Historical Narratives of Justice and Human Rights in Legal and Civic Education: Axiological Shifts in Cultural Transmission

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines how legal and civic education mediate axiological shifts in historical narratives of justice and human rights. Grounded in axiology and philosophy of culture, it conceptualizes education as an active site of value negotiation where universal human rights discourses intersect with culturally specific traditions, producing hybrid value configurations rather than uniform transmission. Addressing gaps in existing scholarship—particularly the limited application of sustained philosophical analysis to human rights education—the study employs a critical hermeneutic approach to analyze historical documents, legal texts, curricula, and comparative case studies from post-apartheid South Africa, post-communist Eastern Europe, and the United States. It traces the historical

evolution of justice narratives, examines jurisprudential foundations and legal pedagogy, and analyzes civic and history education as key mechanisms of cultural transmission. Findings reveal that education functions as a primary arena of axiological negotiation, where values are selectively reinforced, contested, and transformed. Transitional societies tend to utilize education for deliberate value rupture and reconstruction, while established democracies exhibit ongoing contestation between universalist and particularist narratives. A critical synthesis highlights the persistent dialectic between universalism and cultural specificity, as well as education's dual role as both reproductive and transformative. The study contributes to philosophy of culture by advancing a processual understanding of value formation and offers practical insights for developing reflexive educational frameworks that balance global human rights norms with cultural sensitivity.

KEYWORDS: axiology; human rights education; cultural transmission; legal and civic education; philosophy of culture

INTRODUCTION

Historical narratives of justice and human rights function as more than records of past events. They actively construct and transmit the values societies consider worthy of preservation, contestation, or transformation. In legal and civic education, these narratives operate as powerful axiological instruments that shape collective understandings of what is good, just, and morally obligatory. This study critically examines the axiological shifts in conceptions of justice and human rights as mediated through legal and civic education. It pays particular attention to how educational practices negotiate ongoing tensions between universalist human rights discourses and culturally particular value systems.

Axiology, the philosophical study of value, serves as the central analytical lens. It investigates the nature, sources, hierarchies, and cultural embedding of values, including ethical and cultural dimensions. Within philosophy of culture, axiology interrogates how institutions such as education and law reproduce, contest, and renegotiate values across generations. Scholars of philosophy and value theory have long emphasized that education is never axiologically neutral; rather, it functions as a mechanism for cultural continuity and transformation. James Nickel argues that modern human rights discourse rests upon historically contingent moral claims concerning dignity, equality, and justice rather than universally uncontested truths (Nickel 29–35). Similarly, Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy demonstrates that education inevitably embodies ideological and moral assumptions about liberation, oppression, and social transformation (Freire 34–39).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights marks a pivotal axiological moment by explicitly linking education to the promotion of human rights. Its preamble and Article 26 call for teaching and education to foster respect for inherent dignity and inalienable rights, establishing a global normative expectation that schools and legal training programs act as primary vehicles for transmitting new value hierarchies. Article 26 specifically states that education "shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (United Nations, "Universal Declaration"). Contemporary scholarship identifies this provision as foundational to the emergence of modern human rights education (HRE) frameworks (Tibbitts, "Human Rights Education" 64–66).

Yet implementation of this vision has proven neither uniform nor unproblematic. Post-World War II universalism encountered persistent critiques of cultural imperialism and Eurocentrism. Makau Mutua argues that the dominant human rights framework often reproduces hierarchical relationships between Western liberal norms and non-Western societies by positioning the latter as morally deficient subjects requiring "civilization" (Mutua 10–17). Likewise, scholars from the Global South have criticized what Andre Keet terms the "declarationist" orientation of HRE, wherein international rights norms are transmitted as unquestionable truths without sufficient engagement with local epistemologies and cultural value systems (Keet 9–14).

Transitional societies have frequently employed education either to reinforce or rupture previous value systems. In post-apartheid South Africa, curriculum reforms explicitly connected transitional justice processes such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to revised historical narratives intended to cultivate democratic citizenship, dignity, and reconciliation (Cole and Barsalou 12–19). Parallel reforms in post-communist Eastern Europe replaced ideological indoctrination with democratic and rights-oriented values, though scholars note persistent tensions between liberal universalism and resurgent nationalist memory politics (Silova 87–95). In established Western democracies, debates continue over whether civic and history curricula should preserve celebratory national narratives or critically confront colonialism, racial injustice, and systemic inequality (Barton and Levstik 142–149).

These dynamics position education as a contested site where historical narratives simultaneously stabilize and destabilize cultural values. This paper therefore advances a strictly qualitative, interpretive analysis grounded in axiology and philosophy of culture. It treats legal and civic education not as neutral channels of information transfer, but as critical mediators of value transformation embedded within broader struggles over memory, identity, and legitimacy.

Scholarship on human rights education has expanded considerably since the 1990s. Foundational contributions from Felisa Tibbitts distinguish key dimensions of HRE: education about human rights (knowledge transmission), through human rights (pedagogical practices and institutional culture), and for human rights (empowerment and transformative action) (Tibbitts, "Understanding What We Do" 161–165). These models have become highly influential within educational policy and practice, particularly in post-conflict and transitional contexts. Tibbitts later refined these categories into the Values and Awareness Model, Accountability Model, and Transformational Model, emphasizing their distinct social and pedagogical functions ("Revisiting 'Emerging Models'" 69–74).

Comparative studies document substantial regional variations in the implementation of HRE. In post-apartheid South Africa, human rights narratives were integrated into school curricula as instruments of reconciliation and democratic reconstruction (Cole and Barsalou 23–29). In Eastern Europe, the collapse of communist regimes facilitated curricular reforms oriented toward pluralism and democratic citizenship, although nationalist backlash frequently complicated these reforms (Silova 91–94). Meanwhile, in the United States and other Western democracies, curricular debates increasingly center on contested historical memory, including slavery, settler colonialism, and systemic racism (Barton and Levstik 147–152).

Despite extensive policy-oriented literature, philosophical and axiological analyses of these processes remain comparatively underdeveloped. Existing HRE scholarship often prioritizes implementation strategies, institutional barriers, and measurable outcomes rather than deeper examination of how educational narratives embody shifting conceptions of moral value and

cultural legitimacy. While philosophers from Aristotle to contemporary theorists such as James Nickel have examined justice and rights, systematic integration of axiology into the study of legal pedagogy and civic education remains limited.

Several significant gaps therefore persist in the literature. First, few studies employ axiology and philosophy of culture as sustained frameworks for analyzing how educational transmission of historical narratives produces value transformation. Second, transitional justice scholarship frequently discusses curriculum reform without sustained philosophical interrogation of tensions between universal human rights norms and culturally embedded ethical systems. Third, comparative analyses connecting legal education, civic curricula, and historical memory across both transitional and established democratic societies remain fragmented. Finally, qualitative interpretive investigations of value negotiation within educational texts and pedagogical practices lag behind quantitative assessments of HRE effectiveness.

