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# Conceptual Origins of Widely Used Value Frameworks in Educational Research

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**Abstract**

Values have become important concepts in educational and social research today, where they are commonly used to study moral development, citizenship, cultural orientation, institutional aims, and learner behaviour. In much of this research, values are treated as measurable orientations or dispositions and are examined using established empirical Value frameworks. However, relatively little attention is given to the conceptual origins and philosophical assumptions on which these frameworks are based. As a result, values are often presented as self-evident empirical variables rather than as concepts shaped by specific historical and philosophical traditions. This paper examines the conceptual background of popular value frameworks in educational research by tracing the development of the concept of value within European philosophical thought and by exploring how this development influences empirical practice today. Using a critical, narrative, and analytical review approach, the study brings together classical philosophical writings and a synthesis of 39 empirical studies in the field of education. It traces how value gradually came to be separated from metaphysical being, theological order, and natural purpose, giving birth to axiology as a dedicated area of inquiry in the 19$^{th}$ and early 20$^{th}$ century. The paper also examines the ontological, epistemological, normative, and anthropological assumptions that direct modern value theories and shape its use in empirical research. The analysis shows that many influential value models used in educational research carry assumptions originating from European intellectual traditions, including the separation of value from empirical fact, implicit universalism, a subject-centred view of the human agent, and a priority to measurability and comparison. While these assumptions make systematic empirical research possible, they also give rise to methodological and cross-cultural situations, especially when such frameworks are applied in different cultural and educational contexts. The paper argues that empirical research on values is strengthened when greater conceptual awareness is brought to the use of value frameworks. By clarifying the philosophical background of value theory and examining its implications for educational research, the study supports more theoretically contemplative, context-sensitive, and critically informed approaches to studying values in education and the social sciences.

Keywords: Values; Value Education; Ontology; Anthropology; Narrative Review

## Introduction and Rationale

Today, advances in technology have gradually reduced the distance between science-fiction and everyday reality. This has also raised questions about the role of certain professions, including that of the teacher. If technology can collect, process, interpret, and transmit information quickly and efficiently, then what remains the role of a teacher in this context? One common answer to that question is ‘teachers are now expected to give something that machines cannot’. This brings concepts such as Values, ethics, and consciousness into conversation.

Although Values have always been part of educational discourse, they have gained a renewed importance in current situation where knowledge transmission is increasingly automated. As a result, Values have arrived at a central place in educational and social research. Now they are used to understand moral judgment, cultural

orientation, civic responsibility, institutional aims, and the broader purposes of education. It is now realized well that in educational practices, Values influence curriculum design, teaching methods, assessment practices, and the overall goals of schooling by a good measure. This is why many studies on Value education, moral development, citizenship, and socialization, treat Values as important factor shaping both individual learners and educational systems.

At the same time, one finds relatively little research that examines *where contemporary ideas of Values actually come from*? Much educational research uses established Value frameworks as ready-made tools to measure attitudes or orientations, without questioning the assumptions on which these frameworks are built. In such cases, Values tend to appear as self-evident empirical variables rather than as concept shaped by particular historical and philosophical traditions. Historically, the idea of Value has changed over time, and many currently popular Value frameworks can be traced to European lineage of thought.

Early traditions in European thought linked 'Value' to ideas of the good, virtue, and purpose, often based on specific moral and metaphysical views. Gradually, changes in philosophy and social thought made distinction between Value and these foundations, giving birth to axiology as a distinct field by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This shift made it possible to treat Values as distinct, comparable, and measurable, allowing psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education to develop empirical Value models. These models are now widely used in educational research because they offer clarity and ease of application. However, their widespread use, especially in cross-cultural studies, has also raised concerns about whether Values hold significant (if any) equivalence across different cultures?

One such concern is about the implicit assumptions built into many Value frameworks. A large number of empirical models are based on European philosophical traditions that understand Values in ways that are shaped by specific historical, geographical, religious, and political settings of Europe from time to time. When these models are applied across different cultural and educational settings, like that of India, they do not always fit with indigenous moral reasoning, religio-cultural practices, or local educational traditions. However, in much empirical research, this concern goes largely unexamined, and the normative implications of such frameworks are seldom made explicit. This gap between '*where Value frameworks come from?*' and '*how they are used?*' is especially important in education. Education is naturally Value-laden, as it involves judgments about what counts as worthwhile knowledge, how learning should take place, and what kinds of persons education aims to develop, ultimately influencing broader ideas of right vs. wrong, and good vs. bad. Treating Values only as variables to be measured therefore risks narrowing educational inquiry to what can be easily operationalized, while overlooking the cultural, ethical, and institutional contexts in which Values are actually shaped, enacted, and contested.

The present study is motivated by the need to 'magnify to clarify' this gap to its audience. Rather than proposing yet another empirical model of Values, it aims to see and show how contemporary Value related research is shaped by a philosophical lineage. By tracing the evolution of the concept of Value within European thought, analysing the assumptions underlying modern Value theory, and examining how these assumptions are etched in empirical frameworks used in educational and social research, the study aims to bring conceptual reflexivity into Value research.

This paper adopts a historical development (genealogy) and analytical approach. Genealogically, it looks at how the idea of Value developed from early ethical and ontological conceptions to modern axiological frameworks. Analytically, it examines how these conceptual developments inform the structure, methodology, and application of empirical Value frameworks. Drawing on both classical philosophical sources and a synthesis of education-focused empirical studies, the paper locates contemporary Value research within its broader intellectual context.

By doing so, the study does not seek to reject empirical Value research or deny its contributions. Rather, it aims to clarify the conceptual foundations upon which such research stands and to examine the implications of these foundations for educational inquiry, particularly in different cultural contexts. Understanding how

Value frameworks are constructed, operationalized, and applied is essential for interpreting empirical findings, generated using them, responsibly and for advancing Value research that is both methodologically rigorous and conceptually alive to context.

