International Journal of Social Science and Human Research

ISSN (print): 2644-0679, ISSN (online): 2644-0695

Volume 09 Issue 10 October 2026

DOI: 10.47191/ijsshr/v9-i10-27, Impact factor- 8.361

Page No: 8807-8817

Development of A Core Values-Based Higher Education Curriculum at the Islamic University of Maldives: An Outcome-Based Education Perspective

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ABSTRACT: This study analyzes the development of a core values-based higher education curriculum at the Islamic University of Maldives (IUM) through the perspective of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), constructive alignment, and Islamic educational philosophy. The study used qualitative document analysis by examining institutional curriculum development documents, course structures, learning outcomes, teaching strategies, and assessment mechanisms compiled in the curriculum development project of IUM. The findings show that curriculum development at IUM is grounded in seven institutional core values: commitment to the nation and the people, spirituality, justice, brotherhood/collegiality, quality and excellence, integrity, and accountability. These values are not treated as decorative institutional slogans but are translated into curriculum structures, course learning outcomes, instructional strategies, learning materials, and assessment practices. The curriculum especially operationalizes these values through core courses such as Critical Thinking and Its Methodology and Islamic View of Knowledge and Civilization. The discussion demonstrates that the IUM model is consistent with OBE and constructive alignment because it links institutional philosophy, graduate outcomes, learning activities, and assessment. However, compared with recent studies on OBE, project-based learning, blended learning, and values-based curriculum, the model still requires stronger curriculum mapping, validated rubrics for value assessment, empirical evaluation of student outcomes, and continuous feedback loops. The study concludes that IUM offers a distinctive model of Islamic higher education curriculum that integrates academic excellence, Islamic worldview, ethical formation, and social responsibility.

KEYWORDS: -core values, curriculum development, Islamic higher education, Outcome-Based Education, constructive alignment, Islamic University of Maldives

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education curriculum development is increasingly expected to connect institutional identity with demonstrable graduate capabilities. A curriculum is therefore more than a sequence of courses or a distribution of credit hours; it is an institutional architecture that links educational purposes, graduate attributes, learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, assessment, and quality assurance. This expectation has intensified as universities respond simultaneously to employability, digital transformation, social fragmentation, ethical challenges, and demands for accountability. In this environment, curriculum coherence becomes a central quality issue because institutional aspirations have little educational meaning when they cannot be traced into what students learn, do, and demonstrate. Outcome-Based Education (OBE) offers a useful response by beginning curriculum design with the capabilities expected at the end of learning and aligning educational processes with those outcomes (Spady, 1994). Yet the contemporary curriculum challenge is not simply to make outcomes measurable. It is also to decide which outcomes are educationally worthwhile and how intellectual, professional, ethical, spiritual, and social purposes can be represented without reducing education to a checklist of observable performances.

OBE has become influential in higher education because it provides a transparent logic for curriculum planning and evaluation. It requires institutions to articulate Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), translate them into Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), select learning experiences that enable students to attain them, and gather assessment evidence showing the extent of attainment. This logic is strengthened by constructive alignment, in which intended outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks are deliberately coordinated (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Recent empirical evidence shows, however, that implementation is demanding. A large study of OBE implementation in Indonesian higher education found that lecturers could express confidence in OBE while still experiencing difficulty in formulating measurable outcomes, selecting appropriate teaching strategies, developing learning materials, and constructing assessment tools; institutional leadership was identified as a decisive support factor (Mufanti

et al., 2024). The implication is important for this study: a curriculum may adopt OBE terminology without achieving genuine curricular alignment. An analysis of IUM must therefore examine not only whether outcomes are stated but whether institutional values are traceable across outcomes, learning activities, assessment, and quality-assurance practices.

The problem becomes more complex when a university explicitly defines itself through religious and moral commitments. Conventional OBE can accommodate affective and ethical outcomes, but its implementation often privileges outcomes that are easiest to observe and quantify. In Islamic higher education this imbalance is particularly problematic because knowledge is not treated as morally neutral or separated from the formation of the person. Classical and modern Islamic educational thought emphasizes the relationship among knowledge, adab, faith, action, and responsibility (Al-Attas, 1993; Al-Faruqi, 1982). Recent comparative work on Islamic higher education likewise argues that a tawhidic curriculum should overcome the fragmentation between religious values and contemporary disciplinary knowledge by making Islamic worldview an organizing principle rather than an isolated subject (Subhan et al., 2024). Accordingly, an Islamic university requires a curriculum model in which value formation is structurally connected to academic learning rather than added as an extracurricular or rhetorical component.

