

Challenges and Wayouts of Integrating Values in Education in Nepalese Schools: Insights from the Educators

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How to cite this article: Romkanta Pokhrel, Bhagwan Aryal, Manual Selvaraj Bexci, Ramkrishna Chapagain, Bharat Ram Dhungana (2024) Challenges and Wayouts of Integrating Values in Education in Nepalese Schools: Insights from the Educators. *Library Progress International*, 44(2s), 1880-1904

Abstract

Shaping young lives with great minds and good hearts is the primary goal of education. For this, every nation needs to initiate the integration of values in education through their national policies and strategies. In Nepal, the national curriculum framework for school education, 2019 has emphasized the integration of behavioral skills/soft skills with sociocultural values and practices. Under the spirit of this framework, schools have initiated the integration of values in their curricular and pedagogical activities. However, these initiatives bear a wide spectrum of challenges. This paper aimed to uncover those challenges and outline possible way-outs through a qualitative-phenomenological approach. Information was collected through interviews and observations. All the interviews were audio recorded,

transcribed, coded, categorized, and developed into themes for further analysis. The findings revealed that challenges of integrating values range from macro to micro levels including contradictory policies, inadequate and rigid curriculum, the commercial motif of academia, indifferent parents/community, traditional pedagogical approaches, and lack of proficient and motivated educators were the notable challenges. These challenges, the study unfolded, could be mitigated by creating a conducive institutional culture, preparing the stakeholders, revitalizing/contextualizing the curriculum, reforming the pedagogical approaches, and blending the Eastern tradition and Western science to name a few.

Keywords: Challenges, Nepalese schools, pedagogy, values integration in education

Introduction

The report of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, *Learning: The treasure within* states, education must contribute to the overall development of every individual, mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic sense, personal responsibility, and spiritual values (Dealors, 1998). A successful education, the report highlights, builds on the four pillars of learning- learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. In addition to this, Education for All (Jomtien, 1990; Dakar, 2000; Muscat, 2014), Education 2030 (Korea, 2015), MDG2, SDG4, Education 2030: SAARC Framework for Action for achieving SDG 4 have stressed a common goal that education must be holistic, ambitious, aspirational and should ensure inclusive and impartial quality education for lifelong learning opportunities for all (OECD, 2019).

Nepal has signed the 'Education by 2030' agenda (MoEST, 2019b) which aims to transform lives through education. It considers education as a main driver of development and in achieving proposed SDGs through a renewed education agenda that is holistic, ambitious, and aspirational leaving no one behind (UNESCO, 2022). To address these commitments and execute the national objectives of school education, the Government of Nepal has formulated a range of educational policies, plans, and curriculum frameworks. Education for All (EFA) by 2015, School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) 2009-16, School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) 2016-21, Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2021-2030, National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF) 2019, national education policy (NEP), 2019, and SDG4: Nepal National Framework (NNF) 2019 are some initiatives made to materialize the national goals and international promises.

The Curriculum Development Center (CDC) under the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST), has designed a national curriculum framework (NCF) 2019 in a more inclusive, integrated, and comprehensive way. The framework echoes the vision of holistic education where values are inherent in every school activity (CDC, 2019a). More importantly, it focuses on the integration of soft skills -behavioral skills- as essential for the holistic development of a child (CDC, 2019a). The national objectives of school education are set to help prepare citizens with good conduct and morals by promoting supreme human values inherent in each individual; promote national culture and dignity, social values, beliefs, and experience; foster feelings of peace, friendship, goodwill, tolerance, and fraternity in the local,

national and international context; prepare citizens loyal to the nation, nationality, democracy; help prepare citizens committed to conserve and promote Nepali art, aesthetic values, ideals, and other specialties. (CDC, 2019a)

To materialize these goals, academic inputs need to be accompanied by the integration of skills and values. Spector (2015) outlines some 21st-century skills like Learning and Innovation Skills, Information, Media, and Technology Skills, Life and Career Skills (p.150) to be incorporated into curriculum and pedagogy. In Nepal, NCF, 2019 has developed an integrated curriculum for basic-level students including soft/behavioral skills in the curriculum. The skills comprise- thinking skills (application skills, learning skills, creative and critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills); intrapersonal skills (self-management, development of self-esteem/respect, integrity/honesty/self-discipline, time management, personal goal setting and taking initiatives, independent learning, flexibility and adaptability, responsibility, and commitment); interpersonal skills (communication, collaboration, cooperation and empathy, active listening, cultural skills/ethics); multi-literacy skills (basic literacy, technological literacy, visual literacy, information literacy, multicultural literacy); and citizenship skills (tolerance and openness, respect for diversity, intercultural understanding, democratic, participatory, and fair value, awareness of and respect for the environment, national identity and sense of belonging, social and civic responsibility, and personal responsibility) (CDC, 2019a)

These skills and values function as the foundations for holistic learning (CDC, 2019a). Likewise, the secondary-level curriculum envisions developing a range of skills and competencies. The objectives are set to prepare students to: be responsible and conscious citizens capable of promoting nation and nationality by adopting fundamental human values, norms, and democratic principles; be familiar with global context and acknowledge the differences, promote solidarity, and contribute to forming a well-civilized and inclusive society; develop a habit of positive thinking, exploring ideas and connecting them to the real world situation for the individual development; internalize the connection of life systems, learn life skills and develop pro-social behavior; be aware of personal health, environmental issues, and population management; analyze the social and natural happenings, their causes-consequences and act towards resolutions; respect to the work; ... (CDC, 2021).

Education is a valuable instrument for instilling and shaping attitudes, values, and beliefs in future generations (Gökçe, 2021). Studies have shown that values-integrated learning promotes the holistic development of a learner, alleviates the social problems caused by youth misbehaviors, and brings a positive difference in students' moral behavior (Lickona, 1997). Value integration demands educators to be more patient, more aware, and understand that it takes time to internalize positive values into personality traits (Dewi & Alam, 2020). Moreover, it is a collective effort to be initiated from school age and nurtured by the school, home, and community through curricular and co-curricular activities. However, a cursory review of educational reports (MoEST, 2018) reveals the fact that despite having beautiful provisions made in policies and curricular frameworks, effective output is lacking for various reasons. In response to this, the study aims to understand what sort of problems the educators have experienced and what can be the possible way-outs for the future.

This paper aims to explore the challenges/problems and way-outs of value integration in the context of secondary schools in Nepal. To understand this phenomenon, the following research question was set: What are the major challenges of teaching/integrating values in pedagogical activities? And what can be the possible way-outs to these challenges?

Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values

Shalom H. Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values, developed in the 1990s, posits that values are overarching, enduring goals that transcend specific situations and contexts. It aims to comprehensively understand and categorize the fundamental values that steer human behavior across diverse cultures (Schwartz, 2012). The theory identifies ten basic human values organized into a circular structure known as the Schwartz Value Circumplex, with four higher-order clusters representing different motivational goals. These clusters and their respective values are as follows:

Table 1

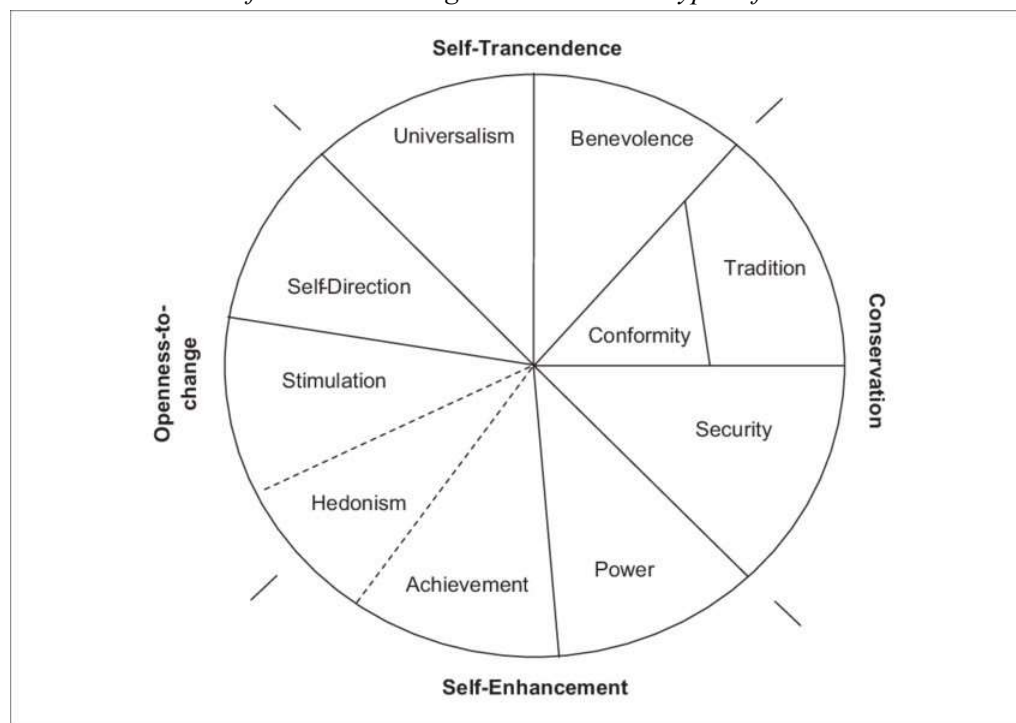
Schwartz's Basic Human Values: clusters-values-goals

Higher-order clusters	Value	Defining goal
Openness to change	Self-direction	Independent thought and action, expressed in choosing, creating, and exploring
	Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life
Self-enhancement	Hedonism	Pleasure, sensuous gratification for oneself
	Achievement	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards
	Power	Control or dominance over people and resources
Conservation	Security	Safety, harmony, and stability of society, relationships, and self
	Conformity	Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms
	Tradition	Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture or religion provides
Self-transcendence	Benevolence	Preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact (the in-group)
	Universalism	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and nature

Schwartz's theory also elucidates the dynamic structure of connections among these values. Actions pursued to fulfill one value may conflict with some values but align with others. For example, the pursuit of achievement may clash with benevolence values if it obstructs the welfare of others, highlighting the inherent conflicts within the value structure (Schwartz, 1992). The circular structure illustrates the overall pattern of relationships between conflicting and congruent values. For instance, tradition and conformity, sharing the same overarching motivational objective, are situated within a single wedge. Tradition, positioned on the periphery, clashes more vehemently with opposing values compared to conformity. This indicates that traditional values demand a more forceful rejection of competing values, reflecting their absolute and abstract nature (Schwartz, 1992).

Figure 1

Theoretical model of relations among ten motivational types of value



Source: (Schwartz, 2012)

Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values holds significant relevance in addressing the hurdles associated with integrating values into pedagogy, as well as proposing viable solutions.

Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values offers a structured framework for identifying fundamental values in educational settings, aiding stakeholders in understanding and aligning priorities. It underscores the importance of bridging the gap between advocated and practiced values, emphasizing satisfaction derived from aligning actions with core values. The theory assists in navigating dilemmas arising from competing values and acknowledges the influence of cultural context on values expression. While offering valuable insights, it risks oversimplification by organizing values into clusters and assuming consistent prioritization, potentially overlooking the dynamic nature of value systems and their susceptibility to

contextual nuances. Nonetheless, the theory remains a relevant and comprehensive tool for comprehending value integration challenges in pedagogy and guiding efforts to address them effectively.

Methods: Qualitative-Phenomenological

Qualitative analysis adopts an 'interpretive' or 'naturalistic' stance towards research inquiries, aiming to understand phenomena by exploring the meanings attributed to them by participants (Saha, 2019). Precisely, phenomenological method of inquiry was adopted to know the participants' lived experiences through interviews and observations (Saldaña, 2011). The main reason for choosing phenomenological study was to explore human experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). For phenomenological studies, subjective experiences are the source of knowledge that is useful to analyze and describe how people negotiate, understand, and make sense of the world (Cohen, 2018). It presents a rich account of subjective experience where the subject is socially and culturally embodied in the real world (Zahavi, 2019) i.e. the subject has a lived experience.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology, deeply rooted in the philosophical tenets of thinkers like Husserl, distinguishes itself in qualitative research for its dedication to unraveling subjective experiences. In contrast to quantitative methods' pursuit of objectivity, phenomenology prioritizes delving into meaning-making processes, acknowledging the inherent subjectivity of human perception. Through methods such as in-depth interviews, phenomenological inquiry engages with participants to unveil the layers of meaning within their lived experiences, ensuring the authenticity of the research process by suspending preconceived notions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Phenomenology excels in providing a comprehensive understanding of phenomena within real-life contexts (Gillard et al., 2014). By exploring participants' perspectives, phenomenological studies illuminate the intricacies of human behavior and cognition, enhancing the relevance and applicability of research findings (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Furthermore, its compatibility with other methodologies enriches qualitative inquiry, allowing for more nuanced interpretations when integrated with other approaches (Patton, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Essential to the social sciences, phenomenological inquiry focuses on uncovering the essence of lived experiences and understanding the origins of meanings and understandings. Transcendental phenomenology prioritizes detailed description, while hermeneutical phenomenology integrates interpretation alongside description, acknowledging contextual influences (Heidegger, 1962). These nuanced approaches provide valuable tools for understanding lived realities in the social sciences. In essence, phenomenology offers a powerful lens to explore the complexities of human consciousness and experience (van Manen, 2014). Grounded in philosophical rigor, phenomenology equips researchers with the tools needed to unravel the mysteries of human perception and interpretation, reaffirming its significance in understanding the essence of human existence.

