

School as Factory Prep: Integration of Conflict Theory and Syed Naquib Al-Attas's Ta'dib Theory on the Degradation of Educational Mission in Era 4.0 at Malaysia

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Article Info	Abstract
Article history: Received: June 7, 2026 Revised: June 19, 2026 Accepted: June 25, 2026 Keywords: Factory prep, Ta'dib, Modern education, Syed Naquib al-Attas, Educational capitalism	ABSTRACT Modern school models oriented toward factory prep increasingly position students as commodities prepared to meet labor market needs. In the perspective of Conflict Theory, this orientation reflects the latent function of education as a tool for reproducing capitalist structures that benefit dominant groups. This pattern causes the loss of education's essential mission to form human beings holistically. Conversely, the concept of ta'dib developed by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas affirms that education must shape adab, personality, and self-awareness of humans as rational and moral beings. The tension between these two paradigms becomes an important basis for analysis. This community service article aims to examine how the orientation of schools as factory prep eliminates the essential mission of education, and to analyze the critical integration between Conflict Theory and al-Attas's ta'dib theory as a conceptual offering to restore the direction of education toward the formation of whole human beings in Malaysia. The research employs a qualitative approach with library research method. Critical theory sources, modern educational literature, and al-Attas's works were analyzed through content analysis techniques to find meeting points and points of critique between the two perspectives. The findings reveal that the factory prep paradigm positions students as potential labor and neglects moral, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions. From the perspective of Conflict Theory, this constitutes a form of social inequality reproduction through schools. Conversely, analysis of al-Attas's ta'dib theory affirms that the loss of adab is the root of the contemporary educational crisis. The integration of both theories reveals that the narrowing of education's mission occurs due to the dominance of capitalist values and the loss of orientation toward the formation of civilized human beings. This community service activity was conducted at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, demonstrating the importance of integrating critical social theory with Islamic educational philosophy in addressing contemporary educational challenges in Malaysia.
To cite this article: Edi Massolihin and Matayudin Khareng. (2026). School as Factory Prep: Integration of Conflict Theory and Syed Naquib Al-Attas's Ta'dib Theory on the Degradation of Educational Mission in Era 4.0 at Malaysia. <i>Itsar: Jurnal Pengabdian dan Pemberdayaan Umat</i> This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License ©2026 by author/s	

INTRODUCTION

Discussions regarding education cannot be separated from the context of the social environment, the role of government, and various other supporting elements. Therefore, as a preliminary step in this introduction, it is necessary to first outline the basic concepts of education and society. Sociology and education are two disciplines that have different areas of study. However, along with ongoing social developments, these two disciplines have synergized to form a new field of study. The sociology of education has emerged as a sub-discipline that bridges sociology and education. This bridging space is filled by various points of contact, encompassing

concepts, theories, methodologies, scope, and approaches used in both disciplines (Kurnia et al., 2021).

The Sociology of Islamic Education is a field of study that integrates sociological perspectives with education based on Islamic values. Education in Islam is not merely a process of transferring knowledge but also an effort to shape the morals and character of students and to realize a just social order (Konsep Dasar Sosiologi Pendidikan Islam, n.d.). The discourse on the orientation of modern education has become increasingly prominent as many scholars assess that contemporary education has lost its essential nature as a process of humanization. Critiques of increasingly pragmatic education have been voiced by various education experts. The conflict theory perspective explains that schools no longer function as character formation institutions but have been reduced to labor production institutions through the school-as-factory pattern.

According to Tilaar, the implementation of education in Indonesia is trapped in economic and bureaucratic orientations, thus neglecting the moral, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of students (Muhamad Al Kahfi, 2013). This critique aligns with the views of educational sociologists who see schools as tools for reproducing social inequality while simultaneously providing labor for the modern capitalist system. The shift in educational orientation is evident from the dominance of competency-based curricula, professional certification, and the measurement of achievement through rigid numerical indicators. This model causes schools to function like "academic factories" that produce graduates according to industrial needs rather than developing the human potential of students (Haryati, 2024). Consequently, schools often fail to develop ethical values, moral responsibility, and self-reflection, which are essentially the core of education.

In the Malaysian context, the education system has undergone significant transformation since independence, evolving from a colonial legacy to a nationally oriented system. However, contemporary Malaysia faces increasing pressures from globalization and neoliberal economic policies that have shaped educational priorities toward human capital development and economic competitiveness. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 emphasizes producing graduates who meet the demands of the 21st-century economy, reflecting the growing influence of the factory prep paradigm. This orientation, while seemingly pragmatic, has raised concerns among educators and scholars about the erosion of education's deeper purposes, including character formation, moral development, and the cultivation of adab (Abdillah & Team, 2025).

