

Interfaith values love-based curriculum: Reimagining early childhood education in the digital age

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Abstract: Early childhood education (ECE) is increasingly recognized as a foundation for building inclusive and sustainable societies. Global frameworks, such as UNESCO's vision of education for global citizenship and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4.7), emphasize the need for learning that fosters empathy, tolerance, and social responsibility. Yet in practice, many faith-based early childhood institutions remain exclusive to a single tradition, offering little space for interfaith encounters. At the same time, young children grow up immersed in digital environments where algorithm-driven content often amplifies intolerance, apathy, and disconnection from social and ecological realities. This paper, utilizing qualitative conceptual synthesis and document analysis, proposes the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC), a conceptual framework structured around five integrated core values, for integrating interfaith values into early childhood education. By rooting early learning in shared ethical and spiritual principles across religious traditions, this approach aims to nurture empathy, care, and ecological awareness while countering risks of intolerance in the digital era. This contribution highlights the potential of culturally grounded yet globally relevant pedagogy to prepare young children for an increasingly complex and diverse world

Keywords: Digital Childhood; Early Childhood Education; Inclusive and Sustainable Education; Interfaith Values; Love-Based Curriculum.

Introduction

ECE is increasingly positioned as a strategic domain for shaping inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable societies. Global educational agendas, such as the United Nations SDG 4.7 and UNESCO's Education 2030 Framework for Action, universally emphasize the importance of nurturing empathy, cultural understanding, ethical awareness, and social responsibility from the earliest years of life. However, these global imperatives face challenges rooted in the dual pressures shaping contemporary childhood: the persistence of religious exclusivism in many educational institutions and the rapid expansion of algorithm-driven digital ecosystems.

In many faith-based early childhood settings, including those in Indonesia, curricular practices often remain primarily mono-religious and inward-facing. While these approaches successfully strengthen identity formation within communities,

they often limit children's exposure to values, symbols, and narratives from other traditions. This exclusivism may inadvertently restrict children's capacity to recognize shared ethical principles across religious traditions, principles essential for fostering interfaith literacy, cooperation, and cosmopolitan awareness in plural societies (Jackson, 2019; Ipgrave, 2020).

Simultaneously, young children today spend substantial time inhabiting digital ecosystems shaped by personalization algorithms. Research consistently shows that digital platforms tend to reinforce echo chambers, selective exposure, and affective polarization (Livingstone et al., 2019; Tesar, 2021). Exposure to homogenized digital content may thus contribute to early intolerance, social apathy, and diminished connectedness to real-world social and ecological issues (Novianti & Garzia, 2020). This dual challenge, religious exclusivism offline and algorithmic fragmentation

online, creates an urgent need to reconceptualize ECE curricula. Specifically, ECE requires pedagogical frameworks that can bridge faith-based ethical values with the demands of digital citizenship, while fostering children's sensitivity toward justice, care, and communal well-being.

Responding to this conceptual and practical gap, the present study employs qualitative library research encompassing educational theory, interfaith theology, and digital studies. This approach focuses on rooting early learning in shared ethical and spiritual principles found across religious traditions. KBC is grounded in interfaith values, understood not as comparative religion, but as cultivating shared ethical virtues, such as compassion, justice, hospitality, and care for creation, that resonate strongly with Indonesia's philosophical foundation of "*kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab*." By rooting early learning in these shared principles, the proposed Love-Based Curriculum approach specifically aims to nurture empathy, care, and ecological awareness in young children while proactively countering the risks of intolerance and apathy amplified by the digital era.

This paper is a theoretical and normative contribution that seeks to articulate a conceptual model informed by cross-religious curriculum documents and global educational frameworks (Johansson et al., 2021). The primary aim of this paper is thus to construct and articulate the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC) as an integrative conceptual framework for embedding universal, shared ethical values within early childhood education in the digital age. This contribution highlights the potential of culturally grounded yet globally relevant educational innovation to enrich discourse on justice, sustainability, and human flourishing in ECE. Ultimately, this conceptualization positions early childhood educators to nurture socially responsible, empathetic, and eco-conscious learners prepared to flourish in a plural and digital world.

Literature Review

The literature review establishes the theoretical foundation for the proposed Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) by synthesizing three core scholarly areas: the normative role of ECE in global

frameworks, the potential of interfaith values in moral education, and the challenges posed by the digital childhood environment.

