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Reconstruction of *Ta'dib* Concept: A Critique and Redefine of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's Thought

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Abstract

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's concept of ta'dib as an Islamic educational framework has faced various epistemological, pedagogical, and practical critiques. These critiques do not indicate a weakness in the philosophical substance of ta'dib itself; rather, they reveal the absence of an operational formulation capable of bridging Al-Attas's philosophical vision with the practical demands of contemporary Islamic education. This study aims to reconstruct the concept of ta'dib to make it more operational and applicable as a paradigm for Islamic education curriculum. This study employed Paul Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutic approach through three stages (distanciation, critical interpretation, and appropriation). The findings showed the philosophical substance of ta'dib is internally coherent and remains valid despite existing critiques. The novelty of this study lies in transforming ta'dib from a philosophical-normative concept into a structured conceptual-operational model, by redefining ta'dib as a conscious and gradual process of internalizing justice that integrates spiritual, intellectual, and moral dimensions, and systematically translating it into four core curriculum components: objectives, content, methods, and assessment. Thus, this study not only offers a theoretical reinterpretation, but also provides a new implementable framework for operationalizing ta'dib as a comprehensive alternative paradigm of

Islamic education that is relevant to contemporary educational challenges.

Keywords: Curriculum, Educational Philosophy, Islamic Education, Ta'dib

A. Introduction

Contemporary Islamic educational practices tend to be reduced to the transmission of knowledge *(ta'lim)* focused on measurable cognitive outcomes, while the dimension of *adab*—as part of the hidden curriculum—receives insufficient attention. This phenomenon has indirectly limited human potential to the intellectual realm alone, even though there are many other aspects of human potential that can be developed. At this point, the concept of ta'dib emerged as a solution to this problem, popularized by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. The concept of *adab* as the foundation of Islamic education has long been discussed by classical and contemporary scholars alike; however, its systematic formulation as an educational concept was developed more explicitly by Al-Attas. Normatively, the concept of ta'dib is frequently referenced in numerous hadiths of the Prophet (Al-Atsir, 1963; As-Suyuthi, n.d.), although the authenticity of some of these hadiths is debated; nevertheless, substantively, it serves as the conceptual foundation for Islamic education.

Various studies have made significant contributions to understanding the concept of ta'dib from diverse perspectives. From a linguistic and historical perspective, Abdul-Rahman (1997) and Alshaar (2017) traced the semantic shift of the word *adab* from the pre-Islamic to the post-Islamic era. Lapidus (1984) and Robinson (1984) demonstrated that ta'dib in the history of Islamic civilization encompasses physical, emotional, and intellectual dimensions simultaneously. This historical research indirectly reinforces that ta'dib is closely linked to knowledge and pedagogy. From a philosophical perspective, Sassi (2018, 2021), Ahmed (2018), and Daiber (2020) examined the ontological and epistemological foundations of ta'dib within the framework of tawhid and classical Islamic intellectual tradition, while Zarkasyi et al. (2019) and Huringiin (2021) discussed the formulation of Islamic educational goals based on ta'dib in shaping the perfect human being. From a comparative perspective, Pi et al. (2019) compared the concept of ta'dib according to Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Al-Attas. At the implementation level, Ardiansyah (2020) demonstrated that ta'dib can be applied in higher education, and Taqiyuddin (2021) showed that the classification of fardu ain and fardu kifayah as the core of a ta'dib-based curriculum has been culturally established in Indonesian pesantren. Anwar et

al. (2025) explicitly developed the philosophical values of ta'dib as a framework for the development of modern Islamic educational philosophy based on pesantren.

In addition to studies that support the concept of ta'dib, there are several studies that critique it. Criticism of the concept of ta'dib can generally be classified into three categories: 1) epistemological criticism related to the normative foundations of ta'dib (Madjid, 1998; Noaparast, 2012; Tafsir, 2014); 2) pedagogical criticism related to the limitations of ta'dib in terms of pedagogy (Badaruddin, 2009; Maragustam, 2018); 3) implementation-related criticism regarding the difficulty of operationalizing ta'dib within modern educational systems (Bahdar, 2023). This classification of critiques is essential because each requires a different response. Epistemological criticism requires historical and epistemological evidence regarding the normative foundations of ta'dib. Meanwhile, pedagogical and implementational criticism actually serve as a gap that reinforces the urgency of this research with the argument that what needs to be done is not to reject the concept of ta'dib, but to carry out a systematic conceptual reconstruction so that this concept can be interpreted and applied within the modern Islamic education system in a measurable and systematic manner.