In pursuing this objective, this paper contributes to ongoing discussions in education, philosophy, and the social sciences on the place of Values in research and educational practice. It suggests that research on Values is enhanced when greater attention is paid to conceptual clarity and historical background, particularly in cases where Values are treated as universal or used as standards for judging educational outcomes. By drawing attention to the philosophical roots of Value theory and examining how these ideas have been taken up in empirical research, the study aims to provide a firmer theoretical grounding for Value-based research and to encourage more reflective and context-sensitive ways of thinking about Values in education.

**Problem Statement**

Educational and social research nowadays makes wide use of Value frameworks to study areas such as moral development, civic engagement, cultural orientation, institutional ethos, and learner behaviour. In much of these works, Values are defined as measurable orientations, priorities, preferences, or dispositions and are treated as explanatory variables within empirical research designs. These approaches have produced large bodies of data and enabled comparison across groups and settings. At the same time, they have relied on Value constructs whose conceptual origins and philosophical assumptions are left unstated. As a result, the analytical tools used to study Values are frequently taken for granted, even though they are shaped by particular intellectual traditions.

Many of the Value frameworks most commonly used today draw, either explicitly or implicitly, on European philosophical developments that gradually separated Value from metaphysical foundations and empirical facts, and redefined it as an independent theoretical category. This shift made it possible to organize Values into typologies, hierarchies, and measurable orientations suitable for empirical investigation. However, when these frameworks are employed without reflection on this background, they naturally tend to present Values as neutral and universally understandable variables, rather than as concepts that are historically formed and culturally mediated.

This becomes especially important in educational research, where Values are not only objects of study but are closely related to judgments about what should be taught, how learning should take place, and what kinds of personal and social development education seeks to promote, what is right or wrong, good or bad, beautiful of ugly, acceptable or unacceptable. Therefore, the use of standardized Value frameworks in education carries implications that go beyond methodological efficiency, even though many empirical studies remain focused mainly on measurement, comparison, and prediction.

These concerns are further intensified in cross-cultural and comparative research. Value frameworks developed within European intellectual contexts are often applied across diverse cultural and educational settings with the assumption that Value categories are conceptually equivalent. Differences observed in empirical findings are then interpreted as variations in emphasis or priority, rather than as reflecting distinct moral logics or culturally grounded meanings. Especially in Indian settings, such assumptions present a risk of overlooking indigenous Value systems and narrowing the interpretive possibilities of research findings. Despite a substantial body of literature on Value education and Value measurement, relatively little work has systematically examined how contemporary empirical Value frameworks are shaped by their philosophical origins, or how these origins influence their use in educational research and cross-cultural contexts. Addressing this gap requires an analysis that brings together the historical development of Value theory and its present-day empirical applications in educational and social research.

**Research Objectives**

The objectives of the present study are to:

1. Explore the historical development of the concept of Value within European philosophical thought, with attention to birth of axiology.
2. Examine the philosophical assumptions that inform modern Value theory.
3. Analyze how these philosophical assumptions are reflected in the empirical Value frameworks commonly used in educational and social research.
4. Draw conceptual and methodological implications of applying Value frameworks developed in European contexts to diverse cultural and educational settings.

**Research Questions**

1. In light of the above objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:
2. How has the concept of *Value* evolved within European philosophical thought?
3. What philosophical assumptions underpin the development of Value theory from classical ethics to modern axiology?
4. In what ways have European philosophical conceptions of Value been operationalized into empirical classifications, inventories, and frameworks used in educational and social research?
5. What conceptual and methodological issues arise when European-origin Value frameworks are applied across diverse cultural contexts?

**Methodology**

The present study adopts a critical, narrative, and analytical review methodology to examine the conceptual development of Value theory and its empirical use in educational and social research. Rather than aiming for exhaustive coverage or quantitative synthesis, the study focuses on conceptual development, theoretical analysis, and methodological critique.

This orientation is appropriate given the study's concern with tracing philosophical assumptions and examining how these assumptions shape contemporary research practices. The methodological approach draws on the typology of review methods proposed by Grant and Booth (2009), which distinguishes critical and narrative reviews from systematic reviews on the basis of purpose, scope, and evaluative focus. Within this framework, critical reviews prioritize conceptual clarification, theory development, and interpretive synthesis over procedural standardization or comprehensive database searching.

Consistent with this approach, the study does not claim exhaustiveness in its engagement with either philosophical or empirical literature. Instead, it follows a purposive strategy of source selection, guided by relevance to the research questions rather than formal inclusion-exclusion criteria. Philosophical sources were chosen for their role in shaping European conceptions of Value, including classical ethical traditions, early modern moral philosophy, nineteenth-century developments, and the emergence of axiology as a distinct field. To examine how these philosophical developments are reflected in research practice, the study draws on a corpus of 39 empirical studies drawn from published articles, doctoral dissertations, manuals, and reports in education, along with selected studies from related social science domains. These studies were examined not to compare findings or outcomes, but to identify recurring patterns in the adoption, operationalization, and methodological treatment of Value frameworks, with particular emphasis on education-focused research.

The analytical process used theme-based analysis along with conceptual analysis rather than quantitative synthesis. Empirical studies were analyzed for how Values were defined, measured, and interpreted, with attention to underlying assumptions about universality, stability, comparability, and measurability. The analysis examined how established Value frameworks, including typologies, inventories, and motivational models, are used within research designs, and how these uses reflect earlier philosophical commitments.

Where relevant, quantitative methodologies were considered to understand how psychometric practices reinforce particular conceptions of Value. Throughout the analysis, philosophical and empirical sources were placed in dialogue, allowing philosophical texts to illuminate conceptual assumptions and empirical studies to demonstrate how these assumptions operate in research practice. Methodological rigor was ensured through conceptual coherence, transparency of analytical criteria, and consistency in interpretation, rather than through procedural standardization.

