



TEACHING BEYOND LESSONS: HOW TEACHERS BALANCE ACADEMICS AND VALUES IN THE REVISED K TO 10 CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Key Stage 2 teachers in balancing academic instruction and values education within the K to 10 curriculum, focusing on their challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, allowing informants to express their perspectives until data saturation was reached freely. Thematic analysis was employed to identify significant patterns across informants' narratives. Findings revealed that teachers experience major challenges in balancing academics and values education due to time constraints, learner diversity, classroom management difficulties, and the complexity of integrating and assessing values formation. Despite these challenges, teachers employ coping mechanisms such as instructional strategies for integration, professional support systems, and reflective practice with continuous assessment to enhance teaching effectiveness and learner development. Moreover, teachers emphasized that academics and values are interconnected processes, strengthened through persistence, instructional adaptation, and expanded teacher roles that promote holistic student development. Teachers also highlighted the importance of collaboration among colleagues, support from school administrators, and active learner participation in creating a positive learning environment. The study further revealed that effective integration of values education contributes to learners' academic performance, behavior, and interpersonal relationships inside the classroom. Based on these findings, it is recommended that school heads strengthen policies on instructional time allocation, workload management, mentoring, and professional development, while providing standardized tools for values assessment. Teachers may further enhance practice through reflective teaching, collaborative planning, and learner-centered strategies to promote holistic learner development and meaningful educational experiences.

KEYWORDS: *Teaching beyond the lesson, academics, values, K to 10 curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers in contemporary basic education are expected to accomplish more than the transmission of academic content. They are also expected to cultivate learners' character, social responsibility, ethical judgment, and interpersonal skills. This dual responsibility is particularly important in curriculum reforms that emphasize learner-centered and holistic development. In the Philippine setting, curriculum reform has sought to strengthen foundational competencies while responding to concerns about curriculum congestion, instructional demands, and the development of learners beyond academic achievement (Abragan et al., 2022; Barrot, 2021). The Revised K to 10 Curriculum similarly emphasizes foundational learning and the development of socio-emotional and values-related competencies (Department of Education, 2023).

Values education is most meaningful when it is connected with everyday learning rather than treated as an isolated component. Berkowitz and Bier (2020) emphasized the importance of intentionally developing character through school experiences, while Lovat (2011) argued for a values-oriented approach to holistic learning. Jones and Kahn (2020) likewise highlighted the importance of integrating social-emotional and moral development with academic learning. From this perspective, the classroom becomes a setting in which academic competencies and values can be developed simultaneously through contextualized tasks, interactions, reflection, and teacher modeling.

Despite this policy and pedagogical emphasis, teachers continue to encounter practical barriers. Curriculum

overload can occur when learning expectations exceed available instructional time, reducing opportunities for reflection and meaningful integration (OECD, 2020). Barrot (2021) documented challenges associated with instructional delivery, lesson preparation, and curriculum alignment in the Philippine K to 12 context. Kolbe et al. (2020) similarly noted that limited teaching time can constrain teachers' capacity to conduct richer learning experiences. More recent discussion of shortened instructional periods under the MATATAG reform also points to the need for teachers to continually adjust lesson delivery and assessment practices (Almodiel, 2025).

The problem is compounded by learner diversity. Classrooms contain learners with different backgrounds, readiness levels, behaviors, interests, and patterns of engagement. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasized the need for differentiated instruction in response to learner differences, while Evertson and Weinstein (2021) described classroom management as increasingly complex in diverse learning environments. Fredricks et al. (2021) further explained that engagement is influenced by the relevance and design of learning experiences. These conditions place additional demands on teachers who must manage classroom behavior, maintain participation, achieve academic competencies, and promote values at the same time.

Another challenge concerns the assessment of values. Unlike many academic competencies that can be measured through tests and performance tasks, values are often manifested through attitudes, decisions, interactions, and behaviors that develop gradually and contextually. Lovat et al. (2021) noted that values formation is difficult to quantify



through traditional assessment procedures. Nucci and Narvaez (2022) likewise emphasized the importance of clear frameworks for moral and character education. Tirri (2021) observed that teachers may experience uncertainty in documenting and validating learners' values development when assessment guidelines are unclear.

