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The Role of Intangible Heritage in Critical Citizenship Education: An Action Research Case Study with Student Primary Education Teachers

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Abstract: Heritage plays a significant role in understanding historical societies, particularly intangible heritage, as a legacy kept "alive" solely by the action of communities. Therefore, it holds great education potential in the context of critical citizenship education. This action research aims to investigate the perceptions of primary education teachers about intangible heritage and its didactic potential in critical citizenship education. In addition, this paper analyses the changes and continuities that occur in student teachers' perceptions after carrying out a didactic project focused on relevant social problems linked to the Way of Saint James. This case study is proposed for primary teachers in initial training at the University of A Coruña (Galicia, Spain). The study was conducted during three academic years (2020–2023), with the participation of 160 student teachers. The questionnaire, the interview, and the focus group were used as research instruments. Students learned to give more importance to understanding intangible heritage and reconsidered it as an educational resource for critical citizenship education. However, many aspects of a traditional heritage education remain, where what matters is to respect and care for what is inherited without questioning its current value or its suitability for transmission to future generations.

Keywords: intangible heritage; critical citizenship education; critical thinking; primary education

1. Introduction

Intangible heritage is only maintained in the present if the groups voluntarily accept their legacy to preserve it and transmit it to future generations. However, intangible heritage is vulnerable to being manipulated by groups with economic and political power to create a "collective" memory that, in reality, only represents their interests leaving social minorities on the margins [1].

Social thought is essential to question history and society and to build a critical interpretation to avoid manipulation. This enables not only a better understanding of the past but also a better reading of reality and an intervention aimed at finding better alternatives for the future [2]. Hence, the relevance of intangible heritage in education for critical citizenship.

1.1. Critical Citizenship Education

Education has a fundamental role in the formation of social thought and, ultimately, in the formation of citizens capable of facing the challenges of today's society. According to [3], there are three conceptions of citizenship: personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented. Whereas [4] establish adapting citizenship, individualistic citizenship, and critical democratic citizenship. Each type of citizenship is related to a didactic model; for example, adapting citizenship focuses on transmitting values and regulating behaviour; individualistic citizenship focuses on learning independently and the development of

critical thinking, whereas critical democratic citizenship considers cooperative learning and critical thinking through inquiry and dialogue as key aspects [5].

Also, Ref. [6] distinguishes three types of citizenship education for a democratic society: traditional, progressive, and advanced. The traditional one is focused on understanding how the government works, as well as on traditional content in the disciplines and on commitments to democratic values such as freedom of expression. The progressive one shares a similar commitment to this knowledge but places greater emphasis on civic engagement in its many forms. The advanced one is based on the progressive perspective but pays special attention to the inherent tensions between pluralism and assimilation.

Likewise, a relevant issue in the theoretical framework of education for citizenship is its vision of democracy as an infinite process. According to [7], democracy is not a status that endures on its own once achieved; rather, it is an ethical–political conquest that can require constant self-criticism. Therefore, Ref. [8] argues that education for citizenship is a dynamic process that promotes rationality in the classroom. This allows questioning of social and political organisations, their structure as a system of freedoms, the distribution of power and responsibilities, and the demand for mechanisms to guarantee social justice. To facilitate decision-making on these topics, these authors established a conceptual framework based on the contributions of the Social Sciences (History, Geography, Political Science, Anthropology, Sociology, Economics, Philosophy. . .), integrated by five interdependent concepts: plurality, citizenship, political systems, political culture, and civic culture.

Thus, from a critical standpoint, education for citizenship is understood as the education that students receive at school to foster their active and responsible participation in solving social problems. Citizens must recognise cultural diversity, develop critical thinking, practice responsible consumption, advocate for human rights, and engage in the social and political life of their environment from a global perspective [9].

However, the progress of globalisation and its impacts at an economic, cultural, political, and environmental level mean that citizenship education transcends the border of the local. Hence, the emergence of the concept of Global Citizenship Education (GCED), which aims to educate individuals capable of facing these global challenges. For the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, the purpose of GCED is to help students of all ages to understand that problems such as human rights violations, inequality, and poverty are global, not local. Likewise, it is intended to inculcate attitudes, values, and behaviours that promote responsible global citizenship: creativity, innovation, and involvement in the fight for peace, human rights, and sustainable development [10].

Equally, Ref. [11] point out a close relationship between GCED and critical literacy. They consider that the GCED allows students to develop skills for the critical interpretation of information and for detecting instances where it aims to hide or deny certain communities, cultures, or identities. It is an approach to the concept of social and global justice based on contents or social problems common to humanity, such as the victims of wars, poverty, or territorial inequalities. Their vision of the GCED focuses on six dimensions: geographic space, historical time, political education, legal education, economic education, and sociological and anthropological study.

1.2. Intangible Heritage, Citizen Participation, and Critical Citizenship Education

The evolution of intangible heritage has been shaped by several milestones. Firstly, the Franchesccini Commission (1964–1968) marked the first step towards democratisation by considering heritage as a common good. Secondly, the Rivière Ecomuseum model in the 1980s [12] and the New Museology gave prominence to local identities and citizen participation. Thirdly, at the beginning of the 21st century, different institutions produced documents that placed the local community at the centre of attention. In 1999, the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (The Burra Charter) was approved, impacting the programs of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). In 2000, the European Landscape Convention was approved, which bases its definition on the perception of the population. In 2003, the

Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was also approved [13]. This transfer of Leadership to communities, facilitated through participatory processes, entrusts them with the responsibility of determining what constitutes heritage and how to intervene to preserve it. This transformation has been referred to as the "participatory heritage paradigm" [14,15].

In general, human beings tend to provide protection to tangible heritage at the expense of intangible assets, giving preference to immovable elements and objects associated with a practice or knowledge [16]. However, the global recognition of intangible heritage has made it possible to overcome the elitist and ethnocentric visions that have permeated the lists of heritage protected by various administrations. In this way, visibility has been given to minority, subaltern, and inconspicuous groups [1], favouring the democratisation of memory and the recognition of social diversity. Consequently, there has been a shift from a heritage conceived by and for the elites to a heritage that represents a diversity of social groups.

Precisely, this democratisation in the heritage processes allows us to understand the plurality in the versions of the past that can be made visible through heritage, even showing contradictions that can often be found in the same heritage symbol. Therefore, the consideration of social memory as heritage—particularly intangible heritage—seeks to transmit ways of learning from the past, regardless of what has been recorded by official sources [5].

