Actualization of Contemporary Islamic Education Concepts: A Study of the Thoughts of Sayyid Naquib Al-Attas and Buya Hamka

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Abstract

The crisis of Islamic education, along with other pressing issues, has long been apparent within the Islamic world. According to Al-Faruqi, the education sector is suspected to be experiencing the worst crisis. This should not happen because the spirit of renewal in Islam should not only touch upon political, military, and economic aspects but should also be more focused on education. This type of research is a literature review, utilizing a factual-historical approach concerning prominent figures. Through several efforts, this research concludes that what has been formulated by Al-Attas and Hamka, particularly regarding education, is their intellectual jihad to realize an ideal Islamic education system. This system is based on moral, spiritual, and religious values. The orientation and values of Islamic education fundamentally lie in the harmony and balance of the complete individual, encompassing both the physical and spiritual aspects of human beings. Similarly, when viewed in terms of the human function as the servant of Allah (*'abd Allah*), symbolizing the vertical dimension, and as the vicegerent on earth (*khalifah fi al-ard*), symbolizing the horizontal dimension.

Keywords: Education of Islam, Buya Hamka, and Sayyid Naquib Al-Attas

Introduction

Islamic education is an integral aspect in shaping Muslim individuals capable of integrating religious values into daily life (Yatim, 2001:42). With the changing times and societal dynamics, the concept of Islamic education has evolved to respond to the challenges and changing needs of the era. In facing the current context, Sayyid Naquib Al-Attas and Buya Hamka are two prominent thinkers who have made significant contributions to contemporary Islamic education concepts (Nizar, 2008:103).

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Sayyid Naquib Al-Attas, a Muslim scholar and prominent thinker from Malaysia, formulates his views on Islamic education in his monumental work, "Islam and Secularism." Al-Attas (1987) emphasizes the importance of understanding and preserving the roots of Islamic values within the modern educational system. He asserts the need to integrate worldly knowledge with Islamic values so that education creates individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess moral and spiritual integrity (Al-Attas:1979:24).

On the other hand, Buya Hamka, an Indonesian cleric and intellectual, presents his ideas on Islamic education in various written works, such as "Islamic Religious Education" (Ramayulis & Nizar, 2003:174). Buya Hamka emphasizes an approach that absorbs local wisdom while maintaining the essence of Islamic teachings. Hamka's thoughts provide an understanding of integrating local culture with Islamic values as the foundation for molding future generations with a strong Islamic identity while remaining capable of synergizing with their social environment (Nizar, 2008:98).

Considering the contributions of the thoughts of Al-Attas and Hamka (Zahroh, 2021), it becomes relevant to conduct a more in-depth study regarding the realization of contemporary Islamic education concepts. How can these two ideologies be integrated and applied in the context of education in the era of globalization and modernization (Fakhrurrazi et al., 2023)? How can this approach address the complex challenges faced by the Muslim community in adapting to changing times?

An analysis of the ideas of Sayyid Naquib Al-Attas and Buya Hamka is expected to provide a robust conceptual foundation for formulating adaptive and progressive Islamic education strategies. These strategies should be capable of meeting the demands of the times while still preserving the fundamental values of Islam.

Literature Review

The book, titled "The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas," was written by Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud in Kuala Lumpur in 1998. The book has been translated into Indonesian by Hamid Fahmy and others with the title "Filsafat dan Praktik Pendidikan Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas," published by Mizan in 2003. Although the book extensively presents ideas about Naquib al-Attas' educational concepts, its discussion primarily emphasizes Al-Attas's thoughts as a scholar and a contemporary Islamic thinker in promoting his ideas about the necessity of the Islamization of knowledge. Additionally, while the book provides an overview of the realization of Al-Attas's educational thoughts, further discussion is needed, especially in the context of Indonesian culture (Mahmudah, 2020).

Furthermore, there are theses that delve into Buya Hamka's educational philosophy, such as "Konsep Pendidikan Integral Dalam Surat Al-Alaq Ayat 1-5 (Studi terhadap tafsir al-azhar karya Hamka)" and "Konsep Fitrah Manusia dalam Al-Qur'an dan Implikasinya terhadap Pendidikan Islam (Studi tafsir al-azhar karya Hamka surat ar-rum ayat 30)." However, there is also a need for more exploration, particularly in understanding how these concepts can be applied in the present-day context (Khadavi et al., 2023).

Given the similar focus on the same subject matter in these writings, the author suggests that further development is necessary. Specifically, there is a need to explore the potential application of Naquib al-Attas's educational philosophy in the context of contemporary Islamic education in the broader Islamic world and particularly in Indonesia, a country with a Muslim-majority population. Therefore, comprehensive research and in-depth examination of Naquib al-Attas's Islamic educational philosophy, especially in the form of a thesis, are still highly warranted and should be further developed.

