



Critical Pedagogy and Ta'dib: Towards an Emancipatory-Islamic Education Paradigm

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Abstract: This study examines the possibility of integrating Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' concept of ta'dib to formulate a new paradigm of Islamic-emancipatory education. Employing a qualitative library research design, the study analyzes primary texts, including Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Al-Attas' major works on Islamic education, complemented by relevant scholarly literature. Data were collected through document analysis and examined using Gadamerian hermeneutic interpretation, comparative analysis, and conceptual synthesis. The analytical process involved identifying the philosophical foundations, educational objectives, epistemological assumptions, and pedagogical implications of both frameworks, followed by the construction of an integrative theoretical model. The findings reveal that Freire's critical pedagogy emphasizes liberation through critical consciousness, dialogical engagement, and transformative praxis, whereas Al-Attas' concept of ta'dib focuses on moral discipline, recognition of the hierarchy of knowledge, and the cultivation of adab grounded in the Islamic worldview. Despite their differing epistemological foundations, both perspectives converge in their critique of dehumanizing educational practices and their commitment to human transformation. The novelty of this study lies in the formulation of an Islamic-emancipatory educational paradigm that systematically integrates Freirean critical consciousness with the ethical-spiritual framework of ta'dib. This synthesis offers a theoretical alternative to the dichotomy between secular emancipatory education and traditional Islamic education by positioning education as a process of intellectual liberation, moral refinement, and holistic human development. The proposed paradigm contributes to contemporary debates on Islamic educational reform by providing a framework that is simultaneously critical, ethical, and transformative.

Keyword : Critical Pedagogy; Ta'dib; Islamic Emancipatory Education; Critical Consciousnesses

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Introduction

Contemporary education faces a serious problem in the form of the dominance of instructional approaches that are mechanistic, reproductive, and lack of critical reflection. In many practices, education is still oriented towards one-way knowledge transfer, so students are placed as passive objects. Paulo Freire's fundamental critique of conventional education is expressed through the concept of the *"Banking Model of Education."* According to Freire, this model positions learners as passive recipients of knowledge, while teachers function as the sole authorities who deposit information. In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, he argues that such an approach reduces education to

an “act of depositing,” whereby students merely receive, memorize, and repeat information without developing critical awareness or transformative capacities (Freire, 2005). This model not only inhibits creativity, but also reinforces the relationship of domination and dehumanization in social structures. In fact, Freire asserts that education is never neutral, but rather serves as a means of reproduction of the system or as a liberating praxis that allows human beings to “deal critically with reality and transform it” (Freire, 2002).

Alternatively, Freire offers a dialogue-oriented critical pedagogy, critical awareness (*Awareness*), and praxis. In this framework, knowledge is not understood as something transferred, but rather is generated through a dialogical and reflective process between the learning subject. Education, thus, is a humanization process that places students as active agents in understanding and changing social reality (Taff & Lazzaro, 2025). This approach makes education a means of emancipatory social transformation.

On the other hand, in the tradition of Islamic education, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas put forward a critique of the crisis of modern education which is marked by the secularization of knowledge and the loss of manners (*loss of adab*). In his work *The Concept of Education in Islam*, al-Attas emphasized that education is not just a process of knowledge transfer (*Ta'lim*), rather than a process *Ta'dib*, that is, the cultivation of manners that place everything precisely in the order of form and knowledge (Al-Attas, 2023; In'Ami et al., 2025). Education in this perspective aims to produce civilized human beings (*Insān Kamil*) that is intellectually, morally, and spiritually balanced.

Despite coming from different epistemological backgrounds, Freire and al-Attas' thinking has a common point in the critique of the dehumanization of education. Freire saw dehumanization as a result of oppressive social structures, while al-Attas saw it as the result of the chaos of knowledge and the loss of manners. This difference actually opens up a productive dialectical space between the critical-emancipatory approach and the theocentric-mannered approach.