**Historical Evolution of the Concept of Value in European Thought**

The existence of 'Value' as a dedicated theoretical category in modern thought can be understood as the result of a long and uneven process within European philosophy. Rather than appearing suddenly as a discrete concept, Value has gradually been separated from ideas of metaphysical being, theological order, and natural purpose. This section outlines this transformation across three broad phases, that are, Classical-Medieval, Early Modern, and Nineteenth-Century. These categories describe major conceptual shifts that contributed to the separation of Value from being and to the eventual emergence of axiology.

**Classical-Medieval Origin**

In classical Greek philosophy, Value is related to ideas of 'being' and 'purpose' and does not appear as an independent concept. In Plato's thought, Value is based on the metaphysical realm of Forms, most notably in the Form of the Good, which serves as the ultimate source of truth, knowledge, and moral orientation. 'The Good' is not treated as one Value among others but functions as the ontological condition that makes all valuation possible (Plato, *Republic*, trans. 1997). In this view, moral and epistemic worth depend on how things relate to an objective metaphysical order, rather than on Value being treated as a separate or independent concept.

Aristotle continues with this ontological base to offer an account of Values that is more worldly rather than transcendence oriented. For Aristotle, Value is situated in *telos*, that is the 'purpose' or end toward which beings naturally strive. Ethical Value is realized through the cultivation of virtue, which sees human action with rational purpose and the natural order of things (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. 2009). Although Aristotle's emphasis on practical reasoning (*phronesis*) introduces an element of context and judgment into ethical life, Value remains tied to the fulfilment of human nature rather than abstracted into an independent theoretical domain.

Medieval Christian philosophy further takes Value into a metaphysical and theological framework. In the work of Thomas Aquinas, Aristotelian teleology is combined with Christian theology that sees Value in divine order and natural law. Moral goodness is understood as participation in God's rational design, and Value is held in objective metaphysical and theological truths (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. 1947). While Aquinas acknowledges the role of human reason in discerning moral Value, valuation itself remains secondary to an ontological hierarchy located in the divine being. Hence, in classical and medieval thought, 'Value' functions as an attribute of being, order, and purpose rather than as an independent object of inquiry. The conceptual separation of Value from ontology, which later makes axiology possible, is not yet available within these philosophical frameworks.

**Early Modern Transformations**

Early modern philosophy marks a shift by relocating Value from cosmic and theological frameworks to human judgment, reason, and sentiment. David Hume (1739) challenges the idea that Value can be derived from fact, he argues instead that moral distinctions arise from human sentiment rather than from reason alone. In this account, Value is situated within human affective responses rather than in the structure of the world itself (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, trans. 2000). This takes 'Values' away from the ontological roots and connects it to psychological or experiential phenomenon.

Immanuel Kant (1785) responds to this shift by offering different grounds for Value, locating it in practical reason. Kant distinguishes moral Value from personal desires and grounds it in the ability of rational individuals to act according to moral principles that apply to everyone (Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. 1998). While Kant retains a claim to objectivity, Value is no longer drawn from nature or from being itself. Instead, it is situated within the domain of normativity, marking a further departure from earlier ontological accounts.

Utilitarian philosophy carries forward this transition by defining Value in terms of outcomes and consequences. Thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham (1789) and later John Stuart Mill (1861) conceptualize Value in relation to pleasure, happiness, and the reduction of suffering (Bentham, 1996; Mill, 2015). This approach introduces ideas of comparability and aggregation into moral reasoning and anticipates later efforts to measure and rank Values. Although utilitarianism remains a normative framework, it clearly separates Value from metaphysical and theological foundations.

Taken together, these developments show a conceptual transition within early modern philosophy. Value, here onwards, is no longer understood as an attribute of being but as something that emerges from human judgment, rational agency, or the evaluation of consequences. This separation creates the conditions under which Value can later be treated as an analytically distinct domain of inquiry.

**Nineteenth Century Progression**

Nineteenth-century philosophy further separates Value from ontology through historically informed and critical reflection. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1807) situates Values within historical and institutional life, arguing that ethical norms are not realized through abstract principles alone but through concrete social practices and forms of collective life (Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. 2018). While Hegel resists moral subjectivism and retains a commitment to ethical objectivity, his emphasis on the historical unfolding of ethical life weakens claims to timeless or universally fixed moral foundations. In this way, Value becomes increasingly tied to social and historical conditions, further loosening its connection to ontological order.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1887) introduces radical changes into this line of thought by presenting Values as historically produced expressions of power, life, and human evaluation. Through his genealogical approach, Nietzsche rejects the idea of objective or universal Values and instead portrays moral systems as constructed frameworks that reflect particular historical conditions and interests rather than timeless truths (On the Genealogy of Morals, trans. 2006). This does not simply question specific moral Values but challenges the very idea that Values possess inherent or objective validity. As a result, Values are no longer treated as unquestioned foundations of thought and action, but as objects open to critical analysis and interpretation.

Alongside these developments, systematic philosophical efforts also emerge to theorize Value as a distinct domain. Rudolf Hermann Lotze (1885) plays a role in this shift by drawing a clear distinction between the ‘realm of being’ and the ‘realm of Value’, arguing that Values do not exist in the same way that empirical objects do, but instead possess validity (Lotze, 1885). This separation provides an important conceptual basis for treating Value as neither reducible to empirical fact nor dependent on metaphysical substance. By the late nineteenth century, this line of thinking leads to the formal existence of axiology, in which Value is fully separated from ontology and positioned as a distinct domain of meaning, evaluation, and analysis. This development makes it possible for Values to be classified, compared, and systematically studied, setting the stage for their later use in empirical research.

