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SENSIBILIDADES CULTURAIS E IDENTIDADES PATRIMONIAIS: RELEVÂNCIA EDUCATIVA ATRAVÉS DA MEMÓRIA
CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES AND HERITAGE IDENTITIES: THE EDUCATIONAL RELEVANCE THROUGH MEMORY
SENSIBILIDADES CULTURALES E IDENTIDADES PATRIMONIALES: LA RELEVANCIA EDUCATIVA A TRAVÉS DE LA MEMORIA

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RESUMO

Introdução: A educação patrimonial constitui um eixo essencial na formação para a cidadania global e inclusiva, promovendo o reconhecimento do patrimônio cultural e da diversidade como elementos estruturantes da identidade. Destaca-se o papel ativo do professor na construção desse conhecimento.

Objetivo: Identificar os conhecimentos dos estudantes sobre educação patrimonial, de modo a compreender a sua consciência quanto à importância do patrimônio cultural, sua diversidade e reconhecimento na formação docente.

Métodos: Adotou-se uma abordagem qualitativa. Foi aplicado um questionário a estudantes de duas instituições de ensino superior portuguesas e uma brasileira. Os dados foram analisados com recurso ao programa SPSS e a estatísticas descritivas.

Resultados: Os resultados mostram a importância de compreender e definir o patrimônio cultural, bem como de o ensinar, aprender e valorizar, conduzindo os estudantes à construção de significados. São evidenciadas implicações, discrepâncias e limitações do estudo.

Conclusão: Melhorar a educação patrimonial por meio de métodos pedagógicos específicos pode não só elevar o nível de conhecimento dos estudantes, como também promover a sua apreciação e valorização do patrimônio cultural.

Palavras-chave: memória cultural; identidade patrimonial; diversidade cultural; formação de professores

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Heritage education is a key element in the development of inclusive global citizenship, promoting the recognition of cultural heritage and diversity as structural components of identity. The teacher's active role in the construction of this knowledge is emphasized.

Objective: To identify students' knowledge regarding heritage education and understand their awareness of the importance of cultural heritage, its diversity, and its recognition in teacher training.

Methods: A qualitative approach was adopted. A questionnaire was applied to students from two Portuguese and one Brazilian higher education institution. The data was analyzed using SPSS and descriptive statistics.

Results: The results show the importance of understanding and defining cultural heritage, as well as teaching, learning, and valuing it, leading students to construct meanings. Implications, discrepancies, and limitations of the study are highlighted.

Conclusion: Improving heritage education through specific pedagogical methods can enhance students' knowledge and increase their appreciation and valuation of cultural heritage.

Keywords: cultural memory; heritage identity; cultural diversity; teacher training

RESUMEN

Introducción: La educación patrimonial constituye un eje esencial en la formación para una ciudadanía global e inclusiva, promoviendo el reconocimiento del patrimonio cultural y la diversidad como elementos estructurantes de la identidad. Se destaca el papel activo del profesor en la construcción de este conocimiento.

Objetivo: Identificar los conocimientos de los estudiantes sobre la educación patrimonial para comprender su conciencia respecto a la importancia del patrimonio cultural, su diversidad y su reconocimiento en la formación del profesorado.

Métodos: Se adoptó un enfoque cualitativo. Se aplicó un cuestionario a estudiantes de dos instituciones de educación superior portuguesas y una brasileña. Los datos fueron analizados mediante el programa estadístico SPSS y estadística descriptiva.

Resultados: Los resultados muestran la importancia de comprender y definir el patrimonio cultural, así como de enseñarlo, aprenderlo y valorarlo, llevando a los estudiantes a la construcción de significados. Se evidencian las implicaciones, discrepancias y limitaciones del estudio.

Conclusión: Mejorar la educación patrimonial mediante métodos pedagógicos específicos puede no solo aumentar el nivel de conocimientos de los alumnos, sino también fomentar su aprecio y valoración del patrimonio cultural.

Palabras clave: memoria cultural; identidad patrimonial; diversidad cultural; formación de profesores

INTRODUCTION

The new millennium generation faces a significant and growing challenge concerning cultural memory and artistic and heritage identity. The issue of cultural and heritage identity is becoming increasingly relevant in today's globalized world, where the notion of a universal, multidimensional discourse brings the complexity of globalization closer to modern culture, while simultaneously pulling cultural practices into standardized, increasingly connective and homogenizing demands. These tendencies direct cultural interpretations towards specific meanings, justifying national and local identities in a "real dynamism of social and cultural processes" (Pinto, 2025). Associated with this identity or identities is a dialogical and inclusive memory that lives through local, regional, or national heritages, enriching them and reflecting sensitivities that should equally be grounded in respect for generational values, regardless of age. A shared and valued memory can and should act as a generational thread, providing each of us with a sense of belonging and continuity. We believe in the growing awareness of the unity of human values and respect for heritage, along with an assumed responsibility to safeguard it for future generations (Fontal Merillas, 2025).