This study addresses these gaps through a qualitative, hermeneutic inquiry integrating philosophy, history, law, and education. Drawing upon interpretive textual analysis, it critically examines historical evolution, jurisprudential foundations, curricular practices, and comparative case studies to demonstrate how legal and civic education mediate axiological shifts. The study situates itself within multidisciplinary conversations in philosophy of culture and value theory by conceptualizing education as a dynamic arena of moral negotiation rather than a passive transmitter of consensus values.

Thesis Statement

Legal and civic education function as primary sites of axiological negotiation wherein historical narratives of justice and human rights are selectively transmitted, contested, and transformed. This process reveals both the emancipatory potential and the inherent cultural tensions of universalist value discourses when enacted within particular historical and societal contexts.

The study pursues several interconnected objectives. It traces major historical axiological shifts in narratives of justice and human rights from pre-modern foundations through the post-World War II universalist turn to contemporary multicultural challenges. It examines how legal theory, jurisprudence, and legal education transmit and reshape values of justice. It analyzes civic and history education practices as mechanisms of cultural transmission, emphasizing curricula, textbooks, and pedagogical approaches. It conducts comparative case studies from transitional societies such as post-apartheid South Africa and post-communist Eastern Europe alongside established democratic contexts such as the United States to identify patterns of continuity and disruption. It further offers a philosophical synthesis concerning tensions between universalism and cultural particularism and contributes practical insights for more reflexive educational policies that balance global norms with cultural sensitivity.

This research holds particular significance in an era marked by resurgent nationalism, migration-driven pluralism, and digital fragmentation of historical narratives. The increasing politicization of memory and education demonstrates that curricular choices are inseparable from broader struggles over cultural identity and moral authority. As Tibbitts observes, HRE increasingly faces the challenge of reconciling universal human rights principles with local contexts characterized by competing historical experiences and normative traditions ("Human Rights Education" 68–70). Consequently, understanding the axiological role of education has become an urgent scholarly and practical concern.

The study advances philosophy of culture by conceptualizing education as an active agent in value formation rather than a neutral transmitter of knowledge. It also provides scholars in

law and education with a deeper theoretical vocabulary for analyzing hidden curricula, pedagogical assumptions, and narrative selection. For policymakers, it underscores the necessity of reflexive approaches to HRE that acknowledge cultural tensions instead of presuming the seamless universality of liberal democratic values.

The scope of this study centers on critical hermeneutic analysis of primary and secondary sources. These include historical documents such as the UDHR and national constitutions, legal texts and jurisprudence, educational curricula and textbooks from selected national contexts, and relevant philosophical and educational scholarship. The interpretive methodology prioritizes depth of meaning-making over statistical generalization. Three comparative cases illuminate distinct manifestations of axiological negotiation across different political and cultural contexts. Limitations include reliance on publicly available materials and the interpretive subjectivity inherent in qualitative inquiry. The study mitigates these limitations through transparent theoretical grounding, comparative analysis, and cross-verification of scholarly sources.

The paper proceeds by first outlining the theoretical framework drawn from axiology and philosophy of culture. It then traces the historical evolution of justice and human rights narratives. Subsequent sections examine jurisprudence and legal education, followed by civic and history education practices. Comparative case studies provide empirical grounding for the analysis. A concluding axiological synthesis evaluates the broader philosophical implications of the findings while identifying practical implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Axiology constitutes the philosophical study of value in its broadest sense. Derived from the Greek terms *axios* (worthy or of value) and *logos* (study or discourse), axiology examines what humans consider good, worthy, or obligatory, along with the nature, sources, hierarchies, and cultural embedding of such values. It encompasses ethics (moral values) and aesthetics while extending to broader cultural and social valuations. Although the term gained formal prominence in the early twentieth century through thinkers such as Paul Lapie and Eduard von Hartmann, its core concerns are deeply rooted in classical philosophy, particularly in Aristotle's exploration of virtue, ethics, and the good life in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Modern axiology was significantly shaped by Ralph Barton Perry, whose *General Theory of Value* (1926) defines value as "any object of any interest," thereby expanding the concept beyond moral philosophy into domains such as law, politics, and education (Perry 115). This broad conception has been foundational for subsequent philosophical engagements with value pluralism and cultural relativism. As James W. Nickel argues, contemporary human rights frameworks are themselves grounded in historically contingent value judgments about dignity, agency, and well-being, rather than universally uncontested moral truths (Nickel 29–35). In this study, axiology serves as the primary analytical lens for examining shifts in the perceived worth of justice and human rights within educational contexts.

Philosophy of culture complements axiology by focusing on how values are produced, transmitted, and transformed within specific cultural formations. Clifford Geertz conceptualizes culture as "webs of significance" that humans themselves have spun, within which meaning—including moral valuation—is constructed and interpreted (Geertz 5). From

this perspective, historical narratives function as axiological constructs: they do not neutrally recount events but encode collective judgments about what deserves remembrance, condemnation, or emulation. Education therefore emerges as a central institution of cultural reproduction and transformation. As Pierre Bourdieu demonstrates, educational systems reproduce social and cultural capital by embedding dominant value systems within curricula and pedagogical practices (Bourdieu and Passeron 71–76).

Within legal education, this transmission often occurs through professional socialization that privileges particular conceptions of justice, such as procedural fairness, legal formalism, and the rule of law. Duncan Kennedy's critical analysis of legal education shows how law schools implicitly transmit hierarchical and ideological assumptions about authority and justice, shaping not only legal knowledge but also professional identity (Kennedy 40–45). In civic and history education, value transmission operates through curricula and textbooks that selectively interpret historical events to cultivate specific understandings of rights, citizenship, and national identity (Barton and Levstik 142–149).

This framework treats legal and civic education as active sites of axiological negotiation. Rather than viewing education as a passive conduit, the study regards it as a dynamic arena where historical narratives of justice and human rights are selectively reinforced, contested, or reconfigured. The post-World War II era, epitomized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, introduced a major universalist axiological shift by explicitly linking education to the promotion of human dignity and inalienable rights. As Article 26 affirms, education is directed toward strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (United Nations).

However, this universalist project has generated enduring tensions when encountering culturally specific value systems. Makau Mutua critiques the human rights corpus for reproducing a "savage-victim-savior" metaphor that positions Western liberal values as universally normative while marginalizing alternative cultural frameworks (Mutua 10–17). Similarly, Jack Donnelly defends a "relative universality" of human rights, acknowledging their global applicability while recognizing culturally specific interpretations and implementations (Donnelly 281–284). These debates underscore the importance of analyzing education as a site where such tensions are negotiated rather than resolved.

Felisa Tibbitts' models of human rights education provide a crucial conceptual bridge between philosophical theory and educational practice. Her framework identifies three overlapping approaches: the Values and Awareness Model (focused on knowledge transmission and socialization), the Accountability Model (emphasizing legal standards and institutional responsibility), and the Transformational Model (oriented toward critical reflection and social change) (Tibbitts, "Understanding What We Do" 161–165). These models illuminate how different pedagogical strategies prioritize distinct axiological outcomes. The Values and Awareness Model tends to reinforce existing cultural norms, while Transformational approaches actively seek to challenge and reshape value systems, particularly in post-conflict or transitional contexts (Tibbitts, "Revisiting" 69–74).

