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Integrating Values in Pedagogy for Holistic Learning: Educators' Perspectives and Practices in Nepalese Schools

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Values, more than mere moral codes, are the empowering tools and competencies that a twenty-first-century learner needs to acquire for holistic learning. Education in the twenty-first century must contribute to producing an integrated personality with physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual values. Enculturation and socialization are the key processes in values transmission in diverse social contexts like home, peers, and more importantly, schools where educators are the primary agents. In this context, it is crucial to know how educators perceive values and incorporate them into everyday school practices. This paper delves to answer this question. A qualitative-phenomenological inquiry was made to discern the 'lived experience' of the educators. Information was collected using semi-structured interviews followed by school visits and classroom observations. The inquiry focused on exploring the educators' perspectives and practices vis-à-vis the concept- 'what', relevance- 'why', and process- 'how' of values integration. The findings revealed varied opinions on how they perceive values with a deep realization of the importance of teaching/integrating values. It was also found that substantial efforts are made to impart values through everyday school practices. Most of the educators opined on the effectiveness of an integrated approach to values inculcation. However, few argued that teaching values in separate courses are equally important for theoretical/conceptual/philosophical insights that make integration more effective. Overall, there was a consensus among the educators that instilling values has to be reflected and embedded in the school ambiance, co/co-curricular activities, pedagogical approaches, role modeling, community engagement, and comprehensive assessment. The major concern was seen not only in making students aware of the values but also in making it a part of their daily lives – a holistic outcome. **Keywords:** holistic learning, pedagogy, perspectives and practices, schools, values integration.

Introduction

International bodies like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Council of Europe (CoE), and Asian Program of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID) state that values are not the mere moral codes but the competencies to be acquired by the 21st-century learners (Cohen et al., 2019; OECD, 2019, 2021; UNESCO, 2015, 2022). Scholars like Shaver and Strong (1976) define values as the standards and principles for judging people, objects, ideas, actions, and situations to be good, worthwhile, desirable, or on the other hand, bad, worthless, or despicable. Likewise, Schwartz (2012)acclaimed the theory of Basic Human Values (BHV) and defines values as desirable trans-situational goals that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity. The CoE in a model of competencies for democratic culture defines values as general beliefs that individuals hold about

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the desired goals that should be striven in life. Personal belief motivates action and also serves as a guiding principle for deciding how to act (Cohen et al., 2019).

The concept broadens the horizon of values from ideal moral conduct to competencies, principles, and criteria by which we evaluate, choose, and prioritize what is worth adopting and acting in a just way. In this sense, values fuel our actions, emotions, and behaviors and have a transformative power to alter the way we perceive and react to stimuli. Studies carried out on values, especially among children showed that values appear from various sources like genetic factors Uzefovsky et al. (2016), individual characteristics Daniel et al. (2022), and social or parental influences (Barni et al., 2013; Aryal & Maharjan, 2021; Aryal, 2022; Aryal et al., 2024). The transmission of values takes place primarily through enculturation and socialization in a variety of social contexts; home, with peers, and more importantly at schools Luengo Kanacri et al. (2017) where children spend a considerable time with a diverse group of individuals (Sharma & Adhikari, 2022). To a great extent, values develop from subjective experiences obtained from observational learning and environmental influences. Hence, they are experienced at individual, social, and global levels. Based on these observations and a review of the literature, this paper categorizes values into three mutually inclusive groups: individual, social, and global values (see Figure 1).

Individual - the Values of the Self

The individual/personal domain of values has a relationship with oneself Klamer (2017) at the physical, emotional, or intellectual level. Each individual has a unique personality carried out with physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and moral progression and hence has unique values. Personal values help in the individuation process i. e. understanding of characters, strengths, and weaknesses (Di Paolo, 2020). Values under this category are also associated with the development of ethics, morality, self-respect, and self-discipline. These values lead an individual toward the formation of an integrated personality developing a sense of identity, self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence, and genuine respect for others. It seeks an integration of an individual's knowledge, values, attitudes, abilities, and skills to bring about holistic development. An individual practices and shares these values with the wider circle s/he lives in. When the values are shared with the outer circle, they become a part of social/cultural values or the values of relationships.

Social - the Values of Relationship

Intra-personal values comprise relationships with others and effects on social values and identity. The interrelationships with family members' influence and emotional support are renowned contributing factors for communal beliefs, principles, and actions. Human beings have shared norms, moral beliefs, and principles that are accepted by all or majority of the community members that function/regulate societies. Living in a society with shared beliefs, we value things, people, situations, and their relationships for how we can be useful to each other. Social values are helpful to support the stability of social order and supply general guidelines for social conduct. As social beings, we value truth, freedom, justice, human rights, rule of law. Social values help us internalize our responsibility, relationships, and interconnectedness with various aspects of society (Klamer, 2017). Briefly, social values incorporate a theme of supporting others to live the life that one wants to live. Once we think of acting for others, the values become universal/global values irrespective of person, place, and time i.e., everyone's values- the values of the common good.

Global - the Values of Common Good

Global value highlights our interconnectedness across personal, social, and global levels due to technological advancements, transforming the world into a global village where cultural influence transcends borders. Humanistic principles underscore a shared global home with common values, surpassing cultural and ethnic distinctions. Advocating for global fraternity, the concept dismisses narrow-minded perspectives, promoting cooperative and compassionate approaches to globalization. This inclusive perspective encourages harmonious global coexistence, environmental sustainability, and a balanced human-nature relationship. Instilling global values aims to nurture socially responsible and environmentally conscious generations through values education, guided by principles like equality, tolerance, non-violence, and sustainability.