ECE and Call for Universal Value

Global educational frameworks increasingly emphasize the importance of equipping young children with the competencies needed to thrive in culturally and religiously diverse societies. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 (SDG 4.7) and the UNESCO Framework for Global Citizenship Education highlight the necessity of nurturing values such as empathy, respect for diversity, and responsibility for peace and sustainability (UNESCO, 2019). Scholars argue that early childhood is a critical developmental period for laying these foundations, as children at this age naturally form moral intuitions, emotional attachments, and relational understandings of the world (Noddings, 2013; Johansson et al., 2021). However, a persistent gap exists between these global ideals and institutional practice. Several studies indicate that many early childhood systems globally remain overly focused on cognitive readiness and academic skills, often prioritizing them over the development of social-emotional and humane values (OECD, 2020; Nussbaum, 2010). Furthermore, many systems prioritize mono-tradition religious exposure over broader ethical awareness.

Interfaith Values: Moving Beyond Exclusivity

The limitations of mono-religious exposure in ECE create a critical need for pedagogical approaches that foster interfaith literacy. Research by Jackson (2019) and Ipgrave (2020) suggests that exclusive religious learning can narrow a child's worldview and hinder the formation of cross-identity empathy. A study by the Maarif Institute (2022) in Indonesian religious educational institutions shows a similar tendency, where teachers often avoid interfaith materials due to perceived sensitivity or fear of parental misunderstanding. Crucially, effective interfaith pedagogy does not require teaching comparative religion; instead, it focuses on fostering the recognition of shared ethical commitments across diverse religious traditions, such as compassion, hospitality, gratitude, humility, and justice (Schweitzer, 2014; Ipgrave, 2020).

Approaches emphasizing “common moral ground” have been shown to strengthen empathy and reduce prejudice in childhood settings (Jackson, 2019; Hull, 2020). Literature across Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, and Indigenous traditions highlights convergent themes of love, care for creation, and responsibility to others. These universal principles provide the essential ethical vocabulary to reimagine ECE beyond rigid identity markers toward a relational, humane pedagogy.

Digital Childhood: Challenges to Empathy and Social Connection

While the call for universal values is strong, its implementation is complicated by the rapid expansion of the digital environment. The rise of digital technology has profoundly reshaped children’s socialization patterns. Research indicates that algorithmic platforms create filter bubbles, reduce exposure to diversity, and increase polarization, even among young users (Livingstone et al., 2019; Tesar, 2021). Livingstone and Byrne (2018) specifically demonstrated how digital algorithms create “personalized bubbles” that restrict the diversity of experiences available to children. Moreover, excessive screen-based interaction may limit children’s opportunities for real-world empathy, social problem-solving, and ecological awareness (Novianti & Garzia, 2020). UNICEF (2021) further reinforces this point, noting that intensive device use in childhood can reduce direct social interaction, which is foundational to moral development. Consequently, educators must help young children develop early forms of critical digital literacy and ethical digital behavior, a capacity sometimes described as digital wisdom (Prensky, 2012). Integrating digital ethics into value education is increasingly recognized as essential in contemporary ECE scholarship to counter apathy and disconnection.

Love and Care as a Unifying Pedagogical Anchor

The challenges of exclusivism and digital fragmentation underscore the need for a unifying moral grammar in ECE. The concept of love and care in education provides this anchor. Scholars like Nel Noddings (2013) argue that caring relationships form the moral foundation of all effective education,

placing relationship, care, and interconnectedness at the core of the learning process, which is profoundly relevant for character formation in early childhood. Similarly, peace education scholars emphasize love as a form of active, restorative engagement, especially within diverse communities (Galtung, 2015). Importantly, the concept is not limited to secular ethics. Interfaith studies (Dillon, 2018; Hayward & Bockelman, 2011) demonstrate that love is considered a universal moral principle, expressed in various forms: *agape* (Christianity), *rahmah* (Islam), *karuṇā* (Buddhism), *ahimsa* (Hinduism), and *chesed* (Judaism). These shared ethical resources make love a strong conceptual anchor for the proposed Love-Based Curriculum framework, bridging religious commitments with the universal mandate for social and ecological responsibility.

Materials and Methods

The present study employed a qualitative conceptual research design grounded in document analysis. This methodology is appropriate because the primary aim is to synthesize diverse ethical theories and normative principles into a coherent, practical curriculum framework, the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC), thereby engaging in theory-building from existing sources rather than collecting empirical field data.

