

The Concept of the Integration of Knowledge According to Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas and Its Relevance to Islamic Education

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze Al-Attas' concept of knowledge integration and examine its relevance to contemporary Islamic education. The study employed a qualitative approach using library research. Primary data were collected from Al-Attas' major works, namely *Islam and Secularism*, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*, and *The Concept of Education in Islam*, while secondary data were obtained from books, scholarly journals, and relevant previous studies. Data were collected through documentation techniques and analyzed using content analysis and intellectual thought analysis based on the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings indicate that Al-Attas' concept of knowledge integration is founded upon the principles of *tawhid*, the unity of revelation and reason, *adab* as the ultimate goal of education, and the Islamization of knowledge as an epistemological reconstruction. The concept is highly relevant to the development of Islamic education by overcoming the dichotomy of knowledge, promoting integrated curriculum development, strengthening character education, and establishing a holistic educational paradigm aimed at producing civilized individuals (*insan adabi*). Therefore, Al-Attas' thought offers a significant conceptual contribution to the reform of Islamic education in the contemporary era.

Keywords: *knowledge integration, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, Islamization of knowledge, Islamic education, Islamic epistemology.*

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Introduction

The advancement of science and technology in the modern era has brought profound changes to various aspects of human life. While these developments have significantly contributed to the progress of civilization, they have also generated a number of epistemological challenges, particularly concerning the separation between scientific knowledge and religious values. Within the modern educational tradition, knowledge is often perceived as neutral and value-free, resulting in the marginalization of spiritual and moral dimensions from the development of scientific knowledge (Nasr, 1996). Consequently, education tends to emphasize intellectual achievement and technical competence rather than the cultivation of character and learners' spiritual awareness.

In the context of Islamic education, this issue is commonly referred to as the dichotomy of knowledge, namely the separation between religious sciences and secular sciences. This dichotomy has persisted since the colonial period and continues to influence educational systems in many Muslim countries, including Indonesia. Its consequences are reflected in fragmented curricula, the separation of educational institutions, and the widespread assumption that religious sciences concern only the afterlife, whereas secular sciences are limited to worldly affairs (Azra, 2012). In contrast, the classical Islamic intellectual tradition regards all knowledge as originating from Allah (SWT) and sharing the same ultimate purpose: guiding humanity toward the knowledge of God and the attainment of human welfare.

One of the prominent contemporary Muslim scholars who critically addressed the dichotomy of knowledge is Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas. Al-Attas argues that the fundamental crisis of the Muslim ummah does not lie in the lack of technological advancement, but rather in the **loss** of *adab*, which has resulted in confusion regarding the nature of knowledge and the true purpose of education (Al-Attas, 1995). According to him, knowledge cannot be separated from religious values because, in the Islamic worldview, true knowledge originates from both divine revelation and human reason, functioning harmoniously in understanding reality.

To address this issue, Al-Attas introduced the concept of the Islamization of knowledge, aiming to liberate knowledge from the influences of secularism, materialism, and Western worldviews that are incompatible with the Islamic worldview (Al-Attas, 1993). This concept does not reject modern science; rather, it seeks to reconstruct its epistemological foundations so that scientific knowledge develops in accordance with the principles of *tawhid* and Islamic values. Thus, knowledge integration, according to Al-Attas, represents an effort to reunite the spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social dimensions within the educational process.

Numerous studies have examined Al-Attas's ideas concerning the Islamization of knowledge and Islamic education. However, most of these studies remain focused on philosophical and epistemological discussions without comprehensively exploring their relevance to the development of contemporary Islamic education. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the concept of knowledge integration according to Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas and examine its relevance to the advancement of Islamic education in responding to the challenges of modernity and globalization.

Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Knowledge Integration

Knowledge integration refers to the effort to unify various academic disciplines within a comprehensive epistemological framework, thereby eliminating the dichotomy between religious and secular sciences. From the Islamic perspective, all knowledge originates from Allah (SWT) and serves the common purpose of guiding humanity toward truth and public welfare (Al-Faruqi, 1982).

