

**Examining the role of formal schooling and informal learning in
the transmission of cultural knowledge, values, and practices**

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ABSTRACT

With a focus on the complementary functions of formal and informal learning systems, this study investigated sociocultural teaching methods that facilitate the dissemination of cultural knowledge and values throughout Southeast Asia. The results show that the main means of fostering civic values, patriotism, moral growth, national identity, and shared historical traditions are still formal and structured national curricula. However, through everyday interactions, storytelling, rituals, and intergenerational learning, informal family and community-based learning continue to play an equally significant role in maintaining indigenous knowledge, cultural traditions, and customary practices. The findings also showed that character and citizenship education, religious or monastic-based education, and culturally sensitive curricula all support social cohesiveness, ethical responsibility, cultural awareness, and respect for a variety of cultural traditions. Combining these methods offers a thorough and long-lasting framework for teaching cultural knowledge while empowering students to value both local and national identities. Despite these efforts, some Southeast Asian nations still struggle to strike a balance between the acknowledgment and preservation of Indigenous and minority cultures and standardized national educational curricula. The study comes to the conclusion that maintaining cultural heritage in the face of globalization and modernization requires improving cooperation between schools, families, elders, cultural communities, and other stakeholders. While guaranteeing the ongoing relevance and transmission of cultural knowledge and values to future generations, integrating formal educational structures with community-based and culturally grounded learning practices can support inclusive education.

Keywords: Sociocultural teaching practices, cultural knowledge, cultural values, formal education, informal learning, Indigenous knowledge, Southeast Asia.

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INTRODUCTION

A society's identity is largely shaped by its cultural knowledge, values, and customs, which give people a sense of community, a common past, and generational continuity. They spread thru a variety of educational settings, especially formal education and informal learning. While informal learning occurs in families, communities, peer groups, and regular social interactions, schools offer structured opportunities for students to acquire cultural knowledge and values thru curricula, classroom instruction, educational activities, and institutional practices (Zalli, 2024).

Through courses like history, language, literature, social studies, the arts, and civic education, formal education contributes significantly to the methodical introduction and preservation of cultural heritage (Achille & Fiorillo, 2022). But educational institutions are not the only places where cultural learning takes place. Indigenous knowledge, traditions, beliefs, customs, and practices—which are typically acquired thru participation, observation, storytelling, and intergenerational interaction—remain significant sources from families, elders, and communities. In culturally diverse societies, where various groups continue to preserve and transmit their cultural heritage in different ways, the complementary roles of formal and informal learning are especially pertinent (Mardliyah et al., 2025).

Thus, the main goal of this study is to investigate how cultural knowledge, values, and practices are transmitted thru formal education and informal learning. It looks for trends in the ways that these two learning environments support cultural continuity and work in tandem to preserve cultural heritage for future generations. In order to develop inclusive learning strategies that acknowledge both formal educational systems and community-based practices as significant mechanisms for cultural transmission, educators, educational institutions, communities, and policymakers may find the findings to be helpful.

Statement of the problem

The study intends to investigate how cultural knowledge, values, and practices are transmitted across various cultural contexts thru formal education and informal learning. It looks for commonalities in the ways that cultural knowledge and values are passed down in both formal and informal learning settings. It also seeks to investigate the complementary roles that families, communities, schools, and other social groups play in maintaining cultural practices and heritage. The study's ultimate goal is to shed light on how both formal and informal education can aid in the preservation and ongoing dissemination of cultural practices, values, and knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a data mining approach to look for trends and connections in the body of knowledge about how formal education and informal learning contribute to the transfer of cultural practices, values, and knowledge across various cultural contexts. In order to find recurrent themes, patterns, associations, and trends pertaining to formal and informal learning practices, pertinent secondary data is methodically gathered from published studies, scholarly literature, institutional reports, and other reliable sources. Data mining techniques are then used to process, organize, and analyze the data. To ascertain how these two learning

environments support the development, transmission, and preservation of cultural knowledge, values, and practices, the findings are combined.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Formal/structured national system or curriculum

Formal or structured national systems or curricula offer an orderly framework that directs educational institutions in providing students with standardized cultural content, values, knowledge, and skills (Ghani, 2025). They are crucial tools for fostering national identity, protecting cultural heritage, and guaranteeing uniformity and fairness in educational opportunities among various communities.

