



Integrating Islamic Moral Values into Foreign Language Curricula in Bangladeshi Higher Education

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Article Information:

Received January 16, 2026

Revised February 27, 2026

Accepted March 28, 2026

Keywords: *Islamic moral values, foreign language curricula, integration, higher education*

Abstract

The integration of Islamic moral values into foreign language curricula has emerged as a critical issue in Bangladeshi higher education, where universities strive to reconcile global academic standards with local religious and cultural contexts. This study explores the challenges and prospects of embedding Islamic ethical principles into undergraduate and graduate English Language and Literature programs while maintaining academic rigor, critical inquiry, and intercultural competence. Employing a qualitative research design, purposive sampling was used to select 20 participants, including English faculty members, curriculum developers, department chairs, and an academic administrator from public and private universities in Bangladesh. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis supported by systematic coding and categorization. The findings highlight significant challenges, such as the absence of a coherent curriculum framework, limited pedagogical resources, inadequate faculty training, institutional constraints, and concerns regarding academic neutrality. Despite these obstacles, participants viewed English Language and Literature as a promising platform for integrating Islamic moral values through ethical literary interpretation, value-based language instruction, contextualized learning activities, and interdisciplinary curriculum development. This study contributes to the growing scholarship on value-based curriculum reform by offering an empirically grounded framework for integrating Islamic moral values into foreign language education in Muslim-majority contexts.

INTRODUCTION

With the globalised, technological and culturally interdependent world, universities are expected to not only equip their students with academic skills, but also with the ethical values, skills and attitudes required to be good citizens of the world. Higher education institutions have begun to see the need for intellectual growth to be coupled with moral growth, social responsibility and inter-cultural understanding (Minoiu et al., 2026; Yanniris, 2021). In this context, the issue of embedding moral and religious values in the academic disciplines has emerged as a major focus of research (Marujo & Casais, 2021).

How to cite

Uddin, M. K., Ahsan, M. A., Ahmad, S., Absar, A. B. M. N., Ahmed, H. (2026). Integrating Islamic Moral Values into Foreign Language Curricula in Bangladeshi Higher Education. *Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education*, 10(1), 37-56.

E-ISSN

2549-4783

Published by

Islamic Studies and Development Center Universitas Negeri Padang

ELL is given a special significance in the higher level education in Bangladesh. English is the language of international communication, academic research, business and career and professional development and hence the ability to communicate in English is an important factor in one's socioeconomic mobility and employability (Hossen & A.-A., 2022; Rahman et al., 2019). As a result, English departments in both public and private universities have grown significantly, and have developed programmes that integrate the study of language, linguistics, literature and cultural studies (Amin, 2019; Hamid, 2021). At the same time, however, the rapid development of English language education has led to worries over the cultural/ethical character of curricula which are still dominated by Western literary canons and linguistic rules and theories (Mansoor & Bano, 2021).

Meanwhile, Bangladesh is a Muslim-dominate nation where the Islamic moral values are still very prevalent in social, cultural and educational life. Islamic ethics includes the following values: honesty, justice, compassion, responsibility, moderation and respect for human dignity (Addzaky & Apriyanti, 2025; Aydin, 2020; Halstead, 2007). These values, together with intellectual and professional skills, should be nurtured in the process of education, and, according to many scholars, contributes to the students' complete development (Asyibli et al., 2025; Halstead, 2004). The vision is in line with the global discussions about value-based education, character education and global citizenship, where moral education is viewed as cross-curricular (Basarah et al., 2025; S. F. B. A. Rahman & Smith, 2024).

There are opportunities for such integration in ELL classrooms. Literary text often involve moral issues, issues of identity, issues of justice, issues of empathy, and issues of social responsibility, and language learning promotes communication, intercultural awareness, and a critical reflection (Aifang et al., 2024; Brokerhof et al., 2023; Li et al., 2021; Simpson & Cremin, 2022; Xu & Mustafa, 2024). However, Incorporating the Islamic moral values to English curriculum is yet a complex approach. It is a balancing act between religion/culture and academic freedom, discipline, critical inquiry and the international character of the study of English.

While there is previous research on Islamic education, value-based education, and problems of English education, empirical research on the incorporation of Islamic moral values into English Language and Literature courses in the universities of Bangladesh has been scarce. Current research has mainly provided conceptual elaborations and lacked empirical data on the perspectives, curriculum application and institutional limitations of the educators.

The study addresses this gap by adopting a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews of the English faculty, curriculum developers, English department chairs, and academic administrators. It enables them to gain insights into the opportunities and challenges of embedding Islamic moral values in English Studies in a Muslim majority postcolonial context through thematic analysis.

