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Reconstructing the Philosophical Foundations of Islamic Religious Education: Integrating *Ta'līm*, *Tarbiyah*, and *Ta'dīb*

Rekonstruksi Landasan Filosofis Pendidikan Agama Islam melalui Integrasi *Ta'līm*, *Tarbiyah*, dan *Ta'dīb*

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Abstract: *Contemporary Islamic Religious Education (IRE) faces the challenge of connecting the acquisition of religious knowledge with ethical judgment, spiritual formation, and responsible action. Although ta'līm, tarbiyah, and ta'dīb have been widely discussed, their distinct yet interdependent philosophical functions require clearer articulation. This qualitative library-based study examines purposively selected Qur'anic passages, Prophetic educational traditions, classical scholarship, and contemporary educational philosophy, with particular attention to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. The study combines thematic textual reading, comparative conceptual analysis, and philosophical synthesis. The findings show that ta'līm is not reducible to information transfer: it involves theological, epistemological, ethical, and civilizational dimensions. Tarbiyah foregrounds the gradual cultivation of human capacities, whereas ta'dīb articulates the normative ordering of knowledge, development, and conduct. On this basis, the study formulates the Philosophical Ta'dīb Framework for Islamic Religious Education (PTF–IRE), connecting five mutually informing foundations: Qur'anic worldview, integrative epistemology, adab, taqwā, and 'imārat al-arḍ. Rather than claiming a new educational practice or the superiority of ta'dīb over other traditions, the framework specifies how established Islamic concepts can function relationally as an interpretive basis for educational aims and ethical praxis. Its contribution is a preliminary philosophical synthesis, not an empirically validated model; its pedagogical feasibility and explanatory value require further investigation.*

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education; Ta'līm; Tarbiyah; Ta'dīb; Islamic educational philosophy

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Abstrak: *Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) kontemporer menghadapi tantangan dalam menghubungkan penguasaan pengetahuan keagamaan dengan pertimbangan etis, pembentukan spiritual, dan tindakan yang bertanggung jawab. Meskipun ta'līm, tarbiyah, dan ta'dīb telah banyak dikaji, fungsi filosofis ketiganya yang berbeda sekaligus saling bergantung masih memerlukan perumusan yang lebih tegas. Penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif ini menelaah secara purposif ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an, tradisi pendidikan Nabi, karya ulama klasik, dan pemikiran pendidikan kontemporer, dengan perhatian khusus pada Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. Analisis dilakukan melalui pembacaan tematik teks, perbandingan konseptual, dan sintesis filosofis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ta'līm tidak dapat direduksi menjadi transfer informasi karena memuat dimensi teologis, epistemologis, etis, dan peradaban. Tarbiyah menekankan pembinaan potensi manusia secara bertahap, sedangkan ta'dīb memberikan orientasi normatif untuk menata pengetahuan, perkembangan diri, dan tindakan. Atas dasar itu, penelitian ini merumuskan Philosophical Ta'dīb Framework for Islamic Religious Education (PTF–IRE), yang menghubungkan lima landasan yang saling memengaruhi: pandangan dunia Al-Qur'an, epistemologi integratif, adab, taqwā, dan 'imārat al-arḍ. Kebaruannya terletak pada penjelasan hubungan fungsional antarkonsep, bukan pada klaim penggantian konsep pendidikan atau keunggulan empiris suatu model. Kerangka ini merupakan sintesis filosofis awal yang masih memerlukan pengujian kelayakan pedagogis dan penerapan empiris.*

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan agama Islam; Ta'līm; Tarbiyah; Ta'dīb; Filsafat pendidikan Islam

Introduction

Islamic Religious Education transmits religious knowledge, preserves identity, and shapes moral character. However, educational practices often prioritize cognitive achievement and examinations over sustained character development and the practical application of Islamic values in everyday life.[1] Throughout Islamic civilization, education has transcended knowledge transfer (*ta'līm*), nurturing human intellectual, spiritual, ethical, and social development.[2] Classical Muslim scholars viewed education as transformative, cultivating knowledge, virtue, and responsibility toward God and society.[3] This holistic orientation distinguishes Islamic educational philosophy from educational paradigms that primarily emphasize cognitive achievement or vocational competence.[4] Nevertheless, contemporary practices of Islamic Religious Education increasingly reveal a tendency to prioritize measurable academic outcomes while paying comparatively less attention to ethical formation and the cultivation of adab.[5] As a result, the philosophical foundations that historically integrated knowledge, morality, and spirituality require critical reexamination in light of current educational realities.

Islamic Religious Education faces challenges from AI-driven knowledge transformation, digital religious content, and consumer culture that prioritizes popularity and immediacy over reflection. These developments demand integrated

digital literacy, critical verification, and ethical formation. The PTF–IRE model addresses these challenges while preserving epistemic responsibility, pedagogical relevance, and Islamic educational values.

