

Educating Future Lawyers for Global Citizenship: Gender, Cultural Expertise, and Justice Across Difference in Europe

Eleni Meletiadou, London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

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Abstract

As legal systems increasingly operate within culturally diverse and transnational contexts, legal education plays a crucial role in preparing future lawyers for global citizenship and justice-oriented practice. This paper explores how female law students in Turkey, Portugal, and the United Kingdom understand and engage with cultural expertise, defined as specialised knowledge used to interpret cultural, linguistic, and social difference in legal decision-making, and how gendered educational environments shape their confidence, agency, and ethical responsibility. Drawing on survey data and reflective interviews with 182 law students, the study examines students' perceptions of the legitimacy of cultural expertise, their preparedness to mobilise such knowledge, and their experiences navigating hierarchical and evaluative legal settings. Findings indicate that while students widely recognise cultural expertise as essential for fair and peaceful resolution of culturally complex cases, women often report heightened self-doubt and perceived professional risk when requesting or relying on expert input, particularly in adversarial contexts. Across national settings, students identify the need for clearer pedagogical guidance, accredited intercultural frameworks, and experiential learning opportunities, such as scenario-based simulations and exposure to expert testimony, to support the development of confidence and ethical judgement. These practices help future lawyers understand cultural differences not as a procedural obstacle but as a central dimension of justice, inclusion, and social cohesion. By foregrounding student perspectives, the paper contributes to debates on global citizenship education and education for peace, demonstrating how gender-responsive legal education can support more equitable and socially responsive legal systems across Europe.

Keywords: global citizenship, legal education, cultural expertise, gender, intercultural competence

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Introduction

Contemporary legal practice increasingly takes place within culturally diverse, multilingual, and transnational environments, requiring legal professionals to interpret not only rules but also social norms, cultural practices, and linguistic meanings. Legal education must prepare future lawyers for global citizenship, ethical decision-making, and justice across difference (Banks, 2008; Nussbaum, 2010). Scholars emphasise that professional education should cultivate the ability to understand perspectives across cultures, recognise structural injustice, and act responsibly (Andreotti, 2011; Byram, 2008). These skills are especially relevant in legal professions, where decisions often involve individuals from diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, and misunderstanding may lead to unjust outcomes (Merry, 2006).

Cultural expertise, specialised knowledge of social, religious, or linguistic practices, can support fairer, context-sensitive decisions but is sometimes contested in adversarial legal systems (Holden, 2011; Merry, 2006). Students often feel uncertain about how non-legal knowledge should be used, particularly when challenging hierarchies or requesting expert input (O'Sullivan, 2010). Gendered expectations may amplify this uncertainty; female students frequently report lower self-confidence in evaluative or competitive environments (Clark Blickenstaff, 2005; Rezaei, 2012), influencing their ability to act with authority and advocate alternative perspectives (Morley, 2013).

This study investigates how female law students in Turkey, Portugal, and the United Kingdom understand the role of cultural expertise in legal decision-making and how their educational experiences shape their confidence, agency, and ethical responsibility. By examining student perspectives across different European contexts, the paper explores how legal education can better support global citizenship, intercultural competence, and justice-oriented professional identities.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do law students perceive the legitimacy and usefulness of cultural expertise in legal practice?
2. How do gendered educational experiences influence students' confidence in using cultural expertise?
3. What pedagogical practices support the development of intercultural competence and ethical judgement in legal education?

By addressing these questions, the paper contributes to ongoing debates on global citizenship education, education for peace, and socially responsive legal training, highlighting the importance of gender-responsive and culturally informed pedagogy in European higher education.

Literature Review

The growing interconnectedness of societies through globalisation, migration, and digital communication has intensified the need for higher education to prepare students for engagement with cultural diversity and complex global challenges. Universities are increasingly expected to develop graduates with disciplinary knowledge and the competencies required for responsible global participation, ethical decision-making, and intercultural understanding (Leask, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). Global citizenship education emphasises

knowledge, skills, and values enabling individuals to recognise cultural difference, reflect critically on inequality, and contribute to more inclusive societies (Pashby & Sund, 2020; Stein et al., 2019). In law, these goals are significant as practitioners operate in multicultural contexts where understanding perspectives influences legal interpretation and outcomes.

