

Strengthening DepEd CALABARZON's Commitment to Values-Based Education

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Abstract: The Department of Education (DepEd) remains unwavering in its commitment to guiding and nurturing Filipinos who hold a deep love for their country and actively participate in nation-building. It steadfastly pursues a learner-centered approach, instilling values that inspire youth to be God-fearing, humane, environmentally conscious, and patriotic. In line with its mission, DepEd CALABARZON aligns with this vision and emphasizes the importance of values education in the Philippine Curriculum. Recognizing the significance of values, DepEd consistently integrates core values – MakaDiyos, Makatao, Makakalikasan, and Makabansa – into its educational framework. These values are assessed quarterly alongside academic achievements, shaping learners into well-rounded individuals. Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao and the Homeroom Guidance Program further foster commendable values and attitudes, motivating students to excel in both education and employment. However, the current assessment and recognition system fails to emphasize the importance of value formation, leading students to undervalue these essential qualities as they complete basic education. A cultural shift is necessary to promote positive values that foster a highly innovative and trust-based society. DepEd CALABARZON conducts a qualitative-quantitative study to identify factors contributing to learners' values, characters, and attitudes and the challenges they face in evolving these traits. The study aims to propose an innovative character education program rooted in DepEd's core values, Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao, and Homeroom Guidance competencies. This program seeks to recognize excellence in shaping fully developed CALABARZON learners, thereby strengthening DepEd's core values and producing notable graduates in the future.

Keywords: DepEd core values; Character; Values; Attitude; Learners; Character-based award and recognition

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1. Introduction

The Department of Education (DepEd) is dedicated to its vision of guiding Filipinos who passionately love their country and contribute to nation-building. DepED is resolute in delivering learner-centered services for youth, aiming to nurture them into individuals who are not only academically proficient but also imbued with values, thus becoming holistic beings^[1]. Public schools and academic institutions are entrusted with the responsibility

of fostering learners in both cognitive and psychomotor aspects, as well as the affective domain ^[1].

Working in tandem with DepEd, schools actively support these laudable objectives and aspire to produce graduates prepared for diverse career paths upon completing basic education. Beyond academics, schools play a pivotal role in molding learners with values that equip them to be not just educated workers, but also individuals with outstanding values, characters, and attitudes (VCA). Both teachers and learners must recognize the significance of a well-developed VCA to ensure their success in adulthood and the workplace. DepEd is unwavering in inculcating its core values, namely, MakaDiyos (God-fearing), Makatao (compassionate), Makakalikasan (nature-loving), and Makabansa (patriotic), which are assessed quarterly, in conjunction with academic achievements.

The subjects in the curriculum serve as a conduit for enhancing underlying VCA. Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao, together with the Homeroom Guidance Program, instills commendable VCA, motivating learners to excel both in education and employment ^[2]. In the school setting, teachers and school administrators play a crucial role in instilling values as well as shaping the mindsets and behaviors of future adults. VCA should not be underestimated, as they are integral parts of the hidden curriculum and require explicit teaching ^[3].

Acknowledging the importance of VCA, DepEd honors and recognizes learners with exemplary conduct. However, the current emphasis on values formation remains insufficient leading learners to undervalue these essential qualities upon completing basic education. Recognizing the pivotal role of values in shaping the future of the country, there is a pressing need to initiate a cultural shift and promote positive values to achieve a highly innovative and trust-based society.

DepEd Circular No. 36, series of 2016, emphasized the recognition of exemplary learners who embody the DepEd core values. While learners receive awards for their non-numeric achievements each school year, the importance of value formation is still not given sufficient emphasis. Recognizing the significance of values, the National Economic and Development Authority highlights that the values of Filipinos play a crucial role in shaping the nation's future ^[4].

DepEd, including DepEd CALABARZON, believes in the philosophy of values education's inclusion in the Philippine curriculum and the recognition of outstanding learners who excel in developing their VCA. Embedding values and character traits across the K-12 curriculum is a practical approach to achieving this goal, with schools, homes, communities, and religious institutions serving as venues for practicing these traits ^[5].

As education levels rise and cognitive skills flourish, the development of VCA aspects becomes increasingly important. This study aims to explore whether Filipino learners are experiencing a decline in their VCA development. It will delve into the baseline data of CALABARZON learners over three consecutive school years to assess their progression or regression in VCA. The study will also investigate the factors that influence changes in VCA within the family, among friends and peers, and within the learning environment. Additionally, it will examine the challenges learners face and the solutions they employ to overcome these challenges, whether alone or in the company of others.