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A humanistic lens does not categorize values in narrow divisions but rather finds the entire globe a common home and shared values and responsibilities. *Maha Upanishad* (a holy scripture of Hindus) states [अयंबन्धुरयंनेतिगणनालघुचेतसाम्उदारचरितानांतुवसुधैवकुटुम्बकम्॥] (Chapter VI-Verse 72) meaning 'counting this is mine and that is of strangers' is the task of narrow-minded people, for the generous/open-minded, the entire planet is a family. It assumes that as far as the value of humanity is concerned there is no boundary, no relativism. The moment we consider the entire world as a common home, it becomes our responsibility to support the sustainability and well-being of the human and non-human world for now and the generations to come.
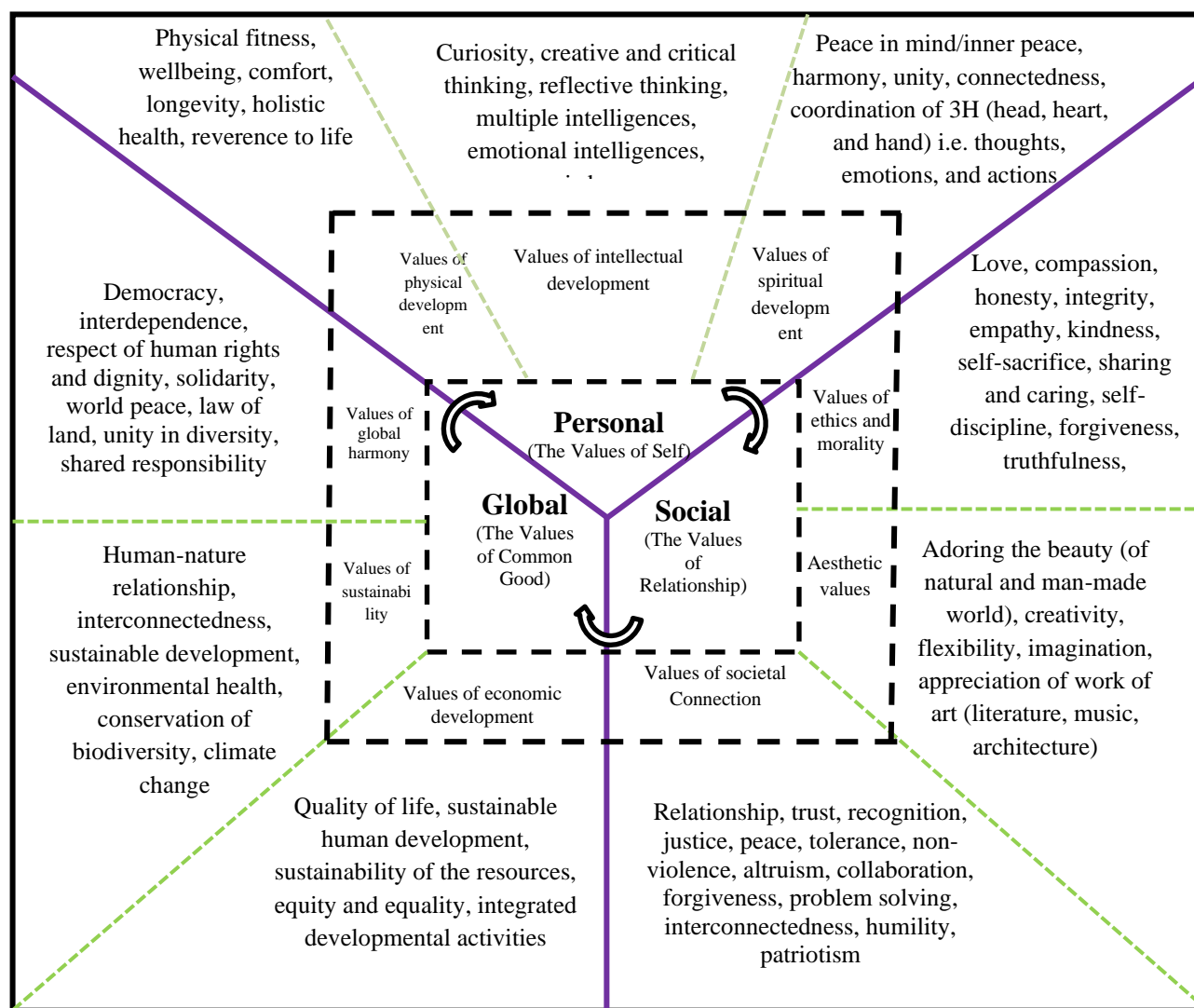

Figure 1. Values and Values Components Depicted from Literature Review[1] and Field Study, (Pokhrel, 2021)

Values Education

In its true sense, education is inbuilt with values in the theoretical or practical aspect. Values education is an explicit and/or implicit school-based activity to promote students' understanding and knowledge of values to inculcate the skills and dispositions of students so that they can enact values as individuals and as members of the wider community. Values education is a complex socialization process within schools, aiming to convey prevailing values and establish a valid connection between the individual, the group, and society (Zajda, 2023). Besides these,

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[1]Based on the review of literature from OECD (2019, 2021), Klamer (2017), Lovat (2017), Leisinger (2014), Leicester et al. (2005), Tete (1996), Schwartz (1992, 2006, 2012)

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values are not only connected to students but also to teachers, administrators, families, and the authorities who are at the policy-making level and can affect the educational system (Epstein, 2018). More importantly, values need to be reflected in the whole school culture i.e., the philosophy of the school, policies, leadership, management, students-teacher-staff relationship, infrastructure, social responsibility, and an exemplary school environment.

Values education is a systematic approach to imparting positive elements of moral and ethical education. Values encompass culturally ingrained, collectively held, and communicated concepts of what is considered good or desirable. These values can pertain to various aspects such as belief systems, like endorsing pluralist democracy; codes of conduct, such as honesty, tolerance, and courage; states of existence, like peace, tolerance, and equality; or moral judgments, including truth, beauty, and justice (Zajda, 2021).

A synoptic review of the educational history in Nepal reveals that effortsto inculcate values in its educational policies and objectives have been emphasized from the very beginning. The report of the Nepal National Education Planning Commission NEPC (1956), the first-ever commission in Nepal, has stated the need and importance of values in education and the holistic development of a child via value-based integrated learning. The report outlined the objectives of school education as:

> To foster civic skills such as a sense of responsibility and cooperation, a commitment to national unity, and a self-reliant and helpful attitude; to cultivate an appreciation for various forms of art and culture, including music, dance, literature, and folklore; to promote personal skills encompassing mental, emotional, and physical well-being, along with moral and spiritual values; to nurture individual talents and abilities, facilitating a substantial contribution to societal well-being; and to instill a comprehensive understanding of life, the world, the environment, and the universe, among other aspects (NEPC, 1956, p. 91).

