Political Literacy and Ethical Citizenship: A Sociological Framework for Integrity and Corruption Prevention among Youth

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ABSTRACT

Political literacy, citizenship values and integrity are frequently addressed as separate educational concerns, while corruption prevention is often framed primarily through law enforcement, institutional reform and public-sector compliance. This conceptual paper argues that these concerns should also be examined through the sociology of education because schools, universities and other sites of socialisation help shape how young people understand power, public institutions, social responsibility and ethical conduct. The paper develops the Political-Ethical Citizenship Formation Framework (PECFF), a theory-informed model explaining how political literacy may be connected to ethical citizenship and anti-corruption consciousness among youth. Using a problem-oriented conceptual synthesis, it brings into dialogue Durkheim's account of moral socialisation, Dewey's conception of democratic education, Bourdieu's analysis of social reproduction, Freire's critical pedagogy and scholarship on citizenship education and political socialisation. The framework identifies four mutually reinforcing dimensions: political literacy; citizenship values; ethical and integrity formation; and anti-corruption consciousness. These dimensions are shaped by interconnected socialisation contexts, including educational institutions, family, peer networks, digital media and wider institutional environments. The paper proposes that political knowledge alone is insufficient to cultivate ethical citizenship. Young people also require opportunities to deliberate, examine unequal power relations, practise accountable participation and experience consistency between the values taught by institutions and the conduct those institutions demonstrate. Applied to Malaysia, the framework provides a sociological lens for connecting civic education, the Rukun Negara and the National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024–2028 without reducing education to political instruction or if education alone can eliminate corruption. The paper contributes an integrated conceptual approach for understanding education as a social institution in the formation of politically informed, ethically reflective and corruption-resistant citizens.

Keywords: political literacy, sociology of education, citizenship values, integrity education, corruption prevention

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is commonly approached as a problem of law, governance, public administration and institutional control. These perspectives are indispensable, but they do not fully explain how societies reproduce or challenge the everyday norms that make corrupt practices appear acceptable, negotiable or resistant to scrutiny. Corruption is not sustained only through individual decisions; it is also embedded in relationships of power, expectations of reciprocity, institutional routines and social beliefs about what is normal or permissible. Preventing corruption therefore requires attention to the formal rules governing public conduct as well as the social processes through which individuals learn to recognise, interpret and respond to abuses of entrusted power. Young people occupy an important position in these processes. They encounter political institutions and public authority through formal education, family discussion, peer relationships, digital communication, community life and their own experiences of institutional decision-making. These encounters may nurture informed participation, public-mindedness and ethical judgement. They may also reproduce cynicism, disengagement or the belief that personal connections and informal exchanges are necessary for navigating institutions. The educational question is consequently broader than whether young people can define corruption or recall civic facts. It concerns how they

develop the capacity to understand political power, evaluate public decisions, recognise conflicts of interest and act in accordance with principles of fairness, integrity and accountability.

Political literacy is central to this discussion. It refers here to the knowledge, interpretive skills and critical capacities required to understand political institutions, public authority, rights, responsibilities, policy processes and mechanisms of accountability. It is not equivalent to partisan identification, support for a particular government or the adoption of a prescribed political position. A politically literate young person should be able to distinguish evidence from assertion, examine competing claims, understand institutional roles and participate in public discussion without being directed towards a predetermined political preference. This conception is consistent with democratic approaches to education that emphasise inquiry, deliberation and the development of judgement rather than political conformity [4, 6]. Citizenship values and integrity add a normative and relational dimension. Citizenship involves more than legal membership or knowledge of formal rights. It includes dispositions towards participation, mutual respect, equality, responsibility and the common good. Integrity concerns consistency between ethical principles and conduct, including honesty, fairness, transparency and accountability. Anti-corruption consciousness extends these commitments into the recognition and rejection of bribery, favouritism, nepotism, abuse of authority, conflicts of interest and other forms of improper advantage. These concepts are related but not interchangeable. Political literacy helps young people understand how power and institutions operate; citizenship values orient their relationship with others and the public sphere; integrity provides standards for conduct; and anti-corruption consciousness applies these understandings to practices that undermine public trust.

