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# Holistic or Traditional Conceptions of Heritage among Early-Childhood and Primary Trainee Teachers

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**Abstract:** This study examines the conception of heritage—holistic or traditional—among future early-childhood and primary teachers. In order to do this, our objective was to analyze trainee teachers' perceptions surrounding the conception of heritage. To carry out the analysis, we designed and validated a questionnaire with closed-ended questions (Likert scale 1–5) and one open-ended question about the elements that respondents considered to be part of what we define as heritage. The participants (n = 602) study at the universities of Alicante, Murcia, and Córdoba, and the investigation took place during 2018/19 and 2019/20 academic years. The results show a traditional conception that is still attached to immovable monumental heritage, with lower scores for intangible and natural heritage. However, there were some high scores for traditions and popular festivals, which are a frequent educational resource in early-childhood and primary classrooms. In conclusion, this non-holistic conception of heritage could be changed if an active and varied use of heritage resources were introduced from the early stages of education.

**Keywords:** social sciences; education; conceptions of heritage

## 1. Introduction

Heritage has remained, in different contexts and situations, a supplemental or auxiliary educational resource for social sciences teaching [1]. Curiously, certain elements of heritage (always seen in a restrictive way) are used for one-off activities, inevitably out of context and with the ultimate aim of breaking the monotony of the rote learning that continues to prevail in classrooms today. As a consequence of this limited and utilitarian perspective, heritage has lost much of its didactic potential and, more worryingly, the possibility of incorporating different forms of knowledge, thereby negating its holistic nature [2–4].

In the Spanish educational system, heritage is included in the regulations of the early-childhood education stage and primary stage. In the case of early-childhood education, it should be noted that it is a non-compulsory stage, although more than 97% of children under 6 years old are enrolled in this educational stage [5]. The national law that governs this educational stage throughout the state is Royal Decree 2/2006, and it quotes textually concepts such as folklore, customs and cultural manifestations, as a mandatory content to work in these years. In that regard, the national law for the Primary stage, Royal Decree 126/2014 also makes express mention of heritage within the contents to work for this

educational stage. Likewise, it is necessary to mention that these regulations are complemented by the decrees of each of the regions where the curriculum is settled.

Educational research on heritage has been gradually developing as a fruitful and worthy area for innovation in the teaching and learning of the social sciences [6–8], not only in Spain but also internationally [9–11]. For some time now, there have been numerous research projects, many of them dedicated to diverse topics but all relating to heritage education, exemplifying its relevance and above all the possibilities of the teaching of heritage as an interesting educational resource, from early-childhood to secondary education, putting Spain at the forefront of scientific research in heritage education [10]. However, despite its relevance and the scientific and educational interest that has arisen, the didactic application of heritage in classrooms remains a problem to this day, as there are doubts around whether its educational potential is being put to full use.

Along these lines, many authors have identified the main problems that prevent heritage from being adequately used in classrooms, at both the early-childhood and primary stages. Thus, Cuenca [12] notes that a large proportion of teachers do not consider heritage as educational content, and for the most part they do not associate it with educational goals. Other aspects to take into account are scant training at the compulsory levels of education, insufficient content related to heritage in the curriculum [13], with the existing content appearing very superficial [14], and the predominance of the traditional model in the teaching and learning of heritage in schools [15]. Finally, it must be mentioned that the majority of teachers have a very restrictive conception of heritage and only consider the more obvious monumental elements to be part of heritage, leaving aside other aspects of heritage such as the movable, the intangible, the natural, and elements related to the landscape [16].

In this context, we understand cultural heritage as the broad and diverse definition, coming from different legal instruments and government meetings, such as the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972 and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of 2003, collected by UNESCO. Thus, cultural heritage is the set of monuments, groups and places that represent tangible and intangible manifestations, and bring together an exceptional universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view. In turn, natural heritage is the set of monuments, geological formations and places of natural interest, defined and considered for their scientific value, and because of the need for their conservation and their intrinsic beauty. We consider intangible heritage as the set of manifestations, popular expressions, knowledge and artisan traditions that are part, in a recognized and identity way, of social groups. Similarly, we consider that one of the values of heritage education concerns its conservation and sustainability: competencies included in the Sustainable Development Goals for Horizon 2030. Specifically, it is worth highlighting the aim of goal 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, which focuses on intensifying the efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

In our view, heritage which is inherited from the past and with which we still have contact in the present is an ideal resource not only for working on historical content or structural concepts like time and space, but also for consolidating critical and responsible thinking. Moreover, in the compulsory stages of education, heritage becomes a valuable educational resource thanks to its transversal nature and multidisciplinary; heritage encompasses aspects related to history, art, geography, economy, technology, and science [17,18], and makes it possible to approach the teaching-learning process through socially relevant problems [18].

