

Civilisational *Malakah* in Higher Education: A Comparative Analysis of Islamic Epistemology and Modern Western Competency Frameworks

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Abstract

Contemporary higher education increasingly seeks to develop graduates who possess not only disciplinary knowledge but also competence, learner agency, critical thinking, responsibility, and the capacity to adapt to change. Competence alone, however, does not fully explain the extent to which such capabilities have been internalised, the normative foundations that guide their use, or the ways in which education contributes to the formation of knowledgeable individuals and societies. This article employs comparative conceptual analysis and integrative literature synthesis to examine the concept of *malakah* and the epistemological foundations of Islamic education alongside modern Western competency frameworks. The comparison focuses on four dimensions: the formation of competence, the sources and hierarchy of values, the purposes of education, and the relationship between individuals, institutions, and society. Modern Western competency frameworks demonstrate particular strengths in operationalising learning outcomes, graduate attributes, active pedagogy, student agency, and competency assessment. Islamic educational thought, by contrast, places particular emphasis on the internalisation of mastery through *malakah*, the orientation of knowledge through *adab*, judgement through *hikmah*, and the sustainability of human formation through a culture of knowledge. On the basis of this synthesis, Civilisational *Malakah* (*Malakah Peradaban*) is proposed as a higher education meta-competency framework comprising six interrelated domains: epistemic, competence, *malakah*, *adab*-axiological, *hikmah*, and civilisational culture. Rather than replacing modern competency approaches, the framework extends them by integrating capability, internalisation, value orientation, and civilisational responsibility. Its implications suggest that higher education should align curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and institutional culture in order to form graduates who are not only competent but also capable of using

knowledge with consistency, *adab*, wisdom, and responsibility. The framework remains conceptual and requires empirical validation in future research

Keywords: *Malakah*, Civilisational *Malakah*, Higher Education, Islamic Epistemology, Competence, Culture of Knowledge

Introduction

Contemporary higher education can no longer be assessed solely in terms of disciplinary knowledge. Technological, economic, and social change requires graduates who can think critically, solve problems, communicate effectively, adapt to changing circumstances, and continue learning throughout their lives. The development of graduate attributes, competency-based education, and frameworks such as the OECD Learning Compass 2030 reflects a shift from knowledge acquisition alone towards an integrated emphasis on knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and the capacity for responsible action (Barrie, 2004, 2007; OECD, 2019).

This shift has strengthened the relationship between learning outcomes, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Modern Western competency frameworks are also not value-neutral, since responsibility, well-being, justice, citizenship, and social coexistence occupy an explicit place within contemporary educational models (Council of Europe, 2018; OECD, 2019). Graduate formation has therefore increasingly moved beyond the acquisition of knowledge towards the capacity to use knowledge meaningfully in professional and social life.

Competence alone, however, does not adequately account for the depth of human formation. A capability demonstrated in an assessment does not necessarily become a stable disposition, while a high level of proficiency does not by itself determine the moral purposes for which that proficiency is used. Higher education must therefore address not only what graduates know and are able to do, but also how those capabilities are internalised and the purposes towards which they are directed.

Ibn Khaldun's concept of *malakah* provides an important basis for addressing the question of internalisation. Mastery develops through learning, training, repetition, and experience until knowledge or skill becomes a relatively stable disposition within the individual (Ibn Khaldun, 1967; Cofsky, 1992). The concept enables a distinction to be drawn between competence that can be demonstrated and capability that has become an intellectual or professional habit.

Stable mastery nevertheless requires normative orientation. Islamic educational epistemology relates knowledge to *adab*, truth, and the purpose of human existence, while a culture of knowledge extends individual formation into institutional and social life (al-Attas, 1980; Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1991, 1998). Educational outcomes therefore encompass more than the achievement of competence; they also concern how human beings understand knowledge, determine the purposes of their actions, and contribute to collective life.