Intercultural competence, a core dimension of global citizenship, refers to interacting effectively and ethically with people from different cultural backgrounds while demonstrating openness, respect, and critical self-awareness (Leask, 2020). It involves not only communication skills but reflection on how knowledge, values, and assumptions are shaped by social contexts (Marginson, 2022). Developing these competencies requires intentional pedagogy, including dialogue, reflection, and experiential learning (Jones, 2019). Yet professional programmes often struggle to integrate intercultural and global citizenship learning into curricula focused on technical expertise.

In legal contexts, these challenges relate closely to cultural expertise, defined as specialised knowledge about cultural, linguistic, religious, or social practices to inform legal decision-making. Legal professionals frequently need to interpret behaviours, norms, or practices originating in different cultural frameworks. Cultural expertise, often provided by anthropologists, sociologists, or linguists, can help courts reach more informed and equitable decisions (Holden, 2025). In European legal systems, it is particularly relevant in asylum, migration, minority rights, and family law cases, where misunderstanding cultural practices can have serious consequences (Holden, 2020).

Despite its relevance, integrating cultural expertise into legal practice remains uneven and contested. Some practitioners worry it may introduce subjectivity or challenge legal universality, while others stress its importance for fairness and justice (Holden, 2020). Legal education must prepare students to engage critically with cultural knowledge and understand when expert perspectives inform reasoning. However, undergraduate law programmes often prioritise doctrinal analysis and procedural reasoning, leaving limited space for social and cultural dimensions, producing graduates with strong analytical skills but limited preparation for culturally complex cases (Jones, 2019).

Justice-oriented pedagogy emphasises examining how power, inequality, and cultural assumptions shape knowledge and professional practice. Rather than presenting disciplines as neutral or purely technical, these approaches foster awareness of the ethical implications of professional decisions (Pashby & Sund, 2020). Experiential strategies such as simulations, role-playing, and engagement with real-world problems help students connect theory with ethical and intercultural understanding (Leask, 2020), practising decision-making under uncertainty.

Gender significantly shapes students' experiences in higher education and professional formation. Female students frequently report lower confidence in competitive or evaluative environments, even when their performance matches that of their male peers (O'Connor, 2023). Institutional cultures valuing assertiveness, authority, and competition may disadvantage those less comfortable with such behaviours. In law, where argumentation, public speaking, and adversarial reasoning are central, these dynamics influence students' perceptions of legitimacy and participation (Jones, 2019).

These gendered experiences may also affect engagement with cultural expertise. Using expert knowledge requires acknowledging uncertainty, recognising one's limits, and requesting input

from specialists. In hierarchical environments emphasising certainty and authority, these actions may seem professionally risky, especially for less confident students. Consequently, students may value cultural knowledge but hesitate to apply it. Research suggests that supportive environments, clear guidance, and structured practice are crucial for developing competence and confidence in addressing complex social issues (Marginson, 2022; UNESCO, 2021).

Inclusive, reflective pedagogy is critical for preparing legal professionals to engage responsibly with cultural diversity. Learning environments that encourage dialogue, reflection, and collaborative problem-solving foster professional agency, ethical responsibility, and intercultural competence, helping students recognise cultural difference as integral to justice and social cohesion.