Contextual Scope and Data Source

This study does not involve a physical study site. The scope of the research is defined by the range of documents analyzed, which are global and cross-cultural. The primary contextual focus is on Early Childhood Education (ECE) within global frameworks. The secondary focus is on the specific challenges and ethical resources found in plural societies, particularly drawing on Indonesia’s philosophical and interreligious heritage (e.g., Pancasila).

The analysis draws from three bodies of documents: (1) Global educational frameworks (UNESCO Education 2030, SDG 4.7, Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development, and UNICEF guidance on early

childhood development); (2) Cross-religious and ethical documents (Includes Islamic ethical texts on rahmah and amanah; Christian writings on agape; Jewish ethics of tikkun olam; Buddhist teachings on compassion; Hindu concepts of ahimsa; and Indonesia interfaith values in Pacasila); (3) Scholarly literature on ECE, digital childhood, and moral development (Peer-reviewed articles and books from Scopus-indexed journals within the last 15 years).

Analytical Procedure for Framework Development

The Document analysis served as the central methodological approach for synthesizing the KBC framework, following three distinct and systematic stages adapted from established guidelines for qualitative document review (Bowen, 2009):

Content Extraction Coding

Identifying recurring value themes common across religious traditions. Themes were selected only if they appeared as a shared virtue across at least three major religious traditions and aligned with SDG 4.7. This stage involved systematically reading the ethical and curricular documents (Sources 1 and 2) to identify and extract recurring core value themes, concepts, and moral injunctions common across religious traditions. Initial codes were generated for shared virtues (e.g., care, justice, peace).

Thematic Synthesis and Categorization

Grouping these themes into conceptual categories relevant to early childhood development. The extracted themes were then grouped and synthesized into conceptual categories relevant to the specific context of early childhood development and the digital era. This synthesis resulted in the formation of the overarching framework for the KBC.

Normative Integration

Interpreting how these synthesized themes can be translated into a coherent curricular model for ECE in digital contexts. This final interpretive stage involved translating the synthesized ethical themes into a coherent, actionable curricular model. This included interpreting how the framework could nurture empathy, care, and ecological awareness

while specifically countering risks of intolerance and digital apathy.

Data analysis was inherently qualitative and interpretive, focusing on the normative integration required to construct a practical framework from disparate philosophical and policy sources.

Results and Discussion

ECE is globally recognized as the foundational stage for cultivating competencies necessary for inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable societies, as mandated by frameworks like the UN SDG 4.7. However, contemporary ECE practice operates under significant systemic stress derived from two critical, interconnected challenges. Offline, many faith-based institutions, particularly in pluralistic settings like Indonesia, sustain curricular practices that are predominantly mono-religious and inward-facing, inadvertently restricting children's capacity for cross-identity empathy and cosmopolitan awareness (Yusuf, et.al, 2025). Simultaneously, the rapid expansion of digital environments, governed by personalization algorithms, actively fragments social exposure, amplifying risks of intolerance, apathy, and disconnection from real-world social and ecological challenges (Reid, 2025).

The proposed Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC) is presented as a conceptually robust and ethically grounded framework designed to address this dual imperative. By anchoring early learning in shared ethical and spiritual principles, specifically Compassion, Hospitality, Gratitude, Justice, and Care for Creation, the KBC offers a pathway to nurture humane values universally recognized across diverse traditions (Taufikin, et.al., 2025). This approach aims to proactively counter both religious exclusivism and algorithmic fragmentation, thereby fulfilling national mandates such as Indonesia's philosophical foundation of *Kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab* (Just and Civilized Humanity) and supporting global goals for sustainability and human flourishing. The KBC transcends mere instruction by emphasizing relational pedagogy, fostering critical digital literacy (Digital Wisdom), and providing a contextually relevant model for ethical development from the earliest years of life.

The Conceptual Architecture: The KBC Framework and Five Core Values

Love and Care as the Unifying Pedagogical Anchor

The KBC is a conceptual model derived from this study's synthesis, operationalizing this philosophical foundation by offering a robust framework for ECE. The conceptual foundation of the Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) is rooted in the philosophy of relational ethics, seeking a universal moral grammar strong enough to bridge religious commitments with mandates for social and ecological responsibility. At its core, KBC adopts Nel Noddings' Ethics of Care, which posits that caring relationships are the fundamental basis of all effective education (Chen and Shih, 2025). This framework places relational encounters, responsiveness, and genuine connection at the heart of the learning process, ensuring a supportive and inclusive environment conducive to deep character formation (Chen and Shih, 2025).