According to Amin Abdullah (2020), knowledge integration represents a scientific paradigm that connects Islamic sciences with the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences through a dialogical and complementary relationship. This paradigm aims to overcome the fragmentation of knowledge that has characterized modern educational systems.

2.2 Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas's Perspective on Knowledge Integration

Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas is one of the leading contemporary Muslim scholars who has extensively discussed Islamic epistemology and education. According to Al-Attas (1995), the principal crisis of the Muslim community is the loss of *adab*, namely the inability to place things in their proper order. This crisis has led to misconceptions concerning both knowledge and the objectives of education.

For Al-Attas, knowledge is never value-free; rather, it is always shaped by a particular worldview. Therefore, modern scientific knowledge should be critically examined in order to free it from elements of secularism, dualism, and relativism that contradict Islamic teachings (Al-Attas, 1993).

Al-Attas's concept of knowledge integration is embodied in his idea of the Islamization of knowledge. Islamization is defined as the process of liberating knowledge from cultural and intellectual elements incompatible with the Islamic worldview while simultaneously incorporating key Islamic concepts into the structure of scientific knowledge (Al-Attas, 1993).

2.3 Principles of Knowledge Integration According to Al-Attas

a.3.1 Tawhid as the Foundation of Knowledge

Tawhid constitutes the fundamental principle underlying all intellectual activities. According to Al-Attas, all reality originates from Allah; therefore, there should be no separation between religious and secular sciences (Al-Attas, 1995).

b.3.2 The Unity of Truth

In Islam, truth originates from divine revelation and is supported by sound human reason. Consequently, there should be no contradiction between religion and science, as both derive from the same ultimate source (Nasr, 1996).

c.3.3 Knowledge Oriented Toward Adab

The purpose of education is not merely to produce intellectually capable individuals but to cultivate *insan adabi*—persons of proper *adab*. According to Al-Attas (1999), authentic education is fundamentally the process of instilling *adab* so that learners are able to utilize knowledge responsibly.

d.3.4 The Islamization of Knowledge

The Islamization of knowledge seeks to harmonize scientific development with Islamic values so that knowledge does not lose its moral and spiritual orientation (Al-Faruqi, 1982).

2.4 The Relevance of Knowledge Integration to Islamic Education

Al-Attas's concept of knowledge integration holds significant relevance for contemporary Islamic education. First, it offers a solution to the persistent dichotomy between religious and secular knowledge within educational systems. Second, it facilitates curriculum development that integrates spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions in a balanced manner. Third, it promotes an educational orientation that prioritizes the cultivation of character and *adab* rather than merely emphasizing academic competence. Finally, the concept strengthens the identity of Islamic education in addressing the challenges posed by globalization and the secularization of education (Azra, 2012; Hashim, 2014). Accordingly, Al-Attas's educational philosophy presents a holistic and integrative paradigm aimed at producing individuals who are both intellectually competent and morally upright.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research design. Library research involves collecting and analyzing various literature sources related to Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas's concept of knowledge integration (Zed, 2018).

The primary data consisted of Al-Attas's major works on Islamic epistemology, the Islamization of knowledge, and Islamic education, including *Islam and Secularism* (1993), *The Concept of Education in Islam* (1999), and *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* (1995). The secondary data were obtained from scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other relevant academic publications.

Data were collected through document analysis. The collected materials were analyzed using content analysis, following the framework proposed by Krippendorff (2019). The analytical process involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, in accordance with the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). To ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, source triangulation was employed by comparing information from multiple primary and secondary literature sources relevant to the research topic.

Results

4.1 The Concept of Knowledge Integration According to Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas

The analysis of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas's major works, particularly *Islam and Secularism* (1993), *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* (1995), and *The Concept of Education in Islam* (1999), reveals that his concept of knowledge integration originates from his critique of the modern scientific paradigm that separates knowledge from its spiritual dimension. According to Al-Attas, the primary crisis facing the Muslim community is not merely its backwardness in science and technology, but rather the loss of adab, which results in misconceptions regarding the nature of knowledge, the purpose of education, and humanity's proper place in existence (Al-Attas, 1995).