Although numerous studies have been conducted on the concept of ta'dib, these studies have remained separate in their focus on philosophical, critical, and practical aspects. No study has yet comprehensively linked these three aspects. Ontologically, ta'dib is grounded in the Islamic perspective on the nature of humanity and its relationship with God. Epistemologically, knowledge within the concept of ta'dib is built upon the hierarchical classification of fardlu 'ain and fardlu kifayah, which focuses on the formation of the perfect human being. Thus, normative-philosophical criticism of ta'dib does not actually indicate a weakness in the concept's substance. Rather, it reflects the failure of efforts to translate ta'dib into practical application. This is the primary gap that forms the focus of this study, which employs Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach to reconstruct ta'dib from its philosophical aspects into a structured and practical curriculum paradigm.

This study employed a philosophical hermeneutic approach grounded in Paul Ricoeur's theory of textual interpretation (1973, 1976, 2016), particularly the concepts of *distanciation* and *appropriation*, to reconstruct the meaning of *ta'dib* for application in contemporary Islamic education. Ricoeur's hermeneutics emphasizes reflective interpretation through texts, symbols, and cultural works (Hu & Zhao, 2025), making it appropriate for this conceptual reconstruction. The analysis proceeds through three interrelated phases.

First, *distanciation*, which separates the text from the author's original intent, enabling a more objective reading of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's The Concept of Education in Islam (1999) and Islam and Secularism (1993), beyond their original polemical context. Second, critical interpretation, which examines scholarly critiques of *ta'dib* to identify their underlying epistemological assumptions as a basis for reconstruction. Third, *appropriation*, in which *ta'dib* is reinterpreted and reconstructed as a foundation for contemporary Islamic curriculum development.

Data were drawn from primary sources, including Al-Attas's works, classical Islamic dictionaries, and hadith collections, and secondary sources, including critical studies on Al-Attas, Islamic curriculum theory, and relevant journal articles. Interpretive validity was ensured through source triangulation across primary texts, critical literature, and contemporary educational frameworks.

B. Result and Discussion

1. Reading Ta'dib Beyond Its Original Context

a. A Semantic-Historical Analysis of the Terms *Adab*-Ta'dib and Their Shifting Meanings

The discussion of the concept of Ta'dib begins with the definition of *adab* itself in the pre-Islamic Arab tradition, continuing through the advent of Islam and the subsequent process of the Islamization of the word *adab*. In the pre-Islamic era, the word *adab* was associated with the concepts of discipline and punishment used to tame animals. The use of *adab* in the context of shaping one's behavior within classical Islamic tradition can be found in the form of poetry or verses that depict the concept of muruwah (a pre-Islamic moral term combining courage and nobility of character) (Abdul-Rahman, 1997; Alshaar, 2017, 2022).

The concept of *adab* began to shift following the arrival of Islam. *Adab* was no longer viewed merely as a set of physical norms, but also came to encompass knowledge and ethics derived from divine revelation. This is as stated in the hadith, *addabani rabbi fa ahsana ta'dibi wa rubbitu fi bani Sa'd* (God has guided me to receive the best education, and I grew up among the Bani Sa'd) (Al-Atsir, 1963), and *inna hadha al-'ilm adabullah* (In truth, this knowledge is a manifestation of God's wisdom) (An-Naisaburi, 2003). These two hadiths serve as the basis for the understanding that, in Islamic tradition, *adab* is intrinsically linked to knowledge and ethics derived from divine revelation (Alshaar, 2017).