From 1956 to the date – Report of NEPC, 1956); Report of the Committee for Holistic National Education [*Srvangina Rastriya Shiksha Samiti* (SRSS,1961)]; Primary School Curriculum (1968, 1992, 2009); Report of National Education System Plan (NESP, 1971); Primary Education Project (PEP, 1979); World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA, 1990); Report of National Education Commission (NEC, 1992); National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal (NCF, 2007); Basic Education Curriculum (BEC, 2012); and the latest National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal (NCF, 2019) – every educational policy, curriculum framework, and their periodic amendment has stressed the importance of values education for holistic learning. NCF (2019) has included values education at all levels under different subject headings with an integrated curriculum for the primary level (grades 1-3) including soft skills – behavioral skills, and values. Moreover, the flexibility of teaching moral education/civic education/character education, or other related subjects is granted under the heading of 'local subject' in grades 6-8 (CDC, 2019).

Table 1. *Level and Grade-wise Value-based Subjects*

Levels	Grades	Subjects	Credit Hour
Basic	1-3	*Serophene* (My Surrounding)	8
	4-5	Social Studies and Human Values Education	5
	6-8	Social Studies and Human Values Education Local Subject(s)	5
Secondary	9-10	Social Studies	5
	11-12	Social Studies and Life Skills	5
		Human Values Education	5

Relevance of the Study

Historically, teaching values were thought to be limited to religious/missionary schools, each affiliated with a specific religion promoting corresponding values such as Jesuit Schools-Christian values, Gurukul/Ashram schools-Vedic values, Madrasas-Islamic values, and Gonpas-Buddhist/Tibetan values. However, contemporary philosophical and neurobiological research presents compelling evidence that integrating values into learning

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activities enhances students' deeper learning, reflectivity, self-confidence, ethical behavior, social responsibility, and overall personality development (Lovat, 2017). This integration also holds significant potential to impact school culture, student-teacher relationships, classroom environment, and students' attitudes, skills, and character DEST (2006) connecting values to a complex web of socialization influenced by cultural, legal, familial, and school-related factors (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

In this context, value in education is an inevitable agenda and the role of a school/educator is more crucial (Pokhrel et al., 2023). In the realm of school pedagogy, values education holds a crucial role, even though the relationship between values education and pedagogy is highly debated and challenging (Zajda, 2023). Hence, the school practice needs to be capable of balancing individual perspective and inclusive social participation and contribute to instilling humanity by focusing on attitude, behavior, and competencies through their structured/unstructured, explicit/hidden curricula and pedagogical approaches. Countries in Europe, Asia, Australia, the US, and many others have put considerable effort into strengthening values in education into their national curricular framework (Zajda, 2023; Mohamad et al., 2019). Similarly, research publications on values education in the international academic arena have been increasing year by year with a due focus on pedagogy, psychology, and sociology (Wu & Zhao, 2019). Nonetheless, there exists a scarcity of empirical research conducted on the occurrences in Nepal that motivated me to engage in this field to make a meaningful contribution to the existing body of knowledge. Hence, the present study makes a significant contribution to poking a crucial but dormant issue in the local context.

Objectives and Research Questions

Studies have shown that educators have the greatest impact on the day-to-day experience and engagement of students in schools (Cinches et al., 2017). Educators play a vital role in students' academic performance and character building. For this, it is important to know how educators perceive values and use them in their everyday classroom activities. To this end, the main objective of this research was to explore educators' perspectives and practices of value integration in school activities. Based on the subjective experiences of the participants, the research sought to comprehend the following research questions:

1. What does the term 'value' mean to the participants?
2. Why is it important to integrate value in education/everyday school activities?
3. How are values integrated into everyday curricular/pedagogical activities?

Methods

Qualitative-Phenomenological Research: Understanding Lived Experiences

Qualitative research, centered on participants' lived experiences, interprets their stories and viewpoints in natural settings through methods like field notes and interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Cohen et al. (2019) highlight qualitative research's purposes, emphasizing its focus on people as meaning-makers who construct their understanding of the world. The approach, rooted in phenomenology aims to explore the unique experiences of individuals in their life-world. Phenomenology focuses on shared lived experiences. It describes, understands, and interprets human life experiences, emphasizing subjective perspectives collected through direct interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Phenomenology studies subjective experience patterns, exploring how individuals make meaning in their lives (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Effective qualitative research involves close and sustained personal interactions with participants, ensuring an accurate interpretation of their subjective perspectives. In applying this phenomenological approach, the study investigates how teachers experience (perceive and practice) values integration and also how it impacts students' holistic learning experiences, concluding intuitively from participants' interpretations of their lived experiences. The study makes generalizations based on multiple perspectives, providing insights into the nuanced phenomena experienced by participants in the educational context.

Research Area and Participants

The study focused on secondary-level schools in the Kathmandu Valley, consisting of three districts: Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur Nepal, with participants purposefully selected using purposive sampling to capture diverse experiences related to values integration in pedagogy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research included thirty-five secondary-level school heads, teachers, and curriculum experts, chosen based on a minimum of three years of working experience and a focus on social studies/language subjects. The use of purposive sampling allowed flexibility in participant selection aligned with the study's objectives (Glesne, 2016).

Table 2. *Selected Schools (pseudonym)*

1. SSS Sadan,	33. GP School,
2. AS School,	34. SS VidhyaMandir,
3. A VidhyaMandir,	35. VP Sec.School
4. S. International School,	
5. Pathshala Sec. School,	
6. SG IB World School,	
7. Samata School,	
8. Svpr Sec. School,	
9. Adhy Sec. School,	
10. SW School,	
11. Gyan S. School,	
12. H. Angels Public School,	
13. Hindu V.P. Sec. School,	
14. K. English School,	
15. M. Ashram (Gurukul),	
16. M. Islamiya School (Madrasa),	
17. FSC. Sec. School,	
18. NPB Sec. School (Gonpa),	
19. HA Sec. School,	
20. KVY School,	
21. KGS School,	
22. DAV School,	
23. GH School,	
24. API School,	
25. ApxL School,	
26. PI IB School,	
27. Imp Intl school,	
28. Xt. XV School (Jesuit),	
29. St.Mry School,	
30. RB School,	
31. ChaitJ School,	
32. KW School,	

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Table 3. *Demographics of the Participants (percentage in parenthesis)*

