

## Comparative Study of Educational Thought in the Islamic View: Al-Attas and Robert Meynard Hutchins

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine educational thought in the Islamic view according to Al-Attas and Robert Meynard Hutchins and to combine the thoughts of the two figures. This research will use a type of library *research* with qualitative, comparative, and descriptive research approaches. In the collection of primary sources, this research refers to the educational thought of Al-Attas in the book *Philosophy and Practice of Islamic Education* Syed M. Naquib Al-Attas by Wan. Mohd. Nor Wan David and the educational thought of Robert Maynard Hutchins in the book *Suing Anarchist Liberal Conservative Fundamentalist Education* by authors Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich, Erich Fromm et al. The result of the study is that there are similarities and differences between the educational thinking of Al-Attas and Hutchins. The similarity is that both of them prioritize scientific studies in reconstructing science. While the difference is that Al-Attas as a Muslim always returns all world affairs to the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as education, Al-Attas refers to the Qur'an and Sunnah as educational references. Meanwhile, Hutchins has a view of the world of education through the experience of educational phenomena that occur in the environment around which he lives. The contribution of this research is to enrich the study of the thinking of Muslim and Western figures in the world of Islamic education.

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## Introduction

Islamic education is defined by Abdur Rahman Nahlawi as a personal and community setting so that he can embrace Islam logically and as a whole both in individual and collective life (Mahmudi, 2019). According to Drs. Burlian Shomad, that Islamic education has the aim of forming a high-ranking human being (Sundari, 2020). The opinion of Drs. Ahmad D. Marimba interprets Islamic education as efforts in guiding the physical and spiritual dengan based on Islamic laws in order to become a Muslim personality with Islamic religious values (Sholeh, 2016). Al-Attas gives the definition of Islamic education as an educator's effort toward learners

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to recognize and recognize the correct places of everything in the order of creation so as to guide toward the recognition and recognition of the right god in the order of form and personality (Rakhmat, 2020). Islamic education was founded on the *worldview* or Islamic view of life which in this case was returned to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad which was later developed with the *ijtihad* of the scholars. The Qur'an is used as the main source in formulating Islamic education. This is because education is included in the realm of *muamalah* in human life, whether personal or community.

Islamic education based on the Qur'an will be able to adjust the progress of the times considering that the Qur'an can be interpreted according to the development of the existing times. The next cornerstone after the Qur'an is the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. The Sunnah contains guidelines in explaining the content of the Qur'an which is still global. Not only does it explain the content of the Qur'an which is still global, the Sunnah can also provide the possibility of interpretation development. *Ijtihad* needs to be done, not to forget the world of education also needs to have *ijtihad*. This is because there are demands for changes in the situation and social conditions in society. Because with *ijtihad* the main teachings in Islam, which in this case in the Qur'an and Sunnah can be detailed through the *ijtihad* of the scholars adapted to the times and the situation as well as the conditions of the existing society (Hamdi, 2020).

The development of Islamic education took place starting from the time of the Prophet Muhammad until his death which then grew in the era of friends to Bani Umayyah, with the pattern of development of *aqliyah* sciences. The culmination of the glory of Islamic education lasted from the beginning of the Abasid daulah to the fall of Baghdad. The decline of Islamic education began from the fall of Baghdad until the fall of Egypt at the hands of Napoleon, marked by the collapse of the joints of Islamic culture which then moved the centers of cultural development to the Western world (Amrozi, 2020). The main reason for the rise of Muslims, according to Muslim reformers, lies in the weakness in science and technology, a presumption that stems from a mistaken understanding of true Islam. In the face of such setbacks, Muslims also use Science in overcoming them. Like one of the Islamic reformist figures, Muhammad Abduh made education the main means in dealing with the shock and decline of the people (Ratnawati, 2018).

In other cases, the decline of the people occurred due to a misunderstanding in practicing knowledge that was not in line with Islam. Like one theory that has been applied in our education that says that the ancestor of mausia was an ape. The theory was derived from Charles Darwin (1809-1882) who was none other than a Western scholar. The conclusion of the theory confirms that the human ancestors of an ape and this approach to science is different

from the religious approach. Because religion is positioned at the existential and transcendental level, in contrast to science which is positioned in terms of factual or empirical proof. In short, religion and science are two things that cannot be synchronized and have autonomy in their respective worlds (Husaini, 2020). This theory is contrary to the Word of God which has been explained sequentially in Sura al-Mukminun verses 12-14 (Anam, 2016).