**From Metaphysical Ground to Analytical Category**

Taken together, these developments trace a clear trajectory, classical and medieval philosophy put Value within ontological and theological orders. Early modern philosophy relocates Value within human judgment,

reason, and consequence, and nineteenth-century thought historicizes, critiques, and finally abstracts Value into a separate domain. This trajectory establishes the conceptual conditions under which Values can function as analytical categories rather than metaphysical foundations.

The significance of this transformation extends beyond philosophy. Once detached from being, Values become available for classification, comparison, and empirical investigation. The birth of axiology thus provides the conceptual groundwork for twentieth-century efforts to operationalize Values within psychology, education, and the social sciences. Understanding this historical evolution is essential for assessing how Values come to function as measurable orientations and variables in contemporary research, a task taken up in the sections that follow.

**Philosophical Assumptions Underpinning Value Theory**

The development of modern Value theory is shaped by a set of philosophical assumptions that influence how Values are understood, studied, and used in empirical research. These assumptions, ontological, epistemological, normative, and anthropological, are closely related to each other rather than operating in isolation. Together, they define the conditions under which Values come to be treated as actual subjects of classification, measurement, and comparison. Although these assumptions originate in philosophical debates, they continue to shape Value frameworks, especially in educational and social research.

**Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions**

The First set of assumptions in modern Value theory is for the ontological status of Values, particularly their separation from empirical being. Neo-Kantian philosophy plays an important role in establishing this separation. Heinrich Rickert (1896) makes an important distinction between facts and Values by arguing that Values belong to the realm of ‘validity’ rather than that of ‘existence’. By this, he means that Values do not exist in the world in the same way as physical objects or observable events, and they do not cause things to happen in a direct or measurable way. At the same time, Rickert does not treat Values as just personal opinions. Instead, he argues that Values function as standards or criteria by which facts, actions, and practices are judged, giving them conceptual independence even though they lack empirical or causal status (Rickert, 1896/1986). This position makes it possible to regard Values as meaningful and significant without explaining them as metaphysical substances or natural forces, and it helps establish Values as a distinct category of theoretical analysis.

This ontological separation is closely connected to epistemological assumptions about how Values can be known. Phenomenological Value theory, especially in the work of Max Scheler (1916), argues that Values are objective yet non-empirical, and are apprehended through intentional feeling rather than through sensory perception or rational deduction (Scheler, 1913–1916/1973). From this perspective, Values are neither subjective preferences nor empirical facts. Instead, they are understood as valid contents that are disclosed through lived experience, occupying a distinctive mode of accessibility.

Collectively, these assumptions establish a conceptual framework in which Values can be analyzed independently of empirical reality while remaining epistemically accessible. Within empirical research, this framework supports the treatment of Values as analytically isolable constructs, distinct from behaviour, belief, or social structure, and capable of being identified and categorized. Educational studies that operationalize Values as orientations or priorities often rely implicitly on this separation, treating Values as measurable constructs without requiring them to stand ontologically on specific practices or institutional arrangements.

**Normative Assumptions**

A second group of assumptions in Value theory relates to how Values are understood in normative terms, particularly how they are ordered and prioritized. In classical moral philosophy, Values were seen as forming

a hierarchy, usually based on metaphysical or theological ideas about *what is ultimately good ?* Modern Value theory complicates this picture by introducing the idea of pluralism, while still holding on to certain universal claims about Values. As a result, Value theory begins to move away from fixed moral hierarchies, but does not fully abandon the search for common moral standards.

This confusion can be seen clearly in Kantian moral philosophy. Immanuel Kant (1785) says moral Values are based on universal practical reason, arguing that moral principles must apply to all rational agents, while at the same time rejecting both empirical experience and metaphysical foundations as sources of moral Value (Kant, 1998). Later liberal thought further unsettles hierarchical moral systems. Isaiah Berlin develops a pluralist view of Values, arguing that different Values can be equally important yet incompatible with one another, and therefore cannot be reduced to a single ranking or organizing principle (Berlin, 1969). This position rejects the idea of one ultimate moral order, while still avoiding a fully relativistic view in which all Values are seen as arbitrary.

Although these discussions recognize that Values can be multiple and context-dependent, many empirical Value frameworks continue to assume a degree of universality. Frameworks that identify a fixed set of basic Values typically presume that these Values are relevant across different cultures, even if their relative importance varies from one setting to another. In such models, universality is treated as a natural feature of the framework itself rather than as an assumption that needs to be tested or questioned empirically (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2012). As a result, the possibility that different cultures may organize, understand, or prioritize Values in different ways is often ignored or underexplored.

In educational research, this assumption becomes particularly visible in the widespread use of standardized Value categories as indicators of moral development or educational success. Values such as responsibility, justice, or autonomy are frequently treated as universally desirable outcomes of education, with limited discussion of how these Values may carry different meanings or levels of importance in different cultural contexts. While this approach makes it easier to compare findings across studies and supports policy-oriented analysis, it also risks marginalizing alternative or indigenous Value systems and narrowing the ways in which moral development is understood and assessed.

**Anthropological Assumptions**

Modern Value theory also stands on understanding of the human subject as the carrier and interpreter of Values. In this view, Values are seen as internal orientations, preferences, or commitments that guide individual judgment and action. This assumption reflects broader developments in modern philosophy that place strong emphasis on autonomy, agency, and self-reflection. As a result, Values are commonly treated as properties of individuals rather than as features of social or institutional life.

Psychological approaches to Values grow in this anthropological model. Gordon Allport understands Values as dominant orientations that shape personality, while Milton Rokeach defines Values as enduring beliefs about desirable end states and modes of conduct (Allport et al., 1960; Rokeach, 1973). In both these approaches, Values are treated as relatively stable internal structures that individuals can report on and that researchers can compare across persons. This makes Values suitable for empirical study using standardized instruments, especially self-report measures.