The official national curriculum of Cambodia serves as a cohesive framework for methodically instilling in students' civic identity, national unity, and societal values (Sam et al., 2026). The system maintains traditional societal hierarchies and cultural patterns across generations by using textbooks approved by the Ministry and structured classroom instruction.

In Laos, a formal national curriculum acts as a centralized instrument for social cohesion by standardizing the teaching of moral education, civic values, and the official language (Kittiphanh, 2024). However, the various indigenous knowledge systems of regional ethnic minorities are frequently subordinated to state-mandated content under this strict framework.

In Myanmar, students are taught common civic values, historical narratives, and prevailing cultural norms through a formal national curriculum (Phattharathanasut & Brehm, 2026). However, cultural assimilation has historically been fueled by this centralized educational system, often ignoring the rich linguistic and ethnic diversity of minority groups.

The nation, religion, and monarchy are the three main cultural pillars that Thailand's centralized national curriculum methodically instills in students from a young age (Rakpathum & Silpachai, 2025). By standardizing the transmission of civic duty and heritage across all regions, this structured framework successfully unifies the national identity.

Basic cultural values like moral integrity, community solidarity, and patriotism are methodically incorporated into the national curriculum of Vietnam (Nguyen et al., 2025). Students all across the country are guaranteed to internalize state-endorsed values and a common national identity thanks to this centralized framework.

Malaysia's formal national curriculum serves as the main institutional framework for fostering multicultural understanding, patriotism, and shared civic values among its various ethnic groups (Balakrishnan, 2026). This organized system methodically protects national heritage while promoting a cohesive national identity across generations by standardizing fundamental subjects like history and moral education.

In the Philippines, a formal, structured national curriculum serves as the main means of methodically instilling nationalism, shared historical traditions, and fundamental civic values throughout various regions (Lucas, 2025). The educational system helps maintain a cohesive national identity while preparing students to function in a globalized society by standardizing these cultural lessons within schools.

Because it incorporates civic responsibilities, national education, and fundamental societal values into everyday education, Singapore's structured national curriculum is an effective tool for deliberate cultural transmission (Hidayati & Nihayah, 2025). The system guarantees a unified national identity while bridging disparate ethnic communities through standardized frameworks like Character and Citizenship Education and the bilingual policy.

By incorporating local history, customs, and official languages into the classroom, a structured national curriculum in Timor-Leste is an essential tool for reestablishing a cohesive national identity (Ribeiro et al., 2020). This formal system supports the post independence development of the young nation by assisting in the transmission of common cultural and democratic values to future generations.

Informal family-or community-based learning

The transfer of knowledge, values, skills, customs, and cultural practices thru regular interactions and experiences outside of formal educational settings is referred to as informal family- or community-based learning (Lu et al., 2026). By enabling children and young people to learn directly from family members, elders, and community members, it plays a significant role in maintaining cultural identity and fostering intergenerational relationships.

In Cambodia, the main means of passing down moral values, respect for elders, and fundamental cultural values to future generations is through informal family and community-based learning (Evrard & Destrooper, 2025). In a collectivistic society, these customs guarantee the preservation of social harmony and national heritage by being directly incorporated into everyday social interactions and household routines.

In Myanmar, the main means of fostering fundamental social values like reverence for elders, religious customs, and harmony within the community is informal family and community-based education (No, 2025). Particularly in situations where formal educational systems are unstable or unavailable, these commonplace, experiential practices serve as an essential, resilient cultural anchor that maintains ethnic identity and social cohesion.

In Thailand, the main way that fundamental cultural values like Bun-Khun (gratitude) and respect for elders are passed down through everyday domestic and social interactions is through informal family- and community-based learning (Rotjanasuksoomboon et al., 2026). By directly incorporating them into the lived realities of younger generations, this experiential transmission guarantees the survival of regional traditions, religious practices, and social harmony.

