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## A Comparative Study of Abuddin Nata and Naquib Al-Attas's Concepts of Character Education Values

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### Article Information

### Abstract

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*This study aims to analyze the conceptual comparison of character education values from the perspectives of Abuddin Nata and Naquib Al-Attas and to examine the relevance of integrating both perspectives for 21st-century Islamic Religious Education learning. The gap between the practical success of Islamic Religious Education in character formation and the theoretical idealism that emphasizes the need for deep philosophical foundations underscores the urgency of this research. The research method employs a qualitative approach with comparative-descriptive library research, data collection techniques through documentation of primary and secondary sources, data analysis using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model comprising data condensation, data display in comparison matrices, and conclusion drawing, as well as data validity testing through source triangulation and peer debriefing. The research findings indicate that Abuddin Nata develops character education values through a practical-pedagogical approach emphasizing noble character with strategies of role modeling, habituation, and curriculum integration. In contrast, Naquib Al-Attas develops a philosophical-epistemological approach that emphasizes the concepts of ta'dib and adab through worldview transformation and the understanding of the hierarchy of knowledge in Islam. The integration of both perspectives produces a comprehensive framework that bridges the gap between practical success and theoretical ideality, thereby deepening students' metaphysical awareness through Al-Attas's philosophical foundation. In contrast, Nata's practical strategies ensure effective implementation in Islamic Religious Education. The relevance of this integration contributes significantly to achieving SDG 4 on quality education by fostering strong character as a foundation for sustainable development grounded in universal and*

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*humanistic Islamic values.*

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perbandingan konseptual nilai-nilai pendidikan karakter dalam perspektif Abuddin Nata dan Naquib Al-Attas serta mengkaji relevansi integrasi kedua pemikiran terhadap pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam abad XXI. Kesenjangan antara keberhasilan praktis pembelajaran PAI dalam membentuk karakter dengan idealitas teoretis yang menekankan perlunya fondasi filosofis mendalam menjadi basis urgensi penelitian ini. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis library research komparatif-deskriptif, teknik pengumpulan data melalui dokumentasi sumber primer dan sekunder, analisis data menggunakan model Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana yang meliputi kondensasi data, penyajian data dalam matriks perbandingan, dan penarikan kesimpulan, serta uji keabsahan data melalui triangulasi sumber dan peer debriefing. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Abuddin Nata mengembangkan nilai-nilai pendidikan karakter melalui pendekatan praktis-pedagogis yang menekankan akhlak karimah dengan strategi keteladanan, pembiasaan, dan integrasi kurikulum, sementara Naquib Al-Attas mengembangkan pendekatan filosofis-epistemologis yang menekankan konsep ta'dib dan adab melalui transformasi worldview dan pemahaman hierarki ilmu dalam Islam. Integrasi kedua perspektif menghasilkan kerangka komprehensif yang menjembatani kesenjangan antara keberhasilan praktis dan idealitas teoretis, dimana fondasi filosofis Al-Attas memperdalam kesadaran metafisik peserta didik sementara strategi praktis Nata memastikan implementasi efektif dalam pembelajaran PAI. Relevansi integrasi ini berkontribusi signifikan pada pencapaian SDG 4 tentang pendidikan berkualitas melalui pembentukan karakter yang kuat sebagai fondasi pembangunan berkelanjutan yang berlandaskan nilai-nilai keislaman universal dan humanistik.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Character education has become a central concern in Islamic education discourse, particularly in response to the growing moral crisis, value degradation, and spiritual disorientation observed among the younger generation in the 21st century. Rapid globalization, the expansion of digital media, and the pervasive influence of secular ideologies pose significant challenges to the identity formation of Muslim students. Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is expected to serve as a strategic instrument for building students' character. Yet, questions persist about whether existing approaches are theoretically grounded and practically effective in producing authentic, lasting character transformation.

In the Indonesian context, IRE has been implemented through various pedagogical strategies such as teacher role modeling, behavioral habituation, and value integration in the curriculum (Syukur et al., 2024). While these approaches have contributed to observable improvements in students' attitudes and behaviors, scholars argue that practical success alone does not guarantee deep and substantive character formation. Without strong philosophical and epistemological foundations, character development risks being superficial and formalistic, and it is vulnerable to erosion when students encounter complex real-world challenges (Hakim, 2023; Ma`arif et al., 2024; Reksiana et al., 2024).