It contributes to scholarship in value-based higher education and culturally responsive curriculum development with its empirical grounding in the presentation of a framework for ethical integration into English Studies. The results are relevant to curriculum developers, policy makers and teachers in developing programs that integrate Islamic moral values into the learning process with academic rigor, critical inquiry and global relevance to ensure graduates are linguistically proficient, ethically grounded and culturally responsive.

English is a strategic language in the context of higher education in Bangladesh due to its position as the main language of communication, academic scholarship, and career growth in the world. English is believed to be a key factor for

socioeconomic mobility and employment opportunities in a country as well as internationally (Ahamed, 2025; Hossen & A.-A., 2022; Rahman et al., 2019). In view of this, ELL courses are provided in public and private universities. On one hand, the public universities mostly apply bilingual instruction, and on the other hand, private universities mostly apply English medium of instruction (EMI), and the graduates of public and private universities are able to develop communicative competence and better employment opportunities, respectively (Rahman et al., 2019; Yasmin, 2023).

It has a well-established academic history as the University of Dhaka was established as a Department of English in 1921. As time went on, curricula changed from literature-based programs to multidisciplinary programs that include the fields of linguistics, applied linguistics, and English Language Teaching (ELT) (Amin, 2019; Hamid, 2021). However, literature is still very important in English study due to its role in language skills, critical thinking, intercultural awareness and analytical skills (Ashrafuzzaman et al., 2021; Moni & Suchona, 2025).

English education in Bangladesh is still faced with so many pedagogical and curricular issues despite its expansion. The studies are consistently reporting teacher centered instruction, examination oriented learning, lack of integration between language and literature, and also limited focus on communicative competence (Rashid & Rana, 2021; Salim, 2023). Numerous students also have poor English skills when they enter into the university, especially students from Bangla-medium families who are not able to read literary texts and participate in the academic discourse in English (Farzana, 2024; Yasmin, 2023).

Moreover, the ideas of the postcolonial and Eurocentric traditions continue to dominate English Studies and give weight to Western literary canon and theory, thus ignoring local cultural and ethical viewpoints (Mansoor & Bano, 2021). The challenges bring out the necessity of reform in the curriculum to meet the international academic standards and its need to be in sync with the cultural and moral context of Bangladesh, which forms a solid basis to introduce Islamic moral values in the curricula of English Language and Literature.

Islamic moral values are a total of moral values based on the Quran and the Sunnah, elaborated and developed by Islamic law, Islamic philosophy and Islamic educational thinking. While there are ethical systems that are secular and try to differentiate between morality and religion, Islamic ethics is based on the theocentric worldview in which moral behavior is linked to faith (*īmān*), worship (*‘ibādah*), and accountability to God (Halstead, 2007; Sudirman, 2023; Supriyatno et al., 2021). Thus, Islam focuses on developing good character (*akhlāq*) rather than simply on adhering to outward regulations.

It is *tamhīd* that is always mentioned as the ontological basis of Islamic morality, and *akhlāq*, *adab*, *iḥsān*, and *ta’dīb* are the central ethical and educational concepts of Islamic moral life (Addzaky & Apriyanti, 2025; Aydin, 2020). Together, these concepts foster a moral character, ethical discipline, spiritual excellence, and an all-round education that is grounded in knowledge, values, and action (Halstead, 2007; Jamil & Fadhilah, 2025).

Islamic moral values are not just limited to actions of individuals, but also apply to responsibilities one has towards humans, society and the environment (Ebrahimi & Yusoff, 2017). Revelation is the main source of moral authority, but contemporary scholarship acknowledges reason and *ijtihād* as a complementary source to solve new ethical problems (Elmahjub, 2021; Kilic et al., 2025). In this regard, Islamic moral values can be integrated into educational curricula in the EFL

field with the help of such frames as *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, which offer a solid conceptual foundation for the application of Islamic moral values.

The modern view of Islamic knowledge sees it as an epistemological whole that is characterized by the simultaneous functioning of revelation, reason, and moral formation. Thus, the Islamic educational philosophy rejects religious and secular knowledge and asserts that every type of knowledge must strive to achieve intellectual excellence, moral development and social responsibility (Asyibli et al., 2025; Halstead, 2004; Suhardi et al., 2026). In this paradigm, the Quran and the Sunnah are the main sources of knowledge, and reason and empirical investigation are used as auxiliary methods for acquiring and applying the guidance of God.

The ideas of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Ismail Raji al-Faruqi have had a significant impact on the present discourse. Al-Attas' view on *tawhīd* and *adab* is also a call for the unification of knowledge, while al-Faruqi's Islamization of Knowledge aims to incorporate Islamic moral values in the domains of modern academic disciplines (Amir & Rahman, 2023; Chande, 2023). In contrast, the construct of knowledge integration has become the focus of more recent scholarship which highlights the importance of whole-school curricula, ethical pedagogy, and interdisciplinary learning (Laabdi & Elbittoui, 2024; Qiso et al., 2025). Despite its limited use, this integrative approach offers a solid foundation for the inclusion of moral values of Islam in the teaching and learning of English Language and Literature.

