



Research Article

A CONTENT-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR BEHAVIORAL CULTURE EDUCATION IN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS: INTERNATIONAL TRENDS AND VIETNAMESE APPLICATIONS

Nguyen Truong Hoang Anh, Le Thanh Phong, Nguyen Van Hien*

Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Vietnam

**Corresponding author: Le Thanh Phong – Email: phonglth@hcmue.edu.vn*

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ABSTRACT

Behavioural culture provides a foundation for shaping individual character, fostering sustainable relationships and cultivating a civilised social environment. This study aims to strengthen the theoretical foundations of behavioural culture education for upper secondary students within Vietnamese all-through schools. Using qualitative document analysis, the authors examine major approaches to behavioural culture education in selected Western and Eastern countries. The findings reveal a global shift from rule-based moral education towards integrated, competency-oriented approaches that emphasise personal development, social responsibility, and adaptability to digital and multicultural environments. Drawing on these insights, the authors propose a content-based framework for behavioural culture education organised into three interrelated domains: intrapersonal, social, and natural. The study contributes to greater conceptual coherence and supports more consistent curriculum interpretation, pedagogical practice, and school culture development, particularly in all-through school settings.

Keywords: content-based framework; behavioural culture education; upper secondary students; Vietnamese all-through schools

1. Introduction

Behavioural culture has been recognised as an essential dimension of school culture and holistic education (Dongjiao, 2015). According to Vo (2009), it refers to the system of values, norms, attitudes, and patterns of conduct that shape individuals' interactions with the social and natural environments. From this perspective, behavioural culture education can be conceptualised as an educational process through which learners develop appropriate, responsible and context-sensitive behaviours across different domains of life. Such education at the upper secondary level is particularly important because adolescence represents a critical developmental stage characterised by identity formation, personality consolidation, and the emergence of civic consciousness (Nguyen et al., 2025).

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In Vietnam, the importance of behavioural culture education has become increasingly evident in recent educational reforms. In Resolution No. 80-NQ/TW, culture is identified as the spiritual foundation of society, functioning both as a long-term goal and a driving force for national development. Within this policy orientation, education is expected to transmit knowledge while cultivating students' values, behavioural norms, and social responsibility (The Central Committee of the Communist Party, 2026). This policy direction is further reflected in the 2018 General Education Curriculum, which emphasises the development of learners' competencies and qualities alongside academic achievement. Accordingly, schools are required to strengthen behavioural culture education to foster students' moral character, civic awareness, and socially responsible conduct (MoET, 2018). This study analyses international trends and, drawing on these insights, proposes a conceptual structure to strengthen the theoretical foundations of behavioural culture education for upper secondary students in Vietnamese all-through schools.

2. Research methods

The study uses qualitative document analysis as its primary method to examine theoretical and practical approaches to behavioural culture education.

2.1. Data Sources and Inclusion Criteria

The data comprised curriculum documents, policy papers, and peer-reviewed journal articles obtained through Google Scholar and official websites of ministries of education. The eight selected countries are the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Finland, China, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. They were chosen for their representativeness and recognised influence in global educational discourse. Instead of relying on a purely geographical distinction, these cases were purposively selected to reflect contrasting educational orientations, thereby enabling a more analytically meaningful comparison across traditions that variously emphasise collectivism, individual autonomy, and hybrid configurations.

2.2. Analytical Framework

Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, this study conceptualises behavioural culture education as operating across three interrelated domains. The intrapersonal domain corresponds to the individual system, focusing on cognitive, emotional, and identity-related processes. The social domain reflects interactions across the micro-, meso- and exosystems, as manifested in individuals' relationships with schools, families, and communities. The natural domain extends this ecological interpretation by emphasising the human-environment relationship, highlighting students' responsibility for environmental sustainability and the ecological systems they share. Allen et al. (2016) applied the socio-ecological framework to examine school belonging among secondary school students, highlighting the influence of factors operating across individual, relational and broader school-context levels. This three-domain structure also aligns with the Happy School Model developed by the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Education and Training (2023), which comprises three core pillars: people, relationships and the environment.

2.3. Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis followed an iterative thematic synthesis process informed by Thomas and Harden (2008). First, relevant concepts, constructs, and pedagogical orientations related to behavioural culture education were identified and coded across the selected documents. Second, related codes were compared and grouped into descriptive categories according to their conceptual similarities and relationships. Third, these categories were synthesised into higher-order analytical themes through iterative comparison across documents and with the theoretical perspectives established earlier in the study.