Education is therefore a significant social institution in the formation of ethical citizenship. Durkheim's account of moral education highlights the role of social institutions in developing discipline, attachment and autonomy [5]. Dewey places democratic experience and shared inquiry at the centre of education [4]. Bourdieu draws attention to the ways institutions may reproduce social hierarchies and unequal access to valued knowledge and participation [2]. Freire's critical pedagogy emphasises dialogue and critical consciousness as means through which learners interpret and question their social conditions [6]. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that education is neither a neutral container for information nor an automatic source of civic virtue. Its influence depends on what is taught, how learning is organised, whose experiences are recognised and whether institutional practices embody the values being promoted.

Recent international work reinforces the importance of experiential and participatory civic learning. The OECD has highlighted classroom and community practices that place learners at the centre of civic engagement [13]. A review of citizenship education research also identifies the significance of school ethos, teacher-student relationships and sustained opportunities for young people to undertake meaningful civic activity [9]. UNESCO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have explicitly connected integrity education with critical thinking, empathy, ethical behaviour and the capacity to reject corrupt practices [14]. These developments provide a foundation for examining the relationship between political literacy, citizenship formation and corruption prevention as an integrated educational and sociological issue.

In Malaysia, the discussion has practical relevance. The Ministry of Education describes civic education as learning about citizenship and the development of responsible members of society. Its approach combines civic literacy with practical civic experience across classroom and co-curricular settings [12]. The Rukun Negara articulates commitments that include democratic life, justice, constitutional supremacy, the rule of law, courtesy and morality [7]. In addition, the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) 2024–2028 identifies education as one of its strategic thrusts, alongside public accountability, public voice, enforcement and incentives [11]. These policy directions create an opportunity to connect educational practice with a broader culture of integrity while recognising that responsibility for corruption prevention extends beyond schools and young people.

Despite this policy and scholarly convergence, political literacy, citizenship values, moral development and anti-corruption education are often addressed in separate discussions. Civic education may concentrate on rights, national identity and participation; integrity programmes may focus on ethical rules and personal conduct; anti-corruption initiatives may emphasise legal definitions and reporting mechanisms. A sociological framework is needed to explain how these dimensions interact across the social settings in which young people learn and act.

It should also address the possibility that institutions teach integrity formally while their everyday practices communicate unequal treatment, opaque decision-making or tolerance of favouritism.

This paper develops the Political-Ethical Citizenship Formation Framework (PECFF) to address this conceptual gap. It argues that ethical citizenship emerges through the interaction of four dimensions: political literacy, citizenship values, ethical and integrity formation, and anti-corruption consciousness. These dimensions are shaped by educational institutions and wider socialisation contexts, and are strengthened when young people have meaningful opportunities to deliberate, participate and observe accountable institutional conduct. The paper makes three contributions. First, it brings sociological theories of moral socialisation, democratic education, social reproduction and critical pedagogy into a shared analytical discussion. Second, it conceptualises anti-corruption consciousness as part of citizenship formation rather than as a narrow compliance outcome. Third, it offers a framework and propositions that can guide future research and policy development, particularly in Malaysia.

Conceptual Approach

This article is a theory-informed conceptual paper. It does not report original survey, interview, experimental or administrative data, and it does not claim to be a systematic review of all scholarship on political literacy, citizenship education or corruption prevention. Instead, it uses a selective, problem-oriented synthesis of foundational sociological and educational theories, contemporary citizenship education research and relevant policy documents. The purpose is to construct an integrative framework that clarifies how educational and socialisation processes may connect political understanding with ethical citizenship and anti-corruption consciousness.

The conceptual development proceeds in four steps. First, the paper distinguishes political literacy, citizenship values, integrity formation and anti-corruption consciousness as related but analytically separate constructs. Second, it examines how selected theories explain the social formation of moral dispositions, democratic participation, unequal access to civic learning and critical awareness of power. Third, it identifies the socialisation contexts and educational processes through which these dimensions may interact. Fourth, it organises the resulting relationships into the PECFF and advances propositions for future theoretical refinement and empirical investigation. The framework is intended as an analytical model, not a validated measurement instrument or a claim of proven causal effects.