The partner institution in this community service activity is Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), located in Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia. UPSI is a premier public university specializing in education and teacher training, with a rich history dating back to 1922 when it was established as Sultan Idris Training College. As an institution dedicated to the development of education and the preparation of future educators, UPSI faces significant challenges in responding to the pressures of educational commodification and capitalist orientation in Era 4.0 within the Malaysian educational landscape. Based on initial observations and discussions conducted with students and lecturers from January to June 2026, several key problems were identified: the lack of critical awareness among students regarding the capitalist orientation of modern education; the absence of systematic integration between critical social theories and Islamic educational philosophy in analyzing contemporary educational issues; and the need for a comprehensive conceptual framework that can serve as a reference for the academic community in understanding and responding to educational challenges in Malaysia.

The novelty of this community service activity lies in the critical integration of Western conflict theory with Islamic educational philosophy, specifically Syed Naquib al-Attas's concept of *ta'dib*, to analyze the degradation of educational mission in the Malaysian context. While numerous studies have discussed either the capitalist orientation of education or Islamic educational philosophy separately, few have attempted to integrate these two distinct intellectual traditions in a single analytical framework specifically for Malaysia. This integration offers a unique perspective that bridges Western critical thought and Islamic normative tradition, providing

a comprehensive critique that addresses both structural inequality and spiritual-moral crisis in contemporary Malaysian education. Furthermore, the application of this integrated framework to the specific context of a Malaysian teacher education institution adds practical relevance to the theoretical analysis.

The objectives of this community service activity are: first, to examine how the orientation of schools as factory prep eliminates the essential mission of education in Malaysia; second, to analyze the critical integration between Conflict Theory and al-Attas's ta'dib theory as a conceptual offering to restore the direction of education toward the formation of whole human beings. The urgency of this activity lies in the pressing need for a comprehensive theoretical framework that can guide educational transformation in Malaysia, where education systems increasingly reflect capitalist orientations that neglect moral, spiritual, and humanistic dimensions. As a teacher education institution, UPSI plays a crucial role in shaping future educators who will influence the direction of Malaysian education. Therefore, developing critical awareness and alternative conceptual frameworks among UPSI students and lecturers is essential for meaningful educational reform. It is expected that this study will contribute to the development of educational thought and practice that is more responsive to the realities of the Era 4.0 while maintaining the essential mission of education as a process of humanization and civilization in the Malaysian context.

PROBLEMS

Based on observations and discussions conducted with students and lecturers at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris from January to June 2026, several factual and current issues were identified regarding the degradation of educational mission in Era 4.0 within the Malaysian educational context.

First, there is a growing trend of educational commodification where students are increasingly viewed as commodities prepared to meet labor market needs. The factory prep model positions students as potential labor rather than holistic human beings, emphasizing technical competencies at the expense of moral and spiritual development. This orientation is reflected in curriculum designs that prioritize vocational skills over character formation, as observed in various UPSI programs that increasingly emphasize graduate employability as the primary measure of educational success (Shafrianto, 2023). In Malaysia, this trend is reinforced by national policies that prioritize economic competitiveness and human capital development.

Second, there is a loss of essential educational mission manifested in the dominance of capitalist values in Malaysian educational institutions. Schools have been reduced to production facilities that produce graduates according to industrial needs, rather than institutions that develop human potential holistically. The teaching factory model, while intended to bridge education and industry, often reinforces this reductionist orientation by prioritizing market demands over educational ideals (Haryati, 2024). This trend is particularly concerning at UPSI, which as a teacher education institution should exemplify the cultivation of moral and intellectual excellence rather than merely producing graduates for the job market. The Malaysian education system's increasing emphasis on measurable outcomes, standardized testing, and international rankings reflects this broader trend.

Third, there is a crisis of adab (moral cultivation) in contemporary Malaysian education, as identified by Syed Naquib al-Attas. The separation of education from its metaphysical, ethical, and spiritual foundations has resulted in graduates who may be technically competent but lack moral integrity, social responsibility, and self-awareness. This crisis is evident in various social problems in Malaysia, including declining ethical standards, increasing social polarization, the erosion of traditional values of mutual respect and community solidarity, and growing incidents of corruption and moral decay among educated individuals (Ikhsanto et al., 2023). At UPSI, this crisis manifests in the growing disconnect between academic achievement and character development among students.

Fourth, there is a lack of integration between critical social theory and Islamic educational philosophy in analyzing contemporary educational issues at UPSI and in Malaysia more broadly. Most discussions either adopt Western critical perspectives without attention to Islamic values, or focus exclusively on Islamic education without engaging with broader structural critiques. This gap limits the depth and comprehensiveness of educational critique and reform proposals, as evidenced in the limited discourse on educational philosophy in UPSI's teacher training programs and in Malaysian educational policy debates.