Value-based education has become a key goal of modern higher education, which aims to develop students not only academically but also morally, with a focus on developing their ethical thinking, integrity, empathy and civic responsibility (Basarah et al., 2025; Minoiu et al., 2026). More and more universities are called upon to produce socially responsible inquisitive individuals who can solve complex global and societal challenges.

Globally, UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.7 equates education for sustainable development, global citizenship, human rights, peace and cultural diversity to its core educational outcomes (Marujo & Casais, 2021; Yanniris, 2021). Empirical research has shown that interdisciplinary curricula and reflective pedagogies are effective strategies in improving students' moral reasoning, intercultural competence, and civic involvement, especially in collaborative, experiential, and project-based learning (Minoiu et al., 2026; Sugiarto, 2025).

In Muslim majority communities, value-based education builds upon these values of the global context and incorporates Islamic ethical principles and values with the universal human values of the world. Scholars recommend to integrate values, such as justice, honesty, compassion, responsibility, and respect, into academic subjects, not just religion. Academic scholars call for embedding values into academic subjects, not only in religion, which includes justice, honesty, compassion, responsibility and respect (Hidayat et al., 2025; Rahman & Smith, 2024). This approach is a pedagogical framework which is relevant for the integration of Islamic moral values into ELLC.

With the increasing awareness of the importance of developing moral awareness, ethical reasoning and intercultural competence in recent times, ELL is now seen as a valuable tool for the development of such skills in addition to being a language of instruction. With complex moral dilemmas, cultural perspectives and experiences, literary texts encourage critical thinking about ethical challenges, including, but not limited to, justice, honesty, compassion, responsibility and tolerance (Brokerhof et al., 2023; Prawiyogi et al., 2025). The engaging nature of

literature helps students think ethically, as they are given the freedom to consider various perspectives and to feel more empathy than just as an abstractly taught moral lesson (Luciana, 2026; Simpson & Cremin, 2022).

Additionally, the study shows that pedagogies that focus on students' learning, such as discussion, debate, reflective writing and collaborative group learning, have been found to positively affect ethical judgment and communication skills and social responsibility (Li et al., 2021; Nah, 2025). Likewise, English language learning can be an intercultural educational experience that introduces students to different cultures and styles of communication, nurturing intercultural awareness and respect for cultural differences and global citizenship (Aifang et al., 2024; Wirentake, 2022).

While there are abundant studies on ELL education, Islamic educational philosophy, and value based education in isolation, there is a lack of research that focuses on value of education in the context of ELL education in Bangladeshi higher education. Previously, studies on English Studies in Bangladesh have mainly concentrated on language proficiency, curriculum design, pedagogical practices, employability and communicative competence; and studies on Islamic education have mainly focused on religious institutions or Islamization of knowledge. In the same way, research on value-based education calls for the integration of moral concepts in the various subjects, yet rarely examines how the Islamic values can be systematically introduced in ELLC. Furthermore, the feasibility, difficulties, and implications for teaching and learning in this regard have still not been extensively investigated, as evidenced by the lack of empirical research on this topic regarding the perceptions of EFL teachers, curriculum developers, and university administrators. The study aims to fill these gaps by investigating the opportunities and challenges for embedding Islamic moral values in the undergraduate and post graduate ELL programmes in the Bangladeshi universities and how culturally responsive and ethically grounded curriculum models can be developed.

METHODS

Research Design

Qualitative research design has been used in this study to explore the problem and opportunities of embedding Islamic moral values into ELL at undergraduate and post-graduate level in Bangladeshi Universities. Qualitative method is deemed suitable in this study because the researcher needs to know the perception, experience, belief, and recommendation of the participants in integrating curriculum, rather than to test the predetermined hypothesis or to find out the causal relationship. Qualitative research methods are well suited for studying complex education phenomena because they help the researcher understand the meanings, experiences, and social realities as they occur in the context of the phenomenon being studied (Alatise & Akinfolarin, 2025; Anidar et al., 2026; Chand, 2025; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denny & Weckesser, 2022; Efendi et al., 2026; Engkizar et al., 2025; 2026; Ikhlas et al., 2025). In view of this, this approach makes it possible to discuss these relationships of Islamic ethical values with English Studies, curriculum practices and institutional environments in depth.

