

Virtual Testimonies in the Classroom: Integrating Tunisia's Truth and Dignity Commission Archives into Civic Education in Sfax

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| Abstract

The archives of Tunisia's Truth and Dignity Commission (TDC) contain vital testimonies of human rights violations. Integrating these records into formal education in post-authoritarian settings presents a significant opportunity, and a challenge, for promoting human rights and civic values. This commentary analyses the potential and pitfalls of using virtual reality (VR) testimonial archives from the TDC within civic education curricula for high school students in Sfax. It examines the pedagogical and ethical considerations of this approach within law-related education. As a commentary, this article employs a conceptual methodology. It synthesises literature on transitional justice, digital archives, and civic pedagogy to construct a critical framework for assessing the proposed educational intervention. Key insights: A central theme is the tension between the immersive empathy VR can foster and the risks of re-traumatisation or voyeurism. Successful integration requires a structured pedagogical framework that contextualises testimonies within broader legal and historical narratives, not as isolated experiences. Preparatory and debriefing activities should form the majority of the lesson structure. VR testimonies from the TDC archives are a powerful but ethically complex tool for civic education. Their use must be carefully managed to advance goals of critical understanding, empathy, and commitment to the rule of law, while avoiding harm or the oversimplification of history. Develop

comprehensive teacher training programmes in trauma-informed pedagogy. Create detailed lesson plans that rigorously contextualise VR testimonies within Tunisia's legal history and transitional justice process. Establish clear ethical guidelines and student opt-out mechanisms.

transitional justice, civic education, digital archives, virtual reality, Tunisia, Truth and Dignity Commission

This commentary provides a critical framework for integrating transitional justice archives into civic education, highlighting the specific pedagogical and ethical imperatives for using immersive digital testimonies in the classroom.