While these developments provide unprecedented opportunities for learning, they also introduce new ethical dilemmas involving misinformation, moral relativism, digital addiction, identity fragmentation, and the weakening of religious authority.[6] Educational institutions are therefore expected not only to equip students with religious literacy but also to cultivate ethical judgment, spiritual resilience, and responsible citizenship within increasingly pluralistic and digitally mediated societies.[7] However, many existing educational models continue to measure success predominantly through cognitive mastery, standardized assessment, and curriculum completion, leaving the ethical and civilizational dimensions of Islamic education insufficiently developed.[8] This imbalance raises important questions concerning whether the prevailing paradigm of Islamic Religious Education remains adequate for responding to contemporary social transformations.

The imbalance stems not from *ta'līm* itself, but from its reduction to cognitive knowledge transmission. Traditionally, *ta'līm* encompasses understanding and meaningful knowledge formation. Its contemporary challenge is integration with *tarbiyah*, *ta'dīb*, ethical-spiritual development, and transformative human agency.[9]

The Qur'an repeatedly associates knowledge with purification, wisdom, and righteous conduct, while numerous Prophetic traditions portray the Prophet Muḥammad as an educator whose mission extended beyond teaching doctrines toward transforming character and cultivating virtuous communities.[10] Islamic education affirms that knowledge attains true value through ethical refinement and spiritual maturity, inseparably linking epistemology with morality.

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas locates the fundamental crisis of modern Islamic education in the loss of adab, understood not merely as etiquette or morality, but as the disciplined recognition of one's proper place within the physical, intellectual, spiritual, and hierarchical order of knowledge and existence.[11] Adab entails both recognizing the proper place of things and ethically acting upon that knowledge. Thus, al-Attas regards *ta'dīb* as the essence of Islamic education, progressively cultivating adab through recognizing creation's proper order and acknowledging God's supreme place in existence.[12] The educational crisis reflects not merely a lack of knowledge but its disconnection from ethical, spiritual, and ontological foundations. Al-Attas identifies *ta'dīb* as education's integrated Islamic conception.[13] This formulation has subsequently been interpreted in secondary scholarship as an attempt to reconstruct Islamic education around the formation of the *insān adabī*—a person whose acquisition of knowledge is inseparable from ethical discipline, recognition of truth, and appropriate action.[14] From this perspective, an

educational system that privileges technical competence while detaching knowledge from moral and spiritual responsibility risks producing intellectual capacity without the corresponding formation of character and responsible action.[15]

He therefore proposes *ta'dīb* as the authentic concept of Islamic education because it encompasses the proper recognition and placement of knowledge, the cultivation of virtuous conduct, and the realization of justice within both individual and social life.[16] This perspective views education as holistic human formation, yet al-Attas's implications for reconstructing Islamic Religious Education's philosophical foundations in rapidly evolving educational contexts remain insufficiently explored.

Existing scholarship has made substantial contributions to the philosophy and theory of Islamic education, particularly through discussions of *tarbiyah*, *ta'līm*, *ta'dīb*, Islamic *worldview*, and holistic approaches to human formation. However, these strands of scholarship have generally developed along partially separate conceptual trajectories. Studies on *tarbiyah* tend to emphasize the processes of nurturing, developing, and cultivating the learner, thereby foregrounding education as a process of gradual human growth.[17] By contrast, studies on *ta'līm* primarily highlight the transmission, acquisition, and development of knowledge, with epistemic formation often becoming the central concern.[18] Scholarship on *ta'dīb*, particularly that influenced by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, places greater emphasis on the cultivation of adab, the recognition of the proper place of things, and the formation of a morally disciplined person whose knowledge is oriented toward right action.[19] Although these three concepts are frequently discussed together, they are not always reconstructed as an integrated philosophical architecture in which knowledge, moral formation, and human purpose are systematically interconnected.

A related body of scholarship has examined the Islamic *worldview* as a philosophical foundation for education. This literature has importantly challenged the epistemological assumptions of secular or purely instrumental models of education by emphasizing *tawḥīd*, the unity of knowledge, revelation, human responsibility, and the ultimate purpose of human existence.[20] Nevertheless, *worldview*-based approaches often operate primarily at the level of philosophical foundations and epistemological orientation. They explain why Islamic education should be grounded in a particular conception of reality, knowledge, and humanity, but provide less systematic explanation of how these philosophical premises are transformed into an integrated educational architecture of knowing, forming, and acting.[21] In this respect, *worldview* scholarship provides an essential philosophical foundation, but does not by itself constitute a comprehensive pedagogical model.