Values-based curriculum provides a conceptual bridge between institutional philosophy and student formation. Universities inevitably communicate values through what they teach, how they assess, how lecturers interact with students, and what forms of achievement they reward. A values-based approach makes these normative commitments explicit and seeks to translate them into curriculum experiences. This translation is crucial because institutional values can otherwise remain symbolic statements displayed in strategic documents while everyday teaching continues to be driven almost exclusively by content coverage and examinations. Research on character and values education in higher education increasingly emphasizes active, reflective, and socially situated pedagogies rather than moral transmission through lectures alone. Service learning, ethical problem solving, reflective writing, collaborative projects, and authentic assessment can create opportunities for students to exercise judgment and responsibility. In Islamic higher education, lecturer competence is also connected with values such as honesty, trustworthiness, and responsibility, indicating that value formation depends on the ethical ecology of teaching as much as on formal content (Orgianus et al., 2024). Thus, curriculum design must address both explicit curriculum and the practices through which institutional values are modeled and enacted.

The Islamic University of Maldives (IUM) offers a particularly relevant case for examining this integration. IUM officially identifies seven enduring institutional values: commitment to the nation and Ummah, spirituality, equity, brotherhood/collegiality, quality and excellence, integrity, and accountability (Islamic University of Maldives [IUM], n.d.-a). The university states that these values are grounded in its Islamic philosophy and are expected to guide interactions and institutional practices. The values combine religious commitments with civic, academic, interpersonal, and organizational dimensions, thereby providing a potentially comprehensive framework for graduate formation. Their significance is strengthened by the social context of the Maldives, where higher education operates within an Islamic national identity and a geographically dispersed island environment. The institutional challenge is therefore twofold: IUM must preserve a coherent Islamic and national identity while preparing graduates to participate in contemporary professional, technological, and global environments. This makes the university an analytically useful case for studying whether institutional values can function as curriculum design principles rather than merely as mission-language.

IUM also provides formal curricular mechanisms through which its values can be operationalized. Its published programme structures identify four IUM core modules: Values and Ethics for a Practical Life, Critical Thinking and its Methodology, Islamic View of Knowledge and Civilization, and Maldivian History and Civilization (IUM, n.d.-b). These modules create an explicit curricular space for ethical reasoning, critical inquiry, Islamic epistemology, and national-historical consciousness. In the curriculum documents analyzed in this study, Critical Thinking and Its Methodology and Islamic View of Knowledge and Civilization are especially important because their learning outcomes connect intellectual skills with fairness, responsibility, Islamic perspectives on knowledge, and responses to contemporary challenges. The presence of dedicated core courses is a strength because it makes institutional values visible and teachable. At the same time, it raises a key curriculum question: whether values are confined to core modules or mapped progressively across disciplinary courses, field experiences, research, and assessment. A genuinely values-based curriculum requires both concentrated learning opportunities and program-wide reinforcement.

Pedagogy is equally important because values cannot be internalized through curriculum statements alone. Project-based and problem-based approaches are relevant because they place students in situations that require inquiry, collaboration, decision making, communication, and accountability. A 2023 meta-analysis of 66 experimental or quasi-experimental studies found that project-based learning produced significant positive effects on academic achievement, affective attitudes, and thinking skills, while also showing that effectiveness varies according to course type, group size, duration, and other design conditions (Zhang & Ma, 2023). A systematic review of higher-order and critical thinking in problem- and project-based environments similarly highlights the importance of deliberately designing tasks that require analysis and judgment rather than assuming that critical thinking will emerge automatically (Loyens et al., 2023). These findings are relevant to IUM because values such as brotherhood, justice, quality, and accountability can become observable in the processes by which students negotiate group work, justify claims, respond to

disagreement, and complete authentic tasks. In this sense, active learning is not only a method for cognitive achievement but also a context for ethical practice.

Blended learning adds another dimension to the IUM case. The Maldives' geographical dispersion makes flexible combinations of face-to-face and online learning educationally significant, particularly for students who cannot participate continuously on campus. However, blended learning should not be understood simply as adding a digital platform to conventional teaching. A systematic review by McCarthy and Palmer (2023) found that effective blended learning requires institution-level alignment with university priorities and appropriate frameworks for implementation and evaluation, rather than a narrow emphasis on technology provision. Other reviews similarly emphasize design, interaction, feedback, learner support, and teaching presence as conditions for effective blended learning (Chen & Jumaat, 2023). For IUM, this means that flexibility and access can embody the institutional value of equity only when online participation is pedagogically supported and students have meaningful opportunities to interact, receive feedback, and demonstrate learning. Technology therefore becomes part of values-based curriculum design rather than a neutral delivery mechanism.

