A Critical Review of Global Moral Education Curriculum Frameworks: Identifying Gaps and Limitations

Azadar Hussain

Ph.D Scholar, Al-Mustafa International University, Qom, Iran.
E-mail: Azadarwd@gmail.com

Dr. Abbas Ali Shameli

Associate Professor, Al-Mustafa International University, Qom, Iran.
E-mail: aashameli39@gmail.com

Dr. Majid Toroghi Ardakani

Associate Professor, Al-Mustafa International University, Qom. Iran
E-mail: majidtoroghi40@gmail.com

Abstract:

This study offers a critical analysis of moral education curriculum frameworks from diverse global contexts, including UNESCO, OECD, and selected national systems such as those in the UK, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Norway. Employing qualitative document analysis, the research examines philosophical foundations, pedagogical strategies, and structural coherence within these frameworks. It identifies significant gaps and challenges, including over-politicization, cultural non-universality, superficial treatment of moral values, and inadequate stakeholder involvement. Methodological issues such as inconsistent assessment tools and insufficient teacher training further undermine the effectiveness of moral education programs. The study highlights ethical tensions arising from pluralistic societies where conflicting value systems—religious, secular, individualistic, and collectivist, intersect. While recognizing the strengths of existing models in fostering civic responsibility and ethical awareness, the analysis

underscores the need for a more inclusive, context-sensitive, and philosophically grounded approach to moral education. The findings suggest a pathway toward developing a universal yet adaptable moral education framework that integrates diverse ethical traditions while promoting critical moral reasoning, participatory pedagogy, and holistic learning outcomes. Such a framework would better equip educational systems to address contemporary moral crises, foster global citizenship, and cultivate ethical agents capable of navigating complex socio-cultural landscapes. This article thus provides foundational insights for policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers seeking to enhance the relevance, depth, and coherence of moral education in an interconnected world.

Keywords: Moral Education, Curriculum, Framework, Ethics.

Introduction

Moral education has been a central concern for educators and philosophers throughout history. It is impossible to ignore moral development in education today. Moral education plays a vital role in shaping character and developing moral personality. The inculcations of moral and ethical strengths through education.[1] Plato sees the purpose of education as the purpose of education is to help student in growing and developing their character and enhancing their ability to perform good. True happiness lies in search of virtue. The true virtue is becoming more like a God as much as possible.[2]

According to Kant, moral perfection is the final destination for us which can only be achieved through education. However, he believes that by education and social change, we need to control our animal nature and resist moral corruption which he terms as radical inherent evil in human nature. If we want to accelerate humanity towards moral perfection, education will have to play a vital role in eradicating this tendency towards evil

which is deeply rooted in our nature, who is a rational being but living in inadequate as well as corrupted social conditions.[3]

Moral education is not limited to moral instructions, imparting knowledge and sharing information. It involves inculcating ethical values, attitude and behavior which would play a crucial role in children's entire life. It is evident that such an education will become a significant element in the time of moral crisis and ethical challenges. Thus moral education becomes the central focus of holistic education.[4]

The world has become a global village, and we need certain rules and principles that would create a cooperative environment and make life easier. However, beyond legal and authorized section of law, there exist another area of actions and dealings in which man is free to make choices. The moral and ethical principles become guiding light in an increasingly challenging and conflicting world. The prime responsibility lies with educational institutions to maintain a similar level of focus on moral education as they do in imparting science and technology. Multicultural societies and intercultural communities possess serious challenges for educational institutions and policy makers to come up with innovative as well as constructive solutions to diverse moral and ethical judgments and priorities.[5]

1.1 Problem Statement: Lack of unified curriculum frameworks

In spite of abundant literature on moral education curriculum across the globe, there is significant lack of cohesive, universally accepted framework to evaluate or guide these programs. The available moral curriculum literature varies from country to country and nation to nation in term of philosophical foundations, pedagogical methodologies and cultural context. As one scholar notes that research in the

field of moral education lacks "*systematic paradigm to guide the discipline's development and to standardize its construction of a system*".[6]

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to conduct a critical review of global moral education curriculum frameworks, assess their strengths and shortcomings, identify key thematic and methodological gaps, and thereby highlight the need for a more coherent and contextually relevant moral education framework. This article does not propose a new model but establishes the foundational groundwork and rationale for its future development.