This paper intends to propose an innovative character education-based program, aligned with DepEd's core values and complemented by the mastery of Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao and Homeroom Guidance competencies. This program primarily aims to recognize learners for their excellence in developing both cognitive and affective aspects, producing fully honed CALABARZON learners. Furthermore, the program will serve as a value-laden framework that strengthens DepEd core values, making them notable and significant for the future graduates of DepEd CALABARZON.

2. Literature Review

2.1. DepEd core values anchored programs and policies

Fundamentally, DepED aligns all its programs and policies with the vision, mission, and core values of the department. These serve as the guiding principles that enable the execution of its mandate.

Notably, certain programs and policies are specifically dedicated to nurturing the core values. One of these key initiatives is DepEd Order No. 8, issued in 2015, which outlines the Policy Guidelines on Classroom Assessment for the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum. The primary objective of the K to 12 curriculum is to cultivate well-rounded Filipinos equipped with 21st-century skills. This academic development must go hand in hand with the cultivation of values and attitudes rooted in the vision, mission, and core values of the DepEd. Additionally, DepEd Order No. 8, 2015, stipulates on page 20, Section IV, that the core values of the Filipino child should be reflected in the report card. These core values are articulated through behavior statements, each accompanied by specific indicators. While schools have the flexibility to devise additional indicators, they must ensure that these are child-centered, gender-equitable, and suitable for various age groups and cultures. Schools should also ensure that their homeroom guidance program actively promotes these core values, with additional opportunities integrated into class discussions ^[6].

Furthermore, schools must ensure that both their homeroom and guidance programs actively promote and support the development of the DepEd core values (MakaDiyos, Makatao, Makakalikasan, and Makabansa). A non-numerical rating scale is employed to report on learners' behavior, reflecting their demonstration of the core values. Class advisers and other teachers should collaborate to determine how to conduct these assessments ^[7].

To fortify the objectives outlined in DepEd Order No. 8, DepEd issued DepEd Order No. 36 in 2016, titled Policy Guidelines on Awards and Recognition for the K to 12 Basic Education Program. This policy was established to formally acknowledge learners' outstanding performance and achievements in academics, leadership, social responsibility, and other aspects of student progress and development. The specified awards are intended to inspire learners to pursue excellence and actively engage in their school and community.

Moreover, this policy aims to provide all learners with equal opportunities to excel, not only in relation to the academic and performance standards set by the curriculum but also concerning the embodiment of DepEd's core values. It recognizes that each student possesses unique strengths that warrant identification, reinforcement, and public acknowledgment ^[8].

2.2. Values, character, and attitudes (VCA) of learners

According to Doyle ^[9], "Values are the engine that defines and drives culture." He observed that in any specific group or groups, a common denominator exists among them, which comprises a set of ideas and moral attitudes. What underscores this is the connection between a school's core values and its ethos. The meaning of values becomes evident when school culture is both defined and propelled by these values. Therefore, school values are intrinsically linked to the school culture and moral attitudes. He also emphasized that "there is no such thing as a value-free school." Values play a crucial role in the effective functioning of any school, highlighting the necessity for schools to reinforce these values. Doyle's concept underscores the significance of values within the daily life of a school. It also underscores the importance of shaping the school's culture and strengthening the moral attitudes of students. Ultimately, it emphasizes the need for the continual reinforcement of values.

Motivational theories have long focused on the factors that lead to highly motivated individuals. While various perspectives exist, they all converge on a single philosophy and effect, which is recognition. A.H. Maslow organized human needs into a hierarchy ^[10]. He posited that before individuals can pursue higher-level needs, their more basic needs must be met. These higher-level needs encompass working towards excellence

and self-actualization. Among the basic needs, he identified adequate reward as necessary for self-esteem. The highest and final level of need includes self-respect, status, and the desire to become the best version of oneself. Maslow summarized that these basic needs must be satisfied initially for the higher-level needs of esteem, recognition, and self-actualization to be pursued and achieved. According to him, two of the most valuable psychological needs for human beings are the need to be appreciated and the need for belonging. These needs find fulfillment through peer-to-peer thanks and recognition.

Herzberg's Theory of Worker Motivation delineated two levels of motivators for workers: 'hygiene' and 'motivation.' Each serves a distinct purpose for workers. 'Hygiene' factors encompass pay, working conditions, relationships with co-workers, the competence of supervisors, and company policies. Herzberg pointed out that these factors alone may not ensure that a worker becomes highly motivated. This is where the 'motivation' factors come into play and must be satisfied. These factors include achievement, responsibility or autonomy, recognition, and opportunities for advancement.

