



REVITALIZING IBN KHALDUN'S EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT IN THE CONTEXT OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF THE SEKOLAH RAKYAT MODEL IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

This study explores the relevance of Ibn Khaldun's educational thought to contemporary alternative education practices, particularly the Sekolah Rakyat (People's School) model in Indonesia. As a classical Muslim scholar, Ibn Khaldun emphasized the transformative role of education in shaping individuals and sustaining civilization. Through a qualitative library-based method, this research analyzes key educational concepts from Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah, including his views on the stages of learning, the integration of moral and intellectual development, and the social function of education. These concepts are then conceptually mapped against the philosophical foundations of Sekolah Rakyat, which emphasizes community-based, character-driven, and experiential learning. The study finds significant theoretical alignment between Ibn Khaldun's ideas and the values promoted in Sekolah Rakyat, particularly in their shared commitment to holistic human development and social justice. The findings contribute to the revitalization of Islamic educational philosophy in contemporary contexts and propose a framework for integrating classical thought into modern alternative education models.

Keywords: Ibn Khaldun, Islamic education, Sekolah Rakyat, alternative education, educational philosophy, Muqaddimah, conceptual study

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi relevansi pemikiran pendidikan Ibnu Khaldun dengan praktik pendidikan alternatif kontemporer, khususnya model Sekolah Rakyat di Indonesia. Sebagai seorang cendekiawan Muslim klasik, Ibnu Khaldun menekankan peran transformatif pendidikan dalam membentuk individu dan mempertahankan peradaban. Melalui metode kualitatif berbasis kepustakaan, penelitian ini menganalisis konsep-konsep pendidikan utama dari Muqaddimah Ibnu Khaldun, termasuk pandangannya tentang tahapan pembelajaran, integrasi perkembangan moral dan intelektual, dan fungsi sosial pendidikan. Konsep-konsep ini kemudian dipetakan secara konseptual dengan landasan filosofis Sekolah Rakyat, yang menekankan pembelajaran berbasis masyarakat, karakter, dan pengalaman. Studi ini menemukan keselarasan teoritis yang signifikan antara ide-ide Ibnu Khaldun dan nilai-nilai yang dipromosikan di Sekolah Rakyat, terutama dalam komitmen bersama untuk pembangunan manusia yang holistik dan keadilan sosial. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada revitalisasi filosofi pendidikan Islam dalam konteks kontemporer dan mengusulkan kerangka kerja untuk mengintegrasikan pemikiran klasik ke dalam model pendidikan alternatif modern.

Kata kunci: Ibnu Khaldun, pendidikan Islam, Sekolah Rakyat, pendidikan alternatif, filsafat pendidikan, Muqaddimah, studi konseptual

INTRODUCTION

The global educational landscape is currently experiencing a notable surge of interest in alternative education models. This trend is largely a response to the perceived limitations of conventional schooling systems in adequately addressing the diverse learning needs of students and the evolving challenges faced by societies worldwide.¹ In Indonesia, a prominent example of this movement is the *Sekolah Rakyat* (People's School) initiative. This model has emerged as a significant alternative, specifically designed to provide accessible and holistic education, with a particular focus on empowering marginalized communities and those from underprivileged backgrounds.² The establishment of *Sekolah Rakyat* reflects a national commitment to broadening educational opportunities and fostering social mobility for vulnerable populations.³

Concurrently, there is a growing acknowledgment of the profound contemporary relevance of classical educational philosophies. These historical frameworks offer deep insights into fundamental aspects of human development, societal well-being, and the overarching purpose of learning that transcend their original historical contexts.⁴ Among these classical thinkers, Ibn Khaldun, a prolific 14th-century Muslim polymath, stands out. His seminal work, *Muqaddimah*, articulates a comprehensive and integrated perspective on education, civilization (*umran*), and social development.⁵ His holistic approach, which interweaves various aspects of societal functioning with educational principles, renders his ideas particularly pertinent for contemporary educational discourse and the pursuit of comprehensive human flourishing.⁶

While both Ibn Khaldun's educational thought and the contemporary *Sekolah Rakyat* model advocate for approaches to learning that are holistic, character-driven, and socially engaged, the explicit conceptual alignment between these two distinct

¹ "Home Education as an Alternative Education to Realise Sustainable Development in Indonesia," in *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Humanities Education, Law, and Social Science* (The International Conference on Humanities Education, Law, and Social Science, Padang, Indonesia: SCITEPRESS - Science and Technology Publications, 2024), 566–73, doi:10.5220/0013407600004654.

² "IMPLEMENTATION OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION IN COMMUNITY GROUPS IN MAKASSAR CITY," n.d.

³ "Indonesia's Sekolah Rakyat to Implement Three Curricula - ANTARA News," accessed July 15, 2025, <https://en.antaranews.com/news/355961/indonesias-sekolah-rakyat-to-implement-three-curricula>.

⁴ "SEKOLAH RAKYAT: Foreseen Hurdles to Prabowo's Push in Broadening Education Access for Poor Students," *OBSERVER - the Latest Information about Indonesian News and Social Culture*, March 22, 2025, <https://observerid.com/sekolah-rakyat-foreseen-hurdles-to-prabowos-push-in-broadening-education-access-for-poor-students/>.