History has recorded errors in applying theories that are not in line with Islam also experienced by Turkey when applying the doctrine of secularism in one political, constitutional, cultural, and educational policy (Mu'ammam, 2015) Turkey experiences the "latah" syndrome when it sees the West progressing from various expectations of life derived from a secular view of life in separating the wheel of world life in all its lines from the spirit of Islam. Therefore, there is a need for a study of Islamic and Western views, which in this case is focused on educational studies. So in this study will examine the educational thinking that exists in Islam and the West. The similarities and differences that exist between Islamic and Western educational thought will be collected and compared. It is hoped that this research can contribute to the discourse of Islamic educational thought in the scientific traditions of the Eastern and western worlds.

## Method

The research uses a qualitative analytical descriptive approach method (S. Arikunto, 2018). This type of research is literature research. Literature research is the collection of data and information with various materials contained in literature or books (Hadi, 2020). The discussion in the study was carried out based on what has been studied in the book *Philosophy and Practice of Islamic Education Syed M. Naquib Al-Attas* by Wan. Mohd. Nor Wan David and the educational thought of Robert Maynard Huntchins in the book *Suing Anarchist Liberal Conservative Fundamentalist Education* by authors Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich, Erich Fromm et al. The object of this study is educational thought in the view of two figures, namely Al-Attas and Robert Meynard Hutchins. Data is taken from two sources, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data is data that comes directly from the source (Creswell, 2013). Secondary data is data obtained indirectly through prantara or generated from other parties (Suharsimi Arikunto, 2013). There is some primary data in the study, namely from the book *Philosophy and Practice of Islamic Education Syed M. Naquib Al-Attas* by Wan. Mohd. Nor Wan David and the educational thought of Robert Maynard Huntchins in the book *Suing Anarchist Liberal Conservative Fundamentalist Education* by authors Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich, Erich Fromm et al. Meanwhile, skunder data in the study was obtained from literature archives, both in the form of books, articles, journals, newspapers and scientific works related to the

concept of education according to al-Attas and Hutchins.

The analytical technique used in the study is a documentation analysis technique with flow as presented in Fig. 1. Documentation analysis technique is one of the qualitative data collection techniques by viewing or analyzing directly the documents created by the subject or other people (Sujarweni, 2014). Documentation is one way that can be done to get an overview from the subject's point of view through a written medium and other documents from the subject concerned, so the author does not obtain information from the source but from the data that is already available. The stage in this analysis technique is to collect data from existing documents, so that records related to research can be obtained (Moleong, 2015). In this process the study uses the inductive deductive method in data analysis. Analysis deductively is an analysis of the general understanding then made an exploitation and application more specifically by collecting data on general problems and then pursuing the process of taking special problems (Syaifuddin Azwar, 2017). While a nalisa induction is an analysis from special to general by collecting a certain amount of data. This analysis helps to understand difficult and complicated data through the development of themes that are broadcast from rough data.

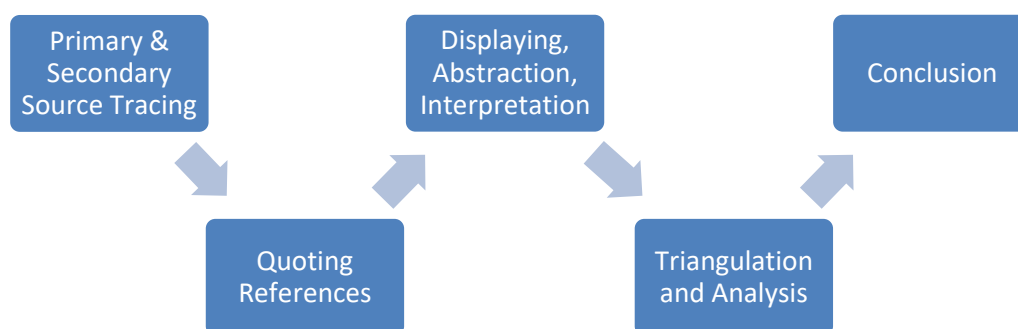


Fig. 1. Qualitative Research Flow of Literature Study

## Results and Discussion

### *Primordial Potential According to Al-Attas*

In terms of human freedom, morals, and the doctrine of evil Al-Attas clings to the aqidah of Muslims, i.e. *Ahl Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, i.e. Allah is the Creator of all the actions of His servants, whether faithful or infidel, devout or disobedient, all occurring by the will of Allah. Importantly, His servants have a choice that causes them to be rewarded or doomed. All the good they do will be rewarded with good on God's side and all the evil they do will not be repaid with good on God's side (Zarkasyi, 2019). The above problem is part of faith because human speculation cannot solve it. However, a reasonable understanding of the role of primordial potentials in fixed essences, where all possibilities and fates of each reality are determined, can explain well the problem of determinism and human fate (Nuryanti & Hakim, 2020). In this