In this sense, the relevance of intangible cultural heritage stands out, as confirmed by research conducted in this field [17–19]. Intangible heritage provides an opportunity to introduce values and interpretation skills into teaching, as part of our socialisation comes from legends, stories, and tales, some of which are social criticisms [20]. However, in the school environment, very little attention is paid to their study, to the legacy linked to daily life, to cooking, to the cultivation of plants, to popular traditions, to oral culture, etc., that significantly shape family identities and collective memory [20].

Heritage education is essential for cultivating individuals with a critical and reflective perspective of sociocultural reality. It intends citizens to value the identity traits of their own culture and those of others and to actively engage in the processes of heritagisation and identisation [21]. The construction of a culture's identity signs takes place at two levels. The first one is the individual, where each person becomes a subject and imparts personal meaning to themselves. Relationships and links associated with one's own history and identity are formed through interactions with the environment. At a second level, identisation consists of finding similarity; a community is configured in the face of otherness. Identisaton is consensual signification and is formed from multiple individual and personalised identities within the community. Therefore, heritage is configured as the identity signs of a group through consensus, allowing the meanings attributed to heritage to be more dynamic, changing according to cultural variations [22].

Thus, education becomes an instrument for raising awareness, providing training, and facilitating heritage-enhancement actions [23]. For this, it is essential to adopt a global and interdisciplinary approach based on critically reconstructing the meanings and guiding them toward social actions that improve both the environment and society [24].

In order for this global and interdisciplinary approach to overcome conflict and to aid the search for social justice in education, a transformation in teacher training is crucial [25]. However, some research shows how the Social Sciences, History, and Geography teachers still rely on traditional methods for teaching heritage, which may be related to poor initial training, such as limited experiences outside the classroom related to heritage [26].

This research values the educational potential of intangible heritage in the formation of critical citizens capable of facing the challenges of today's society. For this, it proposes to study the perceptions of future primary education teachers and the introduction of improvements in their teaching–learning process. Specifically, the research objectives are:

1. To investigate the perceptions of primary education teachers about intangible heritage and its didactic potential in critical citizenship education.

2. To analyse the changes and continuities in student teachers' perceptions after carrying out a didactic project through relevant social problems linked to the Way of Saint James.

2. Materials and Methods

The research is an exploratory case study conducted through a qualitative methodology oriented to change, based on a socio-critical paradigm that seeks social transformation [27]. On the one hand, it allowed students to carry out a self-critical analysis of their perceptions of intangible cultural heritage so that they become aware of rationality and empowering them to decide whether to modify or uphold those perceptions. On the other hand, it is action research since its development allowed teachers to improve the teaching practice that trains future primary education teachers in Social Sciences.

2.1. Case Study

The research was conducted with a sample of 160 third-year students of the Primary Education degree at the Faculty of Education of the University of A Coruña, Galicia (Spain). As mentioned, it is not only about the analysis of the initial perceptions of the teaching students but also about how they are affected after they conduct a practice with a specific case. Why has the Way of Saint James been selected? The main reason is that it is part of the students' environment, and the second is because it provides an opportunity to explore issues related to the territory, culture, politics, or economy of Galicia.

The expression "the Way of Saint James" or "Ways of Saint James" refers to a set of historical territories of exceptional value from both a material and immaterial point of view. There are 10 pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela that, in 1987, were recognised as the First European Cultural Route. The "Camino Francés" and Routes of Northern Spain are considered Assets of Cultural Interest in the category of historical territory and have been included in the World Heritage list since 1993 and 2015, respectively.

The Way of Saint James constitutes an exceptional didactic resource since it allows an understanding of the Galician territory from the Social Sciences based on the landscape, the communities that inhabit it, and the visitors. It contains a remarkable wealth of intangible cultural heritage associated with The Way itself, such as rituals or legends, which is mixed with the traditions of the places it traverses, the dialectal variants of Galician, traditional trades, place names, the gastronomy, festivities, etc. In this context, various problems arise, among them: the impact of commodification, the translation of place names, the loss of traditional trades, or the exclusion of the population in the processes of heritagisation. These issues allow an approach from heritage education and citizenship education aimed at developing critical and creative thinking of teachers in initial training and to social action to shape a future with greater justice.

The aim is that, through the study of the Way of Saint James from a critical perspective, teachers in initial training are aware of the role played by intangible cultural heritage in the formation of critical and creative citizenship capable of promoting social change.

2.2. Data Collection Techniques

The questionnaire, the semi-structured interview, and the focus group—widely extended in social and educational research [28]—were used as research instruments. These tools are essential to access people's perceptions, so they are considered the most appropriate to investigate the central themes of this research.

The questionnaire was used at the beginning to explore the initial perceptions of the students about the concept of intangible heritage, as well as to analyse the relationships established between heritage education and citizenship. At the end of the process, the same questionnaire was used again, which, together with the interviews and focus groups, allowed us to analyse the changes and continuities after working on intangible heritage in classes from a critical perspective. Therefore, methodological triangulation [29] is used, which confers greater rigor and credibility to the results related to the changes and

continuities that occurred in the perceptions of the students after carrying out the practice with the Way of Saint James.

Both the questionnaire and the script for the interviews and focus groups were designed around three axes: perceptions of (I) intangible heritage, (II) citizenship, cultural heritage, and the Way of Saint James, and (III) heritage education and citizenship education.

The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions. Six of them were open questions—since the main objective was to gather information through participants' explanations. These questions aimed to explore the terms associated with heritage, explain what is understood as intangible heritage, give examples of Galicia, explain the meaning of the Way of Saint James, recall memories of the use of heritage while they were in primary education, and elucidate the relationship between heritage education and citizenship education. Likewise, a single-answer nominal question was included from eight images. Four of them corresponded to elements of the Galician tangible heritage—a cathedral, a park, a winegrowing landscape, a landscape linked to the Way of Saint James–and four to elements of the Galician intangible heritage–language, toponyms, a traditional craft, a traditional festivity. The students had to choose between "it is heritage", "it is not heritage", or "I don't know". A multiple-choice nominal question was oriented to the analysis of the people responsible for the conservation, valorisation, and transmission of intangible heritage. Lastly, a single-answer nominal question aimed to have students select from among four possibilities the essential didactic purpose of heritage education. Issues related to heritage management and the case of the Way of Saint James were collected through a metric question.

The questionnaire was carried out with Google Forms. The MAXQDA data analysis program was used to analyse the results of the initial and final questionnaire. A descriptive analysis was carried out based on frequencies and percentages. Categories were predefined for the open-ended questions, which are explained in the results section.

For the interviews and focus groups, we used a script consisting of 12 open questions (Table 1), which allowed for flexibility in answers and the contribution of different nuances. Six interviews were conducted, three electronically and three in person. Each interview lasted approximately 25 min. Three focus groups were conducted, with each group comprising four students. The focus groups encourage interaction to stimulate their reflection without trying to reach a consensus. They were held electronically for a duration of approximately 45 min.

