Welcome Refugees! The Use of Cultural Heritage to Teach Democratic Values

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Abstract: The main aim of this research is to analyze the implementation of a teaching unit, based on cultural heritage education, to teach democratic values among a group of migrants and refugees in Spain. An educational experiment was proposed consisting of four activities based on the Islamic heritage of the Region of Murcia. For data collection purposes, the researchers designed a pre-test and post-test instrument with 13 items divided into 3 sections (social values, democratic values, and cultural values). The analytical process was performed using the statistical package SPSS v 24. The post-test results show a higher degree of identification with the host country, shared democratic values between refugees and the host country, a better understanding of democratic participation and, finally, a good degree of knowledge about the cultural past of Spain and the Region of Murcia. In conclusion, refugees and newcomers feel more integrated and identified with the host country when they are aware of the shared past between Islam and Christianity in the south of Spain.

Keywords: history; education; migrants; heritage; democracy

1. Introduction

The relationship between heritage and educational processes has become a point of interest within the field of social sciences education in recent times. Milestones achieved on an institutional level have focused attention on this particular field: on an international level, UNESCO’s [1] 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and, in Europe, the introduction of different conventions and recommendations, the most recent of which (the European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century) was passed in 2017 [2]. Through this document, the Council of Europe requires all EU member states to promote measures that lead to the management of heritage via three main components: social participation, the sustainability of economic and social development, and research and educational processes. Furthermore, it recommends that professionals from different disciplines (particularly those belonging to the field of education) actively participate in the implementation of this new approach.

These transformations in the field of governance correspond to an evolution in the way in which heritage is conceived, which, as pointed out by specialists in the field, no longer refers exclusively to works of art and archaeological remains but has come to encompass contexts and phenomena which consider artistic activity to be closely linked with social issues. In the field of education, this transition has implied a shift in the perception of heritage as cultural wealth and the mere illustrative image of learning towards its conception as a means of gaining knowledge of the social environment and as a tool for the promotion of activities which respect diversity and the comprehension of social issues, both on a local and global scale [3].

Different studies carried out in the field of educational research dedicated to exploring the specificities of the link between heritage and teaching processes have given rise to the notion of heritage education defined as “… a tool for cultural literacy which enables the individual to read the world which surrounds him/her, leading him/her to understand..."
the socio-cultural universe and the historical and temporal trajectory in which he/she is inserted” [4] (p. 6).

This category, according to [5], is connected with the theoretical developments which started in England around the concept of Heritage Education. These developments arose from the debates generated following the appearance of the aforementioned UNESCO Declaration of 1972. In Spain, interest in these issues has been promoted, on the one hand, by the creation of the Spanish Heritage Education Observatory (in Spanish: OEPE) linked to the National Plan for Education and Heritage passed in 2013 and, on the other hand, by different research and development initiatives aimed at recording and analyzing advances made in this field [6]. Thus, in both the academic and institutional fields, and on a global, European, and Spanish level, some kind of agreement can be recognized with regard to the understanding of heritage as an ideal means and as a resource for putting teaching and learning processes into practice.

As far as the transmission of civic values is concerned, recent studies [7] offer a detailed examination of the academic output published over the first two decades of the 21st century with heritage, identity, and citizenship as its cornerstone. Thus, via this output it is possible to approach research that explores the combination of heritage and citizenship [8–10] or other studies that examine the connection between educational, heritage, and identity processes [11]. This context of conceptual debate is complemented, at the same time, by the introduction of interdisciplinary, participatory, and socio-critical approaches regarding heritage [7].

Faced with the long tradition of using heritage as a means for promoting States and national identities, a valuable new line of research has emerged in which the present study is included, which applies the legacy of both tangible and intangible heritage as an appropriate tool for reinforcing democratic competences and for raising awareness of values that can increase social connections based on citizens’ knowledge of a shared past.

However, little is known of heritage-based educational processes aimed at population groups with experiences of forced mobility or, in general, people with a migratory background. Indeed, in the review of the literature carried out, no specific study on this issue was found. Studies were found which explored the relationship between intercultural and intangible heritage. In this regard, studies such as [12], stress the importance of building spaces for intercultural coexistence with the aim of appreciating the intangible legacy that individuals of a certain social group carry with them. The results of this study suggest that this may be even more relevant in societies with a high degree of heterogeneity and diversity, such as those which have arisen as a result of globalization, which has brought about an acceleration and multiplication of human mobility [13]. In this way, an intercultural approach considers heritage to be not only a tangible legacy, the purpose of which is to interweave previous generations with their descendants but also a present value which can contribute to the construction of egalitarian communities with respect for diversity and with, in general, more robust civic values and better levels of coexistence [12].

