

The two-winged education paradigm: Reuniting professional competence and moral character

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Abstract

Although modern education systems have achieved significant success in equipping individuals with complex technical skills, they often neglect moral and humanistic development. This article argues that professional competence requires a symbiotic integration of technical mastery and "humanistic ethics." The conceptual framework is built upon fundamental distinctions between teaching (knowledge transfer), learning (knowledge acquisition), and education (habituation of behavior). Through the metaphor of "two-winged education," it is demonstrated that professional competence and moral integrity are inseparable, like two wings necessary for a bird to fly. The paper comparatively examines moral education approaches across different cultural and philosophical traditions, evaluates new challenges and opportunities brought by the digital age, addresses teacher education and implementation issues, and offers concrete policy recommendations within the "Standing at the Right Address" model. In conclusion, a holistic moral education reform aiming to synthesize local, national, and universal values is emphasized as a strategic imperative for a sustainable future.

Keywords: Professional Competence; Humanistic Ethics; Two-Winged Education; Teaching; Learning; Education; Standing at the Right Address; Moral Education; Character Education; Teacher Education

1. Introduction: The Fundamental Dilemma of Modern Education

Modern education systems have achieved admirable success in equipping individuals with complex technical skills and preparing them for professional life. However, this success has often been achieved at a critical cost: the neglect of moral and humanistic development. A major deficiency of contemporary educational thought is its failure to cultivate individuals through humanistic ethics. This situation poses a serious risk to the social fabric because professionals who are technically competent but morally unanchored may use their knowledge and skills for destructive purposes (Demirkuş, 2023).

Moral education is a quest as old as human history. While Aristotle emphasized in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that virtue is a state of character (Aristotle, 2014), Confucius founded the ideal of the "superior man" on moral integrity in his *Analects* (Confucius, 2014). In the field of modern psychology, the pioneering works of Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget attained an academic framework with Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of stages of moral development (Kohlberg, 1981). Although these theories offer significant ground for understanding an individual's moral reasoning processes, the issue of transforming knowledge into moral action remains one of the most fundamental weaknesses of education systems.

This article introduces the Two-Winged Education Paradigm as an original conceptual framework that reconceptualizes education as the inseparable integration of professional competence and humanistic ethics. Unlike applied or context-specific studies, this paper focuses on the theoretical, philosophical, and cross-cultural foundations of moral-professional integration in education. The primary contribution of the article is the formulation of a paradigmatic model

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that can function as a theoretical reference point for future empirical, policy-oriented, and practice-based studies. A secondary contribution is the translation of this theoretical synthesis into actionable implications for curriculum design, teacher preparation, and values-based educational policy.

1.1. Research Questions and Purpose

This study aims to answer the following fundamental research questions:

- How can the relationship between professional competence and humanistic ethics be conceptualized?
- How is professional-moral integration addressed in different cultural and philosophical traditions?
- How should the scope of moral education be expanded in the digital age?
- How can the "two-winged education" model be integrated into education policies?

The main argument of this article is that scientific and technological progress can produce destructive consequences for humanity and nature if not presented in an integrated manner with humanistic moral education.

2. Conceptual Framework: Teaching, Learning, and Education

2.1. Defining Basic Concepts

Redefining the basic concepts that are often used interchangeably in the educational literature is essential for constructing a model that places moral development at its center. These definitions reveal that information transfer alone is not sufficient, and the ultimate goal is to raise individuals who exhibit virtuous and responsible behaviors (Demirkuş, 2025a).

Table 1 Teaching, Learning, and Education: Conceptual Distinctions

Concept	Definition	Focus Point
Teaching	Any planned and programmed action, behavior, and discourse performed to transfer knowledge to the target audience.	The Teacher (Instructor)
Learning	All efforts, reactions, and behaviors shown by the target audience presented with information for the purpose of learning.	The Learner (Student)
Education	The process of turning what has been learned into a habit applicable to life and a habitual response (reflex).	Behavior and Character
Goal of Education	The application of acquired habits with a consciousness compliant with good moral rules.	Moral Integrity

Source: Adapted from Demirkuş (2025a).

Table 1 clearly demonstrates that the education process is a behavioral and moral transformation process rather than simple information transfer. This distinction provides a critical foundation for the redesign of education policies and assessment-evaluation systems.