Based on the content analysis, Al-Attas argues that knowledge is not value-free but is always shaped by the worldview underlying it. Modern scientific knowledge has developed within a Western worldview influenced by secularism, dualism, humanism, and relativism, which tends to separate divine revelation from the pursuit of knowledge. As a consequence, scientific development has become increasingly materialistic without adequate moral and spiritual responsibility (Al-Attas, 1993).

Al-Attas's concept of knowledge integration seeks to restore all intellectual activities to the principle of tawhid as the fundamental basis for understanding reality. Within this framework, revelation (*wahy*) and reason (*'aql*) are not opposing sources of knowledge but complementary means of attaining truth. Consequently, religious and secular sciences should not be viewed as separate entities but rather as an integrated body of knowledge originating from Allah (SWT) and directed toward the welfare of humankind.

These findings demonstrate that Al-Attas's concept of knowledge integration extends far beyond merely combining religious and secular subjects within the curriculum. Instead, it represents a reconstruction of Islamic epistemology that positions knowledge as a means of drawing humanity closer to Allah while simultaneously fostering a civilized society. This finding is consistent with Nasr's (1996) argument that the crisis of modern science stems from the loss of the sacred dimension in the development of knowledge.

4.2 Principles of Knowledge Integration in Al-Attas's Thought

The findings indicate that Al-Attas's concept of knowledge integration is founded upon several interconnected principles.

a.2.1 Tawhid as the Foundation of Epistemology

The first principle is tawhid, which serves as the epistemological foundation of all scientific inquiry. Analysis of Al-Attas's works demonstrates that every intellectual activity must begin with the recognition that Allah is the ultimate source of all knowledge. Therefore, no essential distinction exists between religious and secular sciences, as all knowledge originates from the same divine source. Tawhid functions as the paradigm that unifies intellectual, spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions into a coherent whole (Al-Attas, 1995).

b.2.2 The Unity of Revelation and Reason

The second principle is the harmony between revelation and reason. According to Al-Attas, revelation provides absolute guidance concerning ultimate truth, while reason functions to understand, develop, and apply this guidance within human life. Consequently, scientific and technological advancement should not contradict divine revelation but should instead support the objectives of the Shariah.

c.2.3 Adab as the Goal of Education

The third principle concerns adab as the ultimate objective of education. The analysis indicates that Al-Attas does not regard education merely as the transmission of knowledge but as the cultivation of the *insan adabi*—a person of proper adab. According to Al-Attas (1999), educational success should not be measured solely by intellectual achievement but by learners' ability to place everything in its proper position according to the Islamic worldview.

D.2.4 The Islamization of Knowledge

The fourth principle is the Islamization of knowledge. The findings demonstrate that Islamization does not imply rejecting modern science altogether. Rather, it involves critically filtering out elements of secularism, materialism, and relativism that conflict with Islamic teachings while reconstructing scientific knowledge upon foundational Islamic concepts such as tawhid, adab, justice (*'adl*), wisdom (*hikmah*), and trust (*amanah*) (Al-Attas, 1993).

Overall, these findings indicate that Al-Attas's concept of knowledge integration possesses a much broader philosophical scope than simple curriculum integration, encompassing the ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions of knowledge.

4.3 The Relevance of Al-Attas's Concept of Knowledge Integration to Contemporary Islamic Education

The study demonstrates that Al-Attas's concept of knowledge integration has profound relevance for the development of contemporary Islamic education.

First, it offers a solution to the persistent dichotomy between religious and secular sciences that continues to characterize Islamic educational practice. The literature indicates that this separation often produces learners who possess strong academic competencies but lack moral integrity and spiritual awareness. Through the paradigm of knowledge integration, all academic disciplines are regarded as forms of worship (*ibadah*) and as means of recognizing the greatness of Allah, thereby promoting a more holistic educational experience (Azra, 2012).