Although scholarship highlights global citizenship, intercultural competence, and justice-oriented pedagogy, empirical research on how law students understand cultural expertise is limited. Little is known about how gendered educational experiences shape confidence in using such expertise. This study examines female law students in Turkey, Portugal, and the United Kingdom, exploring how legal education can support global citizenship, ethical responsibility, and justice across cultural differences in contemporary Europe.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate how law students understand the role of cultural expertise in legal decision-making and how gendered educational experiences influence their confidence, agency, and ethical responsibility. Mixed-methods approaches are increasingly used in higher education research because they allow the integration of quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions and experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). In the context of professional education, combining survey data with reflective interviews enables researchers to examine both general patterns and the meanings that participants attach to their experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The study was conducted with undergraduate law students enrolled at universities in Turkey, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. These countries were selected in order to explore student perspectives across different European legal and educational contexts, while maintaining a focus on comparable higher education programmes within the field of law. A total of 182 students participated in the survey phase of the study. Participants were recruited through course announcements and voluntary participation invitations distributed by academic staff. Participation was open to all students enrolled in law modules in which issues related to international law, human rights, or legal interpretation were discussed. The sample included students from different years of study, allowing the research to capture perspectives at different stages of professional formation. Particular attention was given to the responses of female students, as the study aimed to explore how gendered experiences may influence perceptions of authority, confidence, and professional risk within legal education.

Data were collected in two stages. In the first stage, students completed an online questionnaire designed to explore their understanding of cultural expertise, their perceptions of its legitimacy in legal decision-making, and their confidence in using specialised knowledge in professional contexts. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items, multiple-choice questions, and short open-ended responses. The survey also asked students to evaluate their preparedness to work

with culturally diverse clients, to request expert testimony, and to engage with perspectives that might challenge dominant legal interpretations. Recent research in legal and professional education highlights the importance of measuring students' perceived competence and confidence, as these factors strongly influence their willingness to act in complex or uncertain situations (Jones, 2019; O'Connor, 2023).

In the second stage, a smaller group of students participated in reflective semi-structured interviews. Reflective interviews were used to gain deeper insight into students' experiences of learning about cultural difference, authority, and professional responsibility. Semi-structured formats allow participants to describe their experiences in their own words while still ensuring that key topics are addressed (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Interview questions focused on students' experiences in classroom discussions, simulations, and assessment situations, as well as their views on the use of cultural expertise in legal practice. Students were also invited to reflect on situations in which they felt confident or uncertain about expressing their views, requesting additional knowledge, or challenging dominant interpretations. This approach is consistent with recent qualitative research in higher education, which emphasises the value of reflective accounts for understanding how students construct professional identities and navigate institutional expectations (Deggs & Hernandez, 2018).

The concept of cultural expertise was introduced to participants using a short explanatory statement describing it as specialised knowledge used to interpret cultural, linguistic, or social differences in legal contexts. Providing a shared definition helped ensure that participants responded to the same concept, while still allowing them to express different interpretations of its usefulness or legitimacy. Previous research has shown that students may be unfamiliar with the term itself even when they recognise the importance of contextual knowledge in professional decision-making (Holden, 2020). Including both closed and open questions allowed the study to capture not only levels of agreement but also the reasons behind students' views.

Data analysis followed an integrated approach combining descriptive statistical analysis of survey responses with thematic analysis of qualitative data. Survey data were analysed to identify overall trends in students' perceptions of cultural expertise, confidence, and preparedness for intercultural legal work. Qualitative responses and interview transcripts were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, a method widely used in educational research to identify patterns of meaning across participants' accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis focused on themes related to confidence, authority, gendered expectations, perceptions of risk, and the role of pedagogy in shaping students' experiences. Attention was given to similarities and differences across national contexts, as well as to recurring patterns in the responses of female students.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained in accordance with institutional research guidelines. Participation was voluntary, and students were informed that their responses would be anonymised and used only for research purposes. Informed consent was obtained before both the survey and interview stages, and participants were assured that their decision to participate or not participate would not affect their academic assessment. Ethical considerations were particularly important because the study addressed issues related to confidence, evaluation, and classroom experience, which students might perceive as sensitive. Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality helped create conditions in which participants could respond openly and reflect honestly on their experiences. Recent research in higher education emphasises that ethical transparency and voluntary participation are essential for obtaining

reliable data when exploring students' perceptions of institutional practices and power relations (Deggs & Hernandez, 2018).