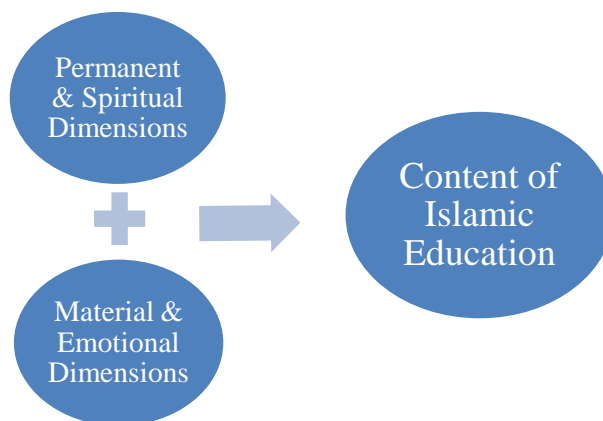
regard, Al-Attas refers to the verse that the statesman simultaneously justifies the *rububiyah* of God with the answer "*Bala Shahidna*" assuming that everyone has known and accepted all the implications of that testimony (Muttaqien, 2019). Another relevant verse is found in Surah al-Ahzab verses 72-73, which contains the freedom of man in receiving a mandate from God (Amiruddin, 2021). The choice of man dictates that every soul has the freedom to choose. Al-Attas commented on Hamzah Fanshuri, which concerns human fate (Lestari et al., 2019):

A person being good or evil depends on the state of primordial potential that comes from the nature of *Jamal or Jalal* Allah however, from the point of view of reality, there is nothing called absolute evil because everything is not in harmony with the essence of God and God Himself is good and loves goodness. The questions around the issue of moral responsibility in life in the world and about the reward and sin of the day are closely related to the belief in human freedom such as faith, and this belief, despite the assumption that man also has the ability to obey or disobey God's commands contained in religious law (sharia), jug a means believing in the existence of the last life as found in religious law. Even though knowing the present life and the life to come does not have an existence that God actually wants, man must still have a kepercayaan to his existence because this is a moral foundation. Sufis have recognized that God's will is not free and blind will. God will not just beg to do something He likes even though he is able to do it. But what is true is that God does things according to the primordial potentials contained in His Science, this harmony does not necessarily make His will and power meaningless because basically all that He wants is the realities of the so-called primordial potentials, fixed entities, cognitive forms, or ideas of God, the Universal Intellect (Muttaqien, 2019).

Although human fate has been determined from the beginning, that is, in primordial potential, the education that requires the following two things, is not only considered an integral part of Islamic aqidah, but is also an obligation that every Muslim must strive for. These two things are, *first*, the latent potential that naturally exists in man must be cultivated through an effective and creative educational process; *Second*, all forms of abilities and disabilities that humans have, can all be improved and improved through effective and creative education. Believing in destiny does not mean the importance of education or the importance of efforts to improve spiritual, ethical, and material conditions in life (Muslih et al., 2022). The above view of freedom differs from that of Muslim modernists. For example, the opinion of Luthfi Al-Sayyid, one of the disciples of Muhammad Abduh, regarding freedom inspired and influenced by the 19th century views of freedom of European humanists that did not give place to spiritual reality and human social identity. Al-Sayyid was of the view that freedom is the detachment from the government's control the functions of the government are limited only to efforts to

maintain security, justice, and defend the people from attack; it is only for these purposes that the government can intervene in the rights of the individual, whereas its interference in the problems of the other is wrong. A free human being is a human being who can spontaneously, without outside interference, fulfill all his functions in society while simultaneously exercising his capacity as a human being (Ghoni, 2017).