Table 1. Script of questions for the interviews and focus groups.

QUESTIONS
1. What do you understand by cultural heritage? Give examples.
2. In Galicia there are 742 Assets of Cultural Interest declared by the Galician government, 11 are intangible (Data corresponding to the time of querying the database, https://abertos.xunta.gal/catalogo/cultura-ocio-deporte/-/dataset/0375/bens-interese-cultural-bic, accessed on 20 June 2021). What do you think?
3. How do citizens value cultural heritage? Do they do it the same way? Why?
4. What are the functions of the Way of Saint James? At a social, educational, economic, tourist level…?
5. Some groups consider that the Way of Saint James is becoming excessively commercialised. What is your opinion?
6. What are their benefits and harms?
7. Do you think that citizens can participate in heritagisation? How do they do that? Give examples.
8. Do you think they can reverse heritagisation?
9. In your opinion, how could citizens lead the visibility, conservation, valorisation, and transmission of the Galician intangible heritage?
10. How do you think ICTs can help to enhance the visibility, conservation, valorisation, and transmission of intangible cultural heritage?
11. What role do you give to heritage education in this process, both in formal and informal settings?
12. How do you consider that heritage education contributes to the formation of democratic, critical, and creative citizenship?

All the students answered the questionnaire, while participation was voluntary in the interviews and focus groups. All the data were treated anonymously, and their use is limited only for research purposes and to broaden knowledge.

2.3. Research Process

The action research was developed for the subject of Social Sciences Teaching II during three consecutive courses (2020/2021, 2021/2022, and 2022/2023). During the first two courses, the flipped classroom methodology [30] was used due to the COVID-19 health crisis. The theoretical contents of the subject were taught electronically, while the practices were in person. In the third course, full attendance was resumed.

In the three courses, the same sequence of didactic intervention was followed throughout seven weeks: the preparatory phase, the development phase, and the discussion phase. Each week had two sessions, one theoretical (1.5 h) and another practical (1.5 h). The preparatory phase took place during the first week. In the first two courses, explanatory videos and various materials on the contents under study—cultural heritage definition, heritage education, citizenship education, Galician cultural heritage, among others—were made available to the students. In the third course, these contents were taught in person during theoretical sessions.

In the second week, the development phase began with the administration of the initial questionnaire in the classroom and the presentation of the practice. The last entailed students working in groups of four or five to design an educational project to be presented to the heritage education program of the Galician government called "Mirando polo Camiño (Looking down the road)" (http://www.edu.xunta.gal/portal/node/23008, accessed on 17 June 2020). The project had to address problems associated with intangible heritage and the Way of Saint James, incorporating historical and geographical content from Galicia and working with different information sources. The work sessions took place in the classroom for three weeks, culminating in the oral presentation in the sixth session.

In the discussion phase, interviews and focus groups were carried out with the student volunteers—outside the subject's schedule. A seventh session of sharing and discussion of results took place in class through brainstorming, followed by the students completing the questionnaire again. At the end of the semester, feedback on this practice was received from the students through an assessment questionnaire on the degree of knowledge acquisition and on the teaching practice.

3. Results

The results are presented in two sections. The first one collects the results of the initial questionnaire as a baseline for the perceptions of the students before carrying out the practice. The second one presents the results of the discussion phase from the analysis of the final questionnaire, the interviews, and the focus groups.

When the testimonies of the students are cited, code IC is used to refer to the initial questionnaire and FC for the final questionnaire, followed by S1, S2. . . S160 to indicate the number assigned by the MAXQDA program to each student. To cite the testimonies of the people interviewed, I1, I2. . . I6 are used, followed by the question they are answering (Q1. . . Q12). Focus group contributions are identified as FG1, FG2, and FG3, followed by the student (S1. . . S4) and the question (Q1, Q2. . . Q12).

Given that Galicia is a bilingual territory, for the analysis of the open questions, the words were counted considering their appearance in both Spanish and Galician.

3.1. Results of the Initial Perceptions of the Students

As Figure 1 shows, *cultura* (culture) was the term most associated with heritage, mentioned by 73.5% of the students. *Tradición/tradiciones/tradicional* (tradition/traditions/traditional) (46.9%), *historia* (history) (45.1%), and *monumento/s* (monument/s) (31.9%) also played a leading role, as well as *arte* (art) (28.3%), *identidad* (identity) (22.1%), *naturaleza/natural/naturales* (nature/natural/s) (22.1%), *bienes* (assets) (19.5%), *lenguaje/lengua/idioma* (language), and *arqui-*

tectura (architecture) (16.8%). Likewise, although heritage is recognised as a legacy (*legado*) (8.9%) and an inheritance (*herencia*) (9.7%), the transmission to future generations is practically absent, except for the low mention of the terms *futuro* (future) (1.8%) and *generational* (generational) (0.9%).

Figure 1. Word cloud of terms related to heritage in the initial questionnaire.

Out of the eight images representing tangible and intangible heritage in Galicia, the students had to choose between "it is heritage", "it is not heritage", or "I don't know". Ideally, students were expected to choose "it is heritage" for all images. However, it can be seen how the images corresponding to material elements, such as a Cathedral, were selected as heritage by 100% of the students (Table 2). While at the other extreme, the image that most clearly revealed the lack of knowledge about intangible heritage was the one that showed some Galician toponyms. Even though the word toponyms appeared in the image in the phrase "View the toponyms of this area", only 67.3% indicated that it was heritage. It is noteworthy how 17.7% of the students did not recognize it as heritage and that 15% said they did not know. Other intangible elements that were also little recognized as heritage were the Galician language, being recognized by only 79.6% of the students, and the traditional craft (75.2%).

Table 2. Images linked to heritage.

Items	It's Heritage (%)	It's Not Heritage (%)	I Don't Know (%)
Cathedral	100	0	0
Park	92.0	7.1	0.9
Landscape linked to the Way of Saint James	91.2	5.3	3.5
Wine landscape	88.5	8.8	2.7
Traditional festivity	88.5	7.1	4.4
Galician language	79.6	11.6	8.8
Traditional craft	75.2	12.4	12.4
Galician toponyms	67.3	17.7	15.0

When students were asked to name at least five intangible elements of Galician culture, language was the most mentioned (53%). It was followed by the Way of Saint James (40.7%) and dancing (30.9%). Other elements mentioned were parties (23%), traditions (21.5%), legends (21.2%), music (17.0%), carnivals (11.4%), and gastronomy (12%). However, it should be noted that 5% of the students indicated material elements such as forests, beaches, islands, capes, or mountain landscapes. Furthermore, toponymy was not mentioned by any student.