By combining survey data with reflective interviews across three European contexts, the study aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of how law students perceive cultural expertise and how gendered educational environments influence their confidence in using it. This methodological approach makes it possible to examine not only whether students consider cultural expertise important, but also how educational experiences shape their willingness to engage with it in practice.

Findings

The findings of the study indicate that law students across the three national contexts widely recognise the importance of cultural expertise in legal decision-making, yet their confidence in using such knowledge varies considerably, particularly among female students. Survey responses showed strong agreement with statements suggesting that legal professionals should be able to understand cultural, linguistic, and social differences when interpreting cases. A large majority of participants indicated that cultural expertise contributes to fairer and more accurate legal outcomes, especially in cases involving migration, family law, and disputes involving individuals from different cultural backgrounds. These responses suggest that students are aware of the increasing complexity of contemporary legal practice and recognise that formal legal rules alone may not always be sufficient for achieving just decisions. Similar findings have been reported in recent research on professional education, which shows that students often value intercultural competence and social awareness but feel uncertain about how these should be applied in practice (Leask, 2020; Marginson, 2022).

Despite this general recognition of the importance of cultural expertise, many students reported limited confidence in their own ability to use such knowledge in professional contexts. Survey items measuring perceived preparedness indicated that students felt less certain about requesting expert testimony, challenging dominant interpretations, or introducing cultural explanations in legal argumentation. This lack of confidence was particularly visible in responses to questions describing adversarial or evaluative situations, such as courtroom simulations, oral assessments, or debates in class. In these contexts, students frequently reported that they preferred to rely on clear legal rules rather than introduce arguments that might be perceived as subjective or uncertain. These findings reflect concerns identified in recent studies of legal education, which suggest that students often experience tension between the expectation to demonstrate authority and the need to acknowledge complexity and uncertainty in real legal practice (Jones, 2019).

Gender differences were evident throughout the data. Female students were more likely than male students to report feeling uncertain about expressing their views in evaluative settings and more likely to indicate that they worried about being judged as incorrect or unprepared. While both male and female students agreed that cultural expertise is important, women more frequently described hesitation when imagining situations in which they would need to request expert input or challenge an established interpretation. In open-ended responses, several participants explained that they feared such actions might be interpreted as a lack of knowledge or confidence. These responses are consistent with recent research showing that female students often report lower self-confidence in competitive or hierarchical learning environments, even when their academic performance is similar to that of male peers (O'Connor, 2023). Participants also noted that law programmes often reward certainty, speed,

and strong argumentation, which may discourage students from expressing doubt or exploring alternative perspectives.

Interview data provided further insight into how students understand these experiences. Many participants described classroom environments in which success was associated with giving quick and decisive answers, particularly during oral discussions or mock legal exercises. While students valued these activities, some felt that they created pressure to appear confident rather than to explore complex issues in depth. Several female students explained that they sometimes avoided raising cultural or contextual considerations because they were unsure how these arguments would be evaluated. In these accounts, cultural expertise was not rejected as irrelevant, but rather perceived as difficult to use within the expectations of legal training. Similar patterns have been identified in research on higher education, which suggests that students' willingness to participate is strongly influenced by how safe they feel taking intellectual risks in the classroom (Wansink et al., 2023).

Across the three countries included in the study, the overall patterns were similar, although some differences were observed in the ways students described their educational experiences. Students in all contexts agreed that cultural expertise should play a role in legal decision-making, but the extent to which they felt prepared to use it varied. In some cases, students reported that issues related to culture, migration, or human rights were discussed mainly in specialised modules rather than across the curriculum. As a result, they perceived cultural expertise as something additional rather than as a normal part of legal reasoning. Participants also noted that opportunities to practise applying cultural knowledge were limited, and that most assessments focused on doctrinal analysis rather than on contextual interpretation. These observations are consistent with recent studies indicating that intercultural and global citizenship learning is often included in higher education programmes but not fully integrated into assessment and teaching practices (Pashby & Sund, 2020).