Thus, the recognition of national identity or identities reinforces participatory awareness, historical and heritage values, and enables citizens to act as proactive agents and promoters of the enrichment of various cultural, heritage, and artistic expressions. This identification and participation allows peers to come together and strengthen their historical and cultural ties, with all stakeholders taking responsibility, as stated in the Porto Santo Charter (European Union, 2021): "the participation of each individual in promoting culture for all must also involve the valuing of the individual, their personal capacity to intervene in the world, their individual creative and deliberative potential, and their freedom of expression" (p. 8). This emerging awareness and valuing of cultural and heritage identity can contribute to a more participatory and active citizenship, which is increasingly at risk of being lost. However, as Hobsbawm and Ranger (2023) argue, historical memory legitimizes, in today's world, the invention of tradition that arises from the contrast between constant change and innovation and the attempt "to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant" (p. 2).

Continuing this line of thought—that cultural identity is a continuous and changing production rather than a defining characteristic—emphasis is placed on the way we represent ourselves through difference. Lowenthal (2012) reminded us that "the world rejoices in a newly popular faith: the cult of heritage. (...) in our time, heritage has become a self-conscious belief (...) we praise the legacies left by those who are no longer here" (p. 1), while also warning that "any extinction, even of pestilential germs, becomes a crime against the legacy of diversity" (p. 11).

It is increasingly important that all citizens have access to inclusive, quality education, with opportunities for lifelong learning and the attainment of solid knowledge, concepts that are fundamental to a more prosperous world, reinforced by Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Quality Education of the *Agenda 2030*, continuing the efforts made at all levels of education (Jensen, 2020). Heritage education can therefore play an important role in the creation and transformation of each individual's cultural identity. Various studies have highlighted its educational role in shaping cultural identity and historical awareness (Castro-Fernandez, Jiménéz-Esquinas & López-Facal, 2022; Cervo & Ceretta, 2024; Vargas, Machado & Lauxen, 2025). Despite its acknowledged importance, it is often neglected in school curricula (Tolentino, 2022) and remains under-analyzed in interdisciplinary teaching approaches.

This study explores students' perceptions and sensitivities regarding heritage education with the aim of contributing to this field of study. It seeks to reveal the perspectives of future educators on heritage education and how they relate to it.

1. CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND HERITAGE EDUCATION

It is important to understand how communities increasingly reflect a latent cultural diversity, a phenomenon that has been intensified by the growing globalization and interconnectedness of modern societies. Cultural diversity offers both richness and potential for sustainable development and stands as a hallmark of contemporary societies. Respectful and meaningful processes of identity affirmation are emerging, presenting a variety of cultures and heritages within a single community. These processes are essential for building the inclusive and sustainable global citizenship we all strive for.

"The idea of culture as a shared, stable, and lived space, equitably supported by all members of the group who pass it on to the next generation, is increasingly less a reality" (UNESCO, 2013, p. 7).

Therefore, observing heritage as a representation of an identity-forming past, with historical records (whether reconciling or controversial) to be valued in their various temporal dimensions by communities (Pinto, 2022). In response to international directives (such as the 2003 UNESCO Convention), ratified legislation aims to strengthen "the safeguarding of the transmission of a national heritage whose continuity and enrichment will unite generations in a singular civilizational path" (No. 1, Article 3, DR. No. 209/2001). This same Portuguese legal text recognizes cultural enjoyment as a fundamental element in the development of personality, the vivification of national identities, and the strengthening of participatory consciousness in a transnational context. Affirming identity requires the active participation of both individuals and communities; it is not a passive process. Such identity affirmation is particularly relevant in heritage education, where people learn to value and respect both their own cultural heritage and that of others. The concept of heritage itself is revisited and seen as constantly being redefined and reshaped by global

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dynamics. Whether material or immaterial, tangible or intangible, spiritual or transcendent, heritage and its diversity take on multiple dimensions—cultural, human, and social (Fontal, 2020).

This is the reality of cultural and heritage contributions, where lifelong learning across different educational contexts is essential. Education—and especially heritage education—is increasingly recognized as a crucial tool for promoting cultural diversity and global citizenship, both of which are highly impactful in today's world.