According to theoretical perspectives and the views of Islamic education experts, optimal character formation in students requires deep philosophical and epistemological foundations, as well as complex, continuous processes. Ideally, character education cannot achieve its full potential solely through practical and pedagogical approaches but requires a strong conceptual foundation regarding the nature of humanity, knowledge, and educational objectives in Islam (Adnan et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2023; Reksiana et al., 2024). The success of character education according to theory requires deep integration among spiritual, intellectual, and moral dimensions that cannot be achieved instantly or merely through outward behavioral habituation (Hassan et al., 2024; Zainuddin, 2023). Experts emphasize that true character formation must begin with reforming students' worldview of reality, which requires a long-term, systematic process (Faruqi et al., 2024; Yasin et al., 2023).

Ideally, according to the concept of ta'dib presented in various contemporary literature, character education must be rooted in metaphysical awareness of human position as servants of Allah and vicegerents on earth, which cannot be perfectly formed without going through a deep and comprehensive process of instilling adab (Muhsin et al., 2023; Syafii, 2024). Modern Islamic education theories affirm that authentic character transformation requires not only teacher role modeling and habituation but also correct epistemological understanding of knowledge and values, which is difficult to achieve in the context of formal education limited by time and curriculum (Hakim, 2023; Nasution et al., 2024).

Thus, in theory, maximum success in character education, as observed in the field, should not be achieved without strong philosophical foundations, lengthy processes, and perfect integration across all dimensions of Islamic education (Abdul-Aziz et al., 2024; Himeur et al., 2023; Hosaini et al., 2024).

There is a significant gap between the maximum effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education in instilling character education values in practice and the theoretical ideal proposed by experts. Factually, Islamic Religious Education learning has successfully formed students' character through practical approaches such as teacher role modeling, behavioral habituation, and value integration in the curriculum, producing students with good character in a relatively efficient time. However, according to theoretical perspectives, such success should require deep philosophical foundations, a comprehensive epistemological understanding of the nature of knowledge and values, and complex, continuous spiritual transformation processes that cannot be achieved solely through practical pedagogical approaches.

This gap raises fundamental questions about how Islamic Religious Education learning can achieve maximum results in character formation without going through all the theoretical processes considered essential by experts. The existence of differences between practical success and theoretical ideality indicates the possibility of contextual, methodological, or conceptual factors that have not been fully explored in the discourse of Islamic character education (Abnisa, 2017). This gap also raises the need to examine more deeply the relevance and effectiveness of practical approaches in Islamic Religious Education learning compared to philosophical approaches that emphasize deep transformation through the concept of ta'dib. From this gap emerges a research problem regarding how the comparison of Abuddin Nata's more practical-pedagogical thought with Naquib Al-Attas's philosophical-epistemological thought can provide a more comprehensive understanding of character education, and how the relevance of both perspectives can be integrated in 21st-century Islamic Religious Education learning to bridge the gap between practical success and theoretical ideality.

Previous research has examined various aspects of character education from an Islamic perspective, employing diverse approaches and research foci. Studies exploring practical-pedagogical approaches in IRE, such as those emphasizing teacher role modeling, habituation, and curriculum integration, have demonstrated measurable behavioral outcomes but tend to lack engagement with the philosophical underpinnings that give those practices their Islamic educational meaning (Ahmad et al., 2023; Subhan & Torchilin, 2024). While these studies are valuable in demonstrating what works in the classroom, they do not adequately address the epistemological and metaphysical dimensions necessary for deep character formation. Research on philosophical concepts such as ta'dib and adab (Dizon & Kamal, 2024; Li et al., 2024), on the other hand, provides rich conceptual frameworks but often remains abstract and lacks clear implementation pathways in formal educational settings. Comparative studies of Islamic education thinkers have also emerged, but most limit their scope to a single figure or fail to bring practical and philosophical dimensions into productive dialogue (Rosyid et al., 2023; Zuhdi et al., 2024).

Studies analyzing Abuddin Nata's thought generally emphasize the applicative and contextual aspects of character education in Indonesia's national education system, but few have connected it deeply with the philosophical perspectives of other figures (Ma`arif et al., 2024; Wahid et al., 2023). Meanwhile, research on Naquib Al-Attas's thought more extensively explores the philosophical and epistemological dimensions of the ta'dib concept but provides less elaboration on its practical implementation in formal learning contexts (Husaini et al., 2023; Latif & Zhai, 2024; Malik et al., 2024). There is a significant research gap in a comprehensive comparison between Abuddin Nata's practical-pedagogical approach and Naquib Al-Attas's philosophical-epistemological approach, particularly in identifying their convergences and differences and their relevance to contemporary Islamic Religious Education learning. This research fills that gap not only by comparing the two perspectives theoretically but also by analyzing how their integration can provide a more comprehensive framework for character

education development in 21st-century Islamic Religious Education learning, thereby avoiding the repetition of existing studies.