Digital transformation also introduces new ethical pressures that make integrity and accountability more important. Generative artificial intelligence has rapidly changed the conditions under which students write, solve problems, and complete assessments. A 2024 study of university students found substantial use of AI chatbots for assessment assistance and showed that students do not always interpret such use as an academic-integrity violation, underscoring the need for clear policies and assessment redesign (Johnston et al., 2024). A scoping review of generative AI and higher-education assessment likewise identified both opportunities for feedback and self-assessment and significant concerns regarding academic integrity, ethical use, and the suitability of traditional assessment formats (Xia et al., 2024). These developments are directly relevant to IUM's values of integrity and accountability. If those values are curriculum outcomes, they must be translated into explicit expectations for digital scholarship, attribution, responsible AI use, authentic assessment, and reflective evidence of student learning.

Against this background, a research gap remains at the intersection of OBE, institutional core values, and Islamic higher education. OBE research has extensively addressed learning-outcome formulation, curriculum mapping, assessment, and quality assurance, while Islamic education scholarship has examined integration of knowledge, worldview, and moral formation. Yet fewer studies show in detail how a university's declared core values can be traced from institutional philosophy into course outcomes, pedagogy, assessment, and continuous improvement within an OBE logic. The IUM case makes this gap visible because it combines an explicit set of seven institutional values with a core curriculum and an Islamic epistemological orientation. Studying this configuration can contribute to curriculum theory by showing how OBE may be extended beyond technical competence toward value-laden graduate outcomes while retaining alignment and accountability. It can also contribute practically by identifying where philosophical coherence is already strong and where curriculum mapping, assessment rubrics, feedback loops, and empirical outcome evaluation require further development.

Accordingly, this study analyzes the development of a core values-based higher education curriculum at IUM through the lenses of OBE, constructive alignment, values-based education, and Islamic educational philosophy. It addresses three questions: (1) which institutional core values form the foundation of curriculum development at IUM; (2) how these values are translated into curriculum structures, learning outcomes, instructional strategies, and assessment; and (3) how the IUM model compares with contemporary research on OBE, active and blended learning, assessment, and Islamic higher education. The study does not assume that the presence of values in institutional documents proves their internalization by students. Instead, it examines the curricular architecture through which such internalization is intended to occur and identifies areas requiring empirical validation. By doing so, the article conceptualizes IUM's approach as a developing model of values-based OBE: a model in which measurable educational outcomes are embedded within a broader Islamic, ethical, civic, and social conception of graduate formation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Outcome-Based Education and Constructive Alignment

Outcome-Based Education is organized around the principle that educational planning should begin with a clear account of what learners are expected to demonstrate at the end of a learning experience. Spady (1994) describes outcomes as culminating demonstrations of learning and argues that curriculum, instruction, and assessment should be organized backward from those expectations. In higher education, this logic normally operates through a hierarchy linking graduate attributes, PLOs, CLOs, teaching and learning activities, and assessment evidence. OBE therefore changes the central curriculum question from “What content will be covered?” to “What should graduates be able to know, do, value, and demonstrate?” This distinction is especially important for a core values-based curriculum because values must be formulated in ways that can guide educational experiences and generate credible evidence of attainment. The purpose is not to reduce values to simplistic numerical indicators but to ensure that they have curricular consequences.

Constructive alignment provides the pedagogical mechanism that makes this outcome logic coherent. Biggs and Tang (2011) argue that students construct meaning through what they actually do, while teachers create conditions in which learning activities

and assessment direct students toward intended outcomes. Alignment is therefore both vertical and horizontal: program outcomes must be represented across courses, and within each course the outcomes, activities, and assessments must correspond. Contemporary applications continue to demonstrate the usefulness of this framework. Pereira et al. (2024), for example, show how constructive alignment can structure course outcomes, learning activities, and assessment as an iterative design process even in technologically changing environments. The principle is directly applicable to IUM: if integrity, spirituality, equity, or accountability are intended outcomes, students need repeated learning activities that require those qualities and assessment evidence capable of making their development visible.

Recent OBE research also reveals a persistent implementation gap between formal curriculum documents and classroom practice. The 2024 study of OBE in Indonesian higher education found difficulties in measurable outcome formulation, instructional design, learning materials, and assessment despite broad policy acceptance (Mufanti et al., 2024). Such findings caution against treating curriculum mapping as an administrative exercise. A robust values-based OBE model requires a traceable chain from institutional values to graduate attributes, from graduate attributes to program and course outcomes, and from outcomes to assessment criteria and improvement decisions. It also requires continuous quality improvement, because alignment is not established once and for all. Student performance, lecturer reflection, stakeholder feedback, tracer evidence, and program review should feed back into curriculum decisions. In this study, constructive alignment is therefore used not only as a teaching principle but as an analytical criterion for judging whether IUM's values have been operationalized coherently.