In this respect, Cuenca [12] highlights the necessity of breaking down the educational and methodological barriers [19] that have restricted the didactic potential of heritage. He advocates taking full advantage of all the possibilities that heritage education offers in order to teach citizens to be respectful of their past and, thereby, their present. In fact, teaching through heritage, in early-childhood education for example, has demonstrated quite clearly the potential advantages that its correct application can have at that stage of education. Firstly, since it is a primary source that explains the past but is anchored in the present, it encourages teachers to use non-abstract historical elements with

which the student can establish an experiential connection [12]. Secondly, it makes it possible to work on certain recurring content in the early-childhood curriculum, such as the cultural elements, festivals, and traditions specific to each place, and it is therefore an ideal vehicle for introducing historical teaching at this educational stage [20] and, at the same time, establishing among students a meaningful closeness to and understanding of their surroundings.

Consequently, if we conceive heritage education holistically and transversally, beyond the recurrent conceptual or epistemological perspectives, we will help future teachers to better understand their surroundings [21]. Not only could the didactic and pedagogical value of heritage education expand and improve the training of early-childhood and primary teachers, but also, since heritage is a primary source of past events preserved by society to the present day, it promises to be an attractive and dynamic resource with infinite possibilities. Thus, our work presents some educational values that transcend the mere fact of knowing and understanding heritage. These values focus on learning through heritage with the aim of using its full didactic potential, not only for history teaching but also, by highlighting its transversal nature, to further support work in different subjects, given that heritage content can be tailored to the proposals in the different sections of all areas of the curriculum [22], thereby putting to use its holistic and integrative nature. As many authors have highlighted, heritage education also enables the acquisition of procedural, attitudinal, and conceptual knowledge [23].

According to the theory put forward by González-Monfort [24], the educational value of cultural heritage lies in its capacity to promote the construction of a responsible citizen identity, the development of critical thinking, the ability to act effectively in conservation of this resource, and, finally, the construction of historical or social knowledge, all of which fosters and ultimately drives the development of responsible and engaged citizens. Therefore, pursuing this line of work, heritage will facilitate the study and analyze aspects that are complex and noteworthy for our society and, of course, for education too. These could include identity and citizenship [25] and even students' emotional skills [26].

To achieve this, it is fundamental to move away as soon as possible from a restrictive conception of heritage, that is, one that identifies heritage solely through monumental elements and that considers the different realities of heritage in isolation [16], without any connection between them, casting aside many of the elements that make up a substantial part of heritage [27]. Accordingly, this partial conception is worlds apart from an integrative view of heritage, where the different elements of heritage are linked together in a single sociocultural entity of a holistic nature, made up of its different realities [28].

All these aspects must be taken into account and to a large extent internalized for an appropriate use of heritage at the different educational stages. This is what Cuenca [12] described when he highlighted the need to consider many other aspects that complicate the educational approach to heritage, such as the functional, social, spatial, and temporal decontextualization of these elements when they are put in museums; the organizational difficulties of working with them, both inside and outside the classroom; and the attempts at manipulation of heritage elements according to social, economic, or political considerations.

In effect, many other research projects, like those of Cuenca [27], Domínguez and Cuenca [1], Fontal and Ibáñez-Etxeberria [10], and Moreno-Vera and Ponsoda [29], have highlighted that, whatever the educational stage, trainee teachers' perception of heritage is higher when dealing with visible cultural heritage, while rates fall when dealing with heritage elements that are less obvious. This could imply that future teachers do not have a complete—that is to say, holistic—understanding of heritage. In other words, this restrictive conception that still prevails when heritage is discussed or studied can be explained on the basis of the monumentality, size, and date of immovable elements (buildings, castles, churches, museums, etc.) and the degree of conservation of movable items displayed in museums (archaeological items, paintings, sculptures, or other visual arts), as their mere conservation makes them important elements that must be preserved and therefore integrated as a key part of our heritage.