Participants

As phenomenological studies are carried out with fewer participants selected mostly from purposive sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2016), fourteen participants, working in different

capacities in secondary schools in Kathmandu were selected for interviews in this study. The heterogeneity of participants in terms of school type and subject is maintained to obtain richer experiences. The table below presents the demographic information of the participants.

Table 2

Demographic and Professional Information of the Participants

Participant Code	Age	Sex	Qualification	Post/Subject	Experience (year)	School Type
BK_P1	29	M	MSc	Science	3	Institutional
NK_P2	42	M	MA/MPhil	English/Social Studies	25	Trust
DG_P3	51	M	MSc	Maths/Science	29	Community
RS_P4	44	M	Med	Principal/Language Teacher	26	Community
LK_P5	35	M	MA	Nepali	17	Institutional
BG_P6	40	M	MA	Social Studies	14	Institutional (IB)
AT_P7	48	F	Med	Principal	27	Institutional
LNP_P8	44	M	MA	Social Studies	20	Institutional
RA_P9	74	M	PhD	Teacher/campaigner	30	Institutional
PM_P10	27	F	BBS	IB Incharge	7	Institutional (IB)
SD_P11	36	M	MBS/PhD	EHV Instructor	11	Trust
DrKN_P12	40	M	PhD	Principal	15	Trust
AB_P13	45	F	MA/MED	Principal	25	Institutional
NU_P14	75	M	PhD	Principal	35	Trust

IB: International Baccalaureate Curriculum

Data Collection and Analysis

Information was collected using a semi-structured interview guide, school visits, and classroom observations. All the interviews were audio recorded, transcribed/translated, coded, categorized, and developed into themes. The themes were further corroborated by the information obtained from classroom observation and school visits. The combination of multiple sources contributed to a better understanding of a research problem and increased the reliability and trustworthiness of findings as compared to research that is based on a single approach (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Coding Procedure

Despite the availability of specialized software for qualitative data coding and analysis, this study adopts manual coding using Microsoft Word as a practical and accessible method for organizing and analyzing textual data. We preferred manual coding and analysis of data with minimum use of computer software supposing that computer-aided analysis may detach the researcher from the data and limit the researcher's capacity to dwelling with the text, hindering abductive reasoning and instrumentalize the process that should be intuitive (Van Manen, 2014). This process involved systematically reviewing the interview transcript, identifying key themes, and assigning codes to relevant segments of text. For this, all the interview transcripts were tabulated, the left column contained the original transcript, and the codes were highlighted and added to the right column. The researcher made repeated scrutiny

of interview transcripts or listening to recordings to enhance clarity and deepen comprehension (Glesne, 2016), aiding in the understanding of each participant's input. This enhanced a deep engagement with the data, enabling researchers to uncover nuanced insights that may not be apparent through automated methods. Features like highlighting, text coloration, and text boxes within Word were used to aid in creating a coding framework and organizing data. This coding process also facilitated transparency and reproducibility in the analysis process, ultimately leading to meaningful interpretations of the data.

Ethical Considerations

Special attention was paid to maintain participants' anonymity with codes (table 1). Informed consent was taken before the interviews. Participants were emailed with a clear statement of research purpose (SRP) and their convenient time. Similarly, the morality criterion and fairness (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) in the use of collected information were taken into consideration. Briefly, the 4Cs -communication, consent, confidentiality, and courtesy- of the research ethics have been maintained.

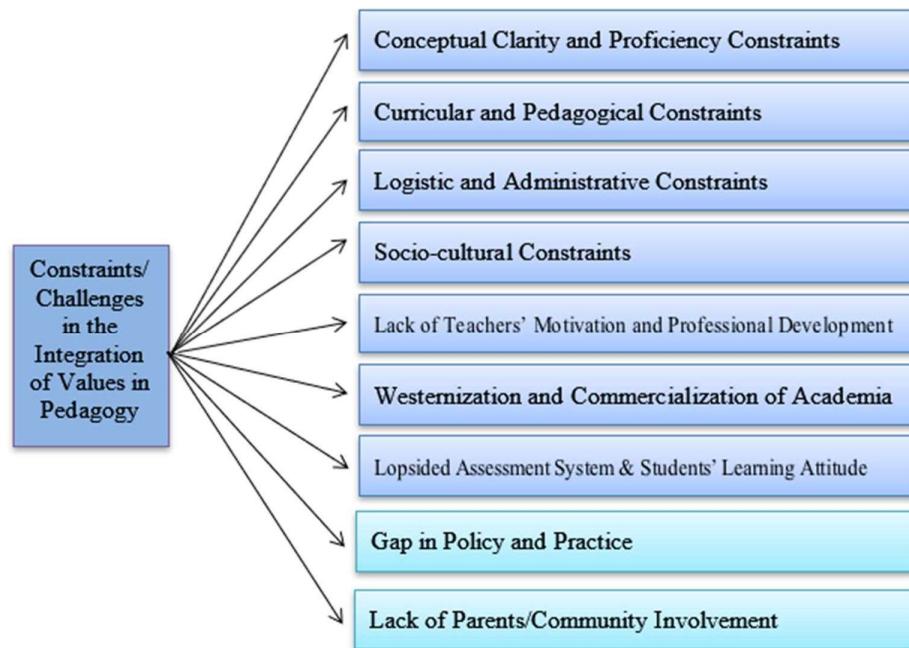
Research Results and Discussion

Challenges of Integrating Values in Pedagogy

Integration of values and behavioral skills has got educational priorities and curricular initiatives worldwide (OECD, 2021). However, studies made in the area indicate that many teachers would ideally like to incorporate values instruction/integration into their classroom but practically, they fail to do so for two reasons: First, the modern education system places higher emphasis on standardized test scores over behavioral changes. Second, most teachers in public, as well as private schools, are not adequately prepared to engage in values-integrated activities (Jeynes, 2019). The challenges of value integration lie at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels (Oeschger et al., 2022) i.e. from national policy to classroom implementation. The interactions made in this research revealed that the major challenge lies in the gap between the planners' intentions and actual delivery i.e. the gap between the intended curriculum and the enacted curriculum (Luitel, 2023). It was also revealed during the discussion that the effectiveness of curriculum to facilitate values in education is heavily overshadowed by traditional textbook-based pedagogies and worsened by the social context. The wide range of responses is thematized and presented in the figure below.