B. Values-Based Curriculum and Character Formation in Higher Education

Values-based curriculum begins from the premise that higher education is intrinsically normative. Choices about curriculum content, assessment, academic conduct, professional standards, community engagement, and institutional priorities communicate judgments about what knowledge and forms of conduct matter. Values education therefore cannot be restricted to a single ethics course or to statements in a strategic plan. It involves the explicit curriculum, the enacted curriculum, and the institutional culture in which students learn what is rewarded, tolerated, or challenged. For this reason, values become educationally meaningful when they are translated into outcomes, learning experiences, assessment criteria, role modelling, and opportunities for reflection. Core values can then function as a coherent institutional language linking mission, curriculum, student development, and quality assurance.

The challenge is that value internalization is qualitatively different from memorizing value definitions. A student may correctly define integrity without acting honestly in assessment, or explain equity without demonstrating fairness in collaborative work. Values-based curriculum must therefore create situations in which students exercise judgment, confront tensions, justify decisions, receive feedback, and reflect on consequences. Recent higher-education literature on character formation increasingly supports active and context-sensitive approaches. Service learning, ethical cases, collaborative problem solving, reflective portfolios, and community projects can connect moral concepts with lived practice. In Islamic higher education, this experiential dimension is reinforced by the role of lecturers as ethical exemplars. Orgianus et al. (2024) identify honesty, trustworthiness, and responsibility as important dimensions of lecturer competence in Islamic higher education, suggesting that value formation is strengthened when institutional expectations are embodied in professional teaching practice.

For IUM, the seven values create a multidimensional framework rather than a single character construct. Commitment to the nation and Ummah introduces civic and communal responsibility; spirituality places faith, ihsan, and taqwa within education; equity concerns fairness; brotherhood/collegiality emphasizes cooperation and lifelong learning; quality and excellence concern standards of academic and personal performance; integrity concerns honesty and trustworthiness; and accountability connects self-discipline with responsibility before Allah (IUM, n.d.-a). These dimensions can be mapped to different kinds of learning evidence. Critical analysis and high-quality academic work may demonstrate excellence; fair participation and peer processes may provide evidence related to equity and collegiality; reflective writing and ethical decision-making can illuminate integrity and accountability; and community-oriented projects may operationalize commitment to nation and Ummah. Such mapping provides a basis for assessing values without pretending that complex dispositions can be captured by a single test score.

C. Islamic Educational Philosophy and the Integration of Knowledge

Islamic educational philosophy provides the normative foundation that distinguishes the IUM model from a generic values curriculum. Al-Attas (1993) locates education within the formation of adab, emphasizing proper recognition of the order of knowledge, self, society, and reality. Al-Faruqi (1982), through the Islamization of knowledge project, emphasizes the need to overcome the separation between revealed knowledge and modern disciplines. Although these intellectual projects differ in emphasis, both reject a fragmented understanding in which professional knowledge is detached from worldview and moral responsibility. A curriculum grounded in tawhid therefore treats knowledge as purposeful and accountable, not merely instrumental. This perspective gives spiritual and ethical outcomes a constitutive role in curriculum rather than positioning them as optional enrichment.

Contemporary scholarship continues to revisit this integration challenge. Subhan et al. (2024), in a comparative study of Islamic higher education in Indonesia and Malaysia, argue for a tawhidic framework that bridges Islamic values and contemporary disciplinary knowledge. Their analysis is relevant to IUM because the university explicitly links its activities to Islamic philosophy while also preparing graduates for contemporary professional and social roles. The curricular implication is that integration should occur at multiple levels: in the selection and framing of knowledge, in learning outcomes, in ethical questions raised within disciplines, in teaching practices, and in the purposes for which knowledge is applied. The IUM core module Islamic View of Knowledge and Civilization is an explicit site for such integration, but a mature model would also enable students to encounter Islamic ethical and epistemological questions within disciplinary and professional modules.

D. Critical Thinking and Project-Based Learning as Vehicles for Core Values

Critical thinking is central to contemporary higher education because students must evaluate claims, distinguish evidence from assertion, identify assumptions, and make reasoned judgments under conditions of uncertainty. Within an Islamic values-based curriculum, critical thinking need not be framed as opposition to faith; rather, it can support intellectual responsibility by requiring careful reasoning, fairness toward alternative arguments, and accountability for conclusions. IUM's Critical Thinking and Its Methodology module is therefore strategically important. Its outcomes can connect quality and excellence with rigorous analysis, justice with fair-minded evaluation, integrity with honest use of evidence, and accountability with reasoned justification. This connection illustrates how a cognitive capability can simultaneously become a site of value formation.

Project-based learning can extend this integration by placing critical thinking within collaborative and authentic activity. Zhang and Ma's (2023) meta-analysis found positive overall effects of project-based learning on academic achievement, thinking skills, and affective outcomes, while also demonstrating that instructional conditions matter. Loyens et al. (2023) similarly show that higher-order and critical thinking in problem- and project-based environments depends on purposeful design. For IUM, projects can be designed around social, educational, ethical, or community problems relevant to Maldivian life. Such projects allow students to demonstrate commitment to community, collegiality, quality, integrity, and accountability in the same task. However, these values will remain implicit unless assessment criteria address both the academic product and the processes through which students collaborate, use evidence, distribute responsibilities, respond to feedback, and make ethical decisions.