1.3 Research Objectives/ Questions

Objectives:
1. To critically review existing moral education curriculum frameworks across diverse cultural and philosophical contexts.
2. To identify key conceptual and methodological gaps that highlight the need for a more coherent and contextually relevant framework.

Questions:
1. What are the foundational principles and structures of current moral education curriculum frameworks across different regions?
2. What conceptual and methodological gaps exist within these frameworks that necessitate further refinement in future research?

1.4 Methodology brief

This study employs a qualitative research design based on document analysis to critically examine existing moral education

curriculum frameworks across different cultural, philosophical, and national contexts. Relevant curriculum documents, policy guidelines, academic publications, and official education standards from selected countries were purposively sampled for review. The analysis involved identifying key themes, philosophical underpinnings, pedagogical approaches, and structural components of each framework. A comparative lens was applied to detect recurring patterns, strengths, and deficiencies. This method is suitable for generating a comprehensive understanding of the conceptual and methodological gaps in moral education curricula and for establishing a rationale for future framework development.

2. Conceptual Foundations of Moral Education

2.1 Definitions and key terms (moral education, curriculum framework)

2.1.1 Moral Education: Moral education refers to the process of cultivating and utilizing one's inner talents and capacities to develop and sustain desirable moral traits and behaviors, with the aim of achieving happiness, nurturing moral virtues, and avoiding vices.[7] It refers to the process of nurturing ethical values, habits, and dispositions in individuals that guide their personal and social behavior. It involves deliberate efforts, either through formal instruction or informal experiences, to instill virtues such as honesty, empathy, respect, justice, and responsibility. As Lickona notes, moral education is "*the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue, that is, objectively good human qualities, that are good for the individual and good for the whole society*".[8]

2.1.2 Curriculum
In this context, curriculum is understood as a planned and

organized set of learning experiences and desired outcomes, designed to promote the moral development of students.[9] When combined with the term framework, it refers to a broad structure or model that defines the philosophy, content, teaching strategies and assessment methods of a moral education curriculum. The curriculum framework therefore serves as a guiding document that ensures internal coherence across the various components of the education system and enables the development of the curriculum in line with the desired moral goals. Wiles & Bibdi state curriculum as a development process which identifies philosophy, evaluate student ability, consider methods of instruction, talks about implementation strategies, selects evaluation instruments and is continuously adjusted.[10]

2.2 Philosophical foundations (Aristotelian, Kantian, Islamic, Confucian etc.)

The concept of moral education has deep roots in philosophical traditions, each of which offers distinct but sometimes overlapping views on what morality is and how it should be taught.

2.2.1 Aristotle's virtue ethics

It emphasizes the formation of character through the habituation of virtues. According to Aristotle, moral development involves the acquisition of practical wisdom (phronesis) through the practice of guidance and example. In this tradition, the role of the educator is to model and encourage virtuous behavior, focusing not only on knowledge but also on moral action.[11]

2.2.2 Kantian ethics

On the other hand, it emphasizes moral reasoning and autonomy. Kant believed that individuals should act in

accordance with moral laws derived from reason, especially absolutes, that is, only those moral principles that can be universally accepted by the will. From an educational perspective, this approach promotes moral agency by encouraging critical thinking, moral reflection, and respect for individuals as it ends in themselves.[12]

2.2.3 Islamic moral philosophy

It is drawn heavily from Quranic ethics, hadith traditions, and the lives of prophets and scholars. It promotes values such as truthfulness, patience, justice, and service to humanity, which are rooted in divine responsibility (*Taqwa*) and inner purification (*Tazkiyah*). The Quran emphasizes individual piety and social justice and considers moral education to be an integral part of the holistic development of the soul and society.[13] Morality refers to a stable and spiritually rooted state of character in which a person possesses firm self-control and clarity of conscience. This moral state allows individuals to consistently perform righteous actions with ease, without internal conflict, hesitation, or negative thoughts. In such a state, ethical behavior becomes second nature, reflecting the integration of inner virtue and outward conduct.[14]