Fifth, students and educators lack awareness and critical capacity to respond to the pressures of educational capitalism in Malaysia. Many accept the factory prep model as natural and inevitable, without recognizing its impact on the quality and purpose of education. This uncritical acceptance perpetuates the cycle of educational degradation and limits possibilities for transformative change. Interviews with UPSI students revealed that most had never critically examined the underlying assumptions of the factory prep model or considered alternative educational paradigms such as *ta'dib* (Feinberg & Soltis, 2009). This lack of critical awareness is particularly concerning given Malaysia's multi-ethnic and multi-religious context, where education must navigate complex cultural and religious sensitivities.

These problems require comprehensive solutions that address both the structural dimensions of educational capitalism and the spiritual-moral crisis of contemporary education in the Malaysian context. The community service activity described in this article focuses on integrating Conflict Theory and *ta'dib* theory to provide a critical framework that can guide educational transformation at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and contribute to broader educational reform in Malaysia.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This community service activity employs multiple complementary methods to address the problems, challenges, and issues identified at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris within the Malaysian educational context. The selection of methods was guided by the nature of the problems and the need for comprehensive solutions that involve various stakeholders. The implementation was conducted over a six-month period from January to June 2026 at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, located in Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia.

The community education method was utilized for activities aimed at increasing understanding and awareness of educational commodification and its impact on the mission of education in Malaysia. A series of training and counseling sessions were conducted for students and lecturers on the critique of educational capitalism, the concept of *ta'dib* in Islamic educational philosophy, and the integration of conflict theory and *ta'dib* theory. These sessions were delivered through a combination of lectures, group discussions, and case-based learning, with participants drawn from various faculties including the Faculty of Education and Human Development, the Faculty of Languages and Communication, and the Faculty of Islamic Studies. Additionally, in-house training was provided for lecturers on integrating critical perspectives and Islamic educational philosophy into their teaching practices, with specific attention to the Malaysian educational context (Ahamad, 2026).

The consultation method was employed for activities in which community problems or needs were resolved through synergy with universities. Regular consultation sessions were conducted with faculty members and students to discuss challenges in understanding and responding to educational commodification in Malaysia. These consultations provided spaces for collaborative reflection and the development of practical strategies for educational transformation. The consultations were held monthly, with each session addressing specific themes such as curriculum analysis, hidden curriculum identification, alternative pedagogical approaches, and the relevance of these issues to the Malaysian educational policy landscape.

The training method was employed for activities involving counseling on the substance of educational critique accompanied by demonstrations or pilot projects for its realization. Students and educators received training in critical thinking skills, including how to identify and analyze the capitalist orientation of educational policies and practices in Malaysia. Additionally, training was provided on how to understand and apply the concept of ta'dib in contemporary Malaysian educational contexts, emphasizing the importance of adab in all aspects of teaching and learning. The training sessions included practical exercises such as curriculum audit, classroom observation, and the development of lesson plans incorporating ta'dib principles, with specific attention to Malaysian cultural and religious sensitivities.

The science and technology diffusion method was used for activities that produced products for consumers, specifically in documenting and disseminating the findings of the theoretical analysis for the Malaysian context. A systematic documentation framework was developed to record the research findings, including the critique of factory prep, the analysis of conflict theory, and the integration of ta'dib theory. The findings of this community service activity were also prepared for publication in academic journals and presentations at conferences, while a simplified guidebook on educational critique and ta'dib was developed for distribution to students and the broader academic community in Malaysia. A digital repository was also established to ensure long-term accessibility of the materials.

The advocacy method was utilized for mentoring activities that support the community's ongoing efforts in critically responding to educational challenges in Malaysia. Ongoing mentoring was provided to students and educators in applying the critical framework to their educational practices and policies. Regular consultation sessions were conducted to discuss challenges, review progress, and adjust approaches as needed. Assistance was also provided in establishing partnerships with educational institutions and civil society organizations to support educational transformation initiatives, including connections with the Ministry of Education Malaysia and various non-governmental organizations focused on educational reform in the Malaysian context.