A comparison between *malakah* and the epistemological foundations of Islamic education, on the one hand, and modern Western competency frameworks, on the other, makes it possible to identify their respective strengths, limitations, and possibilities for mutual

learning. Such a comparison does not treat Islam and the West as mutually exclusive intellectual blocs. Rather, it distinguishes effective pedagogical mechanisms from the epistemological and axiological foundations that shape their purposes and normative orientation.

Civilisational *Malakah* is proposed as a conceptual framework that brings together competence, internalisation, epistemic-axiological orientation, *hikmah*, and a culture of knowledge within higher education. The framework broadens the question of educational outcomes from “what can graduates do?” to the deeper questions of what kind of human beings are being formed, for what purposes their capabilities are used, and how they contribute to institutions and society.

Three questions guide the discussion. First, what are the principal similarities and differences between the concept of *malakah* and Islamic educational epistemology, on the one hand, and modern Western competency frameworks, on the other? Second, what are the strengths, limitations, and possibilities for mutual learning between the two frameworks in the formation of higher education graduates? Third, how can the findings of this comparison be synthesised into a Civilisational *Malakah* framework for higher education?

Research Objectives

The following objectives guide this study:

- To compare the concept of *malakah* and Islamic educational epistemology with modern Western competency frameworks, identifying their principal similarities and differences across four dimensions: the formation of competence, the sources and hierarchy of values, the purposes of education, and the relationship between individuals, institutions, and society.
- To analyse the strengths, limitations, and possibilities for mutual learning between Islamic educational thought and modern Western competency frameworks in the context of higher education graduate formation.
- To synthesise the findings of this comparative analysis into a Civilisational *Malakah* framework for higher education, comprising six interrelated domains: epistemic, competence, *malakah*, *adab*-axiological, *hikmah*, and civilisational culture.

Literature Review and Conceptual Gap

Contemporary higher education increasingly emphasises graduate attributes that extend beyond disciplinary mastery. Critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and lifelong learning are now widely regarded as educational outcomes that should be developed systematically alongside field-specific knowledge (Barrie, 2004, 2007). Competency-based education reinforces this orientation by focusing on mastery demonstrated through performance and the application of knowledge in real-world contexts (Gervais, 2016).

The scope of competence has also expanded beyond employability. The OECD Learning Compass 2030 connects knowledge and skills with attitudes, values, student agency, and well-being, while the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture integrates values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding in the formation of individuals capable of acting responsibly in society (Council of Europe, 2018; OECD, 2019).

Modern Western education therefore cannot be reduced to the development of technical or economic skills alone.

The concept of *malakah* introduces a different dimension to the question of mastery. In Ibn Khaldun's thought, capability develops through learning, training, repetition, and experience until it becomes a relatively stable disposition (Ibn Khaldun, 1967). Its relevance to contemporary education can be seen in the development of *Malakah al-Fikr*, whereby the capacity for thought is not taught merely as a cognitive technique but cultivated until it becomes a more stable intellectual habit (Mohd Azolman Zulkufli, 2021).

The distinction between competence and *malakah* lies primarily in the depth of internalisation. Competence refers to the capacity to use knowledge and skills, whereas *malakah* denotes a condition in which such capacity has become part of the way an individual thinks and acts. Yet stable mastery does not itself determine the direction in which it is used. Islamic educational epistemology situates knowledge in relation to truth, *adab*, and the purpose of human existence, thereby linking capability to moral accountability (al-Attas, 1980; Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1998).

A culture of knowledge extends this process of formation from the individual to institutions and society. The pursuit, development, dissemination, and application of knowledge must become part of the value system and shared life of a community if individual mastery is to develop into an institutional and social resource (Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1991). Higher education therefore not only forms capable graduates but also creates environments that determine whether intellectual habits and scholarly values can be sustained.