Second, the concept supports the development of an integrative curriculum. Such a curriculum encompasses not only academic content but also integrates the values of tawhid, ethics, social responsibility, and character formation across all disciplines. This enables learners to understand the interrelationship between science, religion, and everyday life in a comprehensive manner.

Third, Al-Attas's framework reinforces the orientation toward character education. Education should no longer focus exclusively on cognitive achievement but should also emphasize the cultivation of adab, noble character, integrity, and social responsibility. This

perspective is particularly relevant to twenty-first-century education, which emphasizes a balance between academic excellence and character development.

Fourth, knowledge integration provides a conceptual foundation for developing Islamic education that remains adaptive to scientific and technological progress. Rather than adopting a defensive attitude toward modern science, Islamic education should critically engage with scientific advancement while grounding innovation in Islamic ethical values and the broader welfare of society. This finding supports Hashim's (2014) argument that the paradigm of knowledge integration represents an important alternative for overcoming the educational dualism that persists in many Muslim societies.

4.4 Implications of Al-Attas's Thought for the Development of the Islamic Educational Paradigm

The analysis indicates that Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas's educational philosophy has far-reaching implications for the development of the Islamic educational paradigm in the modern era.

From a philosophical perspective, the concept of knowledge integration reinforces the position of Islamic education as an educational system possessing its own epistemological foundation, distinct from secular educational paradigms. Islamic education is intended not merely to produce competent human resources but to cultivate individuals who combine faith, knowledge, and proper adab.

From the perspective of curriculum development, the concept encourages the integration of Islamic values into every field of knowledge, thereby making learning more contextual, holistic, and character-oriented. Every subject is viewed as a means of introducing learners to the greatness of Allah and fostering their responsibility as khalifah (vicegerents) on earth.

In terms of the learning process, Al-Attas's paradigm positions teachers not merely as transmitters of knowledge but as murabbi (educators) whose responsibility is to cultivate adab through exemplary conduct, guidance, and the establishment of a religious academic culture. Students, meanwhile, are regarded as holistic individuals whose intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social, and moral dimensions should develop harmoniously.

Overall, the findings indicate that Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas's concept of knowledge integration represents a comprehensive paradigm of Islamic education because it successfully integrates epistemological, moral, and spiritual dimensions within the educational process. Its relevance to contemporary Islamic education is reflected in its ability to address the dichotomy of knowledge, strengthen character education, promote integrative curriculum development, and establish an educational system capable of responding to scientific and technological advancement without compromising its Islamic identity. Accordingly, Al-Attas's thought continues to possess significant relevance as a conceptual foundation for the reform of Islamic education in the era of globalization and modernity.

Conclusion

The findings of this study conclude that Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas's concept of knowledge integration constitutes an Islamic epistemological paradigm founded upon the principles of tawhid, the unity of revelation and reason, the centrality of adab as the ultimate goal of education, and the Islamization of knowledge as a process of reconstructing modern science that has been shaped by secularistic paradigms. According to Al-Attas, knowledge is not value-free but is always influenced by the worldview upon which it is built. Consequently, the development of scientific knowledge must be directed toward strengthening Islamic values so that knowledge retains its moral, spiritual, and humanitarian dimensions.

The study further demonstrates that Al-Attas's concept of knowledge integration has substantial relevance for the development of contemporary Islamic education. This paradigm offers a solution to the dichotomy between religious and secular sciences through the development of an integrative curriculum, the strengthening of character education based on adab, and the establishment of an educational system capable of harmonizing learners' intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social development. Furthermore, it provides a philosophical foundation for Islamic education to respond critically to scientific and technological advancement while preserving its distinctive Islamic identity.

In conclusion, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas's thought remains highly significant as a paradigm for the renewal of Islamic education in the modern era. The implementation of his concept of knowledge integration is essential not only for curriculum development and instructional practice but also for constructing a holistic Islamic educational system oriented toward producing *insan adabi*—individuals who excel academically, embody noble character, and possess profound spiritual awareness in addressing the challenges of globalization and contemporary civilization.

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