With regard to educational content, Al-Attas has consistently said the content is very important when compared to methods, although secular modern Muslim educational institutions, which are under the influence of Western educational ideas and practices, place more emphasis on methods. However, Al-Attas does not mean that by his statement emphasizing the content of the method and then ruling out the method in full or arguing that the method does not have a positive impact on educational *output* (Margono, 2022). Regarding the content of Islamic education, Al-Attas views that it starts from a human being who has a dualistic nature, namely science that can meet needs well in two aspects as presented in Fig. 1. *First*, the aspect of meeting needs in the permanent and spiritual dimensions; and *second*, the aspect of meeting needs in the material and emotional dimensions. In this regard, Al-Attas agrees with Al-Ghazal that the glory of a science is determined by its fruit and the authenticity of its principles, and the first is more important than the second (Kamaruzaman et al., 2016).



**Fig. 2.** The Dualistic Concept of Al-Attas Educational Content

The division of science into several general categories depends on various considerations. Based on the method of studying it, there is illuminative or gnostic science and scientific knowledge. The *first* category is the most valid and the highest, that is, the revelation that the Prophet received was then followed by the intuition of the sages, saints, and scientists. The *second* category is based on empirical experience and reason. Scientists name these two categories as *naqliyyah* (rational) or *tajribiyyah* (empirical) sciences. In terms of its usefulness for humans, science is divided into good science (*al-mahmudah*) and bad science (*al-*

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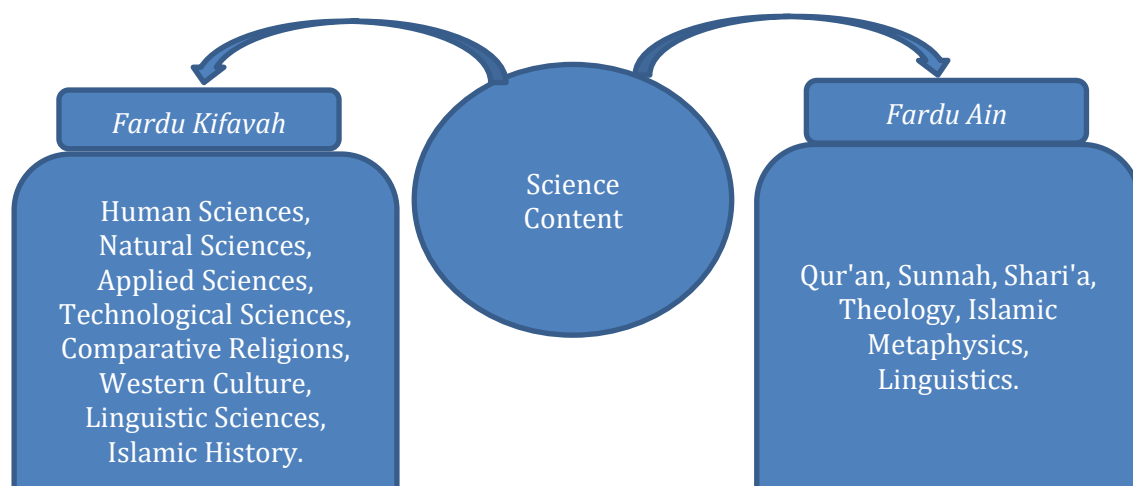
*madzmumah*). When viewed in terms of aspects of human obligations to study, knowledge is divided into fardu ain and fardu kifayah. Meanwhile, when viewed from social and cultural origins, knowledge is divided into sharia and non-sharia or foreign sciences (Taqiyuddin, 2021).

The parts have different levels. The categorization cannot be said to be dualistic because it does not have the same validity or equivalent exclusivity. For example, although higher compared to the intellectual sciences (*al-'ulum al-'aqliyyah*), the religious sciences (*al-'ulum al-naqliyyah*) cannot be explained without the intellectual sciences. Intellectual sciences without religious sciences would be misleading and highly sophistic. For this reason, previous scientists did not consider the categorization as above as two things that are the same or opposite to each other, but rather complementary, although not the same as each other. The good sciences (*al-mahmudah*) of money are revealed, which are personal and ideological (*syar'iyah*) preceding the intellectual, experimental, uncommendable (*al-madzmumah*), social, and *non-religious* sciences. Although the second category only appears later, they are still important if they are placed in their appropriate place, namely fardlu kifayah. A Muslim should not ignore intellectual or experimental sciences of a social nature (Fauzan, 2021).