In Brunei, the main means of transmitting fundamental social values, religious convictions, and indigenous customs between generations are informal family and community networks (Adi & Arafat, 2024). The social cohesiveness and local heritage that formal education frequently ignores are preserved by these everyday exchanges.

Through shared oral storytelling and daily observation, informal family- and community-based learning is the cornerstone for maintaining indigenous customs, moral principles, and social norms across generations in Indonesia (Shantini et al., 2025). These organic practices guarantee that ancestral heritage continues to be a living, flexible component of contemporary identity by incorporating cultural wisdom into routine communal activities like religious rites, gotong royong (mutual cooperation), and family get-togethers.

Through daily domestic observations and local involvement, informal family- and community-based learning in Malaysia preserves indigenous customs, oral histories, and fundamental values like gotong-royong (communal unity) and respect for elders (Radzuan et al., 2024). By integrating heritage directly into lived experiences rather than formal classrooms, this grassroots transmission ensures cultural continuity in a modernizing society while bridging generational gaps.

In the Philippines, the main way that fundamental cultural values like respect for elders and communal unity are passed down through daily observation is through informal family- and community-based learning (Roque, 2025). These practices guarantee the genuine preservation and continuation of Filipino heritage across generations by grounding these lessons in personal experiences and close-knit relationships.

In Singapore, informal family and community-based education is an essential foundation for transmitting fundamental cultural values such as collectivism and filial piety through everyday interactions and customs (More, 2026). Within the country's diverse multicultural society, these natural, intergenerational spaces support social cohesion and serve as an anchor for ethnic identity.

In Timor-Leste, informal family and community-based education is essential for transferring customs like Tara Bandu, local ecological knowledge, and ancestral traditions to future generations (de Deus et al., 2026). The community's fundamental principles of social harmony, collectivism, and mutual responsibility—values that preserve indigenous heritage—are anchored by this practical transmission.

Intergenerational transmission of knowledge

The process by which cultural knowledge, values, customs, abilities, and beliefs are transferred from older to younger generations is known as intergenerational transmission of knowledge (Bihari, 2026). By ensuring that traditional knowledge is maintained within families, communities, and societies, this practice contributes to the preservation of cultural identity and continuity.

Thailand's formal and structured national curriculum supports the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge by integrating local wisdom, traditional practices, and community-based learning in which elders, local experts, and cultural practitioners actively teach younger generations (Pearnpitak et al., 2024). This approach strengthens students' cultural identity, preserves indigenous knowledge, and promotes respect for elders while ensuring that Thailand's cultural heritage is sustained across generations through formal education.

In Brunei, intergenerational transmission of knowledge enables elders to pass on indigenous traditions, religious beliefs, cultural practices, and the values of the Malay Islamic Monarchy (MIB) philosophy to younger generations, preserving the nation's cultural identity (Mat Noor & Roslan, 2026). This learning practice strengthens respect for elders, reinforces family and community ties, and ensures that traditional knowledge is integrated with formal education to sustain Brunei's cultural heritage across generations.

In Indonesia, intergenerational transmission of knowledge enables elders to pass indigenous knowledge, cultural practices, traditional skills, and moral values to younger generations through storytelling, apprenticeship, rituals, and daily community life, preserving the nation's diverse cultural heritage (Purnama & Artika, 2026). These learning practices strengthen cultural identity, promote respect for local wisdom (kearifan lokal), and complement formal education by ensuring that traditional values remain relevant across generations despite modernization.

Character, moral, or citizenship education

Character, moral, or citizenship education is a sociocultural teaching approach that fosters students' respect for others, social responsibility, ethical values, and cultural awareness (Bharti & Singh, 2026). By assisting students in comprehending and appreciating various cultural viewpoints while cultivating the values and behaviors necessary for responsible participation in their families, communities, and society, it fosters inclusive and diverse learning.

Vietnam's formal national curriculum plays a significant role in transmitting cultural knowledge and values by integrating character, moral, and citizenship education into subjects that foster patriotism, respect for cultural heritage, ethical behavior, and civic responsibility (Trần, 2024). Through structured learning experiences, schools help preserve Vietnamese traditions while developing responsible citizens who can contribute to national development and participate effectively in an increasingly globalized society.