Cultural transmission theory further strengthens this framework by explaining how societies reproduce and modify values across generations. Émile Durkheim emphasized that education serves as the primary means by which societies inculcate shared moral values necessary for social cohesion (Durkheim 70–75). More recent scholarship in cultural sociology and education confirms that curricula are not neutral repositories of knowledge but structured selections that reflect and reproduce dominant value hierarchies (Apple 22–28).

In the context of justice and human rights, this transmission is inherently normative. Educational content may celebrate national founding myths, emphasize progressive expansions of rights, or critically interrogate histories of injustice. Michael W. Apple argues that such curricular decisions constitute forms of "official knowledge," reflecting struggles over power, legitimacy, and cultural authority (Apple 5–12). In multicultural and post-conflict societies, these processes often expose tensions between global human rights norms and local cultural values concerning community, authority, and tradition.

The integration of these perspectives—axiology, philosophy of culture, human rights theory, human rights education models, and cultural transmission theory—produces a robust interpretive framework suited to qualitative analysis. It enables a shift from merely describing educational policies to interrogating how educational practices actively construct the value of justice and human rights. This approach is particularly effective in revealing hidden curricula in legal education, where professional norms may subtly privilege certain interpretations of justice. It also supports critical analysis of civic and history education as arenas in which societies negotiate continuity and change in their axiological commitments.

By centering axiology, this framework maintains a strong philosophical core while incorporating historical, legal, and educational dimensions. It conceptualizes value shifts as outcomes of deliberate and contested cultural processes rather than as linear or inevitable developments. This theoretical grounding directly informs the study's hermeneutic methodology, guiding the interpretation of legal texts, historical documents, and educational materials. Ultimately, it positions legal and civic education as privileged arenas for observing and understanding broader transformations in cultural valuations of justice and human rights.

Historical Evolution of Narratives of Justice and Human Rights

The historical evolution of narratives surrounding justice and human rights reflects profound axiological transformations across epochs. These narratives have shifted from conceptions rooted in divine or cosmic order to frameworks grounded in individual dignity, universal entitlements, and collective responsibilities. Far from representing a simple linear progression, this evolution reveals recurring tensions between culturally specific value systems and emerging universalist claims. As Samuel Moyn argues, the idea of "human rights" as a universal moral language is relatively recent, gaining prominence only in the mid-twentieth century rather than unfolding as a continuous historical tradition (Moyn 1–7). This insight challenges teleological narratives and underscores the need for a critical, axiological reading of historical developments.

Ancient civilizations laid foundational ideas of justice often intertwined with religious authority and hierarchical social structures. The Code of Hammurabi represents one of the earliest written legal systems, emphasizing retributive justice and social order while explicitly differentiating penalties according to class status (Roth 71–76). Similarly, legal and moral traditions in ancient India, China, and Africa embedded justice within broader cosmological and communal frameworks rather than articulating individual rights (Glendon 12–18).

Greek philosophical thought, particularly in the works of Aristotle, provided a more systematic conceptualization of justice. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes between distributive justice (allocation based on merit) and corrective justice (rectification of wrongs), thereby establishing enduring analytical categories (Aristotle 1131a–1132b). Later, Stoic philosophers advanced the idea of a universal moral order grounded in reason, asserting a shared humanity that transcended local political boundaries. This Stoic conception

significantly influenced Roman law and subsequent natural law traditions (Tierney 24–31). Nonetheless, these early frameworks largely legitimized existing social hierarchies and offered only limited grounds for universal moral critique.

The medieval and early modern periods witnessed incremental yet significant axiological shifts toward constraining arbitrary power. The Magna Carta marked a foundational moment in the development of legal accountability by asserting that even the monarch was subject to the law (Carpenter 45–52). Although initially a feudal compact protecting baronial interests, its later reinterpretation imbued it with broader symbolic significance as a precursor to constitutional governance. Similarly, the English Bill of Rights institutionalized parliamentary supremacy and articulated protections against arbitrary punishment (Schwoerer 89–94). These developments reflected emerging values of legality, procedural fairness, and constraints on authority, though their application remained socially restricted.

The Enlightenment era constituted a decisive axiological rupture by grounding justice in reason and individual autonomy rather than tradition or divine authority. Thinkers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant articulated theories of natural rights and social contract. Locke's conception of natural rights to life, liberty, and property profoundly influenced revolutionary political thought (Locke 287–289). These ideas were institutionalized in key political documents such as the United States Declaration of Independence and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which asserted the universality of certain rights and the principle of popular sovereignty (Hunt 16–22).

However, as Lynn Hunt demonstrates, these declarations simultaneously revealed significant exclusions: women, enslaved peoples, and colonized populations were largely excluded from the scope of proclaimed universality (Hunt 166–175). This contradiction highlights a critical axiological tension—universalist ideals often coexisted with practices of exclusion and domination. Thus, Enlightenment narratives both advanced and constrained the development of human rights discourse.

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries expanded these narratives through social and political struggles that challenged entrenched inequalities. Abolitionist movements reframed slavery as a violation of universal moral principles, while labor movements emphasized economic justice and the rights of workers (Drescher 210–218). Karl Marx and other socialist thinkers critiqued liberal rights as insufficiently attentive to material inequality, arguing that formal legal equality masked underlying economic exploitation (Marx 57–60). These critiques broadened the scope of justice to include socioeconomic conditions, laying the groundwork for later distinctions between civil-political and socio-economic rights.

At the same time, nationalist and imperialist ideologies often subordinated universalist aspirations to state interests. As Eric Hobsbawm notes, the nineteenth century witnessed the simultaneous rise of nationalist movements that redefined political belonging in exclusionary terms (Hobsbawm 101–108). This duality illustrates the persistent tension between universal human equality and particularistic political identities.

The mid-twentieth century marked the most significant axiological transformation in modern human rights history. The atrocities of World War II and the Holocaust prompted a global reassessment of human dignity and state sovereignty. The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights established a comprehensive framework of rights grounded in the inherent dignity of all human beings. As Mary Ann Glendon argues, the UDHR

represented a "common standard of achievement" that sought to reconcile diverse philosophical traditions into a shared moral language (Glendon 77–83).

This marked a fundamental shift from viewing justice as a purely domestic matter to recognizing it as a subject of international concern. Subsequent legal instruments, including the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, institutionalized this universalist vision (Nickel 40–45). Yet, as Moyn cautions, the global prominence of human rights discourse emerged more fully in the 1970s, shaped by geopolitical transformations and activism rather than solely by the immediate post-war moment (Moyn 120–125).

Post-1948 developments introduced additional complexity and contestation. Decolonization movements across Africa, Asia, and Latin America challenged Eurocentric interpretations of rights, emphasizing collective rights such as self-determination and development (Mutua 36–42). Transitional justice mechanisms, including truth commissions, expanded the meaning of justice to include memory, reconciliation, and reparative measures (Teitel 69–75).

