

## Maritime Heritage and Primary Education in Galicia (Spain)

Patrimonio marítimo y Educación en Galicia (España)

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### Abstract

This paper aims to demonstrate the social and educational relevance of maritime heritage as an element of social cohesion, symbolic recognition and cultural identity. The region of Galicia in north-west Spain is taken as a case study. This area is one of Europe's most important fishing areas and has extensive maritime heritage. In order to contribute to the design of educational projects which foster links and emotional connections with the maritime environment, a mixed research method is employed to identify the degree to which maritime heritage is used in the education of Galician schoolchildren (aged 6-12). The results seem to confirm that, in spite of the importance of this type of heritage in Galicia, it is scarcely visible in the region's schools, receiving very little attention in the curriculum. This could lead to indifference among citizens towards the sea as a heritage asset.

**Key words:** maritime heritage, primary education, heritage education, identity, curriculum.

### Resumen

Este artículo pretende demostrar la relevancia social y educativa del patrimonio marítimo como elemento de cohesión social, reconocimiento simbólico e identidad cultural. Se toma como caso de estudio la región de Galicia, en el noroeste de España. Esta zona es una de las áreas pesqueras más importantes de Europa y cuenta con un extenso patrimonio marítimo. Con el fin de contribuir al diseño de proyectos educativos que fomenten vínculos y conexiones emocionales con el entorno marítimo, se emplea un método de investigación mixto para identificar el grado de utilización del patrimonio marítimo en la educación de los escolares gallegos (6-12 años). Los resultados parecen confirmar que, a pesar de la importancia de este tipo de patrimonio en Galicia, es escasamente visible en las escuelas de la región, recibiendo muy poca atención en el currículo. Esto podría provocar la indiferencia de los ciudadanos hacia el mar como bien patrimonial.

**Palabras clave:** patrimonio marítimo, educación primaria, educación patrimonial, identidad, curriculum.

### Introduction

The current trend in education is to humanize the concept of heritage, establishing a relationship and an emotional link between people and the heritage of their immediate surroundings. In the case of the Autonomous Community of Galicia (north-west Spain), one of Europe's main fishing areas, maritime heritage plays a significant role, serving as an element of social cohesion and of symbolic and cultural identity. In spite of the

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importance of this type of heritage in understanding the history of Galicia and the relationship of past generations with heritage assets, its presence in the classroom today is scarce. This may lead to a lack of knowledge and a feeling of indifference among primary schoolchildren towards this heritage. By employing a mixed research method, this paper aims to demonstrate the wealth of maritime heritage in order to contribute to the design of educational projects which foster links and emotional connections with the maritime environment. It also seeks to highlight the educational potential of maritime heritage for the construction of a society which is committed to its environment and its community. Finally, it analyses the heritage dimension of the sea in order to understand it from a holistic perspective.

## **1.Theoretical Framework**

### ***1.1 Approach to heritage from education***

The concept of heritage is polysemic and is constantly undergoing a process of deconstruction and construction (Hernández, 2003, p. 455). It changes constantly, as it is a cultural process which depends on generalized consensus as far as its explanation is concerned (Oriola, 2019). The definition of heritage has undergone many modifications over the course of history. The prevailing definition today is one of monumentalism, which associates heritage with grandiose, historical constructions (Smith, 2006). This point of view is also reflected in the field of education, as, according to Estepa (Estepa, 2001), it is found in both the conceptions of teachers and students and in teaching materials. The UNESCO Declarations on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003), and on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, as well as the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Council of Europe, 2005) have broadened the traditional perspective of heritage as outlined by Smith (2006), encompassing its use and safeguarding, heritage community and participatory governance (Kisić, 2013).

In order to prevent a lack of knowledge, disinterest and indifference towards heritage, education should evolve towards a vision in which people play an ever-increasing role (Jiménez-Esquinas, 2020). Thus, it is necessary to give a more human dimension to this concept, understanding that without people, there is no heritage. To move from indifference towards a symbolic appropriation, through which appreciation and identification are fostered, heritage education is required as it serves as a tool to provide students with criteria for assigning values to elements with which they identify and want to preserve.