The present study responds to this concern by examining teachers' lived experiences in the Panabo City Division. The inquiry focuses not simply on whether values education is present, but on how teachers negotiate the simultaneous demands of academic instruction and values formation in everyday classroom practice. The study addresses a practical gap in the literature: existing work frequently discusses curriculum implementation, teacher workload, or values education separately, whereas fewer accounts center on teachers' lived experiences of balancing both responsibilities. The study therefore contributes a contextualized account of the challenges teachers encounter, the ways they cope, and the professional insights they develop through the process..

OBJECTIVES

1. Determine the challenges teachers face in balancing academics and values education in the Revised K to 10 Curriculum.
2. Understand how teachers cope with the demands of integrating values formation alongside academic instruction.
3. Explore the insights teachers gain from their experiences of balancing academics and values in fostering holistic student development.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design. Phenomenology was selected because the inquiry sought to understand the meaning and essence of teachers' lived experiences rather than to measure variables statistically. Qualitative inquiry allows researchers to explore complex educational realities through detailed accounts of participants' perspectives and experiences (Naeem et al., 2023). Phenomenological inquiry is particularly suitable when the goal is to understand how individuals perceive and interpret a shared phenomenon (Frechette et al., 2020; Dodgson, 2023).

Participants and Sampling

Six public elementary school teachers from the Panabo City Division participated in the study. Participants were purposively selected because they possessed direct experience relevant to the phenomenon. The inclusion criteria were: (a) public elementary school teachers under Key Stage 2, Grades 4 to 6; (b) Teacher I position; (c) at least three years of teaching

experience; and (d) teaching a values-related subject or implementing values education within the K to 10 Curriculum. Purposive sampling was appropriate because the study required information-rich participants with specific characteristics relevant to the research questions (Campbell et al., 2020).

Data Collection

Data were gathered through individual in-depth interviews using an expert-validated, open-ended interview guide. The questions addressed teachers' experiences in integrating values into academic lessons, challenges involving time, resources, learner behavior and assessment, coping strategies, support systems, and reflections on holistic student development. The study obtained ethics clearance and institutional permissions before data collection. Participants provided informed consent and were assured of voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw. The interviews were conducted in comfortable and secure settings, recorded with permission, transcribed, and returned to participants for confirmation.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Interview transcripts were analyzed through a phenomenological thematic process informed by Colaizzi's approach. Significant statements were identified, meanings were formulated, and recurring patterns were clustered into themes and sub-themes. The analysis moved from individual statements toward an integrated description of the phenomenon. Participants were given opportunities to confirm the accuracy of the interpreted accounts, while field experts reviewed the thematic interpretation for coherence and methodological rigor. This process strengthened the credibility and authenticity of the findings.

RESULTS

Analysis of the six teachers' narratives produced three broad dimensions of experience: challenges in balancing academics and values, coping mechanisms used to manage the dual demands, and professional insights concerning holistic learner development. The themes are presented below and interpreted in relation to relevant literature.

Challenges in Balancing Academics and Values

The first dimension revealed that balancing academic instruction and values education is constrained by time, learner diversity, classroom management demands, and the difficulty of integrating and assessing values. These challenges are interconnected: when instructional time is limited, teachers have fewer opportunities to respond to individual learner needs, facilitate reflection, or document behavioral changes.



Table 1. Summary of challenges experienced by Key Stage 2 teachers.

Table 1

Challenges of Teachers in Balancing Academics and Values Education in the K to 10 Curriculum