The paper adopts a sociological rather than an individual-deficit approach. Young people's ethical choices are understood as situated within social relationships and institutional conditions. The framework therefore avoids attributing corruption to a lack of moral awareness among youth alone. It recognises that ethical conduct is influenced by opportunity structures, organisational norms, accountability mechanisms and the distribution of power. Education can contribute to corruption prevention, but it cannot substitute for transparent governance, fair enforcement, effective institutions and leadership accountability.

Sociological Foundations Of Ethical Citizenship Formation

Moral socialisation and the educational institution

Durkheim's sociology of education provides a starting point for understanding how values become socially meaningful. Moral education is not simply the transmission of rules; it concerns the development of dispositions that enable individuals to participate in collective life. Discipline, attachment to social groups and the development of autonomy are important elements of this process [5]. Applied to citizenship and integrity, this perspective suggests that young people learn the significance of fairness, responsibility and public obligation through repeated social experiences. Rules become meaningful when learners understand why they exist, how they protect collective interests and how they should be applied consistently. However, moral socialisation should not be confused with unquestioning conformity. In plural societies, ethical citizenship requires the capacity to examine rules, understand rights and evaluate whether institutional practices are consistent with principles of justice. Education must therefore combine shared civic commitments with reasoned judgement. A school or university that teaches honesty but tolerates academic dishonesty, unequal treatment or opaque

procedures weakens the credibility of its own moral instruction. Institutional culture is thus part of the curriculum, whether formally acknowledged or not.

Democratic education, inquiry and participation

Dewey's conception of democracy as a mode of associated living provides a second foundation. Education becomes democratic when learners engage in communication, shared problem-solving and inquiry into issues that affect collective life [4]. From this perspective, political literacy cannot be reduced to memorising institutional structures or constitutional terms. Learners need opportunities to interpret public issues, compare evidence, listen to competing views and understand how decisions affect different groups. Such practices can develop political efficacy and a sense that public participation is meaningful. Research on civic learning supports the importance of classroom interaction and participatory opportunities. Hoskins, Janmaat and Melis [8] show that access to citizenship learning and an open classroom climate are relevant to political socialisation and inequalities in engagement. Deimel and colleagues [3] similarly examine the relationship between civic education, school social interactions and intended electoral participation across different national settings. These studies do not establish that classroom discussion automatically produces integrity or prevents corruption. They do, however, support the proposition that political learning is shaped by the quality of educational experiences, not only by the presence of curriculum content. An open educational environment does not require teachers to promote a particular political position. Rather, it requires pedagogical safeguards: evidence-based discussion, respect for disagreement, clear distinctions between fact and opinion, and protection against intimidation or partisan indoctrination. Such conditions are especially important when discussing corruption, public authority and controversial policy questions. The educational objective is to cultivate independent judgement and responsible participation.

Social reproduction, inequality and civic learning

Bourdieu's account of social reproduction draws attention to the unequal distribution of cultural resources and the ways institutions may privilege some forms of knowledge, language and confidence over others [2]. This perspective is important because opportunities to develop political literacy are not equally distributed. Young people differ in access to civic discussion at home, exposure to public institutions, digital resources, supportive networks and opportunities to participate in school or community decision-making. A curriculum may be formally available to all while the confidence and resources needed to benefit from it remain uneven. The framework therefore treats inclusion as a condition of ethical citizenship formation. Civic education should not assume that all young people enter classrooms with equivalent familiarity with public institutions or equal confidence in expressing views. Nor should participation be limited to students who are already articulate, socially connected or academically advantaged. Accessible learning materials, inclusive discussion practices, multilingual and culturally responsive approaches, and varied forms of participation can widen opportunities for civic learning. This is particularly relevant in Malaysia's plural social context, where citizenship education must recognise diversity while sustaining shared commitments to constitutional principles, fairness and mutual respect. Social reproduction also raises a more difficult issue: young people may observe that informal influence, personal connections or unequal access appear to shape real institutional outcomes. If educational messages about merit, fairness and accountability are contradicted by visible practices, learners may interpret integrity as an abstract ideal rather than a realistic social expectation. A sociological approach must therefore examine the relationship between the formal curriculum and the lived institutional environment.