Similarly, holistic approaches to Islamic education have attempted to overcome fragmented conceptions of the learner by integrating intellectual, spiritual, moral,

emotional, social, and sometimes physical dimensions of human development. These approaches move beyond knowledge transmission toward the formation of the whole person.[22] Yet, the notion of "holistic" education is frequently formulated as an aggregation of developmental dimensions rather than as a philosophically integrated relationship between epistemology, ontology, ethics, and educational praxis. Consequently, holistic models may explain what dimensions of the human person should be developed, while leaving under-theorized the epistemological and normative principles that determine the relationship among those dimensions.

A critical comparison of these strands therefore reveals an important conceptual distinction. *Tarbiyah* provides a logic of human growth and cultivation; *ta'līm* provides a logic of knowledge acquisition and intellectual formation; *ta'dīb* provides a logic of ethical and civilizational formation; Islamic *worldview* provides the metaphysical and epistemological horizon within which education is understood; while holistic education provides a framework for integrating multiple dimensions of human development. Each contributes an important component, but existing scholarship has not sufficiently reconstructed these components into a single philosophical framework that explains their epistemological foundation, anthropological orientation, ethical purpose, and transformative educational praxis in an internally coherent sequence.

The limitation identified in this literature concerns the relationship among these contributions rather than the absence of ethical or holistic ideas. Prior accounts already discuss the interplay of knowledge, growth, and *adab*; consequently, it would be misleading to claim that their integration has never been attempted. The narrower question is whether their philosophical roles can be specified with sufficient precision to distinguish foundational assumptions, educational functions, and normative purposes. The present study examines this relational problem through the Philosophical *Ta'dīb* Framework for Islamic Religious Education (PTF–IRE), with particular attention to the reasons for selecting its five foundational dimensions.

Accordingly, this article locates its research gap at the level of conceptual architecture. Existing work offers important accounts of the Qur'anic worldview, educational knowledge, moral cultivation, and holistic development, but the criteria for distinguishing a philosophical foundation from an educational process or mediating virtue are not always explicit. Addressing that distinction can clarify how the three educational concepts relate without treating them as interchangeable or presuming that *ta'dīb* supersedes *ta'līm* and *tarbiyah*.

This study therefore addresses two research questions: (1) How can the philosophical relationship among *ta'līm*, *tarbiyah*, and *ta'dīb* be reconstructed within the broader foundations of Islamic education? (2) How can this reconstruction inform the

development of a coherent normative framework that integrates intellectual development, ethical consciousness, spiritual cultivation, and civilizational responsibility?

To address these questions, the study examines the interrelationship among *ta'līm*, *tarbiyah*, and *ta'dīb* and explores how their philosophical meanings can be integrated into a normative framework for Islamic Religious Education. In doing so, it seeks to clarify the conceptual foundations of Islamic education in relation to the ethical, epistemological, and social challenges facing contemporary Muslim societies.

Research Method

This study employs qualitative library research with a conceptual-philosophical design. Its purpose is to clarify relations among *ta'līm*, *tarbiyah*, and *ta'dīb* and to construct a defensible normative framework for Islamic Religious Education (IRE), rather than to estimate the effects of a teaching intervention. The research proceeds through thematic textual interpretation, comparative conceptual analysis, and philosophical synthesis. It is not presented as a systematic literature review or as an empirical study of educational institutions; consequently, the sources are chosen purposively for their interpretive relevance rather than through a statistically exhaustive search protocol.

The primary textual corpus consists of Qur'anic passages directly associated with divine teaching, prophetic instruction, moral purification, and human responsibility, especially Q. 96:1–5, 2:31–33, 2:129, 2:151, 3:164, 17:24, and 62:2. Related Prophetic traditions are considered as contextual evidence of educational practice, with attention to their reported reliability. In particular, the disputed reports in Ibn Mājah 229 and al-Tirmidhī 3599/Ibn Mājah 3833 are used only illustratively and are not allowed to bear the principal normative argument. Classical interpretive and educational sources include al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Miskawayh, Ibn Jamā'ah, and Ibn Khaldūn. Al-Attas's *The Concept of Education in Islam* serves as a central philosophical interlocutor, supplemented by contemporary scholarship on Islamic worldview, *tarbiyah*, adab, holistic education, and virtue ethics already cited in the article.

Sources were included when they met three practical criteria: direct relevance to an educational concept or philosophical foundation; identifiable authorship and bibliographic provenance; and capacity to illuminate agreement, tension, or conceptual difference. Qur'anic passages and classical works provide the interpretive and historical bases; contemporary studies contextualize alternative conceptualizations and possible educational implications. The analysis does not equate the status of these source types. Statements grounded in revelation and established texts are differentiated from later scholarly interpretation, while normative proposals are distinguished from observable educational outcomes.

