

MICRO-CIVILIZATION OF EDUCATION: FOUNDATIONS OF ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL CIVILIZATION IN THE AI ERA

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Abstract :

Research on Islamic educational civilization has predominantly focused on macro-level dimensions such as institutions, curricula, policies, and technology, while paying limited attention to the deeper foundations that sustain educational civilization. This article proposes the concept of *Micro-Civilization of Education* as a philosophical framework for understanding how Islamic educational civilization is constructed through everyday educational practices. Using a philosophy of education approach and conceptual analysis supported by relevant literature, the study argues that civilization emerges not primarily from institutional structures but from the accumulation of micro-practices that shape educational culture. The framework identifies five interconnected foundations: Intellectual Civilization (*Iqra'*), Moral Civilization (*Akhlak*), Spiritual Civilization (*Tauhid*), Social Civilization (*Ta'awun*), and Digital Civilization. The first four are derived from Islamic conceptions of human nature, knowledge, and educational purpose, while Digital Civilization serves as the contemporary arena in which these values are enacted and tested. The study proposes a developmental chain linking micro-practices, character formation, educational culture, and educational civilization. It concludes that strengthening educational culture, rather than merely expanding institutions or technology, is essential for sustaining Islamic educational civilization in the age of artificial intelligence.

Keywords : *Micro-Civilization of Education; Islamic educational philosophy; educational civilization; adab; digital ethics*

Abstrak :

Kajian tentang peradaban pendidikan Islam selama ini lebih banyak berfokus pada dimensi makro, seperti institusi, kurikulum, kebijakan, dan teknologi, sementara fondasi mendasar yang menopang keberlangsungan peradaban pendidikan masih kurang mendapat perhatian. Artikel ini mengajukan konsep *Micro-Civilization of Education* sebagai kerangka filosofis untuk memahami bagaimana peradaban pendidikan Islam dibangun melalui praktik-praktik pendidikan sehari-hari. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan filsafat pendidikan dan analisis konseptual yang didukung oleh literatur yang relevan, penelitian ini berargumen bahwa peradaban tidak terutama lahir dari struktur kelembagaan, melainkan dari akumulasi praktik-praktik mikro yang membentuk budaya pendidikan. Kerangka ini mengidentifikasi lima fondasi yang saling terkait, yaitu *Intellectual Civilization (Iqra')*, *Moral Civilization (Akhlak)*, *Spiritual Civilization (Tauhid)*, *Social Civilization (Ta'awun)*, dan *Digital Civilization*. Empat fondasi pertama diturunkan dari konsep Islam tentang hakikat manusia, ilmu, dan tujuan pendidikan, sedangkan *Digital Civilization* berfungsi sebagai arena kontemporer tempat nilai-nilai tersebut diwujudkan dan diuji. Penelitian ini mengusulkan rantai perkembangan yang menghubungkan praktik mikro, pembentukan karakter, budaya pendidikan, dan peradaban pendidikan. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa penguatan budaya pendidikan, bukan sekadar perluasan institusi atau teknologi, merupakan faktor penting dalam menjaga keberlanjutan peradaban pendidikan Islam di era kecerdasan buatan.

Kata Kunci: *Micro-Civilization of Education; filsafat pendidikan Islam; peradaban pendidikan; adab; integritas akademik; etika digital*

INTRODUCTION

Educational civilization has become one of the central themes in contemporary discussions of Islamic education (Nuraeni & Mujahidin, 2021; Syafri et al., 2023). The progress of a society is often associated with the quality of its educational system; consequently, debates on educational civilization tend to focus on macro-level dimensions such as institutional development, educational policies, curriculum reform, technological innovation, and the contributions of influential scholars (Fajriati & Bahrudin, 2021; Nuraeni & Mujahidin, 2021). Within this perspective, educational advancement is commonly measured through external indicators, including institutional growth, participation rates, technological access, and academic achievement (Rony, 2021; Syafri et al., 2023).

While such perspectives remain important, they leave a fundamental question unanswered: can advanced institutions, sophisticated curricula, and modern technologies automatically produce civilized human beings? Recent educational realities suggest otherwise.

The results of PISA 2022 revealed that Indonesia's reading performance remained below the OECD average, with only a limited proportion of students reaching the minimum level of reading proficiency expected internationally (OECD, 2023). At the same time, the rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has made access to information easier than ever before, yet ease of access does not necessarily lead to deeper understanding or stronger critical thinking (Chan & Hu, 2023; Farrokhnia et al., 2024). Recent studies have reported that excessive reliance on AI-assisted tools may contribute to cognitive offloading and a decline in critical reasoning abilities (Gerlich, 2025). Furthermore, the emergence of generative AI has intensified concerns regarding academic integrity and ethical learning practices (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025; Eke, 2023). These developments indicate that the central challenge of education lies not merely in systems or technologies but in the quality of the individuals who engage with them (Eke, 2023; Gerlich, 2025).

Within the Islamic educational tradition, this issue is even more significant because education is not limited to the transmission of knowledge. Rather, it aims to cultivate individuals who are knowledgeable, morally responsible, and spiritually grounded (Al-Ghazali, 2023; Lickona, 2016). Classical and contemporary Islamic educational thought consistently emphasizes that civilizational transformation begins with the transformation of human beings (Ibnu Khaldun, 2011; Syafri et al., 2023). Consequently, educational success cannot be measured solely by academic performance or technological competence; it must also be reflected in the development of intellectual culture, moral integrity, spiritual consciousness, and social responsibility (Lickona, 2016; Zubaidi, 2015). A strong educational civilization does not emerge suddenly through policies or physical infrastructures. Instead, it grows gradually through habits, values, and character traits that are continuously transmitted across generations (Aristoteles, 2020; Ibnu Khaldun, 2011).

Against this backdrop, this article introduces the concept of *Micro-Civilization of Education* as a philosophical framework for understanding the foundations of Islamic educational civilization. The concept is based on the premise that civilization is built through everyday educational practices, including reading habits, writing traditions, academic honesty, respect for knowledge, learning discipline, social concern, spiritual awareness, and responsible engagement with digital technologies. When these practices become collectively embedded within educational communities, they gradually develop into educational cultures that sustain civilization.