For the analysis of the definitions of intangible heritage written by the students, eight categories were established, considering the definition issued by [31]. As Table 3 shows,

85.2% of the students understand the intangible component very well, expressing it as: "It is the cultural heritage that is not an infrastructure, such as language" (S107), "It is the heritage that is not related to material objects" (S60) or "Everything that belongs to our culture but that we cannot touch, such as the popular music of Galicia" (S76).

Table 3. Categories established to analyse the definitions of intangible heritage.

Categories	Students (%)
Intangible elements	85.2
Communities, groups, people	27.6
Feeling of identity	22.8
Intergenerational transmission	21.5
History	8.9
Environment and interaction with nature	3.1
Cultural diversity and human rights	0
Inherent tangible elements	0

The second most mentioned category (27.6%)—quite far from the first—was that corresponding to communities, groups, or people. Some definitions that involve it are the following: "Expressions, abilities, and spaces associated with groups and communities of a culture" (S89) and "Set of customs or characteristic processes of a sector of the population that identifies it" (S78). The feeling of identity was collected by 22.8% of the students with expressions such as "Set of elements that are part of the culture of a place (S61)". Intergenerational transmission was mentioned by 21.5%, with definitions such as "Intangible cultural heritage are those works of generational transmission that we cannot visit or tangibly experienced" (S25) or "They are those practices that are taught and transmitted from one generation to another" (S132).

However, history had a much lower representation, mentioned by only 8.9% of the students. Some examples are "The intangible elements that represent an area, as well as its culture, its history, its traditions…" (S11) and "(…) that are part of the culture and history of a place and its citizenship" (S26). Likewise, the environment and its interaction with nature were hardly mentioned (6.1%). There are answers such as "It is about those elements that make up the cultural and natural environment of a town" (S112). Finally, no responses highlighted the need to respect cultural diversity and human rights, nor is intangible heritage linked to tangible elements.

As Table 4 shows, citizens were considered the main ones responsible for the conservation, valorisation, and transmission of intangible heritage (78.8%). Next, the Galician government was mentioned by 65.5% of the students. The school was only recognised by 49.6% of the students. It is striking that the school has such low recognition precisely in student teachers. UNESCO was selected by 46.9%, followed by councils (31.9%), civic/cultural associations (28.3%), and lastly, the government of Spain (26.9%).

Table 4. Responsible for the conservation, valorisation, and transmission of intangible heritage.

Agents	Students (%)
Citizens	78.8
Galician Government	65.5
School	49.6
UNESCO	46.9
Councils	31.9
Civic/Cultural Associations	28.3
Spanish Government	26.9

Another issue investigated was the economic function of heritage assets and the impact it has on the loss of their social and cultural value. To explore this, the object of the didactic proposal that the students had to design was used: the Way of Saint James. Figure 2 shows

how 93% of the students consider that the Way of Saint James is a source of income that must be preserved, following its economic function. Thus, when the students explained the meaning that the Way of Saint James has for them, 24% indicated its economic value. Some examples are "It is part of the cultural heritage of Galicia, being fundamental for tourism and therefore, for the economy of the place" (S26), "A tourist route that is a tradition in Galicia and that collects a large number of tourists that helps the economy" (S80) or "(…) providing more income and greater self-sufficiency when carrying out conservation tasks of this heritage" (S128). However, there appears to be a contradiction in the answers since 69% indicated that heritage assets should not be economically self-sufficient. In addition, it is striking that 74.4% have responded that tourism is an activity that guarantees the conservation of heritage without perceiving the impacts that it can cause. Thus, only 40% appreciate that mass tourism carries the risk of devaluing heritage.
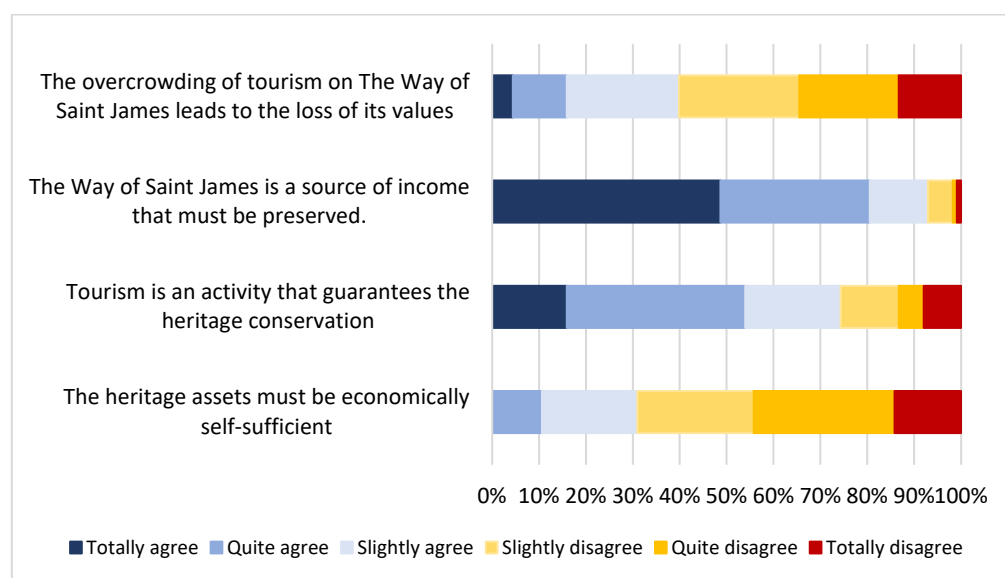
Figure 2. Economic function of heritage through the Way of Saint James.

Next, we will discuss the students' perceptions regarding the didactic potential of heritage and its relationship with citizenship education. When asked about their memories of using heritage during their primary education, 31% stated that they did not have any. Among those who did remember school visits (18.1%), commemorative regional days or popular festivities were mentioned (12.6%). They also highlighted that more work was performed with tangible heritage. Some responses in this sense include: "Above all they referred to heritage as a synonym for monument" (S9) or "As for the intangible cultural heritage I have no memories, the tangible cultural heritage was much more present" (S55).

It is crucial for future primary education teachers to have a clear understanding of the purpose of heritage education. Hence, a single-answer question was posed to determine their views on this matter, offering four options representing different goals. These goals were adapted from [32], where Purpose A is the most critical and transformative option in heritage education and Purpose D is the most traditional. However, as Table 5 shows, option A was selected by only 21.2% of the students, even though this is the option one expected to be selected by all students. It is noteworthy that 36.3% chose the second most critical purpose, option B. Therefore, 57.5% of the students selected option A or B, as opposed to 42.5% who selected an option with a more traditional vision of heritage education, C and D.