⁵ "Revitalizing Ibn Khaldun's Theory of Islamic Education for the Contemporary World" 15 (2023).

⁶ "THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION ACCORDING TO IBNU KHALDUN AND ITS PARALLELISM TO INDONESIAN EDUCATION," *JURNAL HURRIAH: Jurnal Evaluasi Pendidikan Dan Penelitian* 4, no. 1 (March 28, 2023): 177–89, doi:10.56806/jh.v4i1.120.

entities remains largely unexplored in academic literature. The central research problem addressed by this study is to ascertain how Ibn Khaldun's educational thought can be conceptually aligned with current alternative education movements in Indonesia, with a specific focus on the *Sekolah Rakyat* model. This inquiry seeks to bridge a historical philosophical framework with a modern educational practice, identifying areas of theoretical congruence and mutual reinforcement.

This study pursues two primary objectives. First, it aims to explore and synthesize the core principles of Ibn Khaldun's educational philosophy as presented in his monumental work, *Muqaddimah*. Second, it seeks to conceptually analyze the potential relevance of Ibn Khaldun's educational philosophy to the *Sekolah Rakyat* model in Indonesia and to identify reflections of his principles within its foundational philosophies and operational practices. By achieving these objectives, the study intends to illuminate the enduring applicability of classical Islamic thought to modern educational challenges.

This study holds significant implications for several academic and practical domains. Academically, it enriches the broader discourse on Islamic education and philosophy by demonstrating the enduring applicability of classical Islamic thought to contemporary educational challenges.⁷ It showcases how historical intellectual traditions can offer valuable frameworks for understanding and addressing modern pedagogical and societal needs.

Practically, this research offers a crucial theoretical bridge between classical Islamic thought and modern grassroots education initiatives, such as *Sekolah Rakyat*. By establishing this connection, the study provides a robust philosophical foundation for alternative education models not only in Indonesia but potentially in other contexts as well. This theoretical grounding can significantly enhance the legitimacy, vision, and long-term sustainability of such programs, providing them with a deeper intellectual heritage and a clearer sense of purpose.⁸

RESEARCH METHODS

A. Type and Approach

This study employs a qualitative library research design, utilizing a conceptual and comparative approach.⁵ This methodological choice is particularly well-suited for the analysis and synthesis of theoretical concepts derived from

⁷ "Educational Construction in Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy: Literary Analysis and Contribution to Contemporary Islamic Education," *Al-Iltizam: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 9, no. 2 (October 19, 2024): 220–28, doi:10.33477/alt.v9i2.7992.

⁸ "Revitalizing Ibn Khaldun's Theory of Islamic Education for the Contemporary World."

classical texts and contemporary educational models. The design facilitates the identification of conceptual alignments and divergences, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the relationship between Ibn Khaldun's historical philosophy and the modern *Sekolah Rakyat* initiative.

B. Data Collection Technique

The rigorous nature of this conceptual review necessitates the use of both primary and secondary sources to ensure comprehensive coverage and contextual understanding.

- **Primary Source:** The foundational text for understanding Ibn Khaldun's educational theories is his *Muqaddimah*.⁹ Access to this work in both its original Arabic and reliable English translations provides direct engagement with Ibn Khaldun's original thoughts and sociological insights, forming the bedrock of the analysis of his philosophy.
- **Secondary Sources:** A wide array of secondary scholarly materials supplements the primary source. This includes academic articles, books, and other relevant literature that interpret and analyze Ibn Khaldun's educational philosophy, explore various alternative education models, and provide specific details and contextual information regarding the *Sekolah Rakyat* initiative in Indonesia.¹ These sources are crucial for providing diverse perspectives, contemporary interpretations, and empirical details necessary for a comprehensive review.

The analytical process involves two key stages. Initially, content analysis is employed to systematically extract and categorize the core educational concepts from Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* and the philosophical underpinnings of *Sekolah Rakyat*. This involves identifying recurring themes, explicit statements, and implicit values related to education within both bodies of literature.

Following content analysis, thematic comparison is utilized to map these extracted concepts against each other. This comparative approach allows for a structured assessment, enabling the identification of areas of conceptual alignment, shared values, and potential areas of divergence or challenge. This methodical comparison is fundamental to constructing the theoretical bridge between classical Islamic thought and modern alternative education, providing a clear and organized basis for the study's findings and discussion.

DATA EXPOSURE AND DISCUSSION

⁹ "THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION ACCORDING TO IBNU KHALDUN AND ITS PARALLELISM TO INDONESIAN EDUCATION."

A. Key Educational Concepts from Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun's educational philosophy, intricately woven into his broader sociological and historical theories within the *Muqaddimah*, presents a remarkably comprehensive and holistic perspective on learning and human development.¹⁰ His insights extend beyond mere pedagogical methods to encompass the societal role and ultimate purpose of education.