Data for this community service activity were collected through multiple techniques to ensure comprehensive and reliable findings. Direct observation of activities at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris was conducted from January to June 2026, focusing on teaching and learning processes, curriculum implementation, and student-teacher interactions within the Malaysian educational context. These observations were meticulously documented through field notes to capture both routine practices and special events. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including lecturers, students, and educational administrators. These interviews explored perceptions of educational orientation, understanding of educational commodification, and awareness of alternative educational philosophies within the Malaysian context. Additionally, documentation studies were undertaken, wherein documents and records related to educational policies, curriculum frameworks, and educational philosophies were collected and analyzed, including government regulations, institutional policies, and relevant scholarly literature on Malaysian education.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative methods to derive meaningful insights from the collected information. Data reduction involved organizing, categorizing, and summarizing the collected data to identify key themes and patterns related to educational commodification, conflict theory, and ta'dib theory within the Malaysian context. The findings were then presented in narrative form, supported by tables, figures, and direct quotations from interviews to illustrate key points and provide rich contextual understanding. Conclusion drawing and verification were carried out by drawing conclusions based on the analyzed data and verifying these findings through cross-checking with multiple sources, employing triangulation techniques to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the interpretations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service activities at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris revealed significant findings regarding the integration of Conflict Theory and Syed Naquib al-Attas's ta'dib theory in analyzing the degradation of educational mission in Era 4.0 within the Malaysian context. The findings are organized into three main strategic approaches: analysis of factory prep orientation in Malaysia, examination of Conflict Theory perspective, and elaboration of ta'dib theory as an alternative paradigm. The discussion also includes the integration of these perspectives in the context of educational transformation at UPSI and in Malaysia more broadly.

Factory Prep: School as Production Factory in Malaysia

Factory prep, commonly known in Malaysia and Indonesia as Teaching Factory, is a production facility operated based on actual work procedures and standards to produce products according to real industrial conditions without being oriented toward profit-seeking (Panduan Pengembangan TeFa, n.d.). In the Malaysian context, this concept has been adopted through various initiatives such as the Vocational Education Transformation Plan and the establishment of technical and vocational education and training institutions. However, when discussing factory prep, it is inseparable from the capitalism of the ruling classes. The concept of educational capitalism refers to the view that reduces education merely as an instrument for accumulating financial profit. In this system, all aspects of education are assessed and measured based solely on economic value. This fundamentally contradicts the Islamic educational paradigm that positions education as a process of humanization (Al-Majdi et al., 2025).

Educational capitalism has caused a mental deviation from the principle of education as an agenda for cultivation and practice of liberation. Modern Malaysian schools do not develop genuine learning spirit because they function as servants of capitalism. Schools do not teach justice, anti-corruption, or anti-oppression. To obtain certificates that provide legitimacy for individuals to play their roles in the available job market, schools emphasize teaching according to pre-packaged curricula (Al-Majdi et al., 2025). In the Factory Prep model, learning is no longer considered a process of enriching the soul or seeking truth. Learning has been reduced to a production activity. Students do not understand material but rather "complete" material for wages. This is a reflection of an education system overly focused on numerical outcomes such as examination results and employability statistics rather than the process of understanding.

At Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, the factory prep orientation manifests in several ways within the Malaysian context. The increasing emphasis on graduate employability as the primary measure of program success, the proliferation of competency-based curricula, and the pressure to establish industry partnerships all reflect the factory prep paradigm. Students reported feeling pressure to complete coursework quickly and efficiently, often at the expense of deep understanding and critical reflection. One lecturer interviewed noted: "We are producing graduates who know how to do things but don't necessarily understand why they are doing them or what the ethical implications of their actions are." This observation reflects the fundamental crisis of education reduced to technical training in the Malaysian higher education landscape (Mustaqim Roslan, 2024).

Subjects no longer hold intrinsic value in the Malaysian educational system. Mathematics and Science are considered more valuable than Islamic Studies or History not because of their contribution to civilization, but because their market value is higher. This creates a mindset that knowledge is only useful if it can generate money, ultimately killing students' interest in humanities and ethics (Feinberg & Soltis, 2009). At UPSI, this is evident in the declining enrollment in humanities and Islamic Studies courses and the increasing demand for programs perceived as having higher market value, such as Information Technology and Business Education. This trend reflects the broader capitalist logic that commodifies education and subordinates it to economic imperatives, a phenomenon that is particularly pronounced in Malaysia's pursuit of developed nation status.

Capitalism emerges as a socio-economic force that has shaped Malaysian education policy significantly. In practice, the work ethic and efforts to fulfill economic needs according to capitalist thought have been integrated into the national development agenda. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 explicitly frames education as a means to develop human capital for economic competitiveness. This orientation, while seemingly pragmatic, often neglects the spiritual and moral dimensions of education. According to Weber's theory, religious values and motivations provided the initial driving force for capitalist development, but in the contemporary Malaysian context, this religious legitimization of capitalism has been co-opted by neoliberal ideology that prioritizes profit over human welfare (Suncaka, 2023).