Critical pedagogy and the interpretation of power

Freire's critical pedagogy adds a focus on dialogue, reflection and the capacity to interpret social conditions [6]. Political literacy in this tradition involves more than knowing how institutions are organised. It includes asking who makes decisions, whose interests are represented, how resources are distributed and what mechanisms exist to challenge misuse of authority. Such inquiry can help young people understand corruption as a structural and relational phenomenon rather than simply as an individual moral failure. Critical consciousness should not be interpreted as directing students towards a predetermined ideological conclusion. Its educational value lies in equipping learners to examine evidence, identify power relations, assess institutional explanations and consider alternative perspectives. In anti-corruption education, this means exploring how conflicts of interest, favouritism,

bribery and abuse of entrusted power affect public resources and equal treatment. It also means understanding due process, evidentiary standards and the importance of avoiding unsubstantiated allegations. Together, Durkheim, Dewey, Bourdieu and Freire offer complementary insights. Durkheim explains the social formation of moral commitments; Dewey highlights democratic experience and inquiry; Bourdieu reveals unequal access and institutional reproduction; and Freire foregrounds dialogue and critical examination of power. Their integration provides a sociological basis for understanding how educational processes may contribute to ethical citizenship without assuming that education is politically neutral, socially equal or automatically transformative.

Conceptualizing The Dimensions

Political literacy

Political literacy is defined in this paper as the combination of knowledge, interpretive skills and critical capacities that enables young people to understand public institutions, political processes, rights, responsibilities and mechanisms of accountability. It includes knowledge of constitutional arrangements and public administration, awareness of how policies are formulated and implemented, the ability to assess public information, and an understanding of how citizens can participate in lawful and peaceful ways. Political literacy also involves the capacity to recognise misinformation, distinguish substantiated evidence from allegation and consider the implications of public decisions for different communities.

Political literacy should be distinguished from political preference. Education should not seek to secure support for a party, government or ideology. Its purpose is to enable learners to understand institutions and evaluate public claims independently. This distinction is essential for academic freedom and democratic pluralism. A politically literate citizen may agree or disagree with a policy or office-holder, but should be able to explain that judgement through evidence, reasoned argument and an understanding of institutional responsibilities.

Citizenship values

Citizenship values refer to the normative orientations that guide how individuals relate to other members of society and to the public sphere. They include responsibility, respect for rights, tolerance, fairness, solidarity, participation, respect for diversity and concern for the common good. These values are not limited to ceremonial expressions of national belonging. They are expressed through everyday conduct: listening to others, respecting lawful procedures, rejecting discrimination, contributing to community life and recognising that public resources are held in trust for collective benefit.

Citizenship values are socially learned. Families, schools, universities, peer groups, community organisations and digital networks all influence how young people interpret obligations and rights. The educational challenge is to connect values with practice. Student councils, collaborative projects, community engagement, deliberative discussions and transparent classroom procedures can provide opportunities to practise responsibility and participation. Such activities should be meaningful rather than symbolic, with feedback showing how student contributions are considered.

Ethical and integrity formation

Integrity formation concerns the development of ethical judgement and conduct consistent with principles such as honesty, fairness, responsibility, transparency and accountability. It includes the ability to identify ethical dilemmas, consider competing obligations, anticipate consequences and explain decisions. Integrity is therefore more than compliance with a list of prohibited behaviours. It involves understanding why particular actions damage trust, violate fairness or misuse authority.

Educational institutions contribute to integrity formation through explicit teaching and through the example set by their own practices. Assessment integrity, transparent criteria, fair disciplinary procedures, accountable leadership and respectful relationships can reinforce the values communicated in lessons. Conversely, inconsistent enforcement, favouritism or unexplained decisions may undermine them. The hidden curriculum—

the norms conveyed through institutional routines and relationships—must therefore be considered alongside formal instruction.

Moral development perspectives, including Kohlberg's work on moral judgement [10], can help explain how learners reason about rules, obligations and ethical dilemmas. However, moral reasoning should not be treated as a direct guarantee of ethical behaviour. Conduct is also shaped by incentives, pressures, social norms and opportunities. The framework accordingly connects ethical judgement with institutional context rather than treating integrity as an isolated individual trait.