It is important to acknowledge that the underlying idea that habits shape character and character shapes civilization is not entirely new. Virtue ethics regards moral excellence as the outcome of habituation (Aristoteles, 2020); character education highlights the importance of modeling and repeated practice (Lickona, 2016); Ibn Khaldun viewed civilization (*‘umrān*) as a product of social habits and collective solidarity (Ibnu Khaldun, 2011); while Islamic educational

traditions have consistently emphasized the cultivation of *adab*, moral discipline, and ethical conduct as central objectives of education (Al-Ghazali, 2023; Ibnu Khaldun, 2011).

The originality of this article therefore does not lie in the discovery of these individual elements, each of which is already well established within its own tradition. Rather, its contribution is to reorganise them into a single philosophical architecture and to extend that architecture toward the philosophy of Islamic education. Three contributions may be distinguished. First, at the level of synthesis, the article integrates intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, and digital cultures into one foundational framework, instead of treating them as separate educational variables competing for curricular attention. Second, at the level of analytical focus, it relocates the explanation of educational civilization from macro-structures to the everyday micro-practices through which those structures are actually inhabited. Third, at the level of theory-building, it reformulates the classical Islamic vision of education—in which ‘ilm, *adab*, and *tarbiyah* are treated as inseparable—into a developmental account suited to the conditions of the artificial-intelligence era.

Stated more precisely, the theoretical contribution of the framework to Islamic educational philosophy is to make explicit the premises from which its five foundations are derived and to show how those premises generate a developmental sequence. Anthropologically, the human being is conceived as simultaneously an intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social creature; epistemologically, knowledge is held to be inseparable from ethical responsibility; and teleologically, education is understood as the formation of a civilised human being rather than the mere transmission of information. From these premises the framework derives a chain linking micro-practice, character, educational culture, and educational civilization, thereby offering a philosophical bridge between the classical Islamic discourse on *adab* and *ta’dib* and contemporary debates on character, integrity, and the ethics of technology. In this respect the framework is intended not as a restatement of virtue ethics but as a distinctively Islamic philosophical proposition that remains open to dialogue with other traditions of educational thought.

To make this position explicit and to distinguish the framework from existing scholarship, Table 1 synthesises ten representative prior studies. The studies are arranged according to their primary focus and their level of analysis, while the final column identifies the specific gap that each leaves open and that the present framework seeks to address.

Table 1. Synthesis of Representative Prior Studies and the Research Gap

Study	Primary focus / contribution	Level of analysis	Gap relevant to this study
Nuraeni & Mujahidin (2021)	Foundations and principles of Islamic educational planning.	Macro (institution / policy)	Does not explain how everyday practices form the culture that planning presupposes.
Fajriati & Bahrudin (2021)	Role of Islamic religious education in shaping student character.	Meso (school programme)	Treats character as a programme outcome rather than as an accumulating civilizational process.
Rony (2021)	Management of school organizational culture for character building.	Meso–macro (institutional culture)	Culture is handled as a managed variable, not as the foundation of civilization.
Syafri et al. (2023)	Convergence of Ki Hajar Dewantara and Indonesian Islamic educational thought.	Macro (intellectual history)	Centres on figures and ideas; does not specify the micro-practice mechanism.
Lickona (2016)	Character education through modelling and habituation.	Micro (individual virtue)	Individual in focus; not extended to culture/civilization or to an Islamic worldview.

Aristotle (2020)	Virtue acquired through habituation.	Micro (individual ethics)	Philosophical and secular; lacks a civilizational and Islamic frame.
Ibn Khaldun (2011)	Civilization (<i>'umrān</i>) as a product of social habit and solidarity.	Macro (social civilization)	Societal in scale; not applied to educational micro-practice.
Gerlich (2025)	AI use, cognitive offloading, and decline of critical thinking.	Micro (digital cognition)	Diagnoses the problem but offers no integrative value framework.
Bittle & El-Gayar (2025)	Generative AI and academic integrity in higher education.	Meso (institutional integrity)	Integrity framed as compliance rather than as a cultivated culture.
Chan & Hu (2023)	Students' perceptions of generative AI in learning.	Micro (perception)	Descriptive; provides no normative or ethical foundation.

Read across these studies, a consistent pattern emerges. Macro-oriented scholarship explains the institutional and policy conditions of educational advancement, yet says comparatively little about how values become lived realities (Nuraeni & Mujahidin, 2021; Rony, 2021; Syafri et al., 2023). Character-education and virtue-ethics scholarship explains how individual dispositions are formed, but rarely scales that explanation up to the level of culture and civilization or anchors it in an Islamic worldview (Aristoteles, 2020; Lickona, 2016). Studies of artificial intelligence in education diagnose new risks to integrity and critical thinking, but propose no integrative ethical foundation through which those risks might be governed (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025; Chan & Hu, 2023; Gerlich, 2025). The gap addressed by this article lies precisely at these intersections: there is, as yet, no philosophical framework that connects everyday micro-practices, character formation, educational culture, and educational civilization within a single Islamic account that is also adequate to the digital age. The concept of Micro-Civilization of Education is proposed to occupy this space.

Accordingly, this study seeks to establish the philosophical foundations of *Micro-Civilization of Education* by addressing three questions: Why is a macro-level understanding of educational civilization insufficient? How do micro-practices contribute to the formation of civilization? And what implications does this framework hold for the management of Islamic education? The central argument advanced in this article is that Islamic educational civilization emerges from the accumulation of micro-practices that cultivate intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, and digital cultures. Therefore, any effort to build a sustainable educational civilization must begin with the formation of civilized human beings as its most fundamental unit.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach within the field of philosophy of education to formulate the philosophical foundations of the concept of *Micro-Civilization of Education*. Rather than examining causal relationships among variables, the study seeks to construct a conceptual framework that explains the relationship between human beings, education, and civilization from the perspective of Islamic educational thought.

The primary method used is conceptual analysis, which is widely employed in philosophical and theoretical educational research to clarify concepts, examine underlying assumptions, and develop coherent theoretical frameworks. This approach is enriched through a critical review of literature related to educational civilization, Islamic philosophy of education, character education, academic culture and integrity, as well as educational transformation in the age of artificial intelligence (Lickona, 2016; Zubaidi, 2015).