3. Research results and discussion

3.1. Global Trends towards Behavioural Culture Education

3.1.1. Behavioural Culture Education for Upper Secondary Students in Western Countries

In Western nations, behavioural culture education increasingly incorporates competency-based approaches alongside traditional moral instruction, a tendency often observed in progressive education models (Miglani et al., 2026).

In the United States, this shift is reflected in the widespread adoption of Character Education and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), which are rooted in the theoretical foundations of moral development and social learning. More specifically, Character Education emphasises the integration of ethical awareness and action, while SEL, as systematised by CASEL (2020), focuses on five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. In the United Kingdom, behavioural culture education is institutionalised through Citizenship Education, which derives from the Crick Report and is formalised by the Department for Education (2013). This framework emphasises social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy, thereby promoting democratic participation and critical engagement in multicultural societies. In Finland and Australia, behavioural culture education is embedded across the curriculum rather than delivered as a separate subject. The Finnish National Core Curriculum integrates behavioural development into transversal competences such as self-expression, daily-life management, and participation in building a sustainable future (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019). Similarly, the Australian curriculum incorporates behavioural culture education through General Capabilities, particularly personal and social capability and intercultural understanding (ACARA, 2022).

Across these systems, behavioural culture education is defined as a set of transferable competencies oriented towards self-regulation and adaptive interaction. However, this convergence may obscure important philosophical differences, as competency-based models often prioritise individual psychological capacities, whereas several national systems continue to embed behaviour within value-laden frameworks. This tension raises critical questions about whether behavioural development can be standardised or remains fundamentally context-dependent.

3.1.2. Behavioural Culture Education for Upper Secondary Students in Eastern Countries

Eastern educational systems have traditionally approached behavioural culture education through normative and value-oriented frameworks that highlight social harmony, responsibility, and adherence to collective norms.

In China, behavioural culture education is closely linked to Ideological and Political Education, in which individual conduct is framed in relation to social and national goals (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020). The model is deeply influenced by Confucian values, which emphasise personal duty and social order; however, recent reforms reveal efforts to balance traditional values with the demands of globalisation and individual development. In Japan, behavioural education is integrated across subjects and school activities, including special activities and civic-oriented learning, in accordance with MEXT curriculum guidelines (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2018). Beyond formal instruction, behavioural norms are reinforced by daily practices such as class self-governance, school cleaning, and extracurricular activities, fostering responsibility and discipline through collective experience. In South Korea and Singapore, behavioural culture education reflects a combination of traditional values and modern competencies. The South Korean curriculum concentrates on personal character, social relationships, democratic citizenship, and digital ethics (Ministry of Education of South Korea, 2022), with increasing attention to dialogue, moral reasoning, and responsible decision-making. The Singaporean Character and Citizenship Education framework integrates core values such as respect, responsibility, and harmony with national identity, multicultural cohesion, and global competence (Ministry of Education of Singapore, 2021).

Taken together, behavioural culture education in Eastern contexts remains rooted in value-oriented traditions that emphasise social harmony and moral obligation. However, the increasing incorporation of competency-based elements introduces a potential conceptual disjunction. Rather than representing a coherent integration, this hybridisation reflects an ongoing negotiation between competing educational paradigms.

3.1.3. Cross-National Patterns and Emerging Trends

The cross-national analysis reveals several key patterns that extend beyond country-specific differences and reflect broader transformations in behavioural culture education. First, there is a global shift from prescriptive moral instruction towards competency-based behavioural development, in which self-regulation, adaptive decision-making, and social-emotional competencies take precedence over rule compliance. Second, while individualistic and collectivist orientations continue to shape educational priorities, these distinctions are no longer dichotomous. Instead, most systems exhibit hybrid configurations that integrate personal autonomy with collective responsibility in response to globalisation and socio-digital transformation. Third, behavioural education is decentralised from formal moral instruction and embedded within experiential, participatory, and cross-curricular practices, reflecting a recognition that behavioural competencies are internalised through lived social practice rather than through explicit teaching alone.

3.2. The Content-Based Framework for Behavioural Culture Education for Upper Secondary Students in Vietnamese All-Through Schools

Based on the cross-national trends, the study proposes a framework for behavioural culture education. The framework reflects a hybrid orientation: it emphasises competency-based development, particularly socio-emotional and self-regulatory capacities, while retaining traditional moral qualities. Furthermore, the model integrates individual and collective dimensions by balancing self-directed learning with responsibility and collaboration, while retaining a somewhat stronger orientation towards collectivist values consistent with the local context. Notably, these dimensions also incorporate several personal qualities and competencies prescribed by the 2018 General Education Curriculum (MoET, 2018). In addition, the framework decentralises behavioural education by organising learning across intrapersonal, social, and natural domains, which enables behavioural culture education to extend beyond a single subject or isolated moral lessons. Students can enact appropriate behaviours in authentic contexts, participate in collaborative and reflective activities, and experience behavioural learning across multiple subject areas and real-world situations rather than acquire it solely through theoretical instruction.