Students identified several types of learning activities that they believed would help them develop greater confidence in using cultural expertise. Scenario-based simulations were mentioned frequently, particularly exercises in which students were required to interpret cases involving individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Participants explained that such activities allowed them to explore how legal rules interact with social context without the pressure of formal assessment. Exposure to expert testimony, guest lectures, or interdisciplinary teaching was also seen as valuable, as it helped students understand how specialised knowledge can be used in real legal situations. These findings align with recent research showing that experiential learning and interdisciplinary approaches are effective in developing intercultural competence and professional judgement (Leask, 2020; Marginson, 2022).

Another important theme in the data was the role of clear pedagogical guidance. Many students stated that they were unsure when it is appropriate to refer to cultural knowledge or how such arguments should be presented in legal reasoning. Some participants expressed concern that using cultural explanations might be seen as stereotyping or as introducing irrelevant information. Others worried that judges or lecturers might not consider such arguments legitimate. These responses suggest that uncertainty about expectations may discourage students from engaging with cultural expertise, even when they believe it is important. Recent research on justice-oriented pedagogy emphasises that students need explicit frameworks and shared terminology in order to feel confident addressing complex social issues (Stein et al., 2019).

The findings also show that students associate the development of intercultural competence with ethical responsibility (Figure 1). Many participants stated that future lawyers should be able to recognise when cultural misunderstanding could lead to unfair decisions and should be willing to seek additional knowledge when necessary. Female students in particular often described cultural expertise as connected to fairness, empathy, and professional integrity. However, these same students sometimes reported feeling that such concerns were less valued in competitive academic environments. This tension suggests that students may experience a conflict between the values they associate with justice and the behaviours they believe are rewarded in legal training. Similar tensions have been discussed in recent literature on professional education, which highlights the difficulty of balancing technical competence with ethical and social awareness (Huda & Hashim, 2022).

Figure 1

Bridging the Cultural Expertise Gap in Legal Education

Bridging the Cultural Expertise Gap in Legal Education



Overall, the findings indicate that law students across different European contexts recognise the importance of cultural expertise and global citizenship skills, yet many feel insufficiently prepared to apply them in practice. Gendered patterns of confidence and perceptions of professional risk appear to influence how students engage with these issues, particularly in hierarchical or adversarial learning environments. Students consistently emphasised the need for clearer guidance, more opportunities for practice, and teaching approaches that allow them to explore complexity without fear of negative evaluation. These results suggest that the development of intercultural competence and justice-oriented professional identities requires not only curricular content but also pedagogical environments that support confidence, reflection, and ethical engagement.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the growing recognition among law students that contemporary legal practice requires more than technical knowledge of legal rules. Participants across the three national contexts acknowledged the importance of cultural expertise, intercultural competence, and ethical awareness for achieving fair and socially responsible legal outcomes. These results support recent scholarship arguing that professional education must respond to increasingly diverse and transnational societies by preparing graduates for global citizenship and justice-oriented practice (Leask, 2020; Marginson, 2022; UNESCO,

2021). Students' strong agreement that cultural knowledge is essential in cases involving migration, minority rights, and cross-cultural disputes reflects the changing realities of European legal systems, where legal professionals are expected to engage with social and cultural complexity rather than rely solely on formal doctrine.

At the same time, the study reveals a clear gap between students' recognition of the importance of cultural expertise and their confidence in using it in practice. Many participants reported uncertainty about when cultural knowledge should be introduced in legal reasoning and expressed concern that doing so might be perceived as inappropriate or professionally risky. This finding is consistent with recent research suggesting that higher education programmes often promote intercultural awareness at a conceptual level but provide limited opportunities for students to practise applying such knowledge in realistic professional contexts (Pashby & Sund, 2020). When assessment and classroom interaction emphasise certainty, speed, and authoritative argumentation, students may feel discouraged from exploring complex or ambiguous issues, even when these are central to real-world legal decision-making. The tension observed in this study between technical competence and contextual understanding reflects broader debates about the role of universities in balancing disciplinary expertise with social responsibility (Stein et al., 2019).