The present study aims to discover the conception of heritage among early-childhood and primary trainee teachers. The goal is not only to compare the different perceptions among each of the groups analyzed, but also to study the limitations that this conception under study may present, with regards to

the use of heritage elements in classrooms at the respective educational stages as a resource for sparking students' understanding of their surroundings and their grasp of concepts such as time and space. Thus, this research will allow us to identify the extent to which future early-childhood and primary teachers possess a limited conception of heritage, as Estepa indicated [16]. These types of studies are therefore highly important due to the information they provide when it comes to planning and defining teaching-learning programs [30], and they represent a priority within the field of educational research [31].

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Aims and Research Question

At the beginning of this study, the following research question was posed: What conception of heritage do future early-childhood and primary teachers have, holistic or traditional?

Consequently, the main objective of this study was to analyze the conception that trainee teachers have of heritage education, based on the elements that they consider to form part of heritage.

In order to carry out this analysis, two sub-objectives were proposed:

- Sub-objective 1. To analyze future early-childhood teachers' conceptions of heritage and the types of heritage elements they highlight.
- Sub-objective 2. To discover future primary teachers' conceptions of heritage and the elements that form part of their conception of heritage.

### 2.2. Context and Participants

The sample of participants analyzed in this project was a broad total population ( $n = 602$ ), divided into three faculties of education at the universities of Alicante ( $n = 349$ ), Murcia ( $n = 91$ ), and Córdoba ( $n = 162$ ), all in Spain.

The study was carried out over two consecutive academic years, 2018/2019 and 2019/2020, and the participants were trainee teachers in the following subjects:

- University of Alicante: Social Sciences Teaching: History and Teaching of the Understanding of the Social and Cultural Environment.
- University of Murcia: Educational Methodologies for the Teaching-Learning of the Social Sciences; and The Teaching of the Social Sciences.
- University of Córdoba: The Teaching of Heritage.

The participants in this study were mainly women ( $n = 419$ ), and the male population was considerably smaller ( $n = 183$ ). By university, the University of Alicante had the most representatives, with 248 women and 101 men, while the University of Córdoba had 102 women and 60 men, and finally the University of Murcia had 69 women and 22 men. This can be explained by the study's context, as there is a majority of female students in all of the participating faculties of education.

In terms of the age of the participants, the sample was very homogeneous. A total of 85.83% of the sample was between 19 and 23 years, which is consistent with the participation of university students enrolled in classes between the 2nd and 4th years of the undergraduate degree course. Just 14.17% of the sample was over 24 years, of which 8.95% of participants were between 24 and 30 years, while 3.73% were 31 years or older.

### 2.3. Instrument

The process of data collection was carried out through an ad hoc questionnaire on 'future teachers' perceptions of the conception of heritage [Supplementary Materials], using a Likert scale from 1 to 5—1 being 'strongly disagree', 2 'disagree', 3 'neither agree nor disagree', 4 'agree', and 5 'strongly agree'—. The questionnaire included an open-ended question for qualitative analysis, in which the

trainee teacher had to specify a maximum of 5 elements that he or she considered to form part of the concept of heritage.

The questionnaire, as well as providing anonymous and identifying data on the sample (items 1, 2, 3: sex, age, university), established two areas according to the sub-objectives under analysis: items 4–19 aimed to understand teachers' conceptions of some of the elements that form part of heritage, and item 20 (an open-ended question) asked them to specify at least 5 elements that they considered to form part of heritage.

#### 2.4. Validation and Analysis Procedure

The research procedure follows a methodological analysis of trainee teachers' conceptions that has already been proven effective in previous studies [32,33]. This analysis was carried out through quantitative data (items 3–19) using the statistics software package IBM SPSS v.24 for Windows.

Prior to the analysis of this study, we tested the reliability and validity of the construct, using Cronbach's alpha to test the internal consistency of the items, which allows the estimation of the reliability of a research instrument made up of a wide range of items.

The result of the Cronbach's alpha test of the validity of the instrument used in this study was 0.895, as can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Cronbach's alpha result.

Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Elements
Values	0.895	16

Source: authors.

This reliability procedure was used in the same way as in other studies in the field of social sciences teaching, such as Getsdóttir, van Boxtel, and van Drie [34] or Gómez-Carrasco, Monteagudo, Moreno-Vera, and Sáinz [19]. The criterion established by various authors is that a Cronbach's alpha value between 0.70 and 0.90 indicates a good internal consistency of the questionnaire items for a unidimensional scale [35]. Therefore, the value of 0.895 obtained by this study's questionnaire indicates satisfactory internal consistency.

The analysis procedure for item 20, the open-ended question, followed a qualitative methodology based on the codification of the heritage elements mentioned by the sample. For this qualitative analysis, the researchers used the program AQUAD v.7 [36], codifying the elements into heritage typologies in a structured way [27]. This type of qualitative analysis, through the aforementioned tool, enables the analysis of multidimensional results when the elements mentioned by the sample are open and have not been defined or limited by the researchers beforehand.

### 3. Results

In relation to the analysis of the results obtained from the research instrument, an individual analysis was conducted of both the early-childhood and primary trainee teachers, including a comparative study of both groups of participants in case of a significant difference between their results.

#### 3.1. Early-Childhood Trainee Teachers

With regards to the early-childhood trainee teachers, a statistical-descriptive analysis of the questionnaire (items 3–19) was carried out to determine which elements they considered to a greater degree to form part of heritage (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Conceptions of heritage among early-childhood trainee teachers.

Item	Average Value (1–5)	Standard Deviation
<b>4 Monuments, castles and churches</b>	4.57	0.93
<b>5 Works of art in museums</b>	4.38	1.19
<b>7 Clothing</b>	2.88	1.20
<b>8 Traditions, popular festivals and folklore</b>	4.67	0.60
<b>12 Traditional jobs</b>	3.52	1.13
<b>17 Animals</b>	3.45	1.25
<b>19 Marine reserves</b>	4.03	1.04

Source: authors.

In this analysis, the most-valued item of heritage was that of traditions, popular festivals, and folklore (item 8), with an average rating of 4.67 out of 5. Similarly, items relating to a traditional conception of heritage had a very high rating. For example, item 4—monuments, castles, and churches—scored 4.57, and item 5, related to artworks in museums, scored 4.38. Items with lower ratings and a higher standard deviation rate were those related to intangible heritage, such as clothing (item 7, linked to tangible heritage and intangible traditional jobs at the same time), which scored 2.88, or traditional jobs (item 12), with 3.52. This fact indicates more doubts and less consensus about the items being part of the heritage between students. Items relating to natural heritage also received lower ratings: item 17 (animals) scored 3.45, and item 19 (marine reserves) scored 4.03.

If we look at item 20 of the research instrument, the open-ended question that aimed to encourage respondents to comment on which precise heritage elements they considered to form part of the conception of heritage (Table 3), we can observe how it confirms the previous results.

**Table 3.** Heritage elements among early-childhood trainee teachers.

Type	Alicante		Murcia		Córdoba		TOTAL	
	TOTAL	%	TOTAL	%	TOTAL	%	TOTAL	%
<b>Intangible</b>	409	55.95	37	28	39	22.67	485	46.86
<b>Movable</b>	50	6.84	1	0.7	3	1.74	54	5.21
<b>Immovable</b>	202	27.63	78	59.1	121	70.35	401	38.74
<b>Natural</b>	70	9.57	16	12.1	9	5.23	95	9.18

Source: authors.

In this case, intangible heritage elements, including festivals and traditions, were those that were most frequently mentioned by early-childhood trainee teachers, constituting a total of 46.86% of responses. This was particularly pronounced in the sample from the University of Alicante, where this number rose to 55.96% of responses, indicating that popular festivals and traditions have a strong connection with the population of this region. Mentioned in the responses that stood out in this regard were the “*Misteri d’Elx (the Mystery Play of Elche)*”, *paella as a culinary tradition*, and the *Fallas festival of Valencia*”.