Figure 2

Challenges/constraints as experienced by the educators in values integration



Conceptual Clarity and Proficiency Constraints

National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2019 has focused on teacher management with compulsory teaching licenses and teachers' professional development (TPD). It has provisioned the capacity building of every teacher by ensuring the content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, knowledge about children/learners, knowledge about supporting the learning environment, classroom management, communication and collaboration, continuous learning and professional development, legal bases and professional conduct, and knowledge on the use of information and communication technology (CDC, 2019b). Unfortunately, neither teachers are equipped with all these qualities nor do they follow the curricular provisions. The majority of schools and teachers consider the textbook as the universe, not the curriculum; this is the major challenge to materialize the curricular goals in our country. The teacher must stop teaching subjects and start teaching the students to blossom human excellence opined a participant (NU_P14). The concept that a teacher's job is to teach the book, not the students is the major constraint in implementing the curriculum to its fullest.

As a teacher, I feel that we also have certain constraints and limitations like we don't internalize the essence of our profession; we hardly spend quality time with students and interact on various issues due to the time constraints. Teachers are always rushing, and involved in multiple jobs; no time to go through the curricular objectives, just complete the course and prepare students for exams. (NK_P2)

Furthermore, developing teachers' proficiency is more challenging due to teachers' diverse backgrounds and high turnover.

Understanding and internalizing school objectives are more challenging as teachers are from diverse backgrounds and perceptions, and are traditionally oriented. We prepare teachers with a series of training and workshops but we can't retain them for various reasons. This is hindering proficiency development. Hence, so much depends on the individuals' readiness to perceive the changes. (BG_P6)

The effective implementation of any concept is also affected by the lack of minimum qualifications for a teacher. To enter community schools, in addition to the basic qualification (bachelor's for the basic and master's degree for secondary level), a ten-month teacher training is required for those who graduated from other faculties than education (MoEST, 2019a). Unfortunately, such ten-month training courses for teacher training are not available except for the one-year BEd University program. The situation in private schools is worse as there are no concrete criteria for teacher recruitment. Due to the commercial motive of private schools, there is a compromise in recruiting proficient teachers (NK_P2). This is the major constraint to materializing any educational goal including values integration.

Curricular and Pedagogical Constraints

In the context of a globalized world, educational activities precisely, curriculum, and pedagogical approaches can neither be limited to a particular territory/nation nor are the same throughout the globe. The curriculum in any country needs to be soil-fitted; it should match the geographical, social, economic, and political context of the locality (Luitel, personal communication, August 2022), and localization of the curriculum is to be emphasized. In this context, the major challenge of the curriculum design lies in balancing the global and local issues in its framework.

For the holistic development of an individual, a balanced curriculum is necessary. However, existing curricula and pedagogical models are often criticized for being highly decontextualized. Curricular provisions and pedagogical delivery are pivotal to materializing educational goals. In Nepal, there is no uniformity in pedagogical approaches. It is evident that compared to private schools community school teachers receive more training. Unfortunately, such training hardly reaches the classroom. One of the participants from the community school opined:

There are plenty of TPDs in community schools but they are limited to the motive of receiving an allowance and escaping the routine job. Teachers from community schools attend more frequent and better training than institutional schoolteachers, but the ideas and skills learned in the training are hardly delivered into the classroom. When they enter the classroom the same traditional approach is applied (DG_P4).

The reason behind this scenario is the lack of monitoring, follow-up, and self-motivation. On the contrary, in institutional schools, teachers are bound to be updated with their self-efforts. So far as pedagogical approaches are concerned, a participant highlighted a distinct situation:

Unlike community schools, institutional/private schools have variations- some spend a good deal of time and money on TPD and teaching resources without compromising on what students should get, they invest well, and help update the teachers on the latest

pedagogical models. On the contrary, some schools are struggling to survive. We can't put them all in the same bowl; some silver lines are seen. (LK_P5)

When the schools are struggling for their survival, integration values, holistic learning, and other progressive activities are far away. Furthermore, there is a big question of whether the curricular provisions and pedagogical approaches are designed by considering the learners at the center.

Educators are worried about why it is hard to achieve the goals or objectives set. But have we ever thought if the curricular goals are learner-centered, based on real-life situations/needs of the learners? Have we ever considered the age, interest, and context of the learner? Have we ever thought about why some students receive well, and others don't? These gaps must be addressed before discussing any other big things. Perhaps what we are thinking as good or appropriate may not be so for the new generation and vice-versa. This must be reviewed seriously and addressed in curricular and pedagogical approaches. (RS_P4)

The major concern is whose purpose is being served. A study on classroom practices found that teachers in the twenty-first century relied on a traditional teacher-centered method of chalk and talk, rote learning approach even after getting training in student-centered pedagogical approach (Mugizi et al., 2021) where teachers were found reading and explaining the paragraphs on their own. Reasons behind the failure of student-centered pedagogy could be the overcrowded classroom (Marais, 2016), the pressure of course completion, and scores. Though the teacher training packages cover a range of topics (Harris & Jones, 2019), they fail to train teachers on how to integrate various life skills, behavioral skills, and values that can link the text with real-world situations. These agendas are being overlooked in the Nepalese context despite having an integrated curricular provision on soft skills or behavioral skills (CDC, 2019a).

Logistic and Administrative Constraints

Participants expressed that the training, workshops, and seminars have less effect in classrooms as they are done in an ideal situation. They rarely address the real classroom problems for various reasons including logistic support, classroom size, student number, periods allotted, admin-colleague support, parental support, and out-of-school environment. Furthermore, the lack of a common approach, socialization/orientation hinders the execution of the concept.