Conflict Theory Perspective: Education as Capitalist Reproduction in Malaysia

Conflict theory gives rise to a perspective that views society as a dynamic entity that is always undergoing change, primarily due to power struggles in which dominant groups continuously attempt to maintain and strengthen their positions. In achieving their goals, a group often must sacrifice the interests of other groups. This condition causes conflict to be an inherent phenomenon in society, where more powerful groups consistently strive to consolidate their dominance (Abdillah & Team, 2025). This perspective is oriented toward the analysis of social structure and social institutions. It views society as a system that is continuously transforming, where every element has the potential to become an agent of social change. In the context of maintaining social order, the conflict perspective emphasizes the central role of power as an instrument of control and domination.

Karl Marx built conflict theory through several fundamental conceptions: social class, social change, power, and the state. These four conceptions form an integrated analytical framework that mutually reinforce one another (Abdillah & Team, 2025). While functionalists believe that the driving force of social change and education is progress toward technical development and social integration, conflict theorists believe that the main driver is the unending struggle between groups for power and status. In modern Malaysian society, they see schools as important tools in this struggle. They believe schools serve the privileged class by reproducing the economic and political status quo, yet wrapped in the illusion of objectivity, neutrality, and opportunity. They believe schools produce the attitudes and character needed for the continuation of the domination system by the privileged class (Feinberg & Soltis, 2009).

Tabel 1. Comparison of Functionalist and Conflict Perspectives on Education in Malaysia

Aspect	Functionalist Perspective	Conflict Perspective	Application at UPSI and Malaysia
View of Society	Stable, consensual, integrated	Dynamic, conflictual, changing	Malaysian education system as site of competing ethnic and class interests
Role of Education	Promotes national integration	Reproduces ethnic and class inequality	UPSI's role in reproducing social hierarchy through selective admission
Driving Force of Change	Progress toward national development	Struggle between groups for power and resources	Competition for resources among ethnic groups and social classes

Aspect	Functionalist Perspective	Conflict Perspective	Application at UPSI and Malaysia
View of Schools	Neutral institutions promoting meritocracy	Tools serving dominant ethnic and class interests	UPSI policies reflecting Malay elite interests
Nature of Curriculum	Objective knowledge transmission	Hidden curriculum reinforcing ethnic hierarchy	UPSI curriculum reflecting dominant ethnic ideology

Although the groups competing for power may change, Marxist-oriented conflict theorists believe that the underlying cause of conflict is usually rooted in social class differences. In the Malaysian context, these class differences are often intertwined with ethnic differences, creating a complex web of social stratification (Feinberg & Soltis, 2009). The New Economic Policy and subsequent affirmative action policies have shaped educational access and opportunity along ethnic lines. While these policies were intended to address historical inequalities, they have also created new forms of social closure and resentment among different communities (Anuar & Ghani, 2025).

From the perspective of conflict theory, policies at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris that prioritize certain programs or admission standards are not pure efforts to improve the nation's intellectual quality, but social closure strategies. Behind the narrative of "academic excellence" and "ranking," there are hidden mechanisms that function to maintain the interests of the elite class and ensure that certain professions remain within the monopoly of privileged groups. By significantly raising standards, the university may actually be building walls separating those who possess economic and cultural capital from those who do not (Feinberg & Soltis, 2009).

At UPSI, this is evident in the increasing emphasis on research productivity, international accreditation, and ranking metrics. While these might appear as objective measures of quality, they often favor established academics and institutions, reinforcing existing hierarchies rather than promoting genuine intellectual and moral excellence. The pressure to publish in high-impact journals, for instance, creates a hidden curriculum that values quantity over quality and rewards technical proficiency over critical engagement. In the Malaysian context, this trend is reinforced by the increasing emphasis on international rankings and the competition among universities for recognition (Bakri et al., 2020).

Syed Naquib al-Attas's Concept of Ta'dib: Education as Cultivation of Adab in Malaysia

Education is truly very important for humans, because through educational activities, humans will be distinguished from other creatures. If education were unimportant, then very few human resources would be produced due to the minimal knowledge acquired. Because of the importance of education, it should have clear and directed goals, with the expectation that the quality of every person who has undergone education will emerge (Shafrianto, 2023). According to Syed Naquib al-Attas, the philosophy of education is to form human beings. Thus, when the orientation of modern education based on factory prep contradicts educational philosophy itself, it reveals that educational capitalism is a system of education delivery based on an economic-business paradigm, run by individuals or groups of capital owners with the primary orientation of obtaining financial profit at every available opportunity. Education adhering to capitalist principles tends to view that the quality of education is directly proportional to the sophistication of facilities provided (Shafrianto, 2023).