While DepEd Order No. 8, 2015, and DepEd Order No. 36, 2016 emphasize the strengthening of DepEd's core values, DepEd CALABARZON, true to its mandates, implements this policy by developing programs aimed at enhancing the VCA of CALABARZON learners.

2.3. Factors affecting the values, character, and attitudes of learners

Several social factors positively affect students' attitudes. However, educational context factors, such as teachers, and the learning environment (including classroom setup and physical surroundings), have a negative impact on students' attitudes. Lowering psychological variables or affective filters for the target learners can facilitate the learning process. Therefore, as this study implies, there is a need to enhance the physical learning environment. To achieve this, the government should collaborate with school principals, teachers, and communities ^[11].

Family, peers, school, and the broader community all exert influence on student behavior, learning, and well-being. Personal characteristics like age, sex, personality, temperament, and mental and physical health also impact how individuals behave. Various models identify how multiple environments affect learning, well-being, and development, and how risk and protective factors can play a role ^[12].

Attitudes, which are mental factors, encompass organic and kinesthetic elements. They should not be confused with emotions characterized by internal visceral disturbances. Attitudes are relatively specific and significantly contribute to an individual's mental organization and overall behavior. They also play a pivotal role in personality development. Among these attitudes are interest, cheerfulness, affection, prejudice, open-mindedness, and loyalty. Attitudes have a stimulating effect on the pace of learning, teaching, and academic progress ^[13].

The efficiency and speed of daily work are influenced by the learner's attitude. A favorable mental attitude facilitates learning. The factor of interest closely relates to the nature of symbolic drive and rewards.

2.4. Character education-based program

The research has transitioned from broad descriptions to defining specific behavioral characteristics that can be quantified and assessed over time. These measurements encompass both positive and negative morality, self-development, honesty, and respect for teachers and parents. Character education-based programs ensure that students have access to a model that helps them grasp the intricate concept of morality through open discussions and easily understandable examples. This approach enables young individuals to discern between right and wrong not only within the classroom but also in the world outside and beyond the lessons they receive ^[14].

A character education program can exert a positive influence on the broader school community, promoting core values such as respect, responsibility, and compassion that foster a more compassionate environment. Employing a character education curriculum in schools can enhance self-discipline and determination, which, in turn, can positively impact academic performance, completion of homework, and exemplary social behavior. Children engaging in a character education curriculum at school learn that they are part of a larger community and understand the value of civic duty beyond their personal desires, contributing to making the world a better place, even when faced with complex or troubling events. As many educators are aware, youth development, academic achievement, and character development are all interconnected. These innovations operate within these dynamics and teach students to engage in healthy introspection, an essential component in their development. While these subjects are of interest to philosophers and sociologists, explaining these interrelated topics in a manner easily comprehensible to students is challenging. The TAF Circle simplifies these concepts into a cycle that can be readily understood by students of all ages.

Students comprehend the ideas of a thought, an action, and a feeling. However, childhood development efforts often fall short of connecting these concepts logically. While the interaction between these concepts may appear evident to most adults, students often lack the analytical capacity to discern these dynamics independently.

Positive Action offers a systematic approach for students to contemplate these abstract concepts. The philosophy and the TAF Circle represent straightforward distillations of fundamental human behavior. When character education extends across an entire school district, reaching families through parenting classes and the wider community, it contributes to creating a healthy environment where students can live, learn, and grow. Positive Action offers lessons suitable for preschool, elementary, middle school, and high school levels, ensuring students receive a comprehensive character education from an early age.

Most importantly, educators must possess confidence in the content they impart to their students. Positive Action is the sole character education program in the nation to have earned the highest rating from the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) in both the academic achievement and behavior domains. This rigorous evaluation is exhaustive and highly selective. The WWC Positive Effects ratings signify that evaluators have found "strong evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence." This recognition underscores Positive Action's potential to guide students, families, schools, and communities toward a lifetime of health, happiness, and productivity.

Implementing a character education program in schools can have a profound impact on young people, helping them perceive the world through a moral lens, and preparing them to become compassionate, self-aware adults with positive values who understand the significance of respect, responsibility, and their role in diverse communities ^[3].

3. Research questions

This study aimed to uncover the status of the VCA of learners in Region 4A - CALABARZON. Specifically, it addressed the following questions:

- (1) What is the trend in the VCA ratings of CALABARZON learners, anchored in DepEd core values, over a span of 3 consecutive years (SY 2017–2020)?
- (2) What factors influence the development of learner's VCA concerning their family and relatives, friends and peers, and environment?
- (3) What opportunities and challenges have learners encountered that have affected changes in their

VCA, particularly in terms of private/personal space, family/domestic environment, and learning environment?