Research Method

This research falls under the category of bibliographic research, as it is conducted to search, analyze, interpret, and generalize facts derived from the thoughts and ideas written by thinkers and experts. In terms of scope, this study is a type of library research, utilizing a factual-historical approach concerning a figure (Zubair, 1990:64). This means that the research approach is grounded in the thoughts of a particular figure, whether in their works or on a specific topic within their works, using a historical-philosophical approach (Zubair, 1990:64). Data collection is carried out through the documentation method, involving written materials related to the research problem. The sources of documents include both primary and secondary data, photographs, books, encyclopedias, writings, articles, newspapers, the internet, and the like. The steps used in analyzing the data include induction and deduction interpretation, internal coherence, holistics, idealization, comparison, heuristics, inclusive or analogical language, description, specific methods, personal research reflection, and conclusions.

Result and Discussion

Various issues regarding the crisis in Islamic education and other urgent problems have long emerged within the Islamic world (Husein & Ashraf, 1986). Even in the field of education, as indicated by Al-Faruqi, the worst crisis has been identified. This should not be the case, as the spirit of renewal in Islam should not only touch on political, military, and economic aspects but should also be more focused on education (Al-Faruqi, 1988).

The need for a reorganization in Islamic education conceptually has long been recognized and pursued by the Muslim community. This is evidenced by the organization of several international conferences on Islamic education. One notable conference was first held in Mecca in 1977, attended by 313 Muslim intellectuals from various countries. In this conference, fundamental issues related to the problems faced by the world of Islamic education were discussed, alongside seeking appropriate solutions to address the challenges affecting Islamic education globally.

Observing this reality, it is crucial to investigate the root causes of the issue, such as the factors contributing to the weakness, decline, and stagnation of the condition of the Muslim community. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas addresses the aforementioned problem as follows:

The cause of the decline and degeneration of the Muslim community is precisely the negligence in formulating and developing a systematic educational plan based on the principles of Islam, as elucidated by prominent Islamic scholars. There is a failure in implementing a coordinated and integrated Islamic education system developed from the intellectual and spiritual perspectives of wise individuals (Al-Attas, 1987:13).

Referring to the statements above, solving the issues of Islamic education, as stated by Al-Faruqi, becomes an immensely challenging task for the ummah around the 15th century Hijri (Al-Faruqi, 1988:118). This is because the condition of the Muslim community, if it aims to rise again and play a significant role in history, is determined by how effectively they can address the educational challenges (Yatim, 2001:52). Khursid Ahmad supports this perspective by stating: "Among the problems faced by the Islamic world today, the issue of education is the most challenging. The future of the Islamic world will heavily depend on how it confronts this educational challenge" (Husein, 1983).

Referring to the statements of Al-Faruqi, Naquib al-Attas, and Khursid Ahmad, it seems that the implementation of Islamic education by Muslims has been flawed, both in terms of concept and actualization. Therefore, there is a need for reconceptualization, reformulation, reform, and reconstruction or rearrangement of everything related to the implementation of Islamic education (Sholeh, 2023).

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas is one of the renowned Islamic thinkers or global Muslim intellectuals today. Besides being known as a historian, theologian, philosopher, and Sufi scholar, Naquib al-Attas is also recognized as a brilliant thinker in Islamic education (Al-Attas, 1980). Alongside other Muslim intellectuals like Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi, Syed Ali Ashraf, Syed Sajjad Husein, Zaiuddin Sardar, Hamid Hasan Bilgrami, Hasan Langgulung, and Khursid Ahmad, he is deeply concerned and troubled by the current reality of Islamic education.

When mapping the trends of intellectual renewal, including the renewal of Islamic educational thought, Muslim scholars in the Islamic world exhibit diverse tendencies. Among contemporary Muslim intellectuals, at least two prominent trends stand out: external and internal (Al-Attas, 1979:36). Both trends result in thoughts and strategies with varying depths and effectiveness. In this landscape, the thoughts of Naquib al-Attas hold a unique and deserving place for examination and dissemination.

Based on his elaboration on the two primary sources of Islamic teachings, the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as classical scholarly works, alongside his philosophical reflections, Naquib al-Attas has brought a breath of fresh air to the landscape of contemporary Islamic educational thought. He has put forth many intriguing and relevant new ideas, essentially introducing novel concepts in Islamic education. These ideas were conveyed at the first and second international conferences on education held in Mecca in 1977 and Islamabad in 1980, covering topics ranging from the Islamization of knowledge to philosophical considerations of Islamic education. What distinguishes him and makes him well-known among Islamic education thinkers is his emphasis on the theme of reforming Islamic education and the reformulation of other Islamic educational frameworks, forming an intellectual discourse.