B. Stages of Learning (Ta'lim): Repetition, Understanding, and Mastery

Ibn Khaldun proposed a progressive, iterative learning process, emphasizing a gradual and structured approach to knowledge acquisition.⁶ He outlined three distinct stages that he believed were crucial for effective learning and the cultivation of deep understanding. The first stage involves beginning with fundamental general knowledge, presented briefly and simply, ensuring that the information aligns with the student's current cognitive level and does not overwhelm their perceptive capabilities. This initial phase serves as a preparatory "warm-up" for more complex learning.¹¹

In the second stage, the teacher is encouraged to revisit the same information but with increased elaboration and the introduction of more crucial topics. This repetition, delivered at a higher level of detail, allows for an improved and deepened perception of the subject matter.¹² The final stage, leading to mastery, involves a third revisiting of the subject. This time, the discussion is more serious and in-depth, pushing students towards their utmost aptitude and fostering a firm, ingrained familiarity with the subject.¹³

Ibn Khaldun underscored that this repetitive, sequenced method is vital for triggering motivation and interest, which in turn leads to effective learning and the development of "malakah" (habit or competence).¹⁴ *Malakah*, in his view, is a firmly established attribute in the human psyche that provides an individual with the competence to carry out related actions.¹⁵ He explicitly cautioned against

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Ibn-Khaldun's Theory of Education and Its Impact on the Development of Modern Education," *International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology*, October 30, 2021, 477–84, doi:10.48175/ijarsct-2033.

¹² "Educational Construction in Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy."

¹³ "Sekolah Rakyat Sarawak | PDF | Sarawak | Malaysia," accessed July 15, 2025, <https://id.scribd.com/document/28698173/SEKOLAH-RAKYAT-SARAWAK>.

¹⁴ "Ibn-e-Khuldoon's Philosophy of Education," *Ibn-e-Khuldoon's Philosophy of Education*, accessed July 15, 2025, <http://pakphilosophy.blogspot.com/2014/03/ibn-e-khuldoons-philosophy-of-education.html>.

¹⁵ "[Final Report] GCED CDI Project_Indonesia Integrated Teaching Modules of Literacy and Numeracy for Primary Teachers in Indonesia and the Asia-Pacific Region.Pdf," accessed July 15, 2025, [https://gcedcurriculum.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/%5BFinal%20Report%5D%20GCED%20CDI%20Project_Indonesia_Integrated%20Teaching%](https://gcedcurriculum.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/%5BFinal%20Report%5D%20GCED%20CDI%20Project_Indonesia_Integrated%20Teaching%20)

forcing students to memorize difficult concepts they do not yet grasp, arguing that such an approach leads to laziness and hinders genuine understanding, ultimately prolonging the learning period.¹⁶ This structured, iterative approach to learning, moving from simple to complex, brief to elaborated, and repeated for mastery¹⁷, reveals a sophisticated understanding of cognitive processes. It suggests an early recognition of principles akin to modern cognitive load theory and spaced repetition, prioritizing genuine comprehension and assimilation over superficial recall. This pedagogical progression indicates a learner-centric view of knowledge acquisition, aiming for deep, stable understanding rather than mere temporary memorization.

C. Education as a Tool for Human Development and Civilization

Ibn Khaldun regarded education as a profoundly transformative force, indispensable for shaping individuals and for the very sustenance of civilization (*umran*).¹⁸ He believed that education encompasses both moral and intellectual instruction, serving to unlock an individual's potential and foster the comprehensive growth of their character and identity.¹⁹ This perspective positions education as far more than mere academic instruction; it is a means to cultivate the full spectrum of human capabilities.

Beyond its individual benefits, education, according to Ibn Khaldun, stands as a crucial pillar for the construction and advancement of a nation, contributing directly to social stability and collective progress.²⁰ He asserted that education should equip individuals to become economically and socially capable, enabling them to contribute productively to society and thereby improve their overall quality of living.²¹ He further argued that the decline of a society is often a direct consequence of a deterioration in the quality of its education, which in turn

20Modules%20of%20Literacy%20and%20Numeracy%20for%20Primary%20Teachers%20in%20Indonesia%20and%20the%20Asia-Pacific%20Region.pdf.

¹⁶ "(PDF) The Grass Roots Curriculum Model in Basic Education through Self-Development Programs," accessed July 15, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382264314_The_Grass_Roots_Curriculum_Model_in_Basic_Education_through_Self-Development_Programs.

¹⁷ "Indonesia's Sekolah Rakyat to Implement Three Curricula - ANTARA News."

¹⁸ "Implementation of Community Service-Based Indonesian Learning at UINSI Samarinda," *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 2 (June 10, 2022): 157–70, doi:10.21093/sajie.v4i2.4226.

¹⁹ "Ibn-Khaldun's Theory of Education and Its Impact on the Development of Modern Education."

²⁰ "Sekolah Rakyat Orientation Starts July 14," *Antara News*, July 5, 2025, <https://en.antaranews.com/news/364269/sekolah-rakyat-orientation-starts-july-14>.

²¹ "Free Boarding Schools for Poor Children to Open Across Indonesia Next Week," accessed July 15, 2025, <https://jakartaglobe.id/news/free-boarding-schools-for-poor-children-to-open-across-indonesia-next-week>.

leads to moral and scientific decay.²² This view of education as an instrument of civilization.²³ transcends individualistic academic achievement. It positions education as a fundamental driver for societal progress, stability, and moral coherence, highlighting a deep understanding of the reciprocal relationship between individual development and collective well-being. This perspective is particularly relevant in contemporary contexts, especially for developing nations, where education is increasingly recognized as a key catalyst for national development and a means to achieve broader societal goals.