Al-Attas argues that the structure of science and the curriculum of Islamic education should describe human beings and their essence (Taqiyuddin, 2021), see Fig. 3. The curriculum is taken from the dual nature of human beings, the physical aspects are more related to knowledge about the physical and engineering sciences or those that are fardu kifayah, while the spiritual state is fardu ain as presented in Fig. 2. The content in fardu ain at the educational level consists of; *first* the holy book of the Qur'an, in which it is studied around the concept and history of revelation, the derivation, collection, care, and dissemination, the sciences for understanding the Qur'an, such as *nasikh mansukh*, *al-khas wa al-'am*, *muhkam mutasyabih*, and *amr nahi*, including comparative studies of the origin, development, and methodology of interpretive literature, its types, and, madzhabs. *Second*, the sunnah: the life of the Prophet, the history and treatises of the earlier prophets, the hadith and the prophets. This material is an in-depth study of the history of hadith criticism, a comparative analysis of the books of important hadith collections and their categorization, biographical science and the main dictionary on biography. *Third*, sharia: fiqh and law, principles and practice of Islam. According to Al-Attas, sharia knowledge is the most important aspect of Islamic education. After all, the implementation of Sharia in the life of individuals and society must be based on proper science, a moderate and fair attitude. *Fourth*, theology or kalam science: examining God, His Substance, His Qualities, Names, and Deeds. Islamic theology is a very important subject that has not yet been given a proper place in the educational curriculum. The reason is because the

incompetence of many modern Muslim scientists shows that the problems and issues raised in this subject are not old-fashioned and outdated, because they are irrelevant to modern Muslims. But on the contrary, Al-Attas argues that the problems and issues raised and theology reappear, especially from Western cultural sources albeit in different forms. *Fifth*, Islamic metaphysics: psychology, cosmology, and ontology, the well-known elements of Islamic philosophy consisting of cosmological doctrines relating to the hierarchy of being are also the scope of all other intellectual disciplines, such as the science of the Qur'an, hadith, theology, and philosophy, as well as knowledge of classical Arabic. *Sixth*, linguistics: Arabic bahasa, grammar, lexicography, and literature. With the aim of mastering the skills of speaking, analyzing and interpreting primary sources in Islam, intellectual and spiritual treasures are important in Arabic.

The content of fardu kifayah in Islamic education is not obliged to every Muslim to study it, but the entire Muslim society will be responsible if no one from that society learns it, because society will feel the consequences. Of course, this category is very important because it provides a theoretical foundation and religious motivation for Muslims to learn and develop all the knowledge or technology necessary for the prosperity of society. Al-Attas divides fardu kifayah knowledge into eight disciplines: Human Sciences, Natural Sciences, Applied Sciences, Technological Sciences, Comparative Religions, Western Culture, Linguistics, and Islamic History (Huringiin, 2021).



**Fig. 3.** Structure of Science Al-Attas

Al-Attas certainly does not limit the knowledge of fardu kifayah to only the above eight sciences. It is understandable because of the knowledge (*'ilm*) itself, as the nature of God, which is infinite. In addition, if the fardu ain is dynamic and develops according to one's intellectual and spiritual abilities and the circumstances of one's society, the knowledge of fardu kifayah



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will also develop according to the needs and programs of a particular society. Science in the *fardu kifayah* category should describe the ever-changing needs of this age and the needs expected of the future, the Muslim community, and the world as a whole. In contrast to the modern secular understanding of general education and elective curricula in the social sciences (*liberal arts*) which do not carry religious and moral meanings, studying *fardu ain* and *fardu kifayah* as a whole of education as *ta'dib* is not only personal and religious, but also social (Sahidin, 2022).

The narrow specification was much loved for several centuries and worsened by the positive support of dominant Western educational practices. The reason in favor of this specialist is that there is now a "science explosion" so that it is impossible for a person to know all branches of science. Al-Attas gives a defense of the opinion that higher education should not produce specialists does not mean that a university does not produce an engineer, medical doctor, economist, or computer expert because these fields fall into the category of *fardu kifayah* family. For Al-Attas, specialization must exist, even in the subject of *fardu ain* so that later the university can produce reliable theologians, linguists, and jurists. Al-Attas also did not deny the occurrence of an "explosion of science". It's just that Al-Attas emphasized that a Muslim scientist, who is a product of an Islamic university, should have sufficient knowledge of the principles, concepts, and issues of *pentng* in the Islamic intellectual tradition and the humanities so that the scientist is able to contribute and be responsible for the field of science he chooses. Al-Attas also emphasized that although islamic universities it must nevertheless provide specialization in a particular branch of science, the concept of such specialization does not refer to the needs of the state and secular society.

