the principles of Ta'dib, and the adoption of meaning- and value-oriented pedagogical approaches are the basic elements of this model. Al-Atta's legacy can

contribute to the development of more conscious, moral, and responsible individuals by offering a new vision of education that sanctifies knowledge and focuses on meaning and value for future generations (Eaton, 1985).

#### 4. Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

This study reinterprets the concept of ta'dīb, central to the educational thought of Seyyid Naqib al-Attas, within the context of Islamic thought, considering its conceptual, theological, and epistemological dimensions. The findings demonstrate that the understanding of ta'dīb is not merely a pedagogical method; it is a holistic reconstruction of the relationship between humanity, existence, knowledge, and values. This conclusion confirms al-Attas's critiques of the pragmatic and instrumental approach to knowledge prevalent in modern educational systems (Musa, 2021). One of the study's key findings is that ta'dīb-centered education addresses the moral, metaphysical, and ontological dimensions of knowledge together. According to al-Attas, knowledge is not a neutral and value-independent content; it is a divinely ordained trust that guides humanity towards truth, imposes moral responsibility, and gives existential meaning. This approach differs significantly from the understanding of modern secular epistemology, which limits knowledge solely to production, productivity, and individual achievement. Indeed, contemporary educational philosophy literature increasingly emphasizes that limiting knowledge to purely cognitive competencies produces a void of meaning and erosion of values in students (Biesta, 2012, ss. 808-825).

Compared to the literature, the findings of this study reveal that al-Attas's thought offers not only a theoretical but also a critical pedagogical alternative. In particular, there is a strong parallel between Nasr's criticisms of the detachment of modern knowledge from the sacred and al-Attas's ta'dīb-based understanding of education. Both thinkers argue that the abstraction of knowledge from metaphysical references leads to the alienation of the individual from both himself and society. In this context, ta'dīb positions education not merely as a process of acquiring skills, but as an education of being that aims to cultivate the individual with wisdom, justice, and a sense of responsibility. One of the important findings of the study is that the concept of ta'dīb aims at both individual and social transformation. According to al-Attas, the upbringing of morally and epistemologically well-equipped individuals makes it possible to build a society based on justice, consciousness, and spirituality in the long run. This finding aligns with approaches in the field of educational sociology that argue that education is not only a force for individual mobility but also a constitutive force that enables the reproduction of social values .

Therefore, this study offers a normative critique of contemporary education policies that reduce education to definitions of economic efficiency or competitiveness. From a literature perspective, the concept of ta'dīb is increasingly discussed, particularly in studies of Islamic educational philosophy. Wan Daud (1998) emphasizes that the concept of ta'dīb carries the potential for a holistic solution to the identity crises and value erosion experienced in Muslim societies (Daud, 1998). The findings of this study also support the aforementioned literature; they reveal that ta'dīb-centered education enables individuals to recognize their own nature, understand their purpose in creation, and assume social responsibility with this awareness. On the other hand, the results obtained necessitate a critical comparison with contemporary educational approaches. Although constructivist, student-centered, and competency-based models strengthen the pedagogical dimension of education today, they often neglect the moral and metaphysical foundations (Carr, 2018). El-Attas's understanding of ta'dīb, however, attempts to remedy this deficiency by prioritizing the questions "why is knowledge learned?" and "what should knowledge transform a person into?" before the question "how is knowledge taught?". In this respect, ta'dīb offers a complementary framework that can deepen the ethical and semantic dimensions of contemporary pedagogical approaches.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that al-Attas's ta'dīb-centered educational philosophy offers a powerful alternative to the reductionist meanings attributed to knowledge by modern secular educational understanding. Ta'dīb redefines education as a holistic process in which the individual confronts their own ontological truth and internalizes knowledge with morality and wisdom. This approach has the potential to respond to the identity, value, and meaning crises in education, particularly in Muslim societies. The findings of the study show that the ta'dīb concept should be considered not only as a theoretical ideal but also as an applicable paradigm at the level of educational policies, teacher training programs, and school culture. In this context, ta'dīb necessitates a rethinking of education as a process of humanization that guides individuals towards truth, instills a sense of moral responsibility, and prioritizes social justice, going beyond approaches that view education as merely the production of technical competence. In this respect, al-Attas's educational philosophy adds not only pedagogical but also ontological and moral depth to contemporary educational discussions.

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