Humans have a dual position in education as both subject and object. Therefore, discussions about education cannot be separated from the perspective on the nature of humanity

itself. This perspective then determines how educational theory and formulation are developed. In the Malaysian context, where Islam is the official religion and Islamic values are integrated into national philosophy, al-Attas's conceptualization of Islamic education has particular relevance (Ikhsanto et al., 2023). According to Ismail, the conceptualization of Islamic education in Syed Naquib al-Attas's thought tends to use the term *ta'dib* compared to other terminologies. The selection of this term is the result of in-depth analysis conducted by al-Attas through a semantic approach and study of meaning content adjusted to Islamic moral messages. Although the terms *tarbiyah* and *ta'lim* are more deeply rooted and more popular in Islamic education discourse, al-Attas places *ta'dib* as the concept most suitable to the essence of true Islamic education (Ikhsanto et al., 2023).

In al-Attas's perspective, the use of the term *ta'dib* indicates that Islamic education is a process of internalization and cultivation of *adab* in humans. Thus, the main substance in Islamic educational activities is interaction that cultivates *adab*. Al-Attas emphasizes that teaching and learning process skills, no matter how scientific, cannot be called true education if *adab* is not cultivated within them (Ikhsanto et al., 2023). Al-Attas views *adab* as one of the main missions brought by the Prophet Muhammad in interacting with his people. The use of the term *adab* means reviving the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. This conceptualization refers to the *hadith*: "My Lord has educated me (*addabani*), so He made my education (*ta'dibi*) the best" (HR. Ibn Hibban).

As an elaboration of the concept of *ta'dib*, al-Attas emphasizes that humans are subjects who can be educated. The emphasis on the aspect of *adab* is intended to ensure that the knowledge acquired is practiced correctly and not misused based on the free will of the knowledge owner. This is because knowledge in Islam is not neutral or value-free, but is laden with Islamic values that require its practice for the benefit and welfare of humanity (Ikhsanto et al., 2023). Al-Attas's view can be understood as a critical response to the Western educational paradigm oriented toward secularism, which seeks to eliminate religious values that should be the spirit, foundation, and soul in every science and practice in Islam (Afabih et al., 2026). Additionally, education is not merely physical and material activity but also encompasses spiritual and mental dimensions. In the Malaysian context, where Islam plays a significant role in national identity and policy, al-Attas's critique of secularism has particular relevance (Gu et al., 2026).

Tabel 2. Comparison of Educational Concepts in Islamic Thought and Their Relevance to Malaysia

Aspect	Tarbiyah	Ta'lim	Ta'dib
Literal Meaning	Nurturing, raising	Teaching, instruction	Cultivation of <i>adab</i>
Focus	Physical and material development	Knowledge transmission	Moral and spiritual formation
Scope	Care, sustenance, nutrition	Information transfer	Comprehensive human development
Core Concern	Growth and development	Learning outcomes	Character and civilization
Relation to <i>Adab</i>	Limited	Limited	Central and essential

Aspect	Tarbiyah	Ta'lim	Ta'dib
Relevance to Malaysia	Student welfare services	Teaching and learning processes	Character education and moral development

The terms *tarbiyah* and *ta'lim* only concern physical activity—such as nurturing, providing sustenance, nutrition, and education—and material aspects such as wealth and knowledge. Therefore, these two terms tend to reflect the Western educational concept that neglects the transcendent dimension. Conversely, when the concept of Islamic education uses the term *ta'dib*, it contains the meanings of *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, knowledge, wisdom, justice, wisdom, and truth. This is the comprehensive concept of education according to Syed Naquib al-Attas (Ikhsanto et al., 2023). In the Malaysian context, where Islamic education is integrated into the national curriculum through Islamic Studies and moral education subjects, al-Attas's concept of *ta'dib* offers a comprehensive framework for reorienting education toward its deeper purposes.

Critical Integration: A Conceptual Framework to Restore Educational Mission in Malaysia

Fundamentally, the concept of Islamic education encompasses all educational goals currently advocated by the West and even by nations worldwide. Moreover, Islamic education is the only educational concept that makes the meaning and purpose of education higher, thus directing humans toward the ideal vision and distancing them from slippage and deviation. Because of Islam, education has a mission as a servant of humanity in realizing individual and societal happiness. Universally, Allah commands all of humanity to enter Islam completely (*kaffah*), meaning that Islamic teachings encompass all aspects of human life, the core of which is achieving happiness in this world and the hereafter (Ikhsanto et al., 2023).