Contemporary globalization has further intensified axiological tensions. Universal human rights frameworks increasingly encounter assertions of cultural relativism, indigenous epistemologies, and critiques of Western individualism. Sally Engle Merry highlights how global human rights norms are "vernacularized" as they are adapted to local cultural contexts, producing hybrid interpretations rather than uniform applications (Merry 1–5). Additionally, digital technologies and transnational activism have transformed the production and dissemination of justice narratives, enabling new forms of participation while complicating authority over historical interpretation.

Analytically, these historical shifts demonstrate that narratives of justice and human rights are neither static nor neutral. Each historical epoch reconstructs the past to legitimize present value systems, often marginalizing alternative perspectives. Pre-modern frameworks emphasized communal harmony or divine order; Enlightenment thought elevated individual autonomy; post-war frameworks asserted universality while grappling with pluralism and inequality. As Michel Foucault argues, knowledge and power are deeply intertwined, meaning that dominant narratives often reflect underlying structures of authority (Foucault 27–32).

Education and law play central mediating roles in these processes. Curricula and legal training selectively transmit historical narratives that either reinforce dominant value hierarchies or encourage critical engagement and transformation. This underscores the study's central claim: the evolution of justice and human rights is not merely a historical process but an ongoing axiological negotiation embedded within cultural institutions.

This longue durée perspective reveals that while the scope of justice and human rights has expanded over time, it remains subject to contestation, reinterpretation, and cultural negotiation. Understanding these layered historical developments is essential for analyzing contemporary challenges in multicultural educational settings and global legal systems, where competing narratives of justice continue to shape—and contest—the values societies seek to transmit.

Legal Dimensions: Jurisprudence, Human Rights Law, and Value Transmission

Jurisprudential traditions fundamentally shape how justice and human rights are conceptualized and transmitted through legal education. Two enduring paradigms—natural law and legal positivism—offer contrasting axiological foundations. Natural law theory, associated with thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas and later John Finnis, posits that valid law

must align with moral principles grounded in reason and human flourishing (Finnis 23–29). In this view, human rights are universal and pre-political. In contrast, legal positivism, most prominently articulated by H. L. A. Hart, insists on a conceptual separation between law and morality, grounding legal validity in social facts such as enactment and institutional recognition rather than ethical content (Hart 181–207). These paradigms carry distinct implications for value transmission: natural law-oriented pedagogy foregrounds ethical reasoning and substantive justice, whereas positivist approaches prioritize doctrinal clarity, procedural fidelity, and analytical rigor.

This dichotomy, however, is not absolute. Ronald Dworkin famously challenged strict positivism by arguing that legal reasoning inherently involves moral principles, particularly in hard cases where judges must interpret rights as "trumps" over competing policy considerations (Dworkin 184–205). Dworkin's interpretivist approach underscores that legal practice itself is an axiological enterprise, thereby reinforcing the importance of integrating moral reasoning into legal education.

The post-World War II human rights regime embodies a hybrid jurisprudential configuration. Anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent treaties, it combines natural law's emphasis on inherent dignity with the positivist framework of binding international legal instruments. As Jack Donnelly explains, modern human rights are best understood as "legal rights with a strong moral foundation," reflecting both normative universality and institutional codification (Donnelly 10–15). This synthesis creates a complex axiological field in which legal education must prepare students to navigate tensions between universal moral claims and context-specific implementation.

Courts and tribunals play a crucial role in mediating these tensions. Through interpretation, they actively construct narratives of justice that shape broader societal understandings of rights. Aharon Barak emphasizes that judicial reasoning is inherently value-laden, as judges must balance competing principles such as dignity, equality, and security through doctrines like proportionality (Barak 92–98). Similarly, Robert Alexy conceptualizes constitutional rights as principles requiring optimization, meaning that adjudication necessarily involves weighing competing values rather than mechanically applying rules (Alexy 47–52). These perspectives highlight that judicial decision-making performs significant axiological work, reinforcing the argument that legal systems are active sites of value construction.

Legal education functions as a critical site of professional socialization where these jurisprudential values are internalized. Studies of legal pedagogy reveal the presence of a "hidden curriculum" that shapes students' professional identities and normative orientations. Duncan Kennedy argues that law schools systematically reproduce hierarchical and technocratic modes of thinking, privileging adversarial reasoning and formal legal analysis over broader ethical engagement (Kennedy 40–45). This process can foster a narrow conception of justice focused on procedural correctness rather than substantive fairness.

However, alternative pedagogical approaches have emerged to counterbalance these tendencies. Clinical legal education, particularly human rights clinics, integrates experiential learning with critical reflection on power, inequality, and access to justice. As David F. Chavkin notes, clinical programs enable students to connect abstract legal principles with lived experiences, thereby fostering a more holistic and socially engaged understanding of law (Chavkin 3–8). Such approaches align with broader calls for transformative legal education that bridges theory and practice.

Transformative constitutionalism provides a compelling example of a deliberate axiological project within legal systems and education. Developed in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, and theorized by Karl Klare, it envisions constitutional law as a tool for profound social transformation aimed at achieving substantive equality and social justice (Klare 150–156). This approach requires legal education to move beyond formalism toward cultivating interpretive and ethical capacities aligned with constitutional values such as dignity and equality. It underscores the role of legal training in shaping lawyers as agents of societal change rather than mere technicians of the law.

International human rights law further complicates value transmission by introducing supranational norms into domestic legal systems. Legal education must therefore equip practitioners to navigate plural normative orders—domestic, regional, and international. Upendra Baxi highlights the transformative potential of human rights discourse while also cautioning against its selective application and political instrumentalization (Baxi 33–40). This pluralism often generates axiological friction when universal standards encounter local traditions, political constraints, or competing normative frameworks.

In educational theory, such knowledge has been described as "powerful knowledge." Michael Young argues that access to specialized, systematic knowledge—such as international human rights law—enables individuals to critically engage with and transform their social conditions (Young 11–15). Despite this, many legal curricula continue to marginalize human rights law, treating it as a specialized elective rather than integrating it as a foundational perspective across legal subjects.

The axiological implications of these dynamics are substantial. Legal education does not merely impart technical skills; it cultivates professional identities and value commitments that shape how justice is interpreted and enacted. An overemphasis on positivist fidelity to enacted law may limit critical engagement with underlying moral questions, while an uncritical reliance on natural law reasoning risks undermining legal certainty and institutional stability. As Hart himself acknowledged, even a positivist system requires a "minimum content of natural law" to function effectively within human societies (Hart 193–200).

In multicultural and globalized contexts, the need for integration becomes even more pressing. Legal education increasingly faces demands to incorporate perspectives on cultural relativism, indigenous rights, and decolonial critiques of Eurocentric legal frameworks. Sally Engle Merry demonstrates how international human rights norms are adapted and reinterpreted within local cultural settings, a process she terms "vernacularization" (Merry 1–5). This underscores the importance of preparing legal practitioners who are not only doctrinally competent but also culturally and philosophically reflexive.