Heritage fosters a connection between the past, the present and the future. It is a key resource within teaching and learning processes, contributing to historical thinking. Heritage elements make it significantly easier to understand past events in a more motivating way as they are indelible marks of the past on the present (Van Boxtel et al., 2015 in Luna et al., 2023). In the words of Lowenthal (1998), heritage is a declaration of faith in what is ancient. It is not merely something tangible, but rather a set of shared principles and values which nourish common memory, mutual understanding, one's own

cultural identity and that of the community, dialogue and human creativity (Vadrucci, 2025). It refers to behaviours, beliefs, habits and artifacts which are passed on from generation to generation, shaping a communal, shared identity which normally provides people and communities with a sense of pride and identity, whilst also playing an important role in the promotion of intercultural dialogue and the preservation of natural resources (Orphanidou et al., 2024). Han et al. (2024) define cultural heritage as a physical symbol and an incarnation of history, memory and culture, the preservation of which requires the work of local communities. Heritage as a collective cultural inheritance connects yesterday's people to those of the present, with the latter having the right to enjoy the elements of which it consists, whilst also having the duty to pass them on in a better state to the next generations (González-Monfort, 2011). According to Ballart et al. (2010), heritage is a valuable asset which connects different generations and forms identities. In this way, heritage elements are a door to the past or, to put it in another way, an anchor for memory, constituting a visible element of a now invisible world, the loss of which is irreparable (Nora, 1987 in González-Monfort, 2011). While people come and go, culture persists, as long as one generation passes it on to the next (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). Therefore, it can be stated that it is a product of the present, developed to cover present needs or demands and shaped to those needs, as stated by Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996). These authors explain that there are two types of intergenerational links, both of which are determined by the present, as, from the present, an inheritance of an imagined past is selected for its present-day use, whilst, also from the present, it is decided what should be transmitted to an imagined future.

It must be taken into account that, as it is a social construct, all heritage has, at some point, been contemporary, depending on the specific contexts which experienced its histories and dynamics (Vadrucci, 2025). Everybody, in their own particular situation and context, is free to accept or reject the legacy they receive. Howard and Graham (2016) highlight "select" as a key word, arguing that not everything from the past or all culture is heritage. They point out that meanings are marked by an identity and are produced and exchanged via social interaction. In turn, they regulate and structure our behaviours and practices and contribute to determining rules, norms and conventions. Therefore, it is the people of a society who attribute meaning to things (Howard & Graham, 2016).

Ruskin (in Ballart, 2007) explains that objects from the past are fascinating as they are humanized material which bears the hallmark of its creators, who are no longer alive. Furthermore, taking into account the changing world in which we live today, the objects which endure from the past are a treasure which draws our attention when it is examined in depth. However, they are not merely objects of desire, but rather the best resource available to the current generation to understand the passage of time and to contrast life today with that of preceding generations (Ballart, 2007). As long as there is an oral witness, there is history to be recovered and transmitted to future generations.

What is more, from the present, it seems reasonable to contribute a new heritage to that which we have inherited, one which is related to contemporary social needs, making it possible to build shared and inclusive identities from an ethical perspective. Graham (2002) states that, if heritage is the contemporary use of the past, the meaning of which

is defined in the present, then we create the heritage we need and manage it for a series of aims defined by the needs and demands of our present-day society.

In the field of education, the concept of heritage is humanized and identified as an asset related to society which belongs to all of us (Quintero, 2011). According to this approach, heritage is inseparable from people and it is understood as a link between the object and the subject (Fontal, 2003). This is not only the case with tangible assets, as they can also be intangible, such as memories. In other words, heritage is what people use to establish a relationship or connections by attributing it with a meaning. This (re)signification implies establishing relationships of belonging, ownership and identification linked to sentimentality (Baudrillard, 2010). Given that education can contribute to people acquiring tools to identify their emotional connections with certain elements (Gómez, 2015), heritagization tends to be spoken of as a process which implies action on the part of the subjects. According to Fontal et al. (2020), people are capable of heritagizing and deheritagizing a cultural asset, assigning it a specific value. In this way, almost any object can become heritage. This process of awareness raising (Fontal, 2003; Fontal & Gómez, 2015; Gómez Redondo, 2012) is important, as, in accordance with Castro and Castro (2018), if heritage is not valued, it will not be preserved. Educational projects can, therefore, serve to recognize connections and to establish new criteria for evaluation. This sequence coincides with a similar model from Germany known as “COBA”, Communication Model for Built Heritage Assets - Going from Knowing to Identification” (Ripp & Hauer, 2017). In this model, the individual passes through several different levels, from simple recipient, with limited knowledge, to involved expert in relation to the chosen heritage element.