Anti-corruption consciousness

Anti-corruption consciousness is defined as the informed recognition of corrupt practices and their social consequences, combined with the ethical orientation to reject such practices and support accountable systems. It includes awareness of bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, cronyism, favouritism, conflicts of interest, abuse of entrusted power and the misuse of public resources. It also includes the ability to recognise less obvious forms of improper advantage, such as normalised gift exchanges that create obligations, preferential treatment or the manipulation of procedures. Anti-corruption consciousness must be grounded in accurate concepts and due process. Not every administrative error, unpopular decision or personal relationship constitutes corruption. Young people need to understand distinctions between lawful discretion, poor administration, unethical conduct and criminal offences. They should also learn why evidence, confidentiality, safe reporting channels and protection from retaliation matter. An educational approach that relies on sensational allegations or partisan examples risks weakening critical judgement and public trust. UNESCO and UNODC's integrity education resources position schools as important settings for developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that support rejection of corrupt practices [14]. The G20 compendium on public participation and anti-corruption education likewise discusses the integration of ethics, integrity and anti-corruption values into education [15]. These resources support an educational approach that combines conceptual understanding with practical ethical reflection. Nevertheless, anti-corruption education should not be presented as a substitute for independent oversight, fair enforcement or institutional reform.

The Political-Ethical Citizenship Formation Framework (Pecff)

The PECFF conceptualises ethical citizenship as an evolving outcome of the interaction between four dimensions and multiple socialisation contexts. It does not assume that the dimensions develop in a fixed sequence or that a single educational intervention can produce them. Instead, the framework proposes that political literacy, citizenship values, integrity formation and anti-corruption consciousness can reinforce one another when young people encounter coherent learning experiences and credible institutional practices. The socialization contexts form the environment in which the four dimensions are learned, negotiated and enacted. Educational institutions provide organised opportunities for knowledge, discussion and practice, but their influence is mediated by family experiences, peer norms, digital information environments and wider institutional conduct. The contexts are not simply background variables. They shape which issues become visible, whose voices are heard, what forms of participation are considered legitimate and whether ethical commitments are reinforced or contradicted.

Dimension 1: Political literacy as interpretive capacity

Political literacy provides the interpretive resources through which young people understand public authority and institutional responsibility. It enables them to identify the roles of legislatures, executives, courts, public agencies and oversight bodies; understand the relationship between rights and responsibilities; and recognise the procedures through which decisions can be questioned. It also supports media and information literacy, particularly the evaluation of claims about public affairs. Within the PECFF, political literacy is not treated as a sufficient cause of ethical behaviour. Knowledge of corruption mechanisms does not automatically prevent participation in corrupt practices. Its contribution is to make institutional processes and consequences more intelligible, allowing ethical reasoning and civic values to be applied to real situations.

Dimension 2: Citizenship values as social orientation

Citizenship values orient young people towards the rights and interests of others and the responsibilities associated with shared public life. They provide a normative basis for rejecting practices that privilege personal benefit over fairness or collective resources. They also encourage participation that is respectful of diversity and grounded in constitutional and legal principles. These values are most likely to become meaningful when learners can practise them. Group decision-making, student representation, community service and respectful debate offer settings in which fairness, accountability and responsibility can be experienced. The quality of participation matters: tokenistic activities may teach compliance, whereas genuine opportunities to influence decisions can help learners understand democratic responsibility.

Dimension 3: Ethical and integrity formation as practical judgement

Ethical and integrity formation links principles to decisions. Learners should be able to examine dilemmas involving gifts, favouritism, plagiarism, misuse of shared resources, conflicts of interest and pressure from peers or authority figures. Case-based discussion can help them identify stakeholders, consider rules and consequences, and justify a decision. Such learning should avoid simplistic moralising and instead develop the capacity to reason through complex situations. The credibility of integrity education depends partly on institutional congruence. When schools and universities apply rules transparently and consistently, their practices can reinforce formal teaching. When institutional conduct contradicts stated values, the educational message becomes ambiguous. Integrity is therefore both a learning outcome and an institutional responsibility.

Dimension 4: Anti-corruption consciousness as civic vigilance

Anti-corruption consciousness translates political understanding and ethical judgement into a capacity to recognise and reject corrupt practices. It includes awareness of how corruption damages trust, diverts resources, distorts opportunities and undermines equal treatment. It also involves understanding legitimate reporting and accountability processes, while respecting confidentiality, evidence and due process. The framework uses the term civic vigilance to describe informed attentiveness to the use of public power and resources. It does not imply suspicion towards every institution or official. Rather, it combines constructive trust with the capacity to ask questions, seek explanations and use lawful accountability channels. This balance is important: education should neither normalise corruption nor promote indiscriminate cynicism.