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Significant Statements
Time Constraints in Integrating Values Education	Limited instructional time allocation	"Forty-five minutes lang siya... kinahanglan nga imo jud siya i-insert kon unsa integration sa lesson nimo." (P3) "Limited time only... dili nimo ma-explain or ma-integrate ang gusto nimo kay kulang ang oras." (P5)
	Competing academic competencies and content coverage	"Sometimes maglisod ka nga dili naka makaremind og maayo kay kadali ka mo-focus sa content sa imong lesson." (P4) "Magdali-dali ka niya ang bata kay dili na niya ma-sabot kay dalidalion nimo ang discussion." (P3)
	Difficulty in maximizing lesson flow	"Dili jud tanan lesson ma-connect nimo sa values... so kinahanglan jud creativity sa teacher." (P4) "Usahay mawala na lang ang values kay nag-focus na lang sa academic content." (P2)
Learner Diversity and Classroom Management Challenges	Varied learner behavior and discipline issues	"Ang challenge jud, ma'am, kay ang attitude or character sa bata." (P1) "Kani kay classroom management, dili jud malikayan nga naay dili mo-cooperate." (P3)
	Differences in learner background and ability levels	"Lahi-lahi sila background, lahi-lahi silag attitude, level of understanding." (P4) "Naay bright, naay average, naay hilumon nga dili dayon makasabot." (P4)
	Low engagement and participation in learning tasks	"Some of the students kay dili mo-engage, especially pag-reading na." (P2) "Ang uban dili ganahan magbasa kay gusto nila fast-paced lang ang learning." (P2)
Difficulty in Integrating and Assessing Values Formation	Limited integration opportunities across subjects	"Dili man gud tanan lesson sa Math and Science ma-connect nimo sa values." (P4) "As a subject teacher, dili ko ka-focus always sa values integration kay naa pud ko competencies nga apason." (P6)
	Challenges in observing and measuring values	"Values man gud dili siya always observable... dili nimo maingon nga 100% ma-improve ang bata." (P1 & P5) "Ang values kay dili man siya ma-measure pinaagi sa quiz or test scores." (P6)
	Lack of standardized tools for values assessment	"Wala jud gamit nga tools or something... ma-measure ilang values." (P6) "Ang among gamit lang kay observation, anecdotal record, ug class record." (P3 & P6)

Time Constraints and Curriculum Pressure

Teachers consistently described limited instructional time as a central difficulty. They explained that values sometimes have to be inserted into already packed lessons, while academic competencies and required content must still be completed. The pressure to move through the lesson can result in shortened discussions, limited reflection, or the temporary prioritization of academic content. This finding is consistent with Barrot (2021), who identified instructional delivery and curriculum alignment as challenges in the Philippine K to 12 context. It also supports the OECD (2020) description of

curriculum overload as a condition in which learning expectations exceed available time. Kolbe et al. (2020) similarly found that insufficient instructional time can limit richer instructional practices. The teachers' accounts therefore suggest that values integration is not simply a matter of willingness; it is also shaped by the structural time available for teaching.

The teachers' experiences also resonate with Almodiel (2025), who reported that shortened instructional sessions require teachers to modify lesson delivery and assessment. In the present study, teachers described a similar need to make



immediate decisions about which parts of a lesson to emphasize. This suggests that curriculum implementation requires not only clear competencies but also realistic instructional pacing. When teachers must choose between completing content and facilitating meaningful values discussion, values education may become less explicit.

Learner Diversity and Classroom Management

The second major challenge involved the diversity of learners and the resulting classroom-management demands. Teachers described differences in learner attitudes, behavior, ability, background, and engagement. Some learners were highly responsive, while others were quiet, hesitant, less cooperative, or less engaged in particular activities. These differences required teachers to adapt their methods while simultaneously maintaining classroom order and progressing toward academic goals.

This finding is supported by Evertson and Weinstein (2021), who emphasized the complexity of classroom management in diverse learning environments. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) likewise stressed the importance of differentiated instruction when learners vary in readiness and background. Fredricks et al. (2021) noted that engagement depends partly on the relevance and design of learning activities. Thus, the teachers' challenge is not only behavioral management; it also involves designing experiences that allow diverse learners to participate meaningfully. When teachers spend considerable time responding to behavior or disengagement, less time may remain for deliberate values formation.

Difficulty Integrating and Assessing Values

Teachers further reported that values cannot always be naturally connected to every lesson, particularly when subject competencies are highly content-focused. They also found it difficult to determine whether values had been successfully developed because values may be gradual, contextual, and visible only through repeated behavior. Teachers therefore relied heavily on classroom observation, anecdotal records, class records, and other informal evidence.