Gender		Qualification		Capacity		Work Experience	
Male	11 (31.4%)	PhD	9 (26.7%)	Principal	13 (37%)	<10 years	2 (6%)
Female	24 (68.6%)	MPhil	1 (2.9%)	Teacher	17 (49%)	10-20 years	13 (37%)
		Masters	24 (68.6%)	Curriculum Experts	5 (14%)	>20 years	20 (57%)
		Bachelors	1 (2.9%)				

Participants' Average Age in Years	46.2
Participants' Average Work Experience in Years	23.5

The dataset exhibits a diverse range of participants in terms of age, with individuals spanning from 27 to 70 years, and a notable gender imbalance, predominantly featuring male participants. Qualifications vary, including Bachelor's, Master's, MPhil, and PhD, with a prevalence of Masters Degrees. Participants hold diverse roles such as Teacher, Curriculum Expert, and Principal, and their work experience ranges from 3 to 40 years, suggesting a wide array of professional backgrounds. Principals and those in curriculum-related roles tend to have higher average work experience. Gender disparity is evident, particularly in leadership roles. The presence of PhD. holders in both teaching and administrative positions underscores the diverse application of advanced education. Potential correlations between age, qualification, and role type hint at nuanced trends within the dataset.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The researcher employed semi-structured in-depth questions, a focus group discussion guide, a classroom observation sheet, and a school curriculum review sheet as data collection tools. Data were collected direct/face-to-face method. In doing so, flexibility was maintained to capture real-life experiences, aligning with the notion that interviews should resemble conversations (Foster et al., 2021). The interview logistics were arranged for participant convenience, and recorded in a recording device with permission for transcription and analysis. Additionally, classroom observation charts, curriculum review sheets, and assignment questions were designed for comprehensive data collection. The multiplicity of data sources aimed to provide a thorough description of the phenomena, acknowledging the importance of data collection quality in qualitative studies (Saldaña, 2013).

Data analysis is a nuanced process focused on deriving meaning from raw data to address research questions (Saldaña, 2013).. The data analysis employed coding, categorizing, and developing themes from the data for the analysis process. Close readings of interview transcripts aided in understanding participant responses (Glesne, 2016). Open coding reduced transcribed data to capture the essence, and create a thematic structure framework. Themes and statements were drawn, validated with original data, and integrated into descriptions to illuminate participant experiences. Thematic analysis was manually done using content analysis to maintain researcher engagement with the text and preserve intuitive processes (Van Manen, 2014). The findings were corroborated across multiple sources, contributing to a comprehensive conclusion.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Ensuring the integrity of qualitative research, priority over trustworthiness and credibility is a must (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Diverse data collection tools were used for a participant-centric approach, aligning with Guba's criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Guba, 1981, as cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Avoiding manipulation, sustained engagement with participants, and cross-checking interpretations maintained authenticity. Inclusivity, educative value, catalytic impact, and tactical empowerment were considered for fairness. To validate data, experts reviewed and approved the interview protocol. Pilot testing ensured protocol validity and member checking with a panel of researchers and educators ensured transcript accuracy (Glesne, 2016).

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Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations encompass informed consent, the right to privacy, protection from harm, and honesty, following established guidelines. Informed consent involves both oral and written agreements, emphasizing voluntariness and participant rights (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The right to privacy was maintained through anonymity, confidentiality, and coding for research purposes. Protection from harm was ensured by approaching participants with respect and sensitivity, avoiding misconduct in data collection (Ellis, 2007). Honesty, integrity, and truthfulness were upheld in professional interactions, committing to harm prevention. Ethical considerations spanned procedural, situational, and relational stages of research, adhering to university and authority guidelines.

Results

Educators' Perspectives and Practices on Values Integration: What? Why? How?

Perception is associated with the mental process of an individual that helps to acquire knowledge, interpret it, develop a framework of the surroundings, and relate it to real-world situations. Educators' perception influences their attitudes, behavior, and methods of their classroom or pedagogical practices. Moreover, educators are on the front lines and act as the first point of contact between students and the official curriculum (Li et al., 2016). Hence, it is important to know educators' perspectives for the effective implementation of any program.

The 'What' of Values

Guided by the first research question, the interviews were opened with the open-ended question on what values are for them, and how they define values. The summary of the responses is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Educators' Perspectives/Perception of Values*

Perception on Values	Participants
Tools to bring humanity in human beings, bringing fundamental human values back to humans.	P1, P3, P4, P15, P18, P19, P23, P26, P30, P32, P35
Principles that respect human dignity and co-existence; construct social relationships, and produce responsible and capable social citizens.	P2_P7_P8_P18_P22, P25_P26_P27_P28_P32, P34
The components connected to human personality, attitude, ability, and self-development bring a positive transformation to humans.	P9_P10_P11_P30, P34, P35 P17_P18_P24_P26_P32
Components to raise consciousness, precisely critical consciousness, knowing the self, and connecting to others. Tools to shift knowledge to wisdom, developing 21st-century skills (4Cs).	P4_P11_P13_P17_P19 P23_P15_P30_P32, P34
Empowering tools that back up human actions with confidence and conscience, connect learning with life to make self-reliant.	P14_P30_P31, P34, P32, P20_P22_P23_P24_P29
The *aacharan*- the right way of living a life, connecting head, heart, and hand, blossoming human excellence.	P15_P21_P31, P32, P35

Participants in the study express diverse views on values, with some considering them essential tools for reinstating human virtues and principles that uphold human dignity, fostering positive transformations. Others see values as integral components linked to personality and self-development, serving as empowering tools that connect learning with life to promote self-reliance. The study also highlights the role of values in raising consciousness, fostering critical awareness, and developing 21st-century skills. Participants emphasize values as a guiding framework for living, encouraging the integration of the head, heart, and hand to achieve human excellence.

The varied perspectives on values emphasize their complex nature, serving different roles in individual development and societal well-being. Some participants stressed the societal goal of promoting ethical citizenship, suggesting that values play a vital role in shaping responsible and competent members of society. Recognizing

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values as elements associated with personality and self-development aligns with established theories on their influence on personal growth and overall well-being. Additionally, participants view values as essential in contemporary education, serving as instruments for transcending knowledge into wisdom and cultivating skills necessary for navigating modern challenges effectively. The acknowledgment of values as empowering tools and a guiding framework for life emphasizes their dynamic role in bridging theoretical principles with practical applications, contributing significantly to ongoing discussions on education, personal development, and societal well-being.

The 'Why' of Values?

