

Learning Phronesis for Global Citizenship: Classical Narratives and Moral Decision-Making in Secondary Education

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Abstract

This paper presents a guidance-oriented educational workshop designed for upper secondary education, structured as a narrative workshop where classical texts, autobiographical writing, and philosophical dialogue function as devices for ethical reflection and global citizenship education. Grounded in guidance pedagogy, constructivism, and narrative approaches to identity formation, the project conceptualises orientation not as an ancillary activity but as a structural dimension of learning. Drawing on Aristotle's notion of phronesis (practical wisdom), the workshop explores how students can learn to connect ethical principles with concrete situations, exercising responsible judgment in contexts of moral complexity and cultural pluralism. Classical Greek and Latin texts are approached as generative narratives that raise existential questions about responsibility, choice, and the good life. In dialogue with contemporary thinkers such as Hans Jonas, Martha Nussbaum, and Amartya Sen, phronesis is reframed as a key educational competence for navigating uncertainty, fostering ethical agency, and cultivating global citizenship.

Keywords: orientative phronesis, practical wisdom, global citizenship education, humanities education, educational orientation

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Introduction

The educational challenges of the twenty-first century extend far beyond the transmission of disciplinary knowledge or the preparation of students for future employment. Rapid technological innovation, ecological transitions, democratic instability, cultural pluralism, global interdependence, and the growing influence of artificial intelligence have profoundly transformed the conditions under which individuals construct meaning, make decisions, and participate in social life. Within this increasingly complex scenario, schools are called upon not only to promote cognitive achievement but also to cultivate learners capable of exercising critical judgement, assuming ethical responsibility, and orienting themselves in contexts characterised by uncertainty and continuous change.

This educational challenge has progressively reshaped international conceptions of Global Citizenship Education (GCED). Rather than limiting citizenship to civic knowledge or intercultural awareness, contemporary international frameworks emphasise the development of learners who can interpret complexity, deliberate responsibly, and contribute to democratic and sustainable futures. UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education agenda, the Futures of Education initiative, and the OECD Learning Compass 2030 converge in recognising that responsible participation in contemporary societies requires educational processes capable of integrating knowledge, values, reflection, and action. These perspectives suggest that education should prepare individuals to understand the world and also to exercise responsible judgement within it.

Although recent educational research has significantly advanced the fields of Global Citizenship Education, narrative pedagogy, Life Design (Savickas et al., 2009) and educational orientation, comparatively limited attention has been devoted to how disciplinary learning in the humanities may intentionally cultivate practical wisdom as an educational competence. Existing studies have extensively explored identity construction, career adaptability, learner agency, and reflective learning, yet the educational processes through which students develop the capacity to deliberate ethically in situations characterised by ambiguity, conflicting values, and uncertainty remain comparatively underexplored.

Within this perspective, educational orientation can no longer be understood exclusively as vocational guidance or as support for educational transitions. Contemporary orientation pedagogy increasingly interprets orientation as a lifelong educational process through which individuals construct meaning, develop agency, interpret experience, and progressively shape coherent life trajectories. Orientation therefore becomes an intrinsic pedagogical dimension of teaching itself rather than an additional educational service delivered at specific moments of schooling. Such an understanding substantially broadens the educational mission of schools, positioning every curricular experience as a potential opportunity for learners to develop the interpretative and ethical capacities required for responsible participation in personal, professional, and civic life.

Narrative approaches have contributed decisively to this transformation by reconceptualising identity as a dynamic process of meaning-making. Through narrative interpretation, individuals organise experience, connect past and present, and imagine possible futures, continuously reconstructing their understanding of themselves in relation to changing social contexts. Consequently, educational experiences acquire orientation value insofar as they enable learners to interpret their own biographies, recognise personal values, and develop coherent projects for the future.

Within this broader educational framework, the humanities—and classical literature in particular—occupy a distinctive pedagogical position. Greek and Latin narratives confront students with enduring questions concerning justice, responsibility, freedom, courage, loyalty, power, vulnerability, and the search for the good life. These texts invite readers to engage with ethically complex situations whose interpretative openness continues to resonate across historical and cultural contexts. Their educational significance therefore lies in providing opportunities for reflective interpretation, ethical deliberation, and personal meaning-making. It is precisely this educational potential that makes classical humanities particularly relevant for contemporary orientation pedagogy and GCED (Nussbaum, 1997, 2010).