Logistically we are poor, the teaching materials and pedagogical approaches envisioned in curriculum and training are ideal to implement as we have constraints in infrastructure, resources, classroom size, student number, and administrative interest. Don't get me wrong but the bitter fact is most private schools invest or show interest in the area where they get a direct benefit. Now you can locate where the integration of values comes from. (RS_P7)

Moreover, the absence of various supportive roles like role-modeling and mentoring (Berkowitz, 2011), and social interaction within the school premise (Thornberg & Oğuz, 2013) also hinders the integration of values. Effective values integration requires certain guidelines

with values-specific objectives for teacher trainers; professional development of the teachers should be at the center of every school activity; proper in-house evaluation mechanisms need to be developed, and the management needs to work very closely with the teachers (Muthigani, 2019) with every possible logistic and administrative supports.

Socio-Cultural Constraints

Values are transmitted through socialization and enculturation processes. These processes are further affected by the surroundings including family, community, school, cultural values, law of land, and traditions (Oeschger et al., 2022). In this sense, a school cannot be the ideal place for values inculcation if society is in a moral crisis. Similarly, students can't acquire good values if the society and culture they live in are not values-oriented. The transformative process is not linear, easily predictable, and one-size-fits-all; rather, it is a multi-pronged, multi-dimensional, and multi-paradigmatic process (Luitel & Taylor, 2019). It is connected to various dimensions of the socio-cultural context. Value integration is possible with the proper guidance/support of parents, teachers, and other stakeholders through curricular and extra-curricular activities.

We can't blame solely a child for their lack of values. If we reflect on our society, more social problems are taking place among/from the educators- family breakdown, separation, sending parents to elderly homes, corruption, extravagant lifestyle, alcoholism, cases of harassment and unhealthy competition, backbiting, social conflict, etc. are more common among educated. (RA_P9)

Children consciously/unconsciously learn from what they see or happening in their surroundings. Hence, the surroundings need to be well-cultured. Otherwise, efforts made on mere children will go in vain. *Our society is traditionally oriented. Society judges people based on material possessions rather than the character and social contribution of an individual. All the stakeholders need to be reoriented regarding the changes and the challenges. (NK_P2)*

In recent times, familial and social complications have been reflected in students' behaviors. The contradiction and misalignment of the values that are taught in school and practiced in the family/community have made the acquisition of the value more difficult.

Lack of Motivation and Trust in Teachers

Demotivated teachers can't motivate the students. Teachers in institutional schools are mostly found demotivated due to financial and social security reasons in the Nepalese context. The discussions revealed that despite having awareness of values in education, teachers hardly enacted it as the focus of students, parents, and school administration lies in academic achievement.

On the one hand teachers in private schools are found demotivated for financial and social security reasons, they are mostly found expressing their frustrations when they meet. Teaching for them is a makeshift arrangement instead of a career goal. On the other hand, teachers in community schools have high political influences. More than focusing on teaching-learning activities they act like a cadre of a political party. This hinders to materialize of the educational goals. (DG_P3)

In this background, a teacher needs to be equipped with certain qualities like responsibility, intelligence, competence, aspiration for professional development, creativity, motivation, communication skills, striving for self-development, knowledge of the subject, pedagogical approaches, more importantly knowledge about the learner (Yu et al., 2021). A teacher is a curriculum designer, pedagogue, resource manager, and planner of everything at the school level (Trinter & Hughes, 2021). In the Finnish educational system, there is complete autonomy and trust in the competence of teachers, they have significant involvement in designing the curriculum, implementing it, and assessing students (Lavonen, 2020). In the Nepalese context, the education system does not fully trust teachers. As a result, *'A' makes policies/plans, 'B' designs the curriculum, 'C' produces the textbooks, 'D' teaches in class, and 'E' evaluates. Teachers' job is misunderstood just as knowledge transmitters. This has created a huge gap in this process* (NU_P14).

The focus should be on serving the students' purpose, not the educator's. Teachers as transformative agents need to be involved in curricular reforms and collectivize school cultures. To support them in engaging in ways that can lead to school improvement, teachers must be given sufficient freedom and trust to conduct their innovation activities and build their professional agency (Reinius et al., 2022).

Westernization and Commercialization of Academia

There is a general mindset among the Nepalese that everything that comes from the West is good, authentic, and imitable.

We have been blindly borrowing the Western curriculum and pedagogical approaches. However, the curriculum needs to be place-based and soil-fitted. Of course, the ideas may be good but they are highly decontextualized in our case. Hence the blind copy of the West or Westernization has somehow derailed us from inculcating our local values (RA_P9).

Another prominent factor hindering values integration is the commercialization of academia. It has changed the student-teacher relationship. The relationship has been turned into a buyer and seller. When educational institutions have high commercial motifs values like selfless service, respect, gratitude, and cooperation degrade. This changing relationship has affected the issue of values inculcation among individuals. The educational system has been commercialized; with the high influence of capitalism, everything is monetized. Students are the paid consumers and teachers are the service givers that is the relation in the private sector then how come values there? (NK_P2). This makes the education system lifeless, a complete dehumanization of relationships overshadowing the fundamental values of education.

Students' Learning Attitude, Lopsided Assessment, and Dehumanization

One of the serious challenges in terms of behavioral issues reported by the participants is students' learning attitudes. Students pay less attention to values and morality. They consider that these are the things to be followed by traditional people. They are more interested in the latest technology, online games, and reality shows than in such practices (LNP_P8). Students are not motivated to learn. They think the goal is to earn money. This attitude is dominant among contemporary students as society values affluent people over educated people. The declining learning attitude is also the result of the traditional approach of teaching, over-

schooling, unnecessary pressure for test scores, and the practical implementation of what they learn. A participant further explained,

The entire focus lies in what the textbook says, what to teach, and what type of questions are to be asked in exams. Students are kept in school from 6 am–6 pm, made to practice a bulk of old questions for exams, with no time for creativity, family, socialization, and others. This sort of ‘over-schooling’ has dehumanized a child. This is not going to serve the purpose and help achieve the educational goals. (RS_P4)

This mechanical process has decreased the students' learning motifs. Another crucial factor is assessment. Our evaluation system only tests how much one can remember, the basic skill in Bloom's taxonomy (Waite et al., 2020). Other skills like representation skills, creative skills, and performance skills are ignored. A Continuous Assessment System (CAS) has been introduced but not implemented effectively due to the lack of proper coordination among various subject teachers teaching in the same class (MoEST, 2018). For several reasons, the internal marks are taken as rituals in most cases. And it is also intervened by the school management, especially in annual exams.