2.2.4 Confucian ethics

It focuses on promoting goodness through relationships, emphasizing *ren* (benevolence), *li* (observance of rituals), and *xiao* (filial piety). Confucius advocated moral development through education, familial role models, and self-reflection. This tradition underlies many East Asian moral education systems, which emphasize harmony, respect, and social responsibility.[15]

These philosophical traditions continue to influence contemporary models of moral education in different regions. An effective moral education curriculum often incorporates a

combination of these traditions, reflecting universal and cultural moral ideals.

2.3 Importance of moral education in contemporary society

In a rapidly changing and globalizing world, moral education has become essential. Societies are grappling with moral challenges such as social polarization, environmental degradation, digital ethics, corruption, and civic engagement. As Noddings argues, academic success alone is not enough without training moral and compassionate citizens. Moral education is important in promoting social cohesion, democratic values, and responsible global citizenship.[16]

Furthermore, moral education plays a key role in addressing the moral relativism and value confusion prevalent in pluralistic societies. It helps students critically engage with diverse worldviews, clarify their values, and make moral decisions based on empathy and justice. It also supports the development of socio-emotional skills, such as conflict resolution, active listening, and cooperation, which are increasingly valued in educational outcomes.[17]

2.4 Review of learning outcomes expected from moral curricula

Effective ethical and moral education curricula are expected to produce cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes. These outcomes typically include the following:

- Cognitive: Knowledge of ethical concepts (e.g., justice, rights, responsibilities), understanding of ethical theories, and the ability to engage in ethical reasoning and ethical decision-making.
- Affective: Developing empathy, respect, tolerance, and emotional awareness of others.

- Behavioral: Demonstrating ethical behavior in social contexts, honesty, cooperation, helping others, and responsibility.

UNESCO states that the goal of ethics education is to develop:

"… *ethically responsible and engaged (individual who would) enact appropriate skills, values, beliefs and attitudes, demonstrate personal and social responsibility for a peaceful and sustainable world and develop motivation and willingness to care for the common good.*"[18]

Similarly, many national frameworks, such as Singapore's Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) or Japan's Ethics Education Framework, include explicit indicators of character, civic responsibility, and emotional intelligence in their learning objectives.

Despite regional differences, these frameworks converge on several key themes: promoting universal human values, encouraging reflective practice, and fostering active participation in society and social well-being. However, the lack of a single set of standards across countries often leads to diverse emphases, gaps in implementation, and inconsistencies in assessment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design utilizing the method of document analysis. This design is appropriate for studies that aim to examine, interpret, and synthesize existing textual data to identify conceptual patterns and practical gaps. Since the research does not involve empirical data collection through surveys or interviews, but instead engages with curriculum documents and scholarly literature, document

analysis offers a systematic and rigorous way to explore the research problem.

3.2 Nature and Scope of the Study

The study is exploratory and analytical in nature. It seeks to investigate existing moral education curriculum frameworks implemented or proposed in various cultural, religious, and national contexts. The scope of the study includes curriculum documents, policy papers, and academic research related to moral and values education across different countries such as the United Kingdom, Pakistan, Japan, Malaysia, and UNESCO guidelines.

3.3 Data Collection

The primary data sources for this study include:

- Official national curriculum documents on moral or character education
- Frameworks developed by international organizations (e.g., UNESCO, OECD)
- Peer-reviewed academic journal articles and policy reviews
- Textbooks or guides where available (to understand implementation strategies)

Purposive sampling was used to select countries and documents that offer diversity in ideological foundations, such as secular models, religiously informed curricula, and hybrid models. Documents were collected from the official Ministry of education websites, university repositories, and academic databases such as ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected documents were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The following analytical steps were followed:

1. **Initial Reading and Familiarization** – All selected documents were read thoroughly to understand their overall structure, purpose, and scope.
2. **Coding of Text** – Key sections relevant to curriculum philosophy, aims, values, teaching methods, and assessment strategies were highlighted and coded.
3. **Theme Development** – Codes were grouped into categories such as: "Philosophical Foundation," "Moral Values Promoted," "Pedagogical Strategy," and "Cultural Adaptability."
4. **Comparative Analysis** – Similarities and differences across frameworks were compared. This comparison enabled identification of patterns and gaps.
5. **Synthesis and Interpretation** – Findings were interpreted in light of the study's objectives to draw conclusions about the conceptual and methodological limitations of existing frameworks.