The analysis followed four interrelated stages. First, passages and scholarly discussions were read for recurring semantic and thematic relations among teaching, knowledge, wisdom, purification, cultivation, adab, and social responsibility. Second, these relations were provisionally classified into theological, epistemological, ethical, and civilizational aspects; disagreements in exegesis and source reliability were retained rather than flattened into a single reading. Third, the functions of *ta'līm*, *tarbiyah*, and *ta'dīb* were compared with al-Attas's position and relevant holistic and character-education approaches, specifically to test whether the proposed integration merely reproduces an existing argument. Fourth, these comparisons were brought into a philosophical synthesis that distinguishes foundational questions, mediating dispositions, educational processes, and intended praxis.

The proposed five foundations were selected by philosophical indispensability, not by counting the frequency of particular terms. Each addresses a distinct question: the Qur'anic worldview concerns the nature and purpose of reality; integrative epistemology concerns the sources and justification of knowledge; adab concerns the appropriate ethical ordering of knowledge and conduct; *taqwā* concerns spiritual accountability and motivation; and *'imārat al-arḍ* concerns the social and ecological ends of responsible action. *Ta'līm* and *tarbiyah* are treated as educational functions, *ta'dīb* as the orientation integrating them, and *ḥikmah* and *tazkiyah* as cross-cutting qualities or processes rather than additional independent foundations. Coherence was assessed by comparing these roles against the textual corpus and potential conceptual overlaps. The resulting PTF–IRE is a normative interpretive framework; the study cannot establish its efficacy, generalizability, or causal sequence without subsequent empirical research.

The Scriptural and Intellectual Dimensions of *Ta'līm*

A thematic reading of the selected texts discloses several recurrent relations that enlarge the meaning of *ta'līm* beyond the act of classroom instruction. The following discussion traces those relations from divine teaching and human knowledge to purification, ethical action, and social responsibility, while keeping the primary texts distinct from subsequent philosophical inference.

The Qur'an provides the first and most fundamental layer of this reconstruction. A thematic reading of Qur'anic passages containing the semantic field of *'ilm* and *ta'līm* reveals that teaching is repeatedly associated with divine agency and guidance. The opening revelation provides a particularly significant starting point:

> *"Read in the name of your Lord who created … Who taught by the pen, taught humanity what they did not know."* (Q. 96:1–5)

The significance of this passage for Islamic educational philosophy lies not merely in the occurrence of the verb *'allama* but in its relationship with the imperative *iqra'* and

the expression *bismi rabbika*. Reading and learning are thus framed by a theological orientation: knowledge is sought and acquired in relation to God.[23] The act of knowing is consequently not presented as an autonomous intellectual enterprise detached from transcendence. Rather, the divine attribution of teaching establishes a conceptual relationship between knowledge and divine guidance. This textual pattern constitutes the initial basis for identifying the theological dimension of *ta'līm*.

The Qur'anic narrative of Adam provides a second and complementary textual basis:

"And He taught Adam the names, all of them." (Q. 2:31)

The interpretation of *al-asmā'* has generated different positions among classical exegetes. Al-Ṭabarī records interpretations attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās, Mujāhid, Qatādah, al-Ḥasan, and others, including the view that Adam was taught the names of things, the names of angels, or the names of his descendants. Al-Ṭabarī ultimately gives particular weight to an interpretation involving the names of human beings and angels on the basis of the linguistic context of *ʿaraḍahum* ("He presented them").[24] Al-Qurṭubī, meanwhile, emphasizes the divine character of the teaching, describing the teaching as *ilhām*—a divinely bestowed form of knowledge—and also discusses the possibility of mediation through an angel.[25] These differences are important because they show that the educational significance of Q. 2:31 does not depend on reducing *al-asmā'* to a single modern conception of information. Across the interpretations, the central textual feature remains that God teaches Adam and that this knowledge enables Adam to demonstrate a capacity that distinguishes him in the encounter with the angels.

Consequently, Q. 2:31 provides an epistemological extension of the theological meaning identified in Q. 96:1–5. If Q. 96:1–5 establishes God as the ultimate source and orienting principle of knowledge, Q. 2:31 depicts knowledge as a constitutive feature of human existence. Teaching therefore concerns not only the reception of information but also the development of human intellectual capacities for recognizing, naming, distinguishing, and understanding reality. The Qur'anic representation of *ta'līm* consequently begins to move from divine source toward human epistemic formation.

A third and particularly important textual cluster appears in the repeated Qur'anic descriptions of the Prophet's educational mission:

"…He recites His verses to them, purifies them, and teaches them the Book and wisdom…" (Q. 2:129; 2:151; 3:164; 62:2).

These four passages are treated in this study as a thematic cluster because they repeatedly bring together three educational functions: *tilāwah*, *tazkiyah*, and *ta'līm al-kitāb wa al-ḥikmah*. Their recurrence is significant. Teaching is not presented in isolation from purification, while the teaching of the Book is coupled with wisdom rather

than reduced to the transmission of textual information.[26] The textual pattern therefore indicates an integrated educational process in which revelation is communicated, the learner is purified, and knowledge is cultivated together with wisdom.