Competence, *malakah*, *adab*, and a culture of knowledge illuminate distinct but interconnected dimensions of human formation. Modern competency frameworks are particularly strong in operationalising learning outcomes; *malakah* explains internalisation; *adab* provides epistemic and axiological orientation; and a culture of knowledge connects the individual to institutional and social life. The relationship between these dimensions has yet to be articulated with sufficient conceptual clarity in the context of higher education.

This need becomes more pressing as graduates are expected not merely to possess knowledge and skills but to use them consistently and responsibly in complex environments. Competency assessment can establish what an individual is able to do, but it does not fully explain how that capability becomes a disposition, how its use is normatively evaluated, or how it contributes to a culture of knowledge.

Civilisational *Malakah* is proposed to address this gap as a meta-competency framework linking competence, internalisation, *adab*, *hikmah*, and civilisational culture. Its contribution does not rest on presenting *malakah* as a new educational concept, but on reconfiguring the relationship between capability, self-formation, normative orientation, and civilisational contribution within a single framework for higher education.

Methodology: Comparative Conceptual Analysis

This study adopts a qualitative approach based on comparative conceptual analysis and integrative literature synthesis in order to clarify concepts, compare intellectual frameworks,

and construct conceptual relationships from existing scholarship (Jaakkola, 2020; Snyder, 2019; Torraco, 2005).

The material analysed falls into two principal clusters. The first comprises Islamic educational thought concerning *malakah*, epistemology, *adab*, and a culture of knowledge, particularly the works of Ibn Khaldun, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, and Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud. The second comprises modern higher education competency frameworks, particularly graduate attributes, competency-based education, the OECD Learning Compass, and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. Primary conceptual sources are prioritised, while theses and secondary studies are used selectively to clarify contemporary applications.

The comparison is organised around four dimensions: the formation of competence, the sources and hierarchy of values, the purposes of education, and the relationship between individuals, institutions, and society. These dimensions allow pedagogical functions to be distinguished from their epistemological and axiological foundations.

A distinction between functional similarity and epistemological similarity underpins the analysis. An approach may perform a similar pedagogical function; through training, reflection, habituation, or the cultivation of responsibility without sharing the same sources of value or educational purposes. This distinction avoids equating *malakah* directly with modern competence or *adab* with contemporary value frameworks.

The principal constructs are first clarified according to their respective conceptual functions. Their similarities, differences, and areas of complementarity are then examined through the four comparative dimensions before being synthesised into a Civilisational *Malakah* framework comprising the epistemic, competence, *malakah*, *adab*-axiological, *hikmah*, and civilisational culture domains.

The resulting framework is conceptual rather than empirical. It does not constitute a validated model or measurement instrument. The relationships among its domains and its applicability to higher education therefore require further evaluation and empirical testing.

Malakah, Epistemology and a Culture of Knowledge as Foundations of Human Formation
Human formation in Islamic education involves more than the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Capability must develop into relatively stable mastery, acquire direction from a sound normative framework, and be sustained by an environment that cultivates knowledge. *Malakah*, *adab*, and a culture of knowledge perform distinct but complementary functions in this process.

Ibn Khaldun's concept of *malakah* describes a condition in which mastery develops through learning, training, repetition, and experience until it becomes a relatively stable disposition. At this stage, knowledge is no longer episodic or entirely dependent on external instruction but has become part of the way an individual thinks and acts (Ibn Khaldun, 1967; Cofsky, 1992). The development of *Malakah al-Fikr* in contemporary education similarly suggests that intellectual capability requires habituation if learned cognitive processes are to be applied consistently across different situations (Mohd Azolman Zulkufli, 2021).

This depth of internalisation distinguishes *malakah* from competence demonstrated at a particular moment of assessment. Competence describes the ability to perform, whereas *malakah* concerns the extent to which that ability has become an intellectual or professional habit. The formal attainment of learning outcomes does not necessarily mean that critical thinking, integrity, or lifelong learning has become an enduring disposition.