To address this theoretical and pedagogical challenge, the present article proposes *Orientative Phronesis*, a novel educational construct, as *paideia* (Bruni, 2021) that conceptualises practical wisdom as a competence intentionally cultivated through humanities education. Building upon Aristotelian virtue ethics (Aristotle, 2004) hermeneutic philosophy (Gadamer, 2004) narrative identity theory (Ricoeur, 1992) orientation pedagogy (Bertagna, 2023) and GCED (UNESCO, 2015). *Orientative Phronesis* is understood as the educational capacity through which learners interpret complex situations, deliberate ethically, construct meaningful narratives of the self, and orient their personal and civic trajectories responsibly and cultivate *humanitas*, tolerance and open-mindedness.

To operationalise this construct, the study introduces the Narrative Orientation Laboratory (NOL), an interdisciplinary pedagogical model that integrates hermeneutic interpretation of classical narratives, autobiographical writing, and philosophical dialogue within ordinary humanities teaching.

The laboratory is conceived a pedagogical environment in which literary interpretation becomes an opportunity for ethical inquiry, reflective self-understanding, and responsible educational orientation.

By connecting disciplinary learning with existential questioning and democratic deliberation, the model seeks to demonstrate how classical humanities may contribute directly to the educational aims of GCED.

Research Design

This study adopts a conceptual design study informed by the principles of Design-Based Research (DBR) with the aim of developing a theoretically coherent pedagogical framework capable of intentionally fostering practical wisdom through humanities education. Rather than evaluating the effectiveness of a specific educational intervention, conceptual design studies seek to generate innovative pedagogical models by integrating existing theoretical knowledge into coherent frameworks that can subsequently guide empirical investigation. Within this perspective, the present article represents the initial stage of a broader research programme whose subsequent phases will involve classroom implementation, iterative refinement, and empirical validation.

Design-Based Research provides an appropriate methodological orientation because it conceives educational innovation as an iterative process linking theoretical reflection, pedagogical design, implementation, evaluation, and progressive refinement. Although the present contribution does not yet report findings from classroom experimentation, it adopts the

underlying logic of DBR by moving systematically from educational theory towards the design of a pedagogical model intended for authentic educational contexts.

The methodological objective is the construction of an educational framework capable of explaining how practical wisdom may be intentionally cultivated through disciplinary learning in the humanities. More specifically, the study seeks to identify the theoretical principles, educational processes, and pedagogical conditions through which literary interpretation, autobiographical reflection, and philosophical dialogue may contribute to the development of ethical judgement, agency, and educational orientation within secondary education.

This methodological proposal reflects an increasingly recognised assumption within educational research: innovative pedagogical practices require rigorous conceptual development before they can be meaningfully implemented and evaluated. From this standpoint, conceptual model building constitutes an essential phase of educational inquiry, providing the theoretical architecture upon which future intervention studies may be constructed.

Educational Orientation Beyond Career Guidance

Educational orientation has undergone a profound theoretical transformation over the past three decades. Once primarily associated with vocational guidance and support for educational transitions, it is now increasingly understood as a lifelong pedagogical process through which individuals construct meaning, develop agency, and progressively shape their own biographies within complex and rapidly changing societies. This shift reflects a broader understanding of education itself, in which learning is expected not only to prepare students for future occupations but also to enable them to interpret uncertainty, exercise responsible judgement (Jonas, 1984) and participate actively in democratic life to shaping sustainable futures.

The transition from traditional guidance models to constructivist and narrative perspectives has been central to this evolution. Career Construction Theory and the Life Design paradigm (Savickas et al., 2015) reposition educational orientation from the search for occupational correspondence towards the continuous construction of personal identity. Adaptability, reflexivity, and autobiographical meaning-making consequently become educational resources through which individuals respond creatively to social transformation rather than merely adapting to predetermined career pathways. Similarly, theory of self-construction (Guichard, 2005) emphasises that identity develops through an ongoing process of interpretation in which educational, personal, and professional experiences are continuously reorganised into coherent narratives. Orientation thus becomes less concerned with choosing among available opportunities than with cultivating the capacity to interpret one's own experience responsibly over time.