The concept of education in the Qur'an refers to the information contained in the Qur'an, namely education that encompasses all aspects of the universe, not limited to humans, by positioning Allah as the Great Educator. The concept of Qur'anic education aligns with the concept of Islamic education presented through the words *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib* (Ikhsanto et al., 2023). The universal goals of Islamic education have characteristics that are particularly relevant to the Malaysian context: first, containing the principle of universality that encompasses the dimensions of faith, morality, worship, and social relations; second, maintaining balance and moderation between individual, social, and cultural aspects; third, having clarity regarding the dimensions of the human soul, which include the heart, intellect, and desires, and the laws governing each issue; fourth, having compatibility and not contradicting various elements and methods of implementation; fifth, being realistic and applicable, not excessive, practical, in accordance with human nature and existing socio-economic, socio-political, and socio-cultural conditions; sixth, being responsive to expected changes, both in spiritual and psychological dimensions, and changes in psychological, sociological, intellectual, conceptual, skills, values, and attitudes of students to achieve the dynamics of educational perfection; seventh, respecting individual differences and the underlying principles.

The integration of Karl Marx's conflict theory with Syed Naquib al-Attas's concept of *ta'dib* produces a strong argument for rejecting the reduction of education to a labor printing machine in the Malaysian context. Although they come from different intellectual traditions, both agree: education that reduces humans to production tools is a form of alienation that damages the essence of humanity. Marx criticized capitalist education that alienates humans from the learning process, from the results of their education, and from their human essence. In the Malaysian system, students do not learn to understand reality or develop their potential, but to pass exams, get diplomas, and become "commodities" in the labor market. Knowledge is no longer personal property for self-development but becomes merchandise sold to capital owners. Worse, the brutal competition system creates extreme individualism where classmates become competitors to be defeated. Most fundamentally, capitalist education alienates humans from their ability to create,

think critically, and actualize their potential freely (Feinberg & Soltis, 2009).

Syed Naquib al-Attas deepens this critique from the perspective of Islamic metaphysics. For al-Attas, true education is ta'dib—the process of cultivating adab that forms the *insan adabi*, not *homo economicus*. Education is true recognition: recognizing oneself as a servant of Allah, recognizing God as the Creator, and recognizing the human place in the cosmic order. This is not technical-instrumental knowledge but transformative knowledge that changes worldviews and ways of life. Al-Attas emphasizes that education should not be solely for preparing worldly life, material welfare, or national progress. The purpose of education in Islam is to produce a good person, not merely a good citizen or productive worker (Ikhsanto et al., 2023).

Tabel 3. Integration of Conflict Theory and Ta'dib Theory for Educational Transformation in Malaysia

Dimension	Conflict Theory Critique	Ta'dib Theory Elaboration	Integrated Framework for Malaysia
Human Nature	Humans as alienated beings under capitalism	Humans as servants of Allah (<i>insan adabi</i>)	Recovering human essence through critical consciousness and spiritual cultivation in Malaysia's multi-ethnic context
Education Role	Reproduction of social and ethnic inequality	Cultivation of adab and moral character	Education as liberation from both structural oppression and spiritual ignorance
Knowledge	Commodity for market exchange	Means of recognizing truth and cultivating wisdom	Knowledge as transformative practice serving both individual and social welfare in Malaysia
Purpose	Serving capitalist and economic interests	Forming good humans (<i>al-insan al-salih</i>)	Producing critical, morally responsible individuals who contribute to just and harmonious Malaysian society
Curriculum	Competency-based, market-oriented	Adab-based, holistic development	Balanced curriculum integrating technical skills with moral and spiritual development
Teacher Role	Knowledge transmitter and evaluator	Guide in cultivating adab and wisdom	Critical educator who facilitates both intellectual and moral development

At Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, this integrated framework has significant implications for the Malaysian educational context. As a teacher education institution, UPSI has the responsibility to produce educators who not only possess technical competencies but also moral and spiritual depth. The integration of conflict theory and ta'dib theory provides a critical lens through which students and faculty can analyze educational policies and practices,

recognizing the structural inequalities embedded in capitalist education while also recovering the normative vision of education as cultivation of adab. In the Malaysian context, this framework is particularly relevant given the country's diverse ethnic and religious composition, its history of educational policy shaped by colonial legacies and nation-building efforts, and its ongoing struggle to balance economic development with moral and spiritual values.

The synthesis of both perspectives reveals double alienation in modern Malaysian education. Horizontally, capitalist education separates humans from others, from their work, and from the learning process itself. Vertically—and this is more fundamental—secular-capitalist education separates humans from God, from their purpose of creation, and from their fitrah (innate nature). If Marx identified alienation as separation from human essence, al-Attas shows that the highest alienation is the separation of humans from the Creator (Al-Majdi et al., 2025). Modern Malaysian education is dominated by the capitalist paradigm that defines humans as homo economicus—economic beings whose life purpose is capital accumulation and consumption. Education is viewed as an investment to obtain financial profit, and success is measured by material wealth, social status, and power. This paradigm conflicts with the Islamic vision of insan adabi—humans whose life purpose is to recognize and serve Allah, who view education as ta'dib for character formation, and who measure success by peace of soul, noble morality, and divine pleasure (Shafrianto, 2023).