The sources of analysis include classical and contemporary works on Islamic education, character formation, and educational civilization, particularly those of Al-Ghazali (2023), Ibn Khaldun (2011), Lickona (2016), Zubaidi (2015), Syafri (2023), and Syafri (2012). To

contextualize the discussion within contemporary educational challenges, the study also draws upon recent scholarship addressing academic integrity, artificial intelligence, and educational transformation (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025; Chan & Hu, 2023; Eke, 2023; Farrokhnia et al., 2024; Gerlich, 2025; OECD, 2023). The literature was selected based on its relevance, scholarly significance, and contribution to the development of the proposed framework.

The analysis was conducted in four stages. First, the study critically examined the predominance of macro-level approaches in discussions of educational civilization. Second, a conceptual derivation process was undertaken to identify the foundational pillars of micro-civilization based on Islamic conceptions of human nature, knowledge, and the purposes of education (Al-Ghazali, 2023; Ibnu Khaldun, 2011). Third, theoretical synthesis was employed to explain the relationship among micro-practices, character formation, educational culture, and educational civilization, as well as the mechanisms through which these dimensions interact (Aristoteles, 2020; Lickona, 2016; Syafri et al., 2026). Fourth, the framework was subjected to internal evaluation by considering possible counterarguments and establishing scope conditions that allow the framework to remain open to scholarly debate and future empirical testing.

As a conceptual study, the validity of this research rests on the coherence, consistency, and explanatory power of its arguments rather than on empirical generalization. Therefore, the proposed framework should be understood as a theoretical proposition that provides a foundation for subsequent empirical investigations in Islamic educational contexts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Rethinking Educational Civilization Beyond Macro Perspectives

The analysis reveals that contemporary discussions of educational civilization are still largely dominated by macro-level perspectives. Educational progress is commonly assessed through institutional expansion, curriculum reforms, policy innovations, technological advancement, and measurable academic outcomes (Nuraeni & Mujahidin, 2021; Syafri et al., 2023). Although these dimensions are undoubtedly important, they do not fully explain how educational civilizations emerge, endure, or decline over time.

The limitations of macro-oriented approaches become increasingly evident in the contemporary educational landscape. Despite significant advances in educational technology and unprecedented access to information, many educational systems continue to face challenges related to declining reading habits, weakened critical thinking, and growing concerns regarding academic integrity. The findings of PISA 2022, for instance, indicate that a substantial proportion of Indonesian students remain below internationally expected literacy standards (OECD, 2023). Similarly, recent studies suggest that extensive reliance on artificial intelligence may encourage cognitive offloading and reduce opportunities for independent critical reasoning (Gerlich, 2025). The emergence of generative AI has also introduced new ethical challenges concerning plagiarism, authorship, and academic honesty (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025; Eke, 2023).

These developments suggest that educational civilization cannot be adequately understood solely through institutional or technological indicators. Strong institutions do not automatically produce ethical learners, just as technological sophistication does not necessarily cultivate intellectual depth. The persistence of educational problems amidst institutional and technological progress indicates the existence of a deeper civilizational layer that is often overlooked.

From the perspective of Islamic education, this deeper layer is closely related to the formation of human character. Islamic educational thought has consistently emphasized that knowledge cannot be separated from morality, spirituality, and social responsibility. The educational process is therefore directed not merely toward cognitive achievement but toward the cultivation of civilized individuals who embody knowledge, virtue, and ethical conduct (Lickona, 2016; Zubaidi, 2015).

This observation leads to a fundamental proposition of the present study: educational civilization originates not primarily from institutions but from the accumulation of everyday educational practices. Reading, writing, academic honesty, respect for knowledge, self-discipline, social responsibility, spiritual commitment, and ethical engagement with technology may appear as individual acts, yet when they are continuously practiced and collectively shared, they develop into enduring educational cultures (Lickona, 2016). Over time, these cultures become the foundations upon which educational civilizations are built and sustained (Ibnu Khaldun, 2011).

Such a perspective does not reject the importance of institutions. Rather, it argues that institutions function effectively only when supported by educational cultures that are deeply embedded in the daily lives of learners, educators, and communities. In this sense, institutions represent the visible manifestation of civilization, whereas everyday practices constitute its underlying foundation. Understanding this relationship requires a shift in analytical focus from macro structures to micro-level educational practices, a shift that forms the basis of the concept of *Micro-Civilization of Education*.

The Foundations of Micro-Civilization of Education

The concept of *Micro-Civilization of Education* is founded upon three fundamental premises of Islamic educational philosophy. First, human beings are inherently intellectual creatures endowed with the capacity to seek, acquire, and develop knowledge. Second, knowledge is not value-neutral but is inseparably connected to ethical responsibility and proper conduct. Third, the ultimate aim of education is the formation of civilized individuals who integrate intellectual competence, moral integrity, spiritual awareness, and social responsibility (Syafri et al., 2023, 2026; Zubaidi, 2015).

From these premises emerge four foundational virtues that have historically shaped Islamic educational traditions. The intellectual dimension requires the cultivation of a culture of knowledge, represented here as *Intellectual Civilization (Iqra')*. The ethical dimension demands the development of integrity and moral responsibility, referred to as *Moral Civilization (Akhlak)*. Human beings' relationship with the Divine necessitates *Spiritual Civilization (Tauhid)*, while their existence within society requires *Social Civilization (Ta'awun)*. These four dimensions are rooted in enduring conceptions of human nature and educational purpose and therefore transcend specific historical contexts (Al-Ghazali, 2023; Syafri et al., 2026).

The fifth foundation, *Digital Civilization*, occupies a different conceptual position. Unlike the previous four, it is not a virtue in itself but a contemporary arena in which intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social values are expressed, challenged, and tested. The increasing influence of digital technologies and artificial intelligence on learning practices makes this arena impossible to ignore (Chan & Hu, 2023; Farrokhnia et al., 2024). Consequently, *Digital Civilization* is included as a distinct dimension, not because it is equal in nature to the other four foundations, but because it represents the dominant environment in which educational cultures now operate (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025; Eke, 2023).

Together, these five foundations constitute an integrated framework through which educational civilization can be understood as the cumulative outcome of everyday educational practices. Rather than functioning as isolated elements, they interact continuously, reinforcing one another and contributing to the formation of educational cultures that sustain civilization across generations.