However, no matter the value of the intangible representations and meanings contained in the immaterial cultural heritage migrants or refugees bring with them, the role that can be played by the material and tangible heritage assets which exist in the host territories in educational processes or the consolidation of democratic competences has not yet been explored in great detail. Without wishing to give conclusive solutions, some possible clarifications can be put forward based on prior studies [4], which suggest that identification, recognition, and enhancement of heritage would offer people the possibility of a more integral interpretation of their new community, making it possible for them to understand the sociocultural and historical background of the human group into which they have been inserted. In this way, the process of education via heritage can contribute, among other things, toward people becoming settled in their new context, strengthening their self-esteem, facilitating their interaction and communication with their host community, and becoming a means and a pretext for the exchange of knowledge between local and migrant people. This would provide the latter with the opportunity to value their knowledge in this
regard, be it theoretical, historical, or popular [4]. Consequently, the preliminary theoretical review suggests that, more than the heritage in itself, it is the process of joint construction of interactions from diverse perspectives taking place around heritage spaces which could contribute toward strengthening feelings of coexistence, identity, and citizenship.

To this should be added certain other complementary elements, such as the possibility of involving migrant and refugee groups in the planning and management of initiatives regarding cultural and heritage assets, along with the opening up of spaces for the pooling of knowledge, languages, practices, and values. In this way, the presence of new inhabitants and their knowledge can be perceived by society as a whole as an asset which should be preserved and as an opportunity for interpreting, appreciating, and clarifying the meanings and wealth of heritage.

So, in this case, the purpose of the study is to analyse the learning results of implementing a teaching unit based on the use of cultural heritage as a resource for teaching democratic values to newly arrived migrants, refugees, and political asylum seekers and that could be divided into three main objectives: S.O. 1. To identify their social links with the host society; S.O. 2. To analyze their perceptions of the institutions and citizen participation; and S.O. 3. To compare their conceptions about the host country’s culture and values.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Context and Participants

The context and participants of the study are important aspects within the framework of the present study given that the teaching proposal implemented and its objectives were designed ad hoc for the subjects participating in this study.

The instruction process was carried out as part of a far-reaching research project called “Democratic heritage: memorials and heritage museums engaging migrants in developing resilient democracies”, funded by the European Union via its Erasmus+ Key Actions 2 program. The participants in this research project originated from six different countries: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Croatia and Spain. In all cases, including that of Spain, which is analyzed in this paper, groups of migrants participated who had recently arrived in Europe (with a maximum period of two years since their arrival in the European Union).

In the case in question here (Spain), a total of 15 migrants (n = 15) participated, all of whom formed part of the official host program of the Government of Spain, managed in the Region of Murcia by several different non-profit foundations and NGOs. In the post-test just 14 people participated (n = 14) because of administrative issues.

The participants originated from Mali (1), Morocco (2), Mauritania (1), Guinea-Conakry (1), and Afghanistan (10); all countries in which there is violent oppression or warfare against the civil population. In the case of the Afghan population, repression is based on religious principles, whereas in the case of Morocco, the participants came from the Rif region where there is a pro-independence movement and a high degree of political repression from the central government.

As far as the sex of the participants is concerned, the majority (73.33%) were male (11 individuals), while only 26.66% were female (4 individuals). Such an imbalance is common in this type of population, due to the fact that the migrant population that moves in search of employment tends to be male, on the whole.

The mean age of the participants was 28.6 years of age, although there was a wide range of ages, with the youngest participant being 18 years of age and the oldest 58 years of age.

In order to understand the results of the study, it is important to mention that 10 of the 15 participants were from Afghanistan (the most represented country). This is exceptional as, in the South of Spain, the migrant population normally originates from the north of Africa or from sub-Saharan Africa. However, the rise to power of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in the spring of 2021 led to an exodus of the population to Europe, with some arriving in Spain due to the intervention of the Spanish Government. Therefore, during the
During the implementation of the teaching unit (two consecutive days in January 2022), the 15 participants in the study were living in different apartments in the town of Totana (Murcia) and were receiving support from the CEPAIM Foundation, an NGO that works with migrants on a national level (in eight Autonomous Communities in Spain) and on an international level with a presence in Senegal and Morocco.

The town of Totana is located in the Region of Murcia, in the south-east of Spain close to the Mediterranean Sea. It has a population of just over 35,000 inhabitants and is located inland in a rural area of the valley of the Guadalentín River. It is 50 km away from Murcia, the regional capital, which has a population of some 450,000 inhabitants. The Region of Murcia as a whole has a population of almost 1,500,000 inhabitants.