While this subject-centered model is methodologically convenient, it is also has limitations. It assumes that individuals are able to reflect on and clearly articulate their Value commitments. This assumption is closely related with European (mostly Christian) ideas of the autonomous and self-aware individual. In educational research, this perspective supports the widespread use of questionnaires and inventories to assess the Values of students or teachers, often without sufficient attention to the ways in which institutional norms, social expectations, and cultural practices shape how Values are expressed and enacted.

Anthropological perspectives offer an alternative by seeing Values as socially constructed or mediated rather than being purely individual phenomena. Clyde Kluckhohn and Florence Rockwood Kluckhohn, together with Strodtbeck, conceptualize Values as patterned cultural responses to shared human concerns, rather than as isolated personal preferences (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). This approach shows attention to the relational, cultural, and institutional dimensions of valuation that are often overlooked when Values are measured solely at the individual level.

**Pragmatic and Methodological Consequences**

These philosophical assumptions come together in shaping how Values are operationalized in empirical research. Pragmatist philosophy offers a different way of thinking about Values by emphasizing their place within concrete situations of inquiry and action. John Dewey understands valuation as a dynamic process in which ends and means are continuously revised in response to experience (Dewey, 1939/1988). Rather than treating Values as something "fixed", this view highlights their practical and situational character, while still allowing for empirical investigation by locating Values within observable practices and decision-making contexts.

In empirical research, however, this pragmatist point of view is taken up only in a limited way. Values are treated as something that can be shaped through education and action, yet they are commonly operationalized as relatively stable variables that are available to measurement and comparison. Quantitative studies tend to prioritize reliability, validity, and statistical relationships, reinforcing the assumption that Values function as enduring orientations rather than as context-dependent judgments. This methodological tendency reflects the combined influence of earlier philosophical assumptions, including the separation of Values from empirical being, implicit universalism, and a subject-centered view of the human agent.

The cumulative effect of these assumptions is a research landscape in which Values are frequently measured but seldom examined at the conceptual level. Empirical frameworks inherit philosophical commitments that shape *what is recognized as a Value? How Values are understood to be known*? And *why they are considered important*? While these commitments make systematic research possible, they also set boundaries of interpretation landscape, especially in educational settings that are culturally different from those of the origins of such frameworks.

Therefore, to recognizing these philosophical assumptions is not just a theoretical exercise but provides a critical lens for assessing both the scope and the limits of empirical research in field of Values and Value education. By clarifying the ontological, epistemological, normative, and anthropological foundations of Value theory, researchers are better positioned to evaluate *how* Value frameworks operate in practice and where careful conceptual reflection may be needed. This awareness prepares the ground for examining how these assumptions are translated into empirical frameworks and how they give rise to methodological and cross-cultural situations in modern day educational research.

**From Axiology to Empirical Frameworks**

The existence of axiology as a separate domain in philosophy, creates the conceptual conditions under which Values can be treated as systematic objects of inquiry. Once Values are separated from metaphysical being and based on validity, meaning, or human orientation, they become available for classification, comparison, and empirical investigation. This section examines how this transition unfolds in three stages, theoretical consolidation, conceptual translation, and empirical framework formation, with particular attention to educational research

**Theoretical Consolidation of Value Theory**

By the early 20th century, a series of thinkers over a span of time, brought Value Theory to a conceptual stage that makes it available for application that is more systematic beyond the field of philosophy. Neo-Kantian and phenomenological traditions establish Value as neither a natural property nor a metaphysical substance, but as a domain governed by its own normative and logical principles (Rickert, 1896/1986; Scheler, 1913–1916/1973). This development helps stabilize the concept of Value as analytically different from empirical fact, while still maintaining its importance for moral and social evaluation.

At the same time, pragmatist philosophy claims a different emphasis by seeing Value as something that emerges within human action and inquiry rather than as a fixed ideal. Dewey's theory of valuation highlights the situational and instrumental nature of Values, presenting them as provisional guides for judgment and practice that are revised through experience (Dewey, 1939/1988). Although this perspective rejects the idea that Values have fixed or timeless essences, it still supports empirical research by locating Values in observable processes such as decision-making, problem-solving, and educational practice.

Together, these developments provide a consistent theoretical foundation for treating Values as meaningful, comparable, and open to systematic investigation. Value theory no longer functions only as a branch of moral philosophy; it becomes a conceptual resource that can inform psychological, educational, and social research in a sustained and methodologically grounded way.

**Translation of Philosophical Concepts into Research Constructs**

The movement from axiology to empirical research involves a process of conceptual translation rather than direct application. Philosophical notions of Value, such as validity, orientation, preference, or commitment, are transformed into constructs suitable for empirical investigation. This translation preserves and naturally transmits certain theoretical assumptions while simplifying others, making Values available to operationalization within research designs.

An important feature of this translation is the reconceptualization of Values as relatively stable orientations that guide judgment and behavior across situations. This assumption is in line with earlier European philosophical efforts to detach Value from metaphysics while retaining its normative force (Rickert, 1896/1986; Scheler, 1913–1916/1973). In empirical research, it legitimizes the treatment of Values as identifiable constructs that can be measured through standardized instruments.

In educational research, this translation observed by looking at how Values are framed as pedagogical outcomes, learner dispositions, or institutional characteristics. Studies on Value education and moral development often work with broad Value categories, such as responsibility, justice, citizenship, or autonomy, treating them as objects of assessment. In doing so, these categories are implicitly presented as universally understandable equivalent across cultures and empirically accessible (Dhunnoo & Adiapen, 2011). Quantitative studies that examine student Value orientations follow a similar approach, translating complex cultural and ethical processes into survey-based indicators that allow for comparison across different groups and contexts (Zhunussova & Ryspayeva, 2019).