Table 5. Didactic purposes of heritage education in the initial questionnaire.

	Purpose	Result (%)
A	To read reality so as not to be manipulated, so that what is said about history and society is questioned and one can build their own interpretation.	21.2
B	To evaluate the present, how we have gotten here, the actions that have been done and the consequences.	36.3
C	To understand who we are and how we are, so that we are aware of our identity.	25.7
D	To know the sources of the past and the facts of the present, to recognise the historical and social models and their characteristics.	16.8

Finally, the students had to explain how heritage education is related to education for citizenship. Table 6 contains a set of 10 categories established to carry out this analysis. As can be seen, the most mentioned aspects are those related to conservation (33.9%), valuation (28.6%), and respect (26.8%) for heritage. Next, knowledge of one's own identity (19.6%), of the past (16.1%), and education in values (12.5%) were indicated. These responses reflect a predominantly traditional approach to teaching. This is evident in the use of the term "good citizen", as seen in answers such as "It has a great relationship since in citizenship education it is where we have to learn to love and preserve our heritage as good citizens" (S57), "Knowing our heritage is important to find our identity and be good citizens" (S14), or "It is important that citizenship education teaches how a good citizen should be, one who knows and respects their heritage, to promote and preserve it" (S77).

Table 6. Categories established to analyse the relationship between heritage education and citizenship education.

Term	Result (%)
Preserving heritage	33.9
Valuing heritage	28.6
Respecting heritage	26.8
Knowing your own identity	19.6
Knowing the past	16.1
Educating in values	12.5
Ambiguous answer	10.7
Being "good citizens"	7.1
Do not find a relationship	3.6
Critical citizenship	2.7

Likewise, 10.7% responded ambiguously, demonstrating an inability to relate both terms. Some examples are as follows: "I think they must be cohesive for a good understanding" (S62) or "They have to be linked to each other" (S16). Other students directly indicated that they found no relationship (3.6%).

Finally, the category Critical Citizenship encompasses the answers that explain the relationship between heritage education and citizenship education from a critical and democratic perspective. Even though in the previous 21.2% chose purpose A of heritage education, only 2.7% were able to explain this relationship. An example of this association is "I believe that to develop ourselves as democratic citizens it is necessary to be aware of the heritage and give it the value it deserves, in addition to rethinking whether we continue to identify with it since as a society we are moving forward" (S62).

3.2. Results of the Final Perceptions of the Students

Once the students completed the didactic project on problems related to intangible heritage and the Way of Saint James, their perceptions were reevaluated using the same questionnaire, as well as through interviews and focus groups. This made it possible to

identify changes and continuities in their perceptions of intangible heritage and its didactic potential, particularly its role in education for citizenship.

First, it should be noted that the students improved their understanding of what heritage is. As shown in Table 7, in all cases, more than 93% of the students linked the images in the questionnaire with heritage. The case of intangible elements stands out, especially toponyms, which were initially considered heritage by only 67.3% of the students.

Table 7. Images linked to heritage.

Items	It's Heritage (%)	It's Not Heritage (%)	I Don't Know (%)
Cathedral	100	0	0
Park	98.6	0.7	0.7
Landscape linked to the Way of Saint James	99.3	0	0.7
Wine landscape	93.2	5.4	1.4
Traditional festivity	98.6	0.7	0.7
Galician language	98	1.4	0.6
Traditional craft	96.6	2	1.4
Galician toponyms	97.3	1.4	1.3

During both the interviews and the focus groups, the students included intangible heritage when defining heritage. For instance, in the interviews, students provided answers such as: "It is everything both material and immaterial, as we have studied and as we have seen in this project, which ultimately represents and forms part of our identity" (S1, Q1) or "By cultural heritage I understand tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which was a distinction I have not made before" (S2, Q1). Some of the answers obtained in the focus groups were: "A set of both material and immaterial things that are part of what characterises the place where we live and what we are" (FG1, S1, Q1).

When citing examples of cultural heritage, both in the interviews and in the focus groups, the students mentioned: identity, traditions, history, language, monuments, festivals, landscapes, gastronomy, and toponyms. It is noteworthy that the concept of toponyms, in particular, was unfamiliar to the students at the beginning of the practice. This is confirmed in the interviews: "I never thought that toponyms were intangible heritage of a place, I honestly had no idea" (S1, Q1) or "Now I conceive more things within cultural heritage such as toponyms, for example" (S2, Q1).

Likewise, in the questionnaire, the intangible elements had greater visibility when mentioning elements associated with heritage. Figure 3 shows how the term itself, *inmaterial/inmateriales/inmaterialidad* (immaterial/immateriality), has more presence, being mentioned by 35% of the students.

In addition, toponymy was mentioned by 8% of the students. However, when defining the concept of intangible heritage, the same shortcomings observed in the initial questionnaire persisted in terms of scant recognition of the interaction between communities and their environment. The only mention in this regard was that "(...) it is transmitted over the years, from generation to generation and it adapts to the interaction between individuals and the interaction between individuals and the environment" (S143). While only 2% of the students recognised the importance of respect for cultural diversity in phrases such as "Intangible cultural heritage is everything that is transmitted from generation to generation, contributing to promoting respect for cultural diversity" (S155) or "(...) this seeks to promote knowing how to value one's own and that of others, cultural diversity" (S66). Although, as at the beginning, neither human rights nor the material elements inherent to intangible heritage were mentioned. Regarding the low presence of intangible cultural heritage on the list of Assets of Cultural Interest in Galicia, there is a consensus that the administrations are more interested in tangible assets because they are easier to make economically profitable. The students consider that the economic criterion is very relevant when selecting what is heritage for the Government of Galicia. Some appreciations offered

in this sense were: "I think that maybe they make less visible intangible heritage because it gives less economic benefits" (S5, Q2) or:

> It seems logical to me, at first, because you can make an economic product more easily from material goods than from immaterial goods. For example, in an advertisement promoting tourism of a place or a community, for example, the language is not generally shown, the landscape, gastronomy, some traditions that are of interest are shown, but not the language; (S4, Q2)

> If you watch the news on TV or open a textbook, they always talk about Galicia, in this case, about the Cathedral, a bit about The Way, but they almost never talk about traditional festivals or the language. That is why it is noted on the list of cultural interest assets. (FG3, S2, Q2)

The value that citizens place on intangible cultural heritage is also perceived as low. Comments reflecting this perspective include: "Perhaps we do not pay enough interest to intangible heritage, because since it cannot be seen, it cannot be touched, it is not something physical, it is not paid attention to, it is not given the importance it should be" (S5, Q3).