1. Intellectual Civilization (Iqra'): Knowledge Culture as the Foundation of Civilization

The first foundation of *Micro-Civilization of Education* is *Intellectual Civilization*, which derives from the Qur'anic command *Iqra'* (Read). In Islamic thought, *Iqra'* signifies more than the act of reading written texts; it encompasses the pursuit of knowledge, reflection upon reality, critical inquiry, and the continuous search for truth. Consequently, the development of

educational civilization begins with the cultivation of a culture of learning that encourages reading, writing, discussion, research, and intellectual curiosity.

Islamic educational tradition has historically placed knowledge at the center of civilizational development. The pursuit of knowledge has long been regarded as a defining characteristic of Islamic civilization, shaping intellectual traditions, educational institutions, and social transformation (Al-Ghazali, 2023; Ibnu Khaldun, 2011; Syafri et al., 2023). Contemporary scholarship likewise emphasizes that the advancement of Islamic education depends not merely on institutional expansion but on the cultivation of intellectual culture and meaningful engagement with knowledge (Nuraeni & Mujahidin, 2021; Syafri et al., 2026). In this perspective, intellectual development is not merely an academic achievement but a civilizational responsibility.

Contemporary educational challenges demonstrate the continuing relevance of this foundation. Despite unprecedented access to information, many educational systems experience declining reading engagement and superficial patterns of learning. The PISA 2022 results indicate that a substantial proportion of Indonesian students remain below expected literacy standards (OECD, 2023). Likewise, recent research suggests that excessive dependence on AI-assisted technologies may contribute to cognitive offloading, reducing opportunities for independent reasoning and critical reflection (Gerlich, 2025). These developments highlight a paradox of the digital age: information is increasingly abundant, yet intellectual depth is not guaranteed. Similar concerns have been raised within Islamic educational discourse, where the availability of information is not always accompanied by the development of critical literacy, reflective thinking, and intellectual discipline (Syafri et al., 2026).

Within the framework of *Micro-Civilization of Education*, intellectual civilization is sustained through everyday practices such as reading beyond curricular requirements, engaging in reflective writing, questioning assumptions, participating in scholarly dialogue, and cultivating habits of lifelong learning. These practices may appear insignificant when viewed individually; however, when collectively embedded within educational communities, they generate a culture of knowledge that serves as the foundation of educational civilization (Syafri et al., 2023). Without such a culture, institutions may continue to function administratively, yet their civilizational capacity gradually weakens.

2. Moral Civilization (Akhlak): Integrity as the Guardian of Knowledge

Knowledge alone is insufficient for sustaining civilization. Throughout history, intellectual advancement without moral guidance has often contributed to exploitation, manipulation, and social disintegration. For this reason, the second foundation of *Micro-Civilization of Education* is *Moral Civilization (Akhlak)*, which emphasizes integrity as the ethical framework through which knowledge is acquired, transmitted, and applied.

In Islamic educational philosophy, knowledge and morality are inseparable. Islamic educational thought maintains that the cultivation of *adab*, honesty, and moral responsibility constitutes an essential purpose of education (Fajriati & Bahrudin, 2021; Syafri et al., 2026). Contemporary studies in Islamic education further emphasize that character formation and moral discipline should accompany intellectual development, as educational success cannot be reduced to academic achievement alone (Latif, 2021; Syafri et al., 2026). The pursuit of knowledge without moral integrity risks transforming education into a purely instrumental enterprise detached from its higher purposes.

The significance of this foundation becomes increasingly evident in the era of artificial intelligence. Generative AI has created new opportunities for learning and academic productivity, yet it has also intensified concerns regarding plagiarism, authorship, academic dishonesty, and ethical accountability (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025; Eke, 2023). The challenge facing contemporary education is therefore not simply how to use technology effectively, but how to ensure that technological advancement remains aligned with ethical principles.

Moral civilization is cultivated through everyday practices of honesty, responsibility, fairness, respect for intellectual property, and accountability for one's work. These practices form the basis of academic integrity and establish the trust necessary for educational communities to flourish. When integrity becomes a shared cultural norm rather than merely an institutional regulation, it contributes directly to the sustainability of educational civilization. In contrast, when dishonesty becomes normalized, even highly developed educational systems may experience civilizational decline despite their apparent institutional success (Fajriati & Bahrudin, 2021; Latif, 2021; Syafri et al., 2026).

3. *Spiritual Civilization (Tauhid): Divine Consciousness as Educational Orientation*

The third foundation of *Micro-Civilization of Education* is *Spiritual Civilization (Tauhid)*. Within the Islamic worldview, education is not merely an intellectual endeavor but also a process of nurturing human consciousness of God. Knowledge acquires meaning when it is connected to a transcendent purpose, and educational activities become transformative when they contribute to the development of individuals who are aware of their responsibilities before God and society.

Islamic educational philosophy consistently places *tauhid* at the center of human development. Islamic educational thought emphasizes that education should nurture individuals who balance intellectual growth with spiritual awareness and ethical responsibility before God and society (Nuraeni & Mujahidin, 2021; Syafri et al., 2026). The development of knowledge is therefore inseparable from the cultivation of spiritual consciousness, sincerity, and self-discipline. In this tradition, spirituality is not treated as a supplementary aspect of education but as an essential dimension that shapes the purpose and direction of learning (Khotimah & Mujahid, 2025; Syafri et al., 2026).

Contemporary educational systems often prioritize measurable outcomes such as academic performance, employability, and technological competence. While these objectives are important, an excessive emphasis on instrumental achievements may result in the neglect of deeper moral and spiritual concerns. Recent studies in Islamic education have emphasized that educational success should not be measured solely through cognitive and technical indicators but should also include moral, spiritual, and character development (Nuraeni & Mujahidin, 2021; Syafri et al., 2026). As educational environments become increasingly influenced by digital technologies and artificial intelligence, the risk of reducing education to information processing and technical efficiency becomes more pronounced (Farrokhnia et al., 2024).