This is also supported by the context in which the hadith was revealed, as at that time the Companions were greatly amazed and impressed by the Prophet's linguistic prowess in communication. He then said *addabani rabbi fa ahsana ta'dibi wa rubbitu fi bani Sa'd* (al-Ajluniy, 2000). The use of the word *addaba* and its derivatives, as well as *rabba* and its derivatives *(rubbitu),* indicates that there is a fundamental difference between ta'dib and tarbiyah. In the context of that hadith, the Prophet used the word *addaba* to describe the educational process when the Companions asked about linguistic intelligence. Meanwhile, in the context of physical growth related to the environment, he used the word rabba. Linguistic intelligence itself is not merely about the issue of politeness in speech. Rather, it is closely linked to one's framework of thinking, cognitive abilities, abstract reasoning, and the ability to articulate ideas and concepts (Chomsky, 1969; Ilahee et al., 2025; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Thus, this hadith emphasizes that ta'dib cannot be interpreted narrowly as merely referring to norms, ethics, or good and bad moral conduct. Rather, it also encompasses the aspect of knowledge (ilm) and ultimately leads to actions grounded in knowledge.

The term "*adab*" in the Muslim tradition can be traced in several dictionaries written by scholars. Al-Farahidi (2003) explained that the term "adib" (أديب) refers to a person (an educator) who is capable of educating others and capable of learning or educating themselves through the guidance of others (a learner). Ibn Sikkit (1895) and Ibn Faris (2011) also explained that the word *adab*a is closely linked to the concepts of knowledge and nobility, which are symbolized by a banquet. Both of them quote a hadith narrated by Abdullah ibn Mas'ud: "Verily, the Qur'an is a feast from Allah *(ma'dubatullah)*, so learn from His feast". This is reinforced by Al-Jurjani (n.d.) in *At-Ta'rifat*, who defined *adab* as knowledge that enables one to guard against mistakes. al-Jahiz also used the term *adab* to describe the social sciences and natural sciences. He further emphasized the concept of *adab* as a system for studying nature and society, as well as a means of disciplining the soul and society through the acquisition of knowledge and truth (Khalidi, 1996). Al-Qusyairi (2006) explained that, in essence, *adab* is a combination of all good manners (*ijtima' jami'u khisal al-khayr*). al-Jauziyyah (2002), however, held a different view. According to him, civility cannot be limited to mere attitudes, but must extend to their application or practice. In short, *adab* is the actualization of the virtues inherent in a person.

Based on the explanations of several classical Islamic scholars, it can be concluded that the word *adab* is closely related to four things: 1) education; 2) goodness; 3) nobility; 4) knowledge-based deeds. The connection between *adab* and

these aspects means the word *adab* can represent educational process that takes place within a person, enabling them to produce goodness and nobility within themselves and for the wider community, based on divine revelation or religious values.

Contemporary scholar Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas has also undertaken efforts to systematize the concept of *adab*-ta'dib. According to him, ta'dib is a process of Islamic education based on a monotheistic worldview. This paradigm is grounded in three fundamental constructs: 1) the conception of God's nature; 2) the absolute oneness of God; and 3) God as the supreme reality (Sassi, 2021). God as the supreme reality implies that Islamic education grounded in the monotheistic paradigm necessitates a worldview consistent with Islam's vision and mission regarding reality and truth (Arroisi et al., 2023). Reality and truth in Islamic education do not adhere to standards developed by Western civilization. Thus, within the monotheistic paradigm, Muslims are automatically called upon to eliminate the dichotomies between this world and the hereafter, religious knowledge and secular knowledge, the sacred and the profane, and so on (Kosim et al., 2021; Sassi, 2021).

The concept of ta'dib proposed by Al-Attas is indeed grounded in a theocentric paradigm—placing Allah at the center of all educational activities. Some observers consider this paradigm too conventional and insufficiently responsive to contemporary intellectual developments that are shifting toward a theocentric-anthropocentric perspective. However, it must be emphasized that theocentrism in ta'dib does not mean neglecting humanity as the subject of education. On the contrary—by placing God as the source of all reality and value, ta'dib positions humanity with dignity: not merely as biological or economic beings, but as vicegerents bearing cosmic responsibility. Within this framework, the development of the full potential of humanity—intellectual, spiritual, and social—is a religious obligation, not merely a pragmatic necessity. Theocentrism in ta'dib is thus not a restriction on human potential, but rather a foundation that actually honors and maximizes it.

b. The Conceptual Structure of Ta'dib

Efforts to understand the concept of ta'dib are not sufficient if they focus solely on its historical semantics. Rather, an in-depth examination of the elements that constitute the concept of ta'dib in a comprehensive and systematic manner is required. This in-depth study will serve as the foundation for a critical evaluation of the various criticisms directed at the concept of ta'dib.