Therefore, heritage education is a tool which, from a symbolic identity perspective (Cuenca, 2013, 2014), contributes to the construction of a critical, responsible citizenship which participates in and is committed to and competent in the creation of an identity which is both its own and shared (Carrera, 2005; Cuenca, 2014; Cuenca et al., 2020; Cuenca & Estepa, 2017; Trabajo & Cuenca, 2017). This teaching and learning process encourages the subject to become involved with heritage (Copeland, 2006). This is a strategy which is endorsed in Spain by entities such as the Plan Nacional de Educación y Patrimonio (National Plan for Education and Heritage) (Domingo et al., 2013) and the Observatorio de Educación Patrimonial (Observatory of Heritage Education in Spain) (Fontal, 2016).

Heritage can be a powerful tool for the teaching and learning of the social sciences (Van Boxtel et al., 2016). Hernández (2005) explains that it can be conceived of as a holistic entity and compares its structure to that of an iceberg. In this metaphor, the tip is represented by present-day society, which is held up by what is submerged. The use of heritage in the classroom serves to raise awareness of the submerged part of the iceberg, our historical legacy, which sustains today's society. This legacy often goes unnoticed or is ignored by the majority of society. Thus, heritage can be a resource for establishing links between a society and its identity (Cuenca & Estepa, 2017). Hence the importance of carrying out educational projects in which students learn about the heritage which surrounds them, as they can then value it and consider it to be part of

their identity. Jiménez-Esquinas (2021) states that a community which does not build its own heritage lacks an emotional connection which is essential for participating in its management and care.

Each country has its own historical events which are vital for the creation of collective memory (Van Boxtel et al. 2015). As López Arroyo (2013) states, there must be a holistic re-evaluation and resignification of the local context as a prior step to its recognition, safeguarding and subsequent dissemination. Bringing students closer to the heritage which surrounds them brings about significant learning which helps them to understand it and to feel part of it (Pinto & Ibañez-Etxeberria, 2018). Gillate et al. (2021) argue that local heritage implies the creation of relationships between people and assets in a process of identification and symbolic appropriation. In spite of the possibilities offered by local places, most teachers do not use them in their planning. Indeed, a perspective dealing with controversial issues is essential to put into practice innovative teaching methods, which contribute to the development of historical thinking (Domínguez, 2015; Sáiz et al. 2017) and respectful attitudes to the local context. Such an approach fosters the construction of a critical citizenship based on heritage education and the teaching of history (Gosselin & Livingstone, 2016; Miralles et al., 2017; Pagès, 2000; Pinto, 2013; Van Boxtel et al., 2015).

### ***1.2. The sea in Galicia: an economic and heritage powerhouse***

Spain is a maritime country par excellence with around 8,000 km of coastline. Of these, 1,498 km belong to Galicia, where more than half of its 2,705,833 inhabitants live in close proximity to the coast (Instituto Galego de Estadística, 2024). The use of maritime resources and the economic impact of its maritime activity make Galicia a significant fishing power. At the present time, Galicia's maritime-fishing sector is one of the most important in Europe and represents 50% of Spain's fishing activity. The region's maritime activities have produced a great maritime heritage which must be preserved (Ley 4/2023). Galicia's maritime culture, which is still very much alive today, has crossed borders, extending far beyond its own coastline (Xunta de Galicia, 2024b). The sea is Galicia's connection with history, although there seems to be a degree of detachment and a lack of information regarding the region's maritime past (Lema, 2022 in Grupos de Acción Local del sector Pesquero, 2022).

The sea is traditionally associated with masculinity (Xunta de Galicia, 2024b), with the work of the women on land (as they were not allowed to embark) becoming invisible.

Women play a key role in the fishing industry, particularly in relation to shellfishing, the processing and sale of fish, the manufacture and repair of equipment, such as nets, and in occupying positions in the administration and management of fishing. However, there is a vast chasm between the presence of women in extractive fishing and shellfishing on foot. A total of 11,053 men are employed in extractive fishing, representing 95.65% of the total, making this an almost completely male trade (Consellería do Mar, 2021). However, on land the situation is quite different, as 89.7% of those employed in shellfishing on foot are women (Consellería do Mar, 2012).