Much has been done on Freire's critical pedagogy, especially those that highlight the concept of *Awareness*, dialogue, and education as liberation praxis. Similarly, al-Attas's thoughts on *Ta'dib* has become an important reference in contemporary Islamic educational discourse. Some recent studies have begun to link these figures, for example research showing that the integration of critical pedagogy and concepts *Ta'dib* can result in an education that is not only socially liberating, but also forms ethical and spiritual awareness (Muhammad Irsyad Saifullah, Rahmad Mahadi, 2025). Existing scholarship has largely focused on comparing Freire's critical pedagogy and Al-Attas' concept of *ta'dib* at the level of philosophical assumptions and educational objectives. However, these studies stop short of explaining how the core elements of both theories can be systematically synthesized into a unified educational

framework. Specifically, previous research has not: (1) identified the compatible conceptual dimensions of critical pedagogy and ta'dib; (2) formulated a mechanism for integrating critical consciousness with moral-spiritual formation; or (3) constructed an Islamic-emancipatory educational paradigm derived from such integration. This study addresses these limitations by developing a conceptual synthesis that bridges emancipatory educational theory and Islamic educational philosophy within a single coherent framework.

Based on these gaps, this study offers a novel contribution by synthesizing Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' concept of ta'dib within the framework of Islamic emancipatory education. While Freire emphasizes liberation through critical consciousness and transformative praxis, Al-Attas stresses liberation through adab and a tawhidic worldview. This synthesis seeks to integrate social emancipation with moral-spiritual formation into a coherent educational paradigm. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the convergences and divergences between the two perspectives and to formulate an integrative Islamic-emancipatory educational paradigm that combines critical consciousness and adab as foundations for holistic human development.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative library research design to examine and synthesize Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' concept of ta'dib. The study used philosophical, comparative, and conceptual synthesis approaches. The philosophical approach was applied to analyze the ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations of both educational frameworks, while the comparative approach was used to identify their convergences and divergences. The conceptual synthesis approach was employed to construct an integrative model of Islamic-emancipatory education. Data sources consisted of primary and secondary materials. Primary sources included Freire's major works, such as *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *The Politics of Education*, and *Cultural Action for Freedom*, as well as Al-Attas' *The Concept of Education in Islam* and *Islam and Secularism*. Secondary sources were limited to peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly books directly related to Freire, Al-Attas, critical pedagogy, and ta'dib. The analysis was conducted through five stages: (1) source selection based on relevance and scholarly credibility; (2) intensive reading of primary and secondary texts; (3) thematic coding of key concepts; (4) comparative analysis of educational aims, epistemological foundations, teacher-student relations, value orientations, and concepts of liberation; and (5) conceptual synthesis to formulate an Islamic-emancipatory educational paradigm integrating critical consciousness and adab.

Result and Discussion

To facilitate understanding of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, Table 1 summarizes the main concepts that form the foundation of his educational thought. These concepts are interconnected and collectively aim to transform education from a mechanism of domination into a process of human liberation.

Table 1. Key Concepts of Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy

Concept	Main Idea	Educational Implication
Banking Education	Knowledge is deposited by teachers into passive students.	Reproduces domination, conformity, and dependence.
Dialogical Education	Knowledge is constructed through dialogue between teachers and students.	Promotes participation, mutual learning, and democratic relationships.
Critical Consciousness (<i>Conscientização</i>)	Awareness of social, political, and economic structures shaping reality.	Encourages learners to question injustice and develop critical thinking.
Praxis	Unity of reflection and action aimed at transforming reality.	Connects knowledge with social engagement and transformative action.
Liberation	Education should empower individuals to become active subjects of change.	Develops autonomy, agency, and social responsibility.

The following discussion elaborates these concepts and examines their significance within Freire's broader framework of critical pedagogy.

1. Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy Concept

a. Criticism of Banking Education

Concept *Banking Education* is one of the most fundamental criticisms put forward by Paulo Freire against traditional educational practices. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire describes education as a "deposit" process, in which the teacher plays the role of the party who "stores" knowledge into the learner (Freire, 2005; Ritchie, 2026). This model assumes that knowledge is something static and can be transferred unilaterally from teacher to student without a dialogical or reflective process.