This result aligns with Berkowitz and Bier (2020), who noted that character education can be difficult to integrate consistently across academic disciplines. Lovat et al. (2021) emphasized that values are expressed through attitudes and behaviors that are not easily quantified. Nucci and Narvaez (2022) similarly highlighted the need for coherent approaches to moral and character assessment, while Tirri (2021) pointed to teachers' uncertainty regarding the documentation of values development. The present findings indicate a need for practical, developmentally appropriate, and context-sensitive assessment approaches that complement, rather than replace, professional teacher judgment.

Coping Mechanisms Used by Teachers

Despite the challenges, the teachers demonstrated active efforts to sustain both academic and values-oriented goals. Three coping themes emerged: instructional strategies for integration; support systems and professional development; and reflective practice and assessment of effectiveness.

Table 2. Coping mechanisms reported by Key Stage 2 teachers.

Table 2
Coping Mechanisms of Teachers with the Demands of Integrating Values Formation Alongside Academic Instruction in the K to 10 Curriculum

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Significant Statements
Instructional Strategies for Integration	• Integration of Values in Academic Lessons	• <i>"I integrate values education directly into academic lessons using pictures, scenarios, and related content."</i> (P3) • <i>"Teachers embed moral lessons within subject content like honesty and respect."</i> (P4) <i>"Real-life examples and storytelling help connect lessons to values."</i> (P6)
	• Use of Collaborative and Classroom-Based Activities	• <i>"Students work together in activities that promote cooperation and responsibility."</i> (P5)
	• Careful Lesson Planning and Curriculum Alignment	• <i>"Lesson planning helps ensure that values are embedded in each activity."</i> (P2) • <i>"Teachers align values integration with learning competencies during planning."</i> (P6)
Support Systems and Professional Development	• Professional and Institutional Support	• <i>"Seminars and training help teachers manage dual demands of teaching."</i> (P2) • <i>"Professional support from colleagues and administrators provides strategies and resources."</i> (P4) • <i>"Workshops enhance teachers' skills in integrating values education."</i> (P6)
	• Collaborative Practices Among Teachers	• <i>"Teachers share ideas and materials to improve values integration."</i> (P4)
	• Personal and Social Support Systems	• <i>"Support from family and friends strengthens teachers' emotional resilience."</i> (P1) • <i>"Community and parental involvement reinforce values beyond the classroom."</i> (P2)



Reflective Practice and Assessment of Effectiveness	• Observation and Behavioral Indicators	• “Social support reduces stress and promotes consistency in teaching values.” (P3) • “Teachers assess effectiveness by observing students’ behavior and participation.” (P1) • “Positive changes in students’ attitudes indicate successful integration.” (P3)
	• Use of Feedback and Multiple Assessment Methods	• “Teachers use quizzes, reflections, journals, and feedback for evaluation.” (P1) • “Feedback from students, colleagues, and administrators informs teaching effectiveness.” (P4)
	• Reflective Teaching and Continuous Improvement	• “Reflection logs help identify effective coping strategies.” (P5) • “Teachers reflect on what strategies worked and what needs improvement.” (P6)

Instructional Integration, Collaboration, and Planning

Teachers reported deliberately embedding values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, cooperation, and discipline into academic lessons. They used pictures, scenarios, storytelling, real-life examples, group work, role-playing, and interactive discussions. Careful lesson planning helped them identify opportunities where values could be connected to learning competencies without treating values as an unrelated add-on.

This approach is consistent with Jones and Kahn (2020), who emphasized intentional integration of social-emotional and moral development within academic learning. Hattie (2021) also highlighted the value of collaborative learning experiences for engagement and social development, while Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasized purposeful planning and alignment. Biesta (2021) further argued that educational design should make room for meaningful and ethically grounded learning. Taken together, these perspectives support the teachers' practice of making values part of the learning process rather than a separate activity.

Professional, Institutional, and Social Support

Teachers identified seminars, workshops, mentoring, administrative assistance, collaboration with colleagues, and support from family and community as important resources. Professional support gave teachers access to strategies and materials, while collegial collaboration enabled them to exchange ideas and solve classroom problems. Personal and social support also helped teachers manage stress and maintain motivation.