Within Italian educational research, this perspective has been further developed through the concept of *didattica orientativa*, which conceives orientation as an intrinsic dimension of teaching rather than a specialised educational service. From this standpoint, every curricular activity potentially contributes to learners' personal development by promoting self-awareness, reflective competence, decision-making, and agency alongside disciplinary learning. Teaching therefore acquires an explicitly Orientative function, enabling students to recognise personal resources, confront uncertainty, and progressively assume responsibility for their educational and life trajectories.

International educational agendas reinforce this broader conception. UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education framework and Reimagining Our Futures Together, together with the OECD Learning Compass 2030, consistently identify learner agency, democratic participation, anticipation, reflection, and responsible action as fundamental educational outcomes. These frameworks converge in recognising that contemporary schools are expected to cultivate the capacities required to navigate complexity within pluralistic and interconnected societies. Educational orientation consequently assumes a central role in enabling learners to connect disciplinary understanding with ethical responsibility and civic participation in a world of liquid complexity and continuous transformation (Morin, 2000; Bauman, 2000, 2004, 2007).

Despite these significant theoretical developments, an important educational question remains insufficiently addressed. While learner agency is widely recognised as an essential educational objective, less attention has been devoted to the pedagogical processes through which students learn to deliberate wisely, when confronted with ethically ambiguous situations characterised by conflicting values, and multiple legitimate alternatives. This unresolved question becomes particularly significant within Global Citizenship Education, where responsible participation depends not only upon identity construction but also upon the capacity for contextual ethical judgement. It is precisely at this intersection that the present study locates its theoretical contribution.

The conceptual framework developed in this study emerges from the convergence of five complementary theoretical traditions that, although frequently investigated independently, have rarely been integrated into a coherent educational model. These perspectives collectively illuminate the educational conditions through which learners may develop the capacity to interpret experience, deliberate responsibly, and orient their life trajectories within increasingly complex social contexts. Their integration provides the theoretical foundation for the construct of *Orientative Phronesis*.

The first tradition derives from Aristotelian virtue ethics, particularly the concept of phronesis. Unlike theoretical knowledge (*epistēmē*) or technical expertise (*technē*), practical wisdom concerns the capacity to deliberate appropriately in situations where universal rules prove insufficient. Phronesis therefore involves contextual judgement, ethical discernment, and the ability to identify responsible courses of action under conditions of uncertainty. It enables individuals to weigh competing values and to act in ways that are both prudent and ethically justified.

The second tradition is represented by orientation pedagogy and the Life Design paradigm, (Savickas et al., 2009) both of which interpret orientation as a lifelong educational process of identity construction, agency development, and life-project formation. These perspectives have significantly expanded the educational meaning of orientation by emphasising learners' active role in constructing meaningful biographies. Their contribution is particularly relevant because they relocate educational orientation within everyday teaching rather than confining it to vocational guidance or transitional support. However, while these approaches explain how individuals progressively construct coherent life narratives, they devote comparatively less attention to the educational development of the practical judgement required to evaluate ethically complex situations.

A third theoretical foundation is provided by hermeneutic philosophy (Gadamer, 2004) especially the dialogical conception of understanding. From this perspective, interpretation is an active encounter between reader, text, and lived experience through which new

understanding continuously emerges (Eco, 1979). Educationally, this implies that literary interpretation becomes a transformative process in which learners critically examine both the text and themselves. Classical narratives consequently function as objects of literary analysis and also as interpretative spaces where students explore enduring ethical questions while simultaneously reinterpreting their own experiences. Within educational settings, literary texts become occasions for reflective dialogue, inviting learners to confront moral dilemmas that remain permanently open rather than offering definitive answers. Their educational value lies precisely in this capacity to stimulate judgement, interpretation, and ethical imagination.

The fourth tradition concerns narrative theories of identity (Bruner, 1991; Ricoeur, 1992). Although differing in emphasis, these authors share the assumption that identity develops through narrative interpretation rather than through static psychological characteristics. Individuals construct coherent understandings of themselves by organising experience into meaningful narratives that integrate memory, present action, and future aspirations. Within educational contexts, autobiographical narration (Demetrio, 1996) therefore becomes more than an expressive activity: it represents a reflective process through which learners attribute meaning to experience, negotiate values, and progressively develop agency. This narrative dimension is essential because educational orientation presupposes the capacity to interpret one's own life as an evolving project and not as sequence of isolated events. Similarly, studies on narrative orientation emphasise storytelling as a pedagogical process that supports educational decision-making by encouraging reflective interpretation (Batini, 2011). From this perspective, individuals continually organise, reinterpret, and integrate them into coherent narratives through which they understand themselves and orient their future actions. Narratives organise events into meaningful sequences that connect intentions, actions, consequences, and values. Through this interpretative process, learners gradually develop coherent understandings of themselves and of the social worlds they inhabit.