This research offers novelty through the comprehensive integration of Abuddin Nata's practical-pedagogical approach and Naquib Al-Attas's philosophical-epistemological approach within a unified analytical framework for the development of character education in Islamic Religious Education learning. Unlike previous research, which tends to study the two figures separately or emphasize only one dimension, this research explores their convergences and differences. It demonstrates how they can complement each other in addressing challenges in character education in the 21st century. The novelty of this research lies in the development of a character education model based on the synthesis of thought that combines Abuddin Nata's applicative-contextual strength with Naquib Al-Attas's philosophical-spiritual depth, thus producing a theoretical framework that is not only conceptually rich but also practically implementable. This research's contribution to SDGs achievement, particularly SDG 4 on quality education, is realized through the provision of a conceptual framework that can improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning in forming students' character who are not only intellectually intelligent but also morally and spiritually mature, thus able to contribute to building a just, peaceful, and sustainable society in accordance with other SDGs targets.

The urgency of this research lies in the pressing need to strengthen the foundations of character education in Islamic Religious Education amid the complex challenges of the 21st century, characterized by moral crisis, value degradation, and spiritual disorientation among the younger generation. Islamic Religious Education learning requires a theoretical framework that is both robust and applicable to produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also possess moral integrity and a strong Islamic identity. This research is important because it addresses the gap between the practical success of Islamic Religious Education learning in the field and the theoretical ideal proposed by experts, thereby optimizing the character education process through a comprehensive approach integration. In the context of achieving the SDGs,

particularly SDG 4 on quality and inclusive education, this research directly contributes to the development of an education system that focuses not only on academic achievement but also on strong character formation as a foundation for sustainable development. Effective character education will produce a generation that possesses values of justice, peace, tolerance, and social-environmental responsibility, which are prerequisites for achieving various other SDGs targets, including poverty alleviation, gender equality, and building an inclusive and sustainable society.

Given the gap between the practical success of Islamic Religious Education in instilling character education values and the theoretical ideal requiring deep philosophical foundations, this research examines the comparison between the thoughts of Abuddin Nata and Naquib Al-Attas on character education values. The first research question is how the conceptual comparison between character education values from Abuddin Nata's practical-pedagogical perspective and Naquib Al-Attas's philosophical-epistemological perspective, including identifying fundamental similarities and differences in terms of philosophical foundations, key concepts, character-instilling methods, and educational goal orientation. The second research question is how the relevance of integrating Abuddin Nata and Naquib Al-Attas's thoughts toward 21st-century Islamic Religious Education learning, particularly in providing a comprehensive theoretical and practical framework to overcome the gap between applicative success and conceptual ideality of character education, so that Islamic Religious Education learning can produce students who not only possess good character behaviorally but also have deep spiritual and epistemological awareness in accordance with the demands of holistic Islamic education.

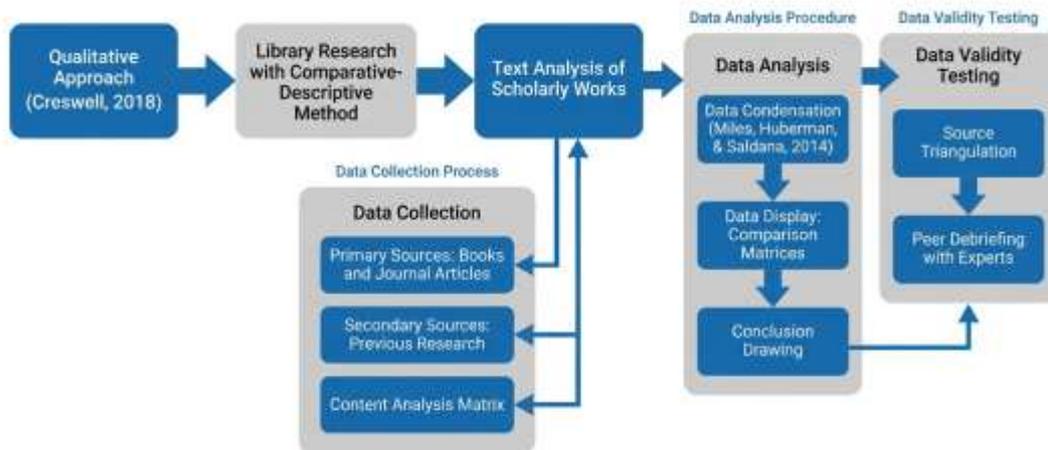
## **II. METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach to deeply analyze the conceptual comparison of character education values between Abuddin Nata and Naquib Al-Attas and to examine the relevance of integrating both perspectives for 21st-century Islamic Religious Education (Creswell, 2019). The research is library