Kraft and Papay (2020) emphasized that supportive professional environments can promote teacher development. Ronfeldt et al. (2021) found that teacher collaboration is associated with improved instructional practice and student outcomes. Collie and Martin (2021) similarly linked teachers' social support with well-being and resilience. OECD (2021) also emphasized the importance of supportive school environments and professional learning. These findings reinforce the present study's conclusion that teachers should not be expected to manage the dual demands of academic instruction and values education in isolation.

Reflection, Feedback, and Multiple Forms of Assessment

The teachers also relied on observation, feedback, reflection, journals, and other assessment evidence to determine whether their approaches were effective. Behavioral changes, participation, attitudes, and engagement were treated as meaningful indicators of values development. Reflection logs and personal evaluation allowed teachers to identify strategies that worked and modify those that did not.

This finding is supported by Hattie (2023), who emphasized the importance of evidence and feedback in improving teaching. Heritage (2021) described formative assessment as a process that uses multiple sources of evidence to inform instructional decisions. Farrell (2020) emphasized reflective practice as an ongoing process through which teachers critically examine and improve their teaching. The teachers' reliance on observation and reflection therefore represents not merely coping behavior but a mechanism for continuous professional learning.

Insights on Holistic Student Development

The third dimension of the findings concerns the meaning teachers derived from their experiences. They increasingly viewed academic learning and values formation as interdependent. Teachers explained that literacy, numeracy, science, social studies, and other learning experiences can provide opportunities to cultivate responsibility, empathy, perseverance, cooperation, and respect. They also described values as a foundation of holistic education and emphasized the importance of connecting lessons to real-life situations.

This insight is consistent with Alam (2024), who emphasized the integration of value education with academic content for intellectual, ethical, emotional, and social development. Purnomo et al. (2025) similarly described the value of practical and experiential activities in strengthening both learning and character formation. Setiowati (2024) highlighted the role of integrating ethical discussions and positive behavior modeling in supporting socio-emotional growth. The present study therefore suggests that holistic education is experienced by teachers not as an additional curriculum burden but as a way of understanding what meaningful learning should accomplish.

Table 3. Major insights gained by teachers from balancing academics and values.



Table 3
Insights of Elementary Teachers from their Experiences of Balancing Academics and Values in Fostering Holistic Student Development

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Significant Statements
Integration of Academics and Values as Interconnected Processes	• Academics and Values as Interdependent in Learning	• “Academic learning and character development are deeply intertwined.” (P3) • “Values enable deeper academic engagement and achievement.” (P4) • “Academic subjects are interconnected with moral and social values.” (P5)
	• Values as Core of Holistic Education	• “Values formation is part of every learning experience.” (P6)
	• Contextualized and Meaningful Learning Experiences	• “Values become concrete when embedded in real-world contexts.” (P1) • “Integrating values makes lessons more relevant and engaging.” (P2) • “Teachers link lessons to real-life scenarios for deeper understanding.” (P3)
Role of Persistence in Instructional Adaptation and Teacher Growth	• Development of Flexible and Creative Instructional Approaches	• “Teachers become flexible, creative, and intentional in linking values and content.” (P2) • “Teachers adapt teaching methods to cater to diverse learners.” (P5)
	• Continuous Improvement Through Experience and Reflection	• “Balancing academics and values improves instructional strategies.” (P3) • “Experiences help teachers design more effective and engaging lessons.” (P6) • “Teachers become more reflective and purposeful in teaching.” (P2)
	• Enhancement of Classroom Environment and Professional Growth	• “Integration of values creates a positive and respectful classroom environment.” (P1) • “Teachers experience professional growth and increased job satisfaction.” (P6) • “Balancing academics and values strengthens classroom management.” (P4)
Holistic Development and Expanded Teacher Roles	• Focus on Students’ Holistic Growth and Character Formation	• “Teachers recognize their role in shaping students’ character and attitudes.” (P1) • “Student success is expanded beyond grades to overall development.” (P3)
	• Importance of Relationships, Modeling, and Social Interaction	• “Building relationships is crucial in shaping students’ values.” (P1) • “Students learn values through observation and modeling.” (P2) • “Everyday interactions influence students’ character development.” (P3)
	• Values Reinforcement Beyond Classroom Instruction	• “Values formation is reinforced inside and outside the classroom.” (P4) • “Simple discussions and interactions impact students’ attitudes and behavior.” (P5) • “Teachers and peers both contribute to shaping student values.” (P6)

Persistence, Adaptation, and Professional Growth

Teachers described becoming more flexible, creative, and intentional through repeated efforts to balance academic and values-oriented goals. They learned to modify strategies according to learner needs, reflect on classroom experiences, and redesign activities. These experiences contributed to

improved classroom management, greater instructional confidence, and professional growth.