Ontologically, ta'dib is grounded in Islam's monotheistic worldview, emphasizing three key concepts: 1) the conception of God's nature; 2) the absolute oneness of God; and 3) God as the supreme reality (Sassi, 2021). These three constructs are closely intertwined with the relationship between humanity—as 'abd (servant) and khalifatullah (God's vicegerent)—and Allah as the object of worship *(al-ma'bud)* (Sassi, 2018, 2021). In Islamic education, the clear definition of humanity's role as both servants and vicegerents of God on earth necessitates a hierarchy that must be observed. Knowledge is no longer a separate entity with its own distinct vision, for it is inextricably linked to the vision of humanity as both submissive servants and creative, trustworthy vicegerents.

This ontological framework implies an epistemological framework of ta'dib that is also grounded in the values of tawhid, comprising five principles. First, the epistemological values of tawhid are rooted in the Qur'an and are not based on speculative thought. Second, they emphasize the significance of spiritual substance. Third, the epistemological values of tauhid involve the unification of the religious and the scientific. Fourth, they minimize the problem of the dichotomy in knowledge between the objective and the subjective. Fifth, they have the potential to produce an exposition of scientific knowledge in a Qur'anic manner (Sassi, 2021). Epistemologically, education must also free the human mind from doubt (syak), prejudice (dzan), and empty arguments (mird) so that it can attain the level of certainty (yaqin) and truth (haqq) regarding spiritual, rational, and material realities (Husni & Hayden, 2024). In the context of modern education, Tawhidic epistemology can serve as an alternative to address the challenges of the fragmentation or dichotomy of knowledge currently unfolding (Ikhlaq & El-Muhammady, 2025).

The epistemological framework of ta'dib emphasizes the hierarchy of fardu ain and fardu kifayah knowledge, as well as the chain of transmission (sanad) and fair scholarly authority (Nugraha, 2017, 2021). The sources and validity of knowledge are strongly emphasized. Knowledge derived from revelation occupies a position one level higher than other sources of knowledge. Knowledge obtained through the five senses or reason must be guided by revelation (Demir, 2026). The relationship between fardu ain and fardu kifayah knowledge—whether derived from revelation, the five senses, or rationality—is not meant to be pitted against one another. Rather, a mutually reinforcing relationship must be established among them within an Islamic worldview (Saleh et al., 2022). In SMN Al-Attas's thought, this relationship is established through the Islamization of knowledge (Majid &

Aljunied, 2023). Methodologically, secular knowledge must undergo stages of de-Westernization and Islamization (Daud, 2013; Huringiin & Azfathir, 2018). These stages share the same spirit as the concept of the decolonization of knowledge (Absolon, 2019; Pratt et al., 2018), where knowledge is value-laden.

The axiological assumptions of ta'dib are based on the view that education must cultivate civilized and just human beings in all aspects, in accordance with their role as God's vicegerents (Auni, 2021). Knowledge must be capable of bringing about transformative effects toward greater moral integrity in accordance with God's guidance. This is the point that distinguishes knowledge in the Islamic perspective from knowledge in secular civilization. Spirituality in Islam can help perfect a person's introspective and extrospective awareness (Bensaid, 2018). Thus, armed with this awareness, positive behavior in accordance with Islamic values will emerge.

Based on this axiological assumption, ta'dib as a curricular framework does not stop at the cognitive aspect but also addresses the psychomotor and affective aspects, all of which are grounded in the value of tawhid. In classical Islamic tradition, knowledge ('ilm) is not merely understood as curriculum content intended solely for testing at the end of a course or for rote memorization. Rather, knowledge must make a positive contribution in at least two ways: first, by being taught to others, and second, by being put into practice (Ahmed, 2021). Technically, this has implications for evaluation models in education designed to assess graduate criteria or standards within an educational process.