Table 1. *Three-domain framework of behavioural culture education for upper secondary students in Vietnamese all-through schools*

Behavioural domains	Content
Intrapersonal	1. Self-assessment and personal orientation 2. Emotional and behavioural self-regulation 3. Digital identity management 4. Reflective and restorative capacity
Social	School: 1. Respectful communication 2. Positive collaborative engagement 3. Role-modelling behaviour Family: 1. Intergenerational respect and cohesion 2. Responsibility and contribution within the family 3. Rejection of domestic violence Community: 1. Self-discipline and adherence to rules 2. Digital risk response 3. Polite communication in multicultural contexts
Natural	1. Awareness of environmental protection 2. Sustainable resource use 3. Responsibility for biodiversity conservation

3.2.1. Behavioural Culture Education in the Intrapersonal Domain

Self-Assessment and Personal Orientation

During adolescence, upper secondary students experience substantial growth in self-awareness, a stronger need for self-assertion and increasing autonomy in decisions about their education and career choices (Nguyen et al., 2025). However, this development is not always accompanied by a corresponding level of maturity, which may lead students to

misjudge their abilities, make poorly informed decisions and be influenced by transient values in a rapidly changing social environment (Hrbackova et al., 2025). Therefore, fostering self-reflection and career orientation is fundamental to individual growth.

Emotional and Behavioural Self-Regulation

According to WHO (2025), adolescence is a period of psychological vulnerability in which heightened emotional reactivity, growing academic demands, and pervasive social influences can place students at risk of mental health difficulties. This vulnerability is compounded by students' still-developing capacity to recognise, interpret, and regulate their emotions accurately, which can result in maladaptive behavioural responses. Without timely and targeted intervention, these challenges can intensify, undermining both well-being and learning outcomes. Equipping students with practical, evidence-informed skills in self-care, and emotional regulation is essential for strengthening their resilience, enhancing adaptive functioning, and safeguarding their long-term psychological growth.

Digital Identity Management

As digital transformation reshapes everyday life, students are no longer merely participants in online spaces; they are continuously visible within them (Burns & Gottschalk, 2019). Each post, comment or interaction contributes to a persistent digital footprint that can create opportunities or risks. Limited awareness and practical skills may lead students to expose themselves unintentionally to data breaches, online manipulation, or damage to their personal reputation. These consequences can have lasting effects on future educational and career opportunities. Moreover, online and offline behaviours are interconnected rather than separate domains. A behavioural issue initiated in virtual spaces can continue in face-to-face settings and vice versa. For example, cyberbullying can originate in social media interactions and subsequently affect peer relationships, emotional wellbeing, and social dynamics at school. Similarly, conflicts originating in classrooms can extend into online harassment. For these reasons, digital identity management should not be treated solely as a technical or online safety issue, but rather as an integral component of students' overall behavioural culture across both virtual and real-life environments.

Reflective and Restorative Capacity

Errors are an inevitable yet pedagogically significant part of adolescent learning and offer important opportunities for reflection, adaptation, and behavioural reconstruction. Without structured and supportive guidance, however, such experiences may lead students to externalise blame, evade responsibility or internalise failure in ways that undermine their self-efficacy and long-term development. From this perspective, behavioural culture education should move beyond punitive or corrective approaches towards fostering a restorative orientation, in which mistakes are reframed as opportunities for personal growth.

3.2.2. Behavioural Culture Education in the Social Domain

a) Within the School Context

Respectful Communication

At the upper secondary level, students actively participate in complex interactions involving peers, teachers, and the wider school community. Their growing need for communication and self-expression makes their behaviour increasingly visible and socially consequential. Maintaining institutional order and creating a welcoming and supportive learning environment require students to develop the ability to communicate in a courteous, respectful, and contextually appropriate manner. Schools should therefore guide students' communication to align with social and institutional norms.

Positive Collaborative Engagement

Contemporary education emphasises the importance of collaborative engagement. Accordingly, cultivating cooperative dispositions and a shared sense of responsibility is fundamental to improving learning outcomes and fostering students' social competence and constructive contributions in group settings. Within the 2018 General Education Curriculum, collaborative competencies are promoted through academic subjects, experiential learning activities, life skills education, and school-based projects (MoET, 2018). Students learn to negotiate differences, share responsibilities, and develop constructive interpersonal behaviours through authentic interaction rather than explicit behavioural instruction alone.