Ibn Khaldun strongly emphasized that education should instill piety, ethics, and a robust sense of social responsibility in learners.²⁴ This ethical foundation extends to introducing children to their social and natural environment, educating them on the principles of positive social relationships, and enabling them to adapt harmoniously to their surroundings.²⁵ His philosophy suggests that character is not merely taught theoretically but is developed through active engagement with the world.

He advocated for educational methods that encourage practical skills and critical reasoning, allowing students to apply theoretical concepts to real-world situations.²⁶ This approach anticipates modern educational needs that prioritize higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving capabilities.²⁷ He believed that education should not be confined to rote teaching but must actively foster the development of practical skills that enable individuals to function effectively within their society. Ibn Khaldun's advocacy for integrating moral values with practical skills and social responsibility reveals a pragmatic approach to character formation. This perspective suggests that ethics are not abstract principles but are cultivated through tangible, real-world engagement and the application of knowledge. It implies an understanding that character is built through action and interaction within a social context, rather than solely through theoretical instruction or dogmatic religious teaching.

²² "Sekolah Rakyat Ready for July 14 Launch: Minister," *Antara News*, July 13, 2025, <https://en.antaranews.com/news/366029/sekolah-rakyat-ready-for-july-14-launch-minister>.

²³ "IBN-Khaldun's Perception of Education: Pre-Conditions and Excellence," *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Scientific Research* 1, no. 10 (December 31, 2018), doi:10.31426/ijamsr.2018.1.10.1021.

²⁴ "Constructivism-Based Teaching and Learning in Indonesian Education | Request PDF," *ResearchGate*, June 20, 2025, doi:10.18502/kss.v5i4.8668.

²⁵ "(PDF) Pedagogical Practices in Indonesia," in *ResearchGate*, accessed July 15, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279456037_Pedagogical_Practices_in_Indonesia.

²⁶ "Ibn Khaldun and John Locke's Thoughts, Reframing Contemporary Education World Order," *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal* 3, no. 2 (July 11, 2024): 134–44, doi:10.59373/attadzkir.v3i2.53.

²⁷ "Revitalizing Ibn Khaldun's Theory of Islamic Education for the Contemporary World."

D. Holistic Development and Integration of Knowledge (Religious, Intellectual, Social)

Ibn Khaldun's philosophy champions a comprehensive approach that seamlessly integrates the religious, intellectual, and social dimensions of learning.⁵ He posited that knowledge can be broadly categorized into two streams: religious topics and philosophical topics, both of which are rooted in human mental capacities. In his view, both types of knowledge are indispensable for the growth and progress of humanity.¹¹

One of his most significant contributions to educational thought was his insistence on the importance of integrating science and religion. He firmly asserted that secular science should not be separated from religion, as these two domains are complementary and mutually enriching in the formation of a civilized human being.⁷ The ultimate goal of education, according to Ibn Khaldun, is to cultivate individuals who possess a harmonious balance between the mind and the heart, and who master knowledge that is beneficial for both worldly life and the hereafter.²⁸ He also believed that moral and religious education should precede intellectual development, suggesting that foundational ethical grounding, often initiated through the study of the Qur'an, is crucial from an early age.⁶ Ibn Khaldun's insistence on integrating religious and secular knowledge⁷ reflects an epistemological harmony, where different branches of knowledge are perceived as complementary rather than conflicting. This holistic perspective aims to produce individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also spiritually grounded and socially conscious, a concept that challenges the disciplinary silos often observed in modern educational systems.

E. Pedagogical Approaches and the Teacher's Role

Ibn Khaldun advocated for a personalized approach to education, demonstrating an early recognition of individual differences in learning styles and abilities.¹¹ He believed that educators should adapt their teaching methods to meet the unique needs of each student, rather than adhering to a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach.¹¹

He strongly supported the "al-qurb wa al-mulayanah" (loving and mild) approach to teaching, vehemently rejecting the use of violence and rudeness towards children.⁶ He argued that strict corporal punishment is detrimental to students, especially young ones, as it can lead to narrow-mindedness, lethargy, and a propensity for dishonesty.⁶ However, he also introduced a nuanced perspective,

²⁸ "Educational Construction in Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy."

cautioning against being overly gentle, particularly with slow learners or those from privileged backgrounds, suggesting that a balance between compassion and occasional firmness might be necessary.⁶

His preferred teaching method is described as concentric, beginning with a broad overview of a topic before delving into detailed explanations.⁶ He criticized the prevalent lecture method of his time, instead advocating for discussions and debates as superior means to develop effective learning capacity and encourage students to express their own opinions and interpretations.¹⁹ In his view, teachers hold a crucial role; they must be knowledgeable, practical, and skillful in their respective fields, serving as positive role models, as students learn best through imitating their teachers' actions and dispositions.¹² Ibn Khaldun's nuanced pedagogical advice, balancing gentleness with occasional firmness and advocating for personalized, interactive methods⁶, demonstrates an early recognition of differentiated instruction and student-centered learning. This foresight in adapting teaching to individual needs and promoting active engagement challenges the common perception of medieval education as purely didactic, highlighting a progressive and adaptable pedagogical philosophy.