3.5 Trustworthiness and Validity

To ensure the **trustworthiness** of the findings, multiple documents from each country or model were reviewed where available, and findings were cross-verified with existing peer-reviewed literature. Triangulation was used by comparing curriculum texts with scholarly critiques of the same frameworks. Transparency in coding and theme development was maintained through documentation of all analysis steps.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

As this study is based solely on publicly available documents and secondary literature, no direct ethical risks are involved. However, all sources have been appropriately cited and credited to maintain academic integrity and avoid misrepresentation.

4. 4. Critical Review of Existing Curriculum Frameworks

Moral education frameworks worldwide reflect deeply embedded cultural, philosophical, and ideological traditions. In an interconnected and pluralistic global society, critically analyzing these frameworks reveals how different nations conceptualize, structure, and implement moral education. This analysis highlights the diversity of approaches—ranging from highly centralized, religiously inspired systems to pluralistic, humanist, and competency-based models. It also underscores conceptual gaps that necessitate a more globally coherent and contextually sensitive moral education paradigm.

4.1 Overview of Prominent National and International Frameworks

A review of national curricula (e.g., Japan, Norway, Pakistan, Malaysia, UK) and international frameworks (UNESCO, OECD) shows significant variations in purpose and scope. Some systems focus on character traits and civic ethics (Japan, USA), others on religious and spiritual formation (Pakistan, Iran), while global organizations promote universal humanistic values and intercultural competencies (UNESCO, OECD).

4.2 UNESCO Guidelines on Global Citizenship and Moral Education

UNESCO's *Global Citizenship Education* (GCED) initiative integrates moral and ethical development with education for peace, human rights, sustainability, and intercultural understanding. The framework emphasizes three core dimensions: cognitive (knowledge of issues and systems), socio-emotional (values, attitudes, and social skills), and behavioral (action-oriented competencies). UNESCO promotes a learner-centered, participatory approach rooted in universal human values such as justice, empathy, and respect. [19]

However, some scholars argue that its Universalist assumptions can overlook local cultural and religious values.[20]

4.2.1 United Kingdom

In the UK, moral education is embedded within the broader *Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE)* education curriculum. The PSHE framework focuses on developing pupils' ability to distinguish right from wrong, respect others, and contribute positively to society. It emphasizes British values such as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect.[21] The approach is secular and skills-based, with limited engagement with moral philosophy or spirituality, which may leave deeper moral reasoning underdeveloped.

4.2.2 Norway

Norway's *Values and Citizenship Education* curriculum integrates ethics and religious education through the subject "Religion, Philosophies of Life, and Ethics" (RLE). It promotes critical thinking, dialogue, and respect for diversity, drawing from various religious and philosophical traditions. The curriculum emphasizes children's rights, ethical reflection, and emotional development.[22] Its inclusive design, however, has sparked debates about cultural neutrality and national identity in education.

4.2.3 Japan

Japan's approach is highly structured, with a separate subject called *Doutoku* (Moral Education). Introduced from elementary to secondary levels, it emphasizes group harmony, diligence, respect for elders, and responsibility. Moral content is delivered through didactic instruction, stories, and group discussions. Japan's model has been praised for its consistency and clarity but critiqued for promoting conformity over critical thinking.[23]

4.2.4 United States

In the U.S., moral and character education is often decentralized

and varies by state. Key models include *Character Counts* and *Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)* frameworks, which focus on core traits such as responsibility, fairness, caring, and respect. The *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)* promotes five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. While these programs are evidence-based and widely implemented, critics argue that they may sidestep deeper moral or philosophical grounding in favor of psychological outcomes.[24]

4.3 Islamic Countries: Pakistan, Iran, and Malaysia

Islamic countries often integrate moral education with religious instruction, grounded in Quranic teachings, Hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence.