This cluster provides the textual basis for identifying the ethical dimension of *ta'līm*. The presence of *tazkiyah* alongside *ta'līm* indicates that the intended outcome of education concerns not merely cognitive acquisition but the transformation of the learner. At the same time, the inclusion of *ḥikmah* indicates that knowledge must be accompanied by appropriate understanding and judgment. Thus, the Qur'anic sequence does not simply represent three unrelated activities. It points toward an integrated educational process in which revelation, knowledge, wisdom, purification, and conduct are mutually connected.

The Prophetic tradition provides a further layer of evidence. The Prophet is represented not merely as a transmitter of information but as an educator whose teaching occurred through speech, action, example, interaction, gradual instruction, and moral formation. The often-cited report containing the statement *"innamā bu'ithtu mu'alliman"* ("I was sent as a teacher") is frequently employed in discussions of Prophetic pedagogy. However, because the report's chain and status require careful examination, it should not be treated as an uncontested standalone premise. The wording appears in Ibn Mājah 229 within a longer report, but its chain has been judged weak; therefore, its evidentiary role in this study is illustrative rather than foundational. The stronger basis for reconstructing Prophetic *ta'līm* is consequently the broader body of Prophetic practice and educational traditions rather than this isolated formulation.[27]

The same methodological caution applies to the frequently cited supplication concerning beneficial knowledge:

> *Allāhumma anfa'nī bimā 'allamtanī, wa 'allimnī mā yanfa'unī, wa zidnī'ilman;* "O Allah, benefit me through what You have taught me, teach me what benefits me, and increase me in knowledge."

The report is transmitted in al-Tirmidhī 3599 and Ibn Mājah 3833. The report is not treated as an independent proof of the philosophy of *ta'līm* because its transmission is not evaluated in this study. Nevertheless, the semantic relationship between '*ilm* and *naf*' ("benefit") is useful as a secondary illustration of a broader Islamic educational principle: the value of knowledge is related not simply to its quantity but to its beneficial application. The philosophical argument, however, should remain grounded primarily in Qur'anic evidence and better-established Prophetic material.[28]

The classical Muslim intellectual tradition further clarifies the patterns already identified in the primary texts. Al-Ghazālī's educational thought emphasizes the relationship between knowledge, the recognition of God, purification of the soul,

intention, and ethical conduct. His critique of knowledge pursued for prestige or worldly status reinforces the distinction between possessing information and realizing the moral purpose of knowledge.[29] Similarly, Ibn Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* situates intellectual development within the cultivation of virtuous dispositions, emphasizing the habituation of the soul toward good action.[30] Ibn Jamā'ah's *Tadhkirat al-Sāmi' wa al-Mutakallim* further conceptualizes education as an ethical relationship in which the character, intention, humility, patience, and integrity of teachers and students constitute integral elements of the learning process.[31]

Ibn Khaldūn adds a further dimension by relating education to *'umrān* and the continuity of social life. His discussion of education, learning, habit formation, and pedagogical method demonstrates that teaching cannot be detached from the social environment in which knowledge is produced and transmitted. His criticism of excessive harshness and mechanical memorization is particularly relevant to the present reconstruction because it illustrates how educational method affects intellectual development and character formation. In this respect, classical Muslim scholarship does not merely repeat the Qur'anic concept of *ta'līm*; it elaborates its implications for epistemology, ethics, pedagogy, and social development.[32]

The convergence of the Qur'anic, Prophetic, and classical sources can therefore be organized into four analytical dimensions. The categories are derived from recurring relationships in the corpus rather than imposed as predetermined labels:

Primary textual evidence	Recurring textual pattern	Interpretive focus	Analytical category
Q. 96:1–5; Q. 2:31–32	Allah teaches, gives knowledge, and guides human beings	Divine source, purpose, and orientation of knowledge	Theological
Q. 2:31; Q. 2:129; Q. 2:151; Q. 62:2; Prophetic traditions concerning *fiqh*, knowledge, and wisdom	Teaching, knowing, understanding, interpretation, and *ḥikmah*	Formation and development of human knowledge	Epistemological
Q. 2:129; Q. 2:151; Q. 3:164; Q. 62:2; classical discussions of character and virtue	*Ta'līm* associated with *tazkiyah*, wisdom, character, intention, and conduct	Transformation of knowledge into moral disposition and action	Ethical
Q. 2:31–33; Q. 3:110; Prophetic educational practice; Ibn Khaldūn's discussion of *'umrān*	Knowledge connected with human responsibility, social formation, and continuity of civilization	Translation of knowledge and virtue into responsible social life	Civilizational

The table demonstrates the analytical pathway employed in this study: primary textual evidence → recurring textual pattern → interpretive focus → analytical category. The theological category is therefore derived from the repeated association between teaching and divine agency; the epistemological category from the relationship between teaching, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom; the ethical category from the association of teaching with *tazkiyah*, character, and conduct; and the civilizational category from the extension of knowledge and moral formation toward human responsibility and social order.