2.2. Operational Definitions

To facilitate empirical testing, the following operational definitions are used:

- **Humanistic Ethics:** A set of moral attitudes based on universal human values (justice, compassion, honesty) independent of cultural context.
- **Rahmani (Divine/Compassionate) Ethics:** In the Islamic tradition, a state of moral consciousness inspired by the attribute of *Rahman* (infinite mercy), approaching all living things with compassion.
- **Professional Competence:** The state of having acquired the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for a specific professional field.
- **Two-Winged Education:** An education paradigm emphasizing the symbiotic integrity between professional/technical competence (the first wing) and moral/humanistic maturity (the second wing).

2.3. The Zipper Analogy: Visualization of the Process

We can liken the relationship between teaching, learning, and education to a trouser zipper. Teaching is the production/creation of one side of the zipper; it has no function on its own. Learning is the production/creation of the other, complementary side of the zipper; just like the other, it is dysfunctional on its own. Teaching and learning are completed when the teeth on the two sides of the zipper come together and interlock. Education, however, is the student making the opening and closing of this closed zipper a habit (reflex) whenever needed. The zipper is now not only closed but also functional and serving its purpose (Demirkus, 2025b).

2.4. The Hand-Washing Example: Stages of the Process

To concretize this conceptual distinction, let us examine the example of instilling the behavior of handwashing in a child:

1. **Teaching Stage:** An adult explains why (germs), when, and how to wash hands. This is the "instructor"-focused stage where information is transferred one-way.
2. **Learning Stage:** The child knows how to wash their hands. However, they only do it when reminded. Knowledge has turned into skill, but not yet a habit.
3. **Education Stage:** Through constant repetition, the child makes handwashing an automatic habit (reflex) without thinking. When leaving the toilet, their hands go to the sink automatically.
4. **Moral Integrity Stage:** This is the highest stage of the process. The child washes hands automatically but also with moral consciousness—for example, not wasting water because "waste is forbidden" or to protect resources. Knowledge integrates with ethics to transform into character (Demirkus, 2025b).

3. The Two-Winged Education Model: Professional Competence and Moral Integrity

3.1. The Dual Nature of Humans

Our pedagogical philosophy is built upon the dual structure in human nature (Demirkus, 2025c). Humans are complex beings formed by the combination of two wings:

Table 2 Human's Two Wings: Angelic and Animalistic Dimensions

Angelic/Human Wing	Animalistic Wing
Spirit, Reason, Human Conscience	Nafs (Self), Intellect, Wild Conscience
Prophetic/Rahmani/Humanistic Ethics	Animalistic/Wild/Natural Ethics

If a human's "Angelic Good Morals Wing is broken," the individual flies with the unilateral Wild/Animalistic Ethics Wing and becomes a "very dangerous freak of nature." If the "Wild/Animalistic Ethics Wing is broken," the individual becomes a "monastic/angel-like creature" disconnected from the world. The goal of education is to balance these two wings "slightly inclined or leaning towards the afterlife" and to strengthen both.

3.2. The Example of Two Doctors: Paradigmatic Analysis

To understand the integrity of competence and ethics, we analyze two medical doctors:

- **The First Doctor (Ineffective Goodwill):** This doctor is deeply compassionate and moral (Rahmani ethics) but lacks sufficient professional knowledge and skills. Despite good intentions, they may make wrong diagnoses or fail to perform necessary interventions, unknowingly causing harm. Their incompetence makes them ineffective, even dangerous.
- **The Second Doctor (Dangerous Expertise):** This doctor is a genius, technically perfect, and never mistaken in diagnoses. However, they lack humanistic ethics. They may treat patients only for money, discriminate based on race, or use their skills for power. They view knowledge as a tool for profit, not service.

Table 3 Competence–Ethics Imbalance Scenarios

Ethics (↓) / Competence (→)	Low Competence	High Competence
High Ethics	Ineffective Goodwill (<i>Safe but useless</i>)	Ideal Professional (<i>The Goal: Two-Winged</i>)
Low Ethics	Irresponsible Amateur (<i>Ineffective and clueless</i>)	Dangerous Expertise (<i>The Risk: High impact harm</i>)

True professionalism lies in the symbiotic union of these two elements. One cannot fly with a single wing.

4. Comparative Perspectives in a Multi-Cultural Context

4.1. Moral Education in Different Philosophical Traditions

The broader relevance of the model is supported by multiple philosophical traditions (Demirkuş, 2025c).

