



Exploring basic school teachers' implementation of national values and social and emotional learning (SEL) in Ghana: A case study of Cape Coast basic schools

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how basic school teachers in Cape Coast, Ghana, conceptualize and implement national values and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) within the Standards-Based Curriculum. The study adopted a qualitative case study design and purposively selected 10 teachers from five public basic schools across the OLA and Aboom Circuits of the Cape Coast Metropolis. Data were generated through a semi-structured interview guide and structured non-participant observation and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) thematic analysis framework. The study found that basic school teachers in Cape Coast conceptualize national values primarily in behavioural and disciplinary measures rather than as civic ideals requiring deliberate moral reasoning. Their understanding of SEL was largely intuitive and experience-driven, with most teachers unable to ground their practice in any formal framework. Critically, the majority conflated national values and SEL, treating them as interchangeable constructs, which undermined the intentionality that effective implementation demands. In practice, both constructs were enacted incidentally, woven into routine classroom activities without explicit learning objectives. Classroom management and discipline served as the dominant vehicle for values education, while assessment remained informal, undocumented, and unsystematic. At the contextual level, large class sizes, curriculum coverage pressures, inadequate professional development, and inconsistent institutional support collectively constrained meaningful implementation, leaving it heavily dependent on individual teacher initiative. The study concludes that a fundamental misalignment exists between curriculum intent and classroom enactment, attributable to conceptual ambiguity and insufficient pedagogical guidance. It recommends sustained, practice-oriented professional development, development of context-specific instructional and assessment tools, active school leadership involvement, and structural improvements in classroom conditions to bridge the gap between policy expectations and implementation realities.

Keywords: Curriculum Enactment, National Values, Social and Emotional Learning, Standards-Based Curriculum

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental process through which societies transmit knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and habits necessary for responsible citizenship and social cohesion. Aside from cognitive development, education plays an essential role in shaping learners' moral character and social behaviour, hence contributing to national development and stability. In the past few years, increasing attention has been given to the need for education systems to move beyond academic achievement to include learners' social and emotional competencies and value orientations (Durlak et al., 2011; OECD, 2019). This indicates the recognition that academic knowledge alone is insufficient for preparing individuals for life. Emotional competencies – which concerns with the skills and abilities people use to understand, manage and express emotions effectively – such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills are essential for effective personal and social functioning (Goleman, 1995), while



values such as respect, responsibility, and tolerance are central to fostering peaceful and cohesive societies (Zajda, 2018; Idris et al., 2012). Studies have shown that integrating social and emotional learning with values education can lead to significant improvements in students' behaviour, attitudes, and academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011).

The concept of national values has received immense attention in educational conversations due to its central role in shaping responsible citizenship and promoting social cohesion. National values are generally understood as the shared moral, cultural, and civic principles that guide behaviour and interactions within a society (Zajda, 2018), often reflecting a nation's historical experiences, cultural traditions, and socio-political aspirations. In the classroom context, education on national values has been viewed as a deliberate effort to inculcate desirable attitudes such as respect, responsibility, tolerance, and honesty in learners (Idris et al., 2012; Jones, 2009). Zajda (2018) argues that promoting national values through education is necessary for maintaining social order and preparing learners for democratic participation. However, different stakeholders may interpret and prioritize values differently based on cultural, religious, and contextual considerations (Gomez, 2024). This means that national values are socially constructed and subject to varying interpretations. This raises important questions about how teachers understand these values and translate them into classroom activities. The Standards-Based Curriculum in Ghana places significant emphasis on core values such as respect, honesty, discipline, and tolerance, positioning them as integral to learners' total development (NaCCA, 2019a; Tawiah et al., 2025).

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has similarly emerged as an important component of contemporary education, reflecting a shift towards a more holistic understanding of learner development. SEL is commonly defined as the process through which individuals acquire and apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2013). Research has consistently shown that integrating SEL in school curricula contributes to improved social behaviour, enhanced academic outcomes, and overall learner well-being (Durlak et al., 2011; Ahmed et al., 2020). Ahmed et al. (2020) emphasise that SEL fosters emotional regulation and resilience essential for learners' adjustment within and beyond school. Nevertheless, the conceptualisation of SEL in practice is often inconsistent, as teachers may interpret it in relation to behaviour control or moral instruction rather than a structured set of competencies (Burroughs & Barkauskas, 2017; Brush et al., 2021).

Although national values and SEL are often presented as distinct components, there is significant overlap between them in terms of objectives and outcomes. Both aim at shaping learners' behaviour, attitudes, and interactions, particularly in areas such as respect, empathy, responsibility, and cooperation. Values such as tolerance and respect are closely related to SEL competencies like social awareness and relationship skills (Burroughs & Barkauskas, 2017; Brush et al., 2021). However, these similarities exist alongside differences in orientation. Whereas national values are often framed as moral and civic expectations, SEL focuses on developing skills that enable individuals to manage emotions and relationships effectively. This distinction highlights the possibility that teachers may conflate the two concepts, thereby influencing how they are interpreted and enacted in classroom practice.

In response to the global shift towards holistic education, Ghana has reformed its basic education curriculum to incorporate both national values and SEL as essential components of learner development. The Standards-Based Curriculum emphasizes core values such as respect, honesty, discipline, tolerance, and responsibility, alongside competencies reflecting social and emotional skills, and expects these to be integrated across all basic school subjects including Mathematics, English Language, Ghanaian Language, and Religious and Moral Education (NaCCA, 2019b; Tawiah et al., 2025). The curriculum further promotes learner-centred and activity-based pedagogies as means through which such values and competencies can be developed. Though the curriculum provides clear expectations regarding what learners should acquire, it offers limited explicit guidance on how teachers should effectively translate these expectations into classroom practice (Laar, 2024; Agbofa et al., 2023). Implementation is therefore largely left to teachers' discretion, shaped by their understanding, experiences, and the contexts within which they operate, raising concerns about the consistency and depth of implementation across different classroom settings.