In any case, it is interesting to highlight that there was a great imbalance between provinces. In Murcia as well as Córdoba, far more trainee teachers cited immovable monumental heritage elements as a part of heritage. In Murcia, immovable heritage was mentioned in 59.1% of responses, with “*Murcia Cathedral and the Roman Theatre of Cartagena*” standing out. Meanwhile, in Córdoba, 70.35% of responses cited immovable heritage, especially the “*Mosque–Cathedral of Córdoba and the palatial city of Medina Azahara*”.

### 3.2. Primary Trainee Teachers

With regards to primary trainee teachers, a quantitative analysis was carried out on the statistical-descriptive data from items 3–19 of the research questionnaire (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Conceptions of heritage among primary trainee teachers.

Item	Average Value (1–5)	Standard Deviation
<b>4 Monuments, castles and churches</b>	4.75	0.64
<b>5 Works of art in museums</b>	4.55	0.92
<b>7 Clothing</b>	3.17	1.15
<b>8 Traditions, popular festivals and folklore</b>	4.65	0.64
<b>12 Traditional jobs</b>	3.81	1.16
<b>17 Animals</b>	3.45	1.19
<b>19 Marine reserves</b>	4.17	1.02

Source: authors.

The results show again the significant influence, among primary trainee teachers, of a traditional conception of monumental heritage. In this case, item 4, which refers to monuments, buildings, castles, and churches, had the highest average rating, with a score of 4.75 out of 5 and the lower standard deviation rate which remarks a high consensus among the future teachers. Meanwhile, artworks in museums (item 5) also had a very high rating of 4.55. Intangible heritage obtained some very unbalanced results. Traditions, popular festivals, and folklore (item 8) had a very high rating as a heritage element, with a score of 4.65, while other items such as item 7 (clothing) or item 12 (traditional jobs) obtained lower ratings of 3.17 and 3.81, respectively. Finally, the variables related to natural heritage also received lower ratings compared to monumental heritage. Item 17 (animals) received a score of 3.45, and item 19 (marine reserves) scored 4.17.

If we observe the results in Table 5, regarding the open-ended question on heritage elements, which in this case only trainee teachers from the universities of Alicante and Córdoba responded to, intangible heritage stands out again, cited in 47.4% of total responses. In the Alicante sample, intangible heritage was mentioned in 55.1% of responses, with “*the Misteri d’Elx, the Hogueras de Alicante (the Bonfires of Alicante), the fiestas de Moros y Cristianos (festivals of Moors and Christians), and the local dish paella*” standing out as elements that shape local tradition. However, among the students of the University of Córdoba, what stood out the most was immovable monumental heritage, with 70.0% of responses including elements such as the “*Mosque–Cathedral of Córdoba, the Medina Azahara, and the courtyard houses*” typical of the center of Córdoba.

**Table 5.** Heritage elements among primary trainee teachers.

Type of Heritage	Alicante		Córdoba		TOTAL	
	TOTAL	%	TOTAL	%	TOTAL	%
<b>Intangible</b>	647	55.1	80	22.22	727	47.4
<b>Movable</b>	68	5.8	3	0.83	71	4.62
<b>Immovable</b>	352	30	252	70.0	604	39.4
<b>Natural</b>	107	9.1	25	6.95	132	8.6

Source: authors.

#### 4. Discussion

When quantitatively analyzing the questionnaire results, we can see that future early-childhood teachers' conception of heritage continues to be connected to the traditional view [10,27,29], with elements such as item 4, concerning monuments, castles, and churches (immovable heritage), and item 5, concerning artworks in museums (movable heritage), receiving a greater degree of consideration within the conception of heritage. However, items concerning less visible intangible heritage, such as clothing or traditional rural jobs (items 7 and 12, respectively), received less consideration as heritage elements. The items that concern natural heritage, such as animals and marine reserves (items 17 and 19, respectively), received less consideration than traditional monumental heritage.

This traditional conception of heritage is consistent with the results of the open-ended question if we focus on the trainee teachers at the universities of Murcia and Córdoba. There, immovable monumental heritage elements were the most cited—59.1% in Murcia and 70.35% in Córdoba—with a focus on iconic buildings such as the “*Mosque–Cathedral, the palace of Medina Azahara, and the Roman Theatre of Cartagena*”.