In the framework of *banking education*, pedagogical relations are hierarchical and oppressive. The teacher is positioned as the *knower*, while the student becomes the object of the ignorant. This structure not only creates inequality in relationships, but also limits the critical potential of students. They are not encouraged to question reality

or develop their own understanding, but rather simply accept information as absolute truth.

Freire asserts that this model has serious ideological implications. Education is no longer a means of liberation, but a means of reproduction of oppressive social structures. In other words, *banking education* serves to maintain the status quo by instilling compliance and submission to the existing system. Learners who are familiar with this model tend to accept social reality without criticism, so they do not have the awareness to change unjust conditions.

Furthermore, Freire attributed *Banking Education* with the phenomenon *culture of silence*, which is a condition in which the oppressed group loses the ability to express their experiences and aspirations. In this context, education is actually a tool that strengthens social silencing, because it does not provide space for students to speak up or actively participate in the learning process (Du, 2026; Freire, 2005).

Freire's critique of traditional education is also reinforced by other critical pedagogical thinkers such as Henry Giroux, who stated that modern education often serves as a mechanism of reproduction of dominant ideologies. Giroux emphasizes that schools are not neutral spaces, but rather political arena where values, knowledge, and power are produced and distributed (Giroux, 2011; Taff & Lazzaro, 2025; Walsh & Sutherland, 2025).

Thus, criticism of *banking education* is not only pedagogical, but also political and ideological. Freire invites to reconstruct education as a liberating process, in which learners are positioned as active subjects who are able to think critically and participate in social transformation. This criticism became the starting point for the development of critical pedagogy as an alternative paradigm that was more humanist and emancipatory

b. Dialogical Concepts in Education

In response to weakness *Banking Education*, Paulo Freire developed the concept of dialogical education (*Dialogical Education*). Dialogue in Freire's thought is not just verbal communication, but an ontological process that affirms the existence of human beings as beings who think, interact, and create meaning. Freire stated that dialogue is "a meeting between human beings to name the world" (Farias et al., 2025; Freire, 2005).

In dialogical education, the relationship between teachers and students undergoes a fundamental transformation. Teachers are no longer the only source of knowledge, but facilitators who are involved in the learning process together. Freire calls this relationship *teacher-student with students-teachers*, which confirms that both parties are equally subjects in the learning process.

Dialogue in education aims not only to convey information, but also to build critical awareness. Through dialogue, learners are invited to reflect on their life

experiences and relate them to broader social structures. This process allows them to understand reality more deeply and critically.

Freire also emphasized that dialogue must be based on humanistic values such as love, *humility*, and faith in humans. Without these values, dialogue can turn into a veiled domination that actually hinders the liberation process. Therefore, dialogue in critical pedagogy is ethical as well as epistemological.

This thinking was reinforced by Peter McLaren who saw dialogue as a means to build collective consciousness and resistance to cultural hegemony. McLaren emphasizes that education should be a space where students' life experiences are valued and used as a basis for building critical knowledge (McLaren, 1993, 1995, 2015).

Thus, the concept of dialogic in Freire education not only changed the method of learning, but also reconstructed the power relations in education. Dialogue is a means to create democratic, participatory, and emancipatory learning.

c. Critical Awareness

Concept *Awareness* (*Awareness*) is at the heart of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. The term refers to the process of developing an individual's critical awareness of the social, political, and economic realities that shape their lives. Freire emphasized that the main goal of education is to build this awareness so that humans are able to understand and change the world (Castells et al., n.d.; Freire, 2005; Taff & Lazzaro, 2025).

Freire classifies human consciousness into three levels: magical consciousness, naïve consciousness, and critical consciousness. Magical consciousness is characterized by a fatalistic attitude, in which the individual accepts reality without questioning its causes and effects. Naïve consciousness begins to show reflection, but it is still limited to surface understanding. Meanwhile, critical awareness allows individuals to analyze reality deeply and understand the power structures that surround it (Freire, 2002).