Stable mastery nevertheless requires direction. Scientific, professional, or technological capability may be used for constructive or harmful purposes. Islamic educational epistemology situates knowledge in relation to truth, responsibility, and the purpose of human existence. Reason and experience occupy an important place in understanding reality, but they are not detached from revelation as a normative source that orients human life and the use of knowledge (al-Attas, 1980; Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1998).

Adab connects knowledge with its proper use. It extends beyond social etiquette to encompass the capacity to recognise the proper place of knowledge, human beings, and action. In education, *adab* ensures that mastery is judged not only in terms of effectiveness but also according to truth, trustworthiness, and responsibility (al-Attas, 1980). High levels of competence are therefore insufficient unless accompanied by the capacity to evaluate the purposes and consequences of action.

Individual formation also requires a social environment in which knowledge is accorded its proper place. A culture of knowledge emerges when the pursuit, development, dissemination, and application of knowledge become integral to the value system and shared life of society (Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1991). Within the university, such a culture is expressed through reading, research, scholarly debate, academic integrity, respect for expertise, and a willingness to revise one's views in the light of evidence.

The relationship between *malakah*, *adab*, and a culture of knowledge extends educational outcomes from the individual to the institution. Individuals possessing *malakah* require environments that sustain intellectual habits, while institutions characterised by a culture of knowledge depend on members who practise rigour, integrity, and continuous learning. Higher education therefore produces not only individual capability but also an ecology within which knowledge can be sustained and transmitted.

These three elements provide the foundation for Civilisational *Malakah*. *Malakah* explains the internalisation of capability, *adab* provides epistemic and axiological orientation, and a culture of knowledge connects individual formation with institutional and social life. Modern competence is not rejected, but situated within a framework that deepens, directs, and embeds human capability within a broader culture of knowledge.

Modern Western Competency Frameworks: Pedagogical Strengths and Graduate Formation

Modern Western higher education increasingly emphasises the formation of graduates who not only possess disciplinary knowledge but are also able to think critically, solve problems, communicate, collaborate, and adapt to change. This development can be seen in the literature on graduate attributes, competency-based education, and international frameworks that integrate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values (Barrie, 2004, 2007; OECD, 2019).

The concept of graduate attributes broadens the purpose of university education from disciplinary mastery to the development of generic capabilities applicable across academic, professional, and social settings. Critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, lifelong learning, and adaptability have become part of the expected outcomes of higher education (Barrie, 2004, 2007).

A major strength of this approach lies in linking graduate attributes to curriculum and the learning experience. Attributes articulated only at the policy level are insufficient unless they are translated into learning activities and assessment. The formation of competence therefore requires alignment between outcomes, pedagogy, and programme experience (Barrie, 2007).

Competency-based education reinforces this orientation by emphasising mastery demonstrated through performance. Knowledge must not only be understood but also applied in relevant contexts. Clear articulation of what students should be able to do helps align learning outcomes, educational experiences, and assessment (Gervais, 2016).

The revised Bloom's taxonomy distinguishes cognitive processes ranging from remembering and understanding to applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating (Krathwohl, 2002). Its relevance here lies not in any equivalence with *malakah*, but in recognising different levels of cognitive depth. *Malakah* goes beyond the classification of cognitive processes by asking whether cultivated capabilities have become relatively stable dispositions.

Contemporary competency frameworks also move beyond a narrow emphasis on employability. The OECD Learning Compass 2030 integrates knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and student agency while also emphasising individual and collective well-being (OECD, 2019). Student agency recognises learners as active participants who are able to set goals, make decisions, and assume responsibility for their own development.

Values are likewise given an explicit place. The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture organises competence around values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding (Council of Europe, 2018). Modern Western education is therefore not accurately characterised as value-free. Responsibility, human dignity, justice, coexistence, and respect for diversity have become integral to contemporary competency formation.