Indonesia's formal national curriculum, particularly through Character Education, Pancasila, and Citizenship Education (PPKn), plays a significant role in transmitting cultural knowledge and national values by integrating local wisdom, cultural diversity, and civic responsibility into classroom learning (Wahyudi & Wuryandani, 2024). The curriculum strengthens students' moral character, nationalism, and respect for Indonesia's multicultural heritage while preparing them to become responsible and culturally aware citizens in a globalized society.

Singapore's formal national curriculum, particularly through Character and Citizenship Education (CCE), plays a significant role in transmitting cultural knowledge and values by fostering students' sense of national identity, respect for multiculturalism, and shared civic responsibility (Tan & Abbas, 2024). The structured CCE curriculum integrates moral values, cultural heritage, and global competence, enabling learners to appreciate Singapore's diverse society while developing responsible, resilient, and community-oriented citizenship.

Religious or monastic-based learning

Thru faith-based organizations and communal practices, religious or monastic based learning is a sociocultural teaching approach that disseminates moral principles, religious beliefs, customs, and cultural knowledge (Bumbayar, 2026). By encouraging ethical growth, cultural awareness, respect for customs, and an appreciation of the values and customs of various communities, it promotes inclusive and diverse learning.

In Cambodia, religious or monastic-based learning has historically served as a primary means of transmitting Khmer cultural knowledge, Buddhist teachings, ethical values, and traditional customs from one generation to the next (Loeung & Phal, 2025). Monastic education continues to complement the national education system by fostering moral development, cultural identity, respect for Buddhist principles, and the preservation of Cambodia's cultural heritage.

In Myanmar, the religious or monastic-based learning system plays a significant role in transmitting cultural knowledge and values by preserving Buddhist teachings, the Pali language, traditional literature, and ethical principles through structured monastic education (Herngseng, 2023). It also cultivates moral discipline, respect for elders, compassion, and community responsibility, ensuring that Myanmar's cultural and religious heritage is passed on to younger generations while complementing formal basic education.

In Brunei, the formal national curriculum, which integrates Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) and the national philosophy of Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB), plays a significant role in transmitting religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and moral values to younger generations (Jaidin & Petra, 2026). This structured religious learning system strengthens students' Islamic identity, respect for Malay cultural heritage, and commitment to national values while promoting ethical behavior and social responsibility.

Cultural traditions and indigenous practices

Sociocultural teaching methods that integrate local knowledge, customs, beliefs, languages, arts, and community traditions are known as cultural traditions and Indigenous

practices. By appreciating students' cultural identities, enhancing cultural awareness, and making sure that Indigenous and traditional knowledge is acknowledged and conserved within education, they support inclusive and diverse learning (Fitrianto & Farisi, 2025).

Vietnam's formal national curriculum plays a significant role in transmitting cultural knowledge and values by integrating Vietnamese history, language, cultural traditions, and indigenous ethnic minority heritage into teaching and learning, helping students develop national identity and appreciation of cultural diversity (Nguyễn & Nguyễn, 2024). It also promotes the preservation of indigenous practices and traditional values by incorporating local cultural content into the curriculum while fostering respect for the customs and identities of Vietnam's diverse ethnic communities.

In Indonesia, the formal national curriculum serves as an important learning practice for transmitting cultural traditions and indigenous practices by integrating local wisdom (kearifan lokal), regional languages, folklore, and traditional knowledge into classroom instruction (Sawita et al., 2024). This structured approach strengthens students' cultural identity, promotes respect for Indonesia's diverse indigenous communities, and preserves cultural heritage while preparing learners to participate in a multicultural and global society.

In the Philippines, the formal K–12 curriculum serves as a vital mechanism for transmitting cultural knowledge and values by integrating Filipino cultural traditions, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP), local history, and mother tongue-based education into classroom learning (Miole, 2024). Through the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program and culturally responsive curricula, the education system preserves indigenous identities, fosters appreciation of cultural diversity, and strengthens learners' respect for the country's rich cultural heritage.