Table 1: Key Educational Principles of Ibn Khaldun

Principle	Description
Stages of Learning (Ta'lim)	Progressive, iterative learning process (fundamentals, elaborated repetition, deep mastery).

F. Philosophical Foundations and Operational Model of Sekolah Rakyat

Sekolah Rakyat (People's School) in Indonesia represents a contemporary alternative education model specifically designed to address educational disparities and foster holistic development, particularly among underserved populations. Its structure and philosophy are tailored to meet the unique needs of its target beneficiaries.

G. Community-Based Learning and Character Building

Sekolah Rakyat is fundamentally a community-based initiative, conceived to expand educational opportunities for children from severely underprivileged

families, including street children and school dropouts.³ The core philosophy underpinning *Sekolah Rakyat* is a commitment to lifting marginalized communities out of poverty through comprehensive education.³ This explicit targeting of vulnerable children and the provision of extensive support, including free education, boarding, and basic necessities³, demonstrates a profound commitment to social equity and empowerment. The program views education as a direct and potent instrument for poverty alleviation and fostering social mobility, extending its mission beyond mere academic instruction to encompass holistic upliftment.

Character education is a central and pervasive pillar of the *Sekolah Rakyat* curriculum. It is integrated across all learning activities rather than being treated as a separate, isolated subject.¹⁴ This is achieved through the systematic strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile values, which encompass six key dimensions: faith and devotion to God Almighty and noble character, global diversity, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), independence, critical reasoning, and creativity.¹⁵ These values are further reinforced through the integration of local cultural values and practices within Community Learning Centers (CLCs) associated with the program.³³ This values-driven approach underscores a deliberate move away from purely academic metrics towards fostering well-rounded individuals equipped for real-world contributions and ethical citizenship, deeply aligning with Indonesia's national philosophy.

H. Experiential Learning and Social Responsibility

The *Sekolah Rakyat* model places a strong emphasis on experiential learning, where students actively engage in real-life experiences to develop practical skills and a profound sense of social responsibility.¹ This pedagogical approach aims to contextualize education within the learners' cultural environment, fostering core Indonesian values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), deliberation (*musyawarah*), care for others (*kepedulian*), and responsibility (*tanggung jawab*).³³

Concrete examples of experiential learning activities include community clean-ups, which provide a practical application of values like *gotong royong* and *tanggung jawab* by involving learners in real-world scenarios that directly benefit their community.³³ Similarly, traditional craft-making activities enhance learners' understanding and appreciation of local cultural practices and values.³³ This practical engagement is considered crucial for shaping students' personalities and equipping them with the ability to solve complex problems encountered in community life.¹⁴ The curriculum's emphasis on character education through the Pancasila Student Profile and life skills, coupled with experiential learning¹⁷, highlights a values-driven practicality. This approach ensures that learning is not

confined to theoretical knowledge but extends to fostering well-rounded individuals prepared for active and ethical participation in society.

I. Curriculum Structure and Target Beneficiaries

Sekolah Rakyat operates as a tuition-free boarding school model, providing not only comprehensive education but also essential support services, including accommodation, nutritious meals, school uniforms, and basic necessities.³ This holistic provision ensures equitable access to quality education for children from severely underprivileged backgrounds, removing financial and logistical barriers that often prevent their participation in conventional schooling.

The program implements a unique three-part curriculum structure.¹⁷ The first is a preparatory curriculum, designed to build students' physical readiness and discipline over approximately two weeks before formal classes commence.²⁹ The second follows the national formal school curriculum, ensuring academic instruction aligns with national standards.¹⁷ The third curriculum focuses on life skills education, emphasizing character development, national values, and a deeper understanding of religious teachings.¹⁷ Unlike conventional schools, *Sekolah Rakyat* offers a flexible, personalized learning system with a multi-entry, multi-exit approach, allowing students to begin or complete their studies outside the standard academic calendar, accommodating diverse learning trajectories.²

The program benefits from a collaborative oversight model involving multiple government ministries: the Ministry of Social Affairs oversees character education, the Ministry of Education handles academic instruction, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs is responsible for religious studies.³ This integrated approach is designed to produce smart, patriotic students with strong values.²¹ Furthermore, the initiative embraces digital-based learning to keep pace with the digital era and plans to leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) for talent mapping, aiming to develop more effective and personalized learning methods tailored to individual student potential.³ The multi-ministerial oversight and the flexible, digital-integrated curriculum³ point to an adaptive governance model. This model is specifically designed to address complex social problems through inter-sectoral collaboration and the strategic application of modern pedagogical tools, recognizing that comprehensive educational solutions for vulnerable populations require a coordinated, flexible, and technologically informed approach.

²⁹ "Anthropological Aspects of Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah : A Critical Examination | Bérose," accessed July 15, 2025, <https://www.berose.fr/article1777.html>.