Mounting individual/social problems among teens, alcoholism, drug abuse, depression and suicides, violence, corruption, abuse of authority, and more prominently declining cultural values and mores in successive generations justify the urgency of values in mainstream educational practices. Every educational activity in its core objective is to be value-laden and values are to be intrinsic to every school activity (Spector, 2015). However, modernization, commercialization, and politicization of academia, the dominance of technology coupled with many other factors have sidelined the humanistic aspect resulting in a mechanical process. Hence, it is crucial to employ the values-based approach in education to preserve the humanitarian aspect of education (Balakrishnan, 2021). Contemporary education needs to encompass the knowledge of values, citizenship, national identity, patriotism, ecological awareness, creative and critical thinking, effective decision-making and problem-solving skills, and other soft skills (Ladwig et al., 2010). The value-integrated pedagogical approach is needed to instill a range of capabilities, attitudes, and skills required in a real-world situation to make the world a better place for everyone.

Guided by the second research question, the interaction was made on the relevance of values education in the 21st century. The respondents expressed a wide range of views with certain commonalities. Common themes on why values in education are outlined here. Value in education is essential:

- to kill the educated monster;
- to transform society and build good human relationships;
- to blend Western science with Eastern tradition/culture;
- to instill soft skills/behavioral skills among the students;
- to prepare a responsible social citizen capable of building good relationships and transforming society;
- to shift the individualistic attitude to humanistic and common good;
- to create a meaningful living with good moral conduct;
- to develop human resources with great minds and good hearts

The research findings present a compelling narrative advocating for a transformative reevaluation of education, encapsulated by the metaphorical imperative to "kill the educated monster." This phrase distressingly emphasizes the need to move beyond traditional models of education that may prioritize academic achievement over the cultivation of ethical values. The call to 'transform society and build good human relationships' underscores the belief that education is not merely a personal pursuit but a powerful force for societal change. By prioritizing values such as empathy, compassion, and mutual respect, education can contribute to the development of individuals who actively engage in community building, fostering a more harmonious and interconnected society.

Moreover, the research advocates for a balanced and culturally inclusive approach by encouraging the 'blend of Western science with Eastern tradition/culture.' This integration recognizes the importance of diverse knowledge systems, aiming to create an educational environment that is not only academically enriching but also culturally relevant. By embracing a holistic perspective, education can transcend cultural boundaries, fostering a nuanced understanding of values that resonate with a globalized world. In essence, the research findings collectively call for an educational paradigm that goes beyond the conventional, placing values at its core and envisioning a generation of responsible, empathetic individuals capable of contributing to the common good of society.

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The 'How' of Values?

The third research question focused on the practices. Incorporating the spirit of the national curriculum framework, many schools have made significant efforts to make values a part of school life and the life of the practitioners. They opined that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to values integration. A combination of multiple approaches helps make it a part of school life. The common themes of the respondents for successful values integration were: creative conducive school ambiance; preparing teachers, parents, and students; reorienting community and media; reaching out to the real-world situation; honest execution of curriculum; diversifying the pedagogical approach; and reorienting the assessment system.

Figure 2. *A Thematic Framework on Values Integration and Holistic Learning Achievement*
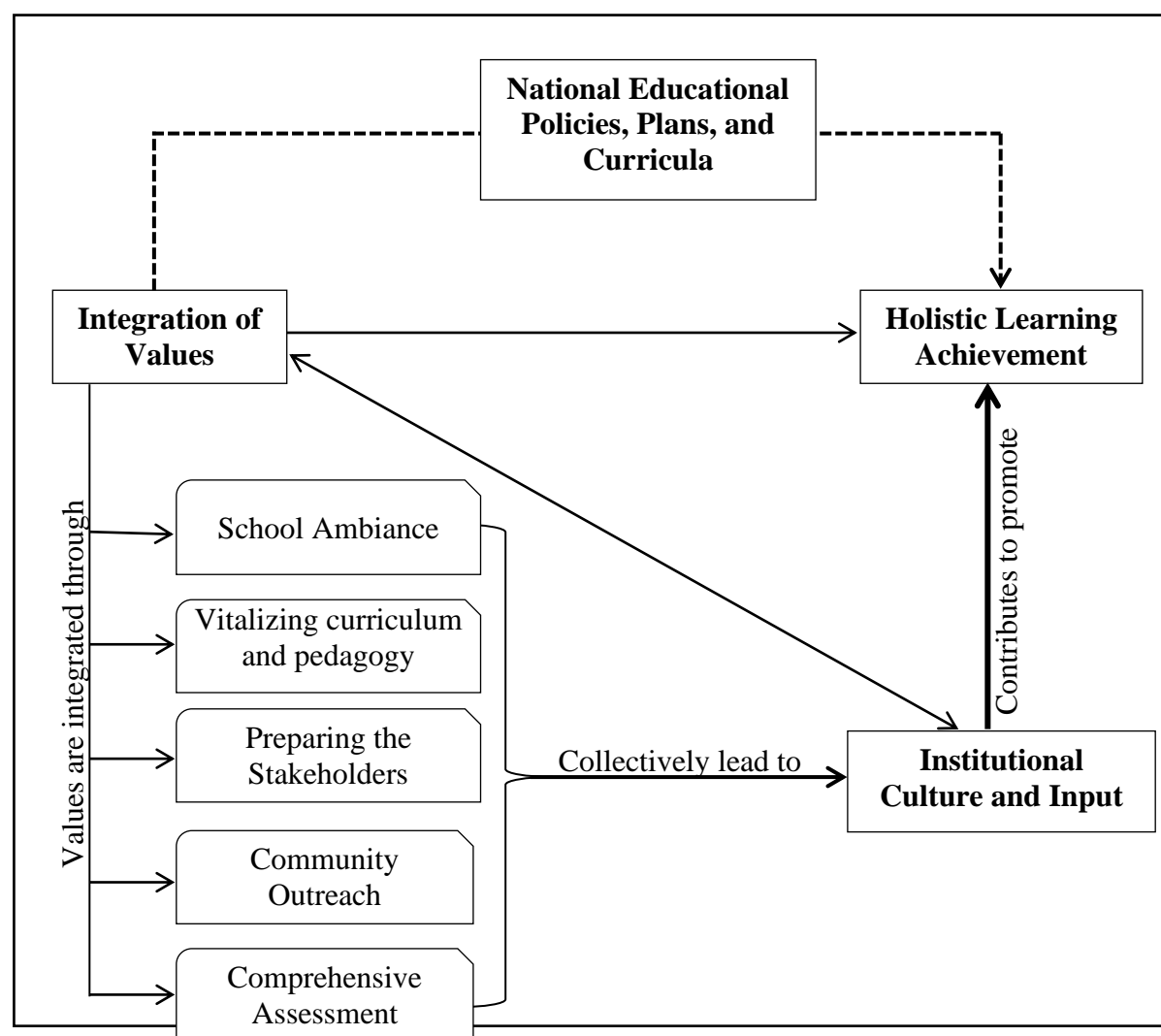
Values through Conducive School Ambiance