research, using a comparative-descriptive method, focusing on systematic textual analysis of the scholarly works of both figures. Primary sources used in this study include major works by Abuddin Nata and Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas on Islamic education and character formation, such as Nata's writings on akhlak and Islamic pedagogy, and Al-Attas's foundational works on the concept of ta'dib and the Islamization of knowledge. Secondary sources consist of peer-reviewed journal articles and academic texts that critically engage with the thought of both figures. The inclusion criteria for literature selection required that sources must directly discuss character education, Islamic educational philosophy, or the thought of either figure, with preference given to publications from the last eight years to ensure currency of analysis. A total of more than 30 primary and secondary sources were analyzed and organized using a content analysis matrix to identify key conceptual dimensions, including philosophical foundations, core character values, character-instilling methods, and educational goal orientation, from both perspectives.

Data analysis techniques use the Miles et al. (2014) model, consisting of three stages, applied specifically to the context of this research. First, data condensation was carried out by reading, selecting, and reducing relevant concepts from the primary works of both figures, focusing on statements and ideas directly related to the values, methods, and philosophical foundations of character education, while setting aside content unrelated to the research focus. Second, data display was conducted by organizing the condensed data into a structured comparative matrix that maps the similarities and differences between Nata's and Al-Attas's approaches across key dimensions, including foundational philosophy, core concepts, pedagogical strategies, and educational goals, thereby enabling systematic visual comparison. Third, conclusion drawing was performed by synthesizing the comparative findings to produce interpretive conclusions about how the two perspectives converge, differ, and can be integrated into a comprehensive framework for IRE. Data validity testing is conducted through source triangulation by cross-checking interpretations against multiple works of each figure to ensure consistency, as well as peer debriefing through discussions

with Islamic education scholars to verify the credibility and accuracy of the comparative analysis, thus producing a rigorous and trustworthy understanding of how the integration of Nata's and Al-Attas's concepts can contribute to character education in 21st-century Islamic Religious Education.



**Figure 1.** Research framework

### III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### Conceptual Comparison of Character Education Values from Abuddin Nata and Naquib Al-Attas's Perspectives

Analysis of Abuddin Nata's thought reveals that character education values are developed through a practical-pedagogical approach that integrates Islamic teachings with the context of Indonesian national education. In his work on Islamic education and *akhlak*, Nata consistently argues that character values must be rooted in the Quran and Hadith while remaining responsive to the empirical needs of modern learners, resulting in a set of applicable values including religiosity, honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and social care (Reksiana et al., 2024). The philosophical foundation of Nata's thought centers on *akhlak karimah* as a manifestation of faith, realized through concrete, observable behavior in daily life. He emphasizes that character formation is not a spontaneous event but a systematic educational process that can be structured, measured, and evaluated through appropriate pedagogical strategies such as teacher role modeling (*uswah hasanah*), habituation, and integration of character values across the curriculum. Nata's approach is explicitly contextual, recognizing the plural

social-cultural reality of Indonesia as the primary context in which Islamic character education must operate, and therefore prioritizing methods that are both practically feasible and educationally effective within formal schooling systems (Ma`arif et al., 2024; Reksiana et al., 2024).