The problem addressed in this study is the lack of clarity in how basic school teachers interpret and enact national values and SEL within classroom practices under Ghana's Standards-Based Curriculum. This lack of clarity creates uncertainty regarding what teachers are expected to prioritise and how these competencies should be translated into classroom practice. Consequently, the implementation of national values and SEL may become dependent on individual teachers' interpretations, beliefs, and classroom realities rather than on coherent pedagogical guidance. Despite the explicit inclusion of national values and SEL in the curriculum, there remains a critical concern with regards to how these expectations are translated into actual classroom practice (Laar, 2024; Agbofa et al., 2023). This consistently creates situations, where teachers implement these components based on their own understanding and available resources, resulting in potentially inconsistent practice. Existing research works suggest that structural constraints such as large class sizes, time limitations, and assessment demands tend to prioritize academic content over non-examinable areas like values and SEL (Ntumi et al., 2025). Thus, these competencies may be addressed implicitly through disciplinary practices rather than deliberate instruction, raising concerns about the effectiveness of their implementation.



Whereas existing studies have highlighted the importance of national values and SEL within Ghana's educational framework, there remain limited empirical studies on how these components are actually understood and implemented by teachers in classroom settings. Many of the available studies have focused on general educational outcomes, curriculum design, or policy intentions, with relatively little emphasis on teachers' lived experiences and classroom practices (Agbofa et al., 2023; Laar, 2024). The present study, therefore, explores how basic school teachers in Cape Coast conceptualise and integrate national values and SEL into their teaching practices, and examines how these concepts are enacted in classroom settings and the contextual factors that influence their implementation. Cape Coast was selected as the study site because of its diverse school landscape, comprising both university-community schools and schools serving indigenous urban communities.

1.1 Research Questions

- i. How do basic school teachers conceptualize national values and social and emotional learning (SEL) in Cape Coast basic schools?
- ii. In what ways are national values and SEL implemented in classroom practices?
- iii. What contextual factors influence teachers' implementation of national values and SEL?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This section reviews relevant models of curriculum implementation to provide a theoretical perspective for understanding how national values and SEL are understood and enacted in classroom practice. The review focuses on the fidelity approach, mutual adaptation, and enactment perspectives, which explain the diverse ways teachers engage with curriculum reforms. These models are important to the present study as they provide a framework for analysing how national values and SEL are conceptualized, enacted, and influenced by contextual factors in basic school classrooms.

2.1.1 Fidelity Approach to Curriculum Implementation

The fidelity approach to curriculum implementation is rooted in early implementation research of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in the work of scholars such as Michael Fullan and Milbrey McLaughlin, who examined the causes of many curriculum reforms failing to produce intended outcomes. The fidelity model emerged as a dominant perspective that defines successful implementation as the extent to which teachers deliver the curriculum exactly as it was designed by developers. According to Flinders and Fisher (2023), the model is grounded in a sender–receiver assumption, where curriculum developers are seen as producers of knowledge and teachers as implementers expected to transmit this knowledge without modification. The main assumption of this approach is that the closer classroom practice aligns with the intended curriculum, the more successful the implementation. It therefore emphasizes strict adherence to prescribed content, instructional methods, and assessment procedures. This perspective assumes that the curriculum is flawless hence deviations from it may compromise its effectiveness. However, this assumption has been questioned, as studies have shown that teachers often adapt curriculum content to suit classroom realities (Özüdoğru & Sakallıoğlu, 2025). Owusu (2014) notes in Ghana that teachers' level of familiarity with the curriculum significantly affects their ability to implement it with fidelity, suggesting that strict adherence may not always be feasible in practice. In the context of this study, where national values and SEL require interpretation and contextualization, strict adherence may not adequately capture how teachers actually implement these components in classroom practice, thereby highlighting the limitations of the fidelity approach.

2.1.2 Mutual Adaptation Approach to Curriculum Implementation

The difficulty of achieving strict curriculum fidelity led to the development of alternative perspectives that recognize the realities of classroom teaching. One such perspective is the mutual adaptation approach, advanced by Berman and McLaughlin (1976), which conceptualizes curriculum implementation as a dynamic process involving continuous interaction between the curriculum and the context in which it is enacted. Rather than viewing teachers as passive implementers, this approach places them as active agents who interpret and adjust curriculum materials to suit their specific classroom conditions. In this view, implementation is not just transmission of content but a process of negotiation shaped by student needs, school environments, and available resources. As Flinders and Fisher (2023) explain, mutual adaptation challenges the assumption that curriculum messages are transmitted unchanged, instead emphasizing the role of local context in shaping practice. Özüdoğru and Sakallıoğlu (2025) found that teachers often modify instructional content and strategies in response to student readiness and contextual factors. Rohadi (2017) similarly demonstrates that in character education, effective implementation depends on continuous adaptation of curriculum objectives and learning experiences to reflect contextual realities. In Ghanaian, such adaptation is evident in how teachers respond to challenges associated with the Standards-Based Curriculum, including issues of training,



resources, and classroom conditions (Takyi et al., 2025a). Although mutual adaptation provides a more realistic curriculum implementation approach, it raises concerns about potential deviations from intended curriculum goals. In the context of this study, this perspective offers useful insight into teachers' adaptive practices, although it does not fully explain how meaning is constructed in classroom enactment.

2.1.3 Enactment Approach to Curriculum Implementation

Current studies on curriculum implementation shifts attention from how curriculum is delivered to how it is enacted in classroom contexts. Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2012) enactment perspective conceptualises curriculum not as a fixed product to be implemented but as a set of policy texts that are interpreted, translated, and reconstructed by teachers within specific contexts. In this regard, teachers are not mere implementers but active meaning-makers whose beliefs, experiences, and professional judgements shape how curriculum is realized in classroom practice. This perspective emphasizes that enactment is influenced by multiple factors, including school resources, institutional expectations, and teachers' professional knowledge. Son and Kim (2016) identify different patterns of enactment shaped by teacher knowledge and contextual conditions, while Wang et al. (2019) demonstrate that curriculum enactment involves collaborative and school-based processes shaped by institutional dynamics. In the Ghanaian context, Addai-Mununkum and Setordzi (2023) state that teachers interpret and implement curriculum reforms in diverse ways depending on their motivation, competencies, and contextual constraints. With regard to this study, the enactment perspective provides a comprehensive lens for understanding how teachers construct meaning and translate curriculum expectations into practice. Although the fidelity, mutual adaptation, and enactment approaches offer different perspectives on curriculum implementation, they can be understood as complementary rather than competing frameworks.