The principal strength of these frameworks lies in their capacity to operationalise graduate formation. Outcomes are articulated clearly, competence is connected to learning experience, students are given an active role, and values are incorporated into educational outcomes. Human formation is therefore not left at the level of normative aspiration but translated into forms of training and experience that can be observed and assessed.

Yet the competencies and values cultivated within these frameworks do not fully resolve questions concerning the sources of truth, the hierarchy of values, and the ultimate purposes of education. The OECD and Council of Europe frameworks have clear normative orientations, but they do not position revelation as the highest authority governing the relationship

between knowledge, values, and human purpose. This difference provides the basis for a deeper comparison.

Comparative Analysis: Strengths, Limitations, and Possibilities for Mutual Learning

A comparison between Islamic educational epistemology and modern Western competency frameworks reveals significant convergence at the pedagogical level but deeper differences in epistemology, axiology, and educational purpose. Modern competency frameworks have developed effective mechanisms for connecting knowledge with action through graduate attributes, active learning, student agency, and outcomes-based assessment (Barrie, 2004, 2007; OECD, 2019). Islamic education similarly values knowledge and the capacity for action, but deepens human formation through *malakah*, *adab*, and a culture of knowledge.

The most evident common ground lies in the recognition that education cannot be reduced to the acquisition of information. Knowledge must be translated into the capacity to act in real situations. Competency-based education and *malakah* are functionally comparable insofar as both connect learning with mastery. *Malakah*, however, places additional emphasis on the internalisation and stability of capability through training and habituation (Ibn Khaldun, 1967). Competence demonstrated in an assessment does not necessarily constitute a stable disposition.

A major strength of modern Western frameworks lies in the operationalisation of educational outcomes. Graduate attributes can be translated into curriculum, learning experiences, and systematic forms of assessment (Barrie, 2007). The OECD Learning Compass 2030 integrates knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and student agency, positioning students as active agents responsible for their learning and future development (OECD, 2019).

Modern Western competency frameworks are also not value-neutral. The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture positions values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding as interconnected components (Council of Europe, 2018). The difference from Islamic epistemology therefore does not lie in the presence or absence of values, but in their sources of authority and normative hierarchy. Within Islamic epistemology, reason and experience operate alongside revelation, which provides orientation concerning truth, responsibility, and the purpose of life (al-Attas, 1980; Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1998).

These differences also shape the purposes of education. Modern educational frameworks emphasise well-being, the capacity to respond to change, citizenship, personal development, and professional readiness (OECD, 2019). These aims possess clear practical and social value. Higher education, however, is also susceptible to the narrowing of the university's purposes around employability and market demands. When employability becomes the dominant measure of success, education risks being reduced to an economic function (McCowan, 2015). Questions concerning good education also require attention to human formation and participation in social life rather than only to outcomes that are readily measurable (Biesta, 2009).

Islamic educational epistemology broadens these purposes by relating knowledge to *adab* and responsibility. Professional competence remains important, but it is not treated as an

ultimate end. Mastery should develop into *malakah*, while *adab* guides the use of capability in accordance with truth, trustworthiness, and justice. A culture of knowledge ensures that individual formation remains connected to institutional and social life (Ibn Khaldun, 1967; al-Attas, 1980; Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1991).

The most productive possibilities for mutual learning lie at the pedagogical level. Islamic education can benefit from clear outcomes, active learning, competency assessment, and student agency in strengthening the formation of *malakah*. Normative commitments to values or *adab* are not sufficient if educational processes do not provide repeated opportunities for training, experience, reflection, and decision-making. Conversely, *malakah*, *adab*, and a culture of knowledge can extend modern competency discourse towards questions of internalisation, normative orientation, and institutional contribution.