- **Confucian Virtue Ethics:** *Ren* (humaneness) is the highest virtue (Angle & Slote, 2013). Confucius emphasizes the balance between professional competence and moral maturity, positioning the individual within a network of social relations.
- **Buddhist Moral Development:** Founded on the five precepts (*pañcasīla*). *Cetanā* (intention) is the fundamental unit of moral action. The triad of *sīla* (discipline), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom) parallels the two-winged model (Fink, 2013).
- **Hindu Concept of Dharma:** Covers moral duty and cosmic order. Virtues like *ahimsa* (non-violence) are interpreted contextually, aligning with the model's flexibility.

4.2. Western Secular Approaches

- **Kohlberg's Theory:** Suggests moral reasoning progresses to universal ethical principles (Kohlberg, 1981). Studies largely support its universality claims (Gibbs et al., 2007).
- **Gilligan's Ethics of Care:** Criticized Kohlberg for gender bias, proposing that women prioritize relationships and preventing harm (Gilligan, 1982). Noddings (1984) systematized this approach. This aligns with the relational dimension of the two-winged model.

Table 4 Comparative Ethical Foundations Supporting Integrated Education

Ethical Tradition	Core Ethical Concept	Relation to Professional Action
Aristotelian	<i>Phronēsis</i> (Practical Wisdom)	Ethical judgment guides the application of <i>technē</i> (skill).
Confucian	<i>Ren</i> (Humaneness)	Competence is embedded in relational ethics and social roles.
Buddhist	<i>Sīla</i> (Discipline) & <i>Cetanā</i> (Intention)	Moral intention governs the outcome of skilled action.
Care Ethics	Responsibility & Care	Ethics is inseparable from practice and relational context.

5. Historical Critique: The Moral Vulnerability of Scientific Progress

The legacy of the 19th and 20th centuries, characterized as the "Product of the Empire of VETO," necessitates an urgent moral accounting. Massive advances in science have not been matched by moral maturity. Approximately 80% of global greenhouse gas emissions originate from G20 countries (IPCC, 2023).

A tragic paradox exists: "An Eskimo, an African, an Aborigine, and an Amazon native do less harm to nature" than citizens of developed nations. While the average annual carbon emission of an American is 15.5 tons, it is 0.1 tons in Ethiopia (World Bank, 2023). This proves that scientific advancement without moral guidance can turn into a destructive force.

Current education systems are based on "natural value judgments" that imprison spiritual values in the "mortal and finite shroud" of science, leading to the "autisticization" of scientists who specialize in only small parts of reality.

6. The "Standing at the Right Address" Model: Basic Principles

The "Standing at the Right Address" model is a strategic framework aiming to reposition the individual within themselves, their society, and the universe with a moral perspective. It consists of five basic rules:

6.1. First Rule: Acceptance of Being a Member of the Human Family

This principle requires the individual to accept their nature (*fitrah*) and unchangeable realities like death. It is based on seeing oneself as part of the universal human family and developing an unprejudiced, just, and egalitarian attitude towards all people. **Implementation Suggestion:** A course named "Humanity Stories," focusing on lives from different cultures, can be developed in schools.

6.2. Second Rule: Knowing Oneself Correctly

This rule expresses evaluating oneself with "flat mirror logic"—neither exaggerating nor belittling, but honestly analyzing one's talents, limits, and social position. **Implementation Suggestion:** "Strengths and Areas for Development" inventories can be applied to students with guidance services.

6.3. Third Rule: Knowing One's Environment Correctly

The individual must recognize the social and physical environment using "flat mirror logic." Knowing a person's sensitivities and red lines is the prerequisite for establishing healthy relationships. **Implementation Suggestion:** In-class "Active Listening" and "Empathy Mapping" exercises.

6.4. Fourth Rule: Acceptance of Having Sufficient Knowledge and Skills

This principle emphasizes that possessing sufficient knowledge and skills to correctly interpret and practice one's profession is a *moral responsibility*. **Implementation Suggestion:** At the beginning of all courses, a short "ethical context" discussion can be held on why that knowledge is important and how it can be used responsibly.

6.5. Fifth Rule: Applying What Is Learned to Life with Humanistic Ethics

This is the ultimate step: the implementation of all acquired knowledge as a reflex within the framework of Rahmani/humanistic ethics that considers social interests rather than personal ones. It is the subordination of knowledge to action, and action to morality. **Implementation Suggestion:** Mandatory community service (service-learning) projects before graduation.