Together, these approaches provide a comprehensive framework for analysing how national values and SEL are understood and implemented in classroom practice. The fidelity approach is relevant to the study's focus on teachers' conceptualization of national values and SEL, as it aids in the examination of the extent to which teachers' understanding of SEL and national values aligns with the intentions of the Standards-Based Curriculum. The mutual adaptation approach helps in analysing how teachers adjust and integrate national values and SEL within actual classroom situations, including constraints that relate to time, resources, and learner diversity. The enactment approach helps in understanding how teachers actively interpret, negotiate, and translate curriculum intentions into practice based on their beliefs, experiences, and institutional contexts.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Teacher's Conceptualization of National Values and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Agbofa, Anamuah-Mensah, and Quaicoe (2023) examined teachers' understanding of Ghana's Standards-Based Curriculum and found that many teachers possessed a general awareness of curriculum expectations but demonstrated limited depth in their conceptualization of key components such as values and competencies. A key strength of this study lies in its focus on teachers as central actors in curriculum implementation, highlighting how their interpretations shape classroom practice. The study also draws on evidence from practicing teachers, which strengthens the credibility of its findings. However, the study treats curriculum components broadly and does not provide a detailed account of how teachers specifically understand constructs such as national values and SEL. In addition, the study does not sufficiently explore how these conceptualizations translate into classroom practices. The present study addresses these gaps by focusing specifically on teachers' conceptualization of national values and SEL and examining how such understandings influence their implementation in classroom contexts.

Laar (2024) explored teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum and reported that teachers often rely on personal interpretations when engaging with curriculum components, particularly those that are not explicitly defined. The strength of this study lies in its recognition of teachers' interpretive role in curriculum implementation, which provides insight into how curriculum intentions are mediated in practice. It further highlights the role of teacher experience and training in shaping these interpretations. However, the study does not clearly distinguish between different curriculum elements, thereby limiting understanding of how teachers conceptualize specific constructs such as national values and SEL. Moreover, its focus remains largely on general implementation challenges without examining the nuances of teachers' conceptual understanding. The present study extends this line of inquiry by providing a more focused exploration of how teachers conceptualize national values and SEL within the Ghanaian basic school context.

2.3.2 Classroom Implementation of National Values and SEL

Addai-Mununkum and Setordzi (2023) examined how teachers implement curriculum reforms in Ghanaian basic schools and found that classroom practices often reflect a blend of prescribed guidelines and teachers' personal teaching approaches. A notable strength of this study lies in its attention to actual classroom practices, providing insight into how teachers translate curriculum expectations into teaching and learning activities. The study also



highlights the role of teacher agency in shaping instructional practices. However, its focus is largely on general pedagogical practices and does not provide a detailed account of how specific components such as national values and SEL are enacted in classroom contexts. In addition, the study does not sufficiently capture the subtle and informal ways through which values and SEL may be embedded in everyday classroom interactions. The present study addresses these limitations by examining how teachers explicitly and implicitly integrate national values and SEL into their classroom practices.

Rohadi (2017) investigated the implementation of character education in classroom settings and reported that teachers often rely on informal and incidental strategies, such as modelling behaviour and giving moral instructions, to promote desired values among learners. The strength of this study lies in its focus on value-based education and its recognition of the role of teacher behaviour in shaping students' learning experiences. It also provides useful insights into the practical challenges of integrating values into classroom instruction. However, the study is situated outside the Ghanaian context and does not consider how curriculum structures influence classroom enactment. Furthermore, it does not address the integration of broader competencies such as SEL alongside values education. The present study builds on these insights by examining how national values and SEL are enacted together within the framework of Ghana's Standards-Based Curriculum and within specific classroom contexts.

2.3.3 Contextual Factors Influencing Implementation

Takyi et al. (2025b) examined the implementation of Ghana's Standards-Based Curriculum through a systematic review and identified several contextual factors that shape teachers' practices, including large class sizes, inadequate teaching and learning materials, and limited professional development opportunities. A major strength of this study lies in its focus on the structural and institutional conditions that influence curriculum implementation, providing a realistic account of the challenges teachers encounter in their work. The study also highlights how these constraints affect teachers' ability to fully engage with curriculum expectations. However, its emphasis is largely on general implementation challenges and does not specifically address how such contextual factors influence the integration of particular components such as national values and SEL. In addition, the study does not explore how teachers navigate these challenges in their day-to-day classroom practices. The present study extends this work by examining how contextual conditions shape teachers' implementation of national values and SEL in classroom settings.

Özüdoğru and Sakallıoğlu (2025) explored how contextual realities influence teaching practices and found that teachers often adjust curriculum content and instructional strategies to suit classroom conditions and student needs. The strength of this study lies in its recognition of the adaptive nature of teaching, highlighting how contextual constraints and opportunities shape instructional decisions. It further provides insight into how teachers balance curriculum expectations with practical realities. However, the study is situated outside the Ghanaian context and does not consider the specific demands of the Standards-Based Curriculum. Moreover, it does not examine how such adaptations affect the implementation of values and SEL. The present study addresses these limitations by focusing on the Ghanaian basic school context and by examining how contextual factors influence the enactment of national values and SEL.

III. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study adopted a case study design to investigate the issue of lack of clarity with the enactment of social-emotional values and SEL in the standards-based curriculum. The case study design helped to investigate the existing phenomenon or happening (Yilmaz, 2013) in a particular institution. The inclusion of socio-emotional values and SEL into the Standards-based curriculum is not a hypothetical or emerging concern but it is a well-established and documented institutional reality, particularly at the pre-tertiary institutions in Ghana. Investigating this existing phenomenon required a research design capable of capturing its complexity, depth, and contextual specificity, qualities that are the hallmark of case study inquiry. The case study design is particularly justified by its capacity to generate in-depth, contextually rich understanding of a bounded phenomenon within its real-world setting to gather in-depth information about the how pre-tertiary teachers implement the Standard-based curriculum in Ghana, while paying attention to the development of social-emotional values and SEL in the students (Shapira & Amzalag, 2025). This design enabled the researchers to focus on basic schools within the Cape Coast Metropolis as a bounded system and to obtain rich, context-specific data from participants, making it suitable for capturing the complexity of teachers' practices and the contextual factors influencing the implementation of national values and SEL. To strengthen the depth and credibility of the data, two complementary methods of data collection were employed. These were semi-structured interviews and structured non-participant classroom observation. Triangulation of data sources was allowed by this combination, enabling interview accounts of teachers' practice to be examined alongside direct evidence from classroom setting.