The finding agrees with Shi and Liu (2025), who emphasized adaptive teaching in responding to learner needs, and Rincón-Flores et al. (2024), who highlighted adaptive strategies as a means of improving teaching and learning. It also complements literature on reflective practice and teacher



resilience (Farrell, 2020; Collie & Martin, 2021). Adaptation, therefore, can be understood as both a response to constraints and a pathway for professional development.

Relationships, Modeling, and Values Beyond the Classroom

The teachers' accounts further showed that values formation extends beyond formal lesson activities. Positive teacher-student relationships, everyday conversations, peer interaction, and teacher modeling were viewed as important mechanisms through which learners encounter and practice values. Teachers recognized that learners observe how adults behave and respond to situations, making the teacher's conduct part of the learning environment.

Jones et al. (2022) reported that social-emotional learning supports students' self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills. Pianta and Hamre (2020) likewise emphasized the importance of responsive teacher-student relationships in fostering belonging and resilience. Allen (2026) connected positive teacher-student interactions with motivation and character-related outcomes. These perspectives support the teachers' broader conception of their role: effective teaching involves not only presenting content but also creating relationships and environments in which positive values can be practiced.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that balancing academics and values education in the Revised K to 10 Curriculum is a complex but meaningful dimension of Key Stage 2 teaching. Teachers experience substantial constraints arising from limited instructional time, competing competencies, learner diversity, classroom management, limited opportunities for values integration across subjects, and difficulties in assessing values development. These challenges indicate that values education cannot depend solely on individual teacher effort; its successful implementation is also influenced by curriculum design, school support, resources, and assessment systems.

At the same time, teachers demonstrate considerable agency. They cope by integrating values into academic lessons, using collaborative activities, planning deliberately, seeking professional and social support, and engaging in reflective assessment. Their experiences suggest that the most sustainable approach is not to separate academics and values but to design learning experiences in which both are developed together.

Finally, teachers' reflections reveal a broader understanding of educational success. Learner development is viewed as extending beyond grades to include character, relationships, responsibility, engagement, and emotional and social growth. The findings affirm the relevance of a values-oriented and holistic approach to education and suggest that teachers' expanded roles as facilitators, mentors, and role models are central to meaningful implementation of the Revised K to 10 Curriculum.

IMPLICATIONS

School heads and education leaders should review instructional-time allocation and workload expectations so teachers have realistic opportunities to integrate values meaningfully without compromising essential academic competencies.

Schools should strengthen professional development on values integration, differentiated instruction, classroom management, formative assessment, and reflective teaching.

Professional learning communities, collaborative planning, mentoring, and peer-sharing mechanisms should be institutionalized to help teachers exchange practical strategies and resources.

Schools should develop or adopt context-appropriate tools for documenting and assessing values formation through observable behaviors, reflections, performance tasks, and other multiple sources of evidence.

Teachers should continue using contextualized, collaborative, learner-centered, and experiential strategies that connect academic content with real-life values and situations.

Future researchers should investigate the development and validation of standardized but flexible values-assessment tools and conduct comparative or longitudinal studies on the relationship between values integration, academic learning, and character development.

LIMITATIONS

The study was limited to six Key Stage 2 Teacher I informants from the Panabo City Division and used qualitative phenomenological inquiry. The findings therefore represent the experiences and perceptions of the selected participants and should not be generalized statistically to all elementary teachers or school contexts. Data were primarily self-reported through interviews and may be influenced by recall, personal interpretation, and willingness to disclose experiences. The study also focused on teachers' perspectives and did not directly include learners, parents, or school administrators.

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