Taken together, these passages and classical discussions substantiate a multi-dimensional reading of *ta'līm*. Q. 96:1–5 foregrounds the divine orientation of knowing; Q. 2:31–33 highlights human epistemic capacity; the cluster Q. 2:129, 2:151, 3:164, and 62:2 associates instruction with *tazkiyah* and *ḥikmah*; and Ibn Khaldūn links learning to social formation. The four categories in Table 1 are analytical abstractions from these convergences, not claims that every source expressly names four foundations or that *ta'līm* exhausts all dimensions of Islamic education.

This reconstruction cautions against equating *ta'līm* exclusively with instruction, memorization, or curriculum delivery. These activities remain indispensable, yet they do not exhaust the educational significance of teaching and knowledge. The question is how epistemic competence becomes a basis for judgment and responsible action, not whether the transmission of religious knowledge should be abandoned.[33]

The textual cluster linking *ta'līm*, *ḥikmah*, and *tazkiyah* should also be interpreted carefully. Their co-occurrence indicates a meaningful educational relationship, but it does not establish that the three terms are synonyms or that one automatically causes the others. Rather, *ḥikmah* and *tazkiyah* qualify how acquired knowledge is evaluated, internalized, and enacted.

This distinction matters in institutional contexts where examinations, memorization, accreditation, or curriculum completion are used as proxies for educational success. Such indicators have legitimate purposes; the concern arises when they alone represent the ethical and spiritual quality of learning.[34]

Digital learning intensifies this challenge because students encounter religious claims through search platforms, social media, and artificial intelligence as well as through teachers. Greater access does not itself secure source reliability or ethical discernment; instructional practice must therefore address verification, interpretation, and accountable application of knowledge.[35]

The conceptual implication is not a deficiency inherent in *ta'līm* but a possible reduction of its practice to informational attainment. A more adequate account must retain knowing while clarifying how knowledge is cultivated and morally ordered. This is the point at which the distinct roles of *tarbiyah* and *ta'dīb* become analytically necessary.[36]

The Philosophical Relationship among *Ta'līm*, *Tarbiyah*, and *Ta'dīb*

The four analytical dimensions above establish that *ta'līm* has ethical and civilizational implications in addition to epistemic significance. The remaining philosophical problem concerns the functions of education: acquiring warranted knowledge is not identical to nurturing the learner's capacities, and neither function by itself specifies the normative criteria governing their proper use. These are analytically distinguishable operations, even where they converge in lived educational practice.

Ta'līm may therefore be described as the epistemic function of teaching and learning, including interpretation, critical evaluation, and the pursuit of wisdom. *Tarbiyah* denotes the developmental function of cultivating capacities and dispositions gradually, as illustrated by the language of nurturing in Q. 17:24. *Ta'dīb*, in the account developed here, denotes the normatively ordered relationship between knowledge, personal formation, and appropriate action. Such distinctions are conceptual emphases rather than exclusive lexical definitions.

One practical example clarifies the distinction: learning to evaluate the authenticity of a religious claim engages *ta'līm*; acquiring the intellectual patience and habits needed for sustained inquiry engages *tarbiyah*; and judging whether, when, and how the verified claim should be communicated with justice and responsibility engages *ta'dīb*. In practice, the three can occur together. Their relationship is therefore reciprocal, not a sequence that renders earlier functions obsolete.

For al-Attas, *ta'dīb* is not a synonym for etiquette or disciplinary compliance. It concerns recognizing and acknowledging the proper place of things within an ordered reality and acting accordingly. His account links the loss of *adab* with injustice and epistemic disorder. The present study draws on this normative insight while retaining the indispensable developmental function of *tarbiyah* and the epistemic breadth of *ta'līm*.[37]

A critical qualification is essential. Integrating knowledge and virtue is not peculiar to Islamic thought; contemporary character education and virtue ethics also emphasize habituation, moral judgment, and practical wisdom. The distinctive feature of the present Islamic reconstruction lies instead in its explicitly Qur'anic worldview, account of warranted knowledge, and spiritual accountability. This is a claim about philosophical grounding, not proof that the proposed framework is empirically more effective than alternative educational models.[38]

This functional distinction also prevents an apparent paradox: if *ta'līm* already has ethical implications, why invoke *ta'dīb*? Because an ethical implication does not, without further explanation, specify the evaluative criteria that should order competing forms of knowledge or uses of power. *Ta'dīb* names that normatively regulative task, while *tarbiyah* addresses how the capacity to exercise such judgment develops over time.