3.1 Participant Selection

The population of the study consisted of all 97 primary and junior high school teachers from five schools within the OLA and Aboom Circuits of the Cape Coast Metropolis. From this number, the sample was selected for the study. These teachers were considered appropriate for the study because they were directly involved in the implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum at the basic school level. There were no restrictions regarding subject specialisation or years of teaching experience, as the study sought to capture diverse perspectives and experiences related to the implementation of national values and SEL. In all, ten (10) basic schoolteachers were purposively selected for the study, which was based on accessibility and availability of the participants (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2018). Specifically, five teachers were selected from each circuit, with participants drawn from five schools in total: three from the OLA Circuit and two from the Aboom Circuit. The selection of participants was guided by the need to obtain in-depth and information-rich data relevant to the study. The inclusion criteria for the selection were based on teachers who have taught for five years or more, as such teachers would have in-depth knowledge and experience with the implementation of the standards-based curriculum in Ghana (Kuutol, 2023). In line with the purposive sampling technique, the issue of saturation set in when the tenth participant was interviewed, where there were no new emerging themes from the context of these teachers (Vasileiou et al. 2018). For the classroom observation, all ten teachers in the study were observed, however, two of the original ten interview participants were inaccessible at the time of the observation. Two replacement teachers from the same circuit and school contexts were therefore included to maintain the observation scope. The observation data from these two replacements were used for general contextual corroboration of findings, instead of direct comparison with specific interview accounts. Each teacher was observed during one full lesson of approximately 60 minutes for JHS and 45 minutes for primary school, covering different subject areas. The observation of multiple subjects was considered a strength, as it allowed for thorough examination of whether SEL and values implementation were consistent across different subject areas.

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

Interviews were the primary method of data collection for this study. Both face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide purposefully designed to explore how basic school teachers conceptualized national values and SEL within the context of the curriculum, the ways in which these were enacted in classroom practice, and the contextual factors influencing their implementation. The interview guide covered three broad thematic areas corresponding to the research questions: teachers' conceptualization of national values and SEL; their enactment in classroom practice; and contextual factors shaping implementation.

The guide was piloted with two teachers not included in the main sample to assess clarity and coherence, and minor revisions were made based on the pilot feedback. Semi-structured interviews were considered appropriate because they provided flexibility for participants to express their views while allowing the researcher to probe for further clarification and depth (Vasileiou et al. 2018). Individual interviews lasted between 25 and 35 minutes. The use of both face-to-face and telephone interviews ensured accessibility and convenience for participants. It is acknowledged that telephone interviews may differ slightly from face-to-face interviews in terms of non-verbal cue availability; however, all interviews used the same guide and probing strategies to maintain consistency in data depth.

The second instrument was a structured observation checklist to guide structured, overt, non-participant classroom observation. The checklist was organized around teachers' enactment of national values and SEL, classroom management practices, nature of national values and SEL assessment, and teachers' conceptualization of national values and SEL. Each focal area contained observable indicators rated on a presence or absence basis, supplemented by a frequency tally for overall lesson rating. The checklist was used alongside field notes, which captured contextual details, verbatim teacher statements, and authentic classroom interactions. The observation checklist was reviewed by a senior researcher before use to assess clarity and relevance of the indicators, and minor adjustments were made accordingly. The observation was conducted in an overt manner, meaning teachers were fully aware of the observer's presence and purpose, which is consistent with ethical standards for research in educational settings.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

Audio recordings were transferred to a secure laptop and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants to protect their identities; they are referred to throughout this paper as Teacher A through Teacher J. The transcribed data were then organized and prepared for analysis using thematic analysis, which involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six phases: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Byrne, 2022). The process began with careful reading of the transcripts to achieve familiarization with the data, followed by the generation of initial



codes from meaningful segments. These codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories based on similarities and patterns. Recurring themes that captured key ideas related to teachers' conceptualization and implementation of national values and SEL, as well as contextual factors that influenced their implementation, were then developed and interpreted. Where divergent or contradictory responses were noted, these were acknowledged and interpreted alongside the dominant patterns. As noted by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017), qualitative data analysis involves an iterative process of coding, categorizing, and interpreting data to construct meaningful representations of participants' perspectives.

The observation data, comprising checklist summaries and written field notes, were prepared for analysis by organizing each teacher's checklist responses alongside the corresponding field notes into a single observational record per teacher. The records were then analysed using the same thematic analysis framework applied to the interview data. The interview transcripts and observation records were analyzed in an integrated manner, with both data sources coded concurrently to enable direct comparison. This integrated approach enhanced data triangulation, as points of convergence between interview and observation data were identified and used to enhance the credibility of findings, while points of divergence were acknowledged and interpreted as providing additional analytical depth.

3.4 Trustworthiness of Data

This study ensured the trustworthiness of the data by adhering to the qualitative research criteria proposed by Yanti et al. (2025), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement with participants during semi-structured interviews, which allowed for the collection of rich and detailed data. Member checking was also employed, where participants were given the opportunity to review their transcribed responses to ensure accuracy and clarity of meaning. Credibility was further enhanced through data source triangulation, by combining semi-structured interview data with non-participant classroom observation. These two data sources allowed interview accounts of teachers' practices to be examined alongside direct classroom observation. This reduced the risk of over-reliance on self-reported accounts. Transferability was achieved by providing detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and context to enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar settings (Drisko, 2025). Dependability was ensured through systematic documentation of the research process, including data collection and analysis procedures, thereby allowing for consistency and transparency (Creswell, 2014). Confirmability was ensured by maintaining objectivity throughout the study and grounding interpretations in the data collected. Reflexive practices, including careful attention to personal assumptions during analysis, were employed to minimize researcher bias and ensure that findings were shaped by participants' perspectives.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their voluntary participation was sought through informed consent before data collection through verbal consent in the presence of the school headteacher. They were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by the use of pseudonyms and by ensuring that no identifying information was disclosed in the reporting of findings. For the classroom observation, teachers provided explicit informed consent prior to being observed, and were made aware that the observer would be present in the classroom in a non-participatory capacity. All data collected was securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Finding

4.1.1 Basic School Teachers Conceptualization of National Values and SEL in Cape Coast Basic Schools

This research question focused on teachers' understanding and interpretation of national values and SEL. It sought to find out if teachers' grasp of these was clear, partial, or vague. Three themes emerged: national values are conceptualized as moral behaviour and discipline; teachers demonstrate a limited, experience-shaped understanding of SEL; and national values and SEL are frequently conflated.