Table 1

Comparison between Islamic Educational Epistemology and Modern Western Competency Frameworks

Dimension	Islamic Educational Epistemology	Modern Western Competency Frameworks	Implications for Civilisational Malakah
Formation of competence	Mastery develops through training and habituation until it becomes a relatively stable <i>malakah</i> .	Outcomes, graduate attributes, active learning, and competency assessment cultivate capability systematically (Barrie, 2007; OECD, 2019).	Competence should develop beyond demonstrated performance towards internalisation.
Sources and hierarchy of values	Revelation, reason, and experience operate within an epistemological order that relates knowledge to <i>adab</i> and responsibility (al-Attas, 1980; Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1998).	Values, attitudes, human dignity, and responsibility form part of competence; revelation does not function as the highest normative authority (Council of Europe, 2018; OECD, 2019).	Values determine the direction and limits of the use of capability.
Purposes of education	To form knowledgeable and well-mannered human beings who use their capabilities rightly and responsibly.	Emphasises personal development, well-being, citizenship, and professional readiness, while also operating under pressures associated with employability (McCowan, 2015; OECD, 2019).	Professional capability is placed within a broader horizon of educational purpose.
Individuals, institutions, and society	Individual formation is sustained by a culture of knowledge connecting learning with institutional and social life (Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1991).	Competence is also linked to social responsibility, lifelong learning, and whole-institution approaches (Council of Europe, 2018, 2021).	Graduates are assessed not only through personal attributes but also through their contribution to a culture of knowledge and to society.

Functional similarities between the two frameworks do not eliminate their epistemological differences. Pedagogical mechanisms such as active learning, professional training, reflection, and mastery-based assessment can be adopted without assuming that their entire normative foundations must also be accepted. Civilisational *Malakah* draws on the operational strengths of competency formation while situating capability within a wider relationship of internalisation, *adab*, *hikmah*, and a culture of knowledge.

A Civilisational Malakah Framework for Higher Education

Civilisational *Malakah* is proposed as a meta-competency framework that brings together mastery of knowledge, the capacity for action, internalisation, normative orientation, judgement, and contribution to institutional and social life. It does not replace modern concepts of competence. Rather, it extends them by insisting that higher education outcomes should be assessed not only in terms of what graduates can do but also according to the extent to which their capabilities have become stable dispositions and are exercised responsibly.

The framework comprises six domains: epistemic, competence, *malakah*, *adab*-axiological, *hikmah*, and civilisational culture. These domains are mutually reinforcing rather than sequential. The epistemic domain concerns the human relationship with knowledge and truth; competence refers to the capacity to use knowledge in real contexts; *malakah* accounts for the internalisation of capability; the *adab*-axiological domain provides normative orientation; *hikmah* guides judgement under conditions of complexity; and civilisational culture connects individual formation with institutions and society.

Table 2

Six Domains of the Civilisational Malakah Framework

Domain	Primary focus	Manifestation in higher education	Civilisational contribution
Epistemic	Relationship with knowledge and truth	Knowledge literacy, critical thinking, source evaluation, research	Knowledge-informed judgement
Competence	Capacity to use knowledge	Problem-solving, communication, creativity, professionalism	Capacity to address real-world challenges
<i>Malakah</i>	Internalisation of mastery	Training, experience, habituation, reflection	Consistency in thought and action
Adab-Axiological	Normative orientation	Integrity, trustworthiness, justice, responsibility	Right and responsible use of knowledge
Hikmah	Contextual judgement	Assessing priorities, risks, <i>maṣlaḥah</i> , and implications	Balanced judgement
Civilisational Culture	Relationship between individuals, institutions, and society	Culture of knowledge, leadership, lifelong learning, social engagement	Sustaining and advancing a knowledgeable society

The epistemic and competence domains have clear points of convergence with modern educational frameworks. Critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, student agency, and adaptability are now central to contemporary graduate attributes (Barrie, 2004, 2007; OECD, 2019). Civilisational *Malakah* extends these capabilities by asking whether they have been internalised and how their use is guided by values and responsibility.