Ultimately, jurisprudence, human rights law, and legal education are deeply interconnected in the transmission and transformation of societal values. Legal education serves as a mediating institution between abstract philosophical theories and concrete legal practices. By shaping how future lawyers understand the nature, purpose, and limits of justice, it actively participates in broader axiological shifts. A critically reflexive and philosophically informed approach to legal pedagogy is therefore essential for harnessing the emancipatory potential of human rights while navigating the complexities of cultural pluralism.

Educational Practices: Civic and History Education as Vehicles of Cultural Transmission

Civic and history education serve as primary institutional mechanisms for the cultural transmission of values related to justice and human rights. These fields do not merely convey factual knowledge but actively shape learners' axiological orientations by selecting, interpreting, and prioritizing particular historical narratives. As Michael W. Apple argues, school knowledge is never neutral; it reflects "official knowledge" shaped by broader struggles over power and legitimacy (Apple 5–12). Through curricula, textbooks, and pedagogical practices, educational systems therefore reproduce or contest dominant value hierarchies, influencing how successive generations understand dignity, equality, responsibility, and justice.
Civic education explicitly aims at fostering democratic citizenship, respect for human rights, and civic agency. It operates as a form of axiological socialization, transmitting norms that define responsible participation in society. Monisha Bajaj emphasizes that effective human rights education integrates cognitive, affective, and action-oriented dimensions, enabling learners not only to understand rights but also to internalize and practice them (Bajaj 489–492). This tripartite framework aligns closely with Felisa Tibbitts' models of human rights education, which distinguish between awareness, accountability, and transformational approaches (Tibbitts, "Understanding What We Do" 161–165). Together, these perspectives position civic education as a potentially transformative force, particularly in multicultural and post-conflict societies where competing value systems must be negotiated rather than simply transmitted.
History education plays a complementary yet distinct role by providing the narrative foundation upon which civic values are constructed. Historical narratives in classrooms function as what Jörn Rüsen calls frameworks of "historical consciousness," shaping how individuals interpret the past in order to orient themselves in the present (Rüsen 63–69). These narratives are inherently axiological: they determine which events, actors, and struggles are worthy of remembrance and which are marginalized or silenced.
Research demonstrates that the way history is taught has profound implications for civic identity formation. Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik show that history education can either promote critical democratic engagement or reinforce uncritical national loyalty depending on how narratives are framed (Barton and Levstik 142–149). Narratives emphasizing progressive expansion of rights may foster commitment to universal values, while those exposing contradictions and injustices can cultivate critical reflexivity and moral questioning.
Textbook analysis reveals persistent patterns in value transmission. Studies of curriculum content indicate that national histories are often presented through selective lenses that reinforce dominant cultural identities while incorporating elements of global human rights discourse. Falk Pingel notes that textbooks frequently balance nation-building narratives with limited acknowledgment of controversial or traumatic pasts, reflecting political compromises over collective memory (Pingel 23–30). Such representations carry significant axiological weight: they signal whether values such as national cohesion, critical inquiry, reconciliation, or resistance are prioritized.
When history education adopts a critical orientation, it equips learners to interrogate dominant narratives and recognize ongoing struggles for justice. Peter Seixas argues that fostering "historical thinking" skills—such as evidence evaluation, perspective-taking, and ethical judgment—enables students to engage more deeply with questions of justice and responsibility (Seixas and Morton 5–9). This approach aligns with broader goals of democratic education by encouraging reflective rather than passive citizenship.

Pedagogical approaches further shape the depth and character of value transmission. Traditional teacher-centered models tend to emphasize rote memorization, often reinforcing established value hierarchies with limited critical engagement. In contrast, dialogic and critical pedagogies, influenced by Paulo Freire, encourage learners to question dominant narratives and examine contradictions between proclaimed ideals and historical realities (Freire 34–39). Experiential methods—such as site visits, oral history projects, and community engagement—connect abstract human rights principles to lived experiences, enhancing both relevance and internalization.

These dynamics become particularly complex in multicultural and transitional contexts. Educators must navigate tensions between universal human rights frameworks and local cultural values, between national identity formation and global citizenship, and between historical truth-telling and social cohesion. Elizabeth A. Cole and Judy Barsalou highlight how history education in post-conflict societies often becomes a contested arena where competing narratives of past violence and injustice vie for curricular recognition (Cole and Barsalou 12–19). Teachers' own training, beliefs, and institutional constraints significantly influence how these tensions are negotiated in practice.

Scholarly work underscores the dual potential of education in these contexts. Tibbitts' evolving models of human rights education illustrate a shift from values-and-awareness approaches toward more critical and transformational orientations that explicitly address power imbalances and cultural specificity (Tibbitts, "Revisiting" 69–74). Similarly, sociological theories of cultural transmission emphasize that schools function alongside families and communities as key agents in shaping dispositions toward democracy, tolerance, and rights observance (Bourdieu and Passeron 71–76).

The axiological implications are far-reaching. Civic and history education do not transmit neutral facts but actively participate in constructing what societies deem worthy of preservation or transformation. As Benedict Anderson argues, nations themselves are "imagined communities" sustained through shared narratives, many of which are disseminated through education (Anderson 6–7). When aligned with critical philosophy of culture, educational practices can cultivate reflective citizens capable of navigating value pluralism. When instrumentalized for political or nationalistic purposes, however, they risk entrenching exclusionary hierarchies and suppressing dissenting perspectives.

Ultimately, civic and history education function as vital bridges between past narratives and future possibilities. By shaping how learners interpret historical struggles for justice and understand their contemporary responsibilities, these practices actively mediate broader axiological shifts within culture. A philosophically grounded and critically reflexive approach—integrating historical inquiry, cultural sensitivity, and commitment to human rights—offers the greatest potential for education to serve as an emancipatory rather than merely reproductive force.

Case Studies: Comparative Analysis Across Historical, Legal, and Educational Contexts

Comparative case analysis illuminates how historical narratives of justice and human rights are negotiated within legal and educational systems across divergent cultural and political contexts. By examining post-apartheid South Africa, post-communist Eastern Europe (with emphasis on Romania and Poland), and the United States as a Western liberal democracy, this section reveals patterns of axiological continuity, rupture, and hybridity. These cases demonstrate that

education functions as an active mediator of value transmission rather than a neutral conduit, highlighting tensions between universal human rights discourse and culturally embedded value systems. As Elizabeth A. Cole and Judy Barsalou argue, education in post-conflict societies is deeply implicated in shaping collective memory and moral frameworks, often reflecting broader struggles over legitimacy and identity (Cole and Barsalou 12–19).

Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transformative Reconstruction

Post-apartheid South Africa represents a paradigmatic case of deliberate axiological reconstruction through intertwined legal and educational reforms. Following the dismantling of apartheid and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the new constitutional order embraced transformative constitutionalism, emphasizing dignity, equality, and social justice. Karl Klare conceptualizes this framework as a long-term project aimed at reshaping social and economic relations through constitutional interpretation (Klare 150–156).