When we test students from a limited universe of a textbook, they have an illusion that they know everything because they memorize the content and score better. However, when we start assessing students from projects, community works, and field research they feel that there are lots of things yet to be known. Hence our assessment system needs to be changed (LK_P5).

We need to stop assessing students from the cognitive domain and explore a wide range of affective domains. Every child is gifted with a certain capability, but we fail to identify that and put all in a single bowl of evaluation and make judgments.

The Problem in Effective Implementation of the Policies

Experts recounted a huge gap between what type of human resources the policy aims to produce and what is produced. We are in a crisis in education- a crisis of human resource, a crisis of capacity, a crisis in planning, execution, evaluation, teacher materials, curriculum, pedagogy, and the essence of the core educational goals as envisioned in the constitution, national education policy and curriculum framework and other international documents. The honest execution and effectiveness of the implementation are under question (Luitel, personal communication, August 2022). Luitel further claims that If 10% of the policies and programs are executed honestly, 90 % of the problems will be solved. Education happened to be a mere process of certification failing to address real-world problems. Hence realization of this crisis is necessary. A founder director of an IB school in Kathmandu highlighted how the gap has been widened between policies and practices due to a lack of competencies:

Some teachers have not even seen the curriculum let alone the educational policies and other provisions. If the curricular objectives are addressed in everyday pedagogical activities, most problems will be solved. Mere grades are never so important, socio-emotional skills, physical culture, etc. are more important. A vision of producing responsible social citizens, and contributory individuals should be the deep-rooted value of every educational institution. On the contrary, we have been killing the inquisitive nature of our child in twelve years of schooling. (AT_P7)

Discussions revealed that though there are certain rigidities and contradictions in policies, at least the honest implementation of what is envisioned solves the majority of the problems.

Lack of Parents Involvement

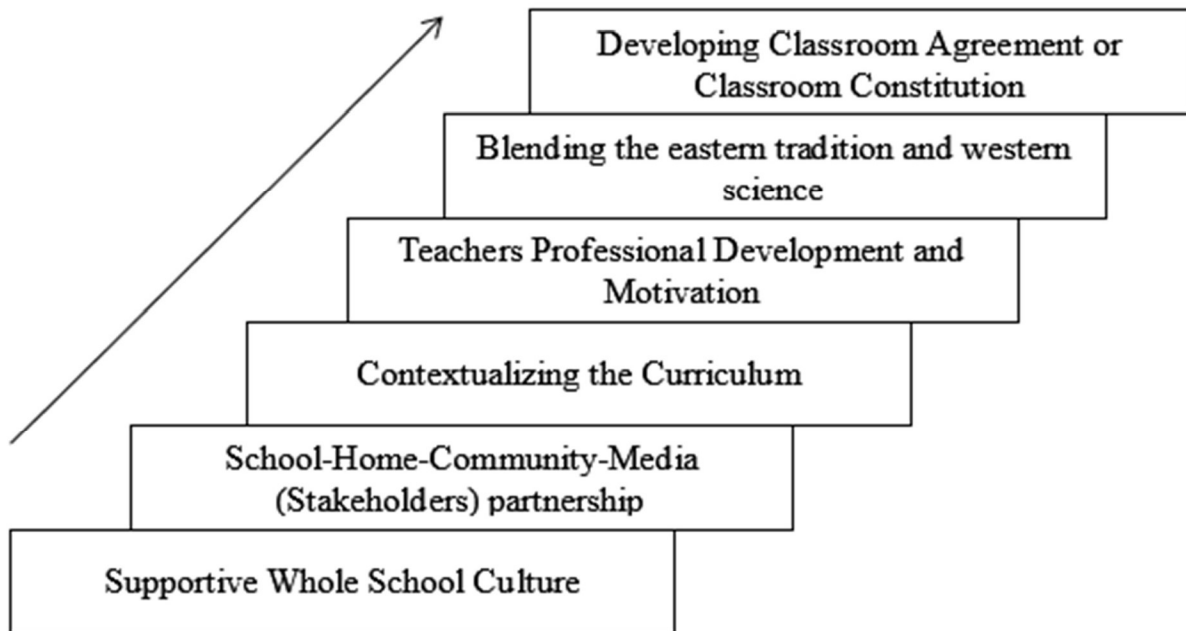
Many parents believe that once the child is admitted to the school, it is the school's sole responsibility in the overall development of the child. They respond as if they have nothing to do with the child. *Parents don't give any priority to the needs/interests of their children; they fail to understand that there is a world beyond the academic score and exam results; by hook and crook the child needs to score better or top the list (NK_P2).* This mindset is putting unnecessary pressure on the children. There is a lack of parenting parent education and curriculum sharing. In most cases, parents seem to be indifferent to the school's vision, mission, ethos, and pedagogical and evaluation approach. There is a huge gap between parents and school; there is an absence of communication, coordination, and collaborative culture.

The Way Forward

Identification of the problem is half the solution provided there is an honest correction. Guided by the second part of the research question, participants were asked about the possible wayouts of the challenges. The responses obtained from the participants are thematized and discussed below.

Figure 3

Possible Way-outs of the Challenges of Values Integration



Supportive Whole School Culture

Whether values are taught or caught is still a debate. Arguments on values are not taught but caught (Balakrishnan, 2017; Hunt, 2004; Panigrahi, 2020; Sutrop, 2015) from the practitioners' experiences are more convincing. Since school is a place to materialize educational goals and a place that is linked with the holistic development of a child, it should take the initiative and maintain a conducive environment to instill the value system and create value-oriented, powerful leaders (Panigrahi, 2020). Every school is independent in developing, merging, connecting, and adjusting the national curriculum with local needs, accessibility, and relevance without distorting the essence of the main framework (CDC, 2019b). For this, schools can- develop the school as a zone of peace, and inclusive academic environment, strengthen school-parent collaboration, develop appropriate teaching materials, adopt ICT in everyday activities, adopt collaborative work plans, grade teaching, subject teaching, or multi-class teaching, provide student counseling and quality education (CDC, 2019b).