In Singapore, the formal national curriculum plays a significant role in transmitting cultural knowledge and values by integrating multicultural education, Character and Citizenship Education (CCE), and National Education to promote respect for the nation's diverse cultural traditions and shared heritage (Choo et al., 2025). Although Singapore has no officially recognized Indigenous peoples, its structured curriculum preserves the cultural traditions of its Chinese, Malay, Indian, and other ethnic communities while fostering social cohesion, intercultural understanding, and national identity.

Findings

The results show that formal, structured national curricula continue to be the main means of transferring cultural knowledge and values throughout Southeast Asian nations. Centralized education systems regularly incorporate civic education, national identity, patriotism, moral values, and shared historical traditions into classroom instruction in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Timor-Leste. Many nations, especially Laos and Myanmar, struggle to strike a balance between standardized national content and the acknowledgment and preservation of indigenous knowledge systems and the cultural diversity of ethnic minority communities, despite the fact that these structured curricula successfully foster social cohesion and protect national heritage.

The review also shows that intergenerational knowledge transfer and informal family and community-based learning continue to be important factors in maintaining cultural identity across Southeast Asia. Thru daily experiences, storytelling, rituals, and community involvement, families, elders, and local communities in nations like Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Timor Leste transmit moral values, religious beliefs, indigenous knowledge, oral traditions, and customary practices.

By preserving cultural continuity, fostering respect for elders, and guaranteeing that traditional knowledge is still applicable in the face of modernization and social change, these informal learning methods enhance formal education.

Additionally, the results show that religious or monastic-based education, character and citizenship education, and the incorporation of indigenous customs and cultural traditions into formal curricula are common approaches used to preserve cultural heritage throughout the region. Moral education, religious values, multicultural education, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP), local history, and cultural traditions are all purposefully incorporated into the educational frameworks of Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore, Cambodia, Myanmar, Brunei, and the Philippines. Together, these methods ensure that indigenous and traditional cultural knowledge is passed down to future generations in both formal and informal learning environments, strengthening students' ethical values, civic responsibility, appreciation of cultural diversity, and sense of national identity.

CONCLUSION

These results show that the complementary roles of formal education systems and informal community-based learning practices sustain the spread of cultural knowledge and values throughout Southeast Asia. Families, elders, and local communities continue to play an equally important role in maintaining indigenous knowledge, traditions, and cultural practices thru daily interactions and intergenerational learning, even though centralized national curricula are the main means of fostering civic values, patriotism, moral development, and national identity. When combined, these strategies guaranty that cultural heritage maintains its significance and relevance in spite of the difficulties posed by globalization and modernization.

The study also finds that incorporating religious or monastic-based education, character and citizenship education, and culturally sensitive curricula promotes social cohesiveness, ethical responsibility, and respect for cultural heritage while strengthening the preservation of cultural diversity. The combination of formal and informal learning practices offers a comprehensive and sustainable approach to preserving cultural identity and passing on shared values to future generations, even though some nations still struggle to strike a balance between standardized national curricula and the recognition of indigenous and minority cultures.

The integration of formal national curricula with informal, family-, community-, and Indigenous-based learning practices should be strengthened by educational institutions and policymakers. While upholding the fundamental goals of national education, educators should be encouraged to integrate local histories, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices, cultural traditions, storytelling, community activities, and intergenerational learning into their lessons. Without ignoring the various cultural identities and knowledge systems of local and minority communities, this strategy can help guaranty that standardized curricula support civic values and national identity.

In order to promote the ongoing dissemination of cultural knowledge and values, it is also advised that schools forge closer ties with local communities, religious institutions, families, elders, and cultural leaders. Teachers should be trained in inclusive, culturally sensitive teaching methods that take into account Indigenous, linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity as part of professional development programs. In addition to maintaining cultural heritage, fostering social cohesion, and guaranteeing that cultural knowledge is meaningful and applicable to future generations, such cooperative efforts can assist educational systems in effectively responding to globalization and modernization.

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