- (4) What immediate solutions have respondents devised to overcome the challenges in VCA changes?
- (5) What proposed program could be formulated to enhance the VCA of CALABARZON learners?

4. Scope and limitations

This study primarily aimed to determine the VCA of CALABARZON learners within the context of various influencing factors. The main focus of this research was to analyze the potential trends in the VCA rates of CALABARZON learners, as anchored in DepEd core values, over a span of 3 consecutive years (SY 2017–2020). This served as the statistical foundation of the study for understanding the expressions of CALABARZON learners' VCA.

Furthermore, this study aimed to identify the factors influencing the development of VCA in learners concerning their family and relatives, friends and peers, and their environment. Additionally, it explored the opportunities and challenges experienced by learners that contributed to changes in their VCA, particularly in personal/private space, family/domestic environment, and the learning environment. The research also delved into the immediate solutions adopted by respondents to address challenges related to VCA changes.

To attain these objectives, the study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather various perspectives from respondents regarding the values, character, and attitudes of CALABARZON learners. The data collection methods included surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions to derive meaningful insights aimed at addressing the identified issues.

However, this study had certain limitations. The absence of face-to-face communication limited the observation of intimate details such as gestures and nonverbal expressions. Additionally, due to the vast size of DepED CALABARZON as one of the largest regions on the mainland, only a representative sample size was included in the study.

5. Research methodology

5.1. Sampling

To determine the number of participants in the study, purposive sampling was employed. The research was conducted among junior high school learners in CALABARZON, specifically Grade 8 students. These respondents were meticulously selected by the researchers, and validated based on certain characteristics. Among the learners, JHS Grade 8 students were considered the most suitable respondents due to their age and adolescent status, which is amenable to potential paradigm shifts. Their status of academic adjustment, representing not-so-young but not-so-old learners, was also taken into account. Additionally, their years of monitoring and evaluation of the proposed plan meant four years of evaluative implementation among the study's participants.

To achieve purposive sampling, the respondents were required to meet specific criteria: they must be residents of CALABARZON cities/towns from birth to the present, nominated by their respective schools as qualified data sources, granted permission by their parents/guardians to participate in the study, and willing to take part. This led to an acceptable limit of approximately 1,000 respondents in the entire CALABARZON region.

Given that this is a quantitative-qualitative study, the researchers aimed to obtain micro-samples from each division, which would serve as rich sources of data. This approach resulted in a total of 21 participants

in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Lastly, to complete the triangulation method, 100 participants were considered for the prompt or open-ended questions to support the study.

5.2. Data collection

Among the various data collection tools available, the study employed the triangulation method. Questionnaires stood out as a quick instrument for efficiently collecting data and mapping out a strategic pattern among a large group of students ^[15]. Consequently, the researchers primarily utilized questionnaires for data collection. A set of researcher-made questionnaires was designed to gather data from learners across the entire province. This questionnaire was used to determine the values, character, and attitudes of the respondents, serving as the foundational basis for the study. It was also used to identify factors affecting the learners' VCA.

In addition, prompt or open-ended questions were given to select respondents to gather information about the opportunities and challenges facing the learners, as well as the immediate solutions they implemented to address these challenges. These methods were complemented by Focus Group Discussions to elaborate on the opportunities, challenges, and solutions encountered during changes in VCA. These techniques were also maximized to explore all possible avenues for formulating the best course of action for the learners.

The researcher-made instruments aimed to collect data to determine the perceptions of the students. Validation was conducted to establish construct validity, and content and face validity were achieved through the input of five experts in the field. Pilot testing was supervised by a statistician to evaluate the validity and reliability of the researcher-made questionnaire and checklist. After this process, the research tools were finalized and subsequently produced.

Additionally, letters for questionnaire and checklist distribution were prepared for the administration. Careful and monitored administration was conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the data during the administration process. The questionnaires were collected for tabulation, interpretation, and data analysis.

5.3. Ethical issues

The questionnaire was developed by utilizing concepts and related literature from various sources, including books, reference materials such as journals, dissertations, theses, and online references. The checklist was created through careful analysis and internet research. The developed questionnaire, as well as the pilot testing, was administered to learners who were not part of the sample. The questionnaire ratings were presented to several experts for their comments and suggestions. To validate the questionnaire, letters of request were sent to experts in the field and panel members. Revisions and suggestions from the experts were integrated into the validation process, leading to the final production of the questionnaire. Approval letters of validation were then obtained from the panel members, experts, and the dean.