### ***The concept of education according to Hutchins***

Human beings are naturally free beings and are social beings. In order for man to use his freedom appropriately, man needs discipline. In terms of social society, humans need moral policies that regulate how to socialize with others. The essence of the whole person will be realized with good morals and intellectual habits (Rukiyati, 2009). Hutchins is of the view that liberal education (McGucken, 1937) is an ideal education that is used as a tool to control human nature and as a regulator of human moral policy in society. Hutchins argued that liberal Education is a decent Education for human beings who have the basic nature of freedom. After human beings have laid the foundations of a capable, free, and responsible humanity through liberal Education, human beings will be able to realize all their ideals and be able to provide for the living they need. In liberal education, a target is set for the development of understanding and assessment forces. Understanding and judgment are important because

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many of the educated are able to provide a ratio of the objectives of Education. Many educated people still experience frustration after graduating from school because they are still studying in the hope of getting a better job after they graduate. If the views like the one above are still used as a reference in studying, namely studying in order to get a better job or with *the lure of* a job after graduation, then among them will inevitably be infected with frustration and despair when they run aground their hopes. It will be different when undergoing education with the hope of leading knowledge to *become a human being*, and that everyone, be it a well digging man or a isinyur must get education because both of them are human beings (Nanggalaupi & Suryadi, 2021).

Thus, the Western world should not mislead itself into thinking that the industrialization of the world and the improvement of its production capabilities alone, without other things, can already set the way for global peace. The desire to satisfy the material will never be realized and satisfied. If our efforts are only directed towards increasing the supply of material, one day we will realize that we do not know what material we have built and mountainous (Yasyakur et al., 2021). One goal of education is to bring out the same elements of humanity in man. The elements are fundamentally no different even though the time and place are different. Education hints at teaching, teaching hints at knowledge, and knowledge is truth. A truth, wherever and whenever, is the same. Therefore, education is also the same wherever it is located. This does not negate possible differences in terms of local organization, administration, customs and ordinances. But all the differences that exist are only details, while the essence of education itself is the same. Hutchins argues that the heart of every lesson for all is that, if education is understood correctly, equally, unaffected by place, tipoliticsotic, social, and economic conditions(Nurjannah, 2015).

If education is understood correctly, it will be understood as an intellectual nurturer(Eka Wahyudi, 2018). The intellect is something good for all human beings in any society. Moreover, education is a good thing. Material prosperity, peace and order of justice, and moral virtues are the paths of cultivating of the intellect. Until Aristotle said in *Politics*, "The realm of man, reason and the human mind are something that nature strives to achieve so that generations and moral disciplines of citizens should be organized in harmony with it. "With regard to the socialization of science in education, Hutchins argued that people cannot become a specialty in any field. Perhaps society has accepted the existence of specialists as an undeniable reality, but in reality, this world and the knowledge of this world are not plotted with only one area of expertise. With specialization makes people know nothing about any field outside of their own intellectual plot, unless they have the same educational basis as those of specialties in other fields. A specialist in a narrow scientific field is already bothered to follow the most up-to-date

developments in his own field (Rahman, 2018). Others, even fellow specialties in the same major as the person just now, are overwhelmed teaching the latest news about a branch of science but only contain that that's all but are cut into small branches, following the progress of one branch is overwhelmed so don't expect to be able to follow the development of other branches that are different from the specialization. However, if education is equipped with general education, it is hoped that specialists can also understand what is happening in the branches or even other branches of science because they have something in common. With general education, it is hoped that it can attract elements of human intensity and develop what is shared by all mankind and not busy themselves with elements of differences between parties (Nurrohmah & Syahid, 2020).

## Conclusion

The two figures have similarities and differences in educational views. Differences are seen in the process of taking educational resources, this is due to differences in the backgrounds of the two characters. Al-Attas as a Muslim always returns all world affairs to the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as education, Al-Attas refers to the Qur'an and Sunnah as educational references. Meanwhile, Rober Meynard Hutchins has a view of the world of education through the experience of educational phenomena that occur in the environment around which he lives. The backgrounds of the two figures are also a factor in the differences in views on education.

## Declarations

- Author contribution** : Tri Yaumul Falikah was responsible for the overall research project. She also led the scriptwriting and collaboration with the second author. Ponco Kumalasari and Fadhlurrahan participated in data collection, transcription, and analysis. She also revised the manuscript. All three authors approved the final manuscript.
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- Ethics Approval** : Information on Ethics Approval and informed consent statements are required for all articles published in Al-Misbah since 2023.
- Additional information** : No additional information is available for this paper.

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