We all bear a shared responsibility in this matter, particularly educators and teachers in training. Educators must not only impart knowledge but also prepare students to be active, engaged citizens, as Giroux (2023) argues. He further stresses that education is fundamental to democracy, warning that “no democratic society can survive without a formative culture shaped by pedagogical practices capable of creating the conditions to produce critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable citizens willing to make moral judgments and act in socially responsible ways” (p. 3).

We thus reaffirm cultural identity and diversity as essential aspects of modern societies, and heritage education as playing a vital role in this context. Understanding and promoting cultural values adds recognition to an educational and social awareness that is fundamental to life in society, “recognising and caring for cultural heritage means having the wisdom to have a society that is consistent in its values and duties as citizens, committed above all to valuing its own culture and that of others” (Cervo & Ceretta, 2024, p. 34). These authors also highlight the fundamental role of education in preserving heritage as a means of “strengthening attitudes, actions and children, and empowering families” (p. 36).

Munilla Garrido and Marín-Cepeda (2020) emphasize the relationship between heritage and emotions, relating it from a humanistic and relational perspective, but also with a strong focus on heritage management at national and international levels, strongly centered on scientific literature and international organizations (UNESCO and the Council of Europe), as well as national regulations (heritage laws and national plans).

Within the European context, recent policy frameworks have reinforced the central role of culture and heritage in building sustainable and inclusive societies. The Porto Santo Charter – “For a Sustainable Transformation through Culture” (2021), developed under the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, highlights culture as a key driver of sustainable development and calls for integrating cultural dimensions into educational and community initiatives. Similarly, the Recommendation (EU) 2021/1970 of the European Commission emphasizes the importance of cultural heritage as a catalyst for social cohesion, innovation, and post-crisis recovery, while promoting universal access and active citizen participation in cultural and educational practices. These European guidelines complement UNESCO and ICOMOS frameworks, broadening the policy foundation that supports contemporary heritage education.

The procedural experience of humanising cultural heritage acts as a transformative force for all those involved, from creation to communication – a dynamic, interactive and participatory process – in favour of citizen participation, the result of active and emphasised contact in today's global and multicultural society. Due to its collective nature, cultural heritage has a high educational potential in addition to its emotional potential. It is a form of knowledge that is reflected in the development of procedures and values, which is not neutral but rather invites reflection and interpretation of realities. Cultural heritage is an integral part of all individuals. The proximity of a selection of knowledge of historical and artistic heritage finds meaning and purpose in educational processes - being able to ‘be critical, thoughtful, creative, not submitting to the role of merely reproducing ideologies established as ready-made truths’ (Rocha, Mota & Velôso, 2024, p. 1680). Promoting intellectual, moral, and social development through education, developing from heritage a language that expresses feelings and translates representations.

The effective involvement of social actors may not always be peaceful, but the resulting dialogue and critical reflection based on critical perspectives shape individual and collective memories in an exercise of full citizenship (Tolentino, 2022). This reinforces the need for national cultural and heritage knowledge as fundamental to the conscious strengthening of ties to history, memory, and imagination. It opens the door to a broader perspective of the world that values “the contributions that multiple ethnic and cultural participants can make to the construction of collective identity” (Pereira & Cardoso, 2016, pp. 111–112).

Such strengthening calls for a transversal 'heritage literacy' across various contexts (school, heritage-related, museum-based), fostering the ability to manage emotions alongside a rational, humanistic awareness of an intercultural space. Learning through awareness of heritage provides access to a better understanding of the human, social, and cultural world, as well as an appreciation of cross-cultural diversity through the recognition of values, in an attitude of consistent learning for care and transmission (Fontal Merillas, 2020).

Heritage should be regarded as a form of capital—one that is accumulated, restructured, and leveraged. It is the responsibility of educators to appropriate this community-constructed knowledge, and for each individual to legitimize its value dynamically across its various meanings. Heritage education paves the way for critical dialogue, contributing to everyone's participation in appreciation and interventionist but also creative training.

A lack of sensitivity toward heritage—resulting from ignorance, misunderstanding, lack of respect, undervaluation, or inability to appreciate—justifies Fontal's (2020) assertion that “a sensitive person tends to care for what they know to be valuable (...) [and that] we can hardly understand what we do not know, or what we only partially or wrongly know” (pp. 56–57).

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We return, once again, to the recommendations of Edgar Faure and their continued relevance as highlighted by Jacques Delors: that we must enrich ourselves in parallel with academic study, developing “autonomy and discernment, alongside the strengthening of personal responsibility, in the pursuit of a collective destiny. (...) Memory, reasoning, imagination, physical abilities, aesthetic sense, ease of communication (...), natural charisma” (Delors, 2023, p. 20) are listed among the so-called hidden treasures within every human being.