- **Pakistan**'s moral education is delivered through Islamic Studies (*Islamiat*), focusing on truthfulness, justice, piety, and social responsibilities. However, it often lacks methodological consistency, depth in ethical reasoning, and practical application.[25]
- **Iran** blends Islamic philosophy with modern educational strategies. Moral education is infused through textbooks, with emphasis on values like sincerity (*Ikhlas*), patience (*Sabr*), and collective welfare. Nonetheless, critiques point to over-ideologization and limited space for critical inquiry.[26]
- **Malaysia** follows a more integrated model, combining Islamic values with civic education. The *Pendidikan Moral* curriculum (for non-Muslims) and Islamic Studies (for Muslims) emphasize harmony, responsibility, and national unity. Yet, the dual-track system raises concerns about inclusivity and shared ethical foundations.[27]

4.4 Comparative Analysis of Structure, Content, and Values

A comparative analysis reveals significant variation in how

moral education frameworks are structured:

- **Structural Approaches:** Some frameworks (e.g., Japan, Iran) adopt a centralized, subject-specific model, while others (e.g., UK, U.S.) embed moral education within broader personal and social development curricula.
- **Content Focus:** Western models frequently emphasize character traits, citizenship, or skills-based competencies, whereas Islamic or Eastern systems often ground moral education in religious or cultural values. This divergence reflects broader philosophical differences in the conceptualization of morality.
- **Values Promoted:** Despite contextual differences, recurring values across curricula include respect, responsibility, empathy, honesty, and cooperation. However, frameworks differ in how they define, contextualize, and assess these values.

4.5 Evaluation of Philosophical Coherence and Pedagogical Strategy

The philosophical foundations of these frameworks vary considerably. Western secular models often draw from Kantian ethics (autonomy, rational moral reasoning), Aristotelian virtue ethics (character cultivation), or utilitarian approaches (maximizing well-being). Eastern frameworks may incorporate Confucian ethics (relational harmony and duty), while Islamic frameworks derive from Quranic moral philosophy emphasizing divine accountability (*Taqwa*) and inner purification (*Tazkiyah*).

Pedagogically, many programs favor experiential learning, narrative ethics, and dialogic reflection, but this is not universal. For instance, Japan's moral education relies more heavily on direct instruction and scripted lessons, whereas Norway emphasizes dialogical engagement and ethical inquiry. Moreover,

the assessment of moral learning remains a contentious issue. While some systems use behavioral checklists or teacher evaluations, others avoid assessment altogether due to the subjective and developmental nature of moral growth.

5. Diagnosis of Gaps and Challenges

While numerous national and international frameworks for moral education exist, their effectiveness and coherence remain inconsistent across contexts. A critical examination reveals not only content- and structure-related shortcomings, but also deeper philosophical, methodological, and stakeholder-level concerns. This section presents a thematic diagnosis of key gaps and challenges found in existing moral education frameworks, based on a review of selected curricular documents and academic literature.

5.1 Thematic Gaps: Missing Elements in Moral Education Frameworks

1. One of the most prevalent gaps is the lack of cultural universality. Many frameworks are deeply embedded in the ideological or religious contexts of their countries of origin and may not translate well across cultural boundaries. For example, Western models, often rooted in secular liberalism or virtue ethics, prioritize values like autonomy, equality, and civic participation, while Eastern or Islamic frameworks may emphasize harmony, duty, or piety. These divergent moral priorities pose challenges to the development of a unified, globally applicable framework.

2. Another issue is the over-politicization of moral education. In several contexts, particularly in postcolonial or ideologically polarized societies, moral education becomes a tool for political or religious indoctrination. This is evident in countries where curricula are aligned more with nation-building and less with ethical reflection. Consequently,

critical thinking and moral reasoning are often suppressed in favor of loyalty to a dominant ideology.

3. Furthermore, superficial treatment of values is also a common problem. Moral education is sometimes reduced to a checklist of character traits or behavioral prescriptions without engaging students in meaningful ethical discourse or self-reflection. This instrumental approach undermines the internalization of moral values and fails to equip learners for real-world ethical dilemmas.