Process *Awareness* It does not happen instantly, but rather through continuous dialogue and reflection. Education acts as a medium to facilitate this process by linking students' concrete experiences with critical analysis of social realities (Freire, 2002; Schugurensky, 2011). Thus, knowledge is no longer abstract, but contextual and relevant to real life.

This concept is also in line with the thinking of Henry Giroux who emphasized the importance of education as a means to develop *critical agency*. Giroux argues that learners should be prepared to become active and critical citizens, able to challenge injustice, and participate in social transformation (Giroux, 1988).

Thus, *conscientization* is a process of forming consciousness that is not only cognitive, but also political and ethical. Education within this framework serves as a tool to liberate human beings from ignorance and oppression.

d. Education as a Praxis of Liberation

For Paulo Freire, education is inseparable from the concept *Praxis*, that is, the unity between reflection and action in order to transform reality. Freire states that "praxis is human reflection and action on the world to change it" (Freire, 2005).

The concept of praxis emphasizes that education should not stop at the level of theory or understanding alone. Knowledge must be actualized in concrete actions aimed at creating social change. Thus, education becomes a dynamic and transformative process.

Freire rejects the dichotomy between theory and practice. For him, reflection without action is verbalistic, while action without reflection is blind activism. Therefore, education must integrate the two in a sustainable process. Learners are encouraged to not only understand reality, but also to act to change it.

This thinking is also reinforced by Peter McLaren who sees education as an arena of social struggle. McLaren emphasizes that education must equip learners with critical awareness and skills to fight structural injustices (McLaren, 1993, 1995).

In this context, education as a praxis of liberation has a strong political dimension. Education not only serves as a means of individual development, but also as a tool to create a more just and democratic society. Students are positioned as agents of change who have social responsibility.

Thus, Freire's critical pedagogy offers an educational paradigm that is not only humanistic, but also transformative. Education is a means of liberation that integrates reflection, action, and critical awareness in an effort to create meaningful social change.

2. The Concept of Ta'dib Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas

As the second conceptual foundation of this study, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' concept of ta'dib provides an Islamic perspective on the aims, content, and orientation of education. Unlike Paulo Freire, who primarily addresses the problem of social oppression and the development of critical consciousness, Al-Attas focuses on the crisis of knowledge, the loss of adab, and the moral-spiritual disorientation of modern human beings. For Al-Attas, the central problem of education is not merely the absence of critical awareness but the failure to place knowledge, values, and human beings in their proper order according to the Islamic worldview. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because it offers dimensions that are less emphasized in Freire's critical pedagogy, namely spiritual consciousness, ethical formation, and the integration of knowledge with faith. Consequently, examining the concept of ta'dib is essential for identifying the complementary elements that may contribute to the construction of an Islamic-emancipatory educational paradigm. Table 2 summarizes the key concepts within Al-Attas' educational thought that serve as the basis for the subsequent synthesis with Freire's critical pedagogy.

Table 2. Major Concepts of Freire's Critical Pedagogy and Their Educational Implications

Concept	Main Idea	Relevance to the Synthesis
Ta'dib	Formation of adab and proper conduct	Complements critical consciousness with moral formation
Adab	Recognition of the proper place of things	Provides ethical direction for emancipation
Hierarchy of Knowledge	Knowledge organized according to truth and tawhid	Strengthens epistemological foundations
Insan Adabi	The civilized and virtuous human being	Expands the goal of education beyond social liberation
Tawhidic Worldview	Unity of knowledge, reality, and divine purpose	Adds spiritual dimensions to critical pedagogy

The concepts summarized above demonstrate that Al-Attas' educational philosophy is fundamentally concerned with the cultivation of morally and spiritually grounded human beings. The following discussion elaborates each concept and explores its contribution to the development of an Islamic-emancipatory educational framework.

a. Definition of Ta'dib

Concept *Ta'dib* is the core of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' educational thought and is an alternative to commonly used educational terms such as *Tarbiyah* and *Ta'lim*. In his classic works *The Concept of Education in Islam*, al-Attas asserts that the most appropriate term to describe Islamic education is *Ta'dib*, because it reflects the entire process of human formation that includes the intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions in an integrated manner (Al-Attas, 1979, 2023).