Unlike Nata, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas constructs his framework for character education on deep philosophical-epistemological foundations, with the concept of *ta'dib* as the essence of Islamic education. Al-Attas argues that Islamic education must be understood primarily as the instillation of adab in the human being, and that this process necessarily encompasses spiritual, intellectual, and moral dimensions simultaneously. In his foundational writings on Islamic education philosophy, Al-Attas defines adab not merely as outward courtesy or social etiquette, but as the correct recognition and acknowledgment of the right and proper place of things, persons, and institutions in the order of creation, a definition that positions adab as the central organizing principle of Islamic character formation (Al-Attas, 2023). Character education values in Al-Attas's framework must be rooted in a metaphysical understanding of the human being as a creature possessing both body and soul (*al-insan*), whose purpose is to serve Allah and fulfill the role of *khalifatullah* on earth. Regarding the hierarchy of knowledge, Al-Attas explicitly distinguishes between *fard 'ayn*, obligatory religious knowledge that every Muslim must acquire to fulfill their fundamental duties, and *fard kifayah*, knowledge, which is communal-obligation knowledge serving broader societal functions. This distinction, rooted in classical Islamic epistemology and systematized in Al-Attas's philosophy of Islamic education, serves as the epistemological backbone of his approach to character formation: students must first be grounded in *fard 'ayn* before engaging with *fard kifayah*, ensuring that their worldview and moral orientation are properly established. Al-Attas's philosophical foundation thus emphasizes that authentic character transformation cannot be achieved merely through behavioral habituation or teacher role modeling. Still, it requires a comprehensive transformation of students' worldview through a correct understanding of reality, knowledge, and the purpose of human life within an integrated Islamic perspective.

Conceptual comparison between the two shows fundamental differences in orientation and method, yet also reveals fundamental similarities in the ultimate goal of character education. Abuddin Nata develops character values through a bottom-up approach that starts with educational practice in the field and is built into a theoretical framework. At the same time, Al-Attas uses a top-down approach that starts from philosophical formulations about the nature of Islamic education, and is derived into practical principles. This methodological difference affects how both formulate character-instilling strategies, where Nata emphasizes teacher role modeling, positive behavioral habituation, and value integration in the curriculum as main methods that can be implemented in formal education contexts. In contrast, Al-Attas emphasizes adab formation through the ta'dib process, which involves reforming the knowledge structure, purifying language, and transforming students' metaphysical consciousness. Nevertheless, both aim to produce *insan kamil*, or complete human beings, who possess balance between the physical and spiritual dimensions, between intellectual intelligence and spiritual maturity, and between worldly competence and otherworldly righteousness.

In terms of key concepts that become pillars of each thought, Abuddin Nata places *akhlak karimah* as the core concept that is operational and measurable, with clear behavioral indicators that can be observed in learning contexts, such as punctuality as a manifestation of discipline, honesty in doing assignments, or care for others shown through social activities. Meanwhile, Al-Attas places adab as a central concept that is holistic and transcendental, encompassing not only outward behavior but also inner condition, thinking structure, and students' life orientation as a whole. Al-Attas's concept of adab contains a vertical dimension related to human relationship with God and a horizontal dimension related to human relationship with fellow creatures, and both must be understood within the framework of tauhid, which integrates all aspects of life. The difference in level of abstraction between the practical *akhlak karimah* and the philosophical adab reflects the difference in context and audience that becomes the focus of both thinkers, where Nata is more oriented toward the needs of educators and

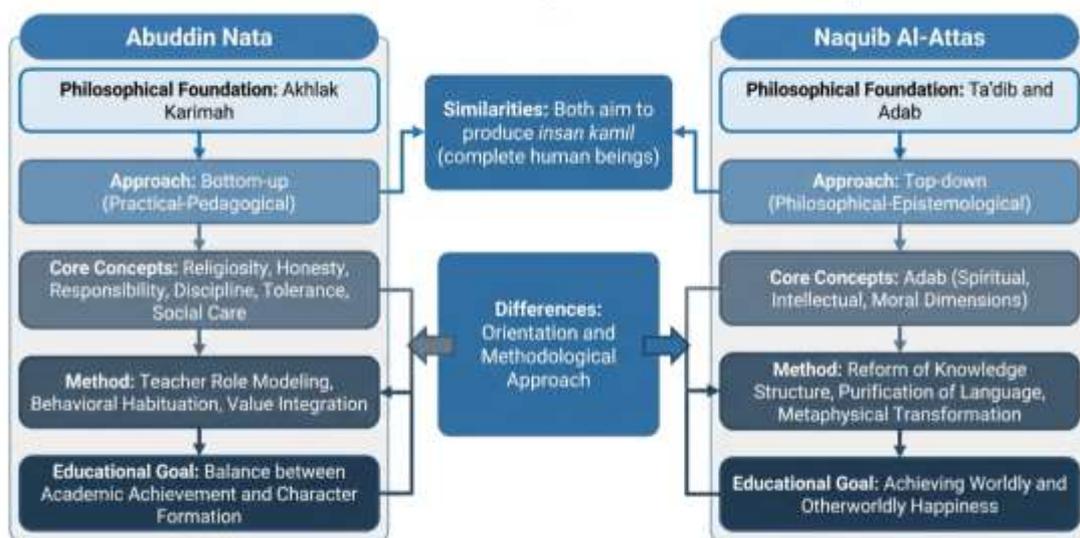
education practitioners in Indonesia. At the same time, Al-Attas is more oriented toward formulating a universal and fundamental Islamic education paradigm.