Heritage education is also aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4- Quality Education, which advocates for inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Target 4.7 specifically calls for education that promotes sustainable development, human rights, global citizenship, and cultural diversity. In this sense, education for culture and heritage directly contributes to the achievement of SDG 4 by fostering critical understanding, social responsibility, and commitment to cultural and environmental sustainability.

2. METHODS

In heritage education, a committed and dynamic educational attitude is essential. Educators must be capable of fostering well-rounded personalities, positively shaped and sensitive to heritage-related identity commitments; giving relevance to a type of awareness that generously builds the future, one that knows how to take risks, without forgetting “the characteristics that make us a unique species (...) and endow us with humanity” (Munilla & Marín-Cepeda, 2020, p. 178). This requires not only pedagogical knowledge and skills, but also a deep understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage and its significance for identity and citizenship. Students need to develop broad cultural capital that contributes to their comprehensive education and integration into society, in an ‘affective-symbolic process’ for both educational and social communities (López, Castro & López, 2021, p. 8).

Globally, comprehensive dialogue and interactive communication are recognized as a means of sharing and facilitating formal and non-formal educational approaches. Striking a balance between unity and diversity requires the unconditional participation of all. Schools are thus positioned as central spaces for acquiring such competences and skills, as “acquiring competences is a thrilling challenge since no one is, naturally, called upon to understand the values of others” (UNESCO, 2013, pp. 4-5). This dialogue and communication can help students to understand and value their cultural heritage and that of others, and to see how this heritage relates to their identity and their role as citizens (Giroux, 2023).

In this multicultural context, the following research question was formulated: What are students’/future teachers’ perceptions of the educational contribution of heritage education, and what are their value-related sensitivities towards cultural heritage? This question explores how future educators view heritage education and how they perceive themselves in relation to it daily.

To address this question, the following objectives were defined:

- To identify students’ knowledge of heritage education;
- To understand their sensitivities regarding the valuing of cultural heritage and its diversity;
- To analyze the degree of recognition attributed to heritage education in their training as future teachers.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was employed to achieve these objectives. The qualitative methods enabled in-depth exploration of the students’/future educators’ perceptions and sensitivities, while the quantitative methods provided more general and comparable data (Bardin, 2020; Creswell, 2022). We believe that the results of this study could have significant implications for teacher training and the practice of heritage education in our institutions in the future.

An integrated questionnaire comprising fifteen questions was used to obtain data for analysis, and it was administered online via Google Forms to undergraduate students in Basic Education at two higher education institutions in Portugal (IES1 and IES2) and one in Brazil (IES3), these institutions have partially overlapping study plans, with reference to the content under analysis in compulsory curricular units, and are therefore considered a convenience sample.. The questionnaire was validated in a sample similar to that of the respondents, without suggesting any changes to the questions, and proceeding to the respondents; confidentiality protocols were followed, and informed consent was obtained from all participants, in the academic year 2024–25. A content analysis was used for the open-ended questions, and a statistical analysis was applied to the closed-ended questions. The analysis followed a chronological structure: pre-analysis, data coding, and interpretation of results.

3. RESULTS

The sample consisted of 113 students, out of a total of 220 students. Despite the unequal number of responses per higher education institution (HEI), it was decided to proceed with the study: 67.3% (n = 76) were enrolled at HEI1, 24.8% (n = 28) at HEI2, and 8.0% (n = 9) at HEI3. A total of 84.1% (n = 95) of respondents identified as female. The participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 53 years, with a mean age of 22.96 years and a standard deviation of 6.94 years. The average age was relatively similar between male and female participants (see Table 1).

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Table 1 - Characterization of Age by Gender

Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Female	23,05	7,14	18,00	53,00
Male	22,44	5,91	18,00	45,00
Total	22,96	6,94	18,00	53,00

Regarding nationality, 64.6% (n = 73) of the students were Portuguese, 16.8% (n = 19) were from Portuguese-speaking African countries, 16.8% (n = 19) were Brazilian, and 7.1% (n = 8) were Spanish. As for the year of attendance, 50.4% (n = 57) were in the first year of their course, 16.8% (n = 19) in the second year, and 32.7% (n = 37) in the third year. Among these students, 90.3% (n = 102) were regular students, while 9.7% (n = 11) were mobility students.

Students were asked about various aspects related to the concept of culture: "Culture is a complex concept, imbued with meanings and constantly evolving..." (see Table 2). The majority of students, 72.6% (n = 82), defined culture as "a network of symbols, meanings and values of a group or society," while 55.8% (n = 63) stated that "Culture is the result of social relations among individuals in a given community," and only 24.8% (n = 28) defended the idea that "Culture is an interdependent term of a given social group." Only 8% of the students (n = 9) provided a more comprehensive view by selecting all three options.