However, among future early-childhood teachers there was a very high consideration of intangible heritage elements, such as popular festivals, traditions, and folklore (item 8). This is doubtless explained by the fact that the early-childhood curriculum includes this heritage as compulsory content at this educational stage [37]. Additionally, when analyzed by region, it should be mentioned that item 8 was especially relevant for the trainee teachers at the University of Alicante, given that the qualitative analysis of the open-ended question confirmed a higher consideration of festivals and traditions as a heritage element, especially important festivals such as “*the Misteri d’Elx, the Hogueras de Alicante, the fiestas de Moros y Cristianos, and the Fallas of Valencia*”, which were the most frequently cited responses and which coincide with some of the Valencian traditions that are included on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

We find a similar situation when we analyze the results of the future primary teachers, in fact Student’s T two-tail test (using De Winter analysis for unequal sample size, as happens in this case) shows a positive and strong correlation between results, being all items rating  $0 > 1$  [38]. In this case, their traditional conception of heritage becomes even clearer. Observing the statistical-descriptive data of the questionnaire, we see that they give the highest rating (and lower standard deviation) to the item on monuments, buildings, castles, and churches, which is consistent with previous studies by authors such as Domínguez and Cuenca [1], Cuenca [27], Fontal and Ibáñez-Etxeberria [10], Ponsoda and Moreno-Vera [39], and Chaparro and Felices-De la Fuente [40]. The questionnaire also highlights a lower heritage rating for intangible and natural elements, which indicates a vision of heritage that is still not very holistic. It is for this reason that authors such as González-Monfort [41] emphasize starting heritage education at an earlier stage.

As Table 6 reveals, there is a significant correlation, as well, between all items (subscales) when analyzing Pearson’s correlation as all the subscales rated  $-1 > 0 > 1$ . According to other studies in Social Sciences Education, such as Gómez et al. [33], the items corresponding to a traditional conception of heritage (items 4 and 5, monuments, castles, works of art, etc.) have a positive Pearson correlation (0.54 and 0.26) reaching a better rate among Primary trainee teachers. The same significant result is observed in item 7 (clothing) and in item 17 (animals). On the other hand, subscales related to intangible heritage elements such as traditions, folklore (item 8 that rated  $-0.25$ ) and traditional jobs (item 12 rating  $-0.14$ ) show a significant correlation close to 0.00, but in this case, being better rated by early-childhood trainee teachers, as happens with item 19 (marine reserves rating  $-0.08$ ).



**Table 6.** Inferential analysis between two group results: early-childhood and primary trainee teachers.

Item	Student's T (2-Tail Test)	Pearson Correlation
4 Monuments, castles and churches	0.45	0.54
5 Works of art in museums	0.34	0.26
7 Clothing	0.79	0.16
8 Traditions, popular festivals and folklore	0.50	−0.25
12 Traditional jobs	0.33	−0.14
17 Animals	0.42	0.21
19 Marine reserves	0.89	−0.08

Source: authors.

In parallel with the results for early-childhood trainee teachers, future primary teachers also gave a high rating to 'traditions, popular festivals, and folklore'. In this case, the average rating was 4.65 out of 5, which is backed up by the frequent occurrence of these elements in responses to the open-ended question, where "the paella, the Fallas, the Misteri d'Elx, and the fiestas de Moros y Cristianos" were included in 47.4% of responses. In fact, the Chi Square test (Table 7) confirms that idea as the Early-Childhood and Primary Education training teacher rates for Intangible heritage were 0.16 and 0.05, respectively, both data very close to 0. In this case, both data are linked to a strong inferential correlation in Student's-T test ( $0 > 1$ ) and Pearson correlation ( $-1 > 0 > 1$ ), as Satorra and Bentler indicate [42]. However, as is the case of early-childhood trainee teachers, this high percentage can be influenced by higher results among the Alicante sample (55.1%). Among the future primary teachers at the University of Córdoba, the open-ended question also reflects a significant traditional conception of heritage, with elements such as "the Mosque-Cathedral, the palatial city of Medina Azahara, and the courtyard houses" of the city of Córdoba included in 70% of responses. In this case, again the Chi Square test for the open-ended item ensures the positive correlation for Immovable elements for Primary Education trainee teachers as they rate 0.05, much closer to 0 than other types of heritage such as movable or natural. The same happens for early-childhood trainee teachers that rate 0.15, again a good result as it is very close to 0 [42,43].