Within the framework of *Micro-Civilization of Education*, spiritual civilization is cultivated through daily practices that nurture awareness of God and moral self-reflection. These include prayer, Qur'anic recitation, remembrance (*dhikr*), contemplation, gratitude, and the conscious alignment of learning activities with ethical and spiritual values. Such practices gradually shape dispositions of humility, responsibility, and self-restraint, enabling individuals to use knowledge in ways that contribute to human flourishing rather than mere personal advancement. Previous studies have shown that the internalization of spiritual values through habitual religious practices contributes significantly to the development of self-discipline, moral awareness, and personal integrity among learners (Kurnianingsih et al., 2025; Syah Putra, 2024).

Spiritual civilization therefore serves as the moral compass of educational civilization. It provides the transcendent orientation that prevents knowledge from becoming detached from ethical responsibility and ensures that educational progress remains connected to the broader objectives of human development in Islam (Syafri et al., 2026).

4. *Social Civilization (Ta'awun): Social Responsibility as Civilizational Capital*

Educational civilization cannot be sustained through individual achievement alone. Human beings develop within communities, and the quality of civilization depends significantly on the strength of social relationships that connect individuals to one another. For this reason, *Social Civilization (Ta'awun)* constitutes the fourth foundation of *Micro-Civilization of*

Education.

The concept of *ta'awun* refers to cooperation, mutual assistance, and collective responsibility. Islamic teachings consistently emphasize that human beings are social creatures whose well-being is intertwined with that of others. Contemporary studies in Islamic education highlight that values such as *ta'awun*, social solidarity, and collective responsibility are essential for strengthening social cohesion and fostering harmonious communities (Pangeran et al., 2025; Syafri et al., 2026). Educational institutions therefore function not merely as places of knowledge transmission but also as environments in which habits of cooperation and social responsibility are cultivated.

From this perspective, educational success should not be measured solely by individual academic accomplishment. Equally important is the ability of learners to contribute positively to their communities, respect differences, demonstrate empathy, and participate in collective problem-solving. Recent studies on Islamic education and religious moderation similarly emphasize that social development requires active engagement with communities that reinforce values of cooperation, tolerance, citizenship, and mutual respect (Nyimas, 2025; Rahmadi & Hamdan, 2023).

Social civilization emerges through seemingly ordinary practices such as helping peers, participating in collaborative learning, respecting diverse viewpoints, engaging in community service, and contributing to the welfare of others. Although these actions may appear modest, their cumulative effect is significant. Repeated across educational communities and transmitted across generations, they create cultures of trust, cooperation, and mutual support that strengthen the foundations of civilization. Research on Islamic social education demonstrates that the integration of values such as *ukhuwah*, *ta'awun*, and social justice contributes significantly to the development of social cohesion and collective responsibility (Pangeran et al., 2025).

Within the framework of *Micro-Civilization of Education*, social responsibility is not viewed as a secondary outcome of education but as one of its primary objectives. A civilization cannot endure if it produces intellectually capable individuals who lack empathy, social concern, or a sense of collective responsibility. Sustainable educational civilization therefore requires the continuous cultivation of social virtues that enable individuals to live and work together for the common good (Fajriati & Bahrudin, 2021; Syafri et al., 2026).

5. Digital Civilization: The Contemporary Arena of Ethical Engagement

The fifth foundation of *Micro-Civilization of Education* is *Digital Civilization*. Unlike the previous four foundations, which are derived directly from enduring Islamic conceptions of human nature, knowledge, and educational purpose, Digital Civilization occupies a distinct conceptual position. It is not a virtue in itself but rather the contemporary environment in which intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social values are enacted, challenged, and tested. Its inclusion within the framework reflects the growing influence of digital technologies and artificial intelligence on virtually every aspect of educational life (Chan & Hu, 2023; Farrokhnia et al., 2024). Recent studies in Islamic education similarly indicate that digital transformation has reshaped educational practices, learning cultures, and patterns of interaction among teachers and students, requiring educational institutions to rethink the relationship between technology, values, and character formation (Syafri et al., 2026).

The emergence of artificial intelligence has transformed the ways individuals access information, communicate, conduct research, and engage in learning. Educational technologies provide unprecedented opportunities for expanding access to knowledge, personalizing instruction, and enhancing learning efficiency. Recent studies indicate that AI can support educational processes by facilitating information retrieval, content generation, adaptive learning, and interactive learning experiences (Chan & Hu, 2023; Farrokhnia et al., 2024; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). In the context of Islamic education, digital technologies are increasingly viewed as strategic instruments for broadening learning access, strengthening educational flexibility, and

supporting innovative learning environments (Chan & Hu, 2023; Farrokhnia et al., 2024; Syafri et al., 2026). From this perspective, technological innovation represents a significant opportunity for educational advancement.

However, the same technologies also introduce new ethical and pedagogical challenges. Research has highlighted concerns regarding academic dishonesty, overreliance on automated systems, diminished critical thinking, and the erosion of intellectual independence (Eke, 2023; Gerlich, 2025). Generative AI, in particular, has complicated traditional understandings of authorship, originality, and academic responsibility, creating tensions between efficiency and integrity (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025). Consequently, the educational challenge is no longer whether technology should be used, but how it should be used responsibly.

Within the framework of *Micro-Civilization of Education*, digital civilization is understood as the arena in which the other four foundations are continuously examined. Intellectual civilization is tested through the ability to distinguish information from knowledge and to maintain critical inquiry despite the availability of instant answers (Gerlich, 2025). Moral civilization is tested through the commitment to honesty, accountability, and academic integrity in technology-mediated environments (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025; Eke, 2023). Spiritual civilization is tested through the capacity to preserve ethical awareness and self-discipline amid digital distractions and algorithmic influences. Social civilization is tested through the responsible use of technology for cooperation, dialogue, and social benefit rather than division, hostility, or misinformation.

The significance of *Digital Civilization* lies in its role as a bridge between classical educational values and contemporary realities. Technological development does not eliminate the need for intellectual rigor, moral integrity, spiritual awareness, or social responsibility. Rather, it amplifies the importance of these qualities by placing them within increasingly complex and interconnected environments. As digital technologies become embedded in everyday educational practices, the sustainability of educational civilization depends not on technological adoption alone but on the ethical cultures that guide its use (Chan & Hu, 2023; Farrokhnia et al., 2024).