While this approach makes systematic investigation possible, it also tends to narrow how Values are understood, if used without cultural and other contextual adaptations. Elements such as normative meaning, cultural embeddedness, and ethical reasoning often receive less attention, as priority is given to measurability and comparability. Although this does not amount to a misrepresentation of philosophical Value Theory, but it does reflect a selective use of Value Theory due to methodological concerns. It is therefore important to recognize this process of translation, for assessing how Value frameworks operate within empirical educational research.

**Major Empirical Value Frameworks in Educational and Social Research**

The translation of Value Theory into empirical research happens through various popular frameworks that give direction to how Values are defined, measured, and interpreted. These frameworks, even when they differ in their emphasis and scope, do share a common orientation toward treating Values as analysable orientations or dispositions rather than as metaphysical or theological subjects. Together, they provide the conceptual and methodological basis through which Values enter empirical educational research.

Early empirical works use Spranger's typology of value orientations, which understands values as dominant life orientations that shape personality and cultural engagement (Spranger, 1928). Even if this typology was not originally developed as a measurement instrument, it does have an influence in educational research concerned with the cultivation of intellectual, social, aesthetic, and moral dispositions. Its legacy is visible in studies of Value education and teacher education that frame educational aims in terms of differentiated Value Orientations (Dhunnoo & Adiapen, 2011).

A more overt psychometric operationalization comes up in the works of Allport–Vernon–Lindzey, which adapts Spranger's typology into standardized instruments suitable for empirical research (Allport et al., 1960). Educational psychology studies using these tools examine relationships between student values, learning preferences, and institutional culture. Within this approach, values are treated as relatively stable dispositions that can be identified through self-report and compared across individuals and contexts (Singh, 2017).

On the other hand, a systematic structured approach is visible in Rokeach's distinction between terminal and instrumental values, which defines values as enduring beliefs about desirable end states and modes of conduct (Rokeach, 1973). This framework has been widely used in educational research on moral education, citizenship, and socialization. Studies based on Rokeach's model often interpret changes in value priorities as indicators of educational influence, linking schooling experiences to shifts in moral orientation (Godara, 2008; Kumari, 2023).

The most popular and used framework in modern day research is Schwartz's theory of basic human values, which conceptualizes values as trans-situational motivational goals organized within a structured relational system (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2012). Educational research using this framework explores associations between student values and outcomes such as academic motivation, civic engagement, and intercultural attitudes. Its widespread adoption is partly due to its internal theoretical structure and its extensive cross-cultural validation, which support comparative analysis across educational settings (Zhunussova & Ryspayeva, 2019; Singh, 2025).

At a broader institutional level, Hofstede's cultural dimensions model extends Value analysis to collective and organizational contexts (Hofstede, 1980). Although originally developed within organizational research, this framework is popular in comparative education to interpret differences in authority relations, individualism, and pedagogical norms. Thus, educational systems are analyzed as expressions of underlying cultural value patterns (Gururaja, 2011).

Across the field specific (education) studies reviewed here, several patterns can be observed.

- Empirical value research is dominated by established frameworks of European origin,
- Values are most often operationalized through standardized instruments, and
- Methodological emphasis is placed on measurement and comparison rather than on conceptual examination.

While these frameworks yield analytical clarity and empirical reach, they also carry philosophical assumptions that shape how values are understood and evaluated in research.

Collectively, empirical value frameworks represent the applied outcome of axiology's conceptual development in Europe. They translate European philosophical ideas about Value into research instruments that structure inquiry across educational and social domains. Understanding how these frameworks have developed and how they function in practice thus becomes essential for assessing both their methodological

strengths and their conceptual limits, a task that informs the analysis of methodological and cross-cultural stuations in the sections that follow.

**Methodological and Cross-Cultural Situations in Empirical Value Research**

The translation of value theory into empirical frameworks has aided a good amount of research in the field of education and social sciences at large. However, this translation has also given rise to a set of methodological and cross-cultural situations. This is because of the philosophical assumptions that are naturally built into value frameworks and from the ways in which such frameworks are applied in research practice without much reflection of their origins. They are not scattered problems tied to specific contexts, but are more general and structural consequences of treating values as measurable constructs in equivalence across different cultural and educational settings.

At the methodological level, empirical value research shows a preference for quantitative approaches. Values are, most often than not, operationalized through standardized instruments, such as scales, inventories, and questionnaires, that are designed to measure orientations, preferences, priorities, or motivational goals. This reflects an earlier conceptual milestone where values were separated from empirical 'being', allowing them to be treated as analytically separable constructs characterized by validity rather than existence (Rickert, 1896/1986). Once values are understood in this way, the attention of research starts shifting away from questions about *what are values? How they arise?* and toward technical questions of *how they can be measured and compered reliably?*

Quantitative Educational research clearly illustrate this methodological orientation. Research that examines Value Orientation among secondary and university students typically place strong emphasis on psychometric criteria such as reliability, factor structure, and construct validity, treating these as main indicators of methodological rigor (Desai, 2005; Singh, 2017). Within such studies, values are commonly understood as relatively stable internal dispositions that can be correlated with outcomes such as academic achievement, moral reasoning, emotional intelligence, or social behaviour (Godara, 2008; Kumari, 2023). While this approach supports systematic analysis and comparison across groups, it also reinforces the European assumption that values operate as relatively stable variables rather than as contextual judgments or relational practices.

This methodological emphasis gives rise to a broader conceptual tension between understanding values as 'measurable variables' and understanding them as 'elements of cultural systems'. Variable-based frameworks treat values as discrete units that can be ranked, aggregated, and compared. Currently popular models such as those proposed by Rokeach and Schwartz define values as enduring beliefs or trans-situational motivational goals, which legitimizes their use as explanatory variables in empirical research (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2012). In educational research, this perspective supports studies that interpret changes in value scores as indicators of educational influence or moral development.