7. Synthesis of Local, National, and Universal Values

An effective moral education must synthesize a three-layered value structure: local, national, and universal. This relationship is like the "numerator" and "denominator" of a fraction:

- **Numerator:** Local/National values (unique identity).
 - **Denominator:** Universal values (common humanity). Without the numerator, identities vanish; without the denominator, identities become exclusionary. The disruption of this balance leads to destructive ideologies like Chauvinism or Zionism. **Synthesis Suggestion:** "Mosaic of Values" projects where students pair local cultural values with universal ones.
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8. Conceptual Clarity and the Dangers of Misconception

"Misconception" is a danger leading to disasters. Ensuring conceptual clarity is mandatory. For example, distinguishing between "to love," "to like," "to appreciate," and "to have mercy" is vital. Love, human's most valuable energy, must be directed meritoriously to humans and rational beings.

9. Critical Evaluation and Counter-Arguments

9.1. Separation of Technical and Moral Education

Some theorists, such as Stanley Fish (2008), argue universities should only pursue truth. **Response:** The environmental and social crises of the 20th century prove that technical education without a moral compass is insufficient and risky.

9.2. Moral Relativism

The "values clarification" approach was criticized for promoting relativism (Lickona, 1991). **Response:** The 'two-winged' model balances universal values (denominator) with local values (numerator) rather than imposing specific doctrines.

9.3. Measurability

Critics, such as Alfie Kohn (1997), argue moral development is hard to measure. **Response:** Tools like DIT-2 (Rest et al., 1999) and Ethical Skills Assessment (Narvaez, 2007) provide reliable metrics.

10. Moral Education in the Digital Age

10.1. AI and Moral Education

The integration of AI into education presents both opportunities and challenges. The model requires ensuring fairness in algorithms and protecting data privacy. Principles like non-maleficence must guide AI use (Holmes et al., 2021; Aksu et al., 2024).

10.2. Digital Citizenship & Addiction

The model requires teaching online ethical behavior (moral wing) alongside digital skills (professional wing). It also addresses technology addiction by teaching the value of offline interactions and "digital balance."

11. Teacher Education and Professional Development

Teacher education often neglects character formation (Lapsley & Woodbury, 2016), yet candidates desire it (Revell & Arthur, 2007).

- **Pre-Service Suggestions:** Courses on moral development theories, dilemma discussions, and role modeling.
- **In-Service:** Continuous professional training similar to *Character Counts!* programs.

Table 5 Teacher Competencies for the 'Two-Winged Education' Model

Knowledge Dimension	Skill Dimension	Attitude Dimension
Moral development theories	Managing moral dilemma discussions	Responsibility of being a role model
Multi-cultural moral perspectives	Creating classroom climate	Respect for moral pluralism
Knowledge of assessment tools	Coordinating community service	Motivation for continuous learning

12. Implementation Challenges and Sustainability

- **Curriculum Integration:** Requires an infusion approach, special ethics courses, and interdisciplinary projects. Transformation must start with school leadership.
- **Funding:** Sustainability depends on adequate resources, potentially from Ministry budgets or international organizations.

13. Inclusivity and Diversity

- **Special Needs:** The model must be adapted using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Individualized Education Programs (IEP) (UNICEF, 2023).

- **Immigrant Diversity:** Cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural religious literacy are essential for applying the model to refugee students (Seiple & Hoover, 2021).

14. Methodological Framework and Empirical Research

A mixed-methods design (explanatory sequential) is suggested. In addition, future studies may triangulate classroom observation, reflective journals, and stakeholder interviews in order to examine how the model is enacted in authentic educational settings.

Table 6 Moral Development Assessment Tools

Measurement Tool	Dimension Measured	Source
DIT-2	Moral reasoning level	Rest et al. (1999)
MJI	Moral judgment development	Colby & Kohlberg (1987)
Ethical Skills Assessment	Four-component model	Narvaez (2007)

15. Concrete Proposals for Education Policies

15.1. University Attendance System Example

Current policies focus only on physical presence (one-dimensional). The system should incentivize exemplary behavior rather than just meeting minimum requirements.

15.2. General Policy Proposals

- Local, national, and universal moral values should be covered under separate headings.
- "Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge" courses must prove that science without ethics brings harm.
- Curricula should comparatively analyze the harms of the "incompetent but moral" vs. "competent but immoral" person.
- **Monitoring:** An independent monitoring and evaluation (M&E) unit should be established.

16. Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that reducing professional competence to technical skills is unsustainable. True competence relies on the symbiotic integrity of technical mastery and humanistic ethics. The "Two-Winged Education Model" is supported by cross-cultural traditions and is essential for the digital age.

The ultimate goal of education is to make being just, honest, and conscientious a "habitual response." True education makes the individual not just a "knowing" human, but a "being" human. The future of humanity depends on individuals who can develop and sustain both of these wings in balance.

Compliance with ethical standards

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