In the present day, the town’s main sources of employment and income are agriculture and livestock rearing, producing goods such as pumpkins, grapes, peppers and pork products. On an industrial level, meat processing, ceramics and pottery constitute the town’s main sectors of activity.

In such a context, dominated by employment in the primary sector and its associated industries, it is common for there to be a large migrant population as there are opportunities for stable unqualified employment. Thus, in Totana, more than 9300 inhabitants are of migrant origin (26.85% of the total).

2.2. Principles and Goals of the Teaching Proposal

The didactic unit proposed is under the supervision of the CEPAIM Foundation that leads in the Region of Murcia the governmental program to facilitate the integration of migrants and newcomers. In this sense the aim of the activities is not homogenize cultures or strength stereotypes, if not taking in account the cultural identification of each individual to reflect on the similarities between different realities [14–16].

The principles of the didactic proposal, in that sense, are:

- To make the newcomers feel that the host country was also related to their personal beliefs in the past. If the identification between the participants and the new country grows, they will feel themselves being part of the host society and they will strength their responsibilities and their participation in the new community [17,18];

- Following the approach of historical analogies [19] between the past and the present, our activities encourage the participants to use the past to reflect on present-day affairs. Because of that reason, the authors selected good examples of peacefully co-living between two religions in the Middle Ages. Obviously, the purpose of the didactic unit is not to held a history lesson, if not to use cultural heritage and history as a resource to teach democratic values as peace, tolerance, respect or solidarity.

2.3. Teaching Proposal

The design of the teaching unit implemented during the experiment was theoretically based on the importance of the teaching of cultural heritage as a means for learning about and assimilating democratic values [20,21]. In addition, the theoretical construct on which the design of the activities is based is that of the development of the historical thinking skills [22] via the use of historical evidence as a primary source for being able to learn about the past and the cultural values of the Region of Murcia.

A learning situation consisting of three different stages was planned: The initial phase consisted of an activity to detect the participants’ prior knowledge via a questionnaire (one week before the implementation of the activities); the development phase consisted of four activities (2 consecutive days); and the final evaluation phase employed a questionnaire in order to measure the students’ learning progression (two weeks after the implementation of the activities).

The activities focused on the cultural heritage of the Region of Murcia as a means of fostering integration, tolerance, and respect for the different cultures and religions
which have coexisted in this area over the centuries. In this sense, the complete didactic unit (Supplementary Material) was delivered to the CEPAIM Foundation as part of the agreement among the University of Murcia and the foundation.

Due to the Muslim origin of the majority of the participants, particular attention was paid to the Islamic legacy of the Region of Murcia. Islamic culture was present here for more than 400 years, leaving behind a wide range of cultural heritage, such as constructions, buildings, traditional trades, place names, names, surnames, celebrations, streets and even a great number of words, objects, and traditional products of this region.

Due to the difficulties in communicating with recently arrived people who are yet to achieve a good level of Spanish, the entire teaching experience was carried out in four languages (Spanish, Persian, Arabic, and French).

First of all, an excursion was made to the church/sanctuary of Saint Eulalia, the patron saint and protector of the town of Totana. This church was chosen as it fits well with the aim of the teaching unit, which was to show a shared heritage among different cultures and religions. It is a Mudéjar church, i.e., a Christian church (from the Renaissance era) built by Muslims who remained in the Kingdom of Murcia. The use of elements of Islamic architecture (e.g., exposed brick, wood paneled ceilings and the Rub el hizb, the 8-pointed Islamic star) is blended in perfect harmony with the alfresco decorations with Christian themes, particularly the paintings describing the life and work of Saint Eulalia of Mérida, who, in the Roman era, refused to reject her Christian faith in favor of the official religion of the empire, for which she was tortured and killed. Conceptual elements, such as the peaceful coexistence between Christianity and Islam, tolerance and respect for other cultures and fundamental democratic rights, such as freedom of religion or freedom of expression, were addressed in an activity, which included a visit to the church and the participants’ creation of a description of their own lives in comic format, due to their difficulties in expressing themselves in Spanish. Upon finishing the comic, the participants presented their work orally in order to show the results. It was a huge effort for them as they explained the causes of their travels, the situation of their countries of origin, or the conditions that they lived in refugee camps. This action permitted, both the researchers and the participants, a better understanding of each other.