Moral behaviour and disciplinary measures: Evidence of fidelity constraints: A dominant pattern in the data was teachers' tendency to conceptualise national values in terms of moral conduct and behavioural expectations rather than as civic ideals embedded in the curriculum. From the responses, values were consistently described through expressions such as respect, discipline, responsibility, and good behaviour, suggesting an action-oriented rather than conceptual understanding. The following account is representative:

National values are the good behaviours we teach the children so that they will respect others and behave well in society (Teacher A, 10th April, 2026, Cape Coast).



The emphasis on “good behaviours” and “respect” reflects an interpretation of values in observable and corrective terms. Teachers appear to prioritise behavioural outcomes over fostering learners’ deeper understanding of civic responsibility. A similar orientation is evident in the account below:

It is about training them to be disciplined and responsible in whatever they do (Teacher C, 13th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

The use of the term “training” denotes a corrective and prescriptive approach to the teaching of national values, where learners are guided to abide by expected norms rather than engage with the principles underlying those norms. This positions the teacher primarily as a regulator of conduct rather than a facilitator of moral reasoning. Such a pattern aligns with findings within the Ghanaian context, which show that teachers tend to emphasise discipline and moral upbringing when engaging with values in the curriculum (Asare & Afriyie, 2023; Atiku et al., 2025). It also reflects broader arguments that values education in practice is frequently reduced to behavioural expectations rather than explicit conceptual teaching (Lovat, Dally, Clement, & Toomey, 2011). From a fidelity point of view, this conceptualization shows that teachers have departed from the curriculum’s civic intent and have operationalize national values as behavioural compliance rather than as the principled moral ideas the Standards-based curriculum prescribes (NaCCA, 2019a). Across the lessons observed in the classrooms, teachers consistently drew students’ attention to values only when students are being corrected of a wayward behaviour, with no teacher introducing national values as a named learning objective at the beginning of the lesson.

Lack of a clear understanding of SEL: Teachers’ understanding of SEL appeared to be limited and largely informal. While participants described aspects of SEL such as managing emotions, relating with others, and showing empathy, these descriptions were not really grounded in formal terminology or structured knowledge. This suggests that teachers’ engagement with SEL is intuitive rather than theoretically informed.

SEL is about helping learners to control their emotions and relate well with others in the classroom (Teacher E, 15th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

This response captures key dimensions of SEL such as emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships; however, it lacks reference to specific competencies or frameworks. In similar fashion:

It is how students behave and how they interact with their friends and teachers (Teacher G, 15th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

Here, SEL is reduced to observable behaviour and social interaction, closely relating to how national values were conceptualized – a pattern that resonates with the conflation discussed in the next theme. More explicitly, some participants acknowledged that their understanding of SEL was not derived from professional training:

I have not really been taught about SEL, but from experience, I think it is about how students manage themselves and others (Teacher B, 10th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

Not downplaying the value of experiential learning, it may lack the depth necessary for intentional and structured implementation. This finding resonates with studies in Ghana highlighting gaps in teacher preparation regarding newer curriculum components, particularly those related to socio-emotional competencies (Atiku et al. 2025). It is also consistent with broader concerns that teachers often implement SEL implicitly due to limited formal training and conceptual clarity (Durlak et al., 2011). Notably, however, Teacher H offered a more structured description linking SEL to the CASEL framework of competencies, suggesting some variation in conceptual depth across the sample. Such variation underscores the importance of targeted professional development rather than assuming uniform understanding among teachers.

About your interaction with the environment, the relationship between you and the kids and the emotional that is the affective; the kids state of mind and the teachers’ readiness and your state of mind and readiness (Teacher H, 17th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

Conflation of national values and SEL: An enactment perspective: A recurring pattern across the data was teachers’ tendency to treat national values and SEL as interchangeable constructs. Rather than maintaining clear conceptual differences, participants frequently moved between the two in ways that suggested significant overlap.

They are almost the same because both of them deal with how the child behaves and relates with others (Teacher D, 15th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

This response directly defeats the distinction between the two constructs, framing them as equal. The shared emphasis on behaviour and relationships makes it difficult for teachers to identify SEL as a distinct framework with its own competencies. This becomes more evident in the following:

When you teach values like respect and tolerance, you are also teaching how to manage emotions and relate well with people (Teacher F, 15th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

While there is indeed a meaningful relationship between national values and SEL, interpreting one as automatically covering the other blurs important conceptual boundaries. In some cases, the confusion was explicit:

I think they are connected, but I don’t really know the difference between them (Teacher I, 17th April, 2026, Cape Coast).



Such confusion is an indication that teachers may be addressing both constructs concurrently without recognizing their distinct purposes or pedagogical demands. It is worthy to note that this conflation is not simply as a result of insufficient training or conceptual overlap between the two constructs, although the NaCCA (2019a; 2019b) curriculum explicitly differentiates between national values as civic and moral expectations and SEL as a set of developmental competencies. This explanation can partly be linked to a cultural foundation. Like most Ghanaians, basic school teachers tend to interpret moral conduct, social behaviour, and emotional development through the lens of morality and religiosity, collapsing what the curriculum treats as distinct domains into single framework of good character and Christian virtue. The data from the observation supports this because across all the classrooms observed, none of the teachers used the terms ‘national values’ or ‘SEL’, instead, teachers invoked patriotism and Christian values as organising concepts, with one teacher explicitly linking empathy to the biblical injunction to love one’s neighbour as himself. Other teachers also listed classroom compliance rules as direct expressions of SEL and national values, further conflating behavioural management with socio-emotional management. In consistence with the enactment perspective (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012), teachers are reconstructing the curriculum intent through their own cultural and experiential frames. This produces a version of implementation that is shaped more by moral tradition than curricular design.