Among Al-Attas's fundamental educational concepts is his perspective on *ta'dīb*. According to him, the fundamental issue in Islamic education is the loss of values encompassed by *adab* in its broader sense. This is primarily due to confusion in understanding the concepts of *tarbiyah*, *ta'līm*, and *ta'dīb*. Al-Attas prefers to use the term ta'dib for the concept of Islamic education (Al-Attas, 1979:36). He asserts that the structure of the concept of *ta'dīb* already includes elements of knowledge (*ta'līm*) and proper nurturing (*tarbiyah*), eliminating the need to use the terms *tarbiyah, ta'līm*, and *ta'dīb* separately when referring to Islamic education (Al-Attas, 1979:33-34).

Al-Attas consistently emphasizes the importance of using specific terminology, as he believes that semantic confusion resulting from the misuse of key concepts in the Islamic vocabulary can influence our perception of the Islamic worldview. The concept of education is currently one of the key terms in the fundamental Islamic vocabulary, traditionally expressed as tarbiyah (Al-Attas, 1979:36).

In formulating the objectives of education, Al-Attas tends to emphasize the individual aspect while not neglecting the formation of an ideal societal order. Since society consists of individuals or a collection of individuals, making each person (individual) or some of them virtuous also means making society virtuous. Therefore, Al-Attas emphasizes that the ultimate goal of Islamic education is to produce good human beings, not merely to produce good citizens as in Western civilization (Al-Attas, 1987:150).

Islamic education fundamentally seeks to actualize good individuals or universal human beings (*al-insan al-kamil*), in line with the purpose of human creation (Syukur et al., 2023). Humans have a dual mission: as servants of Allah (*'abd Allah*) and as stewards on earth (*khalifah fi al-ard*). Therefore, the Islamic education system should reflect the knowledge and behavior of the Prophet Muhammad and be obligated to create a Muslim community that embodies the exemplary qualities of the Prophet as much as possible, according to their respective potentials and capabilities (Ismail, 1999:283). This aligns with the Quranic dictum that declares Prophet Muhammad as the best role model.

To achieve the aforementioned educational objectives, Al-Attas places more optimistic emphasis on the importance of higher education institutions. He assumes that the deficiencies found in lower levels of education can be rectified if proper education is provided at the highest level, in the form we know as *ta'dīb* (Daud, 1998:204). Therefore, from the outset, Al-Attas, as the founder and designer of the institution he currently leads, the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), ensured that everything from the architectural design to the curriculum reflects a philosophical foundation that embodies the concept of a universal human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*) realized in the persona of Prophet Muhammad.

What Al-Attas formulates as mentioned above is part of his intellectual jihad to realize an ideal and independent Islamic education system. This system is centered on the cultivation of ethical behavior, where the value of Islamic education lies in the harmony and balance of the individual through various exercises involving the spiritual, intellectual, rational, emotional, and sensory aspects. This, in turn, shapes an individual to achieve equilibrium

between the dimensions of servitude (*'abd Allah*) and stewardship (*khalīfah fi al-ard*), representing the primary purpose of human creation in the world.

The development of personality competence for an educator is highly crucial but often not extensively discussed by education figures, with many addressing it in a global context (Nurmaliyah et al., 2023). However, as both a literary figure and an educational influencer, Buya Hamka has elucidated the duty of an educator to possess a good personality characterized by noble conduct (*berakhlakul karimah*). The importance of an educator with noble conduct stems from the sacred and noble nature of their task. Their existence involves not merely undergoing the process of transforming a set of information but extends beyond that, involving the endeavor to shape the character (personality) of students in accordance with the values of Islamic teachings (Nizar, 2008:138).

Hamka is the prototype of a successful and convincing educator in his era. This is evident when examining several works and his involvement in educational institutions, establishing him as both an educator and a thinker in Islamic education. This assumption is supported by existing data, revealing that throughout his life's journey, he remained a consistent and successful educator. He played a role in introducing educational reforms in Indonesia by modernizing institutional structures and the content orientation of Islamic education. This was evident during his management of Tabligh School and Kullyatul Muballighin, both in Makassar and Padangpanjang, as well as the development of Al-Azhar Mosque (*Kebayoran Barat*) into a modern Islamic educational institution.

Hamka, as a figure from Indonesia, had his thoughts widely used as a reference in decision-making, and the theories he presented in his books were frequently applied to address issues related to social, political, religious, and educational matters. Additionally, he successfully compiled the interpretation of Al-Azhar, which many people used to understand the Qur'an.

Hamka initially worked as a religious teacher in 1927 at the Tebing Tinggi Plantation in Medan and later as a religious teacher in Padangpanjang in 1929. Through his experience as a teacher, he authored books on education, including "*Lembaga Hidup.*" In this book, he not only discussed education but also addressed our rights and obligations as human beings toward God, society, and the state.