2. Critical Views of Ta'dib

a. Epistemological criticism

Criticism of SMN Al-Attas's concept of ta'dib stems from an epistemological perspective, as the concept is deemed to lack a solid foundation in Islamic tradition, to be highly abstract and philosophical, and to be difficult to verify in educational practice. Madjid (1998) and Noaparast (2012) claimed that the concept of *adab*-ta'dib as a term in Islamic education lacks a strong foundation. Therefore, it cannot serve as an equivalent for the term "Islamic education." Both argue that the term tarbiyah is more appropriate as the equivalent for "Islamic education." Tafsir (2014), specifically, criticized SMN AL-Attas's definition of "ta'dib" for being overly philosophical, excessively lengthy, abstract, difficult to understand, and hard to operationalize. Thus, a redefinition of ta'dib is needed that is easier to understand

and operationalize without neglecting its substance or reducing its original meaning.

The absence of the word ta'dib and the presence of the word tarbiyah in the Qur'an do not necessarily imply that ta'dib lacks a normative foundation in Islam, nor that tarbiyah is the most appropriate term to describe Islamic education. The word "*adab*-ta'dib" and its derivatives are not found in the Qur'an, but these terms can be found in the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Companions, and the works of Muslim scholars thereafter. There are at least 18 entries for "addaba" and its derivatives in various hadith collections. This is further supported by Rahman's (1997) research, which traced the derivations of the terms '*adab*' and "ta'dib" as documented by Muslim scholars.

Madjid and Noaparast measured the legitimacy of an Islamic educational concept solely by its explicit presence in the Qur'an and Hadith. On the one hand, this assumption can be understood as a spirit of purification; on the other hand, it also risks reducing the richness of the Islamic normative tradition, which also recognizes other sources such as ijma' and qiyas as part of Islamic epistemology (Jaffar et al., 2024). Within the framework of Ushul Fiqh, the validity of a concept is not only assessed through its explicit presence in the Qur'an and Hadith but also through its coherence with the intellectual tradition of Islam. Thus, while Madjid and Noaparast's critique is a valid one at the level of idealism in demanding a more solid foundation, it does not invalidate ta'dib as a concept rooted in the intellectual tradition of Islam.

b. Pedagogical Criticism

Pedagogical criticism of the concept of ta'dib centers on its limitations, as it is seen as focusing solely on moral aspects and being difficult to implement, particularly in relation to the curriculum. Maragustam argued that Al-Attas, through the concept of ta'dib, places emphasis only on the cultivation of character, as reflected in the definition of ta'dib (Maragustam, 2018). This means that the concept of ta'dib cannot encompass pedagogical areas such as the learning process, teaching methods, and assessment. Even if it could be applied, it would only be applicable at the higher education level (for adults) (Badaruddin, 2009). This is as practiced by SMN Al Attas through ISTAC, which was established in Malaysia.

Maragustam's critique stems from his interpretation of the definition of the ta'dib format, which emphasizes the cultivation of *adab*; consequently, he concludes that *adab* is limited to morality. Indirectly, he has reduced ta'dib by interpreting it

solely in terms of its output—namely, a civilized individual. Meanwhile, ta'dib is a process that necessitates a dimension of knowledge by involving intellectuality as an effort toward its ultimate goal. This was reinforced by Wan Daud (1998) through his work, which seeks to explain the pedagogical aspects of ta'dib, although not in a formal operational framework ready for implementation.

Badaruddin's view that ta'dib is relevant only to higher education needs to be evaluated contextually. He bases this on the empirical observation that Al-Attas implemented ta'dib at ISTAC, a higher education institution. Wan Daud states that Al-Attas's implementation of the concept of ta'dib at ISTAC does not imply that the concept is limited to higher education. Rather, Al-Attas aimed to cultivate mature individuals who would eventually become educators at lower educational levels: secondary and primary. Thus, the concept of ta'dib can be effectively transformed from the top down (Akademi Jawi Malaysia, 2024). Badaruddin's critique is valid in its demand for a more concrete roadmap for implementation across various levels of education, and this is precisely one of the focal points of reconstruction in this study.

Thus, these pedagogical critiques do not undermine the validity of ta'dib as a concept; rather, they accurately identify gaps that need to be addressed regarding the lack of a systematic operational framework for translating ta'dib into curriculum components that can be implemented at various levels of Islamic education.

c. Implementational Criticism

Bahdar (2023) outlined four criticisms of the concept of ta'dib in his book: (1) it is not sufficiently adaptable to the modern environment, as evidenced by students' difficulty in applying disciplined behavior and ethics on social media or in complex global situations; (2) the effectiveness of ta'dib is highly dependent on the teacher's role as a role model, resulting in highly variable outcomes depending on the teacher's competence; (3) a lack of reflective and analytical approaches, with greater emphasis placed on shaping behavior but insufficient encouragement for students to think critically, reflectively, and adaptively; (4) limitations in the use of technology in moral education, resulting in students struggling to apply moral values in a modern, fully digital context.