The study employs an interpretivist research paradigm that assumes that knowledge and educational realities are socially constructed based on individual's experiences, beliefs or contextual understandings. The focus of the interpretivist approach is on understanding how participants interpret their professional practices and social worlds; not on finding universal explanations that are free of context (Engkizar et al., 2024; 2026; Hamzah et al., 2025; Masoud & Almajri, 2025; Sithole,

2025; Thanh et al., 2015). The use of this paradigm is particularly relevant in relation to the present study because the embedding of Islamic moral values into English Language and Literature education is complex since it entails negotiations among the various educational domains such as religious traditions, learning conventions, curriculum goals, and institutional expectations.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do ELL educators perceive the integration of Islamic moral values into undergraduate and graduate curricula in Bangladesh?
2. What challenges hinder the integration of Islamic moral values into ELL programmes?
3. What opportunities exist for incorporating Islamic moral values into English curricula without compromising academic standards and disciplinary integrity?
4. What strategies can facilitate effective curriculum integration in Bangladeshi universities?

Research Setting

The research was conducted in selected public and private universities in Bangladesh which offer undergraduate and graduate programs in English Language and Literature. The institutions were chosen to reflect a variety of educational settings, such as public universities, private universities and faith-based institutions. This diversity enabled an effective range of opinions on curriculum development and value integration to be captured.

Participants

The sampling strategy used was purposive sampling, which was used to select participants with extensive knowledge and experience in Higher Education curriculum development and English Studies. The participants were faculty members, curriculum developers, departmental heads and academic administrators from the ELL department who were directly involved in the teaching, curriculum and educational policy making.

The sample consisted of 20 participants, representing both public and private universities in Bangladesh. The participants are faculty members, curriculum developers, department chairs and an academic administrator. Participant identification numbers were created to maintain participant anonymity. The English Language Faculty group comprised eight members (E01–E08) who were lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and professors. They were between the ages of 34 and 49, and had worked between 8 and 22 years. There were six participants in English Literature Faculty group (E09–E14), ranging in age from 35–52 years, experienced from 9–26 years in teaching. In addition, there were three curriculum developers (C01–C03), ranging in age from 42 to 54 years and having a work experience of 16 to 28 years in the profession. The study involved two department chairs (D01–D02): a professor (50 years old), and an Associate Professor (58 years old), who had 24 and 30 years of professional experience, respectively. In addition, one academic administrator (A01), an Academic Administrator aged 61 years and 30 years of professional experience participated in the study. The participants consisted of male and female academics, which included academics from various academic ranks and professions, thus giving a wide variety of perspectives on the integration of Islamic moral values in the English Language and Literature curricula.

Sampling Technique

In order to get information-rich participants, those who have a significant experience in curriculum design, English language education, and integration of

Islamic values were selected using purposive sampling. Eligible participants had at least five years of university teaching experience, actively participated in undergraduate and/or graduate English teaching, had experience in English curriculum development, English curriculum review or academic administration, and had given informed voluntary consent. Interviews continued until data saturation, i.e., no new themes and/or conceptual understandings emerged.

Data Collection

The primary data was collected by using semi-structured interviews which spanned 14-months from January 2025 to February 2026. The interview protocol was systematically developed to meet the research goals of the study and after careful consideration of the literature reviewed, content validity was established and the protocol fit the conceptual framework. The interviews delved into the perspectives of the participants regarding the Islamic moral values, the current practices in school curriculum, the possibility of incorporating Islamic moral values into the English School curricula, the support systems available in the institutions, the pedagogical challenges, the readiness of teachers, the strategies for curriculum reform, and the expected educational outcomes. These interviews took about 45-60 minutes, and were either conducted in person or online depending on the availability and preference of the participants. All interviews were audio recorded and verbatim transcribed for accuracy and credibility of the qualitative data with participants' informed consent.

In discussion section, secondary data was also collected and analyzed to add to the triangulation and contextualization of data. The sources were institutional policy documents, scholarly publications related to ELT, curriculum studies and related publications in Islamic education. Primary interview data were used in conjunction with documentary evidence to corroborate the findings, enhance the methodological rigor, and give a holistic picture of the opportunities and challenges to integrate Islamic values in university English curricula.

Data Analysis

The six-phase thematic analysis method developed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used for analyzing the interview data, which is a rigorous and flexible approach to qualitative analysis that is used for identifying, analyzing and interpreting themes of meaning from textual data. The analysis was conducted in six stages: i) familiarization with the data by reading the verbatim interview transcripts repeatedly to capture meaning; ii) systematic generation of initial codes to identify meaningful segments of the data; iii) searching for themes that were found by organizing and clustering related codes into broader concepts; iv) reviewing and refining themes to ensure coherence, internal consistency, and distinction between themes; v) defining and naming themes by clarifying their scope or their analytical meaning; and vi) producing an interpretive narrative that is supported by representative quotations from the participants. Coding was done manually, using an iterative process of constant comparison across transcripts to increase analytical consistency, conceptual clarity and the trustworthiness of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2021).