Mechanisms connecting the dimensions

Four mechanisms connect the dimensions. The first is critical inquiry: learners use political knowledge to examine public issues, compare evidence and identify institutional responsibilities. The second is ethical deliberation: learners apply citizenship values and moral reasoning to situations involving competing interests. The third is participatory practice: learners experience responsibility through dialogue, student representation and community engagement. The fourth is institutional modelling: the conduct of educators and institutions either reinforces or weakens the values communicated through formal learning. These mechanisms are reciprocal. Participation can generate questions that deepen political literacy; critical inquiry can reveal ethical dilemmas; ethical deliberation can strengthen civic commitments; and accountable institutional responses can reinforce trust and future engagement. Conversely, exclusion, arbitrary rules or visible contradictions between institutional rhetoric and practice can weaken these processes. The PECFF therefore treats ethical citizenship as a relational and institutionally conditioned process.

The Malaysian Context

The PECFF offers a way to connect Malaysian civic education and integrity initiatives without collapsing them into a single programme. The Ministry of Education describes civic education as developing knowledge of citizenship and encouraging responsible conduct towards society and the country. Its approach combines civic literacy including civic knowledge, socio-emotional dimensions and civic action with practical experiences inside and outside the classroom [12]. This structure provides a useful foundation for the framework because it recognises that citizenship involves knowledge, values and action.

The Rukun Negara provides a shared normative reference for this discussion. Its stated aspirations include preserving a democratic way of life, creating a just society, respecting cultural diversity and building a progressive society. Its principles include constitutional supremacy, the rule of law, courtesy and morality [7]. Within the PECFF, these principles can be approached not only as content to be memorised but as ideas for critical and practical learning. For example, constitutional supremacy and the rule of law can be explored through age-appropriate discussions of institutional roles, due process and equal treatment. Courtesy and morality can be connected to respect, honesty and responsible conduct in school and community settings.

The NACS 2024–2028 is also relevant because it identifies education as one of five strategic thrusts, alongside public accountability, public voice, enforcement and incentives [11]. This policy orientation recognises that corruption prevention requires more than enforcement. The PECFF complements this approach by explaining how education may contribute to the social foundations of integrity and public accountability. It does not imply that young people should carry responsibility for correcting systemic weaknesses. Instead, it places youth learning within a wider environment in which institutions must demonstrate transparency and respond to legitimate public concerns.

At school level, the framework suggests integrating political literacy, citizenship values and integrity across subjects and school life. Lessons can use carefully designed scenarios involving fairness, misuse of resources, conflicts of interest, misinformation and public decision-making. Students can examine how rules protect collective interests, how decisions are made and what lawful mechanisms exist for seeking clarification or raising concerns. Teachers should facilitate evidence-based dialogue and avoid partisan instruction. Co-curricular activities, student councils and community projects can provide opportunities to practise participation and responsibility.

At tertiary level, universities can connect academic learning with institutional ethics, public reasoning and community engagement. Courses in social sciences, education, law, public administration, communication and professional studies can examine corruption as a social and institutional phenomenon. Universities can provide structured spaces for students to discuss governance, public accountability and ethical dilemmas while modelling transparent assessment, fair procedures and responsible leadership. Student participation in committees and campus initiatives can also offer practical experience of accountable decision-making.

Family and community contexts should not be overlooked. Families are often important sites of early socialisation about authority, fairness, reciprocity and obligation. Community organisations and youth groups can provide opportunities for intergenerational dialogue and civic participation. Digital media, meanwhile, can widen access to public information while exposing young people to misinformation, polarised commentary and unverified allegations. Digital and media literacy should therefore be incorporated into political literacy, including source evaluation, verification, respectful engagement and awareness of online manipulation.

Malaysia’s plural social context makes inclusive citizenship education particularly important. Political and ethical learning should create space for different cultural, linguistic and socio-economic experiences while maintaining a shared commitment to constitutional principles, equal dignity and the public good. Inclusion also requires attention to unequal access to civic opportunities. Students who have fewer resources, limited digital access or less confidence in formal discussion should not be marginalised from participation. The framework consequently encourages educational institutions to assess not only what civic content is delivered but who can access, understand and influence the learning process.