5.2 Methodological Issues: Assessment, Training, and Learning Environments

1. A significant challenge in moral education lies in its assessment methodology. Unlike cognitive subjects, moral development is difficult to measure using standard tools. Some frameworks rely on behavioral indicators or teacher observations, but these often fail to capture deeper moral reasoning or intention. The absence of consistent, validated tools to assess ethical growth poses a major limitation, leading to under-evaluation or misinterpretation of outcomes.

2. Similarly, teacher training remains an underdeveloped area in many countries. Teachers often lack formal training in moral philosophy, developmental psychology, or ethical pedagogy. As a result, their ability to facilitate nuanced moral discussions or resolve ethical conflicts in the classroom is limited. In certain cases, teachers themselves may hold biases that inadvertently affect how moral education is delivered, reinforcing stereotypes or suppressing dissenting views.

3. Moreover, the learning environment often does not reflect the moral values being taught. In schools where competition, conformity, or authoritarianism dominate,

students receive conflicting signals about integrity, fairness, and respect. This hidden curriculum, the implicit messages conveyed by school culture, policies, and teacher-student relationships, can undermine formal moral education efforts.

5.3 Ethical Dilemmas and Value Conflicts

Modern societies are increasingly characterized by pluralism, which introduces complex ethical dilemmas. Students are frequently exposed to conflicting moral viewpoints, religious vs. secular, individual vs. collective, and national vs. global, without sufficient guidance on how to navigate these tensions. Few curricula equip students with ethical frameworks that allow for respectful disagreement, reflective judgment, and value negotiation.

Additionally, value conflicts between home and school environments are often neglected. Parents and communities may prioritize different moral values than those promoted in school curricula, leading to confusion or resistance. For example, discussions around gender equality, religious tolerance, or civic dissent can create tension in conservative communities if not handled sensitively. This lack of alignment not only affects moral outcomes but also contributes to a trust gap between educational institutions and families.

5.4 Stakeholder Neglect: A Missing Participatory Dimension

1. A final critical gap is the marginalization of key stakeholders, particularly students, parents, and local communities. In many contexts, moral education is developed and imposed in a top-down fashion, with little consultation or input from those directly affects. Students are rarely invited to share their ethical concerns or real-life moral challenges, limiting the curriculum's relevance and engagement. Moral education must be dialogic and

student-centered, but many systems remain overly didactic, or discipline focused.

2. Similarly, parental involvement in moral education is often absent or minimal. Parents are primary moral educators, and their exclusion from curricular development reduces consistency between home and school. This is especially problematic in culturally diverse settings where schools need to build trust and moral alignment with families to be effective.

3. Community engagement is also limited. Moral education has the potential to become a collaborative, society-wide endeavor that reflects shared values and cultural wisdom. However, most current frameworks do not leverage local knowledge, elders, religious institutions, or civil society actors, thus missing an opportunity for collective moral formation.

6. Discussion and Way Forward

6.1 Summary of Findings

The critical review of global moral education frameworks has revealed a landscape rich in diversity but fragmented in coherence. While various national and international curricula (e.g., from UNESCO, the UK, Japan, Pakistan, and Iran) offer structured approaches to teaching values, they often suffer from thematic gaps, limited adaptability, and cultural biases. These frameworks tend to reflect their local sociopolitical agendas and philosophical underpinnings, making them difficult to transfer or replicate across different contexts. Moreover, methodological inconsistencies, especially in assessment strategies and teacher training, undermine the long-term impact of moral education programs. Equally concerning is the insufficient involvement of students, parents, and communities in

shaping and evaluating these curricula. These gaps together emphasize the absence of a unified, context-sensitive, and ethically grounded approach to moral education that can respond to contemporary global challenges.

6.2 Reflections on the Need for an Inclusive and Adaptable Framework

The findings clearly indicate the urgency of developing a more inclusive and adaptable framework for moral education. Such a framework must be sensitive to cultural diversity while maintaining certain universal ethical principles that can resonate across regions and belief systems. Instead of imposing a one-size-fits-all model, it should offer guiding principles and flexible tools adaptable by educators in different contexts. A pluralistic framework could accommodate various ethical traditions, religious, philosophical, civic, and foster moral reasoning, empathy, and civic responsibility rather than mere compliance with behavioral norms.