Researchers argue that Bahdar's critique of the concept of ta'dib tends to stem from an empirical interpretation that fails to clearly distinguish between the ideal-normative level and the practical-real-world level, thereby leading to weak generalizations. Furthermore, this critique also implies a downplaying of the

teacher's role in Islamic education, whereas, conceptually, Islamic education actually positions the teacher as a central actor in the process of shaping *adab*. On the other hand, Bahdar appeared to narrow the reflective and analytical dimensions within a Western epistemological framework that ends in skepticism, while ta'dib seeks to integrate rationality, spirituality, and ethics into a holistic epistemological framework.

The role of technology in Islamic education should be understood in its instrumental nature—that is, as a tool to aid the learning process, not as a transformative agent inherently capable of shaping students' personalities (Rochim et al., 2025; Trianita et al., 2025). Therefore, what should be the object of criticism is not the concept of ta'dib itself, but rather the failure to transform that concept into contextual, systematic, and structured educational design and practice.

Based on the critiques that have emerged regarding the concept of ta'dib from epistemological, pedagogical, and practical perspectives, the researchers argue that, from a hermeneutical standpoint, these critiques do not reveal any weaknesses in the philosophical substance of ta'dib. Rather, they highlight a disconnect between the philosophical vision of ta'dib and the practical needs within the field of Islamic education.

3. A Reconstruction of the Ta'dib Concept

a. Redefining Ta'dib

In this section, the researchers seek to reconstruct the concept of ta'dib by drawing on the thoughts of existing scholars, the context of contemporary developments, as well as critiques of this concept by Islamic education scholars. This reconstruction is considered important because *adab* (which includes elements of justice) is a universal standard related to educational success. It is hoped that this reconstruction will bridge the existing gaps, particularly regarding the practical aspects of ta'dib that have been challenged by Islamic educational thinkers.

Researchers propose a definition of ta'dib as a conscious and gradual process of internalizing a sense of justice by integrating spiritual, intellectual, and moral aspects, thereby enabling individuals to develop their potential and position themselves fairly. This definition contains several key terms that will be explained in further detail.

First, a conscious and gradual process of internalization within oneself. This phrase indicates that education is a process—not an instant one—of internalizing

something within a person, so the knowledge acquired can be consciously manifested into good behavior. In the context of Islamic teachings, Imam Al-Ghazali (2004) explained that beneficial knowledge brings its possessor closer to Allah (the spiritual aspect) and fosters kindness toward fellow creatures (the social aspect). This internalization is carried out consciously to demonstrate that the educational process must involve human effort *(kasb)*, in addition to God's will to give knowledge to whomever He chooses. Thus, there is a dual dynamic between human effort and God's power.

Second, justice. Islam has its own distinct understanding of the concept of justice, which is highly comprehensive. Justice is not merely understood as a harmonious relationship between two parties. Rather, justice in Islam begins with being just toward oneself through the testimony of humanity before birth, as stated in Surah Al-A'raf, verse 172. When a person denies this testimony, they have acted unjustly (*zalim*) toward themselves as well as toward their Lord. Thus, a good person in Islam is one who is just toward themselves by placing themselves before God and fellow creatures in accordance with religious guidance. Technically, justice in this context can be broken down into three main components: knowledge, faith, and good deeds. Faith and knowledge must be taught and internalized by students, thereby leading to good deeds.

Third, the integration of spiritual, intellectual, and moral aspects is an essential element that must be addressed in the educational process (Farikhah, 2014; Hadi et al., 2024; Sarnoto, 2021). This is based on human nature itself, which consists of soul and body, the outer and the inner, reason and the heart. Thus, when education focuses solely on one aspect and neglects the others, the educational process philosophically violates human nature and demeans the human being as the subject of education by reducing them to just one aspect.