Role-Modelling Behaviour

Haralambos and Holborn (2013) note that upper secondary students, as the oldest cohort in an all-through school, exert a significant influence on younger students. Through processes of observation and imitation, their behaviour can serve as a model for others. When properly guided, upper secondary students can promote positive values and strengthen school culture. In addition, role-modelling within schools is not limited to students. Harris and Jones (2022) argue that teachers, school leaders and other staff also contribute to the behavioural culture experienced by students through their daily interactions, communication styles, and responses to conflict or discipline. In this sense, behavioural culture should be understood as a shared responsibility constructed through interactions among all members of the school community.

b) Within the Family Context

Intergenerational Respect and Cohesion

Even as adolescents assert their independence and define personal identities, their values and behaviours remain deeply rooted in familial norms and practices. Under these circumstances, promoting intergenerational respect should not be viewed as optional but as an essential educational priority. As Shamsikhani et al. (2022) indicate, encouraging students to show genuine respect for older family members is important for preserving cultural continuity, nurturing moral responsibility, and strengthening the integrity of family relationships. Without such respect, the foundations of both personal development and social cohesion may be substantially weakened.

Responsibility and Contribution within the Family

Engagement in family responsibilities plays a crucial role in helping students recognise their role and responsibilities within the family as a social unit. When students contribute to

everyday family tasks, they can come to see themselves as active members rather than passive dependents. This participation nurtures a strong sense of accountability and reinforces their commitment to shared goals. In contrast, if students are detached from family duties, they are more likely to develop habits of dependency. Promoting active contribution within the family, therefore, supports the development of broader personal responsibility.

Rejection of Domestic Violence

Given the persistence of domestic violence, students also need to develop informed awareness and critical attitudes towards such behaviour. Exposure to or normalisation of violence can shape students' perceptions in ways that increase the likelihood of passive acceptance or future reproduction of harmful practices. This indicates that schools should emphasise the recognition and rejection of domestic violence as an element of behavioural education.

c) Within the Community Context

Self-Discipline and Adherence to Rules

As upper secondary students become more involved in both offline and online communities, their actions carry greater consequences beyond themselves. This increased engagement requires both awareness and self-control. When students lack self-discipline, they may make impulsive decisions that negatively affect others and disrupt shared environments. Hence, developing respect for rules and common standards is essential. By helping students understand how their behaviour affects others, schools can help them build responsible habits. This, in turn, supports their growth into disciplined individuals who can contribute positively to society.

Digital Risk Response

The widespread use of digital technology exposes students to potential risks such as misinformation, cyberbullying and violations of personal privacy (Burns & Gottschalk, 2019). Many students, however, still lack the skills to question what they see online or handle negative situations effectively. This gap leaves them vulnerable to manipulation, harmful experiences, and the unintended spread of damaging information. Addressing this challenge requires a strong focus on developing students' ability to respond safely and effectively in digital environments.

Polite Communication in Multicultural Contexts

As global integration intensifies, students encounter greater cultural diversity and require more sophisticated forms of communication (Huang et al., 2025). Differences in language, values, and social conventions can become sources of misunderstanding and conflict when students lack intercultural competence. Under these conditions, developing polite and culturally sensitive communication should be regarded as an educational priority. Learning to respect and navigate cultural differences can prepare students to engage in international settings, strengthen their sense of identity, and contribute to a more inclusive global community.

3.2.3. Behavioural Culture Education in the Natural Domain

Awareness of Environmental Protection

Climate change, resource depletion and environmental pollution are no longer distant issues; they are directly influenced by human actions, including those of students. Upper secondary students are already developing awareness of environmental issues and forming relatively stable behavioural habits. However, without appropriate guidance, such awareness may not translate into sustained action, and indifference towards environmental concerns may develop. From this perspective, raising awareness of environmental stewardship is important for promoting sustainable lifestyles and strengthening students' responsibility for protecting the planet.

Sustainable Resource Use

Minor everyday practices, from maintaining cleanliness to preserving shared facilities in school and public spaces, are more significant than they may initially appear. When these behaviours are overlooked, they gradually result in wasted resources. If schools guide students to value and care for their surroundings, they can cultivate a mindset that respects both the environment and the community. These small but consistent actions help students understand that sustainability begins with personal habits, empowering them to become active contributors to a more sustainable future.

Responsibility for Biodiversity Conservation

The decline of biodiversity presents a critical challenge that necessitates stronger educational responses. Limited understanding can result in passive disengagement and behaviours that inadvertently contribute to ecological degradation. Under these circumstances, biodiversity education should move beyond superficial awareness-raising towards fostering a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of ecosystems, wildlife, and genetic resources. Embedding these dimensions within behavioural culture education is essential for nurturing an informed sense of ecological accountability. This approach can enable students to adopt more conscious and ethically grounded practices for long-term environmental protection.