Conceptually, *Ta'dib* refers to the planting process *Manners*, that is, the recognition and recognition of the proper place for everything in the order of being. In other words, adab is not just social ethics or manners, but epistemological and ontological awareness of reality. In this context, education is not only the process of mastering knowledge, but the process of forming awareness about the truth and order of the cosmos (Sassi, 2018, 2020).

Al-Attas emphasized that a civilized human being is a human being who knows his position in relation to God, fellow humans, and nature. Therefore, *Ta'dib* cannot be reduced to mere teaching of knowledge (*Ta'lim*) or physical training (*Tarbiyah*), because neither explicitly encompasses the dimensions of metaphysical value and consciousness (Rofiq, 2022).

Furthermore, the concept *ofta'dib* also emphasizes the integration between knowledge and charity. Knowledge that does not give birth to manners is considered flawed knowledge, because it does not produce moral transformation in human beings. In this regard, al-Attas criticizes modern education which tends to emphasize purely cognitive aspects without regard to the ethical and spiritual dimensions.

From a philosophical perspective, *ta'dib* is a holistic educational concept. It integrates aspects of epistemology (knowledge), axiology (values), and ontology (the essence of reality) in a single unit. This makes *ta'diba* concept that is not only theoretically relevant, but also has practical implications in the formation of a whole human being.

Thus, the definition of *ta'dib* in al-Attas' thought can be understood as an educational process that aims to form a civilized human being through the integration of knowledge, values, and spiritual awareness. This concept is an important foundation in building an Islamic education paradigm that is different from the secular education paradigm.

b. Education as the Formation of Manners

In the framework *ofta'dib*, education is understood as the process of forming *adab* (*formation of adab*). For Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, the main goal of education is not only to produce intellectually intelligent individuals, but to produce civilized human beings (*insānkāmil*) who have a balance between intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

Adab in al-Attas' thought includes the ability to put things in their proper place. This includes the relationship between humans and God (monotheism), the relationship with fellow humans (social ethics), and the relationship with nature (ecological responsibility). Thus, education functions not only as a cognitive process, but also as a process of character formation and existential consciousness (Nadiyah et al., 2025).

Education as the formation of manners requires the integration of knowledge and values. In practice, this means that every discipline must be taught within the correct framework of values. Science should not be separated from moral goals, because such separation will produce intelligent but immoral human beings. This is al-Attas' main criticism of the modern education system which tends to be secular and utilitarian.

The role of teachers in this concept is very important. Teachers not only function as transmitters of knowledge, but also as role models in manners. The relationship between teacher and student is ethical and based on respect for the authority of science. However, this relationship is not an oppressive relationship, but a relationship that guides and shapes the personality of students.

In addition, the formation of adab also emphasizes the importance of value habituation. Education is not enough to provide knowledge about morality, but it must be able to form habits and characters that reflect these values. In other words, education must produce internal transformation in students.

In this context, the concept *ofta'dib* has a high relevance to contemporary character education. However, in contrast to modern approaches that are often pragmatic, *ta'dib* is rooted in the values of monotheism that are transcendent. This provides a spiritual dimension not found in the paradigm of secular education.

Thus, education as the formation of manners is a complex and multidimensional process. It not only forms intellectual faculties, but also builds moral and spiritual awareness that is the basis for meaningful human life.

c. Hierarchy of Knowledge

One of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's important contributions to the philosophy of education is the concept of the hierarchy of knowledge. Al-Attas rejects the modern view that all sciences are neutral and equal. According to him, science has a hierarchical structure that reflects ontological reality.