Gender differences identified in the findings further illustrate how educational environments influence students' engagement with cultural expertise. Female students in particular reported greater hesitation in situations requiring public argumentation, questioning authority, or requesting expert input. These patterns align with recent studies showing that women in higher education often experience lower confidence in competitive or highly evaluative settings, even when their academic performance is comparable to that of male students (O'Connor, 2023). In professional programmes such as law, where adversarial reasoning and public performance are central, these dynamics may be intensified. The perception that success depends on appearing confident and decisive may discourage students from acknowledging uncertainty or seeking additional knowledge, behaviours that are nevertheless essential for responsible professional practice. The findings, therefore, suggest that gendered expectations about authority and competence can influence not only classroom participation but also the development of ethical and intercultural skills.

The study also indicates that the use of cultural expertise is closely connected to students' understanding of justice and professional responsibility. Many participants described cultural knowledge as necessary for ensuring fairness, avoiding misunderstanding, and protecting the rights of individuals from different backgrounds. These responses are consistent with recent work in global citizenship education, which emphasises that professional competence should include the ability to recognise structural inequality and to act in ways that promote inclusion and social cohesion (Leask, 2020; Marginson, 2022). However, students also reported that such values are not always clearly supported within legal education, where assessment practices may prioritise doctrinal accuracy over contextual reasoning. This suggests that the development of justice-oriented professional identities requires not only the inclusion of intercultural topics in the curriculum but also changes in pedagogical approaches and evaluation criteria.

Participants' emphasis on the need for clearer guidance and more experiential learning opportunities highlights the importance of pedagogy in shaping students' confidence. Scenario-based simulations, exposure to expert testimony, and interdisciplinary teaching were frequently identified as helpful for understanding how cultural expertise can be used in practice. These findings support recent research showing that experiential and reflective learning approaches

are particularly effective in developing intercultural competence and ethical judgement (Leask, 2020). When students are given opportunities to apply knowledge in realistic situations, they are more likely to develop the confidence needed to handle uncertainty and to recognise the value of multiple perspectives. Conversely, when teaching remains primarily lecture-based, and assessment focuses on single correct answers, students may struggle to see how intercultural understanding fits within professional reasoning.

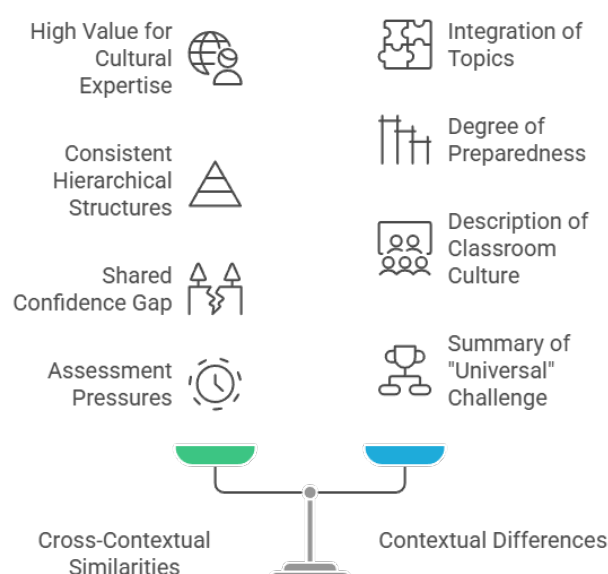
The results also underline the importance of inclusive and supportive learning environments. Students who feel that mistakes will be judged harshly or that alternative viewpoints are unwelcome may avoid engaging with complex or controversial issues. This is particularly relevant for female students, who in this study often described greater concern about being evaluated negatively when expressing uncertainty or introducing cultural arguments. Recent scholarship on inclusive pedagogy suggests that transparent expectations, constructive feedback, and opportunities for dialogue can help reduce these barriers and encourage more active participation (Moriña, 2022). Creating such environments is especially important in subjects like law, where professional identity formation is closely linked to classroom experience.