Applying the chi-square test of independence, it was found that the definition of culture as "a network of symbols, meanings, and values of a group or society" was not significantly associated with the institution attended by the students ($\chi = 4.448$; $p = 0.105$). However, the definition "Culture is an interdependent term of a given social group" was significantly associated with the institution ($\chi = 16.815$; $p < 0.001$) and was notably overlooked by students attending HEI1 and HEI3. On the other hand, the definition "Culture is the result of social relations among individuals in a given community" was not associated with the institution attended, according to the chi-square test ($\chi = 3.496$; $p = 0.195$).

Table 2 – Definitions of the concept of culture presented to the students

	Number answers	of	% de Answers	% from total answers (n=113)
Culture is a network of symbols, meanings and values of a group or society	82		47,4%	72,6%
Culture is an interdependent term of a particular social group	28		16,2%	24,8%
Culture is the result of social relations among individuals in a given community	63		36,4%	55,8%
Total	173		100%	

Regarding the definition of popular culture (Table 3), it can be stated that 50.4% (n = 57) of the respondents stated that it is "laden with purism, with tradition, in a creative process linked to 'doing' rather than 'knowing'"; 44.2% (n = 50) also claimed that popular culture is "linked to regionalisms and a threatened past, as a form of collective production, often naïve"; and 34.5% (n = 39) reported that it is "spontaneous, simple, and easily accessible". Only a small percentage of respondents (n = 7) selected all the options, providing a more complete response.

The chi-square test of independence revealed that the definition of popular culture as "linked to regionalisms and a threatened past, as a form of collective production, often naïve" was significantly associated with the institution attended ($\chi = 13.084$; $p < 0.01$), as was the definition "spontaneous, simple, and easily accessible" ($\chi = 9.532$; $p < 0.01$). Students selected these definitions less frequently from IES1 and IES3.

As for the definition "laden with purism, with tradition, in a creative process linked to 'doing' rather than 'knowing'", Fisher's exact test showed a statistically significant association with the institution attended ($f = 49.337$; $p < 0.0001$), and it was most frequently chosen by students from IES1.

Table 3 – Definitions of the concept of popular culture presented to the students

	Number responses	of	% of responses	% of total respondents (n=113)
Linked to regionalisms and a threatened past, as a form of collective production, often naïve.	50		34,2%	44,2%
Laden with purism and tradition, in a creative process associated with "doing" rather than "knowing".	57		39,0%	50,4%
Spontaneous, simple, and easily accessible.	39		26,7%	34,5%
Total	146		100%	

Regarding the definition of high culture (Table 4), 50.4% (n=57) of the students stated that it is "the result of studies, theoretical research, and empirical data", while 46.0% (n=52) also claimed it stems from "the refinement of an aesthetic taste and a more

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elitist, sophisticated, and critical mindset”; 23.9% (n=27) reported it to be “the accumulation of extensive prior knowledge on the part of the consumer in order for it to be appreciated”. Only two respondents answered more comprehensively by selecting all three options.

Applying Fisher’s exact test, it was concluded that the definitions “result of studies, theoretical research, and empirical data” and “refinement of an aesthetic taste and a more elitist, sophisticated, and critical mindset” were significantly associated with the educational institution attended, ($F = 9.090$; $p < 0.05$) and ($F = 9.832$; $p < 0.01$), respectively. It was observed that students from IES2 preferred the first definition, while students more commonly chose the second from IES1. Regarding the definition “the accumulation of extensive prior knowledge on the part of the consumer for it to be appreciated”, the chi-square test showed no significant association with the institution attended ($\chi = 0.539$; $p = 0.825$).

Table 4 – Definitions of the concept of high culture presented to the students

	Number responses	of	% of responses	% of total respondents (n=113)
The result of studies, theoretical research, and empirical data	57		41,9%	50,4%
The refinement of an aesthetic taste and a more elitist, sophisticated, and critical mindset.	52		38,2%	46,0%
The accumulation of extensive prior knowledge on the part of the consumer in order for it to be appreciated.	27		19,9%	23,9%
Total	136		100%	

Regarding the students’ understanding of the relational/social phenomenon of multiple cultures coexisting within the same environment and community, it was concluded that the majority of respondents, 66.4% (n=75), identified it as multiculturalism, while 17.7% (n=20) stated it was interculturality. It is worth noting that 13.3% (n=15) were unable to define the concept. Using Fisher’s exact test, it was found that these responses were significantly associated with the attended higher education institution ($F=33.268$; $p<0.001$), with IES1 students standing out for the multiculturalist response, and IES2 students more likely to choose “I don’t know”.