Finally, the framework incorporates philosophical dialogue, drawing upon Lipman's Community of Inquiry (Lipman, 2003). Collective inquiry provides the educational context in which individual interpretations are examined, questioned, justified, and refined through dialogue with others. Philosophical dialogue encourages learners to compare perspectives, evaluate arguments, and recognise the complexity of ethical deliberation. In doing so, it transforms reflection from an exclusively individual process into a democratic educational practice that cultivates intellectual openness, critical judgement, and shared responsibility.

Considered together these contributions reveal a common educational concern that has not yet been fully conceptualised: the intentional cultivation of practical wisdom through disciplinary learning. It is precisely from this convergence that the present study develops the construct of Orientative Phronesis understood as the educational competence through which learners integrate hermeneutic understanding, narrative self-reflection, ethical deliberation, and responsible orientation within a coherent pedagogical process. This integrated perspective provides the theoretical bridge between the educational aims of Global Citizenship Education and the pedagogical possibilities offered by the humanities.

Individuals develop the capacity to projecting themselves towards the future precisely because they continuously revise the meanings attributed to their past. Educational orientation therefore cannot be separated from narrative interpretation, since every educational choice presupposes an understanding of who one has become and who one aspires to become.

Nevertheless, narrative interpretation alone does not fully explain how learners move from self-understanding to ethically responsible action. Constructing coherent narratives does not automatically entail the capacity to evaluate competing values, deliberate prudently, or assume responsibility for complex decisions. This observation reveals an important theoretical limitation. If narrative identity explains how individuals interpret themselves, an additional educational perspective is required to explain how such interpretation develops into practical judgement. It is precisely this transition—from narrative understanding to ethical deliberation—that directs attention to the educational significance of *phronesis* as the next step in the present theoretical framework.

While narrative and hermeneutic perspectives explain how learners construct meaning and develop coherent identities, they do not fully account for the educational processes through which individuals learn to make ethically responsible decisions in situations characterised by ambiguity, uncertainty, and conflicting values. Contemporary educational contexts increasingly require students to exercise judgement when no predetermined solution is available. This challenge directs attention to Aristotle's concept of *phronesis*.

Defining *Phronesis*

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes practical wisdom (*phronesis*) from both theoretical knowledge (*epistēmē*) and technical competence (*technē*). Whereas theoretical knowledge concerns universal truths and technical expertise aim at the effective production of predetermined outcomes, practical wisdom enables individuals to deliberate about actions whose moral significance depends upon the specific circumstances in which they occur. Practical judgement therefore cannot be reduced to the application of abstract principles or procedural rules. Instead, it requires the capacity to interpret context, evaluate competing values, anticipate consequences, and identify courses of action that are ethically appropriate within particular situations.

From this perspective, practical wisdom represents an indispensable educational resource because it enables learners to navigate situations in which correct answers cannot be determined in advance and where responsible action depends upon thoughtful deliberation rather than procedural certainty.

Conception of subjectification (Biesta, 2020, 2022) further reinforces this educational perspective by emphasising that one of the fundamental purposes of education consists in supporting the emergence of individuals capable of acting responsibly within a pluralistic world. Education, therefore must create opportunities for learners to exercise freedom responsibly, encounter different perspectives, and assume ownership of their decisions. Educational judgement consequently becomes inseparable from ethical responsibility, requiring learners to engage with uncertainty rather than simply applying externally prescribed solutions.

The educational relevance of practical wisdom becomes particularly evident within contemporary technological innovation, artificial intelligence, and increasing cultural complexity continuously confront young people with situations in which multiple legitimate perspectives coexist and predetermined responses prove insufficient. Under these conditions, responsible citizenship depends less upon the accumulation of information than upon the capacity to deliberate critically, justify one's decisions in the hybrid infosphere (Floridi, 2014).