E. Blended Learning, Equity, and Digital Academic Integrity

Blended learning has particular relevance in a geographically dispersed national context. Combining online and face-to-face learning can expand access, support flexibility, and reduce barriers associated with location, but its educational quality depends on design. McCarthy and Palmer's (2023) systematic review emphasizes that effective blended learning requires an institutional framework aligned with university priorities, while Chen and Jumaat (2023) identify design, technology, participants, and learning effects as recurring dimensions in higher-education blended learning. From a values perspective, the important point is that access alone does not constitute equity. Equity requires meaningful participation, appropriate support, timely feedback, accessible resources, and assessment arrangements that do not systematically disadvantage particular groups of learners. IUM's blended practices can therefore be interpreted as value-bearing when flexibility is deliberately connected with fairness and educational quality.

The rise of generative AI makes the digital dimension of values-based curriculum more urgent. Johnston et al. (2024) found that student use of chatbots for assessment is already substantial and that perceptions of acceptable use do not necessarily coincide with conventional academic-integrity expectations. Xia et al. (2024), reviewing generative AI and assessment, likewise identify opportunities for feedback and self-assessment alongside challenges involving cheating, ethical behavior, and assessment validity. These findings suggest that integrity cannot be protected simply by prohibiting new technologies. Universities need transparent expectations, AI literacy, authentic assessment, process evidence, oral or dialogic components where appropriate, and opportunities for students to disclose and critically evaluate AI assistance. For IUM, digital integrity policies can become a concrete expression of integrity and accountability while also supporting quality and critical thinking.

F. Analytical Synthesis: Values-Based OBE

Taken together, the literature supports a values-based OBE framework consisting of four interconnected layers. The first is normative: institutional philosophy defines the values and graduate qualities the university considers educationally important. The second is curricular: these values are translated into PLOs, CLOs, course sequences, and progressive learning experiences. The third is pedagogical and assessment-oriented: students participate in activities that require them to enact the values and produce evidence through authentic tasks, reflection, collaboration, and performance. The fourth is quality-assurance oriented: attainment evidence and stakeholder feedback are used to review and improve curriculum design. Constructive alignment connects the layers, while Islamic educational philosophy provides the normative account of why knowledge, character, spirituality, and social responsibility belong together.

This synthesis provides the analytical lens for the present study. IUM can be considered strongly aligned at the philosophical level if its seven values are clearly reflected in institutional purposes and core courses. It can be considered curricularly aligned when those values are mapped to program and course outcomes across the degree. It can be considered pedagogically aligned when learning activities repeatedly require students to demonstrate value-relevant practices. Finally, it can be considered evidentially aligned when assessment and quality assurance provide credible information about the attainment and development of those outcomes. These distinctions make it possible to identify both the distinctive contribution of the IUM model and the areas in which further technical development is necessary.

III. METHOD

This study used qualitative document analysis. The primary data were institutional curriculum development documents of the Islamic University of Maldives compiled in the curriculum development project. The documents include descriptions of institutional philosophy, vision, mission, core values, curriculum structures, course competencies, learning materials, instructional methods, and assessment systems.

The data were analyzed through thematic analysis. The analysis focused on four major themes: institutional foundations of curriculum development, integration of core values into learning outcomes, operationalization of values through courses and teaching strategies, and assessment mechanisms. These themes were then interpreted using OBE, constructive alignment, values-based education, and Islamic educational philosophy.

The analysis treated the uploaded book not as an object of review but as a compiled source of primary curriculum data. Therefore, references to the document are used to support findings about the curriculum model, institutional values, and implementation strategies at IUM. The discussion section compares these findings with relevant theories and recent studies published within the last five years.

IV. RESULTS

A. Institutional Core Values as the Foundation of Curriculum Development

The document analysis shows that curriculum development at IUM is grounded in seven institutional core values. These are commitment to the nation and the people, spirituality, justice, brotherhood/collegiality, quality and excellence, integrity, and accountability. These values form the philosophical foundation of academic activities and guide curriculum planning, learning implementation, and student development.

The value of commitment to the nation and the people reflects the university's responsibility to contribute to national development and the welfare of Maldivian society. Spirituality emphasizes faith, ihsan, piety, and the role of lecturers as educators who nurture both intellectual and moral development. Justice requires fairness in academic services and institutional relationships. Brotherhood or collegiality emphasizes teamwork, collaboration, and lifelong learning. Quality and excellence direct the university toward high academic standards. Integrity requires honesty, ethics, and trustworthiness. Accountability links academic responsibility with spiritual responsibility before Allah SWT.