Before the final distribution of the questionnaire, a letter to the school's division superintendent was prepared. Upon receiving the signed letter of request, the researchers administered the questionnaires to the target respondents according to the specified timeline. Immediately after the administration of the questionnaires to the teachers, careful retrieval, checking, tallying, and analysis were conducted. Throughout these processes, confidentiality was maintained throughout the research period. Analysis, discussion, and interpretation of data were carried out to generate the most suitable output for the locale.

5.4. Plan for data analysis

Analysis, discussion, and interpretation of data were conducted to extract significant findings and results from the collected data. In the interpretation of quantitative data, weighted means were used to determine the factors affecting changes in VCA. The items were rated using a four-point Likert scale and their corresponding verbal

descriptions. On the other hand, focus group discussions and open-ended questions were thoroughly explored through document analysis. These methods were employed to investigate all forms of assistance and immediate solutions encountered by the participants in dealing with changes in VCA, considering the given indicators. The data were transcribed and coded until saturation was reached. Additionally, discourse analysis was used to interpret the qualitative data for the study. Themes were thoroughly explored to present the significant results.

6. Results and discussion

6.1. VCA rates of CALABARZON learners as anchored in DepEd core values in 3 consecutive years (SY 2017–2020)

This study aims to delve into the finer details of the data concerning the rates of values, character, and attitudes of CALABARZON learners as anchored in DepEd Core Values over three consecutive years. These years encompass SY 2017 to 2018, 2018 to 2019, and 2019 to 2020.

Table 1 illustrates the trends in how learners in CALABARZON were assessed. Notably, it is remarkable that the respondents fell within the range of 15 to 20 Achievement Objectives (AOs) in a year, as assessed by their advisers. This suggests that the learners are more likely to exhibit behavior in accordance with the department’s set values, although not to the extent that they can be recognized as learners with exemplary values and attitudes. This scenario reflects positively on the richness of culture and values instilled in these learners, indicating that they generally behave appropriately.

Table 1. VCA rates of CALABARZON learners as anchored in DepEd core values in 3 consecutive years (SY 2017–2020)

AO	SY 2017–2018		SY 2018–2019		SY 2019–2020	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
>21	64	6.67	66	6.88	105	10.94
15–20	232	24.17	220	22.92	170	17.71
9–14	63	6.56	48	5.00	57	5.94
0–8	97	10.10	87	9.06	68	7.08

Abbreviation: VCA, values, character, and attitudes; DepEd, Department of Education; AO, achievement objective; SY, school year.

However, when comparing the three years, it becomes evident that as the learners grew older, the number within this range decreased. It can be observed that some moved to the higher range, while others regressed to a lower range. Notably, during the last year, it is apparent that learners included in the last two ranges totaled 125, which can also be considered a concern for the schools and advisers. This accounts for 13 percent of the total respondent population and warrants attention in the overall respondent population.

6.2. Factors affecting the development of learner’s VCA

6.2.1. Factors affecting the development of learner’s VCA in relation to their family and relatives

Table 2 illustrates how family and relatives impact the development of the learners’ VCA. It is noteworthy that the respondents strongly agree that their family and relatives play a significant role in shaping their VCA. This implies that the learners’ set of values is closely linked to their upbringing and the treatment they receive in their homes. Furthermore, it suggests that if the family exhibits positive VCA, the learners are likely to develop a positive VCA as well.

Table 2. Family and relatives as the factor in the development of learners' VCA

Family and relatives	Weighted mean	Verbal interpretation
(1) Guide me to fulfill my religious responsibilities like going to church, attending spiritual gatherings, and alike	3.53	Strongly agree
(2) Give me the freedom to choose their religious affiliations and must respect it	3.52	Strongly agree
(3) Oblige me to uphold truth in the name of faith and ethical principles.	3.48	Strongly agree
(4) Instruct me to be sensitive to individual, social, and cultural differences	3.41	Strongly agree
(5) Lead me to demonstrate contributions toward solidarity	3.43	Strongly agree
(6) Make me care for the environment	3.59	Strongly agree
(7) Educate me to utilize the resources wisely, judiciously, and economically	3.56	Strongly agree
(8) Prompt me to demonstrate pride in being a Filipino citizen	3.54	Strongly agree
(9) Give me the freedom to exercise the rights and responsibilities of a Filipino Citizen	3.53	Strongly agree
(10) Guide me to do appropriate behavior in carrying out activities in the school, community, and country.	3.59	Strongly agree
Composite mean	3.52	Strongly agree

For interpretation, the following remarks apply to the mean interval: 1.00–1.74, Strongly disagree; 1.75–2.49, Disagree; 2.50–3.24, Agree; 3.25–4.00, Strongly agree.