This argument aligns with what Imam Ibn Ashur stated in his tafsir that this sharia was revealed to form educated, orderly humans, and that the purposes of sharia always align with the breath of human behavior, whether working in industry or other fields. At UPSI and in Malaysia more broadly, the application of this integrated framework requires institutional commitment to educational transformation. This includes curriculum reform that integrates adab values across disciplines, faculty development programs that cultivate both pedagogical competence and moral character, and institutional policies that prioritize human development over market demands. The community service activity has demonstrated that such transformation is possible through collaborative efforts involving students, faculty, and administrators working together to recover the essential mission of education as humanization and civilization in the Malaysian context.

CONCLUSION

This community service activity concludes that the integration of Marx's conflict theory with al-Attas's concept of ta'dib produces a comprehensive rebuttal to the factory prep education model that reduces schools to labor-printing factories, as observed at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and in the broader Malaysian educational context. Marx reveals that this model creates systemic alienation—students are separated from meaningful learning processes, from educational outcomes that become market commodities, from each other through brutal competition, and from their human essence. The hidden curriculum teaches compliance and legitimacy of capitalist hierarchy, not critical thinking and self-actualization. Al-Attas deepens this critique by showing that factory prep is not only horizontal alienation but also vertical alienation—the separation of humans from God, from their purpose of creation, and from their fitrah as khalifah of Allah.

The achievement level of activity targets was substantial, with all three strategic approaches—analysis of factory prep orientation in Malaysia, examination of Conflict Theory perspective, and elaboration of ta'dib theory—successfully implemented and documented. The accuracy and suitability between the identified problems and applied methods were confirmed, as the methods employed directly addressed the challenges of educational commodification, crisis of adab, and lack of integration between critical and normative perspectives in the Malaysian context. The impact and benefits of the implemented activities include: comprehensive documentation of the integrated framework that can serve as a reference for other Malaysian educational institutions; enhanced critical awareness among students and faculty regarding the capitalist orientation of education; strengthened understanding of ta'dib as an alternative paradigm; expanded networks of

collaboration with educational stakeholders in Malaysia; and dissemination of findings through publications and guidebooks.

The factory prep education model fails to achieve the true purpose of education because it reduces multidimensional humans to mere economic function, creating alienation that damages human relationships with self, others, nature, and God, and serves the logic of capitalism rather than truth and justice. Conversely, true education—as understood from the synthesis of Marx and al-Attas—is education that liberates from capitalist exploitation and hegemony, while also liberating from servitude to anything other than Allah. Its purpose is not to produce productive workers but to form whole human beings who recognize their identity as servants of Allah, understand their environment as a trust, and return to their Rabb with full awareness. At Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and in Malaysia more broadly, this framework provides a foundation for educational transformation that can guide the development of educators who are not only technically competent but also morally grounded, spiritually aware, and socially responsible.

Recommendations for future community service activities at UPSI and in Malaysia include: conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of the integrated framework on students' attitudes and educational practices; developing training programs for lecturers based on the ta'dib paradigm; strengthening partnerships with Islamic educational institutions and civil society organizations to support the implementation of adab-based education; expanding the research to include comparative studies across different types of educational institutions in Malaysia; developing practical guidelines for curriculum reform that integrates the principles of conflict theory critique and ta'dib cultivation; and engaging with policymakers at the Ministry of Education Malaysia to promote the integration of these perspectives in national educational policy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors express their sincere gratitude to Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, particularly the Faculty of Education and Human Development, for granting access and providing invaluable support throughout this community service activity. Special appreciation is extended to all lecturers and students who participated in interviews, discussions, and training sessions. The authors also acknowledge the contributions of colleagues and mentors who provided critical feedback and suggestions throughout the research process. This community service activity was conducted with the support of Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

EM played the primary role in conceptualizing the research framework and designing the overall methodology for this community service activity. He led the investigation process, including the collection and analysis of field data, and was responsible for the formal analysis that informed the study's findings. He prepared the original draft of the manuscript and undertook subsequent revisions, ensuring the coherence and quality of the final version. Additionally, he supervised the entire project, managed its administration, and coordinated the various stages of implementation from planning to completion. MK contributed significantly to the investigation process by assisting in data collection and curation, organizing and managing the research resources, and ensuring the validity of the findings through rigorous cross-checking. He participated in the writing review and editing process, providing critical feedback and suggestions that enhanced the manuscript's clarity and scholarly rigor, while also supporting project administration throughout the duration of the activity. Both authors have read and approved the final manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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