These values function as educational aims. They describe the type of graduate IUM seeks to produce: intellectually competent, spiritually grounded, ethically responsible, socially committed, collaborative, and accountable.

B. Islamic Epistemology as Curriculum Philosophy

The curriculum documents show that IUM's curriculum philosophy is rooted in Islamic epistemology. Knowledge is understood as originating from Allah SWT and must be disseminated in accordance with tawhid. Education is considered meaningful when it is connected to faith, moral responsibility, and the pursuit of beneficial knowledge.

This foundation shapes the university's understanding of curriculum. Curriculum is not merely a technical plan for transferring knowledge. It is a structured process for developing human beings who recognize the unity of knowledge, the moral purpose of learning, and the responsibility to use knowledge for the benefit of society.

The emphasis on lifelong learning is also evident. The curriculum documents connect the pursuit of knowledge with Islamic teachings that encourage learning from early life to old age. This strengthens the idea that higher education should develop intellectual curiosity and continuous self-improvement.

C. Integration of Core Values into Course Learning Outcomes

The data show that IUM integrates institutional values into course learning outcomes, especially through core courses. In Critical Thinking and Its Methodology, students are expected to understand critical thinking, apply logical principles in problem solving, analyze and criticize ideas, question information and viewpoints, think deeply and fairly, and apply thinking skills in communication. These outcomes directly reflect quality and excellence, integrity, justice, and accountability.

In Islamic View of Knowledge and Civilization, students are expected to explain the concepts of knowledge, science, and civilization; review methodologies of scientific inquiry; understand the contribution of Islamic civilization; identify contemporary

challenges facing Muslims; and propose creative responses to scientific and technological issues. These outcomes reflect spirituality, quality and excellence, commitment to community, and accountability.

This finding shows that values are not inserted superficially. They are translated into intellectual, ethical, and professional competencies.

D. Instructional Strategies for Value Internalization

The curriculum documents show that IUM uses interactive lectures, tutorials, assignments, presentations, projects, and hybrid learning. In interactive lectures, lecturers ask questions, invite student responses, clarify answers, and guide discussion. This strategy supports critical thinking, intellectual humility, and respectful dialogue.

Tutorials and online learning are used to support students who live far from campus. This reflects justice and accessibility. Assignments and presentations require students to write, defend arguments, respond to questions, and improve their work. These practices support integrity, accountability, and quality.

The use of project-based assignments is particularly important because values are more effectively internalized when students actively produce academic work and reflect on its meaning. This approach aligns with recent research showing that project-based learning can strengthen active learning, although its success depends heavily on lecturer capacity and institutional support.

E. Assessment and Quality Assurance

Assessment in the IUM curriculum includes continuous assessment and final examination. The use of continuous assessment allows lecturers to evaluate students throughout the learning process rather than only at the end of the semester. This supports accountability and formative learning.

The documents also indicate that lecturer performance is monitored through attendance, relevance of course modules, lecturer involvement in guiding students, use of digital tools, and alignment between assignments, examination questions, and course learning outcomes.

This mechanism reflects an early form of curriculum quality assurance. However, the documents do not yet provide detailed evidence of standardized rubrics for assessing values, longitudinal student outcomes, or graduate tracer data. Therefore, the assessment system needs further strengthening to ensure that values-based outcomes are measurable, auditable, and continuously improved.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that IUM has developed more than a conventional OBE curriculum with an Islamic label. Its curriculum architecture is better understood as an emerging form of values-based OBE in which institutional philosophy supplies the normative content of outcomes and OBE supplies a mechanism for translating those commitments into educational design. The seven values—commitment to the nation and Ummah, spirituality, equity, brotherhood/collegiality, quality and excellence, integrity, and accountability—cover domains that are frequently separated in higher education: civic responsibility, spirituality, interpersonal relations, academic quality, ethics, and personal responsibility. Their incorporation into core modules and learning outcomes therefore broadens the meaning of graduate competence. Rather than defining success only as what graduates can perform professionally, the IUM model asks what kind of persons and members of society graduates should become. This is consistent with Islamic educational philosophy, but it also addresses a wider contemporary concern that higher education should connect expertise with ethical and social responsibility.

From an OBE perspective, the strongest feature of the IUM model is its philosophical coherence. The official values provide a clear institutional point of departure, and the curriculum documents show that they are translated into intellectual and ethical expectations in courses such as Critical Thinking and Its Methodology and Islamic View of Knowledge and Civilization. This is significant because OBE requires outcomes to originate in a defensible conception of graduate capability rather than in arbitrary lists of course content. The IUM approach therefore answers the "what outcomes matter?" question before addressing the technical problem of measurement. At the same time, recent OBE research shows why philosophical clarity is not sufficient. Lecturers frequently struggle to convert OBE principles into measurable outcomes, aligned activities, and appropriate assessment even when institutional policy is clear (Mufanti et al., 2024). IUM's next developmental task is consequently to make the relationship among values, PLOs, CLOs, activities, and assessment more explicit and auditable.