Values are not something to be installed upon us, instead, they are already there ingrained within us, and all we need to do is create a supportive environment for them to come out. When schools start 'walk the talk' many problems will be solved. As an alumnus of a values-based institution, I remember, we were never told 'you should be truthful/rightful; you should not hurt, etc. The system/atmosphere was so conducive for us that by the end of three years, we walked out a person with extraordinarily strong values. And, when I look back on retrospection, I find nobody told/taught us that, but the atmosphere was so conducive that values were rooted in our subconscious mind. (SD_P11)

In this sense, to make values integration optimally effective, a conducive school environment needs to be ensured via the school's authentic mission and vision generated by the broader school community and school-wide character education events and practices (Berkowitz, 2011). Moreover, principals' values significantly predicted students' subsequent value priorities (Oeschger et al., 2022). Researchers have also found that a positive school climate experienced by children at age 12 predicted the pro-social behavior of these children one year later (Luengo Kanacri et al., 2017). Schools can do so by adopting moral leadership, a sense of community, student involvement in school activities, activating student councils, and clubs, creating a moral atmosphere of mutual respect, fairness, and cooperation that encompasses all relationships, models, promoting, and upholds the school's values in all school environments

School-Home-Community-Media (Stakeholders) Partnership

Though the school is considered a primary agent of values inculcation, the long-term success of these activities depends on the strong bond among the stakeholders. Studies have shown that positive parental involvement promotes greater achievement in children's holistic development (Berkowitz, 2011). The out-of-school environment i.e. families and communities where they live, followed by the media, are equally important to overcoming these challenges. Parent involvement can be increased by considering parents as partners.

We run a campaign that the school-home, teachers-parents are just complementary to each other. We spend quality time with parents at regular intervals for parent education. Parents are also involved in leadership and decision-making roles; have frequent communication with parents and know their expectations from the child/children. Consider parents as the partners in whole school activities, especially values education programs. We also have frequent interactions with the media and request them to be moral teachers. We also develop values education homework i.e., if having a problem getting parents to value-based school programs, take such programs home- send the materials home. (AT_P7)

To materialize these, parents need to be well-oriented on their role in school activities, and proper home-school communication. Since parents want their children to be honest, confident, responsible, able to work in a team, independent, kind and considerate, hardworking, social, and helpful to others, they need to join hands together with the school. Besides, as values are inherent in the older generations, inter-generational interactions are helpful for students to learn history, traditions, and values. *One of the best ways of instilling good values in children is by inviting a socially acclaimed personality as a guest lecturer (DrKN_P12).* Frequent communication with parents and the local community via regular workshops, meetings, and training programs helps minimize the gap in this partnership program. These communicative activities focus on – *good parenting, discipline, family culture, planning, and monitoring home assignments, projects, behavioral aspects, drug/alcohol, nutritional issues, and the like (AB_P13).*

In the past, schools, families, and communities (temples/churches/mosques/...) were the primary agents to transmit values among students. In the 21st-century digital era, electronic media is another strong partner in terms of value inculcation as it has a direct and

immediate impact on children. Media is omnipresent and inevitable to the present generation. These media should function as windows to see the outer world not to distract.

Contextualizing the Curriculum and Pedagogical Approaches

Transitioning from traditional teacher-centered methods to student-centered cooperative learning approaches is shown to boost academic achievement and memory retention compared to conventional teaching methods (Simesso et al., 2024). Additionally, employing a communicative approach in classroom communication enhances student engagement and elevates educational quality. The integration of a communicative approach to education into teacher training programs significantly enhances our education system (Aksoy & Ceylan, 2021). Similarly, the soil-fitted, place-based curriculum creates a platform to learn local values where community people become the source of knowledge. It also helps in connecting learning with a real-world situation. The involvement of local people, teachers, and learners along with experts is crucial in curriculum design to make it more contextual.

People who have never been to a class and have never known what society needs are involved in curriculum design directly or indirectly. This doesn't solve the problem. Curriculums and textbooks need to be place-based and based on 'lived experiences' so that the language and the content will be close to the real-world situation; the curriculum must be made by the local teachers and the subject expert. (DrKNS_P12)

Schools and teachers should have greater flexibility in terms of curriculum design. This flexibility is particularly important to ensure that values from the local community are reflected in the curriculum with relevant out-of-school learning content (OECD, 2021). However, check and balance from the higher authority is necessary for quality, engagement, and potential values conflict among schools while planning and administering curricular materials.

Teachers' Professional Development and Motivation

A teacher is a voice that encourages, the ear that listens, the eye that reflects, the hand that guides, and the face that does not turn away (Spector, 2015). Transformative and holistic learning does not require a big theory/formula/program, it simply demands educators' readiness to be transformed (Palmer et al., 2010). There is less to do answering a question because students have an unimaginably large source of answers- the internet; the most important thing a teacher needs to do in the classroom at present is to frame the right question. Teacher as an entertainer, an educator, big brother, a mother, role model, a counselor, a champion, and teacher as a teacher can have diverse roles to create an impactful environment for education. A teacher is a complete package of teaching and learning methods, techniques, and strategies and can create a motivating learning environment. The responsibilities of teachers have evolved significantly since the incorporation of constructivist learning principles into progressive educational ideologies. Alongside this transformation, there has been a recognition that not only teachers but also learners have distinct and specialized roles within the classroom environment (Saha, 2019).

Since teachers play a vital role in curriculum design and its effective implementation, teachers' professional development is very crucial. A teacher needs to be equipped with

certain professional knowledge skills and evaluation mechanisms (CDC, 2019b). There is no need to change the curriculum if teachers change their pedagogical approach and facilitate students properly (Koirala, 2019). A change in perspective in educational practices encompasses a transformative understanding of teaching ‘the self’ opines Taylor (2017). We can think of holistic orientation in academia when educators’ inner thoughts and lives are changed in a holistic sense. Furthermore, Harder et al. (2019) argue that the holistic approach exclusively focuses on the four aspects of being such as body, mind, heart, and soul which can be executed via cognitive, physical and emotional, social, and spiritual aspects. The bitter reality in Nepal in most schools is: 21st-century students are being taught by 20th-century teachers using a 19th-century approach. To correct this, enough motivation and training are required.

Blending/Balancing the Traditional and Modern Approaches

The traditional theories of knowledge and philosophy need to be blended with the concept and theories of modern natural and social science (MoEST, 2019a). Most of the participants showed their concern about forgetting our traditional values as the major cause of degrading values and norms. Hence, traditional values must be included in teaching learning without compromising the need for students to know modern knowledge and skills. *It is not that everything of the West is good and of the East is bad or the other way round. Eastern or Vedic traditions are richer in terms of values and morality. Every Eastern practice has science in it but we hardly follow unless it is branded from the West. When ‘Yog’ became ‘Yoga’, ‘Veds’ became ‘Vedas’ then we followed. I don’t mean we discard Western knowledge. Since the East is rich in values and the West in knowledge, why not blend them?* (RA_P9).