Across the three national contexts included in the study, similarities in student responses suggest that these challenges are not limited to a single educational system but reflect broader patterns in European legal education (Figure 2). Although participants studied in different countries, they reported comparable experiences of hierarchical classroom structures, strong emphasis on doctrinal knowledge, and limited opportunities to practise intercultural reasoning. This consistency supports the argument that preparing future lawyers for global citizenship requires structural changes in curriculum design rather than isolated initiatives within individual modules. Integrating cultural expertise, intercultural competence, and ethical reflection throughout legal education may help students see these elements as central to professional practice rather than as optional additions.

Figure 2

Balancing Similarities and Differences in Legal Education

Balancing Similarities and Differences in Legal Education



Overall, the discussion highlights that the development of global citizenship in legal education depends not only on what students are taught but also on how they are taught. Students in this study demonstrated a clear awareness of the importance of cultural expertise and justice-oriented practice, yet their confidence in using these skills was shaped by gendered expectations, assessment practices, and classroom culture. Addressing these factors through inclusive pedagogy, experiential learning, and clearer integration of intercultural frameworks may help future lawyers develop the competence and confidence needed to work effectively in diverse societies. In this way, legal education can contribute to the formation of professionals who are not only technically skilled but also capable of supporting fairness, social cohesion, and peaceful resolution of culturally complex cases in contemporary Europe.

Conclusion

This study examined how law students in Turkey, Portugal, and the United Kingdom understand the role of cultural expertise in legal decision-making and how gendered educational experiences influence their confidence, agency, and sense of professional responsibility. The findings show that students widely recognise the importance of cultural knowledge, intercultural competence, and ethical awareness for achieving fair and socially responsible legal outcomes. Across all three contexts, participants viewed cultural expertise as particularly relevant in cases involving migration, minority rights, and cross-cultural disputes, confirming that future legal professionals are aware of the increasing complexity of contemporary legal practice in diverse societies.

At the same time, the study identified a clear gap between recognising the value of cultural expertise and feeling confident in using it. Many students reported uncertainty about when and how cultural knowledge should be introduced in legal reasoning, especially in adversarial or evaluative situations where authority and certainty are strongly emphasised. Female students in particular described greater hesitation when imagining situations that required challenging dominant interpretations or requesting expert input, suggesting that gendered expectations about confidence and professional behaviour may influence how students engage with intercultural and justice-oriented approaches. These findings indicate that the development of global citizenship in legal education is shaped not only by curriculum content but also by classroom culture, assessment practices, and how authority and competence are defined within professional training.

Students consistently highlighted the importance of clearer pedagogical guidance, experiential learning opportunities, and exposure to interdisciplinary perspectives. Activities such as simulations, case-based learning, and engagement with expert testimony were seen as valuable for helping students understand how cultural expertise can be used in real legal contexts and for building confidence in dealing with complex situations. These results suggest that integrating intercultural competence and cultural expertise throughout the curriculum, rather than treating them as optional topics, may support the development of more reflective and socially responsible professional identities.

Overall, the study demonstrates that gender-responsive and interculturally informed legal education can play an important role in preparing future lawyers for global citizenship. By creating learning environments that encourage reflection, dialogue, and ethical awareness, universities can help students develop the skills and confidence needed to contribute to more equitable, inclusive, and socially responsive legal systems across Europe.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author declares that no AI or AI-assisted technologies have been used to generate, refine, or correct the content in the manuscript. The ideas, design, procedures, findings, analyses, and discussion are originally written and derived from appropriate and systematic conduct of the research.

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Contact email: elenim@outlook.com