The second activity took place in the ceramic workshop of “Romero & Hernández Alfareros”. The ceramic industry has been one of the main activities of Totana since the Middle Ages. Indeed, working with ceramics is a common element in all cultures and civilizations around the world, although, due to the quality of its clays and the presence of the river, this industry grew exponentially in Totana throughout the Islamic era and remains today one of the town’s most important industries. At the end of the activity, some participants also presented their creations and explained the relation between them and the life in their former countries.

The third activity was carried out in the neighboring towns of Pliego and Mula. Firstly, the Argaric archaeological site of La Almoloya in Pliego was visited. Argaric civilization was established in the south-east of the Iberian Peninsula during the Bronze period. This site preserves, what possibly is, one of the oldest parliamentary building in Western Europe (c. 2200 B.C.). Subsequently, the Museum of Mula was visited, where the tombs and funeral trousseaux of the aforementioned site are displayed. The replica (scale 1:1) of the parliamentary building was also visited, where the participants performed a role play activity in order to learn about different government institutions (municipal, regional, national, and European) and the importance of the laws and the Constitution which have to be passed by Parliament. Each participant took on a role within the town council in order to represent democratic elections: mayoral candidates, councilors, political opposition, citizens, problems to be solved in the town, etc. An interesting point was the debate that emerged at the end of the activity making the participants reflect on the importance of living in a democratic system.

The fourth and final activity was an educational tour of public history around the historical center of the city of Murcia. The first stop was the Museum of Santa Clara,
currently located in the convent of the order of Saint Clare, which was formerly the Al-Qsr Al-Sagir (lesser kasbah) of the governors of Murcia during the Islamic period. Then, the present-day square of Santo Domingo was visited, which, in medieval times, served as the town’s marketplace or souk. The third stop on the route was the crossroads known as “Las 4 esquinas” between the central streets Traperia and Platería, which represent the medieval guilds which worked in the town. The next stop was the Cathedral of Murcia, a Gothic construction with a spectacular Baroque façade. At the entrance to the cathedral’s museum, it is still possible to observe the archaeological remains of the town’s old mosque which was located on the same sacred site. To end the tour, the monumental site of San Juan de Dios was visited. This is an oval Rococo-style church which formed part of the old hospital of the Brothers Hospitallers of Saint John of God. This building is located on the mediaeval site of the Al-Qsr Al-Kabir (greater kasbah), which was the seat of power of the town. In the building, which was always dedicated to religious occupations, it is possible to visit the Christian church and the Islamic oratory, which is preserved with the Mihrab arch from the Islamic era.

2.4. Instrument Design, Validation and Research Procedure

For the data collection process, an ad hoc questionnaire was designed which was applied before starting the educational experiment (pre-test) and, again, at the end of the process (post-test). In this way, it was possible to measure the learning progression and change in perceptions of the participating students.

The design of the evaluation instrument was based on prior questionnaires carried out by the World Values Survey as they are partners in the European project that fund the study [26]. The instrument was adapted to the context and participants of the teaching experiment. In order to carry out this part of the research, the oral assistance of two translators (Persian/French and Arabic) was required, who could explain each of the questions asked to the participants.

The instrument (Supplementary Material) consists of 13 items and is divided into three blocks of contents (related to the specific objectives) preceded by a section containing the sociodemographic data of the participants (items 1 to 5):

- Block 1. The social values of the migrants regarding their adaptation to the new country (items 6 to 9);
- Block 2. Values concerning democracy, participation, institutions and the Constitution (items 10, 11 and 13);
- Block 3. Cultural values regarding the presence of Islamic religion and culture in European culture (item 12).

The design of the questionnaire implied both qualitative and quantitative items, as is the case in other similar research within the field of the teaching of the social sciences [27] and heritage education [28]. In this sense, it is important to remark that the use of a quantitative analysis was determined by the intellectual outputs of the European project that funded the study (Erasmus+ KA2) where the goal is to evaluate and grade the changes and progression of knowledge using different elements related to cultural heritage. The authors considered the use of a deep interview to obtain a qualitative analysis, but the characteristics of the participants and their difficulty to express themselves fluently was an important limitation to assess the research.

As far as the validity of the research instrument is concerned, an internal reliability analysis was carried out via the Cronbach’s alpha test, employing the statistical package SPSS v 24. The alpha value obtained for the five items with quantitative numerical values (Likert scale) was 0.676. This indicates a positive and acceptable internal consistency of the instrument, as established in prior studies [29,30], which indicate that the reliability of an instrument is acceptable between 0.6 and 0.9 (Table 1) [31,32].
Table 1. Internal reliability analysis.

| Reliability Value | Cronbach’s alpha | Elements |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------|

Authors’ own elaboration.