4.1.2 Enactment of National Values and SEL in Classroom Practices

This research question examined the instructional strategies, classroom interactions, and learning activities through which teachers translate national values and SEL into practice. Three themes emerged: teachers rely predominantly on implicit and informal approaches; classroom management and disciplinary practices serve as the primary vehicle for enacting national values; and assessment of national values and SEL is largely informal and unsystematic.

Implicit and informal approaches in enacting national values and SEL Evidence of mutual adaptation: From the interview data, the enactment of national values and SEL was largely incorporated in everyday classroom interactions rather than delivered through explicitly structured instruction. Teachers described integrating these elements incidentally through routine activities such as group work, storytelling, and general teacher–student exchanges – suggesting that while teachers do engage with these areas, their approach is largely unplanned and not grounded in intentional pedagogical design.

Sometimes when I am teaching, I don’t really say I am teaching values or SEL, but through the lesson, the students learn to respect each other, especially when I put them into groups to work together. They learn to listen to one another and also share ideas (Teacher A, 10th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

This account illustrates how values and SEL are woven into instructional activities without being explicitly identified as learning objectives. The teacher relies on group work as a medium for interpersonal development, yet the absence of intentional framing means outcomes are assumed to emerge naturally rather than being systematically guided. A similar pattern is evident in the following:

I normally use stories and examples when I am teaching so that the students can learn good behaviour from them. I don’t separate it; it just comes with the lesson (Teacher J, 17th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

The phrase “it just comes with the lesson” captures the unplanned nature of this integration. One teacher was even more direct:

There is no specific time I teach these things. It is part of how I handle the class and interact with the students (Teacher C, 13th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

These findings align with studies which indicate that teachers frequently rely on implicit methods when implementing values and SEL, particularly in the absence of clear pedagogical guidance (Durlak et al., 2011). This pattern was confirmed by classroom observations: no lesson was designed around values or SEL as its primary objective. Moments where values arose were when teachers responded to student questions, managed behaviour, or used a narrative prompt. In one observed lesson, a teacher elicited a student narrative on the effects of illegal mining and derived five national values from its moral lesson. This illustrates the instance of implicit enactment observed. This resonates well with Berman and McLaughlin’s (1976) mutual adaptation perspective where teachers are adjusting curriculum content to their classroom realities. However, this adaptation is incidental rather than deliberate. This widens the gap between policy expectation and practice (NaCCA, 2019a).

Classroom management as values vehicle: A fidelity deviation: The role of classroom management and disciplinary practices in enacting national values was a dominant pattern across participants’ accounts. Teachers consistently described promoting values such as respect, responsibility, and tolerance through rule enforcement, behavioural correction, and the maintenance of order. In this sense, values were not primarily taught as content to be understood, but were embedded within systems of control and regulation.

Teacher D: I make sure that students follow the rules in the class. When someone misbehaves, I correct them so that others will learn to respect authority and do the right thing.



In this framing, respect is likened with obedience to authority, and the act of correcting misbehaviour functions simultaneously as a regulatory tool and as moral instruction. A further account reveals a reactive rather than proactive orientation:

When a student does something wrong, I talk to them or sometimes punish them so that they will understand that what they did is not right (Teacher F, 15th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

In my class, I always insist on respect. If a child talks when someone else is talking, I stop them immediately because that is how they learn to respect others (Teacher H, 17th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

These responses indicate that everyday interactions involving rule enforcement are used as avenues to instil values, with limited attention given to helping learners understand the underlying principles. Studies in Ghana suggest that teachers often rely on disciplinary structures to promote moral behaviour due to limited instructional guidance on values integration (Asare & Afriyie, 2023). The observation data corroborated this finding. It was observed across majority of the classrooms that disciplinary-actions were the most value-oriented moments. Most teachers stated rules without explaining the underlying principle. A contrasting case emerged in one observed lesson when a teacher modelled emotional self-regulation under provocation. The teacher's ability to control his emotions rather than acting on impulse helped get the student to apologise and reconcile. This demonstrated how SEL can be enacted even with teacher modelling. Though this exception exists, the dominant pattern reflects what the fidelity approach would note as significant deviation from curriculum intent: the Standards-based curriculum expects the development of values through reflective civic engagement, yet classroom enactment largely reduces them to behavioural conformity (NaCCA 2019a; ODEC, 2019).

Informal and unsystematic enactment of the assessment of national values and SEL: A further issue that emerged from the data deals with how teachers assess national values and SEL. Unlike core academic subjects, evaluation of these competencies was largely observational, subjective, and not guided by standardized procedures. Teachers relied heavily on personal judgement, with little evidence of intentional or systematic assessment practices.

I don't really have a specific way of assessing it. I just observe how the students behave in class and how they relate with other (Teacher B, 10th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

Even though observation is an effective assessment tool in qualitative educational contexts, the absence of clear criteria or structured instruments raises concerns about consistency and objectivity. Assessment in this form becomes dependent on the perception of the individual teacher, which may vary significantly across classrooms. This concern is reinforced in the following account:

When a child shows respect or helps others, I take note of it, but I don't record it anywhere. It is just something I see and know (Teacher E, 15th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

The lack of documentation suggests that such evaluations do not contribute meaningfully to tracking learners' development over time, nor do they enable targeted feedback. The general absence of formal structures was explicitly noted:

We don't have specific tests for values or SEL. It is just part of how the child behaves throughout the term (Teacher G, 15th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

These findings are consistent with research indicating that teachers face significant challenges in assessing socio-emotional and values-based outcomes due to the lack of clear tools and guidelines (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). It was observed across all classrooms that no teacher used any formal or documented assessment tool for values or SEL. Teachers acknowledged good behaviour verbally and encouraged students to maintain same. This reflects an informal positive reinforcement. However, no teacher recorded anything nor used any structured criteria in assessing values and SEL. Also, there was no feedback that was tied to specific competency targets. This makes progress in these domains very invisible within the existing accountability structure and represent a significant gap in terms of the competency-based assessment expectations of the curriculum (Atiku, Gozah, & Erebakere, 2025 NaCCA, 2019a).

4.1.3 Contextual Factors Influencing Teachers' Implementation of National Values and SEL

This question explored the enablers and constraints shaping teachers' implementation of national values and SEL. Three themes emerged: classroom realities constrain implementation; teachers demonstrate uneven levels of preparedness; and institutional support is inconsistent across schools.