Studies have found that the blended or integrated approach to teaching and learning results in higher levels of educational outcomes (Lalima & Dangwal, 2017). The blending of values in science equips students with higher levels of expressions of love, integrity, compassion, and self-discipline with a higher level of competence. It is also found in the studies that high school students have a greater effect on such approaches than in junior school (Jeynes, 2019) as they are capable of gathering, filtering, blending, and applying what they have acquired.

Developing a School/Classroom Agreement

The problem lies when people who have hardly stepped into the classroom make decisions and they focus on standardized test scores, smart technology, and behavior plans. The reality is that classroom relationships are the core foundations for any impactful learning outcomes. Classroom agreement or classroom constitution is one of the most effective tools to build a relationship for impactful learning.

A classroom is a community; every member of the community is responsible for making it a good place. Students are given different responsibilities; they make their own rules and codes of conduct and follow them strictly as they were made by themselves. More than imposed by the authority, students follow what they agree. However, a check and balance from the authority is necessary (SD_P11).

This further develops a horizontal relationship between teachers and students as an essential dimension of holistic learning (Taylor, 2017). It is more about the art of including,

connecting, and balancing as transformative experiences for both students and teachers. Here, the educator's role is to enable students to explore their essence by exposing them to various paths and possibilities they may take in life (Ojha, 2020) through their pedagogical approaches.

The following Table 3 summarizes the challenges and way-outs of value integration at different levels.

Table 3

Summary of Challenges and Way-outs of Values Integration

Challenges		
Macro level	Mezzo level	Micro level
Associated with educational policies and curricular provisions	Associated with institutional culture, socio-cultural-economic structure, and community connectivity	Associated with pedagogical approaches, individual differences, and classroom enactment
Contradictory, a bit rigid, not rooted in the real world situation in many cases, borrowed, not soil fitted, a contradiction in constitutional provisions, national education policy, and curricular provisions	Commercialization, politicization, and westernization of educational institutes; socio-cultural-economic constraints, lack of trust in teachers, no coordination between/among school networks, lack of parents/community involvement, intercultural values relativity, cultural diversity, media influence,	Lack of conceptual clarity, proficiency of teachers, traditional pedagogy; readiness of the primary stakeholders, lopsided assessment system; logistic and administrative constraints, lack of 'walk the talk' among the stakeholders
Way-outs		
Coordinating and contextualizing the policy documents and curriculum	Blending the Eastern tradition and Western science; school-home-community-media (stakeholders) partnership, creating a conducive institutional culture, strengthening the school networks, and adopting a common approach	Developing classroom agreement or classroom constitution, teachers' professional development and motivation, nobility in pedagogical approach, multi-generational learning

Conclusions Limitations, Recommendations, and Implications

Conclusion

Integrating values into pedagogy faces a multitude of challenges, from macro-policy discrepancies to micro-level implementation hurdles. Despite global recognition of values education's importance, a persistent gap exists between intentions and actions within educational frameworks. Conflicts between educational priorities and standardized testing, coupled with inadequate teacher preparation and logistical constraints, hinder effective

implementation. Socio-cultural factors, erosion of trust in teachers, and student attitudes further complicate matters. Bridging this gap requires empowering teachers, involving parents, and aligning curricular objectives with societal needs. Moving forward necessitates a multi-dimensional approach, including fostering supportive school cultures, cultivating partnerships, contextualizing curricula, investing in teacher development, and blending traditional wisdom with modern knowledge systems. Establishing classroom agreements promotes student ownership and responsibility, fostering collaborative environments where values are lived. Through these efforts, educational institutions can foster a values-oriented approach, empowering students to thrive as compassionate, ethical, and resilient individuals.

Limitations

The study acknowledges certain limitations that warrant careful consideration. It primarily relies on qualitative data derived from participant experiences and perspectives, potentially restricting the broader applicability of its findings. Moreover, while the research predominantly focuses on the viewpoints of educational stakeholders, it may overlook insights from other pertinent groups, such as students or policymakers. Furthermore, the absence of longitudinal data impedes the evaluation of the sustained effectiveness of proposed strategies for values integration in education, restricting insights into their long-term impact. Despite the study's emphasis on fostering partnerships between schools, homes, and communities, it does not extensively explore the obstacles or challenges that could impede effective collaboration among these stakeholders. Addressing these limitations is essential for guiding future research endeavors and enhancing the practical implementation of initiatives aimed at integrating values into educational settings.

Recommendations:

Drawing from the study's findings, several recommendations emerge to address the intricacies of integrating values into education. Initially, policymakers should prioritize the incorporation of values education within national curricula, ensuring its alignment with students' comprehensive development. This necessitates adaptable curriculum frameworks that accommodate local values. Secondly, investing in the professional development of educators is imperative to equip them with the requisite competencies for proficient values integration. Training initiatives should encompass pedagogical strategies and adept classroom management techniques. Furthermore, cultivating robust partnerships among educational institutions, parents, communities, and media outlets is indispensable for fortifying values education efforts. Schools ought to actively involve parents, foster transparent communication, and cultivate nurturing environments that underscore mutual respect and ethical conduct. Implementing holistic school-wide approaches to character education can additionally bolster positive school climates. Lastly, educators should adopt a harmonized approach by blending traditional values with contemporary knowledge, thereby preparing students to confront modern challenges while honoring cultural heritage. By implementing these recommendations collectively, enriched learning environments conducive to nurturing students' ethical values and overall well-being can be fostered.

Implications

At the policy level, the study suggests that values integration impacts curriculum design, assessment strategies, resource allocation, policy execution and communication, policy

evaluation, and amendment, teachers' professional development, policy dissemination and community engagement strategies, legal and ethical frameworks, national and international connections, and sustainable impact evaluation. At the practice level, it influences instructional strategies, classroom culture, assessment methods, role modeling, interdisciplinary approaches, experiential learning, collaborative learning, classroom norms, parental involvement, adaptability, professional development, and conflict resolution skills. At the personal level, values integration affects learners' character development, ethical decision-making, social and emotional skills, respect for diversity, civic engagement, critical thinking, reflection, emotional resilience, self-awareness, sense of purpose, and adaptability.

Declaration

Conflicts of Interest: None

Funding: The research work didn't receive any funding.

Contributors: RKP conducted the fieldwork, conceptualized and drafted the article. BA and MSB supervised the research work and revised the article for submission. BA corresponded with the publication procedures. RC and BRD assisted in conceptualization, framework development and revision. All authors gave final approval of the version to be published.

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