6.2.2. Factors affecting the development of learner's VCA in relation to their friends and peers

Table 3 presents how friends and peers act as influential factors in the development of learners' VCA. It is evident that the respondents strongly agree that their friends and peers have a substantial impact on their VCA development. This underscores the notion that peers and friends are integral components of the learners' value system. Consequently, learners with positive VCA tend to associate with friends whose values prioritize moral standards.

Table 3. Friends and peers as the factor in the development of learners' VCA

Friends and peers	Weighted mean	Verbal interpretation
(1) Accompany me in fulfilling my religious obligations, such as attending church services and spiritual gatherings, among other things.	3.32	Strongly agree
(2) Reiterate to me our right to select and respect religious affiliations.	3.35	Strongly agree
(3) Remind me to preserve truth in the name of religion and ethical beliefs.	3.38	Strongly agree
(4) Allow me to be attentive to the needs of others and the distinctions in social and cultural groups.	3.40	Strongly agree
(5) Lead me to demonstrate contributions toward solidarity	3.32	Strongly agree
(6) Make me care for the environment	3.47	Strongly agree
(7) Inspire me on how to use resources wisely, sparingly, and economically.	3.47	Strongly agree
(8) Encourage me to be proud of my heritage as a Filipino citizen.	3.48	Strongly agree
(9) Encourage me to fulfill my rights and obligations as a Filipino citizen	3.48	Strongly agree
(10) Help me in carrying out activities in the school, community, and nation responsibly and suitably.	3.46	Strongly agree
Composite mean	3.41	Strongly agree

For interpretation, the following remarks apply to the mean interval: 1.00–1.74, Strongly disagree; 1.75–2.49, Disagree; 2.50–3.24, Agree; 3.25–4.00, Strongly agree.

6.2.3. Factors affecting the development of learner’s VCA in relation to their environment

The evolution of the learners’ VCA is depicted in Table 4. Notably, the respondents firmly concur that the learning and household environment have a considerable influence on how their VCA develops. This suggests that a learner’s core values are directly shaped by the way they are nurtured and the environment they are exposed to. It indicates that if the learning and household environment uphold positive VCA, the learners are likely to develop a positive VCA as well.

Table 4. Learning and household environment as the factor in the development of learners’ VCA

Learning and household environment	Weighted mean	Verbal interpretation
(1) Help me with my religious duties, like going to church, attending spiritual gatherings, and so on.	3.43	Strongly agree
(2) Guide me to understand that each person has the right to choose their religious affiliations and that they should respect that right.	3.49	Strongly agree
(3) Indulge me to keep the truth in the name of faith and morality.	3.41	Strongly agree
(4) Allow me to be aware of individual, social, and cultural differences.	3.50	Strongly agree
(5) Help me show how I can help build a better world.	3.50	Strongly agree
(6) Make me care about our surroundings.	3.55	Strongly agree
(7) Teach and show me how to use the resources wisely, judiciously, and economically.	3.53	Strongly agree
(8) Make me proud to be a Filipino citizen.	3.53	Strongly agree
(9) Train me to value the rights and responsibilities of a Filipino citizen.	3.48	Strongly agree
(10) Help me to behave appropriately when I do things at school, in my community, and in my country.	3.53	Strongly agree
Composite mean	3.49	Strongly agree

For interpretation, the following remarks apply to the mean interval: 1.00–1.74, Strongly disagree; 1.75–2.49, Disagree; 2.50–3.24, Agree; 3.25–4.00, Strongly agree.

6.3. Opportunities and Challenges Influencing the Changes in Their VCA

Schools have the autonomy to establish their behavioral expectations within their student engagement policies, resulting in a lack of universally recognized challenging behaviors. However, the grounds for suspension and expulsion are predetermined and standardized in government schools. In the majority of schools and among most teachers, challenging behavior is defined as anything that disrupts the safety or learning of the student or other students, as well as the safety of school staff. This research seeks to identify the opportunities and challenges that influence changes in VCA.

6.3.1. Personal/private space

During the FGD, the informants commonly mentioned that challenges in life, mental health issues, personal characteristics, and study difficulties were the primary reasons that students faced. These experiences are shared by most students as they undergo changes in their VCA. It’s noteworthy that teachers are aware of these factors so that students can be understood, treated, and addressed appropriately. As Rauch stated ^[16], understanding what motivates students can help them comprehend their goals, which, in turn, may aid them in understanding their behavior and how to steer themselves toward behaviors necessary for learning.

When students face challenges in their lives, they often experience behavior changes. Some studies suggest that students’ behavior is a form of communication. For example, a child who can’t express their frustration verbally may throw a pencil across the room, while a child who feels socially excluded might push a classmate

on the playground. To prevent these undesirable outcomes, teachers need to identify the underlying causes of inappropriate behavior and implement systems that promote greater self-awareness and self-control ^[17]. When students are burdened by challenges, they may become irritated and forget the proper behavior expected of them in a classroom or school environment.