Trustworthiness of the Study

The criteria used in this study to ensure the trustworthiness of the results were those of (Mazurek, 2018) in which they mentioned 4 criteria; credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The engagement process, member checking, and multiple sources of interview and documentary data added to the credibility. Rich descriptions of the research setting and participants provided support for transferability. Documentation of the research process was systematic

and this helped to ensure dependability, while the use of an audit trail and researcher reflexivity helped to strengthen the confirmability.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical requirements were carefully followed in the study. Participants were given an information sheet describing the aims and methods of the study and written informed consent was obtained before the data were gathered. No time limit to withdraw and all the participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity (e.g., E01, C02) were maintained and all audio recordings and interview transcripts were kept safely and only used for research purposes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Perceptions of Integrating Islamic Moral Values

The first theme is on participants' perceptions of incorporating Islamic moral values in undergraduate and graduate ELLC. The interviews indicated that the concept of value integration was well received, but there were differences in the extent and how value should be integrated. Most considered Islamic moral values to be acceptable in English Studies while others focused on maintaining academic neutrality, critical enquiry and discipline purity. Analysis led to the identification of two subthemes.

Islamic Moral Values as a Foundation for Holistic Education

The majority of them considered the integration of Islamic moral values as an important part of integrated higher education. E01, E03, E05, E07, E09, E11, E13, D01 and C02 suggested that university education should not only provide students with language skills and literacy, it should also nurture ethical awareness, integrity, empathy and social responsibility. They argued that values, including honesty, justice, compassion and accountability, do augment the aims of ELL education.

E07 remarked:

“Students in the study of English ought to be people who express themselves well and who are honest, compassionate and responsible in their working and social lives.”

Likewise, E03, E09, C02 and D01 pointed out that ethics education needs to be carried out in every discipline and not just in Islamic Studies programmes. Cautious responses, however, were heard from E12, E14 and A01, who suggested that value integration should involve a reflection on ethics rather than making it doctrinal or distracting from the aim of English Studies in the curriculum.

Compatibility between English Literature and Islamic Ethical Values

The participants also addressed the acceptability of English literature with Islamic moral principles. E02, E04, E06, E08, E10, E15, C01, D02, and A01 concluded that literary texts offer opportunities for comparative ethical analysis, which deepens the interpretation and critical thinking of literary works and enriches the teaching of literature.

E10 observed:

“Students face moral dilemmas in both Shakespearean and modern texts, and can be discussed with Islamic ethical frameworks yet without altering the text itself.”

On the other hand, E04, E06, C01, and D02 thought it is better to provide learning that has meaning and relevance to culture because the purpose of learning is to achieve cultural development. However, E05, E12, E13 and E14 warned against reading the literature through the lens of religion. They believed that English literature could be subject to various theoretical and cultural approaches and that one of them should be Islamic ethics, not the sole one.

Overall, participants saw Islamic moral values as acceptable as long as they are incorporated into LEL in a way that enhances critical reflection, ethical awareness, cultural relevance, and academic freedom and discipline, without neglecting the diversity of interpretation.

Pedagogical and Curriculum Challenges

The second theme explores pedagogical and curricular challenges to the implementation of Islamic moral values in undergraduate and graduate ELL programmes. The participants were generally positive and had agreed that the implementation of value integration is needed to be supported by curriculum reform, appropriate instructional resources, and more prepared teachers. The analysis resulted in two subthemes.

Curriculum Limitations and Instructional Resources

Participants mentioned that there was no clear curriculum model as the main challenge in the integration of Islamic moral values. E01, E02, E04, E06, E08, E10, E11, C01, C03, D01, and A01 noted that current English education is based on teaching language skills, literature analysis and theoretical understanding, but does not provide enough information on the ethical learning outcomes and the value-based teaching methods.

C01 stated:

“The English curriculum is academically comprehensive, but the way to include Islamic moral values is not well structured; as a result, ethical discussions rely heavily on individual teachers.”

Likewise, E04, E08, E10 and D01 reported that classroom practices are inconsistent due to the lack of curriculum guidelines. Some teachers use ethics in literature and language classes, some don't, as they think it is not part of the syllabus.

Another concern expressed was the lack of teaching materials. E02, E06, E11, C03, and A01 indicated that a lack of textbooks, teaching materials, and supplementary materials to illustrate the integration of Islamic ethical perspectives without affecting educational quality. Furthermore, E01, E08 and C03 claimed that the existing assessment systems emphasize the evaluation of textual analysis and examination while the assessment of ethical reasoning and reflective learning has been neglected.

But, D01 wrote, there's a possibility of not needing to change a lot of the curriculum. Instead, changes to course learning objectives, classroom practices and assessment practices might help to integrate values while maintaining the current framework of English programmes.