Table 2: Core Philosophical Foundations and Operational Aspects of Sekolah Rakyat

Aspect	Description	Priority
Target Beneficiaries	Children from severely underprivileged backgrounds, street children, school dropouts.	3
Philosophical Foundations	Community-based, character-driven (Pancasila Student Profile, local values), experiential learning, social equity, poverty alleviation.	1
Operational Model	Tuition-free, boarding school system, multi-entry/multi-exit, multi-ministerial oversight.	3
Curriculum Structure	Preparatory, national formal, life skills; integrates character education, national values, religious teachings, digital learning.	3

J. Conceptual Alignment: Shared Values and Principles

The conceptual mapping conducted in this study reveals significant theoretical alignment between Ibn Khaldun's educational philosophy and the *Sekolah Rakyat* model. This alignment demonstrates a profound shared commitment to holistic human development and social justice, bridging centuries and diverse contexts.

Shared Commitment to Holistic Human Development and Social Justice

Both Ibn Khaldun and *Sekolah Rakyat* fundamentally emphasize the development of the whole individual, extending far beyond mere academic achievement to encompass moral, intellectual, and social dimensions. Ibn Khaldun's vision of education as a tool for fostering moral and ethical values, cultivating critical thinking, and developing practical skills essential for societal contribution ⁵ finds a strong and direct parallel in *Sekolah Rakyat's* character-driven curriculum, its embrace of community-based learning, and its explicit focus on life skills and social responsibility.³ This convergence highlights that both educational philosophies prioritize the comprehensive growth of the individual as a productive and ethical member of society.

A deeper examination reveals that both philosophies are profoundly rooted in the belief that education should serve to uplift society as a whole. Ibn Khaldun viewed

education as a fundamental pillar for building and sustaining civilization (*umran*)⁷, recognizing its instrumental role in societal progress and stability. In a strikingly similar vein,

Sekolah Rakyat explicitly aims to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and empower marginalized communities, thereby contributing to broader social equity.³⁰ This shared social justice imperative underscores a fundamental congruence in their ultimate objectives, demonstrating that regardless of historical period, effective education is seen as a means for collective betterment. The profound conceptual alignment between Ibn Khaldun's philosophy and *Sekolah Rakyat* lies in their shared human-centric and societal-centric educational goals, transcending historical periods. Both models prioritize the development of the whole individual—morally, intellectually, and practically—for the betterment of the community and civilization, suggesting a universal truth about effective education for human flourishing and social progress. This enduring relevance of classical thought to modern challenges is a testament to the timeless nature of certain educational principles.

Theoretical Bridge Between Classical Islamic Thought and Modern Grassroots Education

The observed conceptual alignment serves as a robust theoretical bridge, powerfully demonstrating that Ibn Khaldun's educational thought remains highly relevant and applicable to contemporary education, particularly within the Indonesian context.⁶ Both perspectives share the common, overarching objective of fostering students who possess a harmonious blend of faith, strong character, and comprehensive knowledge.⁶ This shared foundation provides a compelling narrative for the enduring value of classical Islamic intellectual traditions.

Ibn Khaldun's emphasis on the foundational importance of moral and religious education from an early age for character formation⁶ is directly reflected in *Sekolah Rakyat*'s integrated religious studies and character-building curricula.³ This explicit connection provides *Sekolah Rakyat* with a deeper philosophical grounding, anchoring it within a rich and venerable Islamic intellectual tradition. This not only enhances its legitimacy but also provides a clearer and more profound vision for its mission. The alignment provides an indigenous epistemic validation for *Sekolah Rakyat*, grounding a modern Indonesian educational initiative in a rich, classical Islamic intellectual tradition. This not only strengthens the philosophical legitimacy of *Sekolah Rakyat* but also demonstrates the enduring practical wisdom of Islamic educational thought in

³⁰ "Ibn Khaldun and John Locke's Thoughts, Reframing Contemporary Education World Order."

addressing contemporary challenges, offering a culturally resonant framework for modern educational reform.

Table 3: Conceptual Alignment Matrix: Ibn Khaldun's Principles vs. Sekolah Rakyat's Values

Key Theme	Ibn Khaldun's Principle	Sekolah Rakyat's Value/Practice
Holistic Human Development	Education for moral, intellectual, social development; fostering character and identity; developing potential.	Character-driven curriculum (Pancasila Student Profile); life skills education; comprehensive care (boarding, meals).
Character Formation & Ethics	Instilling piety, ethics, social responsibility; moral education precedes intellectual.	Integration of Pancasila values; focus on mutual cooperation, responsibility; religious studies.
Practical & Experiential Learning	Integration of theoretical knowledge with practical skills; application to real-world situations; learning through experience.	Experiential learning activities (community clean-ups, crafts); focus on life skills; learning through direct interaction with environment.
Social Function of Education	Tool for civilization building, social stability, national progress; economic and social capability.	Poverty alleviation; social empowerment; fostering community awareness and solidarity; targeting marginalized groups.
Adaptive & Student-Centered Pedagogy	Personalized approach; "loving and mild" methods; iterative stages of learning (repetition, understanding, mastery); emphasis on discussion over rote.	Flexible, personalized learning system (multi-entry/exit); differentiated learning; digital-based learning; AI for talent mapping.