Finally, as far as the data analysis procedure is concerned, it should be highlighted that participation in the questionnaires was consensual as it was voluntary and previously informed, both in Spanish and in the participants’ own languages.

The questionnaires were applied both before and after the implementation of the teaching unit. In fact, in order to be able to evaluate learning and to avoid answers being influenced by the development of the experiment, the pre-test questionnaire was implemented 7 days before the start, whereas the post-test questionnaire was applied 15 days after the end of the teaching unit.

The data analysis was performed using the statistical package IBM SPSS v 24 (IBM, New York, NY, USA), carrying out a statistical-descriptive analysis of the data obtained.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results Relating to Social Links to the Host Country

As has been mentioned above, the first specific objective of this research (S.O. 1) was to identify the social links and relationships of migrants and refugees with regard to the country which receives them, in this case, Spain.

Analyzing the results in relation to the gender of the participants, the study did not identify any difference between men and women. As a hypothesis, we believe that the fact of responding orally to the translators (both men) could influenced the responses of the four women.

Thus, in items 6 to 9 of the questionnaire, the recently arrived refugees and migrants were asked about: their mastery of Spanish, a fundamental aspect for communication and their subsequent access to the labor market [33,34]; their feelings regarding making a home in a foreign country; the social connection which they perceive with regard to the host country; and their perception of how they might adapt to Spain’s social values (Table 2).

Table 2. Migrants and refugees’ social links to the host country.

| Items                                           | Values | Pre-Test Frequency | Pre % | Post-Test Frequency | Post % |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------|--------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| Item 6: Do you speak Spanish?                   | Yes    | 0                  | 0     | 2                   | 14.3  |
|                                                | Some   | 11                 | 73.3  | 7                   | 50    |
|                                                | No     | 4                  | 26.7  | 5                   | 37.7  |
| Item 7: Do you feel at home?                    | Yes    | 11                 | 73.3  | 13                  | 92.9  |
|                                                | Somewhat | 2                  | 13.3  | 0                   | 0     |
|                                                | No     | 2                  | 13.3  | 1                   | 7.1   |
| Item 8: Which country do you feel more of a connection with? | Country of origin | 10                 | 66.7  | 0                   | 0     |
|                                                | Spain  | 3                  | 20    | 2                   | 14.3  |
|                                                | Both   | 2                  | 13.3  | 12                  | 85.7  |
|                                                | Neither | 0                  | 0     | 0                   | 0     |
| Item 9: Is it easy for you to adapt to life in Spain? | Easy    | 11                 | 73.3  | 10                  | 71.4  |
|                                                | Somewhat | 4                  | 26.7  | 4                   | 28.6  |
|                                                | Difficult | 0                  | 0     | 0                   | 0     |

Authors’ own elaboration.

As can be observed in Table 2, the comparative results between the pre-test and post-test are, in general, extremely positive.

Item 6 (Do you speak Spanish?) is a fundamental element which is often neglected in formal education as migrants and international asylum seekers consider the language to
be the main means for socialization, communication and integration into the host society. Furthermore, migrants depend on mastery of the language when it comes to finding a career which will enable them to obtain stability and an acceptable standard of living in the host country. In this regard, in spite of the short time gap between the pre-test and the post-test, there was an increment of 14.3% among the participants who claim to already be able to communicate in Spanish, although they were just capable to maintain very simple conversations and none of them were able to speak fluently in Spanish.

In relation to item 7 (Do you feel at home?), the majority of the participants answered that they did, both in the pre-test (73.3%) and the post-test (92.9%). However, it should be highlighted here that there was a 19.6% increase in positive answers following the implementation of the teaching unit. Obviously, it is important to state that these positive answers are related with the positive perception of Spain held by recently arrived migrants and asylum seekers. This is particularly the case among the majority of the Afghan participants, who arrived in Spain due to the intervention of the Spanish Government and its embassy in Afghanistan, which helped its Afghan workers and their families to leave the country amidst a climate of political pressure, religious oppression, loss of rights and freedoms, denial of gender equality and violence following the ascent to power of the Taliban regime.

However, the 19.6% increase in positive answers is worthy of note, as it indicates that the majority of the participants have seen their values, culture and religion reflected among the democratic values present in Spanish society. Particularly, the deeply-rooted presence of the Islamic past and its monumental remains in the south-east of Spain has led them to consider Spain to be a welcoming nation accepting of all cultures of its past which can be positively integrated into its present-day society.