Nevertheless, little attention has been devoted to the pedagogical environments through which it may be intentionally cultivated within ordinary disciplinary teaching. Practical wisdom is frequently presented as a desirable educational outcome, yet the concrete educational processes capable of fostering its development remain comparatively underexplored. This unresolved question is particularly significant for humanities education, where literary interpretation, ethical reflection, and dialogue naturally converge. The present study argues that classical literature offers uniquely favourable conditions for cultivating practical judgement.

The Orientative Function of Classical Literatures in Cultivating Phronesis

Unlike approaches based on the transmission of prescriptive moral norms, classical narratives rarely distinguish clearly between right and wrong. Instead, they present conflicts in which legitimate values collide and every possible decision entail ethical consequence. Literary figures such as Antigone, Odysseus, Aeneas, Medea, Hector, and Penelope do not function as moral exemplars to be imitated uncritically; rather, they embody the complexity of human action, requiring readers to interpret motives, evaluate competing responsibilities, and consider alternative courses of action. In doing so, literature becomes an educational space in which ethical reflection develops through interpretation rather than prescription.

This interpretative openness is particularly significant from a pedagogical perspective. Classical narratives encourage learners to suspend immediate judgement, recognise the plurality of perspectives, and appreciate the contextual nature of moral deliberation. Such experiences cultivate habits of reflection that are fundamental for democratic participation, where responsible decision-making frequently requires balancing competing principles rather than applying predetermined rules. Literary interpretation therefore becomes an educational exercise in practical judgement, preparing learners to confront uncertainty with intellectual openness and reflect upon the consequences of different choices.

Literary interpretation is therefore the beginning of a broader educational process through which disciplinary knowledge is progressively connected with autobiographical reflection and responsible action. In this way, the study of classical literature contributes simultaneously to intellectual development, ethical formation, and educational orientation, demonstrating how the humanities can respond to the contemporary educational challenges identified by Global Citizenship Education.

This observation leads directly to the central theoretical question addressed by the present study: how can humanities education intentionally cultivate practical wisdom as an Orientative educational competence capable of supporting responsible judgement in contemporary democratic societies? The following section develops this argument by identifying the theoretical gap from which the construct of Orientative Phronesis emerges.

However, an important theoretical question remains insufficiently addressed. Existing research rarely explains how disciplinary learning itself—and particularly the study of classical humanities—may intentionally cultivate practical wisdom through coherent pedagogical processes. Narrative identity does not necessarily lead to ethical judgement; learner agency does not automatically imply responsible deliberation; and the recognition of practical wisdom as an educational objective does not, by itself, identify the pedagogical conditions through which it may be systematically developed in ordinary classroom practice. Consequently, the relationship between disciplinary learning, ethical reflection, autobiographical interpretation, and educational orientation remains conceptually fragmented.

To address this theoretical gap, the present study proposes Orientative Phronesis as a novel educational construct situated at the intersection of these theories. Within this framework, practical wisdom is conceptualised as an educational competence that can be intentionally cultivated through carefully designed curricular experiences.

In this perspective, the teachers' role evolves into an epistemic mediator facilitating dialogue between disciplinary knowledge and ethical reflection. The proposed framework also has important implications for teacher education. If orientation constitutes an intrinsic dimension of disciplinary teaching, teachers are required not only to possess subject expertise but also to facilitate inquiry, interpretation, dialogue, and reflective learning. Their educational role progressively shifts from the transmission of knowledge towards the design of learning environments in which students actively construct meaning, compare perspectives, justify their interpretations, and assume responsibility for their educational choices. Such an approach requires pedagogical sensitivity capable of integrating disciplinary competence with ethical and relational dimensions of teaching. The originality of the proposed construct lies in its reinterpretation of practical wisdom as an educational competence that can be intentionally cultivated through curriculum design by teachers.

Orientative Phronesis consequently redefines the relationship between disciplinary knowledge and educational orientation. Knowledge retains its central role within the curriculum, yet its educational significance is expanded through processes of interpretation and deliberation that connect learning with learners' personal, ethical, and civic development. Humanities education, in particular, becomes a privileged environment in which disciplinary study contributes simultaneously to intellectual understanding, identity formation, and responsible participation in democratic life.

This approach recognises learners as active agents who continuously interpret experience, construct meaning, and shape their own biographies through reflective engagement with changing personal and social contexts.