School ambiance encapsulates philosophy, policy, vision, mission, infrastructure, organizational structure, and functioning. An honest discussion of values education is sterile and counter-productive without healthy reflection on the potential of institutions. Discussion of values in a single subject by a single teacher will be a futile act. The school's overall environment must have a transmissive influence or else schools do not transmit values. A school needs to provide a safeguard against demoralizing and de-civilizing forces like poor parenting, consumerism, and media influence. A positive school culture makes values integration more effective and transformative as

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students learn from what they see (Widodo, 2019). Hence, school climate is the heart and soul of a school. Poor school culture reflects poor values in the students. A good school ambiance ensures every individual's worth, dignity, and importance, is a healthy and harmonious learning place, and teaches many things implicitly.

> *Our school fosters a positive environment with the 'Happy Entry and Happy Exit' initiative, ensuring a joyful experience in all areas. Infrastructure and resources are allocated for positivity. A cultural museum promotes diversity, values, and understanding, complemented by the presence of a temple, emphasizing the importance of all religions. (AB_P18)*

The school ensures a positive environment, allocates resources wisely, introduces a cultural museum, and emphasizes diversity and religious understanding for students' holistic education.

Values through Collaboration of Stakeholders: Parents, Teachers, Students

We cannot impose any value even if our intention of doing so is good. An effective integration or internalization is not possible unless the primary stakeholders are ready to accept that. Hence, preparing primary stakeholders is crucial.

Preparing Teachers

Teachers are considered the primary agents and sources of good character for the students because students observe their behaviors and follow (Aryal, 2022). Arthur (2011) opines that teachers need to prepare themselves as moral agents and model the kind of positive attitude and moral behaviors that they want to see in students as responsible social citizens. However, in traditional pedagogical practices, teachers are not able to play with the values as they are under tremendous pressure of course completion, exams, parents, and school pressure on students' performance. Every parent wants their child to be well cultured, but their focus lies on exam scores.

> *While language and social science textbooks offer ample opportunities to incorporate values, time constraints and the pressure to cover the curriculum pose challenges. Balancing the demand for good grades from students, parents, and school administration adds complexity. Connecting values to each chapter becomes difficult, given these factors. Nevertheless, I make efforts to integrate values into my subject teaching, recognizing the inherent challenges in uncovering and linking values within the constraints of the educational system. (BG_P9).*

The participant further showed his concern that if *teachers are evaluated based on the changes they make in students' lives instead of the student's scores, we can be the best agent of transformation (BG_P9).* Key stakeholders need to understand the challenges that teachers face in real-world situations. It must be taken as a collective effort by all stakeholders.

Teachers' education is one of the major supports for values integration. They need more education and training, professional development programs, pedagogical skills, and resources to bolster their awareness and set a positive attitude. Training, workshops, seminars, and other professional development programs should be the regular features where value integration needs to be the major approach. This provides a platform for the teachers to learn, reflect, think, and apply to their daily pedagogical activities. Such training and seminars should not be conducted in an ideal situation but based on real-world classroom situations- soil fitted.

> *After researching Western and Eastern practices, we concluded that the primary job of developing good culture is to prepare good teachers; teachers need to be well cultured, equipped with automated habits, and collaborative activities, and finally take all the practices into the classroom. The next step is to prepare parents and finally, it reflects among the students. (AB_P18)*

Among the stakeholders, the teachers play a significant role because values are taught every time teachers step into the class, by how they address the students, how they relate to them, the policies they enact in classroom procedures, and certainly in how they stand for their views (Lyons et al., 1998).

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Preparing Parents

Home is the first school and parents are the first teachers of a child. Parents' involvement is very crucial to materialize any school approach including values inculcation. Parents need to be well-oriented so that they can play a vital role in shaping the good character of a child. *Parents need to be partners in every school endeavor (NP_P21)*. Parents-teacher collaboration supported by school management multiplies the effects of any approach applied. However, preparing parents is not a piece of cake as they are from diverse backgrounds. If we try to talk about values without preparing parents, there is a high chance of values conflict. For this, parent education, parenting, and frequent communication with parents are crucial. One of the participants said that they worked with parents as much as with teachers to make them clear about the school approach.

> *Execution of any concept requires parents' support. Preparing parents for the new concept is challenging as they are used to the traditional approach of an exam-oriented teaching-learning system, grades/marks, position in class, and life. However, we have been doing it through regular parenting, parent education, frequent meetings with parents, periodic home visits, inviting parents to different school activities, and so on. (PM_P13)*

Preparing Students

Today's children spend more time with the internet and gadgets than with socialization activities. In a sense, they are digitally addicted. In this case, school-age children must be well supervised by families, teachers, and the community to prevent the hazardous impacts of virtual life (Salman, 2015) and bring them back to normal social life. An unfortunate bitter truth is that children at present are less in their parents' grip. Hence, it is the teacher again who needs to be the front line to prepare students for positive input.

> *In the initial five minutes, I aim to prepare students for a holistic perspective. My goal is to cultivate goodness beyond greatness, emphasizing that while all good people are great, not all great people are inherently good. I focus on fostering understanding through love, mental preparedness, and relating academic content to real-world scenarios. Encouraging empathy, I prompt students to reflect on their personal experiences, encouraging a sense of responsibility in addressing social issues. (LNP_P11)*

As a part of preparing students, I found, during my class observation, the teacher started class with silent sitting for 1-2 minutes followed by chanting prayers then a quotation on the board and explaining, telling stories of great personalities based on the theme of the lesson under discussion followed by some group activities (2022.7.2: 2:35 pm). Later when the teacher was asked about the purpose he reported, that

> *Silent sitting brings students physically and mentally inside the classroom, the prayers are chanted to express gratitude to those who made all this possible, quotations and stories of great personalities motivate students, and the group activities engage students for effective learning (VK_P1).*

Furthermore, teachers asserted that they tried to instill values by becoming role models to their students through their attitudes and actions.