Indeed, item 8 (Which country do you feel more of a connection with?) confirms the good results of the educational experiment and show a close relation to activities 1 and 4, where the proposal tried to link Muslim cultural heritage to their personal beliefs. Before the implementation of the activities, the majority of the participants (66.7%) only felt a connection with their country of origin. However, after the teaching unit on cultural heritage and integration had been completed, the vast majority (85.7%) claimed to feel identified with both their country of origin and the host country. Indeed, 14.3% of the participants even claimed to feel an identification with the host country upon becoming aware of their rights and freedoms and the institutions and laws which protect them. This information is in line with other studies [35] which have revealed that cultural identification is a key element when wishing to settle and become integrated in the host country, with the language being the main element which enables such integration.

Finally, with regard to item 9 (Is it easy for you to adapt to life in Spain?), it can be observed that there is almost no variation in the pre-test (73.3%) and post-test (71.4%) results with the participants considering that their integration in and adaptation to the host country is easy. Evidently, the fact that this is a study carried out with recently arrived migrants included in a welcome program offering language tuition, legal protection and the provision of food and accommodation has a clear influence on this positive perception. These positive data confirm that the work being done by the welcoming NGOs (in this case the CEPAIM Foundation) is successful in achieving the integration of migrants into the host society.

3.2. Results Related to Democratic Values, Institutions, Participation and the Constitution

The second section of the research instrument is aimed at analyzing the results relating to S.O. 2 regarding the democratic institutions, values, participation, and the Spanish Constitution.

Table 3 shows the comparative results of the pre-test and post-test in relation to items 10, 11 and 13 of the questionnaire.
Table 3. Results related to democratic values, institutions, participation and the Constitution.

| Items                                                                 | Values                              | Pre-Test Frequency | Pre % | Post-Test Frequency | Post % |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|---------------------|--------|
| Item 10: Do you believe that the Spanish Constitution guarantees that the rights of migrants are respected? | Yes, they are always respected      | 6                  | 40    | 8                   | 57.1   |
|                                                                       | Somewhat                            | 5                  | 33.3  | 4                   | 28.6   |
|                                                                       | No, they are never respected        | 4                  | 26.7  | 3                   | 14.3   |
| Item 11: If you obtain Spanish nationality, can you vote in elections? | Local                               | 2                  | 13.3  | 0                   | 0      |
|                                                                       | National                            | 0                  | 0     | 0                   | 0      |
|                                                                       | European                            | 0                  | 0     | 0                   | 0      |
|                                                                       | All elections                       | 0                  | 0     | 10                  | 71.4   |
|                                                                       | No, I cannot vote                   | 0                  | 0     | 0                   | 0      |
|                                                                       | I don’t know                        | 13                 | 86.7  | 4                   | 28.6   |
| Item 13: How important is it for you to live in a democratically governed country? | Extremely important                 | 10                 | 66.7  | 12                  | 85.7   |
|                                                                       | Not very important                  | 1                  | 6.7   | 2                   | 14.3   |
|                                                                       | Somewhat important                  | 4                  | 26.7  | 0                   | 0      |

Authors’ own elaboration.

As can be observed in Table 3, the results regarding democratic values, institutions and participation are extremely positive.

Item 10 inquired about the rights and duties guaranteed by the Spanish Constitution to all people, independently of their country of origin, religion, skin color, or ethnicity. The results of the pre-test show a lack of knowledge regarding such issues, with 40% believing that such rights and duties were, indeed, guaranteed. However, 28.6% and 14.3% considered that their rights were guaranteed to some extent or not at all, respectively.

The post-test result, on the other hand, demonstrated how, after completing activity 3 of the teaching unit on institutions, rights and the Spanish Constitution, the participants changed their perception regarding the Constitution as a basic guarantee of individual rights and freedoms. Following this activity, 57.1% of the participants claimed to trust the Constitution as an essential framework granting them the same rights as the rest of the citizens of the host country.

As far as item 11 is concerned (If you obtain Spanish nationality, can you vote in elections?), democratic participation was also taken into account in the teaching unit along the activity number 3 where they reflected about the elections and democratic participation. This was achieved via role-playing, in which the participants had to take on the role of candidates and voters in democratic elections.

In this aspect, the comparative study was extremely positive (in terms of understanding the Spanish political system) given that before the teaching experiment, the majority of the migrants (86.7%) did not know whether they were able to vote in elections, whereas after completing the exercise, the majority (71.4%) were sure that if they obtained Spanish nationality, they could participate in all forms of democratic elections under the same conditions as all Spanish citizens.