Constructive alignment offers a practical way to undertake this task. The curriculum already contains evidence of alignment because core values inform course competencies and are supported by interactive lectures, assignments, presentations, projects, and continuous assessment. However, alignment should be demonstrated through a program-level curriculum map rather than inferred from selected examples. Each of the seven values could be mapped against PLOs and courses using developmental levels such as introduced, reinforced, and demonstrated. Courses could then identify which learning activities generate relevant evidence and which assessment criteria capture that evidence. Pereira et al. (2024) illustrate the continuing usefulness of constructive alignment as an iterative process connecting outcomes, activities, and assessment in contemporary higher education. Applied to IUM, such

mapping would reveal both over-concentration and gaps—for example, whether spirituality is assessed only in core Islamic modules, whether collegiality is systematically developed through collaborative tasks, or whether accountability appears across research, professional experience, and community engagement.

A major contribution of the IUM model is its treatment of Islamic epistemology as a curriculum philosophy rather than simply as disciplinary content. The analyzed documents understand knowledge in relation to tawhid, faith, beneficial action, and responsibility, and this orientation is particularly visible in Islamic View of Knowledge and Civilization. This finding resonates with Al-Attas's (1993) emphasis on adab and Al-Faruqi's (1982) project of integrating Islamic worldview and contemporary knowledge. It also corresponds with recent calls for a tawhidic framework in Islamic higher education that overcomes the dichotomy between religious and modern knowledge (Subhan et al., 2024). The significance of the IUM case lies in the possibility of moving this integration from a philosophical statement to a program-wide curriculum principle. If the Islamic worldview is to function as an organizing framework, disciplinary courses should also provide opportunities to examine the ethical purposes, assumptions, consequences, and social uses of knowledge.

The four IUM core modules are an important institutional mechanism for establishing a common graduate foundation. Values and Ethics for a Practical Life provides an explicit ethical space; Critical Thinking and Its Methodology develops reasoned judgment; Islamic View of Knowledge and Civilization provides epistemological integration; and Maldivian History and Civilization links learning with national identity (IUM, n.d.-b). Together, these courses address dimensions that a purely professional curriculum might neglect. Their existence also helps ensure that all students encounter institutional values in structured academic settings. Nevertheless, the findings suggest a risk of "core-course containment," in which value formation is assumed to be the responsibility of a small set of general courses. A mature values-based OBE curriculum should use the core modules as foundations and then reinforce the same values within disciplinary courses, professional experiences, research activities, and community engagement. This would transform the values from topics students study into dispositions and practices they repeatedly exercise.

The findings concerning Critical Thinking and Its Methodology illustrate how such reinforcement can work. Critical thinking is often treated as a generic graduate skill, but within IUM it can also operationalize institutional values. Fair evaluation of arguments relates to equity and justice; accurate representation of sources relates to integrity; willingness to revise a conclusion relates to intellectual humility; high standards of reasoning relate to quality and excellence; and responsibility for claims relates to accountability. This interpretation is supported by research showing that higher-order thinking develops when tasks and learning environments intentionally require analysis and judgment (Loyens et al., 2023). The implication is that critical thinking should not be assessed solely through examinations asking students to reproduce logical concepts. Authentic tasks requiring students to evaluate competing claims, justify evidence, identify ethical implications, and reflect on their reasoning would produce richer evidence of both cognitive and value-related outcomes.

Project-based learning provides a particularly promising mechanism for integrating multiple IUM values within a single learning experience. The curriculum documents already indicate the use of projects, assignments, presentations, and article writing. Meta-analytic evidence suggests that project-based learning can improve academic achievement, thinking skills, and affective outcomes, although its effects depend on careful design (Zhang & Ma, 2023). For IUM, community-oriented projects could connect disciplinary knowledge with commitment to nation and Ummah, while team processes could make brotherhood, equity, integrity, and accountability observable. Yet the assessment design must avoid evaluating only the final product. A project rubric could separately assess academic quality, evidence use, contribution to the team, fairness in role distribution, ethical decision making, responsiveness to feedback, and reflective accountability. Peer and self-assessment could supplement lecturer judgment, particularly for values that are manifested during collaboration rather than only in the submitted product.

The blended-learning findings have a distinctive interpretation in the Maldivian context. Because students may be geographically separated from the main campus, hybrid provision can advance equity by reducing location-based barriers. However, equity should not be equated with access to an online platform. McCarthy and Palmer (2023) show that effective blended learning depends on institutional alignment and evaluation, while Chen and Jumaat (2023) emphasize the importance of design and participant factors. IUM should therefore examine whether remote students receive comparable teaching presence, feedback, opportunities for dialogue, access to resources, and assessment support. If these conditions are monitored, blended learning becomes a practical expression of equity and accountability. If they are not, technological flexibility may conceal new forms of inequality. This illustrates a broader point of the study: core values become meaningful when they function as criteria for evaluating curriculum decisions.