From this perspective, the objective of Islamic education in the age of artificial intelligence is not to resist technological change, nor to embrace it uncritically. Instead, it is to cultivate digitally competent individuals whose engagement with technology remains grounded in knowledge, integrity, spirituality, and social responsibility. Digital Civilization therefore functions as the contemporary arena in which the success or failure of educational civilization becomes most visible (Syafri et al., 2026).

From Micro-Practices to Educational Civilization

The central finding of this study is that educational civilization develops through a cumulative process that begins with everyday educational practices. Rather than emerging suddenly through institutional reforms or technological innovations, civilization evolves through repeated actions that gradually shape individual character, collective culture, and ultimately civilizational patterns. This process can be represented through the developmental sequence: *Micro-Practices* → *Character Formation* → *Educational Culture* → *Educational Civilization*.

At the most basic level, micro-practices consist of routine actions embedded within educational life. These include reading, writing, questioning, maintaining academic honesty, participating in worship, assisting others, respecting differences, and engaging responsibly with digital technologies. Individually, such actions may appear insignificant; however, their continuous repetition contributes to the formation of enduring personal dispositions (Syafri et al., 2026).

This process corresponds closely with Aristotle's concept of habituation, in which virtues are acquired through repeated practice rather than through theoretical instruction alone

(Aristoteles, 2020). A similar idea appears in concept of *habitus*, which explains how repeated social practices become internalized as durable dispositions that shape future behavior. Within educational settings, habits of inquiry, integrity, spirituality, and cooperation gradually become part of an individual's character.

As these dispositions are shared and reproduced within educational communities, they evolve into collective cultural patterns. Educational culture emerges when values and practices are no longer confined to individuals but become recognized norms governing institutional life. A culture of reading, for example, is not merely the sum of individual reading habits; it is a shared expectation that values intellectual engagement. Likewise, academic integrity becomes a cultural phenomenon when honesty is collectively practiced and socially reinforced rather than imposed solely through regulations (Syafri et al., 2026).

The transition from culture to civilization occurs when these shared values become sufficiently stable and influential to shape institutions, social relationships, and intergenerational transmission. Educational civilization therefore represents the long-term manifestation of educational cultures that have become embedded within communities. In this sense, civilization is not an external structure imposed upon individuals but the cumulative outcome of values and practices continuously reproduced across generations (Ibnu Khaldun, 2011; Syafri et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, this framework does not imply that institutions are unimportant. On the contrary, institutions play a critical role in preserving, transmitting, and reinforcing educational cultures. Educational institutions serve as vehicles through which values, norms, and traditions are continuously reproduced across generations (Ibnu Khaldun, 2011; Nuraeni & Mujahidin, 2021). Educational institutions are therefore simultaneously shaped by the practices of individuals and responsible for sustaining those practices over time. The relationship between micro-level educational practices and institutional structures should consequently be understood as complementary rather than oppositional.

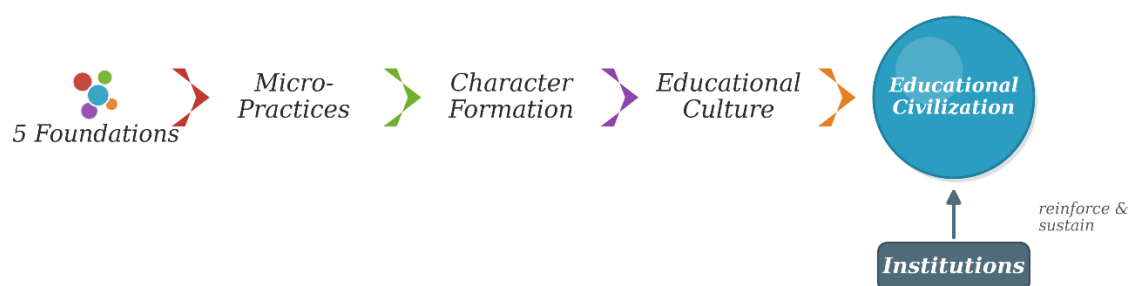


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Micro-Civilization of Education

The figure illustrates the developmental relationship between the five foundational dimensions of Micro-Civilization of Education and the emergence of educational civilization. Everyday educational practices generated by intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, and digital values contribute to character formation. Character subsequently shapes educational culture, which over time develops into educational civilization. Educational institutions function as reinforcing structures that sustain and reproduce these processes across generations.

Illustrative Applications across Educational Settings

Because the present study is philosophical rather than empirical, the framework has so far been argued at the level of principle. A fair objection is that such an argument risks remaining merely normative unless it can be shown to translate into recognisable practice. The purpose of this section is to meet that objection by illustrating how the five foundations would be enacted concretely across four settings that structure Islamic education in Indonesia: the school (*sekolah*), *madrasah*, *pesantren*, and higher education (*perguruan tinggi*). The examples in Table 2 are

offered as operationalisable illustrations rather than as empirical findings; they indicate the kind of observable practice in which each foundation becomes visible, and thereby specify what subsequent case-study research would look for.

Table 2. Illustrative Enactment of the Five Foundations across Educational Settings

Foundation	School (sekolah)	Madrasah	Pesantren	Higher education (perguruan tinggi)
Intellectual (Iqra')	A protected daily reading period and reflective reading journals.	Pairing <i>tahfiz</i> with structured reading (<i>mutāla'a</i>) of classical and modern texts.	Kitab-reading <i>halaqah</i> and <i>bahth al-masā'il</i> as habits of inquiry.	Research seminars, writing circles, and critical use of primary sources.
Moral (Akhlak)	An honesty policy enacted through transparent, low-stakes assessment.	Daily routines of <i>adab</i> towards teachers and towards knowledge.	<i>Amāna in shared duties</i> ; the ethics of <i>ta'līm wa-l-muta'allim</i> .	Authorship ethics, citation integrity, and an anti-plagiarism culture.
Spiritual (Tauhid)	An opening reflection linking each lesson to a sense of purpose.	<i>Duḥā</i> prayer, Qur'an, and intention-setting (<i>niyya</i>) before study.	<i>Dhikr</i> , self-discipline (<i>riyāḍa</i>), and reverence for the <i>barakah</i> of knowledge.	Integrating a tauhidic worldview into the disciplines and into research aims.
Social (Ta'awun)	Peer tutoring and small group service projects.	Communal work (<i>gotong royong</i>) and shared upkeep of the learning space.	<i>Khidma</i> and communal living as daily training in responsibility.	Community-engaged research and genuinely collaborative scholarship.
Digital	Supervised, age-appropriate device use and explicit digital etiquette.	AI literacy taught together with the <i>adab</i> of handling information.	Selective, critical engagement with media under guidance.	Transparent, responsible use of AI and disclosure in AI-assisted work.