Concerning intangible heritage (Table 5), the majority, 62.8% (n=71), stated it was the set of “oral traditions and expressions”, while most, 61.9% (n=70), also affirmed that it referred to “social practices, rituals, and festive events”. Only a very small number of respondents (n=8) selected all four available options, thus providing a more complete response.

The chi-square test of independence indicated that the responses “oral traditions and expressions” and “artistic expressions and manifestations” were significantly associated with the institution attended by students ($\chi=11.558$; $p<0.001$ and $\chi=10.022$; $p<0.001$, respectively), with both being predominantly chosen by students from IES1. On the other hand, the responses “social practices, rituals, and festive events” and “knowledge and practices related to nature” were not significantly associated with the institution attended, as shown by the test results ($\chi=0.221$; $p=0.906$ and $\chi=0.473$; $p=0.833$, respectively).

Table 5 – Definitions of the concept of intangible heritage presented to the students

	Number responses	of	% of responses	% of total respondents (n=113)
Oral traditions and expressions	71		35,3%	62,8%
Artistic expressions and manifestations	31		15,4%	27,4%
Social practices, rituals, and festivals	70		34,8%	61,9%
Knowledge and practices related to nature	29		14,4%	25,7%
Total	201		100%	

Regarding the categorisation of movable heritage assets, it was found that 33.6% (n=38) stated they did not know how to respond; 38.9% (n=44) reported that it referred to “assets of national, public and municipal interest”, and 27.4% (n=31) categorised it as “assets of national, private and regional interest”. Applying Fisher’s exact test, it was concluded that this categorisation was significantly associated with the institution attended ($F=43.795$; $p<0.0001$), with IES1 students standing out for selecting “assets of national, public and municipal interest” (the correct option), and IES2 students choosing “I don’t know”.

A similar question was asked about immovable heritage assets, and it was found that 16.8% (n=19) did not know how to respond; 46.0% (n=52) categorised them as “monuments, ensembles or sites”, and 37.2% (n=42) as “natural, environmental, landscape or palaeontological assets”. Fisher’s exact test showed that the categorisation of immovable heritage assets was significantly associated with the institution attended ($F=14.583$; $p<0.01$), with IES1 students tending to choose “natural, environmental, landscape or palaeontological assets”, and IES2 students selecting the correct option “monuments, ensembles or sites”.

Regarding globalisation in national culture, 39.8% (n=45) stated it is a “cultural unifier”; 21.2% (n=24) defined it as a “cultural separator”, and 38.9% (n=44) did not know how to define it. Fisher’s exact test revealed that the interpretation of this impact was

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significantly associated with the institution attended ($F=19.496$; $p<0.001$), with IES1 students choosing "cultural unifier" and IES2 students more frequently selecting "I don't know".

Concerning the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (Table 6), 65.5% ($n=74$) of respondents indicated that it defines "Cultural diversity as a source of exchange, innovation, and creativity", while 49.6% ($n=56$) also supported defining it as "Cultural heritage as testimonies to be valued and transmitted to future generations"; few students ($n=17$) selected all three options. The chi-square test for independence concluded that the responses "Cultural diversity as a source of exchange, innovation, and creativity" and "Cultural heritage as testimonies to be valued and transmitted to future generations" were not significantly associated with the institution attended ($\chi = 4.627$; $p = 0.115$) and ($\chi = 2.574$; $p = 0.299$), respectively. However, the response "Cultural heritage as a source of creativity and inspiration for dialogue(s)" was significantly associated with the institution attended ($\chi = 17.258$; $p<0.001$), having been mostly overlooked by IES1 students.

Table 6 – Characterisation of Knowledge on the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity

	Number responses	of	% of responses	% of total respondents (n=113)
Cultural diversity as a source of exchange, innovation, and creativity	74		45,1%	65,5%
Cultural heritage is a testimony to be valued and passed on to future generations	68		41,5%	60,2%
Cultural heritage as a means of fostering creativity and inspiring dialogue(s)	22		13,4%	19,5%
Total	164		100%	

Regarding the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (Table 7), 65.5% ($n=74$) of respondents stated that the convention included "Developing an understanding of this importance through educational programs and greater public awareness," and 49.6% ($n=56$) also argued that the convention aimed to "Promote the use of new technologies and encourage partnerships to strengthen information exchange and cultural understanding"; a small percentage of respondents ($n=17$) selected both options for a more comprehensive response. Through the application of the chi-square test of independence, it was concluded that the responses "Developing an understanding of this importance through educational programs and greater public awareness" and "Promoting the use of new technologies and encouraging partnerships to strengthen information exchange and cultural understanding" were not significantly associated with the institution attended, ($\chi = 1.696$; $p = 0.451$) and ($\chi = 0.456$; $p = 0.787$), respectively.