Inclusivity must also extend to the pedagogical process. This means reimagining classrooms as dialogical spaces where students explore moral dilemmas through discussion, storytelling, community engagement, and reflective practice. Teachers, in this model, become facilitators of ethical inquiry rather than enforcers of moral codes. Additionally, schools must ensure alignment between formal curriculum and hidden curriculum, as students' moral development is equally influenced by institutional culture and teacher behavior.

6.3 The Potential Role of Religion, Culture, and Global Citizenship

A forward-looking moral education framework cannot ignore the rich moral traditions embedded in religions and cultures. Religious values, such as compassion, justice, patience, and

service, continue to shape ethical worldviews for billions. For instance, Islamic ethics emphasize inner purification (*Tazkiyah*) and trust (*Amanah*), Confucian ethics stress relational virtues like filial piety and respect, and Kantian and Aristotelian traditions provide rational moral grounds. Integrating multi-faith perspectives respectfully and contextually can add depth and spiritual grounding to moral education.

At the same time, moral education must respond to the demands of global citizenship. Issues such as climate change, digital ethics, migration, and cultural integration require learners to develop not only national or religious moral identities but also a global moral perspective. UNESCO and related organizations have stressed the need for education to promote shared human values, such as peace, equity, and sustainability. A refined curriculum must balance local rootedness with global relevance, helping students appreciate moral diversity while fostering a shared sense of human dignity.

6.4 Brief Insight into a Universal Moral Education Framework

While this article does not aim to present a finalized model, the analysis points toward key elements that a universal moral education framework could embody:

- **Foundational Ethical Principles**: Grounded in both religious and philosophical ethics, including justice, empathy, responsibility, and truthfulness.
- **Flexibility and Localization**: Guidelines rather than rigid structures, allowing adaptation to cultural and national contexts.
- **Holistic Learning Outcomes**: Emphasizing knowledge, reasoning, character development, and ethical action.

- **Participatory Design**: Involving stakeholders, teachers, students, parents, scholars, in curriculum development and evaluation.
- **Pedagogical Diversity**: Combining reflective practice, moral dialogue, real-world problem-solving, and service learning.

Such a framework would not impose uniformity but would offer coherence and direction to moral education globally. It would serve as a reference point for curriculum developers, policymakers, and educators seeking to enhance the ethical

foundations of their education systems.

Conclusion

This study sets out to critically review global moral education curriculum frameworks with the aim of identifying key strengths, limitations, and gaps. It did not propose a new model but rather sought to lay the groundwork and rationale for the future development of a more coherent, inclusive, and contextually relevant framework. Through the analysis of prominent frameworks from both Western and non-Western contexts, including those from UNESCO, the UK, Japan, the United States, Pakistan, Iran, and Malaysia, it became evident that moral education worldwide is fragmented, ideologically influenced, and often lacking philosophical depth and methodological consistency.

The key findings reveal that many existing curricula fall short in promoting moral reasoning, adaptability across cultures, and participatory involvement of stakeholders. Themes such as over-politicization, superficiality of content, limited teacher training, and a lack of cultural universality emerged as common challenges. Additionally, ethical tensions between global norms and local values remain unresolved in most curricular documents.

The implications of these findings are significant for both policy and curriculum developers. There is a pressing need for a moral education framework that is not only adaptable across diverse cultural contexts but also anchored in ethical clarity and pedagogical coherence. Policymakers must prioritize inclusive consultation, invest in teacher preparation, and ensure that curricula foster both individual character development and social responsibility. Curriculum developers, in particular, should work towards integrating multiple ethical perspectives, including philosophical and religious traditions, into cohesive and practical educational approaches.