Hamka's thoughts on education are inspired by the interconnectedness of religious norms, political policies, the potential of students, and the dynamic aspirations of society. These norms refer to the foundation of universal value systems, subsequently elaborated into the principles of Islamic education, encompassing human responsibility to God, the development of potential and real human strengths, societal progress, and the optimal utilization of students' potential (Ramayulis & Nizar, 2003:283).

In his writings, Hamka states that Instruction and Education cannot be separated. A nation that prioritizes instruction alone, without emphasizing education to cultivate character, even if it achieves progress, is said to be clever, but its intelligence will become poison rather than medicine (Hamka, 1984:223). From this direct quote, we can conclude that in an

educational institution, the most crucial thing to teach is moral education (*Akhlaqul karimah*). Given the importance of teaching moral values, it is fitting for an educator to behave in accordance with what they have taught their students. Hamka also asserts that educators play a significant role in imparting moral education to their students. This statement has been articulated by Hamka since ancient times in his book "*Lembaga Hidup*," encapsulated in the statement, "Because intellect and moral values are like diamonds that have just come out of the mine, still dirty and not shining. It is the educator who polishes and cleans it, turning it into a precious diamond" (Hamka, 1984:216). It turns out that his brilliant thoughts have been present since ancient times, even before the current spelling rules were in effect (in the old spelling era).

Hamka envisions future education that reflects an understanding of the past, assesses the present, and aspires to a better future. This is evident in the educational principles offered, which include integrality, relativity, a systemic approach, albeit in a simple and ecological form.

Through his thoughts, Hamka demonstrates a harmonious relevance between religious and general sciences. The existence of religion is not merely to legitimize the existing social system but also to pay attention to and control human behavior effectively. The social system's behavior will be more vibrant when education takes into account and nurtures the natural dynamics of students while professionally integrating the developments of religious and general sciences. With this approach, education can play its role as a motivator and, at the same time, an effective controller of the social system (social control) (Hamka, 1984:284).

However, it is important to note that the current education system tends to be oriented towards general studies, making it a secular-materialistic education. This can be seen in the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, Chapter VI on pathways, levels, and types of general education, Article 15, which states, "Types of education include general, vocational, academic, professional, vocational, religious, and special education" (Arifin, 2003). From this, it is clear that this article presents a dichotomy in education, namely general and religious education. The education system seems to be primarily focused on the study of exact and social sciences, with less appreciation for religious sciences (Mahmudah, 2021).

Based on all the explanations about the actualization of the concept of contemporary Islamic education from the perspectives of Syed Naquib Al-Attas and Buya Hamka, we can draw the following conclusion:

Firstly, considering the problem statement, "How is the concept of Islamic education according to Naquib Al-Attas?" According to Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, the term "ta'dib" is more appropriate to interpret Islamic education than using "tarbiyah" or "ta'lim." The key concept that constitutes the core of education and the educational process is "Adab." Adab encompasses the discipline of the body, soul, and spirit, emphasizing the recognition and acknowledgment of the proper relationship with the potentialities of the physical, intellectual, and spiritual aspects.

Secondly, Buya Hamka distinguishes between the meanings of education and teaching. According to him, education involves a series of efforts by educators to help shape the

character, morals, and personalities of students, while teaching is the effort to fill students' intellects with various knowledge. Both have integral and complementary meanings in achieving the same goal because every educational process includes a teaching process. Conversely, the teaching process will not be meaningful without being accompanied by the educational process.

Thirdly, from the two concepts presented by Al-Attas and Buya Hamka, we find a commonality in terms of the educational goals: to shape good students who should be taught early on. From this educational goal, education in Indonesia should aim to build good character, prioritizing not only academic values but also emphasizing the importance of character values.

Conclusion

Based on the formulated problem, the conclusion drawn from the thoughts of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas regarding the concept of Islamic education asserts that the term "*ta'dib*" is more appropriate to interpret Islamic education than using the terms "*tarbiyah*" or "*ta'lim*". The key concept at the core of education, according to Al-Attas, is "*Adab*," which encompasses the discipline of the body, soul, and spirit. Adab emphasizes the recognition and acknowledgment of the proper position in relation to the potential of the physical, intellectual, and spiritual aspects.

Meanwhile, Buya Hamka distinguishes the meanings of education and teaching. According to him, education is a series of efforts by educators to educate and assist in shaping the character, morality, and personality of students. On the other hand, teaching is an effort to fill the intellect of students with a range of knowledge. Both have integral meanings and complement each other in achieving the same goal, as every educational process includes a teaching process.

In the context of implementation in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, both Al-Attas and Buya Hamka emphasize similarities in educational goals. They agree that the primary goal of education is to shape good students, who need to be taught from an early age. Therefore, education in Indonesia should not only focus on academic grades but also prioritize the formation of good character. This goal reflects a holistic vision of education, encompassing academic and character aspects to create a generation with noble morals.

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