Table 7 – Characterization of Knowledge on the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

	Number responses	of	% of responses	% of total respondents (n=113)
Develop an understanding of this importance through educational programs and greater public awareness.	74		56,9%	65,5%
Promote the use of new technologies and encourage partnerships to enhance the exchange of information and cultural understanding.	56		43,1%	49,6%
Total	130		100%	

It is worth noting that 86.7% ($n=98$) stated that the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development is celebrated on 21 May. Applying Fisher's exact test, it was concluded that the response to this question was significantly associated with the higher education institution (HEI) attended by the students ($F=9.693$; $p<0.01$), with all students from IES3 and nearly all from IES1 providing the correct answer.

Regarding the promotion of visits to local heritage sites by the educational institution, 65.5% ($n=74$) of respondents affirmed that such visits took place. Applying the chi-square test, it was concluded that the response to this question was significantly associated with the HEI attended ($\chi = 25.303$; $p<0.001$), being reported by all students from IES2.

Finally, students were asked about the relationship between heritage education and cultural diversity, and it was found that 75.6% ($n=82$) believe that heritage education mobilizes cultural diversity by strengthening cultural and heritage identities. Applying Fisher's exact test, it was concluded that the response to this question was significantly associated with the HEI attended ($F=11.504$; $p<0.05$), with students from IES1 favouring the response "strengthening cultural and heritage identities" and those from IES2 selecting "building critical knowledge".

4. DISCUSSION

Cultural sensitivity and heritage identity are important pillars in the construction of cultural equality, where plurality versus heritage diversity is presented as part of perceptions of difference, in the ongoing dialogue between the self and the other. It is through sharing and coexistence that these aspects intersect and complement one another. These should be regarded as

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normative behaviors within a desired intercultural perspective in a society based on democratic values and socio-cultural tolerance towards cultural representations and references. This collective effort of integration, aimed at overcoming cultural and linguistic barriers, within the context of academic communities (where the institutional campus and the surrounding civil community are engaged), involves designing strategies and enhancing participants' competences for such articulation, which guided us towards the underlying problem of this study (from the research question to the objectives, which the data analysis seeks to address).

The concept of heritage education and cultural heritage has undergone various redefinitions. However, we understand that discussing heritage education implies the underlying notion of "heritage literacy", present in formal and informal educational spaces, clearly illustrating what is meant by education and cultural heritage. This was the objective in consulting the target audience of this study: to analyze their sentiments and opinions on the subject. The relationship between culture, heritage, education, and identity is perceptible, obvious, and increasingly present in academia and the media that seek to disseminate and promote it (museums, tourism, local authorities, among others).

However, we are aware that much work remains to be done, both in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and in informal education contexts. For instance, when students were asked to define intangible heritage—one of the three categories of data analysis—only 62.8% mentioned that intangible heritage includes traditions and oral expressions; 27.4% referred to artistic expressions and manifestations; 64.6% mentioned social practices, rituals, and festivals; and 25.7% referred to knowledge and practices related to nature. When we presented a definition of movable heritage as an asset of national, public, or municipal interest, only 38.9% of students recognized this classification as correct. We applied the same methodology by defining immovable heritage as monuments, groups, or sites, and only 46% of students recognized this as accurate. Only eight respondents provided a more complete definition. Despite this weakness, there is evidence in various discussions (Pereira & Cardoso, 2016; Ribeiro & Maia, 2018), and also at the legislative level, of a concern with the "collective and democratic construction of knowledge, through ongoing dialogue between cultural and social actors and the effective participation of communities that carry cultural references" (IPHAN, 2014, p. 19).

The data highlight a need to promote regional and local heritage, as mentioned by students: "the school should encourage visits to local heritage so that more people become aware of it" (E13); "excellent, as they should help us learn about the local heritage so we can give it the importance it truly deserves" (E26); "more visits should be promoted to enhance students' knowledge" (E98), and also, "greater effort and involvement is needed from training institutions, showing interest in learning about and having that heritage recognised by others" (E35). Even more so because when asked whether HEIs promote visits to local/regional heritage, 65.5% of the students valued this opportunity.