The orientation of educational goals in both figures' thoughts also shows significant differences despite having similar substance. Abuddin Nata formulates character education goals within a framework aligned with Indonesian national education goals, namely producing students who are faithful and pious to God Almighty, noble in character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens, emphasizing the aspect of balance between academic achievement and character formation. On the other hand, Al-Attas formulates educational goals within the framework of achieving worldly and otherworldly happiness by fostering civilized individuals who understand and acknowledge their proper place in the order of creation, thereby being able to fulfill their functions as *abdullah* and *khalifatullah* with full awareness and responsibility. This difference in orientation reflects different historical and social contexts: Nata responds to the needs of a secular-plural national education system. In contrast, Al-Attas responds to the epistemological and spiritual crisis faced by modern Muslims as they experience westernization and the secularization of thought. Thus, both offer different yet complementary solutions to problems of character education in contemporary Islamic contexts.

Research findings show that the fundamental difference between Abuddin Nata's practical-pedagogical approach and Naquib Al-Attas's philosophical-epistemological approach in formulating character education values aligns with existing theoretical views in Islamic character education literature. Al-Attas's *ta'dib* concept, which centers on the instillation of adab as the correct recognition of one's proper place in the divine order, reinforces the theoretical argument that true character formation must begin with the reform of students' worldview and epistemological orientation (Hakim, 2023). This finding resonates with contemporary Islamic education discourse, which positions spiritual and metaphysical awareness as prerequisites for authentic moral development rather than mere behavioral outcomes. Nata's approach, on the other hand, demonstrates the value of contextually grounded pedagogy: by anchoring

character formation in practices that are culturally familiar and institutionally feasible within Indonesia's national education system, his framework makes character education accessible, measurable, and sustainable in formal schooling contexts (Ma`arif et al., 2024; Reksiana et al., 2024). The comparative analysis thus reveals that both approaches are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary: Al-Attas provides the philosophical depth that grounds character education in Islamic ontology and epistemology, while Nata provides the pedagogical mechanisms for operationalizing this depth in everyday learning environments. This complementarity constitutes the central theoretical contribution of the present study to the discourse on Islamic character education.

However, research findings also reveal that Nata's practical approach, which prioritizes teacher role modeling and behavioral habituation, can produce significant character change without requiring students to undergo a fully explicit epistemological transformation. This challenges the theoretical assumption that optimal character transformation can be achieved only through deep, continuous philosophical processes (Hassan et al., 2024). This finding indicates that there are alternative mechanisms in character formation that do not entirely depend on explicit philosophical understanding, but can occur through implicit value internalization through consistent practice and habituation in a conducive educational environment.



**Figure 2.** Conceptual comparison of character education values

## **Relevance of Integrating Abuddin Nata and Naquib Al-Attas's Thoughts to Islamic Religious Education Learning**

The integration of Abuddin Nata and Naquib Al-Attas's thoughts offers a comprehensive theoretical and practical framework to bridge the gap between the applicative success and the conceptual ideality of character education in 21st-century Islamic Religious Education learning. Nata's practical-pedagogical approach, which emphasizes teacher role modeling, behavioral habituation, and value integration in the curriculum, can be strengthened by Al-Attas's philosophical-epistemological foundation, which emphasizes the formation of a correct worldview and a deep understanding of the hierarchy of knowledge and values in Islam. Islamic Religious Education learning that has been successfully applied in forming students' character can be improved in quality by integrating deep spiritual and epistemological dimensions, so that students not only behave well behaviorally but also have metaphysical awareness of why they should behave that way and how such behavior is related to the purpose of their creation as human beings. This integration is relevant to 21st-century education challenges that demand that students develop strong character amid the currents of globalization, secularization, and modernization that threaten the Islamic identity of the younger generation.