Teacher Preparedness and Pedagogical Competence

The participants also always highlighted that the competence of teachers is essential for successful curriculum integration. There is a general consensus by E03, E05, E07, E09, E12, E13, C02, D02 and A01 that English faculty appreciate the significance of ethical education, but most of them have not been formally trained in value education or Islamic educational philosophy.

E09 explained:

“It is generally believed that most English teachers are specialists in literature or linguistics, but not all of them have learned how to incorporate moral values into English teaching which is balanced and suitable to academic level.”

Likewise, E03, E05, C02, and D02 noticed that many teachers struggle with how to handle ethical issues, and end up either superficially discussing values as if they were incidental or avoiding any discussion of values altogether. In contrast, E07, E12, E13 and A01 explained that an English teacher should not be a religious

educator, but be a facilitator who helps students to critically engage with ethical issues in literary texts and communication. They suggested regular trainings for faculty, interdisciplinary trainings and workshops on reflective and discussion based teaching.

Overall, it was found that the major challenges in integrating Islamic moral values into the curriculum for ELLC education are still the limitations of the curriculum, limited teaching materials, and low level of teacher competence. These challenges can be met by systematically developing curriculum, providing institutional support and ongoing professional development and maintaining the academic integrity and critical stance of English Studies.

Opportunities for Curriculum Integration

Participants were very optimistic about the integration of Islamic moral values in ELLC, despite the challenges identified. They agreed that English Studies is an appropriate subject in which to foster students' reflection on ethics, character building and responsible communication without changing the basic structure of the subject. The analysis has resulted in two subthemes.

Literary Texts as a Platform for Ethical Reflection

Literature courses were considered by the majority of the participants as the most suitable way of incorporating Islamic moral values. E01, E04, E06, E08, E10, E11, E14, C01, D01, and A01 stated that literature frequently examines such universal themes as justice, honesty, compassion, sacrifice, dignity, and social responsibility, providing opportunities for their discussion and critical reflection.

Participant E08 stated:

“Students are encouraged to discuss moral dilemma in the literature using the characters and story; teachers can tie the moral dilemma to Islamic values without altering the contents of the literature.”

Likewise, E01, E06, C01 and D01 thought it could help students think deeply, understand others and be aware of their cultural background and values when making a comparison between literary themes and Islamic ethical guidelines. They noted that the ethical reflection must not supplant literary analysis.

But E05, E12, E13 and A01 warned against analyzing the literature solely in a religious perspective. They claimed that there should be several theoretical and cultural approaches to English literature. These learners felt that the Islamic moral values are one interpretation and should not be the only one taught, as it should not restrict the students' ability to critically analyze the various interpretations.

Language Learning as a Medium for Ethical Communication

Participants also pointed out that the course of English language is effective context for integrating ethical values through communicative teaching. E02, E03, E07, E09, E15, C02, C03, D02, and A01 pointed out that language learning is the medium for interaction, collaboration, and intercultural understanding, and thus appropriate for the development of honesty, respect, empathy and responsible communication.

E03 commented:

“The language learning is not grammar and vocabulary but communicating socially and ethically with people of other cultural backgrounds.”

Similarly, E07, E09, C02 and D02 suggested the inclusion of ethical values through discussions, debates, reflective writing, role play and collaborative projects. All the activities were found to be effective in enhancing communicative competency and moral reasoning.

However, E10, E12, E14 and A01 stressed that ethical aspects should not be

taught overtly as an aspect of the religious education but should be integrated in the learning process through interaction. In general, participants acknowledged that literature and language courses offer good opportunities to teach Islamic moral values while having academic demands of rigor, critical thinking, and cosmopolitanism of English Language and Literature.

Institutional Support and Future Directions

The last theme focuses on institutional support and strategic directions needed for the successful embedding of Islamic moral values into undergraduate and graduate ELLC. Participants consistently pointed out that the sustainable implementation requires not only individual teachers' commitment but institutional commitment, curriculum policy, teachers' development and a balance that maintains the international nature of English Studies. A two-level theme analysis resulted in two subthemes.

Institutional Commitment and Faculty Development

It was widely agreed that institutional support is crucial for the successful implementation of value-integrated curricula. E01, E04, E06, E08, E11, E13, C01, C03, D01, D02 and A01 proposed that integration should be done in a manner that is influenced by policies of the university, curriculum committees and systematic planning, and not depending on individual teachers' initiatives.

D01 remarked:

“Institutional commitment, teacher training, and curriculum materials are key in achieving sustainable curriculum integration, not the work of individual teachers.”