For future research, several directions are suggested. First, empirical studies can be conducted to assess the actual impact of existing moral education frameworks on students' behavior and ethical reasoning. Second, comparative research may help in understanding how different cultural and ideological contexts influence the structure and outcomes of moral education. Finally, the co-construction of a prototype universal framework, developed in collaboration with educators, ethicists, and stakeholders from various cultural and religious backgrounds, would be a meaningful step toward addressing the gaps identified in this review.

In conclusion, the time is ripe for a globally informed, critically grounded, and value-rich approach to moral education, one that prepares learners not just to live in the world, but to improve it.

*****

References

1. Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility* (New York, Bantam, 1992) Chapter 1.
2. Madona Murphy, *Plato's Philosophy of Education and the Common Core Debate* (Chicago, De Paul University, 2015), 1-12.
3. Klas Roth & Paul Formosa, "Kant on Education and evil – Perfecting human beings with an innate propensity to radical evil", Educational Philosophy and Theory, 51, No. 13, (2019): 1304-1307.
4. M. Zainul Hafizi, Hadi Wiyono, The Importance of Moral Education in the Formation of Children's Character, International Journal of Graduate of Islamic Education, 4, No. 2 (2023): 345-350.

   https://doi.org/10.37567/ijgie.v4i2.2527
5. Alena Josefova, The Importance of ethics in the process of education in today globalised society, SHS Web of Conferences, 26, 01019 (2016):

   nd, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20162601019
6 .Jingying Chen, Yidan Liu, Jian Dai and Chengliang Wang, Development and Status of moral education research: Visual analysis based on knowledge graph, Frontiers in Psychology, 13: 1079955

   https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1079955
7 . Ahmad Dilami, Masoud Azarbaijani, *Akhlaq-e-Islami*, (Qom, Nashr Maarif, 2021), 33.
8 . Lickona, *Educating for Character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility;* Chapter 1.
9. Jan Van Den Akker, *Curriculum Landscapes and Trends* (Netherlands, Springer Science & Business Media, 2013), 2.
10. E. K. Wiles, J. Bondi, *Curriculum Development: A Guide to Practice* (New York, Pearson, 2011): Chap. 1.
11. David Carr, Jan Steutel, *Virtue Ethics and Moral Education* (New York, Routledge, 1999), 36.
12. Kenneth Strike, Jonas F. Soltis, *The Ethics of Teaching* (nc,Teachers College Press, 2009), 12.
13 . Syed Hossein Nasr, The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity (London, PerfectBound, 2002): 170.

14. Al-Ghazali, The Alchemy of Happiness, Translated by Claud Field (London, Hazell Watson & Viney, 1910), 19-31.
15 . C. Tan, Confucianism and Education. In D. Phillips (Ed), Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory (nd, Sage Publications, 2017): P/403-418.
16. Nel Nodddings, Caring: *A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (California, Uni. Of California Press, 2013),171-212.
17 . Marvin Berkowitz, Melinda Bier, What Works in Character Education? In L. Nucci (Ed), Ethical and moral matters in teaching and teacher education (New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005),131-148.
18 . UNESCO, Global Citizenship Education: *Topics and learning objectives* (Paris, UNESCO, 2015): 29. https://doi.org/10.54675/DRHC3544
19. Ibid.
20. Vanessa Andreotti, Actionable postcolonial theory in education, (nd, Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011), np.
21 . Department of Education (DfE), Promoting fundamental British Values as part of SMSC in schools (UK Government, 2014).
22 . J. Berglund, Teaching Islam: Islam religious education at three Muslims schools in Sweden, Religious Education: 105 (2): 204-218.
23 . R. B. Howe, Lessons from Japan: A Comparative perspective on Japanese moral education. The Journal of Moral Education: 25(1): 37-51.
24 . L. P. Nucci & D. Narvaez, H*andbook of moral and character education:* (New York, Routledge, 2008), np.
25. M. Khan & A. Riaz, Moral and Ethical Education in Pakistan: Issues and Challenges, Journal of Education and Practice, 5(8): 160-166.
26. R. Gholami, Education in post-revolutionary Iran: *A case of continuity and change*. Comparative Education, 45(2): 167-181.
27. C. Tan, Education policy borrowing in Malaysia: *Looking west or looking east? Compare*: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 44(3): 403-421.