Educational reforms, particularly through Curriculum 2005 and subsequent revisions, integrated human rights education into subjects such as Life Orientation and History. Textbooks were revised to replace apartheid-era narratives with accounts emphasizing resistance, reconciliation, and democratic citizenship (Chisholm 78–85). As Linda Chisholm demonstrates, these reforms sought to align pedagogy with constitutional values, embedding human rights discourse within everyday learning.

Legal education similarly underwent transformation, shifting toward substantive justice and public interest law. However, implementation challenges persist. Scholars note uneven teacher preparation, resource disparities, and tensions between transformative goals and neoliberal policy pressures (Soudien 95–102). Axiologically, South Africa illustrates a conscious rupture from hierarchical and racialized value systems toward a normative order centered on dignity and redress, though persistent socioeconomic inequalities reveal limits in the depth of this transformation.

Post-Communist Eastern Europe: Democratic Transition and Contestation

Post-communist Eastern Europe presents a contrasting transitional trajectory marked by rapid ideological transformation. In Romania and Poland, the collapse of Marxist-Leninist regimes necessitated comprehensive educational and legal reforms aimed at fostering democratic values and human rights. Iveta Silova highlights how post-socialist education systems were reoriented toward pluralism, critical thinking, and civic participation, often under the influence of European integration processes (Silova 87–95).

In Romania, post-1989 reforms introduced civic education curricula emphasizing rule of law, democratic citizenship, and individual rights, while history education began addressing previously suppressed narratives of repression and resistance (Misco 221–226). In Poland, the legacy of the Solidarity movement shaped curricular emphasis on civil liberties and democratic activism (Janowski 134–139). Legal education in both contexts underwent "Europeanization," aligning with frameworks such as the European Convention on Human Rights and broader European Union legal standards (Donnelly 121–125).

However, these axiological shifts have proven fragile. Scholars point to lingering authoritarian mentalities, contested historical memory, and the resurgence of nationalist politics as factors complicating value transmission (Silova 92–94). Recent political developments in parts of Eastern Europe illustrate tensions between liberal democratic norms and nationalist agendas, particularly in curricular debates over history and identity. These cases demonstrate that while

education can facilitate rapid axiological change, such transformations remain vulnerable to political and cultural backlash.

United States: Contestation within a Stable Democracy

The United States represents a case of ongoing axiological negotiation within a relatively stable liberal democratic framework. Civic and history education have traditionally transmitted narratives of national exceptionalism grounded in constitutional principles, individual liberty, and progressive expansion of rights. However, these narratives have been increasingly contested. As Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik note, history education in the United States oscillates between promoting critical inquiry and reinforcing patriotic consensus (Barton and Levstik 147–152).

Contemporary debates over curriculum—particularly regarding slavery, racial injustice, settler colonialism, and systemic inequality—highlight deep axiological divisions. James W. Loewen critiques traditional textbooks for sanitizing historical injustices and promoting uncritical national narratives (Loewen 2–5). Conversely, recent policy initiatives in some states have sought to restrict critical approaches, emphasizing "patriotic education" and national cohesion.

Legal education in the United States reflects similar tensions. While elite law schools often emphasize doctrinal analysis and procedural reasoning, clinical legal education and human rights programs provide avenues for integrating social justice perspectives (Kennedy 40–45). Additionally, the decentralized nature of education policy results in significant variation across states in the extent to which global human rights frameworks are incorporated into curricula (Bajaj 495–498). This case illustrates that even in consolidated democracies, education remains a contested site of value negotiation.

Cross-Case Analysis: Patterns of Axiological Negotiation

Comparative analysis across these cases reveals several important patterns. Transitional societies such as South Africa and Eastern European states often deploy education as a deliberate instrument of axiological rupture and reconstruction. Historical narratives are reconfigured to legitimize new political orders and foster reconciliation or democratization. Legal education in these contexts plays a vanguard role in aligning professional norms with constitutional or supranational values.

In contrast, the United States demonstrates a more incremental and contested pattern of axiological change. Rather than comprehensive systemic overhaul, value shifts occur through ongoing political, cultural, and educational debates. Across all cases, universal human rights discourse encounters friction with local priorities—redress and equality in South Africa, national sovereignty and historical memory in Eastern Europe, and patriotic identity in the United States.

These cases also reveal common limitations. Implementation gaps between policy and practice, teacher preparedness challenges, and political contestation frequently constrain the transformative potential of education. Moreover, globalization and digital media have introduced new dynamics, enabling alternative narratives that challenge official curricula and complicate centralized control over value transmission (Merry 1–5).

Philosophically, the cases underscore that culture is dynamic and contested rather than static. Education emerges as a critical arena in which societies negotiate the universal–particular tension central to contemporary human rights discourse. As Samuel Moyn argues, human

rights function less as fixed truths than as evolving moral and political projects shaped by historical context (Moyn 7–12).

Synthesis

Ultimately, the comparative analysis affirms the study's central thesis: legal and civic education actively mediate axiological shifts. Transitional societies demonstrate the capacity of education to accelerate value transformation, while established democracies reveal its role in sustaining, contesting, and gradually reshaping inherited hierarchies. These insights highlight the necessity of reflexive educational strategies that balance global human rights commitments with cultural sensitivity and historical complexity.

Critical Axiological Analysis and Philosophical Synthesis

The preceding historical, legal, educational, and comparative analyses demonstrate that narratives of justice and human rights have undergone profound axiological transformations across time and context. These shifts involve not merely changes in normative content but reconfigurations in the hierarchy of what societies deem good, worthy, and obligatory. From pre-modern emphases on cosmic or communal order to Enlightenment valorizations of individual autonomy, and from post-1948 universalist assertions of inherent dignity to contemporary engagements with pluralism, justice emerges as historically contingent yet normatively aspirational. As Samuel Moyn argues, the modern human rights framework should not be understood as the inevitable culmination of a long moral evolution but as a relatively recent moral and political project shaped by specific historical contingencies (Moyn 1–7). Legal and civic education play decisive roles in mediating these shifts, actively selecting and interpreting narratives that stabilize or challenge prevailing value systems.

A central axiological tension lies in the dialectic between universalism and particularism. The post-World War II human rights framework, epitomized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, establishes a universal hierarchy that places individual dignity at its apex. Jack Donnelly conceptualizes this as a doctrine of "relative universality," wherein human rights are globally valid but locally interpreted (Donnelly 281–284). Comparative evidence supports this claim: in South Africa, universal rights are rearticulated through transformative constitutionalism to address historical injustice (Klare 150–156); in Eastern Europe, they coexist with nationalist reassertions; and in the United States, they often intersect uneasily with exceptionalist narratives. These cases demonstrate that universal values do not displace particular ones but are reconfigured through interaction, producing hybrid axiological formations.