The Qur'anic descriptions of teaching Adam the names (Q. 2:31), teaching by the pen (Q. 96:4), and teaching the Book and wisdom (Q. 2:129; 3:164; 62:2) resist a merely informational account of *ta'līm*. Meanwhile, the verb *rabbayānī* in Q. 17:24 evokes sustained care and nurturing. Although these textual observations do not by themselves supply a fully articulated modern educational system, they warrant distinguishing epistemic activity from developmental cultivation and normative ordering.[39]

Al-Attas's criticism of *tarbiyah* concerns its semantic breadth as an overarching name for education, not the dispensability of nurturing. The synthesis proposed here therefore differs from a terminological replacement: *tarbiyah* remains necessary for human maturation, *ta'līm* for intellectual formation, and *ta'dīb* for judging the proper ends and uses of both. Their interaction is a conceptual relation to be defended, not a historical or causal sequence.[40]

The Philosophical *Ta'dīb* Framework for Islamic Religious Education (PTF–IRE)

The Philosophical *Ta'dīb* Framework for Islamic Religious Education (PTF–IRE) builds on al-Attas's analysis rather than claiming to originate the association of knowledge, *adab*, and justice. It also acknowledges that virtue-ethical and holistic educational models already connect cognition, character, and flourishing. Its more specific proposal is a relational classification: five philosophically indispensable foundations delimit why learning is meaningful and toward what it is ordered; *ta'līm* and *tarbiyah* designate how learners know and develop; and *ta'dīb* supplies a normative criterion for integrating the two. The framework therefore proposes an explicit architecture of roles, not five newly discovered Islamic values or a demonstrated pedagogical intervention.[41]

Each foundation is included because it addresses a distinct question that the other four cannot fully replace. Table 2 specifies these questions, their philosophical functions, and possible educational implications. The last column identifies proposed directions for future operationalization, not outcomes observed in schools or universities.

Philosophical foundation	Irreducible question	Philosophical function	Illustrative pedagogical implication
Qur'anic worldview	What is the nature and purpose of human existence?	Orients knowing and human formation within *tawḥīd* and accountability	Relate knowledge and curricular aims to human purpose
Integrative epistemology	How are knowledge claims justified?	Connects revelation, reason, inquiry, and critical verification	Examine evidence, source authority, and interpretation
Adab	How should knowledge and conduct be rightly ordered?	Regulates moral judgment, appropriate use of knowledge, and justice	Assess the ethics of interpretation and communication

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Philosophical foundation	Irreducible question	Philosophical function	Illustrative pedagogical implication
Taqwā	What sustains accountability when externally unobserved?	Adds transcendent motivation and inner responsibility	Cultivate reflective self-assessment and integrity
ʻImārat al-arḍ	Toward what shared responsibilities is formation directed?	Orients learning toward social and ecological contribution	Examine responsible action in community and environment

The answer to the first research question follows from this division of labor: *ta'līm* and *tarbiyah* are interdependent educational functions, while *ta'dīb* gives their integration a normative orientation. The Qur'anic worldview and epistemology make knowledge claims intelligible and answerable to criteria of justification; *adab* and *taqwā* guide their responsible use; and *ʻimārat al-arḍ* expresses the intended reach of education beyond individual achievement. Their classification does not imply that these concepts are separable in practice.

Compared with a generic holistic model, the added argument is not that cognitive, emotional, and character development should all be included; that proposition is already familiar. It is the specification of why and how those dimensions can be related within a particular account of reality, knowledge, ethical order, accountability, and responsibility. Compared with al-Attas, the proposed extension lies in separating five foundational questions from three educational functions and representing their mutual conditioning for contemporary IRE. This modest comparative claim avoids treating existing character-education traditions as ethically indifferent.[42]

Al-Attas's *The Concept of Education in Islam* already places *dīn*, *insān*, *ʻilm*, *ḥikmah*, *ʻadl*, *ʻamal*, and *adab* in conversation and differentiates *ta'līm*, *tarbiyah*, and *ta'dīb*. Consequently, PTF–IRE should not claim that their philosophical association is original. Its proposed contribution is the explicit mapping of foundational questions to educational functions and normative praxis, with a distinction between guiding principles, mediating processes, and intended outcomes. The framework thus remains open to conceptual revision when these boundaries prove inadequate.[43]

The integration also requires specifying the status of *ḥikmah* and *tazkiyah*. The Qur'anic account of the prophetic mission in Q. 62:2 connects recitation, purification, teaching the Book, and wisdom. In PTF–IRE, *ḥikmah* informs reasoned judgment across epistemology and *adab*, whereas *tazkiyah* describes the formative work through which ethical and spiritual dispositions are cultivated. Both remain indispensable without becoming additional, independently justified foundations. This distinction guards against an indefinitely expanding list of virtues and processes.