The KBC (or Love-Based Curriculum, LBC) operationalizes this philosophical foundation by explicitly cultivating love (*mahabbah*), care, and empathy toward God, humanity, the environment, and the nation (Rosadah, et.al., 2025). This approach moves beyond simply teaching moral values conceptually; instead, it focuses on embodying them through school culture and social action, transforming knowledge acquisition into ethical practice (Rosadah, et.al., 2025; Sunarya and Sassi, 2025). The explicit integration of emotional literacy and moral formation into spiritual education positions the KBC as a necessary humanizing paradigm. This counter-measure addresses the pervasive tendency in contemporary ECE systems to prioritize cognitive readiness and academic skills over the essential affective and relational intelligence required for comprehensive development. By centering the curriculum on the universal concepts of love (such as *Agape*, *Rahmah*, or *Karuṇā*), the KBC provides a compelling, cross-tradition ethical framework.

Interfaith Convergence and Five Core Values

The KBC avoids the controversial ground of comparative religion by focusing instead on fostering recognition of shared ethical commitments, a common moral ground, that strengthens empathy and reduces prejudice in early childhood settings (Perker, 2014; Sumadi, et.al., 2025). The analysis of cross-religious ethical texts and global educational frameworks yielded five universal values that resonate strongly with the Indonesian national philosophy of *Pancasila*: (1) Compassion (*kasih/rahmah*); (2) Hospitality (*keramahtamahan*); (3) Gratitude (*syukur*); (4) Justice (*keadilan*); (5) Care for creation (*menjaga ciptaan*).

These five values function as the practical, developmental scaffolding necessary for internalizing Indonesia's abstract national principles. Specifically, these virtues align directly with the second principle of *Pancasila*, *Kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab* (Just and Civilized Humanity), which emphasizes the importance of respecting human rights and treating everyone with fairness and dignity (Leonia and Maryatun, 2025).

The strength of the KBC framework lies in its ability to translate abstract national or religious mandates into tangible, age-appropriate behaviors. For instance, the principle of *Keadilan* (Justice) is translated into observable classroom practices such as sharing resources or adhering to rules in a game (Lee, 2022). This process makes the national value of *Kemanusiaan* understandable and actionable for young children, offering ECE teachers a non-controversial, nationally-backed, and developmentally appropriate methodology for teaching inter-human decency, thereby overcoming the institutional resistance often associated with explicit "interfaith" content.

Table 1. KBC Core Values and Cross-Religious/National Foundations

KBC Core Value	Primary ECE Focus	Cross-Religious Ethical Anchor	/	Alignment with Indonesian Norms
Compassion (Kasih/Rahmah)	Cultivating relational responsiveness;	Rahmah (Islam), Agape (Christianity), Karuṇā (Buddhism)		Kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab

	emotional awareness and empathy.		(Treating others with dignity)
Hospitality (Keramahamahan)	Welcoming the 'other'; celebrating diversity and inclusive community building.	Chesed (Judaism), Global traditions of welcoming strangers/guests.	Persatuan Indonesia (Unity amidst diversity)
Gratitude (Syukur)	Fostering appreciation for community, gifts, and life; spiritual reflection.	Daily rituals of thanks across faiths; alignment with Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa.	Fostering positive internal attitudes; recognizing interconnectedness
Justice (Keadilan)	Early understanding of fairness, equity, rule adherence, and moral responsibility.	Principles of Adl (Islam), Tikkun Olam (Judaism); universal human rights.	Ensuring fairness and dignity for all people (Sila II)
Care for Creation	Promoting environmental stewardship and ecological awareness; responsibility to the planet.	Amanah/Khalifah (Islam), Ecotheology, Indigenous traditions of land respect.	Responsibility to the broader social and natural environment

Contextual Discussion: Dual Pressures on Contemporary ECE

The Persistence of Religious Exclusivism and Institutional Inertia (The Offline Challenge)

Globally and within the Indonesian context of ECE, curricular focus often remains narrowly centered on strengthening identity within a single religious tradition. While this approach successfully transmits specific cultural and theological narratives, it often restricts children's exposure to the values, symbols, and narratives of other traditions. This institutional tendency towards mono-religious exposure inadvertently narrows the child's worldview, hindering the formation of the crucial cross-identity empathy necessary for navigating a plural society (Parker, 2014).