The *malakah* domain focuses on the stability of capability. Competence may be demonstrated in a task or assessment, but *malakah* requires training and habituation until the capability becomes part of the way an individual thinks and acts (Ibn Khaldun, 1967). Critical thinking, for example, acquires greater depth when the habit of evaluating evidence and argument is applied consistently across different contexts.

The adab-axiological domain gives direction to internalised capability. Scientific or professional competence does not itself determine whether its use is appropriate. *Adab* relates knowledge and action to truth, trustworthiness, and responsibility, ensuring that competence is not judged solely according to effectiveness (al-Attas, 1980; Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1998).

Hikmah reinforces this orientation by enabling judgement under complex conditions. Professional life often involves competing interests, risks, and consequences that cannot be resolved mechanically. *Hikmah* enables graduates to weigh context, priorities, and implications before acting.

Civilisational culture ensures that formation does not terminate at the level of the individual. Capabilities that have become *malakah* must operate within environments that value knowledge, integrity, and continuous learning. A culture of knowledge makes the pursuit, development, and application of knowledge part of institutional and social life (Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1991). Graduates possessing *malakah* are therefore not merely competent individuals, but persons who carry intellectual rigour and responsibility into their professions and wider social life.

The distinction between Civilisational *Malakah* and graduate attributes lies in scope. Graduate attributes identify capabilities expected of graduates, whereas Civilisational *Malakah* adds the dimensions of internalisation, epistemic-axiological orientation, *hikmah*, and a culture of knowledge. It is therefore better understood as a meta-competency framework connecting multiple capabilities with self-formation and civilisational purpose.

The formation of Civilisational *Malakah* does not require six separate courses. Its domains are better integrated across curriculum, pedagogy, research, professional training, assessment, and institutional culture. Repeated educational experiences enable knowledge to become competence, competence to develop into *malakah*, and capability to be exercised within a wider framework of values and responsibility.

Implications of the Civilisational Malakah Framework for Higher Education

The Civilisational *Malakah* framework has implications for the organisation of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and institutional culture in higher education. Graduate formation cannot be achieved merely by articulating attributes or introducing stand-alone courses on

values. The six domains need to be embedded across the educational experience so that knowledge, competence, internalisation, *adab*, *hikmah*, and a culture of knowledge develop in mutually reinforcing ways.

At the curricular level, the six domains need not be translated into six distinct subjects. They are better integrated into learning outcomes, programme experiences, and academic tasks. Generic attributes become more meaningful when embedded across the curriculum and learning experience rather than expressed only at the policy level (Barrie, 2004, 2007). Students should have opportunities not only to understand concepts but also to apply, evaluate, and use them under increasingly complex conditions.

The relationship between theory and experience is crucial because *malakah* requires training and habituation. Projects, research, simulations, professional placements, and engagement with real-world problems allow knowledge to be translated into action. Repeated experience helps capability develop from temporary mastery into a more stable disposition (Ibn Khaldun, 1967).

Pedagogy must likewise provide space for active student engagement. The formation of *malakah* is difficult to achieve through information transmission alone. Dialogue, problem-solving, research, reflection, and experience allow students to test and deepen their understanding. Student agency strengthens this process by enabling learners to set goals, make choices, and assume responsibility for their learning (OECD, 2019). Within an Islamic framework, such agency acquires a fuller meaning when connected to *amanah* and responsibility in the use of knowledge.

The role of the lecturer extends beyond content delivery. Guidance, feedback, exemplification of integrity, and meaningful academic relationships help cultivate intellectual habits that formal instruction alone may not generate. Research supervision, tutorials, and mentoring provide opportunities for correction, reflection, and habituation.

Assessment must also correspond to the nature of the capabilities being developed. Tests that measure memory alone are insufficient for evaluating deep mastery. Assessment should include the application of knowledge, problem analysis, decision-making, and the ability to justify choices. Competency-based education pays particular attention to evidence that students can actually use knowledge in specific contexts (Gervais, 2016). *Malakah* requires additional attention to the consistency and stability of those capabilities.