> *I never impose on my students to do this or that, I do it first and tell them to follow if what I did was ok, and I tell them only to the extent I can do that I follow a perfect model of– the BE-DO-TELL formula (NP_P21).*

Teachers admitted that there is a significant positive impact on students' behavioral aspects along with academic achievements when they are motivated with positive values. It is obvious that students stay indifferent and take things lightly when it is not linked to examination. Here comes the role of the teacher:

> *Teachers need to boost the student's self-esteem; for this, he/she needs to make them friends, spend time with them, play, eat, sit, and walk with them to help students overcome their inferiority complex (BG_P9).*

When asked students in a group discussion about their expectations from schools and teachers, students invariably reported that the teachers and admin must listen to them.

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We want teachers would listen to us, understand our feelings, and never let us down in front of the group, not put all the students in the same bowl. Most of the time school acts what it feels ok to fulfill its purpose but never heeds what is going on with us (FGD_2022/07/02:4.10 pm).

In this context, a school needs to change its approach; this is the point where values play a vital role for both teachers and students.

Values through Reorienting the Secondary Stakeholders: Media and Community

It is hard to imagine a world without technology and media. Students' engagement in online games, social media, YouTube videos, and other shows is increasing. The use of media equals perversion is not true however, it is crucial to be a selective user.

The idea that technology harms children lacks justification as assimilation with technology is inevitable. Rather than resisting, the focus should be on guiding students to make discerning choices, while holding media accountable for content. Parents' concerns about socialization overlook the virtual community aspect. A shift in perspective is needed to embrace and responsibly navigate the technology landscape, acknowledging its integral role in our lives. (RS_P7).

Community is another challenge concerning values integration. When students step out of the school gate, they hear people with different cultures, languages, backgrounds, and orientations. The community needs to shoulder a collective responsibility and ensure that the child is learning good things from them.

No matter how good a school is, the moment students step out they happen to hear/see unfriendly things. The community must be oriented to internalize what is good and what is bad. Students learn more from what they see in their surroundings; hence the community must be friendly to positive values (NK_P2).

Values through an Honest Execution of Curriculum and Pedagogical Approach

Honest execution of the curricula through a diverse pedagogy such as drama, simulation, gamification and storification, debates, role play, seminars, group work, creative writing, photographs, paintings, etc. help foster the values. For this, teachers must have a pedagogy of daring or the courage to introduce a novel idea or approach though unsure about its consequence or transformative intervention (Stetsenko, 2017).

The curriculum is not to blame either in the past or now; they are good enough though they are heavy and rigid. The only thing is how we deliver it; now the curriculum also holds soft skills and values; if we follow the curriculum thoroughly and execute it honestly, everything is there, and it is rich in values; hence we cannot technically blame the curriculum for the matter (AT_P10).

It is also necessary that teachers are updated about new emerging issues, instructional methods, and techniques from upcoming research. This may help teachers to develop conceptual tools in the context of teaching morals, values, ethics, and character education in the sciences. Extra-curricular activities can be the best means of values integration as students are more interested in this.

In our case theatre, works are a life-provoking and highly effective means of values integration. A student while acting learns to live a character- the greatest impact on a student (RS_P7).

Besides, some schools have designed their internal curriculum – school-made curriculum (SMC) based on the national curriculum to integrate values.

Our school adheres to the national curriculum framework but has developed its curriculum, dedicating one class weekly to values. Emphasis is on aligning local practices with course content and fostering teamwork through projects. Soft skills integration begins in junior grades, following the NCF structure, and extends to upper grades with an internal curriculum. Grades 1 to 10 use separate curricula for teaching, subject-wise integration, and involvement in ECAs, CCAs, and club activities. (AB_P18).

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Reaching Out to the Real-World Situation

To internalize the concept, one must go through integrating the concept into real-life situations i.e., experiential learning either by first-hand experience or vicarious. The values learned via experiences become lifelong, meaningful, and well-actualized. Community service learning, as a part of experiential learning, can also be made a pedagogical tool as it can capture the values of social responsibility while reinforcing academic learning.

Connecting students with the community is effectively achieved through project work. We either facilitate students reaching out to the community or bring the community into schools. This involves field trips, visits to orphanages/elderly care homes, outdoor community studies, and overnight stays. The process is structured with pre-level (identifying learning goals), on-level (gaining necessary knowledge), and post-level (preparing and presenting reports with plans). Additionally, community members are invited to share their experiences during various school occasions and celebrations. (AT_P10)

Such activities contribute to the perfect socialization of the students. It entails a community activity or project that links hands-on experience to course concepts. It also incorporates the basic themes as hands-on experience, tied into the course curriculum, it is more reflective learning that includes a community project and looks to nurture values. Mere content knowledge is not enough, they need to be involved in the context – the community.

Our school allocates 18% of tuition fees to support community schools and provide scholarships. The seven-year Dailekh School Project serves as a model, exposing students to the broader world through regular visits. Students actively volunteer in community schools, fostering a sense of global awareness and instilling the value of contributing to others' welfare. (SDi_P22).

In this sense, the best way to connect the word to the world is through activity-based learning, project-based learning, or dummy learning.

Reorienting the Assessment System

Berman et al. (2018) propose three categories of assessments: assessment *of* learning, *for* learning, and *as* learning. They explain, that in the assessment of learning teachers evaluate student achievement against goals; in the assessment for learning teachers use student progress to guide teaching; whereas in the assessment of learning, students reflect on their progress for future goals and the assessment task is also a learning task. The following section summarizes how these approaches are useful in integrating values.

The assessment framework encompasses three dimensions: assessment of learning, assessment for learning, and assessment as learning. In the summative assessment of learning, values are incorporated through essay questions, integrated into criteria, and reflected in project-based assessments, case studies, and peer/self-assessments, using values-focused literature. Assessment for learning, a formative approach, involves infusing values into learning objectives, exemplifying them, and promoting reflection through cooperative assessments, real-world instances, and community involvement. Assessment as learning views students as dynamic assessors, engaging in ongoing self-evaluation with predetermined criteria, integrating values into curriculum planning and lesson structures, fostering dialogues, and initiating service-oriented learning, multicultural perspectives, reflective practices, community collaborations, and values-centered professional growth.