This systemic challenge is compounded by practical and institutional anxieties regarding curriculum reform. Research findings, mirroring those cited from the Maarif Institute, indicate a widespread reluctance among teachers in religious educational institutions to incorporate explicit interfaith materials, often driven by anxiety or the fear of misunderstanding and resistance from parents (Haikal and Anwar, 2024; Sumadi, et.al., 2021). Furthermore, many educators possess a limited theoretical understanding of how to implement nuanced concepts like "religious

moderation" in the classroom (Fatriza, et.al., 2025). This combination of factors, limited training, institutional pressure, and perceived parental blowback, establishes a challenging environment where the fear of controversy serves as a greater barrier than the technical difficulty of instruction. This feedback loop ensures the perpetuation of exclusionary practices, even when national policies, such as the commitment to *Pancasila's* tolerance principles, explicitly mandate a broader, more inclusive outlook (Yusuf, et.al., 2025). Consequently, the educational system, despite global calls for empathy and cultural understanding, maintains a fundamental gap between stated ideals and actual pedagogical practice.

Algorithmic Fragmentation and the Erosion of Empathy (The Digital Challenge)

The challenge of religious exclusivism is severely amplified by the pervasive influence of the digital environment on contemporary childhood. Young children are increasingly immersed in digital ecosystems where personalization algorithms shape content exposure. This automated curation tends to create "filter bubbles" and echo chambers, which restrict exposure to diversity and contribute to affective polarization, even among very young

users. The developmental consequence of this digital reality is profound. Excessive screen-based interaction is documented to limit children's crucial opportunities for real-world social interaction, which is foundational to moral development, empathy, and social problem-solving (Reid, 2025). This shift in socialization patterns contributes to social apathy and a diminished connectedness to real-world social and ecological issues (Reid, 2025). The digital environment, by design, rewards engagement within homogenous, individualized spheres, thereby structurally working against the ECE objective of forming relational morality and expanding the child's sphere of care. For the KBC to be effective, it must actively develop pedagogical strategies that directly counteract the *logic* of the algorithm, a system that maximizes engagement through homogenization and personalized isolation. This requires proactively integrating content and activities that compel exposure to diversity and prioritize authentic, real-time relational dynamics over passive, individualized digital consumption

Pedagogical Translation: Integrating KBC Values in the ECE Environment

The KBC Instructional Modality: Beyond Didacticism

For the KBC to be internalized, the pedagogical approach must align with the developmental stage of early childhood, which requires learning through experience, relationship, and emotion. The KBC model dictates that the curriculum is not merely a set of didactic lessons, but an entire environment rooted in play-based learning (NAECY, 2020). This modality is essential because children acquire morality primarily through observation, attachment, and relational encounters, making the teacher's consistent behavior, including the use of positive reinforcement, forgiveness, and providing second chances, the most vital curriculum component.

Instructional strategies must incorporate a mix of self-directed play, guided activities, and direct instruction, with frequent opportunities for social negotiation over rules and resources. These spontaneous moments of conflict and resolution, which are impossible to replicate in isolated, screen-based environments, constitute the core learning

mechanism for empathy and fairness (Lee, 2022; Reid, 2025). The KBC prioritizes fostering dialogical and empathetic relationships, integrating values into daily routines, storytelling, music, and arts, ensuring holistic internalization.

Concrete Strategies for Offline Value Integration

The KBC translates its five core values into developmentally appropriate ECE activities. *First*, nurturing gratitude and compassion (the affective core). To cultivate compassion and gratitude, educators must use simple language, defining gratitude as appreciating the good things in life and feeling a "warm, fuzzy feeling". Activities designed to instill these values include the creation of a Gratitude Rock Garden, where children decorate stones with images representing things they appreciate, and the use of Gratitude Story Cubes to encourage verbal reflection. Furthermore, community helper appreciation projects are crucial, as they extend the child's sphere of care beyond the immediate family and school to the broader social community, reinforcing the values of shared humanity and responsible citizenship.

Second, cultivating hospitality and justice (the social core). Hospitality is the first practical manifestation of interfaith tolerance in the KBC framework, teaching children how to welcome the 'other' and build inclusive community (Rosadah, et al., 2025). Strategies involve role-playing polite greetings, demonstrating how to seat guests, and helping children "see needs and meet them" during communal activities. This practice operationalizes the welcoming of strangers without requiring explicit religious instruction. Justice is taught through engaging in games with rules, sharing resources, and discussing scenarios of fairness and unfairness (Lee, 2022). The objective is to foster an early understanding of equity and adherence to communal responsibility, serving as a tangible foundation for the national principle of Just and Civilized Humanity.