Philosophically, this process resonates strongly with Charles Taylor's theory of recognition. Taylor argues that identity and value formation occur dialogically within cultural frameworks, through what he calls "strong evaluations" of what is worthy or meaningful (Taylor 25–32). In educational contexts, historical narratives function as sites where such evaluations are encountered, contested, and internalized. When curricula present sanitized or triumphalist narratives, they constrain this dialogical process, reinforcing unexamined hierarchies. By contrast, critical pedagogies enable engagement with competing moral perspectives, fostering deeper axiological reflection.

This critical engagement aligns with Axel Honneth's theory of recognition, which emphasizes that struggles for justice are fundamentally struggles for social recognition (Honneth 92–98). Education that confronts historical injustices—such as apartheid, slavery, or authoritarian repression—can thus facilitate moral development by exposing learners to contested

narratives of dignity and exclusion. Such approaches transform education from a mechanism of value reproduction into a space of ethical contestation and growth.

Legal education contributes a distinct dimension to this synthesis. The longstanding tension between natural law and legal positivism reflects competing axiological orientations: one grounded in moral universality, the other in procedural legitimacy. Ronald Dworkin's interpretivism bridges this divide by demonstrating that legal reasoning inherently involves moral judgment, particularly in adjudicating rights claims (Dworkin 184–205). When legal pedagogy privileges technical mastery over ethical reasoning, it transmits a constrained axiology that prioritizes certainty and procedural correctness. Conversely, transformative approaches—such as those associated with Karl Klare's theory of transformative constitutionalism—cultivate lawyers as agents of social change, capable of aligning legal practice with broader ideals of justice (Klare 150–156).

From a philosophy of culture perspective, education emerges as both a site of cultural reproduction and a potential arena of transformation. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction highlights how educational systems perpetuate dominant value hierarchies under the guise of neutrality (Bourdieu and Passeron 71–76). However, the comparative cases examined earlier demonstrate that education can also function as a site of resistance and reconfiguration. In transitional societies, deliberate curricular reform operates as a form of "axiological engineering," seeking to install new value systems aligned with democratic and human rights norms.

Yet such efforts are rarely uncontested. Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony helps explain why dominant value systems persist despite formal institutional change (Gramsci 12–18). Residual beliefs, institutional inertia, and political contestation often undermine attempts at rapid transformation. This explains why reforms in South Africa, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere frequently encounter implementation gaps and resistance, revealing the limits of top-down value transmission.

A further critical dimension concerns the temporality of axiological transmission. Historical narratives link past, present, and future in ways that shape moral orientation. Paul Ricoeur emphasizes that memory is not merely retrospective but constitutive of identity and ethical responsibility (Ricoeur 84–90). Educational choices about which histories to emphasize—resistance, oppression, reconciliation—therefore carry profound axiological implications. They determine which values are transmitted across generations and which are marginalized.

This raises a fundamental ethical question: should education prioritize social cohesion or critical truth-telling? Evidence from comparative contexts suggests that overly cohesive narratives risk superficial value internalization, while critical engagement, though potentially destabilizing, fosters deeper and more resilient moral commitments (Barton and Levstik 147–152). Thus, the most effective educational approaches are those that balance narrative coherence with critical openness.

The synthesis also reveals education's dual character as both emancipatory and disciplinary. Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action highlights the emancipatory potential of dialogue grounded in rational discourse and mutual recognition (Habermas 86–94). Human rights education, when practiced reflexively, can expand moral imagination and empower marginalized groups. However, as critics such as Makau Mutua warn, universalist human rights discourse can also function as a vehicle for cultural domination if imposed without sensitivity to local contexts (Mutua 10–17). This ambivalence underscores the necessity of reflexive

axiological practice—one that remains critically aware of its own assumptions and open to dialogue.

In philosophical terms, the analysis affirms that axiology is inherently dynamic and relational. Values of justice and human rights are neither timeless absolutes nor arbitrary constructs; they emerge through historical struggle, legal institutionalization, and educational transmission. This processual understanding aligns with contemporary philosophy of culture, which emphasizes the interplay between power, memory, and identity in shaping value systems.

Ultimately, this critical synthesis reinforces the study's central thesis: legal and civic education are not passive transmitters of fixed truths but active arenas of axiological negotiation. They reveal both the transformative promise of universal human rights and the persistent challenges of cultural embeddedness. A philosophically grounded, critically reflexive approach—integrating historical awareness, cultural sensitivity, and normative commitment—offers the most viable pathway for achieving meaningful and sustainable value transformation in contemporary multicultural societies.

DISCUSSION

This study has demonstrated that legal and civic education function as critical sites of axiological negotiation where historical narratives of justice and human rights are selectively transmitted, contested, and transformed. By integrating axiology and philosophy of culture with historical, legal, and educational analyses across transitional and stable democratic contexts, the research reveals education's dual role as both a reproductive and transformative force in cultural value systems. As Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron argue, educational institutions reproduce dominant cultural values while simultaneously offering spaces for contestation and change (Bourdieu and Passeron 71–76). The findings here affirm that value shifts are neither inevitable nor seamless but emerge through ongoing dialectical processes shaped by power relations, historical memory, and institutional practices.

Theoretically, this work contributes to axiology by advancing a processual and culturally embedded understanding of value formation. Classical approaches, including Ralph Barton Perry's interest-based theory, conceptualized value as relatively stable objects of inquiry (Perry 115). By contrast, this study demonstrates that values of justice and human rights are dynamically reconstituted through educational transmission. Historical narratives do not merely reflect pre-existing values; they actively construct and legitimize them. This insight aligns with Charles Taylor's dialogical account of identity formation, in which moral frameworks emerge through engagement with cultural horizons (Taylor 25–32), and with Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach, which emphasizes education's role in cultivating critical reasoning, empathy, and global citizenship (Nussbaum 9–12). By conceptualizing legal and civic education as "axiological laboratories," this study extends philosophy of culture toward a more dynamic account of intergenerational value transmission in contexts of globalization and pluralism.

The comparative dimension further illuminates the universalism–particularism tension at the core of contemporary human rights discourse. In South Africa, transformative constitutionalism localized universal rights to address historical injustice (Klare 150–156). In Eastern Europe, rapid transitions to liberal democracy revealed the fragility of externally promoted value systems when confronted with nationalist resurgence (Silova 92–94). In the

United States, curricular debates over critical versus "patriotic" history education illustrate ongoing contestation between universalist and particularist narratives (Barton and Levstik 147–152).

These patterns resonate globally. In Latin America, transitional justice initiatives in Argentina and Chile have used education and memory institutions to confront authoritarian pasts, reinforcing the ethical imperative of *Nunca Más* (Jelin 26–32). In Rwanda, post-genocide education policies have emphasized unity and reconciliation while tightly managing historical narratives to prevent renewed conflict (Freedman et al. 665–670). In East Asia, countries such as South Korea have incorporated human rights education into national curricula while negotiating Confucian traditions and democratic norms (Moon 112–118). These examples reinforce Sally Engle Merry's concept of "vernacularization," whereby global human rights norms are translated into locally meaningful frameworks rather than adopted wholesale (Merry 1–5). The result is not convergence but the emergence of diverse, hybrid axiological configurations.