These illustrations clarify how a single foundation takes context-specific forms. The intellectual foundation, for instance, appears in a school as a protected reading habit, in a pesantren as the disciplined reading of kitab within a halaqah, and in a university as critical engagement with primary sources; in each case the underlying practice is sustained, reflective reading, but its institutional expression differs. The digital foundation behaves similarly: supervised device use in a school, AI literacy joined to *adab* in a madrasah, and transparent disclosure of AI assistance in higher education are different enactments of one commitment—that technology must be governed by intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social purposes rather than the reverse (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025; Farrokhnia et al., 2024).

Presented in this way, the framework yields concrete and observable indicators for each setting, which answers the concern that its claims are only normative. These indicators nonetheless remain propositions to be examined empirically rather than established results. The following section therefore turns to the conceptual objections the framework must withstand, while the concluding section sets out the multi-site case-study research that such examination would require.

Evaluating the Framework: Addressing Conceptual Challenges

A conceptual framework gains scholarly value not merely from its explanatory capacity but also from its ability to withstand critical examination. For this reason, the proposed concept of *Micro-Civilization of Education* must be evaluated against several potential objections. This section addresses three major conceptual challenges concerning originality, the role of institutions, and the testability of the framework.

1. Is Micro-Civilization of Education Merely a Reinterpretation of Virtue Ethics?

A first objection concerns the originality of the framework. Critics may argue that the proposition that habits shape character and character shapes civilization is already well established in virtue ethics and character education. Aristoteles (2020) emphasized that virtues emerge through habituation, while Lickona (2016) highlighted the role of repeated practice and moral modeling in character formation. From this perspective, *Micro-Civilization of Education* may appear to be little more than a reformulation of existing theories.

This criticism is partially valid. The present framework does not claim to discover entirely new educational principles. Rather, its contribution lies in integrating several traditions of thought into a unified civilizational perspective. Whereas virtue ethics primarily focuses on individual moral development and character education concentrates on educational practices that shape personal virtues, *Micro-Civilization of Education* extends the analysis toward the formation of educational culture and civilization. The framework explains how intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, and digital practices interact to generate collective educational cultures that sustain civilizational development.

Furthermore, the framework is rooted in the broader tradition of Islamic education that links knowledge, morality, spirituality, and social responsibility as interconnected dimensions of human development (Syafri et al., 2023, 2026). In this respect, the framework does not simply reproduce virtue ethics but reinterprets it within the philosophical foundations of Islamic education while simultaneously responding to the challenges of the digital age.

2. Are Institutions More Important than Micro-Practices?

A second objection concerns the role of institutions. Educational historians and policy scholars frequently argue that educational progress is primarily determined by effective institutions, public policies, curriculum systems, and governance structures. High-performing educational systems are often associated with strong institutions rather than individual habits alone. Consequently, one may question whether educational civilization is truly rooted in micro-practices.

The present study does not deny the significance of institutions. On the contrary, institutions are indispensable for preserving and transmitting educational values across generations. However, the framework argues that institutional effectiveness ultimately depends on the quality of the educational cultures operating within those institutions. Policies and structures may establish formal conditions for learning, yet their success depends largely on whether educators and learners embody the values that those structures seek to promote.

This perspective suggests that educational institutions and educational culture are mutually reinforcing. Institutions provide structures through which values are preserved and transmitted, while everyday educational practices determine whether those values become living realities within educational communities. A school may implement policies promoting academic integrity, for example, but such policies become meaningful only when honesty is practiced consistently by teachers and students. Similarly, a curriculum may encourage literacy, yet a genuine culture of reading emerges only when reading becomes a lived habit within educational communities. Educational civilization therefore depends not only on institutional arrangements but also on the successful internalization of values through repeated educational practices across generations (Ibnu Khaldun, 2011; Syafri et al., 2026).

From this perspective, institutions should be understood as necessary but not sufficient conditions for educational civilization. They provide organizational stability and mechanisms of transmission, whereas micro-practices explain how educational values become embedded within everyday life.

3. Can the Framework Be Empirically Tested?

A third challenge concerns the testability of the framework. Conceptual models sometimes face criticism for being overly broad or difficult to verify. If every educational problem is interpreted as evidence of weakened micro-civilization, the framework risks

becoming unfalsifiable and therefore of limited scientific value.

To address this concern, the framework must be understood as a theoretical proposition rather than a self-evident truth. Its validity ultimately depends on empirical examination. The five foundations proposed in this study—*Intellectual, Moral, Spiritual, Social, and Digital Civilization*—can be operationalized into measurable indicators and investigated within different educational contexts. Future studies may examine how these dimensions influence character formation, educational culture, academic integrity, social responsibility, and educational outcomes across schools, madrasahs, and higher education institutions.

The framework would be challenged if empirical evidence demonstrated that strong educational cultures consistently emerge without corresponding micro-practices, relying solely on institutional structures or technological systems. Likewise, the framework would require revision if sustained improvements in educational practices showed no meaningful relationship with character formation, educational culture, or institutional quality. Such possibilities highlight the importance of future empirical research rather than weakening the conceptual argument itself.

This position is consistent with the view that conceptual frameworks function as heuristic and explanatory tools that guide empirical inquiry rather than replace it. Accordingly, the present framework should be evaluated not only by its philosophical coherence but also by its capacity to generate meaningful research questions and empirical investigations.

Consequently, *Micro-Civilization of Education* should be viewed as an open and testable framework that invites further investigation. Its purpose is not to provide a final explanation of educational civilization but to offer a philosophical lens through which the relationship among everyday practices, character formation, educational culture, and civilizational development can be more systematically understood.

Implications for Islamic Educational Management

The concept of *Micro-Civilization of Education* carries significant implications for the management of Islamic educational institutions. If educational civilization is sustained through everyday practices that shape culture, then educational management should focus not only on organizational structures, administrative procedures, and academic outcomes but also on the cultivation of educational culture itself. In this sense, culture becomes a central dimension of educational quality rather than a secondary outcome of institutional effectiveness.