Likewise, E04, E08, C01, and A01 suggested forming interdisciplinary curriculum committees by integrating English teachers, Islamic study experts, and curriculum experts to create learning outcomes, teaching materials and evaluation methods suitable to the English curriculum. There was also a call for the importance of conducting regular workshops and professional development programmes so as to improve the competence of teachers on value-based pedagogy. E06, E11, C03 and D02 thought that ongoing training would allow teachers to feel confident to lead ethical discussions without compromising on academic standards.

E05, E12, and A01, however, pointed out that curriculum reform should not be subject to ideological or political influences but should be research-based and academically oriented. They stressed that institutions' policies should promote critical thinking and pedagogical creativity, not give specific interpretations.

Balancing Global Standards with Islamic Ethical Values

The other important issue that came to the fore was the issue of balance between the global orientation of English Studies and the Islamic and cultural identity of Bangladesh. E02, E03, E07, E09, E10, E14, E15, C02, D02, and A01 maintained views that incorporating Islamic moral values does not mean giving up on the use of western literary materials or using different curriculum materials other than the ones recognized globally. They rather encouraged students to take an integrated approach to literature, where students read and critically consider a variety of literary traditions, and consider moral viewpoints from their own cultural and religious traditions.

E14 explained:

“Not to islamise English literature, but to make students to read critically and critically understand the texts from around the world with their ethical and cultural values.”

Similarly, E02, E07, C02 and D02 agreed that this approach would help develop students' intercultural competence, critical thinking, and global citizenship by

allowing them to make comparisons between the different ethical traditions. However, E10, E12, E15 and A01 emphasised the need for academic freedom and interpretive plurality to be at the heart of English Studies. In general, it was found that participants agreed that the integration of Islamic moral values in ELL education needs institutional support, interdisciplinary collaboration and balanced curriculum reform, which would not compromise the academic integrity and the global value of the discipline.

This study explored the challenges and prospects of integrating Islamic moral values into ELLC at the undergraduate and graduate levels in Bangladeshi universities. The findings indicate broad support among English faculty members, curriculum developers, department chairs, and academic administrators for incorporating Islamic moral values into English Studies. However, participants emphasized that such integration should be achieved through pedagogically sound, academically rigorous, and culturally responsive approaches rather than through doctrinal or confessional instruction. The discussion below interprets the findings in relation to existing scholarship and the study's research questions.

Integrating Islamic Moral Values as a Holistic Educational Imperative

The results indicate that Islamic moral aspects were seen as supplementary to the aims of ELL learning. They did not consider English Studies merely as a tool for linguistic abilities and literary knowledge, but also saw the importance of imparting moral awareness, critical thinking, empathy, integrity, and social responsibility to students through university education. The viewpoint is in line with Islamic education philosophy of the time which sees education as a process that includes intellectual, moral and spiritual growth (Al-Atas, 2014; Halstead, 2004; Noaparast, 2017). It is also in accordance with the value-based education models that also urge schools to educate not only for academic success, but also for responsible citizenship (Minoiu et al., 2026; Yanniris, 2021).

The emphasis that participants placed on universal values like justice, honesty, compassion, responsibility and respect also indicates that introducing Islamic values of morals does not have to lead to a conflict between religious moral values and universal educational goals. Rather, Islamic moral values can reinforce internationally recognised educational aims, and impart culturally relevant moral frameworks. This discovery also corroborates with earlier research that there are some similarities between Islamic moral values and universal moral values of character education and global citizenship (Hidayat et al., 2025; Rahman & Smith, 2024).

English Literature as a Context for Ethical Inquiry

One of the key findings of this study was that the study participants viewed literary texts as a natural means of ethical reflection. They contended that the themes of justice, oppression, compassion, sacrifice, honesty, identity, and human dignity were common features in English literature, providing students with opportunities to explore issues of right and wrong by analyzing and discussing them. The results of this study align with previous studies which showed that literary texts can promote empathy, moral reasoning and moral imagination as it presents a variety of human experiences and values that learners may encounter and encounter conflict with (Brokerhof et al., 2023; Simpson & Cremin, 2022).

Importantly, the notion of literary text interpretation using Islamic approach was rejected by the participants. Rather, they proposed comparative and dialogic methods that would enable students to respond to ethical traditions from different cultures both critically and in a manner that is rooted in their own cultural context. Such practice is in line with current literature teaching that encourages interpretive

plurality, intercultural dialogue and critical thinking, instead of ideological conformism (Luciana, 2026). Hence, the incorporation of Islamic moral values must be beneficial to enrich the study of literature and not to limit the variety of interpretation found in English literary studies.

Curriculum and Pedagogical Challenges

Despite the general consensus of the ideas, there were many challenges in the way of implementation. The lack of curriculum frameworks, scarce learning resources and exam-based assessment systems were identified as significant constraints in the institutions. The findings are congruent with the previous study on English education in Bangladesh that reveals that curricula are generally centered on linguistic competence and literary knowledge, and have limited attention to ethical learning and character building (Amin, 2019; Salim, 2023).