Assessment of values remains the most difficult technical issue in the IUM model. Cognitive knowledge can often be sampled efficiently through tests and written assignments, whereas spirituality, integrity, equity, collegiality, and accountability are dispositions that develop over time and vary across contexts. The solution is not to abandon assessment but to use multiple sources of evidence and avoid claims that exceed what an instrument can support. Analytic rubrics can specify observable indicators; reflective writing can reveal students' reasoning and self-evaluation; peer assessment can provide evidence of collaborative conduct; portfolios can document development across courses; and field supervisors can contribute observations from authentic settings. For spirituality, assessment should focus on educationally appropriate manifestations—such as ethical reflection, responsible conduct,

and the ability to connect knowledge with Islamic perspectives—rather than attempting to quantify inner faith. This distinction is essential for both validity and respect for the nature of the construct.

Continuous assessment in the IUM documents is therefore a useful starting point, but it should be connected more explicitly to formative feedback and program-level evidence. OBE is strongest when assessment information does not end with grading but contributes to continuous quality improvement. Aggregated rubric data can show which values are well developed and which require curricular attention. Student reflections can identify where the intended values are not experienced consistently. Alumni and employer feedback can test whether integrity, accountability, collaboration, and quality remain visible beyond graduation. Professional-experience data can provide authentic evidence of how students apply values outside classroom tasks. A systematic feedback loop would allow IUM to move from an intended values curriculum to an evidence-informed values curriculum.

At the same time, this study should not be interpreted as evidence that IUM students have already internalized the seven core values. The document-analysis design establishes intended curriculum architecture, not causal effects on student character or graduate behavior. The available documents demonstrate philosophical and curricular intentions and provide examples of implementation, but they do not offer longitudinal measures of value development, systematic student perceptions, graduate tracer evidence, or employer judgments. This limitation is theoretically important because curriculum alignment and student internalization are related but distinct phenomena. Future research should therefore combine curriculum mapping with interviews, classroom observations, student portfolios, validated value-related rubrics, graduate surveys, and stakeholder feedback. Such evidence would make it possible to test whether the values-based OBE model produces the outcomes it intends.

Four priorities follow from the analysis. First, IUM should create a university-wide curriculum map linking each core value to graduate attributes, PLOs, CLOs, learning activities, and assessment evidence across all programs. Second, it should develop and validate multidimensional assessment rubrics appropriate to academic tasks, collaborative projects, professional experiences, and reflective work, while recognizing the limits of measuring internal spiritual states. Third, it should establish continuous feedback loops using student, lecturer, alumni, employer, and community evidence for curriculum improvement. Fourth, it should develop explicit policies and assessment practices for digital integrity and responsible generative-AI use. Together, these measures would strengthen the technical side of alignment without weakening the Islamic philosophical foundation that gives the curriculum its distinctive purpose.

Overall, the discussion supports the interpretation of IUM as an emerging values-based OBE model with strong normative coherence and promising curricular mechanisms but incomplete evidence of program-wide alignment and outcome attainment. Its most distinctive contribution is the attempt to place Islamic worldview, national commitment, ethical formation, and social responsibility within the same curriculum architecture as critical thinking, academic excellence, and professional competence. The model therefore challenges a false choice between measurable outcomes and holistic education. The more productive question is how complex human outcomes can be designed, evidenced, and improved without being oversimplified. IUM provides a useful case for answering that question, particularly for Islamic and other mission-driven universities seeking to combine institutional identity with contemporary standards of curriculum quality and accountability.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Islamic University of Maldives has developed a distinctive core values-based higher education curriculum that integrates institutional philosophy, Islamic worldview, OBE principles, and educational practice. The curriculum is grounded in seven core values: commitment to the nation and the people, spirituality, justice, brotherhood/collegiality, quality and excellence, integrity, and accountability. These values are systematically translated into course learning outcomes, learning materials, instructional strategies, and assessment practices.

The IUM model contributes to the development of Islamic higher education curriculum by extending conventional OBE beyond cognitive and professional competencies. It demonstrates that learning outcomes can include ethical, spiritual, and social dimensions when curriculum design is grounded in institutional values and Islamic educational philosophy.

Nevertheless, the model still requires further development. Stronger CLO-PLO alignment, validated assessment rubrics, project-based implementation, digital integrity policies, lecturer training, and empirical evaluation of student outcomes are needed to ensure that the values are not only taught but also internalized and demonstrated by graduates.

Overall, the IUM curriculum offers a valuable model for Islamic universities seeking to balance academic excellence, institutional identity, spiritual formation, and social responsibility in contemporary higher education.

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