Within the Life Design perspective, orientation is understood as an ongoing process through which individuals develop adaptability, reflexivity, and the capacity to construct meaningful life projects. Likewise, narrative pedagogy has demonstrated that autobiographical reflection enables learners to organise experience into coherent narratives, thereby strengthening self-awareness and supporting educational decision-making. Together, these perspectives have significantly broadened the educational understanding of orientation, moving beyond traditional models centred exclusively on career choice or vocational guidance.

Orientative Phronesis builds upon these contributions while extending their educational implications. Although narrative identity provides an essential foundation for self-understanding, the construction of coherent personal narratives does not necessarily guarantee the capacity to deliberate responsibly when confronted with ethically complex situations. Individuals may successfully interpret their experiences without fully developing the practical judgement required to evaluate conflicting values, recognise the consequences of alternative actions, or justify their decisions within pluralistic contexts. Narrative understanding, therefore, represents a necessary but not sufficient condition for responsible educational orientation.

The proposed framework redefines orientation as a continuous pedagogical process accompanying learning rather than as an intervention limited to specific educational transitions. Every learning experience potentially contributes to learners' capacity to interpret themselves,

evaluate alternative possibilities, and construct meaningful educational trajectories. Consequently, orientation becomes inseparable from curriculum design itself, encouraging teachers to conceive disciplinary knowledge not only as an end in itself but also as a resource for reflective judgement and personal development.

The Narrative Orientation Laboratory (NOL)

The Narrative Orientation Laboratory (NOL) operationalises the theoretical construct and translate its conceptual dimensions into a coherent pedagogical model for secondary humanities education. The laboratory reinterprets ordinary disciplinary teaching as a reflective educational process in which literary study becomes a means of cultivating ethical judgement and self-orientation.

The activity is designed around three sequential yet dynamically interconnected pedagogical phases. Although analytically distinguishable, these phases form a continuous educational process through which learners move progressively from textual interpretation to personal reflection and, finally, to responsible deliberation. Each phase prepares the conditions for the next, allowing practical wisdom to emerge gradually through sustained educational experience rather than through isolated instructional activities.

The first phase consists of the hermeneutic interpretation of classical narratives. Students engage with literary episodes characterised by significant ethical complexity, identifying the dilemmas, conflicting values, motivations, and alternative courses of action represented in the text. Literary interpretation is therefore understood not simply as textual analysis but as an educational exercise in ethical perception. By examining situations in which legitimate values come into tension, learners begin to recognise that responsible judgement requires interpretation rather than the application of predetermined rules.

The second phase introduces autobiographical meaning-making (Demetrio, 1996). Through reflective writing, learners relate the ethical questions emerging from the literary text to their own experiences, educational choices, and personal values. By connecting narrative experience with lived experience, students gradually become aware of the assumptions, values, and responsibilities that shape their own decision-making processes. Literary interpretation thus evolves into self-understanding, strengthening the Orientative dimension of disciplinary learning.

The third phase consists of philosophical dialogue. Students compare interpretations, justify arguments, examine alternative perspectives, and critically evaluate the reasons supporting different positions. Dialogue is not directed towards consensus or the identification of a single correct answer; rather, it functions as a shared process of inquiry through which individual interpretations are refined through encounter with others. In this way, ethical reflection becomes simultaneously personal and democratic, inclusive deliberation, and autonomy.

An illustrative example may clarify the educational dynamics of the laboratory. During the study of Sophocles' *Antigone*, students begin by examining the conflict between Antigone's duty toward her brother and Creon's responsibility to uphold civic authority. Rather than identifying one character as morally right and the other as wrong, they analyse the competing values represented in the tragedy—justice, loyalty, law, responsibility, conscience, and political order—and discuss why the conflict resists simple solutions. In the autobiographical phase, learners are invited to reflect upon situations in which they experienced tension between

institutional rules and personal convictions, exploring how they interpreted those experiences and the values that informed their decisions. The subsequent philosophical dialogue encourages students to compare their interpretations, justify their reasoning, and reconsider their initial assumptions in light of alternative perspectives. Through this progressive movement from literary interpretation to autobiographical reflection and collective inquiry, the tragedy becomes an educational environment in which learners exercise the interpretative, ethical, narrative, and orientative dimensions of Phronesis.