From cultural and anthropological perspectives, however, this reduction is open to challenge. Values are viewed not simply as internal preferences but as components of broader cultural systems that gain meaning through social practices, institutional arrangements, and historical narratives. The framework proposed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck emphasizes values as patterned responses to shared human concerns, located within cultural contexts rather than located solely within individuals (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). When values are removed from their cultural and social contexts and treated mainly as measurable variables, important aspects of meaning are often lost. These include how individuals reason morally about values, the symbolic meanings values carry within particular cultures, and the ways values are expressed and negotiated through social relationships and practices.

This confusion becomes easier to see in educational settings. Many variable-based studies combine individual value scores to describe groups, schools, or institutions, and then interpret average differences as reflecting cultural or contextual influences (Desai, 2005; Gururaja, 2011). While this kind of aggregation makes comparison possible and is useful for policy-related analysis, it can also lead to values being treated as fixed characteristics. In doing so, it may overlook differences within groups, disagreements among members, and the ways in which values are interpreted differently in specific situations. Moreover, everyday educational practices themselves have their own assumptions about authority, knowledge, and what it means to be a learner or a teacher, these assumptions are not always captured through individual-level measurements alone (Dewey, 1939/1988).

These issues magnify when value frameworks are applied across different cultures. Many empirical value models developed within European and North American intellectual traditions are routinely used in very different cultural and educational contexts such as in India. This use is supported by the assumption that values are equivalently meaningful and applicable across different cultures. Neo-Kantian (often Christian theological) philosophy contributes to this assumption by distinguishing values from facts and treating them as standards of validity rather than as practices shaped by particular cultures (Rickert, 1896/1986). Phenomenological approaches reinforce this view by presenting values as objective but non-empirical, understood through 'experience' rather than defined by cultural practices (Scheler, 1913–1916/1973). As a result, value frameworks are often treated as portable tools, even when cultural meanings and educational practices differ substantially across contexts.

In educational research, the influence of these philosophical assumptions result in use of standardized Value categories, especially in cross-cultural studies. Research on Value education and citizenship education often uses broad categories such as democracy, responsibility, justice, and social commitment as benchmarks for evaluation across different educational systems (Dhunnoo & Adiapen, 2011). Quantitative studies that compare adolescent value orientations of linguistic or national groups follow a similar approach, relying on standardized instruments to produce comparable profiles (Zhunussova & Ryspayeva, 2019; Singh, 2025). In most cases, differences in findings are interpret as differences in the relative importance given to certain values, rather than as reflecting differences in moral reasoning or cultural meaning.

This practice points to an assumption of universality or equivalence. Although many value frameworks today recognize that values may be expressed differently across cultures, they often retain a fixed set of basic values that are assumed to be relevant everywhere. Schwartz's model illustrates this approach by proposing a universal value structure organized around motivational tensions, with cultural variation understood mainly in terms of relative emphasis rather than differences in the nature or meaning of values themselves (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2012). While this framework makes large-scale comparison possible, it also oversimplifies moral diversity and overlooking indigenous value systems that do not fit neatly into predefined European categories.

Isaiah Berlin's critique of moral monism is a useful way of understanding this tension. Berlin argues that values can be genuinely plural and may not always be comparable with one another, resisting reduction to a single evaluative framework (Berlin, 1969). From this perspective, efforts to make values fully comparable through standardized models may obscure Value conflicts, trade-offs, and context-specific meanings. In educational research, this can lead to interpretations that implicitly treat alignment with European Value categories as signs of educational success or social progress.

The pragmatist perspective developed by Dewey further complicates this picture. Dewey understands valuation as an ongoing process that takes shape within specific situations of inquiry and action, stressing that values form through experience and remain open to revision (Dewey, 1939/1988). This view challenges the idea that values can be treated as fixed orientations that are measured independent of context. However, in much empirical educational research, pragmatist stance is only partial. Values are described as educable and relevant to action, but they are still operationalized as stable variables suitable for quantitative analysis. This

selective use of pragmatism supports methodological convenience, while limiting attention to the situational and evolving nature of values.

Importantly, a number of research in field of education already acknowledge these limitations in practice. For example, research on ethics education and professional values cautions against the uncritical use of value assessment tools across different cultural and institutional contexts. Such studies highlight the importance of local norms and practices in constructing moral judgment, suggesting that values cannot always be meaningfully assessed using standardized instruments alone (Kumari, 2023). These findings indicate that while standardized frameworks are useful for comparison, their results need to be interpreted carefully and with attention to context.

Together, these methodological and cross-cultural situations point to a paradox within empirical Value research. The same assumptions that allow Values to be treated as measurable, comparable, and analytically useful also decide boundaries of what can be observed and understood about them. The use quantitative methods invariably requires reliability and comparability, but in doing so, often blurs the questions of contextual meaning and cultural specificity. Similarly, cross-cultural application do broaden the scope of value research, they also introduce implicit universalism through the use of standardized European categories that do not fully capture local value systems.

Recognizing these tensions does not require rejecting empirical value frameworks or quantitative approaches altogether. Rather, it asks for greater conceptual contemplation about the philosophical assumptions in Value research and about the boundaries of interpretation of its findings. In educational research, where values inform aims, practices, and institutional purposes, such contemplation becomes especially important. Careful attention to how methodological choices and cross-cultural applications decide the representation of values is essential for interpreting empirical results responsibly and for developing Value research that remains both analytically rigorous and sensitive to cultural context.