In this hierarchy, the science of revelation (*revealed knowledge*) occupies the highest position because it comes from the source of absolute truth, namely God. The science of revelation provides a basic framework for man's understanding of reality, including life purpose and moral values. Meanwhile, rational and empirical science have an important position, but they must be within the framework determined by revelation (Anggraina et al., 2025; Syafa'ati & Muamanah, 2020; Zarkasyi, 2018).

This concept of hierarchy of knowledge aims to prevent epistemological confusion (*confusion of knowledge*), which is a condition in which humans are unable to distinguish between truth and error. According to al-Attas, this chaos is one of the main causes of crises in modern civilization.

In the context of education, the hierarchy of knowledge has significant implications for the curriculum. Islamic education must be designed in such a way that it reflects the order of knowledge. Religious science and general science should not be separated dichotomically, but should be integrated into one whole system.

Furthermore, this concept is also related to the formation of manners. By understanding the hierarchy of knowledge, students will be able to place knowledge proportionally and not get caught up in relativism. It is important to establish a correct awareness of reality.

The concept of hierarchy of knowledge was also the basis for the idea of Islamization of science developed by al-Attas. Islamization does not mean rejecting modern science, but placing it within a framework of values that are in accordance with Islamic teachings. Thus, science can be used to achieve the right goals and not deviate from moral values.

d. Criticism of the Secularization of Education

Criticism of secularization is one of the most important aspects of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' thought. Al-Attas saw secularization as a process of separating knowledge from spiritual and moral values, which ultimately led to a crisis in education and civilization.

According to al-Attas, secularization has changed the purpose of education to be purely for material and utilitarian interests. Education is no longer directed to form civilized human beings, but to produce a productive workforce. This leads to the loss of the spiritual dimension in education (Hanifah, 2018; Kosim et al., 2020).

The impact of this secularization is widespread. Science that is detached from moral values tends to be used for destructive purposes, such as the exploitation of nature and social domination. In addition, secularization also leads to a disorientation of values in society, where people lose their moral grip in the face of social change.

In response, al-Attas proposed the concept of Islamization of science as a solution. Islamization aims to restore knowledge to the Islamic value framework, so that knowledge can be used to achieve the right goals. This process involves the reinterpretation of modern scientific concepts in an Islamic perspective.

Al-Attas's criticism of secularization also has an epistemological dimension. He rejects the claims of the neutrality of modern science and points out that science is always influenced by certain values and worldviews. Therefore, it is important to develop an education system that is rooted in the Islamic worldview.

Thus, criticism of the secularization of education is an integral part of the concept *Ta'dib*. Education must be restored to its original purpose, which is to form civilized human beings who have spiritual awareness and moral responsibility. Without this, education will lose its meaning and become just a means of reproduction of an inhuman system (Harvey, 2023; In'Ami et al., 2025).

3. Comparative Analysis of Educational Thought of Paulo Freire and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas.

To identify the convergences and divergences between Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' concept of *ta'dib*, a comparative analysis was conducted across several key dimensions, including educational aims, epistemological foundations, teacher-student relations, value orientations, and concepts of liberation. The comparison provides the analytical basis for constructing an integrative Islamic-emancipatory educational paradigm. The results of the comparison are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparative Analysis of Freire's Critical Pedagogy and Al-Attas' Concept of Ta'dib