Enactment of national values and SEL constrained by classroom realities: Practical classroom conditions emerged as a major influence on implementation. Participants consistently identified large class sizes, limited instructional time, and insufficient teaching and learning materials as factors restricting deliberate engagement with national values and SEL.

The class is too large, so sometimes it is difficult to make all the students participate, especially when you want them to work in groups or express themselves (Teacher A, 10th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

Large class sizes restrict interactive and participatory opportunities – such as group work and discussion – that are essential for developing socio-emotional skills. Time constraints further compound this:



We have a lot to cover, so most of the time I focus on the subject content. There is not always enough time to teach values or SEL separately (Teacher D, 15th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

Pressure for curriculum coverage consistently pushes teachers to prioritize examinable content over cross-cutting competencies. Resource limitations also add a further layer of constraint:

We don't have enough materials to support some of these activities, so you just do what you can with what is available (Teacher J, 10th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

These findings highlight broader challenges within basic schools in comparable contexts, where structural constraints significantly shape classroom practice. Studies in Ghana have highlighted how large class sizes and curriculum demands affect competency-based approaches (Asare & Afriyie, 2023), while international research confirms that effective SEL implementation requires supportive conditions including manageable class sizes and adequate instructional resources (Kankařaš & Suarez-Alvarez, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). Within a Standards-Based framework that emphasizes learner-centred and participatory approaches, these classroom realities pose significant barriers to effective implementation.

Teacher unpreparedness in enacting national values and SEL: Teachers' accounts of professional preparation varied considerably, with many participants indicating that training received was either insufficient or not practically oriented. Even with the mention of workshops and PLC sessions, teachers frequently suggested these did not equip them with the pedagogical strategies needed for effective classroom implementation.

We had training on the new curriculum, but it was more general. It didn't really show us how to teach things like SEL in the classroom (Teacher C, 13th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

This indicates that training programs may prioritize curriculum introduction over developing practical teaching competencies. As much as PLC sessions provide a platform for discussion, they are limited in depth:

Sometimes during the PLC meetings, we talk about these things, but it is not always detailed. You just have to try your own way in the class (Teacher F, 15th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

The reliance on individual improvisation shows the absence of clear and sustained professional support. Uncertainty about practice was also expressed openly:

I try to include values and SEL in my teaching, but I am not always sure if I am doing it the right way (Teacher I, 10th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

Such uncertainty not only affects the consistency but also the quality of implementation as well. These findings are consistent with research in Ghana pointing to challenges in teacher preparedness under curriculum reforms (Atiku, Gozah, & Erebakyere, 2025), and with broader evidence showing that teachers report limited practical training for SEL implementation despite policy emphasis (Kankařaš & Suarez-Alvarez, 2019). Uneven preparedness thus represents a significant impediment to the effective and consistent integration of national values and SEL, and reflects to the need for sustained, practice-focused professional development that goes beyond initial curriculum orientation.

Inconsistencies in institutional support in implementing national values and SEL: Disparity in institutional support emerged as a further significant factor. As much as some participants indicated that they received encouragement and guidance from school leadership, others reported that support was virtually absent – a disparity suggesting that implementation may be largely dependent on individual school priorities and leadership practices than on any uniform system of support.

In my school, the headteacher sometimes reminds us to include values in our lessons and even checks our lesson notes to see if we have done that (Teacher H, 17th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

The active visible oversight in this context appears to encourage teachers to pay attention to these components. However, such support was far from universal:

We don't really get any support from the school. You just have to do what you can on your own (Teacher B, 10th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

Sometimes we are told about it during meetings, but after that, there is no follow-up or guidance on how to actually do it in class (Teacher E, 15th April, 2026, Cape Coast).

Even in instances where some support exists, limited follow-up and supervision means that teachers are left to bridge the gap between general directives and classroom practice independently. These findings reflect broader concerns about the role of school leadership in curriculum implementation. Asare & Afriyie (2023) argued that leadership support and supervision are critical in shaping instructional practices, particularly under curriculum reforms. Similarly, Kankařaš & Suarez-Alvarez (2019) and UNESCO (2021) emphasize that sustained institutional support, such as leadership involvement, professional collaboration, and structured follow-up, is essential for effective SEL integration. The inconsistency observed here indicates that the successful implementation of national values and SEL depends significantly on the level and quality of support provided at the school level, with implications for how district-level oversight and school leadership development are conceptualized within the Standards-Based Curriculum framework.



4.2 Discussion

The findings from this study reveal a pattern of partial, fragmented, and largely implicit engagement with national values and SEL among participating teachers in Cape Coast, with implications that span conceptual understanding, instructional practice, and systemic support. At the level of conceptualization, participating teachers predominantly framed national values in behavioural and corrective terms, emphasizing discipline, respect, and obedience, rather than as civic or moral principles requiring deliberate reflection. This is consistent with Asare and Afriyie (2023) and Lovat et al. (2011), who note that values education in practice is frequently reduced to the management of conduct rather than the cultivation of moral reasoning.

Similarly, participating teachers' understanding of SEL was largely intuitive and experience-driven, with most unable to locate their practice within any formal framework. The notable exception of Teacher H, who referenced CASEL-aligned competencies, underscores the uneven distribution of conceptual preparation across the sample and points to the inadequacy of current professional development provisions. Most significantly, the general conflation of national values and SEL remains the study's compelling finding and cannot be adequately explained by insufficient pre-service and in-service training alone. Even though NaCCA (2019a; 2019b) curriculum explicitly distinguishes the two, evidence from classroom observation showed that teachers replaced the curriculum's vocabulary entirely, framing SEL and national values through Christian morality, and good character. This reflects cultural, rather than curriculum explanation. Like most Ghanaians, classroom teachers within this sample generally interpret moral behaviour, social conduct, and emotional conduct through the lens of religiosity and moral tradition. With this conceptualisation, what the curriculum treats as two distinct domains is collapsed into a single framework. This resonates very well with the enactment perspective (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012), which states that teachers are not simply failing to implement the curriculum but they are actually reconstructing it through deeply embedded cultural interpretive frames. In the absence of clearly distinguishing the two constructs, no meaningful implementation of national values and SEL can occur (Durlak et al, 2011).