Legal education emerges as a particularly influential domain of value transmission. Professional socialization within law schools shapes not only individual practitioners but also broader societal understandings of justice. Duncan Kennedy has shown how legal education reproduces hierarchical and technocratic orientations that privilege formal reasoning over substantive justice (Kennedy 40–45). Similarly, Kimberlé Crenshaw's work on critical race theory exposes how legal frameworks can obscure structural inequalities while claiming neutrality (Crenshaw 1242–1245). This study extends these critiques by situating them within a global axiological framework: when legal pedagogy is narrowly positivist, it transmits constrained value systems; when it incorporates clinical and transformative approaches, it fosters lawyers as agents of social change.

Civic and history education face parallel challenges as instruments of cultural memory. James V. Wertsch conceptualizes collective memory as a cultural tool shaped by institutional narratives and political interests (Wertsch 21–27). In post-conflict societies such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, and Colombia, efforts to introduce multiperspectival histories have encountered resistance from political elites seeking cohesive national narratives (Cole and Barsalou 12–19). These tensions illustrate a key axiological dilemma: education that prioritizes cohesion may suppress critical engagement, while education that foregrounds contestation may generate short-term instability but foster deeper democratic resilience.

The policy implications are substantial. Curriculum designers and educators must adopt reflexive frameworks that explicitly address the axiological dimensions of teaching. This includes systematic textbook analysis, teacher training in critical pedagogy, and the incorporation of dialogic methods that engage students with competing value systems. International organizations such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe have promoted global citizenship and human rights education, yet implementation often remains uneven (UNESCO 15–20). Effective reform requires sustained investment in teacher capacity and culturally responsive materials. In plural societies such as India, Indonesia, and Canada, integrating indigenous knowledge and minority perspectives has proven essential for balancing universal norms with cultural specificity (Banks 132–138).

This study also acknowledges several limitations. As a qualitative interpretive analysis, it relies primarily on textual and secondary sources rather than ethnographic observation of classroom practices. While this allows for depth in analyzing official narratives, it limits insight into how

values are actually received and internalized by learners. The focus on selected case studies, though analytically useful, cannot capture the full diversity of global experiences. Additionally, the growing influence of digital media—where alternative historical narratives circulate beyond formal education—introduces complexities that require further investigation. Finally, axiological analysis inherently involves interpretive judgment, though this has been mitigated through rigorous theoretical grounding and comparative validation.

Despite these constraints, the study opens several avenues for future research. Longitudinal studies could examine how curricular reforms influence value orientations over time. Comparative research in underexplored regions—particularly the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa beyond South Africa, and Southeast Asia—would deepen understanding of cultural variation. Digital ethnography offers a promising approach to analyzing how young people navigate competing narratives across formal and informal learning environments. Philosophically, further integration of axiology with decolonial theory, indigenous epistemologies, and environmental ethics would expand the scope of inquiry, particularly in light of emerging global challenges.

In conclusion, this discussion underscores the profound cultural and philosophical significance of legal and civic education in shaping societal valuations of justice and human rights. By mediating historical memory and value transmission, these domains participate directly in the ongoing construction of culture. The global patterns identified here reveal both the emancipatory potential of human rights discourse and the persistent challenges of cultural embeddedness. A philosophically informed and critically reflexive approach to education—one that engages rather than suppresses axiological tensions—offers the most viable pathway toward sustainable value transformation in an increasingly interconnected yet plural world. Ultimately, the quality of future societies depends significantly on how deliberately and critically they transmit narratives of justice to subsequent generations.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined how legal and civic education function as vital arenas for the transmission and transformation of values associated with justice and human rights. Through an axiological and philosophy-of-culture lens, it has shown that historical narratives are not neutral representations of the past but active instruments in shaping what societies consider worthy, legitimate, and morally obligatory. The central argument is thus sustained: legal and civic education operate as primary sites of axiological negotiation where universal human rights discourses encounter culturally specific value systems, producing hybrid configurations rather than seamless universality.

The theoretical framework, grounded in axiology and philosophy of culture, has provided a coherent basis for analyzing value formation as a dynamic and socially embedded process. By integrating value theory with cultural transmission and human rights education models, the study has demonstrated that education is not merely reproductive but constitutive of value hierarchies. This dual capacity—both stabilizing and transformative—positions education at the center of cultural continuity and change. Historically, the evolution of justice narratives from cosmic and communal orders to Enlightenment individualism and post-1948

universalism reflects successive reconfigurations of what counts as morally significant. In each epoch, law and education have mediated these shifts, selectively transmitting values across generations.

The analysis of legal dimensions further underscores the role of jurisprudence and legal education in shaping axiological orientations. Enduring tensions between natural law and legal positivism inform how justice is conceptualized and taught, while transformative approaches—particularly in transitional societies—demonstrate law's potential as anداة of value reconstruction. Civic and history education complement this process by structuring collective memory through curricula, textbooks, and pedagogy. Where traditional models tend to reproduce dominant hierarchies, critical and dialogic approaches foster deeper reflection and more durable value commitments.

Comparative case studies from South Africa, Eastern Europe, and the United States reveal that these processes vary across contexts but share a common pattern: education consistently mediates tensions between universal human rights ideals and particular cultural narratives. Transitional societies often mobilize education for deliberate axiological rupture and reconstruction, while established democracies exhibit more incremental and contested transformations. Global parallels further confirm that universal norms are always refracted through local histories, identities, and political conditions.

The philosophical synthesis reinforces several key insights. First, the universalism–particularism tension remains a defining feature of contemporary human rights discourse. Second, value formation is inherently dialogical, emerging through engagement with competing moral frameworks. Third, education possesses an ambivalent character: it can serve as a vehicle for emancipation and critical reflection, or as a mechanism for reproducing dominant ideologies. These findings affirm that culture is not static but continually renegotiated, with legal and civic education occupying privileged positions in this process.

Taken together, the study advances a processual understanding of axiology, emphasizing that values of justice and human rights are historically constructed, institutionally mediated, and culturally contested. Its implications are both theoretical and practical. For scholarship, it enriches philosophy of culture by foregrounding education as a central site of value formation. For policy and practice, it highlights the need for reflexive curricula, improved teacher preparation, and pedagogical approaches that engage rather than suppress value conflicts.

Ultimately, the transmission of narratives about justice and human rights is inseparable from the shaping of collective futures. In an era marked by resurgent nationalism, cultural pluralism, and the fragmentation of knowledge in digital spaces, the role of education becomes even more critical. By fostering critical engagement with competing values instead of imposing singular narratives, legal and civic education can contribute to more inclusive and sustainable cultural formations grounded in respect for human dignity. This study therefore reaffirms the enduring relevance of philosophy of culture for understanding—and guiding—the complex interplay between history, law, education, and values in the contemporary world.

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