Third, instilling care for creation (the ecological core). Care for Creation directly addresses the social and ecological apathy that can result from digital disconnection. KBC integrates ecological awareness through physical interaction with the environment. Activities include nature walks, where children are

encouraged to marvel at the world’s beauty, and discussions about stewardship (*amanah*) (Rifqi and Saputra, 2025). By involving children in simple environmental projects, such as gardening or cleaning, the curriculum explicitly frames the natural world as a sacred responsibility, ensuring that the child’s moral concern extends beyond their immediate social circle to include ecological reality.

Bridging the Digital Divide: KBC and Ethical Digital Citizenship

Shifting from Digital Literacy to Digital Wisdom

The KBC recognizes that simply teaching children how to operate technology (digital literacy) is insufficient; the educational goal must be to cultivate Digital Wisdom (Prensky, 2012). Digital Wisdom, as advocated by scholars like Marc Prensky, involves acquiring the critical capacity to navigate technology ethically, consciously, and responsibly within a complex and turbulent world (Prensky, 2012). For example, algorithms often recommend content that reinforces gender stereotypes or excludes diverse racial characters, creating a homogenized worldview for the child.

The digital environment places an unprecedented ethical load on ECE, as the design of many platforms actively undermines empathy and social skills. Therefore, the KBC explicitly defines digital engagement as a moral task. It must ensure that any use of technology supports, rather than detracts from, the development of relational ethics and social skills. This requires critical engagement with issues of data privacy, equity in access, and balancing screen time with essential physical interaction for moral development.

closely with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL focuses on creating inclusive classroom environments by providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression. By mandating choice in how children learn and demonstrate their knowledge (e.g., producing a collage versus a digital presentation), the KBC actively counters the isolating and fragmenting effects of personalized digital consumption.

Key strategies for digital ethics integration include (1) digital content evaluation (compassion and justice). Utilizing curated, age-appropriate digital stories or games not merely for consumption, but as objects for critical analysis. Children are guided to evaluate fairness of outcomes, identify the emotions and intentions of characters, and discuss social responsibility within the digital narratives. (2) Technology for inclusive connection (hospitality). Leveraging secure digital platforms (e.g., video conferencing, photo-sharing) to enable children to connect with geographically distant individuals or diverse cultural and faith groups. This strategy intentionally breaks the physical and digital filter bubbles, utilizing technology to foster real-world cross-cultural understanding. (3) Digital story creation for stewardship (care for creation). Children use simple digital tools like tablets or voice recorders to create personalized content, such as digital storybooks or recorded narratives, documenting their acts of stewardship or their appreciation for nature. This helps bridge the conceptual gap between virtual and ecological realities, reinforcing the active fulfillment of *amanah* (trusteeship).

Pedagogical Strategies for Digital Ethics Integration

The KBC addresses the digital challenge through strategic, ethical integration of technology, aligning

Table 2. KBC Pedagogical Strategies for the Digital Age

KBC Value	Core	Offline ECE Strategy	Digital Integration (Digital Wisdom)	Ethics (Digital Measure	Goal and Counter-
Compassion		Guided role-play, focusing on restorative practices (forgiveness, second chances).	Using digital stories or videos for affective empathy analyzing intent in digital narratives.	Counteracting affective polarization amplified by algorithms.	and apathy

Hospitality	Designing welcome rituals; field trips to places of worship (with respect protocols).	Utilizing secure digital platforms to connect with diverse cultural or faith communities outside the immediate locality.	Fostering cross-cultural respect and reducing insularity/exclusivism.
Justice	Structured games with rules; resource sharing; discussing social justice through age-appropriate books.	Discussing concepts of data privacy and fairness in digital access/online games (Digital Rights).	Developing early critical assessment of power imbalances and systemic fairness.
Care for Creation	Environmental projects (planting, cleaning); sensory exploration of nature.	Creating digital content (e.g., short videos, AR exploration) documenting nature walks and stewardship acts.	Bridging the gap between the virtual and ecological realities; promoting active amanah.