At the level of practice, the enactment of both constructs was characterized by informality and incidentalism, which is consistent with the mutual adaptation perspective (Berman & McLaughling, 1976). Teachers adapted curriculum expectations to their classroom realities, but the adaptation was unplanned rather than deliberate. Observations across all classrooms showed that no lesson was explicitly designed around SEL or national values. Both of them entered the lessons reactively through teacher-responses to students' behaviour, spontaneous questions or narrative prompts. Dominant in most classrooms were classroom management and disciplinary practices, with most teachers stating rules without giving clear explanation of the underlying principles. These practices reduced SEL and national values to compliance rather than genuine internalisation (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). Across all lessons observed, assessment of national values and SEL remained entirely informal, with no structured tool or documentation recorded. This made progress in the two constructs unmeasurable.

At the contextual level, three interacting constraints shaped these patterns: large class sizes and curriculum coverage pressures that consistently marginalized cross-cutting competencies; insufficient and insufficiently practical professional development; and inconsistent institutional support, with some school leaders actively monitoring integration while others provided no follow-up at all. Taken together, these factors suggest that the implementation of national values and SEL remains heavily contingent on individual teacher initiative and school-level leadership dispositions, rather than being sustained by any coherent system of support. This echoes Kankařaš and Suarez-Alvarez (2019) and Atiku et al. (2025), who argue that effective SEL implementation requires stable structural conditions that current reform efforts in Ghana have not yet adequately established.

Collectively, these findings point to a discernible gap between curriculum policy intent and classroom reality. The Standards-Based Curriculum positions national values and SEL as intentional and assessable competencies; however, the evidence suggests they are being enacted peripherally, inconsistently, and without the conceptual clarity or pedagogical structure necessary for meaningful outcomes. Addressing this gap calls for sustained, practice-focused professional development, the provision of teacher-friendly assessment tools, and more coherent institutional and district-level oversight, not as supplementary measures, but as foundational conditions for effective implementation.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The findings pointed to a deeper issue of misalignment between curriculum intent and classroom enactment. The curriculum positioned national values and SEL as deliberate, structured competencies requiring intentional teaching, yet classroom practice reflected a more intuitive, experience-driven approach. Viewing this through the enactment perspective (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012), this shows that implementation is shaped not merely by structural constraints but also by how teachers make sense of what they are expected to teach. If concepts are not clearly distinguished or pedagogically grounded, they are likely to be absorbed into familiar practices such as discipline and general classroom interaction. Though this ensured that values and SEL were not absent from teaching,



it limited their transformative potential, reducing them to behavioural compliance rather than vehicles for critical, social, and emotional development. The findings therefore suggest that improving implementation requires more than increased emphasis; it requires clarity of purpose, coherence in teacher preparation, and alignment between policy expectations and the realities of classroom practice.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the findings of the study is that if the conceptual conflation of national values and SEL among teachers remains unaddressed, curriculum reform efforts will continue to produce surface-level compliance rather than the deep moral reasoning and social-emotional competencies the Standards-Based Curriculum envisions. Teachers who cannot meaningfully distinguish between the two constructs are unlikely to enact either with the intentionality required for transformative outcomes. The predominance of incidental and behaviour-focused approaches to values integration suggests that, without deliberate intervention, classroom practice will continue to prioritize disciplinary conformity over genuine character and socio-emotional development. The problem that will arise is that the country's educational system will produce learners who are behaviourally managed but not morally equipped or emotionally competent to navigate complex civic and interpersonal realities.

Furthermore, the absence of structured assessment frameworks means that progress in these domains will remain invisible within formal accountability systems, making it difficult for schools, districts, and policymakers to identify gaps, measure growth, or make evidence-informed decisions. If professional development continues to be insufficient and theoretical rather than practice-focused, the uneven distribution of teacher preparedness evident in this study will persist and likely widen. At a systemic level, implementation that depends heavily on individual teacher initiative and school leadership disposition is inherently fragile and inequitable. Without coherent structural support, the quality of values and SEL integration will vary dramatically across schools, undermining the national consistency that curriculum reform seeks to achieve. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on curriculum implementation by demonstrating that the enactment of cross-cutting competencies such as national values and SEL is particularly susceptible to conceptual ambiguity and experiential improvisation when formal pedagogical guidance is limited.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, we propose several recommendations to strengthen the implementation of national values and SEL in basic schools. First, teacher professional development should be enhanced to provide clear and practical guidance on how to teach national values and SEL explicitly. Training programs should move beyond general curriculum orientation to focus on specific instructional strategies, classroom activities, and assessment approaches that teachers can apply directly. These programs should be sustained and practice-focused rather than one-off orientations. Specifically, district education offices could organize termly workshops in which teachers develop sample lesson plans, micro-teach national values and SEL lessons, and receive peer and facilitator feedback. Follow-up classroom coaching and observation sessions should be conducted to support teachers in translating training into practice. Second, curriculum support materials should be developed to help teachers distinguish between national values and SEL, while also showing how the two can be meaningfully integrated. Clear examples of lesson planning, classroom activities, and assessment tools would support more intentional implementation and reduce the conceptual conflation documented in this study. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) could develop teacher guides that provide explicit definitions of each national value and SEL competency, accompanied by age-appropriate classroom activities, discussion prompts, reflective exercises, and assessment rubrics. Such resources should be made available both in print and digital formats. Third, school leadership should play a more active and sustained role in supporting teachers. This includes monitoring, providing feedback, and creating opportunities for collaborative learning through well-structured PLCs that focus specifically on values and SEL implementation. School leaders should allocate dedicated PLC sessions each month for teachers to share implementation experiences, discuss challenges, review learner outcomes, and collaboratively develop strategies for improving classroom practice. Monitoring tools and observation checklists could also be developed to guide feedback and ensure consistency across classrooms.

Finally, efforts should be made to address structural classroom challenges such as large class sizes, limited time, and inadequate resources. Without improving these conditions, even well-prepared teachers may struggle to implement these components effectively. In the short term, teachers could be supported with ready-to-use instructional materials and activity banks that reduce preparation time. In the longer term, policymakers should consider reducing pupil-teacher ratios and ensuring that schools receive adequate teaching and learning resources specifically designed for values and SEL instruction. Future studies could adopt a comparative approach across different regions or school types to explore how varying contextual conditions shape implementation. Longitudinal research examining the effects of targeted professional development on teachers' implementation practices would also be valuable.



Declaration of Interest

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