Authentic forms of assessment, including projects, portfolios, research, structured reflection, and professional placements, can complement conventional assessment. *Adab* and *hikmah* should not be reduced to a single numerical score. They are more appropriately evaluated through the quality of judgement, the reasons offered for decisions, integrity in action, and sensitivity to the implications of particular choices.

Institutional culture determines whether the values taught are actually experienced by students. Academic integrity is unlikely to develop where university life itself tolerates plagiarism, manipulation, or injustice. A culture of knowledge likewise cannot flourish where research, reading, scholarly debate, and respect for expertise exist only at the level of

rhetoric. A whole-institution approach recognises that competence and values develop collectively through curriculum, governance, relationships within the university, research, and social engagement (Council of Europe, 2021).

Research, co-curricular activities, and engagement with society may all form part of such an institutional culture. Research cultivates rigour in the use of evidence and epistemic integrity; co-curricular activities provide opportunities for leadership, cooperation, and responsibility; and social engagement tests the capacity to apply knowledge within real social contexts. Together, these experiences help transfer competence from academic settings to professional and social life.

Alignment between curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and institutional culture is therefore central to the formation of Civilisational *Malakah*. Human formation cannot be achieved through a single ethics course, one co-curricular experience, or one form of assessment. It requires consistent and repeated experiences through which knowledge becomes capability, capability develops into *malakah*, and its use is guided by *adab* and *hikmah*.

Conclusion

Contemporary higher education must produce graduates with both disciplinary knowledge and the capacity to think, act, adapt, and make responsible decisions, a goal advanced by modern competency frameworks through clear outcomes, active learning, and mastery assessment. However, competence alone does not ensure internalized capability or ethical direction, whereas the Islamic concept of *malakah* emphasizes stable habits formed through training, and Islamic epistemology ties knowledge to *adab*, truth, and human purpose within a framework of revelation, reason, and moral accountability. The proposed Civilisational *Malakah* meta-framework extends competence by integrating internalization, epistemic-axiological orientation, wisdom, and a culture of knowledge, aiming to form not just capable performers but intellectually and professionally habituated individuals who can guide change responsibly. While Islamic and Western educational traditions differ in authority, values, and ultimate purposes, they can benefit from critical mutual learning; Islamic education adopting operational pedagogical strengths, and Western frameworks deepening their attention to internalization and purpose. For higher education, this requires aligning curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and institutional culture to consistently develop knowledge into capability, capability into *malakah*, and action guided by *adab* and *hikmah*, though the framework remains conceptual and needs further empirical validation. Ultimately, education's higher task is not merely to prepare graduates for change but to shape wise, stable human beings equipped to steer its direction.

This study makes a significant theoretical and contextual contribution to higher education discourse. Theoretically, it addresses a critical gap by constructing a novel conceptual synthesis that systematically integrates modern Western competency frameworks with Islamic educational thought into a coherent meta framework. The resulting Civilisational *Malakah* model offers a new theoretical lens for analysing and designing higher education. It extends contemporary competency theory by introducing the crucial dimensions of internalisation (*malakah*), normative orientation (*adab*), and civilisational purpose, thereby providing a more holistic and ethically grounded understanding of graduate formation.

Contextually, the framework offers an actionable response to contemporary challenges facing higher education globally. It moves beyond the narrow focus on employability and economic outcomes, providing a conceptual foundation for developing graduates who are skilled, wise, responsible, and capable of navigating complexity with integrity. For institutions in Muslim majority contexts, it enables authentic integration of intellectual and cultural heritage with modern pedagogical demands. For the broader global community, it serves as a bridge for mutual learning, demonstrating how the operational strengths of Western competency frameworks can be enriched by the purpose driven insights of Islamic epistemology. In doing so, it charts a path towards an educational paradigm more responsive to the profound human and civilisational needs of the 21st century.

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