This perspective aligns with broader discussions on the philosophical foundations of Islamic educational planning, which emphasize the integration of values, educational objectives, and institutional practice (Nuraeni & Mujahidin, 2021). Contemporary studies in Islamic educational management likewise emphasize that institutional success depends not only on effective governance but also on the cultivation of shared values, organizational culture, and character formation within educational communities (Syafri et al., 2026). Educational leaders therefore function not merely as administrators but also as custodians of culture who influence the habits, values, and norms that define institutional life.

At the level of leadership, the framework suggests that school leaders and educational managers should prioritize the cultivation of intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, and digital cultures. Leadership effectiveness is demonstrated not only through policy implementation but also through the ability to model and sustain everyday practices that reinforce these values. Habits such as reading, academic honesty, reflective learning, community engagement, and ethical technology use should become visible elements of institutional culture.

In curriculum and instructional management, the five foundations can be integrated as educational outcomes that extend beyond content mastery. Reading programs, writing activities, integrity protocols, spiritual routines, collaborative learning, community service initiatives, and digital ethics education can all function as mechanisms for strengthening micro-civilization within educational settings. The objective is not merely to transmit knowledge but to cultivate

dispositions that contribute to the formation of educational culture.

The framework also offers guidance for educational governance in the age of artificial intelligence. As AI technologies become increasingly integrated into teaching and learning processes, educational institutions require explicit policies that regulate their ethical use (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025; Eke, 2023). Such policies should not focus solely on technological efficiency but should ensure that AI serves educational purposes consistent with intellectual growth, integrity, spiritual awareness, and social responsibility.

Ultimately, the management implications of *Micro-Civilization of Education* suggest a shift in emphasis from measuring educational success exclusively through quantitative indicators toward evaluating the quality of educational cultures that develop within institutions. Sustainable educational civilization is achieved not only through better systems but through the continuous cultivation of values and practices that shape human beings as the primary agents of civilization.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that educational civilization cannot be adequately understood through macro-level perspectives that focus primarily on institutions, policies, curricula, and technological advancement. While these dimensions remain important, they do not fully explain the deeper foundations that enable educational civilization to emerge, endure, and develop across generations. In response to this limitation, the study proposed *Micro-Civilization of Education* as a philosophical framework for understanding educational civilization through the accumulation of everyday educational practices.

The framework identifies five interconnected foundations: *Intellectual Civilization* (*Iqra'*), *Moral Civilization* (*Akhlak*), *Spiritual Civilization* (*Tauhid*), *Social Civilization* (*Ta'awun*), and *Digital Civilization*. Derived from Islamic conceptions of human nature, knowledge, and educational purpose, these foundations collectively explain how educational civilization develops through a continuous process linking micro-practices, character formation, educational culture, and educational civilization. The study further argues that institutions and educational structures function not as alternatives to micro-practices but as mechanisms through which educational cultures are transmitted, reinforced, and sustained.

Theoretically, this article contributes to the philosophy of Islamic education by relocating the analytical centre of educational civilization from institutional structures to the everyday practices through which character and culture are formed. Its principal contribution is to model educational civilization as the outcome of a continuous chain that runs from micro-practice to character formation, from character to educational culture, and from culture to civilization, rather than as an aggregate of institutions, curricula, and technologies. By grounding this chain in Islamic conceptions of human nature, knowledge, and educational purpose, the framework supplies a vocabulary that connects classical concepts—*iqra'*, *akhlak*, *tauhid*, and *ta'awun*—to contemporary debates on literacy, academic integrity, and the place of artificial intelligence in learning. In doing so it reframes institutions not as the source of civilization but as the mechanisms through which cultivated cultures are transmitted and sustained, and it offers a distinctively tauhidic counterpart to secular accounts of human development with which it can be placed in dialogue.

In practical terms, the framework invites educators, institutional leaders, and policymakers to treat educational culture—rather than infrastructure or measurable outputs alone—as the central object of quality assurance in Islamic education. The illustrative indicators summarised in Table 2 provide concrete starting points for this work: protected habits of reflective reading, transparent and integrity-centred assessment, intention-setting that links study to purpose, structured cooperation and service, and the disciplined, *adab*-governed use of digital tools. For schools, madrasahs, pesantren, and universities alike, these indicators can inform programme design, teacher formation, and self-evaluation without reducing educational quality

to external metrics. They are especially pertinent in the age of artificial intelligence, where the framework implies that technology should be subordinated to intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social purposes rather than allowed to set them.

Because the argument advanced here is philosophical rather than empirical, its propositions remain to be tested, refined, and where necessary revised through systematic inquiry. Five directions for future research are especially warranted:

1. Operationalisation and validation. Translating the five foundations into clearly defined, observable indicators and validating them as instruments—through expert review, pilot testing, and appropriate reliability and validity analysis—so that the framework can be applied consistently across settings.
2. Multi-site empirical case studies. Examining how the foundations are actually enacted in schools, madrasahs, pesantren, and higher-education institutions, using the indicators in Table 2 as an observational starting point, in order to test whether the illustrative practices proposed here correspond to recognisable realities on the ground.
3. Longitudinal and explanatory study. Tracing, over time, the proposed chain linking micro-practice, character formation, educational culture, and educational civilization, so as to assess whether and how everyday practices accumulate into durable cultures rather than assuming the connection a priori.
4. Research on the digital foundation. Investigating how the digital arena bears on academic integrity, critical thinking, and spiritual discipline—including the risk of cognitive offloading associated with heavy reliance on AI tools—and how an adab-governed use of technology might be cultivated and evaluated in practice.
5. Comparative theoretical work. Situating *Micro-Civilization of Education* more fully in relation to the capability approach (Sen; Nussbaum) and to flourishing models (Seligman), clarifying both the points of contact and the distinctive contribution of its tauhidic and akhlak-centred foundations.

Pursued together, these lines of inquiry would subject the framework to genuine empirical scrutiny while extending its reach, and in doing so would clarify how *Micro-Civilization of Education* can help to understand, and ultimately to strengthen, Islamic educational civilization in contemporary society.

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