The selection test is philosophical indispensability: a foundational element must answer a question that cannot be fully absorbed by another. Qur'anic worldview answers what reality and human purpose are; integrative epistemology, what counts as warranted knowing; *adab*, how knowledge and conduct should be rightly ordered; *taqwā*, why accountability persists beyond external regulation; and *'imārat al-arḍ*, toward what social and ecological responsibilities learning is directed. This is an interpretive choice justified by conceptual differentiation, not a claim that other Islamic ethical concepts are unimportant.

For that reason, PTF–IRE is systemic and mutually conditioning rather than a causal ladder. The Qur'anic worldview informs epistemic assumptions, but what learners discover may also deepen their interpretation of that worldview; *adab* regulates inquiry and is itself refined by critical learning; *taqwā* motivates conduct while being cultivated through action; and social-civilizational engagement exposes the adequacy of prior judgments to further reflection. No single arrow denotes a necessary temporal progression, and responsible praxis is a normative educational aim rather than a guaranteed result.[44]

Figure 1 represents this reciprocal architecture. The five foundations are displayed around *ta'dīb* as the integrating educational orientation, while *ta'līm* and *tarbiyah* remain mutually informing operations within educational practice. Bidirectional connectors represent interpretive feedback and functional interdependence, not empirically confirmed causal pathways.

QUR'ANIC WORLDVIEW Ontology and purpose	↔	INTEGRATIVE EPISTEMOLOGY Knowledge and evidence
↕	↕	↕
TAQWĀ Spiritual accountability	↔ ***TA'DĪB*** **Normative integration** ↔	*ADAB* Ethical ordering and justice
↕	↕	↕
'IMĀRAT AL-ARḌ Civilizational responsibility	↔	*TA'LĪM* ↔ *TARBIYAH* Knowing ↔ developing

Figure 1. Conceptual architecture of PTF–IRE (authorial synthesis). The five foundations mutually inform ta'dīb, which normatively coordinates ta'līm (epistemic formation) and tarbiyah (developmental cultivation). The diagram depicts reciprocal relations and an intended orientation toward responsible praxis; it does not demonstrate effectiveness, prescribe a fixed sequence, or represent a causal model.

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Table 3 restates the distinction among the educational functions without conflating them with the five philosophical foundations:

Educational concept	Philosophical question	Primary function
Ta'līm	How is knowledge acquired and developed?	Epistemic
Tarbiyah	How are human capacities nurtured?	Developmental
Ta'dīb	How are knowledge and development ordered toward their proper purpose?	Normative-philosophical

The second research question can therefore be answered at a normative level: the five foundations constitute a coherent proposal insofar as each performs a nonredundant philosophical role while the three educational functions connect knowing, human formation, and ethically accountable praxis. This coherence is argued from the texts and the conceptual comparison; it still requires independent examination of conceptual boundaries, observable indicators, and the consequences of applying the framework in different educational settings.

Conclusion

This study answers the first research question by identifying *ta'līm*, *tarbiyah*, and *ta'dīb* as distinct but mutually necessary educational functions. *Ta'līm* develops and critically examines knowledge; *tarbiyah* cultivates human capacities and dispositions over time; and *ta'dīb* provides the normative orientation by which knowledge and formation are judged in relation to truth, justice, and responsible action. The movement suggested in earlier formulations of the argument is thus not a replacement of *ta'līm* or *tarbiyah*, but a clarification of their interdependence.

In answer to the second question, the proposed Philosophical *Ta'dīb* Framework for Islamic Religious Education (PTF–IRE) combines five mutually informing philosophical foundations: Qur'anic worldview (ontology and purpose), integrative epistemology (sources and warrant of knowledge), *adab* (right ethical ordering), *taqwā* (spiritual motivation and accountability), and *'imārat al-arḍ* (social and ecological responsibility). *Ta'līm* and *tarbiyah* operate within this configuration, while *ta'dīb* names its normative integration. The principal contribution beyond the writings of al-Attas and general holistic educational discourse is the explicit differentiation of these philosophical roles, the criteria used to select them, and the non-linear relationships proposed among them. This is a conceptual synthesis of existing sources, not the discovery of an unprecedented educational practice.

The framework remains interpretive and preliminary. It has not been tested through classroom observation, interviews, intervention studies, or comparisons of learner outcomes; nor does the selection of five foundations eliminate legitimate

alternative reconstructions of Islamic educational philosophy. Subsequent research should test the distinctiveness of these conceptual categories against other models, translate them into observable curriculum and assessment indicators, and examine whether their proposed relations are pedagogically meaningful in schools, pesantren, universities, and digital learning contexts. Until such evidence is available, PTF–IRE should be treated as a philosophically argued orientation for inquiry rather than an empirically validated instructional model.

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