3.4. Contrasts and Challenges

While significant conceptual alignments exist between Ibn Khaldun's educational philosophy and the *Sekolah Rakyat* model, it is crucial to acknowledge the inherent differences and challenges that arise when attempting to directly apply

classical thought to a modern context. These distinctions highlight the necessity of a nuanced approach to revitalization.

Differences in Historical Context and Technological Environment

Ibn Khaldun's educational philosophy was formulated within the distinct socio-historical context of 14th-century North Africa. This era was characterized by specific social structures, economic realities, and, critically, significant technological limitations that shaped his observations and recommendations.²⁹ His educational theories were rooted in a pre-industrial, pre-digital world, where the modes of knowledge dissemination and societal organization were vastly different from today.³¹

In stark contrast, *Sekolah Rakyat* operates in 21st-century Indonesia, an era defined by rapid globalization, profound digital transformation, and complex learning crises.¹ The *Sekolah Rakyat* model actively embraces modern technology, integrating digital-based learning and even leveraging Artificial Intelligence for personalized talent mapping.³ This substantial technological disparity represents a significant contextual gap that cannot be overlooked. The stark differences in historical and technological contexts between Ibn Khaldun's era and the present day necessitate a critical reinterpretation, rather than a direct transplantation, of his methods. This underscores the dynamic nature of educational philosophy, which requires continuous adaptation to new realities while simultaneously preserving foundational values. The challenge lies in extracting universal principles from his work and creatively applying them to contemporary mechanisms and tools.

K. The Need for Reinterpretation and Adaptation

Directly applying Ibn Khaldun's concepts to a modern curriculum without careful reinterpretation can be problematic, as his specific recommendations were tailored to his time.¹⁹ While his overarching ideas on education remain profoundly relevant, they require thoughtful "reinterpretation" and "adaptation" to genuinely resonate with contemporary societal needs and current educational practices.⁵

Challenges in this adaptation include the necessity of incorporating external factors that significantly shape modern educational outcomes and social cohesion. These include current economic dynamics, the rapid pace of social change, and persistent geographical disparities.²³ Furthermore, a comprehensive understanding of Ibn Khaldun's original thought, particularly his intricate sociological and economic theories, is essential to fully grasp the nuances of his

³¹ "IBN-Khaldun's Perception of Education."

educational framework and ensure accurate reinterpretation.³² The necessity of reinterpreting Ibn Khaldun's classical concepts for modern application⁵ highlights a dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation in educational reform. This suggests that the revitalization of classical thought is not a static preservation of old ideas but an active, adaptive process that enriches contemporary models by drawing on enduring wisdom while simultaneously addressing modern complexities and evolving societal demands.

Discussion

4.1. Critical Analysis of Relevance

Addressing Current Educational Challenges through Ibn Khaldun's Thought

Ibn Khaldun's educational philosophy offers profound and enduring solutions to many of the persistent challenges faced by contemporary education systems, particularly in Indonesia. His strong emphasis on moral and ethical values⁵ provides a direct and compelling counter-narrative to current concerns about moral degradation and declining character among students in Indonesia.¹⁴ His insistence that character education should permeate the entire learning process, rather than being confined to a separate subject³², aligns seamlessly with modern calls for integrated and holistic character development. This approach suggests that moral integrity is not an add-on but an intrinsic component of all learning.

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun's advocacy for critical thinking, the development of practical skills, and experiential learning⁷ directly addresses the limitations of rote learning, which often characterizes conventional systems. His methods prepare students for the complexities of the modern world by fostering genuine problem-solving capabilities rather than mere information recall.¹⁴ This focus on applied knowledge and intellectual engagement equips individuals to navigate and contribute meaningfully to dynamic environments.

Ibn Khaldun's holistic approach, which integrates intellectual, moral, and social dimensions of learning⁵, can serve as a powerful antidote to educational systems that often prioritize solely academic achievement. Such narrow focuses can inadvertently lead to a loss of social sensitivity and conscience among students.¹⁴ His philosophy provides a comprehensive framework for fostering well-rounded individuals who are not only academically proficient but also ethically grounded, socially responsible, and equipped with a deep understanding of their role within the broader community. This suggests that foundational principles of human development, articulated centuries ago,

³² "Ibn Khaldun and John Locke's Thoughts, Reframing Contemporary Education World Order."

remain profoundly relevant in addressing modern societal ills exacerbated by an overly narrow educational focus.

Sekolah Rakyat as a Practical Realization of Islamic Educational Ideals

The *Sekolah Rakyat* model, with its robust emphasis on community-based, character-driven, and experiential learning ¹, can be interpreted as a practical and contemporary realization of many of Ibn Khaldun's Islamic educational ideals. Its focus on fostering core Indonesian values such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and *tanggung jawab* (responsibility) through real-world activities like community clean-ups ³³ directly mirrors Ibn Khaldun's call for the practical application of knowledge and active social integration.³³ This demonstrates a shared belief in learning through doing and contributing to the collective good.