3.3. Discussion

The findings shed light on the changing nature of behavioural culture education, explaining why a three-domain framework emerges as a necessary content-based structure. The distinction between intrapersonal, social, and natural domains is not arbitrary; rather, it reflects Bronfenbrenner's framework, in which behavioural development is viewed as a multidimensional and contextually embedded process.

The framework is particularly appropriate for Vietnamese all-through schools because these institutions provide a continuous educational environment in which students of different ages coexist and interact within a shared school culture (Harris & Jones, 2022). This structure creates favourable conditions for behavioural culture education to be implemented progressively across developmental stages. In particular, upper secondary students can serve as role models for younger students through daily interactions, peer support, and school activities, reinforcing behavioural norms through observation and social

participation. The integration of three domains is therefore well aligned with the relational characteristics of all-through schools. The framework also offers greater continuity in behavioural expectations and more opportunities to integrate behavioural culture education across curricular, extracurricular, and experiential activities. Long-term relationships among students, teachers, and families can further support the development of stable behavioural values and habits.

Nevertheless, several challenges should also be acknowledged. The coexistence of multiple age groups requires schools to differentiate behavioural content and pedagogical approaches according to students' developmental levels. Teachers and staff must maintain consistent behavioural expectations while remaining responsive to diverse psychological and social needs. Moreover, implementing the framework requires strong coordination among homeroom teachers, subject teachers, school leaders, and families to ensure coherence across educational contexts. Without a shared behavioural culture and sufficient professional support, inconsistencies in modelling, communication, and behavioural management can reduce its effectiveness in practice.

4. Conclusion

The study proposes a content-based framework for behavioural culture education for upper secondary students in Vietnamese all-through schools based on a synthesis of international theoretical developments. The framework reconceptualises behavioural education as a multidimensional construct encompassing intrapersonal regulation, social-relational competence, and ecological responsibility. By bridging Western competency-based approaches and Eastern value-oriented traditions, the study provides a structured lens for integrating behavioural development into curriculum design, teacher practice and school culture policies within rapidly transforming educational systems. However, as the study is based on qualitative document analysis, the framework remains conceptual. Future empirical research is required to validate its applicability, examine its operational feasibility in school settings and explore its effects on students' behavioural outcomes.

❖ **Conflict of Interest:** Authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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**KHUNG NỘI DUNG GIÁO DỤC VĂN HÓA ỨNG XỬ CHO HỌC SINH
TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG: TIẾP CẬN QUỐC TẾ VÀ ĐỊNH HƯỚNG
ĐỐI VỚI TRƯỜNG LIÊN CẤP TẠI VIỆT NAM**

Nguyễn Trương Hoàng Anh, Lê Thanh Phong*, Nguyễn Văn Hiến

Trường Đại học Sư phạm Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam

**Tác giả liên hệ: Lê Thanh Phong – Email: phonglth@hcmue.edu.vn*

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TÓM TẮT

Văn hóa ứng xử có vai trò quan trọng trong việc hình thành nhân cách, nuôi dưỡng các mối quan hệ bền vững và thúc đẩy một môi trường xã hội văn minh. Nghiên cứu này nhằm bổ sung cơ sở lý luận cho giáo dục văn hóa ứng xử đối với học sinh trung học phổ thông ở các trường liên cấp tại Việt Nam. Bằng phương pháp phân tích tài liệu, nhóm tác giả tìm hiểu các cách tiếp cận khác nhau về giáo dục văn hóa ứng xử ở một số quốc gia phương Tây và phương Đông. Kết quả cho thấy xu hướng chuyển dịch toàn cầu từ giáo dục đạo đức dựa trên quy tắc sang tiếp cận tích hợp, định hướng năng lực, nhấn mạnh sự phát triển cá nhân, trách nhiệm xã hội và khả năng thích ứng với môi trường số và đa văn hóa. Trên cơ sở đó, tác giả đề xuất một khung nội dung về giáo dục văn hóa ứng xử được cấu trúc theo ba mối quan hệ: cá nhân, xã hội và tự nhiên. Nghiên cứu góp phần tăng cường tính nhất quán về mặt nội dung, đồng thời hỗ trợ việc triển khai chương trình, thực hành sư phạm và phát triển văn hóa nhà trường một cách đồng bộ, đặc biệt trong bối cảnh các trường phổ thông liên cấp.

Từ khóa: khung nội dung; giáo dục văn hóa ứng xử; học sinh trung học phổ thông; trường liên cấp Việt Nam