Another big hurdle encountered was teacher readiness. The participants recognised that the majority of the English teachers have a good knowledge of literature, linguistics or English language teaching, but lack training in value-based teaching or Islamic educational philosophy. The result resonates with international studies which stress the need for professional development before successful curriculum innovation (Sultana, 2019; Younus, 2023). Thus, embedding Islamic moral values should not be confined to only changing the curriculum, but should include systematic investment in teacher training, pedagogical training, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Balancing Academic Freedom with Ethical Integration

This finding is one of the biggest: the participants' commitment to the principles of academic freedom and discipline integrity. The respondents were generally positive in their views on the integration of Islamic values into the classroom but repeatedly warned against the possibility of turning English classrooms into a place for religious indoctrination. They, on the other hand, promoted reflective pedagogical approaches and inquiry methods that invite students to ponder ethical issues from various angles.

The study adds to the on-going controversy over the role of religion in higher education. Recently, scholars say that ethical education should encourage dialogue and reflection and even consciousness of intercultural relationships, but not the adoption of ideological stances (Lahmar, 2020). The views of the participants also imply that Islamic moral values should operate as one of the important interpretive frameworks in the wider academic arena while remaining open and pluralistic as is essential in English Studies.

Institutional Implications for Curriculum Reform

The findings also reinforces the notion of institutional commitment and its role in achieving sustainable curriculum integration. The importance of value-based education, which requires the support of institutional policies, curriculum changes, interdisciplinary cooperation, and teaching resources, was highlighted, noting that these resources will not be successful when teachers undertake the task alone. This is consistent with research on successful educational reform in higher education that shows that organizational leadership, curriculum governance, and ongoing professional learning are key factors (Liu et al., 2022).

In addition, the participants highlighted the need for the English departments, IS faculties and curriculum specialists to work together to produce contextually appropriate learning outcomes and pedagogy. This interdisciplinary synergy is congruent with integrated knowledge that is preached by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Ismail Raji al-Faruqi in which separation of religious and secular

knowledge goes beyond merely curriculum issues, it is an epistemological challenge. Their framework puts forth the idea of orienting current disciplines according to the principles of *tawḥīd*, ethics, and an Islamic worldview, while maintaining the rigor of each discipline, and at the same time nurturing students' intellectual, moral, and spiritual development (Chande, 2023; Jamaluddin et al., 2025; Salim, 2023; Sholihah et al., 2026).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that integrating Islamic moral values into English Language and Literature curricula in Bangladeshi universities is both feasible and educationally meaningful when approached through a balanced, inclusive, and academically grounded framework. Addressing the research objectives, the study demonstrates that English Studies can provide an effective space for ethical reflection by connecting literary interpretation, language learning, and moral development without compromising academic freedom, critical inquiry, or disciplinary integrity.

The study also highlights that successful integration depends not only on the relevance of Islamic ethical principles but also on institutional readiness, curriculum design, and faculty capacity. The absence of clear curriculum guidelines, limited teaching resources, and insufficient professional training remain major barriers that require systematic attention. Therefore, universities should develop value-oriented curriculum frameworks, provide faculty development opportunities, encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, and design learning activities that promote ethical reasoning through literary and linguistic engagement.

The findings suggest that Islamic moral values should not be treated as additional content within English programmes but as an integrated educational perspective that enhances students' intellectual, ethical, and social development. Future curriculum initiatives may incorporate ethically oriented literary analysis, reflective writing, dialogue-based learning, and culturally relevant teaching materials. Such approaches can contribute to producing graduates who possess strong language and literary competencies while demonstrating social responsibility, cultural awareness, and ethical commitment. The study provides a foundation for further empirical research exploring value-based curriculum models across different disciplines and higher education contexts in Bangladesh and other Muslim-majority societies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of this research.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contribution

Mohammad Kafil Uddin: Writing-Preparation of original manuscript, **Mohammad Amimul Ahsan:** Conceptualization, Methodology, **Saber Ahmad & A B M Nurul Absar:** Visualization, Investigation, Improve Content, **Hossain Ahmed:** Data accuracy, Improve Language.

AI Statement

The data and language usage in this article have been validated and verified by English language experts and no AI-generated sentences are included in this article.

Funding Statement

The author(s) declare that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that this research was conducted without any conflict of interest in the research.

Ethical Clearance

The place or location studied has agreed to conduct research and is willing if the results of this study are published.

Publisher's and Journal's Note

Islamic Studies and Development Center Universitas Negeri Padang as the publisher and Editor of Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education that there is no conflict of interest towards this article publication.

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First publication right:

Khalifa: Journal of Islamic Education

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