Discussion

The qualitative study delves into educators' perspectives on value integration in education, offering valuable insights into how these perspectives shape teaching practices. Educators, as highlighted in the literature, play a crucial role as the conduits between students and the formal curriculum. Understanding their perceptions becomes pivotal for the effective implementation of educational programs. The participants' varied views on values, ranging from considering them as tools for reinstating human virtues to integral components linked to personality and self-development, align with the complexity of values in education. This complexity, emphasized in established theories, suggests that values serve different roles in individual development and societal well-being (Li et al., 2016). The acknowledgment of values as empowering tools and a guiding framework for life resonates with ongoing

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discussions on education, personal development, and societal well-being. These are connected to the understanding of values, as outlined by international bodies like UNESCO, OECD, CoE, and APEID, beyond mere moral codes, portraying them as essential competencies for 21st-century learners (Cohen et al., 2019; OECD, 2019, 2021; UNESCO, 2015, 2022).

The study seamlessly connects educators' perspectives with broader societal issues, such as the decline in cultural values and the urgent need for values-based education in the face of modernization, commercialization, and technological dominance. This echoes with literature emphasizing values as essential for promoting ethical citizenship, shaping responsible members of society, and addressing contemporary challenges (Spector, 2017; Balakrishnan, 2021). The results advocate for a transformative reevaluation of education, stressing the imperative to move beyond traditional models and prioritize the cultivation of ethical values. The practices of values integration discussed in the study align with existing literature on the importance of a holistic and collaborative approach involving multiple stakeholders. The emphasis on creating a positive school ambiance aligns with the idea that values education should be embedded in the overall environment of the school. There lies a close connection between a positive school culture and effective values integration i.e. the role of the school environment in shaping students' values (Widodo, 2019).

The study highlights the importance of preparing teachers, parents, and students, aligning with literature recognizing teachers as primary agents of character development and emphasizing the need to involve parents in the educational process (Arthur, 2011). The emphasis on teacher education and training reflects existing literature suggesting that teachers need ongoing professional development to effectively integrate values into their pedagogical practices. The incorporation of diverse pedagogical approaches and the reorientation of the assessment system align with innovative teaching methods and assessment practices for values integration (Stetsenko, 2017; Berman et al., 2018). The emphasis on experiential learning, community immersion, and project-based learning advocates real-world connections in values education (Salman, 2015). In summary, this study contributes valuable insights that seamlessly integrate with existing literature on values in education, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of values, their importance in addressing societal challenges, and the need for a collaborative and holistic approach to values integration in educational practices.

Table 5. *Summary of the Findings Matrix*

The 'What' of Values	The 'Why' of Values?	The 'How' of Values?
Tools to bring humanity in human beings, bringing fundamental human values back to human	to kill the educated monster; to create a meaningful living with good moral conduct;	Values through Conducive School Ambiance
Principles that respect human dignity and co-existence; Construct social relationships, produce responsible and capable social citizens	to transform society and build good human relationships;	Values through Collaboration of Stakeholders: Parents, Teachers, Students
The components connected to human personality, attitude, ability, and self-development bring a positive transformation to human	to blend Western science with Eastern tradition/culture;	Values through Reorienting the Secondary Stakeholders: Media and Community
Components to raise consciousness, precisely critical consciousness, knowing the self, and connecting to others. Tools to shift knowledge to wisdom, developing 21st-century skills (4Cs)	to instill soft skills/behavioral skills among the students; to develop human resources with great minds and good hearts	Values through an Honest Execution of Curriculum and Diversifying the Pedagogical Approach

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Empowering tools that back up human actions with confidence and conscience, connect learning with life to make self-reliant	to prepare a responsible social citizen capable of building good relationships and transforming society;	Reaching Out to the Real-World Situation: Community Immersion, Project-Based Learning (PBL), Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL), Reflection-Based Learning (RBL)
The *aacharan*- the right way of living a life, connecting head, heart, and hand, blossoming human excellence	to shift the individualistic attitude to humanistic and common good;	Reorienting the Assessment System: Assessment of Learning, Assessment for Learning, Assessment as Learning

Conclusions

The research findings illuminate the intricate landscape of values in education, showcasing diverse perspectives on their significance and emphasizing the urgent need for their integration. Participants accentuated the transformative potential of values in fostering positive societal change and shaping individuals capable of contributing to the common good. The multifaceted nature of values, ranging from their role in personal development to addressing pressing social issues, highlights their dynamic and complex character. The study delves into the 'Why,' 'What,' and 'How' of values integration, offering a comprehensive understanding of the subject. It underscores the societal imperative to move beyond the conventional educational paradigm and advocates for a holistic approach that prioritizes values alongside knowledge acquisition. Recognizing the importance of creating a conducive school environment, collaborating with stakeholders, reorienting community and media, and diversifying pedagogical approaches emerge as key strategies for successful values integration.

Drawing from the outcomes of the research, various recommendations arise for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders actively engaged in molding educational approaches. Firstly, it is recommended to prioritize continuous professional development for educators as transformative agents. Establish effective collaboration mechanisms among stakeholders through regular communication, workshops, and seminars, fostering an interconnected educational environment. Align national curriculum frameworks with an approach that integrates values into pedagogy, highlighting the significance of soft skills, ethics, and character development. Encourage responsible technology use and involve the community to reinforce positive values instilled in schools. Integrate experiential learning that links academic concepts with real-life situations, promoting a continuous learning process. Revise the assessment system to include values, prompting self-reflection and aligning assessments with broader educational objectives. Embrace cultural diversity by incorporating both Western and Eastern traditions, emphasizing the importance of a positive school culture that values diversity and ethical behavior. Implementing these recommendations allows education stakeholders to contribute to creating an educational paradigm beyond traditional models, nurturing a generation with not only academic excellence but also a strong ethical foundation for meaningful societal contributions.

Declaration

Conflicts of Interest

None.

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None.

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Contributors

RKP did the research and developed the concept. MSB and BA supervised the study and supported in preparation of the manuscript. MKS edited the manuscript. BA also handled the publishing process. The final version to be published is approved by all authors.

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