Dimension	Paulo Freire	Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas	Potential Synthesis
Educational Aim	Human liberation from oppression and domination	Formation of the civilized and virtuous human being (<i>insan adabi</i>)	Holistic human development through social emancipation and moral-spiritual formation
Epistemological Foundation	Knowledge is socially constructed through dialogue and reflection	Knowledge is grounded in revelation, reason, and the Islamic worldview	Critical inquiry guided by ethical and spiritual principles
Teacher-Student Relationship	Dialogical and participatory; both are co-learners	Teacher as moral and intellectual guide in the cultivation of adab	Reciprocal learning combined with ethical mentorship
Value Orientation	Justice, equality, participation, and social transformation	Adab, justice, wisdom, and tawhidic order	Transformative education rooted in ethical values
Concept of Liberation	Liberation from social, political, and economic oppression	Liberation from ignorance, moral disorder, and secularization	Integration of social-critical and moral-spiritual liberation
Educational Method	Dialogue, problem-posing education, and praxis	Ta'dib, moral cultivation, disciplined knowledge acquisition	Dialogical learning integrated with character formation
Ideal Human Being	Critical, active, and transformative social agent	Morally disciplined and spiritually conscious individual	Critically conscious and ethically grounded human being
Social Function of Education	Social transformation and empowerment	Preservation of justice, order, and civilization	Transformation of society through ethical and responsible agency

Table 3 demonstrates that Freire and Al-Attas differ primarily in their epistemological foundations and value orientations. Freire approaches education from a socio-political perspective centered on emancipation and critical consciousness, whereas Al-Attas emphasizes the moral-spiritual dimensions of human development

grounded in the Islamic worldview. Nevertheless, both thinkers share a common concern regarding forms of dehumanization and the transformative role of education. These points of convergence provide the foundation for synthesizing critical consciousness and adab into an Islamic-emancipatory educational paradigm that integrates social transformation with moral-spiritual cultivation.

a. Educational Objectives: Emancipation vs Formation of Manners

In Paulo Freire's perspective, the goal of education is the liberation of human beings from oppressive structures through the development of critical consciousness (*Awareness*). Education should enable individuals to understand social realities and act to change them. Freire affirms that education is a "practice of freedom" (*practice of freedom*) that frees man from dehumanization (Freire, 2005; Taff & Lazzaro, 2025).

On the contrary, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas views the purpose of education as the formation of civilized human beings (*Insān Kamil*) through the concept *Ta'dib*. Education is not only aimed at liberating human beings socially, but also placing human beings in the correct cosmic order based on the value of monotheism. Al-Attas emphasized that education must produce individuals who understand their position in relation to God, science, and society (Al-Attas, 1979, 2023; Syafa'ati & Muamanah, 2020).

Both reject dehumanistic education, but have different orientations. Freire focuses on social emancipation, while al-Attas focuses on the formation of a spiritual-based adab. Thus, Freire emphasizes external liberation, while al-Attas emphasizes internal and metaphysical liberation.

b. Epistemology: Dialogical-Critical vs Revelation-Manners

Paulo Freire's epistemology is dialogical and constructivist. Knowledge is not seen as something fixed, but rather is generated through social interaction and critical reflection on reality. Freire rejected the concept of knowledge as a "deposit" and emphasized that knowledge must be born from a process of dialogue between subjects (Ensweiler, 2026; Freire, 2005).

In contrast, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's epistemology is rooted in Islamic revelation and intellectual tradition. Knowledge has a hierarchy, in which revelation is the primary source of truth. Knowledge is not neutral, but must be guided by the values of manners and tauhid (Al-Attas, 1979, 1993, 2023; Hanifah, 2018).

Freire places social experience as the primary source of knowledge, while al-Attas places revelation as the epistemological foundation. This difference shows the existence of a dichotomy between humanistic-critical epistemology and theocentric epistemology. However, both reject positivism which views science as something neutral and value-free.

c. Teacher-Student Relationship: Egalitarian Dialogue vs Hierarchical Ethics

In Paulo Freire's pedagogy, the relationship between teacher and student is dialogical and egalitarian. Freire introduces the concept *teacher-student with students-teachers*, which emphasizes that teachers and students alike learn in the process of dialogue (Freire, 2005; Saito et al., 2026). This relationship aims to remove dominance and create democratic learning.

On the contrary, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas emphasized pedagogical relations based on adab and respect for the authority of science. Teachers have an important position as moral and intellectual guides, while students are required to respect teachers as part of the process of forming manners (Al-Attas, 2023; Sassi, 2018).