Mental health issues are another factor that can significantly impact students' behavior, especially during their formative years. The intensity or complexity of the challenges doesn't matter as much as their reactions and actions. All of this underscores the need for teachers to be vigilant for signs that a student is struggling and to adopt new strategies to support the social and emotional well-being of their students. Likewise, students should be mindful of their behavior, attitudes, and character when they are in a private or personal space and avoid excessive mental stress.

Research has shown that social isolation and loneliness among children are linked to increased mental health difficulties. Another study on the effects of social isolation across the human lifespan suggests that it can impair executive functioning skills ^[18]. When students experience loneliness, they may reach out to teachers at all hours, engage in frequent non-academic conversations, and speak negatively about themselves. Lastly, study difficulties are highly regarded by the informants as a significant challenge for learners that can lead to changes in their VCA.

On the other hand, personal/private space offers students the opportunity to enhance their self-worth, self-management, and self-awareness. Interviews revealed that students acquire many valuable lessons while alone, which they carry with them throughout their lives. Students become well-rounded individuals who are content whether they are alone, in small groups, or crowded places with many people. This concept is supported by Scholl ^[19], who explains that students are encouraged to learn independently when given personal/private space. This means that individuals are responsible for their own learning, set their own objectives, and evaluate their own progress.

As a result, students can develop their VCA positively. Positive solitude refers to being alone without feeling lonely, in a content and happy mental state. Existing research suggests that quality alone time can enhance creativity, productivity, and overall well-being ^[20]. Positive and healthy solitude helps individuals adjust emotionally and prepares them for more effective social interaction. Therefore, individuals should spend more time alone, seeking out good solitude and making efficient use of alone time to adapt to independent learning and improve their academic performance in this more learner-centered learning environment.

6.3.2. Family/domestic environment

The family or domestic environment is another aspect highlighted in this study as a source of challenges and opportunities for why students' VCA changes. According to the informants, family problems, whether stemming from family members or their personal problems, have a significant impact on students. These issues are often related to problems involving their parents, socialization, and financial struggles.

More specifically, family problems are a major factor that leads to changes in students' behavior. The family serves as the primary training ground for students and is the foundational influence in their lives. This is why the study's findings indicate that family problems significantly affect their VCA. Furthermore, students facing family problems may experience symptoms of depression, hopelessness, and a tendency to withdraw from class discussions. They may stop completing assignments, express that the work is pointless, develop a pessimistic outlook, or report a lack of energy and motivation. These students might find themselves in a difficult situation concerning their families.

Personal problems rooted in the family, including financial and socialization issues, can also lead to this

phenomenon. The family serves as the basic unit of society, ideally providing a comfortable and nurturing environment where students feel a sense of belonging. As Ralph points out, the biological need for belonging has consequences for physical health, including sleep quality, cognitive longevity, cardiovascular function, and immune system strength. Belonging also greatly influences mental health; a lack of belonging can lead to depression and antisocial behavior. Moreover, belonging affects academic performance, course persistence, and grades, and it has long-term benefits such as career satisfaction and community engagement ^[21].

When it comes to opportunities, existing research also indicates that regardless of a family's income or socioeconomic status, family involvement is a crucial factor in student achievement. The family or domestic environment can provide positive influences and outlooks for students. Family involvement goes beyond simply assisting with schoolwork, attending school meetings, and communicating with instructors. It can also involve advocating with local school boards and state and federal governments to ensure that schools have the necessary resources to provide every child with a world-class education. Henderson and Mapp even suggest that certain forms of family engagement have a positive academic impact on children, especially concerning their VCA ^[15].

6.3.3. Learning environment

In considering the learning environment, the FGD reflects the prominent challenges that affect the VCA of the learners. The learning environment has an impact on the learners as they express concerns about the lack of encouragement and poverty. Durlak *et al.* stated that when schools fail to provide sufficient support for students, the social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties that frequently accompany learning and attention issues can have severe repercussions ^[22].

Establishing a supportive and positive classroom climate is the first step in developing a healthy learning environment that focuses on the needs of the students. This involves creating a secure and inviting environment for all pupils. Every child needs to feel included in the class and believe that their voice is being heard. When these expectations of the learner are not met, their behavior deviates from what is expected of them.