Portugal and Brazil are both culturally rich countries, making it vital to raise awareness in the educational community about heritage diversity and heritage education. As the students mentioned, "heritage education mobilizes cultural diversity by strengthening cultural and heritage identities" (72.6% of responses). Students believe that "the history of the country is important and should be passed down from generation to generation" (E20); and that "with solid heritage training, we can teach our culture (...) and we will have the ability to explain it so that everyone can know it" (E32); and, by doing so, "we will be fostering and attempting to teach the relevance of heritage identity" (E31), contributing to the consolidation of a process of active citizenship (E72). It is considered that "it is important to promote spaces for dialogue, acceptance of other cultures and ideas" (E23), to be a "multiplier of values" (E62), of self-recognition and recognition of society as a whole, to understand the feeling of belonging (E67); to honour the memory of peoples with a strong emphasis on teacher training in education as agents of heritage preservation, encouraging the inclusion of cultural heritage as a theme in educational projects (E40); using active pedagogies, with strong connection and engagement with the environment, valuing individuality and cultural diversity in educational contexts. Therefore, heritage issues should be approached as a cross-cutting, interdisciplinary, and/or transdisciplinary theme, essential to the educational process to enhance the use of public and community spaces as formative environments (IPHAN, 2014, p. 27).

From the research conducted, it is clear that understanding and defining culture remain aspects that require particular attention from an educational standpoint. The responses indicate that the teaching and learning processes carried out in the institutions involved indeed represent a form of constructing meanings, reaffirming certain social interests and experiences that are shaped by forms of power and cultural and social relations connected to political meaning and the nationality of the research participants. Discussing popular and erudite culture leads us to focus on giving culture a space of recognition and to work on teacher training courses by establishing connections between the daily lives of individuals and academia.

5. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR SPECIFIC PEDAGOGICAL METHODS

Improving heritage education through the implementation of specific pedagogical methods can not only increase students' level of knowledge, but also their appreciation and value of cultural heritage. This, in turn, may have a significant impact on their civic and cultural development, preparing them to be more informed and aware citizens in the world they are immersed in. By adopting a more inclusive and practical approach, schools can play a crucial role in promoting cultural diversity and preserving heritage.

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This is essential for sustainable development, social cohesion, and the building of a more inclusive and respectful society, in line with SDG 4, as defined by the 2030 Agenda.

Based on this goal and in light of the respondents' answers, some ideas for the future are presented here, along with suggestions for implementing a variety of specific pedagogical methods in a forthcoming review of its study plans, namely:

- Project-based learning: involvement in autonomous and in-depth research projects related to local or national cultural heritage.
- Guided visits to museums, historical sites or cultural events: classroom reflection and discussion activities, possibly complemented by preparatory and follow-up tasks.
- Use of technology: Interactive augmented and virtual reality applications can be employed to explore heritage sites, promoting a more engaging and memorable experience.
- Debates and round tables: classroom conversations on the importance of preserving cultural heritage and how it relates to identity and diversity. Open-ended questions that encourage critical thinking could guide these discussions.
- More consistent interdisciplinary curriculum integration: although more complex to implement in practice, it would allow students to see how cultural heritage connects with other aspects of their education.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the crucial importance of heritage education in training future teachers. It underscores the pressing need for a more comprehensive integration of this type of education into the school curriculum. Although significant progress has been made, as evidenced by the 65.5% of students who value visits to local/regional heritage sites, there is still a long way to go. Heritage education is not merely a matter of transmitting knowledge; it also involves appreciating and valuing cultural heritage as “a key element in building a European identity that relies on common values” (European Commission, 2021, p. 1).

Identifying and validating training pathways within higher education institutions that promote a more effective appreciation of heritage is essential. Visiting heritage sites can be an effective pedagogical tool to encourage this appreciation.

We emphasise that “only a heritage that is ours is worth protecting” (Lowenthal, 2012, p. 22); only heritage recognised as our own deserves to be preserved. This underlines the importance of educating students about cultural heritage in general and their own heritage, so they can recognise it, value it, and ultimately protect it.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization, M.C., M.R. and P.T.; data curation, M.C., M.R. and P.T.; ; formal analysis, M.C., M.R. and P.T.; funding acquisition, M.C., M.R. and P.T.; investigation, M.C., M.R. and P.T.; methodology, M.C., M.R. and P.T.; project administration, M.C., M.R. and P.T.; resources, M.C., M.R. and P.T.; software, M.C., M.R. and P.T.; supervision, M.C., M.R. and P.T.; validation, M.C., M.R. and P.T.; visualization, M.C., M.R. and P.T.; writing-original draft, M.C., M.R. and P.T.; writing-review and editing, M.C., M.R. and P.T.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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