Educational And Policy Implications

Knowledge transmission and integrated civic learning

Political and civic knowledge remains necessary, but it should be connected to discussion, inquiry and practice. Educational programmes can combine constitutional and institutional knowledge with case analysis, structured debate, student-led projects and community engagement. These activities should be designed to develop reasoning and participation rather than reward agreement with a particular political position. OECD work on

civic education similarly highlights experiential approaches and connections between classroom learning and community relationships [1, 13].

Institutional integrity

Schools and universities should examine the consistency between the values taught and the procedures experienced by students. Transparent assessment criteria, fair access to opportunities, clear complaint mechanisms, consistent disciplinary processes and accountable leadership can reinforce integrity education. Institutional self-reflection is essential because learners observe how authority is exercised in everyday settings. The hidden curriculum can support ethical citizenship when institutional conduct is fair and explainable.

Teacher and educator empowerment

Educators need confidence and professional support to facilitate discussion of political and ethical issues in a balanced manner. Professional learning can address political neutrality, classroom dialogue, media literacy, ethical dilemmas, anti-corruption concepts and safe approaches to sensitive topics. Teachers should be equipped to distinguish political literacy from partisan persuasion and to manage disagreement without silencing legitimate questions. Teaching materials should be accurate, age-appropriate and sensitive to local contexts.

Accountability of institutions

Educational institutions can work with relevant public agencies, civil society organisations and community groups to provide accurate information about public accountability and corruption prevention. Such engagement should be educational rather than promotional. Learners should understand the roles and limits of different institutions, the importance of evidence and due process, and the lawful channels available for seeking information or reporting concerns. Partnerships should preserve academic independence and avoid using students as instruments for institutional public relations.

Evaluation of awareness

Evaluation should distinguish knowledge, values, judgement and participation. A programme may improve students' ability to define corruption without changing their capacity to identify conflicts of interest or reason through ethical dilemmas. Evaluation may therefore consider civic knowledge, quality of evidence evaluation, ethical reasoning in scenario-based tasks, perceived opportunities for participation, understanding of accountability processes and the inclusiveness of the learning environment. Any behavioural indicators should be interpreted cautiously because stated intentions do not necessarily predict conduct in complex real-world situations.

CONCLUSION

This paper has proposed the Political-Ethical Citizenship Formation Framework as a sociological approach to understanding the relationship between education, political literacy, citizenship values, integrity and corruption prevention among youth. It argues that these dimensions should not be treated as isolated educational topics. They are interconnected elements of a wider process through which young people learn to interpret public authority, relate to others, exercise ethical judgement and respond to the use of entrusted power.

Drawing on moral socialisation, democratic education, social reproduction and critical pedagogy, the paper has shown why education must be understood both as a formal curriculum and as an institutional environment. Political literacy provides the knowledge and interpretive capacities needed to understand institutions and accountability. Citizenship values orient young people towards fairness, respect and shared responsibility. Integrity formation connects principles to ethical judgement and conduct. Anti-corruption consciousness applies these capacities to the recognition and rejection of improper advantage and abuse of power. Their development is shaped by family, peers, digital media, community and the wider credibility of institutions.

For Malaysia, the framework provides a conceptual basis for connecting civic education, the Rukun Negara and the National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024–2028. It suggests that integrity education should be participatory, critically informed, inclusive and supported by institutional practices that demonstrate transparency and fairness. At the same time, the framework rejects the assumption that education alone can eliminate corruption. Effective prevention also depends on accountable institutions, credible enforcement, public oversight and structural reform. The central proposition is that education contributes to corruption prevention most meaningfully when it helps young people become politically informed, ethically reflective and capable of responsible civic participation, while institutions themselves remain answerable for the standards they expect citizens to uphold.

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Ethical Considerations

This is a theoretical and conceptual paper based on published literature and publicly available policy documents. It does not report original research involving human participants or animals. Accordingly, human-participant ethics approval and informed consent are not applicable.

Data Availability

No original dataset was generated or analysed for this conceptual paper.

Conflict Of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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