Based on the FGD and interviews, a good learning environment can make the difference between success and failure. Whether students are acquiring scholastic knowledge or skill, their performance, concentration, and memory can be affected by the culture and attitude toward learning. When leading a lesson, it is equally crucial to create a conducive learning environment. Learners will engage and contribute more effectively regardless of the context if they are in an atmosphere that maximizes their concentration and creativity and makes them feel comfortable sharing ideas and asking for assistance ^[14].

6.4. Immediate solutions made to overcome the challenges in the VCA changes

Students frequently encounter many learning obstacles simultaneously, greatly complicating matters and producing a potpourri of difficulties. These challenges can evolve and shift as students advance in their educational careers and find ways to cope with these scenarios. Based on the findings, respondents have implemented immediate solutions to overcome the challenges they have encountered.

It is noteworthy that self-improvement, the acquisition of learning tools and strategies, improved socialization while maintaining personal space, and enhanced family communication are the immediate solutions reported by the informants.

Self-improvement is the primary immediate solution highlighted by the informants. According to the FGD, to overcome the challenges to their values, characters, and attitudes, the learners push themselves to improve. These learners have an awareness of their qualities, flaws, emotions, beliefs, and ideals, as well as how these things impact those around them. Nevertheless, self-awareness is pointless without self-management and

improvement, which is an equally crucial skill ^[23].

Furthermore, the FGD identifies the acquisition of learning tools and strategies as a significant finding. Amid their troublesome VCA inside the school premises or learning environment, students focus on finding ways to address their worries, one of which is the concern about the lack of learning materials. In public schools, as they strive to provide for the needs of the students, some learning materials are not supplied to them. This might affect the students' condition and behavior, leading them to misbehavior or irritability.

It is also mentioned that teachers help students cope with the situation. Teachers are role models who can convince children that it is okay to overcome obstacles. They serve as mentors who can assist students in identifying and overcoming learning obstacles, including their need for learning materials. They encourage students to move forward, and sometimes, they provide students with the materials they need from their own personal resources.

On the other hand, during the FGD, the learners stated that they try to improve their socialization to get help from other people. They find their classmates and friends to be a coping mechanism to move away from the negative attitudes and characteristics they had previously chosen to be alone.

Interviews also reveal that schools are addressing students' social needs. Schools are taking care of students' social, emotional, and mental health needs to make up for lost learning as VCA problems arise. Some school administrators acknowledge the need to change how they view social and emotional learning; it is not a rival to academic achievement but rather a requirement for success.

Additionally, the findings are linked to the fact that they want to improve their family communication since there are barriers between them. Family engagement ranks first among the factors that affect students' outcomes. Partnerships between schools and families can raise students' test scores and increase their tenacity, motivation, and attendance, regardless of a family's financial status.

Even though certain families actively participate in their children's education, research demonstrates that instructors can initiate and encourage participation from all families with favorable outcomes. It is also a good revelation that while some students change their perspectives through socialization improvement, other informants prefer to maintain personal space. As students grow and develop, it is important to have family rules that define personal spaces for each family member. Everyone needs a space that is just theirs. Interviews and FGD reflect that the teachers model the conduct they want to see in their students. Having conversations and engaging in interactive play, teachers and other people may teach them about boundaries and personal space. As they mature and develop, they need to learn about personal space, which is yet another crucial social skill for success in the classroom ^[24].

6.5. Proposed program that could be developed to strengthen the CALABARZON learners' VCA

6.5.1. Recommendations

- (1) Teachers should gain a better understanding of the values, characters, and attitudes of the learners to provide more concise and worthy assessments in favor of the learners.
- (2) Schools and parents should consider launching various activities to improve their partnership for the betterment of students' VCA.
- (3) The proposed program should be implemented, evaluated, and enhanced.
- (4) A more in-depth study should be conducted in schools to explore the specific factors related to the values, characters, and attitudes of their learners.
- (5) An innovative character education-based program should be developed to uplift the values, character, and attitudes of CALABARZON learners, anchored in DepEd core values.

- (6) Regional & SDO Recognition Program for learners exhibiting excellence in embodying the DepEd Core Values (the affective aspects of fully developed CALABARZON learners).

6.5.2. Dissemination and advocacy plan – CLMD HALAGA

CLMD HALAGA is an innovative EsP program aimed at strengthening the VCA of CALABARZON learners. The crafted Innovative EsP Program of the study was developed based on the primary factors, challenges, and problems encountered by the learners. Different areas of concern were identified in the pre-implementation stage, implementation stage, and post-implementation stage. Various objectives were set, appropriate strategies were identified, individuals involved were determined, an expected time frame was set, budgetary requirements were also presented, success indicators were identified, and sustainability was established.

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Author contributions

The authors jointly prepared all the necessary documents to finish the study for the CALABARZON teachers and learners.

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