Fourth, developing one's potential in general is part of human responsibility, in accordance with Allah's command in Surah al-'Alaq, verses 1–5. These efforts to develop potential are grounded in two principles: the values of justice and the integration of all aspects of the human self. Thus, the development of potential in any field will remain within the framework of Islamic teachings and in harmony with human nature in a balanced manner (Aziz et al., 2022). This also provides practical evidence regarding the development of one's potential in the realm of fardu kifayah, such as the social sciences, natural sciences, and practical skills. Thus, this serves as a compelling argument that ta'dib is not opposed to the progress of the times but

rather encourages humans to respond to such progress in a critical, just, and humanistic manner.

Fifth, positioning oneself justly is the ultimate goal of ta'dib. Justice, in this context, is understood as one's ability to place everything in its proper place. A just individual will be able to position themselves correctly in their interactions with God, fellow human beings, nature, and knowledge. This point emphasizes that the focus of ta'dib is self-transformation, not social or societal transformation. Individuals who act justly will, in the end, automatically form a just society.

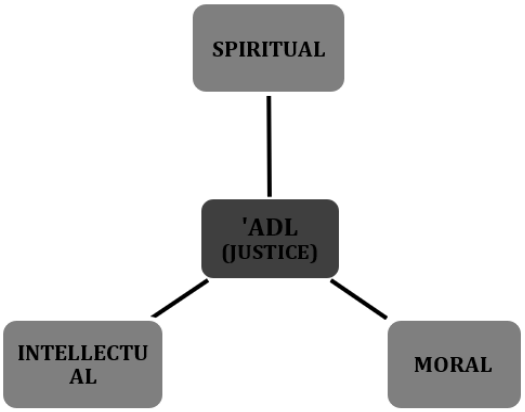


Figure 1. Justice is the core of ta'dib, which must be instilled and manifested in every aspect of a person's life.

Figure 1 above is a conceptual representation of ta'dib as reconstructed in this study. There are three aspects connected to justice: moral, intellectual, and spiritual. Justice is positioned as the core of the educational process, serving to regulate various dimensions within the human self. Justice has two functions: to harmonize these three dimensions so they develop in a balanced manner, and to ensure that humans can act justly in all aspects, ranging from thought to action in an integrated manner.

Justice, as the core of ta'dib, has deep roots in classical Islamic tradition. Al-Farabi (1906) regarded justice (*'adl*) as the supreme virtue that enables humans to live well in accordance with their true nature (Bouarfa, 2025; Syukri et al., 2025). This justice begins with the most fundamental internal harmony within the human being, namely upholding the covenant with God (*mitsaq*) (Shahran, 2022). What distinguishes justice in the concept of ta'dib from justice in general is its emphasis

on the cosmological dimension. Here, justice is not only viewed in terms of interpersonal relations but also in the vertical relationship between humans and God, as well as toward all creation—including the fair treatment of knowledge.

It must be explicitly emphasized that the novelty of the reconstruction of ta'dib in this study lies in its more operational redefinition of ta'dib. This differs from SMN Al-Attas, who offers a highly philosophical and abstract definition. The redefinition undertaken in this study places justice at the center while also serving as a value that ensures the educational process proceeds in a balanced manner across all dimensions. Furthermore, it allows for adaptation to foster students' potential, enabling them to keep pace with the times while remaining grounded in the values of tawhid. The definition proposed by the researchers can be readily translated into curriculum development principles—including objectives, content, methods, and evaluation—that are measurable and aligned with contemporary developments.

b. Ta'dib as the Foundation for Curriculum Development

Ta'dib as a curricular paradigm has practical implications for educational objectives, content, methods, and assessment. First, in terms of objectives, ta'dib aims to form civilized individuals who contribute to a civilized society (Al-Attas, 1999). This goal can only be achieved through an educational process grounded in ta'dib, as it emphasizes not only knowledge acquisition or behavioral development, but also the cultivation of epistemological and ethical awareness of one's proper place within the order of existence. Such awareness enables individuals to use knowledge justly and responsibly. In this sense, a civilized person is one who can actualize their physical, spiritual, and intellectual potential to live meaningfully and devote all actions to Allah SWT in accordance with Islamic teachings. This aligns with the holistic aims of Islamic education covering physical, spiritual, intellectual and social dimensions (Falah, 2015). Thereby this reinforces ta'dib as a holistic and integrative paradigm of Islamic educational objectives (Dhiyauddin, 2018).