The relevance of integrating both thoughts in Islamic Religious Education lies in their ability to bridge the dichotomy between approaches that are too practical-pragmatic and those that are too philosophical-idealistic. Islamic Religious Education that emphasizes only practical aspects without a strong philosophical foundation tends to produce a ritualistic and formalistic understanding, where students perform worship and behave well without a deep understanding of its meaning and purpose, leaving them vulnerable to change when facing complex life challenges. Conversely, Islamic Religious Education that overemphasizes philosophical aspects without clear practical strategies tends to produce an abstract understanding that is difficult to implement in daily life, thereby creating a gap between knowledge and practice. The integration of Nata and Al-Attas's thoughts enables Islamic Religious Education learning to develop strategies that

start from strong philosophical foundations about human nature, knowledge, and educational purpose in Islam, then are derived into practical methods that can be implemented in formal education contexts through role modeling, habituation, and systematic and measurable curriculum integration.

In the context of 21st-century Islamic Religious Education learning, the integration of both thoughts provides solutions to the challenges of moral decadence and identity crisis faced by young Muslims. Nata's contextual and applied approach can address the practical needs of Islamic Religious Education by producing measurable behavioral changes in accordance with national education competency standards. In contrast, Al-Attas's philosophical and epistemological approach can provide the spiritual and intellectual depth needed to build students' mental and spiritual resilience in facing the infiltration of foreign values contrary to Islam. Islamic Religious Education learning that integrates both approaches will be able to produce students who not only possess *akhlak karimah* in outward behavior but also possess correct adab in their thinking structure and worldview, thus able to distinguish between beneficial and harmful knowledge, between values aligned with Islam and those contrary to it, and between true and false life purposes in the perspective of tauhid.

Integrating Nata and Al-Attas's thoughts into Islamic Religious Education learning can be achieved through a curriculum that balances cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions with spiritual and epistemological dimensions. At the cognitive level, Islamic Religious Education learning not only conveys knowledge about the pillars of Islam, pillars of faith, and morals in the form of memorization or literal understanding, but also teaches the correct structure of Islamic knowledge by distinguishing between knowledge sourced from revelation and knowledge sourced from human reason and experience, as well as explaining the hierarchy and function of each in Muslim life. At the affective level, Islamic Religious Education not only encourages students to love Islamic values emotionally but also builds metaphysical awareness of their position as servants of Allah and vicegerents on earth, with responsibilities toward themselves, others, and the universe. At the psychomotor level, Islamic Religious Education not only

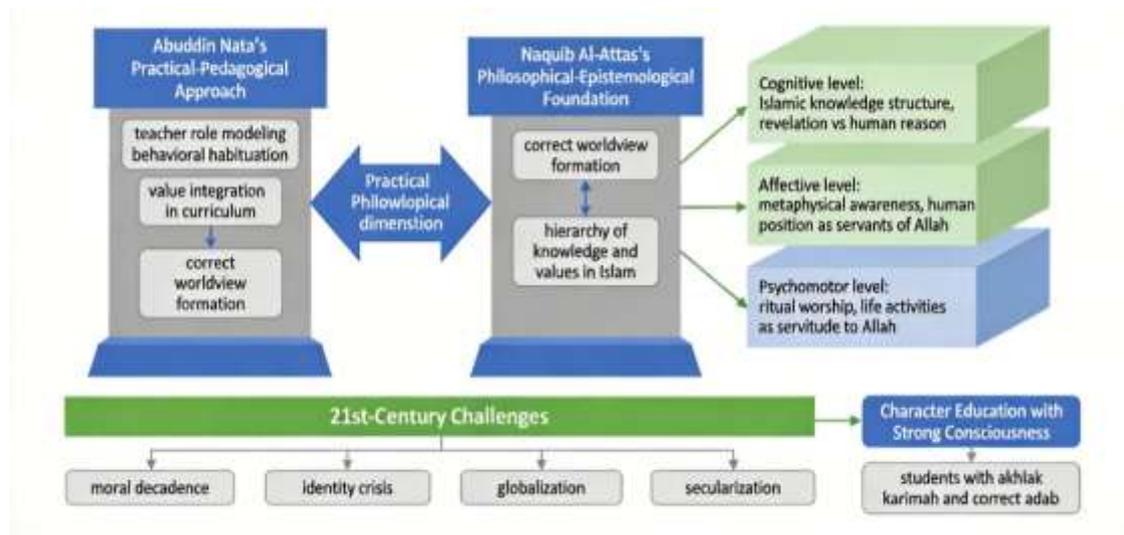
trains students to perform ritual worship correctly and technically but also guides them to perform all life activities as manifestations of servitude to Allah with full awareness and sincerity, thereby fostering unity among knowledge, faith, and deeds in students.