Freire emphasized equality as a means of liberation, while al-Attas emphasized ethical hierarchy as a means of establishing manners. Although they seem different, they have the same goal, which is to create pedagogical relations that are not oppressive, but liberate and shape human beings as a whole.

d. Value Orientation: Humanization vs Tauhidization

Paulo Freire's pedagogy is oriented towards humanization, which is the process of humanizing human beings through liberation from oppression. The main values in critical pedagogy are social justice, freedom, and equality (Freire, 2002, 2005).

Meanwhile, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas placed monotheism as the main orientation of education. All educational activities should lead to the recognition of the oneness of God and the order of the cosmos. Values such as manners, justice, and truth are the main foundations of education (Al-Attas, 1991; Kosim et al., 2020).

Freire departs from critical humanism, while al-Attas departs from theocentric humanism. These differences are not contradictory, but complementary. Humanization in Freire can be enriched with the spiritual dimension of al-Attas, thus resulting in a more holistic educational paradigm.

From the comparative analysis above, it can be concluded that despite the fundamental differences between Paulo Freire and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, both have common ground in efforts to overcome dehumanization in education.

Freire offers liberation through critical awareness and social transformation, while al-Attas offers liberation through manners and monotheism-based order of knowledge. This difference actually opens up opportunities to build a conceptual synthesis that integrates the critical and spiritual dimensions in education.

4. Conceptual Synthesis: Towards an Emancipation-Islamic Education Paradigm

The comparative analysis demonstrates that Freire's critical pedagogy and Al-Attas' concept of *ta'dib* address different but complementary dimensions of educational transformation. Freire focuses on liberation from social oppression through critical consciousness and transformative praxis, whereas Al-Attas

emphasizes liberation from ignorance and moral disorientation through the cultivation of adab. Although rooted in different epistemological traditions, both perspectives share a common concern for overcoming forms of dehumanization and restoring human dignity. The synthesis proposed in this study integrates critical consciousness and adab as two inseparable dimensions of education. Critical consciousness enables learners to recognize and challenge unjust social structures, while adab provides the ethical and spiritual orientation necessary to guide such transformation.

In this framework, education is understood not merely as intellectual development or social critique but as a holistic process of forming morally responsible and critically aware individuals. At the epistemological level, the synthesis combines dialogical inquiry with a value-oriented conception of knowledge. Learners are encouraged to engage critically with reality through dialogue and reflection, while maintaining commitment to ethical and transcendental principles. Likewise, pedagogical relationships are reconstructed as dialogical and ethical, allowing students to participate actively in knowledge construction while recognizing the teacher's role as both intellectual and moral guide. Based on these principles, Islamic-emancipatory education may be defined as an educational paradigm that integrates social transformation, critical awareness, moral formation, and spiritual responsibility. Its ultimate goal is to cultivate individuals who are capable of confronting injustice while remaining guided by ethical values and a broader vision of human flourishing.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' concept of ta'dib are grounded in different philosophical foundations but converge in their critique of dehumanizing educational practices. Critical pedagogy emphasizes human liberation through the development of critical consciousness and social transformation, whereas ta'dib focuses on the formation of civilized human beings rooted in moral and spiritual values. These differences are reflected in their epistemological foundations, pedagogical relationships, and value orientations. Critical pedagogy is based on a dialogical and humanistic approach, while ta'dib is grounded in a theocentric worldview that places revelation and adab at the center of education. Nevertheless, these perspectives should not be viewed as contradictory; rather, they can be integrated within a complementary conceptual framework. Through this synthesis, the study formulates an Islamic-emancipatory educational paradigm that integrates critical consciousness with the cultivation of adab. Within this framework, education is understood not only as a means of liberating individuals from social injustice but also as a process of nurturing morally and spiritually grounded human beings. The main contribution of this study lies in the development of a conceptual framework that bridges the critical and spiritual

dimensions of education. By integrating social transformation with moral-spiritual formation, the proposed paradigm offers an alternative response to the contemporary educational crisis, which is often characterized by secular and reductionist tendencies.

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