Figure 3. Word cloud of terms related to heritage in the final questionnaire.

In some cases, a relationship has been established between the lack of attention of the administrations for the intangible heritage and the ignorance of the population. For example:

> Actually, I didn't have much of an idea of what the intangible heritage of a place was, because it is something that is not disclosed either. So yes, our governments do not let us know how we are going to do it, to know, to value, to respect, and to disclose that in the end, it is very difficult if they do not educate us in them. If they do not give them to us to know, if they do not really give them importance, it is very difficult for citizens, of their own free will and without prior knowledge, to value it. (S1, P3)

Likewise, it has been pointed out that the younger generations are aware of the value of intangible heritage because educational centres are paying more attention to the requirement for the use of Galician or activities related to traditional festivities. However, there is still a long way to go to achieve greater visibility and appreciation of intangible heritage. In the generation of participating students, many deficiencies were detected in this sense, such as ignorance of the phenomenon of the pilgrimage to Santiago and its cultural value or toponymy. Another aspect pointed out by the students that could have influenced the invisibility of intangible heritage was the repression suffered by the Galician culture and language during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco: "I think that it was destroyed a lot with the years of repression, in Franco's time the Galician was left to zero and even today they are rowing [struggling] so that more and more is heard" (FG1, S4, Q3).

In general, it has been admitted that the function that predominates on The Way is the tourist and economic one, above the social or educational one:

The main one is as a tourist attraction, and indirectly an economic repercussion, maybe this year not because of the health crisis, but the Holy Year brings many more people. At an educational level, it is not given the importance that I think it should have, and we miss out on the potential benefits it could bring. My memory of the compulsory educational stage is that I never covered The Way, at least I don't have that memory. We did cover the Cathedral of Santiago, but it is material, and the immaterial aspects of the entire Way are not developed. (FG3, S4, Q4)

However, as previously mentioned, it was admitted that there is an incipient change in educational centres:

At an educational level, my memory is also not having worked on it, but for example, this year in my internship there was a contest for schools from the area on the English Way and the children worked on it, each one had a question about the Cathedral and the Way, and they had to answer it and create a project and present it in class. It seems like it is given some importance, we know that we can use it, especially with the work we did, we know that we can teach and that it is very useful to learn about cultural assets such as the Way of Saint James. (FG2, S1, Q4)

In the same way, there is a general agreement regarding the excessive commercialisation of The Way. They recognised the economic importance for the towns in The Way, but also the importance of setting boundaries to safeguard its social value. One participant's testimony exemplified this sentiment:

At an economic level, it can be a point of income, but also the exploitation of the environment, of the landscape… must be noticed. I also speak from the perspective that I did the Way of Saint James and I saw the overcrowding in certain places, and there are many people who do not do The Way with the idealised image that we have, some people take the car, leave it at a stage, retrieve it later and then continue. This can have environmental implications, and, well, I saw people eating in a bar and throwing the plastic on the ground. There should be a shared civic responsibility to take care of The Way, but I observed that there is not. And then, at a local level, I would say a bit about the over-saturation that there could be in certain places and that the people who live in those places can feel overwhelmed by the crowds or things like that. (FG2, S3, Q5)

This change in the perception of the impacts of tourism on the heritage social value was also found in the questionnaire. In this way, the vision that tourism guarantees heritage conservation, shown by 74.4% of the students in the initial questionnaire, decreased by 59.18% in the final one (Figure 4), while the recognition that the mass tourism on the Way of Saint James leads to the loss of its values increased from 40% to 66% of the students.

Regarding the contribution of citizens in the processes of heritagisation, it was recognised that it plays a decisive role: "If something does not matter to me, I use it in any way [I use it carelessly], I do not try to preserve it or reach future generations" (FG2, S1, Q7), "When something is established as heritage, it is because it has relevance for that place!" (FG3, S3, Q7), "Heritage is a symbol of identity, it should be the people who best know what should be considered heritage" (E5, Q7).
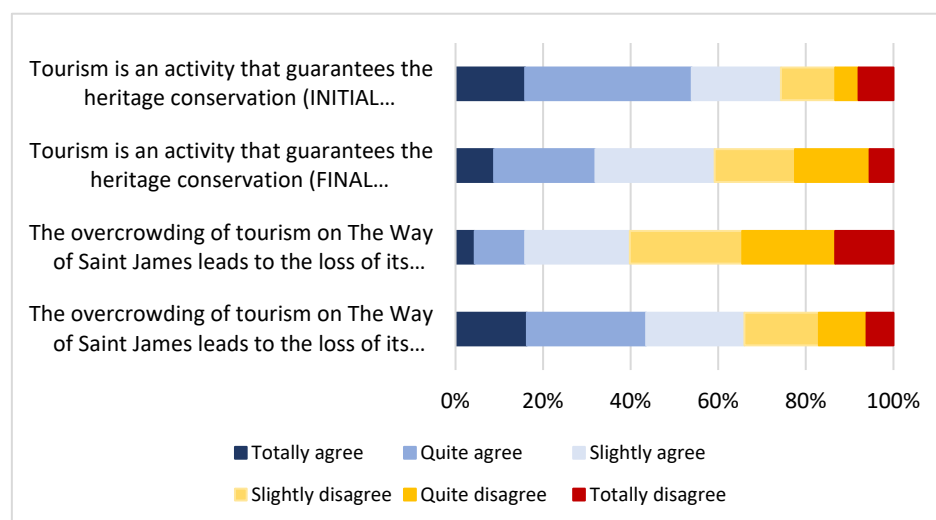
Figure 4. Comparison between initial and final perceptions regarding the impacts of tourism on heritage.

Among the examples cited are the organisation of music and dance festivals, such as the *foliadas* (Night gathering of people to have fun, sing and dance; according to the Royal Galician Academy, https://academia.gal/dicionario/-/termo/foliada, accessed on 2 June 2023), or projects that involve students in the collection and dissemination of toponyms and micro-toponyms in their area. In this sense, it was pointed out that the Galician government has a responsibility for the financing given to associations that promote and disseminate intangible heritage. It was argued that if there is no funding, its transmission becomes more complicated.