Policy Recommendations and Institutional Support for KBC Adoption

Strategic Alignment with Indonesian National Education Frameworks

The KBC provides specific content pillars that directly support the character-building goals of the Pembelajaran Mendalam and its associated initiative, the Delapan Dimensi Profil Lulusan. The Pembelajaran Mendalam emphasizes appreciating and accepting diversity and respecting differences, often integrating religious moderation values. The five core values of the KBC offer the necessary affective and ethical structure for developing delapan dimensi lulusan focused on tolerance, non-violence, and national commitment (Yusuf, et.al., 2025).

Furthermore, the KBC is positioned as a potent policy instrument for agencies such as the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), to actively engaged in researching inclusive education models, equitable budgeting, and strategies to address religious nationalism in Southeast Asia. The KBC offers a concrete methodology for implementing inclusive and equitable education from the foundational ECE stage, directly supporting the agency's goal of strengthening research networks and producing socially beneficial, inclusive policy studies. By integrating KBC principles into ECE policy and budgeting, the framework can move

from a theoretical concept to a scalable, national strategy for early peace education.

Teacher Training and Professional Development Reform

Institutional adoption of the KBC is contingent upon overcoming the documented lack of structured professional development and limited teacher understanding of interfaith or moderation concepts. Recommendations for structured Professional Development (PD) must focus on three interconnected areas. *First*, relational pedagogy. Training rooted in Noddings' Ethics of Care, emphasizing the teacher's role as a facilitator of reconciliation and a model of empathetic and dialogical relationships (Bole and Rangga, 2025; Patricia, et.al., 2025; Rosidah, et.al., 2025). *Second*, universal ethics application. Practical workshops on translating the five KBC values into secular, behavioral activities (e.g., teaching Justice through collaborative play) without engaging in comparative theology. *Third*, critical digital literacy (digital wisdom). Equipping teachers to guide children in ethical digital behavior and utilize technology as a tool for inclusion, countering algorithmic biases.

The design of this training must strategically focus on *pedagogical method* over theological content. By equipping teachers with concrete, play-based instructional techniques and emphasizing that they

are reinforcing universal human decency, PD can significantly reduce professional anxiety and the perceived risk associated with implementing values education that transcends a single tradition.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Overcoming Parental Resistance

The documented parental concern regarding the introduction of 'other religions' is a significant challenge to interfaith ECE. To ensure continuity of values between the school and the home, a collaborative parent-teacher model is necessary (Faticia, et.al., 2025; Yusuf, et.al., 2025). The KBC framework provides the necessary ethical language to engage parents constructively. Educational communication must frame the KBC not as an attempt at religious syncretism, but as a curriculum reinforcing ethical practices common to *all* belief systems and aligned with the shared national value of *Pancasila* (Haikal and Anwar, 2024). By using the language of shared humanity, compassion, respect, kindness, instead of doctrinal specifics, the school reinforces the family's primary role in specific religious transmission while expanding the child's capacity for civic and ethical formation (Sumadi, et.al., 2021). This shared moral vocabulary fosters kinship and builds trust, which is crucial for overcoming institutional fragmentation and gaining stakeholder buy-in for inclusive education.

Conclusions

As a conceptual framework, the KBC has not yet been longitudinally tested in diverse classroom settings. Future research is needed to validate these strategies empirically. The current environment places early childhood development at a critical juncture, constrained by institutional inertia toward religious exclusivism and the fragmenting effects of algorithm-driven digital platforms. The Interfaith Love-Based Curriculum (KBC) offers a transformative and conceptually consistent response to this dual imperative. By grounding ECE pedagogy in the shared, universal ethical principles of Compassion, Hospitality, Gratitude, Justice, and Care for Creation, the KBC provides a necessary corrective mechanism. It simultaneously mitigates the risk of social exclusivism inherent in mono-

religious schooling while countering the emotional apathy and disconnection induced by intense digital consumption.

The KBC's strength lies in its effective synthesis of global ethical frameworks (Ethics of Care, SDG 4.7) with Indonesia's powerful tradition of *Kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab*. This positions the KBC as a robust, culturally grounded, yet globally relevant model for character education in the 21st century. Successful policy implementation requires focused investment in targeted teacher professional development and collaborative efforts with parents, ensuring the curriculum is understood as an essential tool for developing socially responsible, empathetic, and resilient learners prepared to navigate a plural and digital world. Future research must now empirically document the long-term impact of KBC implementation methodologies on student attitudes toward pluralism and ethical digital citizenship, thereby validating the framework's potential to foster genuinely inclusive and sustainable societies.

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