Table 1

The Narrative Orientation Laboratory (NOL) Phases and Orientative Outcomes

Phase	Educational Activity	Orientative Outcome
Hermeneutic reading	Interpretation of ethical dilemmas in classical narratives	Interpretative understanding
Autobiographical Writing	Reflective narrative self-analysis	Self-awareness and agency
Philosophical Dialogue	Community of inquiry and ethical deliberation	Practical judgement and responsible orientation

The educational dynamics of the model unfold through a progressive movement. Hermeneutic interpretation initially encourages learners to suspend immediate judgement and to recognise the plurality of meanings embedded within literary narratives. Rather than seeking definitive answers, students learn to examine ambiguity, identify conflicting values, and appreciate the contextual nature of ethical decision-making. Interpretation thus becomes the first educational condition for the development of practical wisdom.

Autobiographical reflection subsequently transforms literary understanding into personal meaning. By relating the ethical questions emerging from classical narratives to their own educational experiences, learners progressively clarify the values, assumptions, and aspirations that shape their decisions. Reflection therefore extends beyond the comprehension of literary texts, becoming a process through which disciplinary learning contributes to self-understanding and to the construction of coherent educational trajectories.

Philosophical dialogue completes this educational movement by exposing individual interpretations to critical discussion within a shared community of inquiry. Through the comparison of different perspectives, learners are invited to justify their arguments, reconsider their assumptions, and recognise the legitimacy of alternative interpretations. Dialogue consequently strengthens reflective judgement by demonstrating that responsible decisions emerge through reasoned deliberation rather than through the uncritical acceptance of predetermined positions.

Taken together, these educational processes enable learners to move progressively from understanding literary experience to interpreting their own experience and, ultimately, to exercising responsible judgement in relation to future choices.

Future Research

The present study is intentionally conceptual and therefore does not provide empirical evidence concerning the educational effectiveness of the proposed framework. Its primary objective has been to develop a theoretically coherent pedagogical model capable of integrating contributions from orientation pedagogy, into a unified educational perspective. Accordingly, the construct

of Orientative Phronesis should be understood as a conceptual proposal that requires systematic empirical investigation before definitive conclusions concerning its educational impact can be drawn.

Future research will focus on the implementation of the Narrative Orientation Laboratory within secondary humanities education through iterative Design-Based Research cycles. Such studies will enable the progressive refinement of the proposed framework while examining the educational processes through which practical wisdom develops during classroom activity. Particular attention should be devoted to documenting how literary interpretation, autobiographical reflection, and philosophical dialogue interact in supporting learners' ethical judgement, reflective agency, and educational orientation.

Qualitative approaches—including classroom observation, reflective journals, autobiographical narratives, focus groups, and transcripts of philosophical dialogue—appear particularly appropriate for investigating the developmental processes underlying Orientative Phronesis. At the same time, mixed-methods designs integrating qualitative evidence with validated instruments measuring agency, reflective competence, ethical reasoning, and orientation outcomes may contribute to strengthening the empirical validation of the proposed framework while preserving the complexity of the educational phenomena under investigation.

Further research may also explore the transferability of the Narrative Orientation Laboratory across different curricular disciplines, educational systems, and cultural contexts. Although the present study focuses specifically on classical humanities, the pedagogical principles underlying the framework may prove applicable wherever disciplinary learning invites interpretation and ethical reflection about choices.

Conclusion

The educational challenges of the twenty-first century require education to prepare learners to interpret complexity, exercise ethical judgement, and assume responsibility for their decisions within increasingly uncertain social contexts. In this perspective, educational orientation can no longer be conceived primarily as vocational guidance or support for educational transitions. Rather, it becomes a constitutive dimension of teaching through which disciplinary learning. Orientative Phronesis may be defined as the educational competence through which learners integrate interpretative understanding, narrative self-construction, ethical deliberation, and responsible agency in order to orient themselves within uncertain personal and social contexts.

This study has argued that classical humanities offer particularly favourable conditions for achieving this educational objective. Through the hermeneutic interpretation of literary narratives, autobiographical reflection, and philosophical dialogue, the study of Greek and Latin literature may become an educational environment in which learners progressively develop the capacity to interpret ethically complex situations, construct meaningful understandings of themselves, and orient their future choices responsibly.

In this sense, Orientative Phronesis represents also a pedagogical horizon through which humanities education may contribute meaningfully to the formation of reflective citizens capable of navigating the complexity of the contemporary world.

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

No AI or AI-assisted technologies were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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