However, in one of the focus groups, a very curious example was presented to explain why the communities are really the protagonists and, therefore, can make decisions about what they want to include as heritage, independently of the government from Galicia:

> I'm going to give an absurd example. If in my house, say, the tortilla is made in one way and all of us in our house consider that this way is spectacular and that it must be recognised, in our house it will begin to be heritage and that's it, without depending on what the government says. (FG1, S1, Q7)

Likewise, it was admitted that if citizens can participate in heritagisation, they also have the power to reverse the process. In FG1, there was an analysis following the same example of the tortilla:

> I think it depends a bit on the generation. For example, maybe now we consider it heritage because that tortilla is incredible, but maybe in five generations it will lose value. Maybe for whatever reason it is not given so much importance. In our generation it was heritage, but no afterwards. I think so, heritagisation can be reversed for that reason, especially in this case. (FG1, S1, Q8)

The role played by older people in the processes of visibility, conservation, appreciation, and transmission of the intangible heritage of Galicia was recognised. In this regard, it was commented: "You can read a lot about a subject, to the point of delineating that reality with enough precision, but what a person who has experienced it tells you is another perspective" (S2, Q9).

Likewise, there were examples to illustrate how citizens can lead the visibility, conservation, valorisation, and transmission of heritage and the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT):

> What occurs to me is that, for a party it should be the people of that town who are responsible for organising it, bringing the food, setting up everything that has to do with the party and, in the end, also that they should be the ones spreading

the word about the party. And ICTs can help a lot because you can reach a lot of people who don't pass through the street where you have hung the poster, but you can hang it on many pages through advertisements, you can reach a lot more people from outside the town. The citizens of the town feel integrated, excited and they put more effort into it; (S3, Q10)

Associations can be created, which in turn generate valorisation projects and social networks and the media are a great tool to publicise assets of cultural interest, the state in which they are found and give them importance, with service-learning projects as well. (S2, Q10)

However, it was also pointed out that it is necessary to be aware that ICTs are not the protagonists but an element of support for dissemination:

ICTs are essential, but they must coexist, that is, they cannot overshadow the importance that those people who have lived through this reality will always have. They are a tool, what they cannot [do], in my opinion, is take centre stage. (S5, Q10)

The role of heritage education, both in formal and informal settings, was recognised by the participating students. The role of the formal environment in promoting the study of the history of heritage elements was discussed as a way to understand their original and current value and decide whether or not to include it in a heritagisation process based on historical knowledge:

You must go back in time and think or try to understand why this has started to emerge. It has come this far, perfect, it's very important now, but where does it come from? I believe that when you talk about heritage you must look for the origin, which is also why citizens can say what is heritage and what is not, yes, but with the knowledge of knowing what they are talking about. (S2, Q11)

In addition, it has been stated that most of the knowledge about the cultural heritage of Galicia has been acquired in the family environment. Some considerations concerning heritage education at school are: "In the schools it is not taught, not because it is not important, but because they don't know how to teach it" (FG2 S1, Q11) and the following:

The problem is that I don't think it's done enough, because the things that we were looking at, like, for example, toponyms and all these things, it's something that until I got here and done this I had never ever considered whether it's intangible heritage or if it must be preserved. The only thing, Galician language, it is true that in Galicia, from a young age, they do insist a lot that we must take care of the language, to prevent its loss. (S6, Q11)

In the final questionnaire, a better argument is noted regarding the didactic use of heritage, for example: "Written texts were used to work on literature, but it did not go further. There was no attempt to link heritage with citizenship" (FC, S3), "There was no impact on raising awareness and highlighting the importance we have as citizens to value and preserve it" (FC, S76), "The heritage of the place I live was not addressed, but the focus was only on what appeared in textbooks. As a result, many times it had no relationship with my life or with what I knew" (FC, S106), "I remember working with material heritage, focusing on monuments of interest and perhaps they also talked about some legends, but never about the existing problems and their solutions" (FC, S35), or "We were only told about the Cathedral of Santiago and The Way, very little about toponyms and gastronomy, for example" (FC, S91).

Likewise, there is an emphasis on the coordination between the educational centres and the families: "For example, the school should be there to support ideas from home, in case they are negative, change them and try to give them another perspective" (S1, Q11), or:

> As much as they try to educate in school to give importance to heritage, if at home they tell you totally different things, the opposite side of the coin, I think it is useless. I think it is essential that families and the school go in the same direction. (FG2, S4, Q11)

All the participants in the interviews and focus groups acknowledged the role of heritage education in creating democratic, critical, and creative citizenship. An example of these interventions is:

> That you also must question yourself at certain times, question the story that they are telling us and corroborate if that information is true, because it is not enough to simply say well, it says here or I read here in this pamphlet, or on TV they say... You must have a bit of vision beyond what they are telling us. (S4, Q12)

This change was also appreciated when the students explained the relationship between heritage education and citizenship education. Unlike the initial questionnaire, where only 2.7% were able to explain it from a critical perspective, in the final questionnaire, this value rose to 23.1% of the students. However, it is a low percentage since 76.9% of the students were uncritical about it. Some examples of critical answers are: "A democratic citizenry must be created, capable of making decisions about their heritage with the aim of improving their well-being and development and with critical thinking that allows them to develop values of awareness, identity..." (FC, S10), "Thus, it allows us to be aware of the problems that exist and seek solutions for them from a critical perspective" (FC, A95), "I relate this to encompassing critical thinking, social participation, diversity..." (FC, S147) or:

> Learn to value the heritage of our environment and not allow ourselves to be manipulated by the importance given to tangible heritage over the intangible, because it is an issue that is left aside, and many facets of it can come to disappear over the years. Students must be aware of this reality and promote solutions to these problems to revalue their identity. (FC, S89)

In the questionnaire, a change in the perception of the purpose of heritage education was also appreciated. As can be seen in Table 8, the students who selected purpose A, the most critical, went from 21.2% in the initial questionnaire to 45.0% in the final one, while the percentage that selected the most traditional option decreased from 16.8% to 11.3%.

Table 8. Didactic purposes of heritage education (initial questionnaire vs. final questionnaire).

	Purpose	Initial (%)	Final (%)
A	To read reality so as not to be manipulated, so that what is said about history and society is questioned and one can build their own interpretation.	21.2	45.0
B	To evaluate the present, how we have gotten here, the actions that have been done, and the consequences.	36.3	20.6
C	To understand who we are and how we are so that we are aware of our identity.	25.7	23.1
D	To know the sources of the past and the facts of t the present and to recognise the historical and social models and their characteristics.	16.8	11.3

However, to carry out a more detailed analysis, we made a Cross Table, contrasting the results of the question on the purposes of heritage education with the question that relates it to citizenship education (open question). As Table 9 shows, even among the 72 students who selected Purpose A (45% of all students), only 18 (11.3% of all students) were able to critically explain the relationship between heritage education and citizenship education.

Table 9. Cross table between the purposes of heritage education and the relationship with education for citizenship.