**Implications for Educational and Social Research**

The analysis undertaken in this paper has multiple implications for educational and social research that use Value concepts as analytical tools. By tracing the philosophical genealogy of Value theory and examining its translation into empirical frameworks, the study has shown how methodological choices are directed by conceptual assumptions of particular intellectual lineage. Recognizing these implications is essential for conducting Value research that is both empirically rigorous and conceptually reflective.

A primary implication is the need for conceptual reflection in Value related research. Empirical studies frequently adopt established Value frameworks originating in Europe as neutral instruments, focusing on measurement, comparison, and statistical association. However, as the preceding analysis demonstrates, these frameworks have specific ontological, epistemological, normative, and anthropological assumptions (Rickert, 1896/1986; Scheler, 1913–1916/1973; Dewey, 1939/1988). Researchers must therefore be attentive not only to methodological validity but also to the conceptual inheritance present in the tools that they use. Contemplation in this direction requires making clear the assumptions about what Values are, how they are known, and why they matter within a given research context.

In educational research, this reflexivity becomes important as Values are not just explanatory variables but also constitute elements of educational aims and practices. Studies of Value education, moral development, and citizenship education often interpret alignment with predefined European categories of Values as indicators of educational success. While such interpretations are methodologically valid within variable-based frameworks, they risk equating educational quality with conformity to Europe specific normative models (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). A contemplative approach encourages researchers to distinguish between the descriptive use of Value frameworks and their normative implications for educational judgment and policy.

A second implication concerns the limits of Universalist assumptions in Value research. Many popular frameworks give a universal structure of basic Values, with cultural variation expressed through relative prioritization rather than through fundamentally different moral logics (Schwartz et al., 2012). While this assumption facilitates cross-cultural comparison, it may obscure the plurality and contextual specificity of Value systems. Berlin's account of Value pluralism shows the possibility that Values may be non-equivalent and non-comparable rather than hierarchically ordered, challenging the adequacy of single-framework approaches for capturing moral diversity (Berlin, 1969).

For educational research conducted in different cultures, this may has practical consequences. Cross-cultural studies that rely exclusively on standardized European Value categories risk misinterpreting local practices and educational priorities. Pedagogical traditions, institutional norms, and community narratives that do not fit into predefined parameters construct educational Values in different cultures. Recognizing pluralism does not demand abandonment of comparison, but it does require caution and sensitivity to contextual meaning.

Another implication relates to the interpretation of empirical findings. When values are treated as measured variables, changes in value scores are often interpreted as evidence of educational impact or moral development. While such interpretations are common, they stand on assumptions about the equivalence of value constructs. Dewey's pragmatist account of valuation challenges this assumption by emphasizing the situational and revisable nature of values (Dewey, 1939/1988). From this perspective, measured change may reflect shifts in context, framing, or interpretation rather than enduring transformation in value orientation. Educational researchers should therefore exercise care when drawing causal or evaluative conclusions from value measurement alone.

At the level of research design, the findings of this study highlight the importance of clearly specifying the role that values play within analytical models. In empirical research, values may be treated as factors that explain educational processes, as outcomes of educational intervention, or as normative standards used to evaluate educational quality. Each of these uses has different conceptual assumptions implications. Clarifying this role helps prevent confusion between description, explanation, and evaluation, and strengthens the consistency of research findings.

Broadly, the analysis shows the importance of seeing value frameworks as conceptual tools rather than as definitive representations of moral reality. Empirical models necessarily simplify complex phenomena in order to enable analysis, but such simplification should not be mistaken for completeness. Recognizing the partial and constructed nature of value frameworks allows researchers to use them productively while remaining alert to their limitations.

Finally, the implications of this analysis extend beyond education to social research more generally. Values play a central role in studies of culture, organization, politics, and social change. Thus, the conceptual and methodological issues identified here, particularly those concerning universality, measurement, and cultural interpretation, are relevant across disciplines. Contemplating on the philosophical foundations of value theory can enhance both the quality and the interpretive responsibility of empirical research in these domains.

In sum, the implications of this analysis advocates more conceptually reflexive and pluralistic approach to value research. For educational and social researchers, this involves recognizing the philosophical lineage of value frameworks, exercising methodological care in their application, and remaining attentive to cultural and contextual specificity. Such an approach does not reject empirical inquiry; rather, it strengthens it by aligning methodological practice with conceptual awareness.

**Conclusion**

This study has examined the concept of Value by tracing its historical development within European thought and by analysing how this development shapes empirical Value frameworks used in educational and social research until this day. The analysis showed that in European thought, Value did not exist as a fixed or self-

evident concept, but came to be through a long process of gradual separation from metaphysical being, theological order, and natural purpose. While classical and medieval traditions put Value within ontological and moral structures, early modern philosophy relocated Value within human judgment, reason, and consequences. In 19th century, this thought further placed Value as an dedicated domain, leading to the birth of axiology. This historical trajectory has made it possible to treat values as distinct, comparable, and empirically researchable constructs. The study also demonstrated that value frameworks used today, inherit European (mainly Christian) philosophical assumptions, including the separation of value from "being", tensions between universality and pluralism, a subject-centered view of the human agent, and an emphasis on measurability. These assumptions direct today how values are defined, measured, and interpreted in educational research, and they generate conceptual and methodological tensions when European origin frameworks are applied on different cultural contexts such as India. The analysis suggests that values in empirical research function not as neutral descriptors, but as conceptually directed tools influenced by particular intellectual traditions. Recognizing this does not require rejecting empirical or quantitative value research, but it does call for greater conceptual lineage awareness and interpretive care, especially in education where values are closely tied to aims, practices, and judgments of success. Treating value frameworks as analytical tools rather than definitive representations allows researchers to use them productively while remaining attentive to their limits. More broadly, the study highlights the importance of clarifying the philosophical foundations of important research concepts, particularly when they are used across cultural settings, and contributes to a more critical and pluralistic understanding of Value Theory in educational and social research.

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