Last of all, item 13 asked the participants about the importance they attribute to living in a country which is governed democratically. In this regard, albeit to a much lesser extent, the results have also been positive as in the pre-test 66.7% of the participants considered it to be extremely important, whereas in the post-test there was an increase up to 85.7%. It is notable that this increase essentially took place among the African participants, who were much more skeptical at the beginning of the activity regarding the importance of democracy as a system of government. In fact, according to the sample, both in the pre-test and the post-test the Afghan participants gave a lot of importance to have a democratic elected government, as recently they lost this chance due to the arrival of the Taliban regime.

Indeed, these positive data at the end of the teaching experiment are in line with those of prior research (one such study focuses on the case of Germany) regarding the democratic values of refugees [36], which has established that, with the exception of religious and secular values, migrants and refugees arriving in Europe attribute great importance to
and are in agreement with Europe’s democratic values and gender equality. This can be attributed to the fact that problems of racism, xenophobia, discrimination and acculturation are more related with issues of religious, ethnic and cultural supremacy.

3.3. Results Related to Cultural Values and Integration

The final block of the questionnaire inquired about the education in cultural values perceived by the participants in the host country (S.O. 3). In this case, the teaching proposal essentially employed the shared cultural heritage between Christianity and Islam, which coexisted in Al-Andalus during the Middle Ages (with an educational tour around the city of Murcia). Furthermore, the Islamic heritage which still persists in the Spanish society of today was reflected upon (such as the case of the Mudéjar art contained within the Sanctuary of Saint Eulalia in Totana) along with how it has become integrated into present-day society as a cultural, religious and touristic element of great value.

Thus, Table 4 shows the results of item 12, which was divided into five sub-items, all of which were related with Islamic culture and religion and its presence as an element of the past, the history and the culture of Spanish society.

**Table 4.** Results related to cultural values and integration.

| Items | Values | Pre-Test Frequency | Pre % | Post-Test Frequency | Post % |
|-------|--------|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| Item 12a: My culture of origin is very different to that of Spain | Disagree | 0 | 0 | 2 | 14.3 |
| | Agree | 15 | 100 | 12 | 85.7 |
| | Don’t know | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Item 12b: Spanish culture has things in common with other cultures of the world | Disagree | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Agree | 15 | 100 | 14 | 100 |
| | Don’t know | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Item 12c: Islamic art, culture and religion are present in Spanish culture | Disagree | 10 | 66.7 | 2 | 14.3 |
| | Agree | 5 | 33.3 | 6 | 42.9 |
| | Don’t know | 0 | 0 | 6 | 42.9 |
| Item 12d: Islam forms an important part of the history of the Region of Murcia | Disagree | 10 | 66.7 | 0 | 0 |
| | Agree | 5 | 33.3 | 14 | 100 |
| | Don’t know | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Item 12e: Spanish culture is the product of the passage of different cultures through its territory | Disagree | 3 | 20 | 1 | 7.1 |
| | Agree | 12 | 80 | 11 | 78.6 |
| | Don’t know | 0 | 0 | 2 | 14.3 |

Authors’ own elaboration.

If Table 4 is observed along with the results relating to the section on cultural integration of migrants with regard to the host country, it can, again, be noted that good results are achieved via the activities implemented in the teaching unit (activity 1 on Mudéjar art and activity 4 with the educational tour of the cultural heritage of medieval Islamic Murcia).

In item 12a on the cultural differences between the participants’ countries of origin and Spain, the results are positive. In general, both in the pre-test (100%) and in the post-test (85.7%), the participants perceive great differences between their culture of origin and that of Spain, although it should be mentioned that in the post-test the percentage fell by 14.3% and that participants think that between both cultures there are also similarities.

However, item 12b helped the participants to recognize that Spanish culture is related with other world cultures. Both the pre-test and the post-test show that 100% of the participants were in agreement on this issue, although they mainly related Spanish culture with other European cultures (due to religious reasons) or cultures from Central and South America, with which Spain shares a common language and religion.

The most positive results in this section can be observed in items 12c and 12d, which are directly related with the religion of Islam and the culture of the Region of Murcia. This can be explained by the fact that the activities and the teaching unit as a whole
employed examples of heritage belonging to the Region of Murcia. In item 12c, a significant change in trend can be observed as in the pre-test the majority of the participants (66.7%) disagreed with the idea that Islamic art, culture, and religion were present in Spanish culture. However, the post-test shows a change in this perception as the participants in disagreement with this statement descended to 14.3%, whereas those believing that Islamic culture is present in Spanish culture increased to 42.9%.