**Table 7.** Chi Square test for open-ended item 20.

Type	Early-Childhood				Primary Education			
	TOTAL	%	Expected	Chi Square	TOTAL	%	Expected	Chi Square
Intangible	485	46.86	476.1	0.16	727	47.4	720.9	0.05
Movable	54	5.21%	51.7	0.09	71	4.62	61.3	1.51
Immovable	401	38.74	393.3	0.15	604	39.4	598.2	0.05
Natural	95	9.19	93.1	0.03	132	8.6	122.7	0.70

Source: authors.

## 5. Conclusions

At the beginning of this study, we asked: What conception of heritage do future early-childhood and primary teachers have, holistic or traditional? To answer this question, we set two objectives: to analyze future early-childhood teachers' conceptions of heritage, and to study future primary teachers' conceptions of heritage.

To do this, we designed a questionnaire with closed-ended questions (Likert scale 1–5) and an open-ended question on the elements that participants considered to form part of heritage. The questionnaire was validated (0.895 Cronbach's alpha) and given to a large sample of participants ( $n = 602$ ) from the universities of Córdoba, Alicante, and Murcia (Spain).

By way of a conclusion, we must emphasize that future teachers' conception of heritage remains a traditional one that is highly anchored in immovable heritage such as monuments, buildings, castles, and churches. Both early-childhood and primary trainee teachers had a very high consideration of immovable monumental heritage, which especially stands out in the open-ended question, with participants giving examples such as the "*Mosque–Cathedral of Córdoba, the courtyard houses of Córdoba, Murcia Cathedral, Santa Bárbara Castle in Alicante, and the Roman Theatre of Cartagena*". There is a significant correlation (Student's T-test) between all subscales and results (item 4 = 0.45 and item 5 = 0.34) which means that all participants in the study have a strong traditional heritage conception. At the same time, this higher traditional approach to heritage is evidenced by the Chi-Square Test for the open-ended question, obtaining results close to 0, especially in Primary Education where reach the lower rate 0.05 [42].

Movable heritage preserved in museums also had a high consideration among both early-childhood and primary trainee teachers, although in this case its scarce presence in responses to the open-ended question stands out, with only 5.21% of early-childhood trainee teachers and 4.62% of primary trainee teachers mentioning it. This suggests that there are few educational trips to museums in Spanish schools.

With regard to intangible heritage, this received more surprising results, as 'traditions, popular festivals, and folklore' received the highest rating among early-childhood trainee teachers, as well as a very high rating among future primary teachers. The Student's T-test shows a positive correlation between the two groups of the sample, but Pearson's Correlation indicates that intangible heritage elements are better rated (item 8 = -0.25) by early-childhood training teachers due to their relevant position as core content in the national curriculum of Spain and the regional decrees [42]. These high scores could lead one to believe that the conception of heritage is moving toward being more holistic. However, when analyzing the results by province, we can see how this is true only among the sample from the University of Alicante, where festivals like "*the Fallas, the Misteri d'Elx, the Hogueras de Alicante, and the fiestas de Moros y Cristianos*" are highly influential in the social configuration of the region. These positive results for intangible heritage can be also observed in the Chi-Square test, where intangible elements are rated very close to 0 [42].

Other items related to intangible and natural heritage had a lower rating among future teachers, as did clothing, traditional jobs, language, and native animals and plants. This lower rating among future teachers was confirmed in the open-ended question, where these elements were hardly mentioned.

Ultimately, this study is consistent with previous research such as that of Cuenca [27], Domínguez and Cuenca [1], Fontal and Ibáñez-Etxeberria [10], Chaparro and Felices-De la Fuente [40], and Moreno-Vera and Ponsoda [29], in that future teachers' conception of heritage is limited and traditional. The majority consider heritage to consist of important monuments and buildings, while other heritage elements pass by unnoticed in classrooms and lose their didactic potential. For this reason and the lack of concepts for historical thinking, some authors, such as González-Monfort [41] or Moreno-Vera and Alvéñ [44], advocate the inclusion of heritage education from the earliest educational stages, beginning in early-childhood education.

**Supplementary Materials:** The following are available online at <http://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/21/8921/s1>, Ad hoc questionnaire on 'future teachers' perceptions of the conception of heritage.

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