The relevance of integrating Nata and Al-Attas's thoughts also lies in its contribution to the development of Islamic Religious Education teachers' professionalism in carrying out dual roles as instructors and character educators. Islamic Religious Education teachers who understand Nata's practical-pedagogical approach will be able to design effective learning strategies to instill character values through role modeling, habituation, and curriculum integration, while understanding Al-Attas's philosophical-epistemological approach will provide depth to the educational vision and mission that guide all pedagogical activities toward the goal of forming civilized individuals. The integration of both approaches equips Islamic Religious Education teachers with the ability not only to teach Islamic Religious Education material as an academic subject but also to foster spiritual and intellectual transformation in students through deep dialogue about the meaning of life, the purpose of human creation, and the responsibilities of Muslims in the modern world. Thus, 21st-century Islamic Religious Education learning that integrates Nata and Al-Attas's thoughts will be able to bridge the gap between practical success and theoretical ideality, producing character education that is not only effective in changing behavior but also deep in forming consciousness, so that students become individuals with strong character, broad knowledge, and solid spiritual insight in facing the complexity of 21st-century life.

Research findings on the relevance of integrating Nata's and Al-Attas's concepts to 21st-century Islamic Religious Education confirm and extend theoretical views on the necessity of holistic approaches in character education. Contemporary Islamic education scholarship consistently emphasizes that authentic character transformation requires not only behavioral modeling and habituation but also a sound epistemological grounding in Islamic values and knowledge (Hakim, 2023; Hosaini et al., 2024). This study advances this argument by demonstrating how integration of both frameworks can address the limitations

of each approach in isolation: Nata's practically-oriented pedagogy risks producing ritualistic religious behavior that lacks depth, while Al-Attas's philosophical framework, if applied without pedagogical mediation, risks remaining too abstract for implementation in formal schooling contexts. The integrated framework proposed in this research positions IRE teachers as both educators and transformers: equipped with Nata's pedagogical tools to design structured and measurable learning experiences, while simultaneously guided by Al-Attas's educational vision to ensure that every pedagogical act is rooted in a correct Islamic worldview (Reksiana et al., 2024; Syafii, 2024). This study's contribution to contemporary Islamic education discourse lies precisely in this synthesis, demonstrating that philosophical depth and practical effectiveness are not competing priorities but mutually reinforcing dimensions of a comprehensive Islamic character education framework. The findings support the growing consensus in the field that IRE must evolve beyond content delivery to encompass transformative education that shapes students' consciousness, identity, and moral agency as Muslims in the modern world (Ma`arif et al., 2024; Zuhdi et al., 2024).

This research finds that integrating both approaches addresses the limitations of each perspective, where Nata's practical approach, which is effective in producing behavioral change, can be deepened by Al-Attas's philosophical foundation, which provides metaphysical awareness, thereby producing character transformation that is not only superficial but also substantive and sustainable. This finding strengthens the theoretical argument that character education requires strong philosophical foundations.



**Figure 3.** *Relevance of integrating Abuddin Nata and Naquib Al-Attas's thoughts to Islamic religious education learning*

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that Abuddin Nata and Naquib Al-Attas offer fundamentally distinct yet complementary frameworks for character education: Nata's practical-pedagogical approach centers on the formation of *akhlak karimah* through teacher role modeling, habituation, and curriculum integration within Indonesia's national education system, while Al-Attas's philosophical-epistemological approach grounds character formation in the concept of *ta'dib* and *adab*, requiring the transformation of students' worldview through correct understanding of the Islamic hierarchy of knowledge, including the distinction between *fard 'ayn* and *fard kifayah*. Despite their methodological differences, both perspectives converge on the shared goal of forming *insan kamil*. Their integration produces a comprehensive framework that bridges the gap between practical effectiveness and theoretical depth, where Al-Attas's philosophical foundation deepens students' metaphysical and epistemological awareness. At the same time, Nata's pedagogical strategies ensure that such awareness is concretely enacted in formal educational contexts. The integration of both perspectives contributes significantly to the development of Islamic character education theory and practice. It holds direct relevance to achieving SDG 4 on quality education by producing graduates who are not only academically competent but also morally

and spiritually mature, equipped to live as responsible Muslims and citizens in the complex, rapidly changing 21st-century world. Future research is recommended to examine the empirical implementation of this integrated framework in IRE classroom settings across different educational levels in Indonesia.

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