Relationship between Heritage Education and Education for Citizenship	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Total
Critical	18	8	9	2	37
Uncritical	54	25	28	16	123
Nº of students	72	33	37	18	160

Likewise, Table 9 shows that there are 16 very uncritical students (10% of the total) since they chose the most traditional purpose of heritage education (Purpose D) and they did not know how to explain from a critical perspective its relationship with citizenship education. In short, 123 students (76.9% of the total) could not perform it, even after working on it in class both theoretically and practically through the didactic project linked to the Way of Saint James.

4. Discussion

The results obtained in this study are consistent with previous research related to people's perceptions of heritage, which often emphasize its material aspects while overlooking the intangible elements [33,34].

Concerning the scarce knowledge that citizens have about intangible heritage, the students in this study attributed the primary responsibility to the Galician government. The reason mentioned is that the government prioritises the recovery and dissemination of material elements, considering them more economically profitable. On the contrary, Ref. [35] considers intangible cultural heritage to be more varied and profitable since it does not require an investment to prevent the deterioration of movable and immovable property. In any case, the invisibility of intangible heritage on the Galician government's list of Assets of Cultural Interest is a fact which could be associated with an elitist and ethnocentric vision of heritage [16].

Moreover, blaming the Galician government for the ignorance about intangible heritage could be related to the cataloguing of the concept of "intangible heritage" as a "social fact". According to [17], many manifestations are not really elaborated by the individuals who live or practice them but are imposed by external agents; it is the social environment that imposes itself. Similarly, emotions such as those experienced in music festivals, dance festivals, religious rituals, etc., are more intense when shared with many people than individually.

The students also blame the school for the lack of training in heritage education, agreeing that tangible heritage was a priority, while intangible was limited to occasional celebrations and the use of the Galician language. These assessments coincide with what was indicated by [20]. These authors consider that educational centres do not pay enough attention to the legacy linked to daily life, cooking, plant cultivation, popular traditions, oral culture, etc.

In contrast, students claim that the informal environment played a more decisive role in the acquisition of knowledge about intangible cultural heritage. Ref. [36], in their study on the teaching of heritage and citizenship in secondary education, they also collected similar testimonies from interviewed teachers, who indicated that they had acquired their knowledge from personal experiences and the family environment.

In this regard, Ref. [17] consider that although the school has educational tools, the most important part of education comes precisely from the informal environment through relationships with family, friends, and the media. Students indicated the importance of designing school outings and didactic activities linking the formal and informal environment. In any case, the formal environment increasingly coexists with the non-formal, narrowing

the gap between educational centres and heritage management facilities such as museums, libraries, archives, archaeological sites, and urban and rural zones, among others [37].

Through the practice of the "Mirando polo Camiño" program, the students faced relevant social problems linked to the Way of Saint James and its immaterial elements. As a result, part of the students (23.1%) showed a critical and transformative vision. For example, this group explained the role that citizens play in the critical interpretation of heritage, in democratisation processes to bring forth invisible groups and identities, and in advocating for social justice. This group aligns with citizens who advocate for justice [3] and critical democratic citizenship [4], who emphasize diversity, intercultural dialogue, overcoming conflict, and the search for social justice. Therefore, as indicated by [38], it is shown that working with controversial problems related to the protection, preservation, and management of heritage is essential to achieve a critical heritage education.

However, 76.9% of the students continue to express a relationship between heritage education, and citizenship education focused more on the need to respect, preserve, and value heritage, know "our identity", educate in values, and know the past. This behaviour is close to the category of a personally responsible citizen [3].

These shortcomings in heritage education are consistent with how heritage is addressed in the curriculum of the Autonomous Community of Galicia. On the one hand, there is the curriculum for which they studied during their compulsory education stage (pre-school, primary, and secondary school) and the baccalaureate. On the other hand, there is the current curriculum that regulates primary education for Galicia and by which they are studying to be future teachers. In all cases, heritage is addressed solely in terms of respect, care, and conservation, and in no case is linked to its problems and the participation of citizens to resolve them.

5. Conclusions

At the beginning of the research, the perceptions of future primary school teachers focused more on tangible heritage than on intangible ones. Likewise, practically all the students explained the relationship between heritage education and citizenship education in terms of education in values, recognising their own identity, and fostering some respect and care for heritage.

The study shows that intangible cultural heritage is a resource that favours the development of critical citizenship, helping students understand heritage education from a critical perspective. There was progress in recognition of the potential of heritage to carry out a critical reading of reality, as well as in the fact that citizens must be able to question the past, relate it to the current context, and create a well-justified interpretation.

The action research has helped students understand that immaterial elements are susceptible to manipulation by governments or groups with economic power and that citizen participation is essential to avoid making certain groups invisible and to advocate for social justice. In addition, it has allowed students to reconsider cultural heritage in general, based on the inseparable link between the material and immaterial.

The fact that the students were able to reconsider their initial perceptions about cultural heritage is one of the main contributions of this action research. This was made possible by a confrontation with problems related to a specific case study, the Way of Saint James, which challenged their initial knowledge. Through individual and group work, the students had the possibility of incorporating new knowledge and deciding whether to maintain or change their initial perceptions. Therefore, a metacognitive process was facilitated so that they could build their own vision of intangible heritage value. In this way, we sought to promote critical thinking in students, fostering their autonomy and decision-making capacity. All of this is justified by the context in which previous studies showed people's disregard for intangible heritage when compared with material [33,34], which was also verified in this research.

In fact, some of the students maintained their initial perceptions. Thus, many aspects of a traditional heritage education remain, such as emphasizing respect and preservation

without questioning its current value and whether it is worth passing on to future generations. Also, the future has been largely absent in the questionnaires and in the focus groups and interviews.

Teachers of Education degrees must be aware of heritage education in the curriculum regulating their country and region. From there, they must take the lead and focus teaching practice towards working with relevant social problems to develop critical and creative thinking in future primary education teachers. Precisely, this action research conducted during three courses has allowed a better understanding of the teaching–learning process of critical heritage education and, therefore, contributed to the enhancement of teaching practice. Some improvements introduced other "Ways" in the world to find similarities, develop empathy and education in global citizenship, delve into the differences between heritage and historical sources, deepen education for the future, and integrate emotions in the formation of critical and creative thinking.

Regarding methodological limitations, being a case study, the results should be interpreted within their specific context. However, the findings can be compared with parallel cases to identify similarities and differences. Likewise, future research should delve deeper into methodologies for the teaching–learning of heritage education from a critical perspective. Continual improvement of teaching practices is imperative to ensure that primary education teachers in initial training develop critical thinking so that they can develop it in their future students.

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