The subject matter in the ta'dib curriculum is based on a hierarchy of knowledge, referred to as *'ilm al-hal* by Burhan al-Din al-Zarnuji and as *fardu ain* and *fardu kifayah* by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (Al-Attas, 1993; Hashim, 1999). Originally rooted in fiqh, these terms were later adopted to classify disciplines within the Islamic intellectual tradition, beginning with Al-Shafi'i and continued by later scholars (Huda et al., 2016; Nugraha, 2017). *Fardu ain* refers to essential religious knowledge every Muslim must learn to understand and practice Islam properly (Saleh et al., 2022; Saragih et al., 2023). Its scope is dynamic,

extending beyond basic religious instruction to advanced studies according to learners' intellectual and spiritual development (Al-Attas, 1999). In contrast, *fardu kifayah* refers to knowledge pursued according to communal needs; although not directly related to ritual worship, it remains religiously significant because it supports the preservation of Islamic life and teachings (Daud, 1998). This hierarchy is fundamental to cultivating civilized individuals, as it helps learners engage knowledge purposefully, justly, and systematically while responding to contemporary challenges (Masturin & Nadhirin, 2024; Wafy, 2024).

The methodological elements in a ta'dib-based curriculum are not limited to the paradigm of knowledge transfer (ta'lim), but also focus on instilling virtuous values in students. In this regard, SMN Al-Attas identified eight methods: the method of tawhid; discussion; parables (tamsil/metaphors); storytelling; assignments; advice; reward and punishment; and role modeling (Daud, 1998). These eight methods necessitate a very significant role for teachers in the process of Islamic education. However, one more method should be added: habituation, so that students become accustomed to performing acts of goodness, thereby internalizing them within themselves.

The implementation of these educational methods is then evaluated through an assessment process. Ta'dib-based educational assessment is not focused solely on students' cognitive abilities, as the case with modern education today. Assessment in Islamic education must be able to measure a student's readiness as a well-rounded individual—not merely in cognitive terms, but also in psychomotor and, above all, affective aspects.

Table 1. Ta'dib in the Curriculum and Its Indicators

Curriculum Aspect	Ta'dib Dimension	Indicator
Aims of Curriculum	Axiology	1) The goal emphasizes the development of civilized individuals with balance of knowledge, action, and manners 2) The focus of the goal extends beyond formal academic achievements
Structure & Hierarchy of Science	Epistemology	1) The classification of knowledge into fard 'ain and fard kifayah 2) Revealed knowledge as the foundation

		3) The hierarchical integration of religious and secular knowledge
Curriculum Content	Epistemology –Axsiology	1) Integration of ethical values into the curriculum 2) Linking knowledge to moral responsibility 3) Emphasizing the relationship between knowledge and action
Method	Pedagogy	1) The teacher's example as the primary method 2) Habitual practice of etiquette in the learning process 3) The teacher–student relationship is ethical and hierarchical
Evaluation	Axiological–Practical	1) The evaluation covers cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects 2) Good manners are taken into consideration for graduation 3) Consequences for violations of good manners

C. Conclusion

Based on a hermeneutic-philosophical approach, this study concludes that ta'dib, as a concept, remains substantively valid despite the critiques of Muslim thinkers. The gap that has long been the subject of criticism relates to the operational formulation that bridges the philosophical and practical aspects of the concept of ta'dib itself. This study contributes to the reconstruction of the concept of ta'dib by offering a critical analysis and a more practical redefinition, thereby enabling education practitioners to easily interpret the concept of ta'dib. This reconstruction emphasizes several points: first, the position of justice as the ultimate goal of education that governs the intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions; second, the process of gradual and conscious internalization as a characteristic of the educational process; third, the fulfillment of one's potential as part of addressing the challenges of the times. Theoretically, this study contributes by providing a new conceptual foundation for ta'dib without altering its original foundations, making it more applicable and operational, particularly in relation to

the curriculum. This study has limitations, as it focuses solely on conceptual aspects and has not yet addressed empirical research. Therefore, future research could be developed in a more practical direction related to ta'dib. For example, this could involve developing a framework for the elements of the education system, conducting classroom action research, or developing learning media and technologies that can support the practical implementation of ta'dib.

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