Item 12d directly links Islam with the Region of Murcia. In this regard, the pre-test demonstrates a clear lack of knowledge of the past, as 66.7% of the participants were in disagreement with this statement. The post-test, on the other hand, demonstrated a significant improvement as, after carrying out the activities, 100% of the sample were in agreement with the fact that Islam constitutes an important cultural element of the history of the Region of Murcia.

Last of all, item 12e makes reference to the fact that the culture of present-day Spain is the product of the passage of different peoples, cultures, and religions over the centuries. In this aspect, both the pre-test (80%) and the post-test (78.6%) show similar results.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, it is important to recall that the main objective of this research is to analyze the results of the implementation of a teaching unit aimed at migrants and refugees employing cultural heritage education for the teaching and learning of democratic values. The use of cultural heritage in teaching and learning processes is always linked to the development of a critical understanding of our past, what allow the participants to identify themselves with the cultural heritage promoting, at the same time, a sustainable preservation for the future of the monuments, churches, archeological sites, and museums.

Prior research [36] has mentioned that the integration, or lack thereof, of migrants and refugees in our societies generates intense political debate, which is frequently linked with the cultural differences of people who arrive in Europe. Positive examples of coexistence, tolerance and respect among the different cultures and traditions living in Europe are generally ignored in the mass media and political discussions.

In general, the results of the implementation of the aforementioned activities have been extremely positive.

As far as the results relating to Specific Objective 1 (Identifying the social links of migrants to the host country) are concerned, what stands out is how the mastery of the Spanish language of certain members of the group has improved. This aspect [33,34] is considered by some experts to be a key factor in migrants achieving a better level of integration and coexistence and in helping them to find stable employment.

In addition, it is remarkable how the activities proposed have helped to achieve a better perception of integration in the host country among refugees, given that the majority of the participants have stated that, socially, they now feel a connection to both countries as they see some of their cultural realities reflected in their host country.

As regards Specific Objective 2, regarding the Constitution and democratic participation, it is also worthy of note that the activities have led to an increase in the participants' level of trust in the Spanish Constitution as a guarantee of their own rights and freedoms and the importance that migrants attribute to living in a democratic country. Furthermore, the teaching unit has remedied a significant shortcoming as far as the democratic participation of migrants is concerned as, at the beginning of the experiment, the majority of the participants were not aware of how elections work and whether they were permitted to exercise the right to vote or not.

Finally, in relation to Specific Objective 3, regarding cultural values, the results have shown how recently arrived people were almost completely unaware of the significant cultural heritage left behind by Islamic culture and religion in Spain and in the Region of Murcia. The visits to the Sanctuary of Saint Eulalia in Totana and the educational tour of Muslim Murcia helped the participants to appreciate the integration and coexistence of
this Islamic cultural heritage in the present-day society of the host country as an important element within its rich legacy via which migrants can feel a sense of identification.

The necessity of the inclusion of these activities, which are based on the coexistence and integration of different religions (Christianity and Islam), is related with the need to show good practices and positive experiences between the two cultures, which are often used as a pretext for generating hatred, confrontation and racism.

Thus, in the case of Spain and, specifically, the Region of Murcia, monuments and cultural elements from the Islamic past of the region were chosen as they imply a controversial heritage [37] according to the political discourse of the far right, which does not consider these elements to belong to the “traditional, white and Catholic culture of Spain”. However, in reality, studies on the teaching of heritage prove that there is no single cultural heritage, but rather it should be interpreted in accordance with the wealth of cultural diversity which has been built up over the course of centuries, attributing importance to all contributions (some of which may have become invisible [38]) made by different cultures and religions to the culture of each people [39].

Thus, the educational proposal based on the Islamic cultural heritage of the Region of Murcia, as an example of integration and coexistence for present-day Spanish society, has shown, first of all, the importance that migrants attribute to living in a society based on democratic values in which they can participate politically. Secondly, it demonstrates how migrants and refugees feel more a sense of identification and feel more at home when they perceive that the host country shares certain cultural and religious characteristics with their country of origin. This encourages us to continue research into this type of inclusive education, showing good examples of coexistence and tolerance among different religions, which are often the focus of discourses of assimilation, acculturation, hatred and racism.

At the same time, the study found limitations in terms of communication and could be continued and improved through the implementation of open deep interviews to the participants. That could permit new data and information emerge and, at the same time, avoid the limitation of the quantitative analysis.

**Supplementary Materials:** The following supporting information can be downloaded at: https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/su142013466/s1, Research instrument, pre-test results and post-test results, complete didactic unit and sequence of activities.

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