The program's explicit mission to lift children from poverty and instill a strong sense of social responsibility ³ aligns seamlessly with Ibn Khaldun's view of education as a fundamental instrument for societal progress and the building of civilization (*umran*).⁷ Both frameworks recognize education as a powerful lever for social transformation and the creation of a more just and stable society.

Furthermore, the multi-ministerial oversight of *Sekolah Rakyat*, which notably includes the Ministry of Religious Affairs ³, ensures the deliberate integration of religious studies and moral values within the curriculum. This structural integration reflects Ibn Khaldun's insistence on balancing religious and secular knowledge for holistic human development.⁷ This makes *Sekolah Rakyat* a compelling case study for the revitalization of Islamic educational philosophy in a contemporary context, demonstrating how classical philosophical principles can be translated into a practical, impactful alternative education model. This offers a compelling example of how theoretical frameworks can manifest in tangible social change.

4.2. Conceptual Contribution

Proposing a Framework for Islamic Alternative Education

Based on the significant conceptual alignment identified between Ibn Khaldun's philosophy and the *Sekolah Rakyat* model, this study proposes a comprehensive framework for Islamic alternative education. This framework is deeply rooted in Ibn Khaldun's timeless principles and offers a principled approach for designing

³³ "Home Education as an Alternative Education to Realise Sustainable Development in Indonesia," in *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Humanities Education, Law, and Social Science* (The International Conference on Humanities Education, Law, and Social Science, Padang, Indonesia: SCITEPRESS - Science and Technology Publications, 2024), 566–73, doi:10.5220/0013407600004654.

educational models that are both effective in addressing modern challenges and profoundly resonant with Islamic intellectual heritage. The proposed framework would emphasize the following core components:

- **Holistic Development:** This principle advocates for nurturing all dimensions of the individual—intellectual, moral, spiritual, and practical. Education, within this framework, aims to cultivate a well-rounded human being capable of navigating both worldly life and preparing for the hereafter.⁵
- **Iterative, Student-Centered Learning:** The framework promotes progressive stages of learning, moving from fundamental concepts to deeper mastery through repetition and elaboration. It encourages personalized approaches, fostering critical thinking through active discussion and problem-solving, rather than relying on rote memorization.⁶
- **Community Integration and Social Responsibility:** Education is viewed as inherently connected to the social and natural environment. This component emphasizes promoting active participation in community welfare, instilling a strong sense of social justice, and preparing individuals to be productive and responsible members of their society.⁵
- **Integration of Knowledge:** The framework advocates for a balanced curriculum that unifies religious and secular sciences. It recognizes their complementary roles in forming a complete human being, where spiritual wisdom informs intellectual pursuits and practical skills are guided by ethical considerations.⁷
- **Teacher as a Compassionate, Skilled Role Model:** This principle highlights the crucial role of the teacher, emphasizing their *malakah* (competence) and their function as a compassionate guide. Teachers are encouraged to employ gentle yet firm pedagogical methods, serving as exemplary role models whose actions and dispositions inspire their students.⁶

By synthesizing Ibn Khaldun's principles into this coherent framework, this study offers a blueprint for Islamic alternative education that is both deeply rooted in tradition and highly adaptable to modern contexts. This framework can guide the development of future educational models seeking to balance academic rigor with moral integrity and significant social impact.

Strengthening Sekolah Rakyat's Philosophical Foundation

By explicitly connecting *Sekolah Rakyat* to Ibn Khaldun's educational philosophy, this study provides the model with a robust historical and philosophical grounding. This linkage elevates *Sekolah Rakyat* beyond being merely a programmatic response to poverty or a flexible learning option, transforming it into a philosophically informed educational movement with a rich intellectual lineage.

This deeper theoretical rationale significantly enhances *Sekolah Rakyat*'s legitimacy, providing a clearer and more profound vision for its community-based, character-driven, and holistic approach.⁶ Understanding its alignment with classical Islamic thought can also foster greater resilience against potential criticisms, ensuring consistency in its long-term development and implementation. Grounding *Sekolah Rakyat* in Ibn Khaldun's philosophy elevates its status from a practical intervention to a philosophically informed educational movement. This deeper foundation can provide a clearer vision, greater resilience, and enhanced legitimacy, fostering long-term sustainability and broader acceptance within both academic and societal spheres.

CLOSING

A. Conclusion

This conceptual review has demonstrated that Ibn Khaldun's educational ideas offer rich and enduring insights for the development and strengthening of alternative education models in contemporary Indonesia. A strong conceptual alignment exists between Ibn Khaldun's philosophy and the *Sekolah Rakyat* model. This alignment is particularly evident in their shared emphasis on holistic human development, the integration of ethics and practical skills, the promotion of progressive and iterative learning processes, the centrality of community-based education, and the ultimate goal of fostering societal well-being and justice. While differences in historical and technological contexts necessitate careful reinterpretation and adaptation of classical concepts, the core values and pedagogical principles articulated by Ibn Khaldun resonate powerfully with the foundational ideals and operational practices of *Sekolah Rakyat*.

The recommendation for further empirical research underscores the critical need to bridge conceptual alignment with practical validation. This highlights that theoretical frameworks, however compelling, require real-world testing to demonstrate their efficacy, inform ongoing educational development, and ensure their continued relevance and impact.

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