The evolution of these data from 2011 to 2021 indicates that total employment in extractive fishing has reduced and that rate of female employment has not changed significantly, remaining stable in this period at around 500 women (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Evolution of employment by sex in extractive fishing in Galicia (Spain). Own elaboration based on data provided by Ocupesca, Xunta de Galicia from 2011 to 2021 (Consellería do Mar, undated).

Fishing and fish farming are the main activities which generate employment in this coastal region, with a total of 19,565 employment contracts in 2021, representing 38.5% of the total for Spain (Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, 2022) (Figure 2).

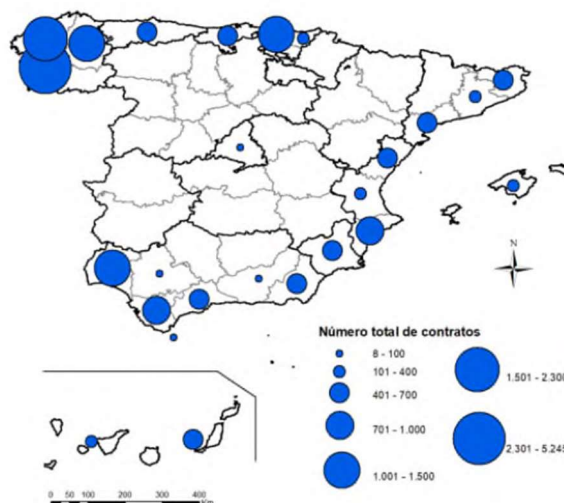


Figure 2. Total number of contracts in the fishing and fish farming sector in Spain. Source: Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación (2022).

However, over the years, fewer and fewer workers have been employed in the fishing industry, which has come to have an ageing population (Table 1). This could become a significant problem in the future due to the extinction of trades, traditions and equipment made with traditional methods to make the most of the resources offered by the sea.



Year/ Age	2010		2012		2014		2016		2018		2020		2022		2023		2024	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
16-24	0.3	0	0.7	0.1	0.5	0	0.4	0	0.3	0	0.2	0	0.5	0	0.2	0	0.2	0
25-34	2.8	0.8	2.4	0.2	2.1	0.6	2.6	0.6	3.0	0	2.1	0	2.1	0.1	1.9	0.4	1.5	0.4
35-44	5.5	0.7	4.7	1.1	3.7	1.0	5.0	1.2	2.5	0.8	4.3	1.6	4.7	1.2	3.4	0.6	3.4	0.5
45-54	5.6	1.3	6.5	1.5	5.8	0.5	6.8	1.8	4.5	1.3	6.3	1.1	5.3	2.1	6.4	1.9	6.8	1.9
55+	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.2	2.4	1.5	1.8	1	3.2	0.8	2.3	0.7	3.6	1.2	2.8	1.1
TOTAL	16.4	4	15.7	4.5	13.6	3.3	17.2	5.1	12.1	3.1	16.1	3.5	14.9	4.1	15.5	4.1	14.7	3.9
	20.4		20.2		16.9		22.3		15.2		19.6		19		19.6		18.6	

Note: \*values in thousands, \*M=male and F=female

Table 1. Population employed in fishing and fish farming according to sex and age. Own elaboration based on data provided by the Instituto Gallego de Estadística (2024) (Galician Institute of Statistics).

Fishing, shellfishing, marine fish farming and the processing industry of seafood products provide work to more than 50,800 people in Galicia, of whom 41,600 are fishermen/women and 9,200 are shellfishers (García, 2003). This represents more than 50% of maritime/fishing employment in Spain and 10% of that of the European Union as a whole (Consellería do Mar, 2025).

Indeed, 91% of Galician economic activity is related in some way to the maritime-fishing industry, with Galicia being the tenth largest exporter of fish products in the world (exporting to 121 countries). Furthermore, Galicia has 127 ports and 65 fish markets for the initial sale of fresh seafood and has its own activity related with the processing of seafood in more than 30 countries (Xunta de Galicia, 2024b). As far as the number of fishing vessels in Spain is concerned, Galicia stands out above all the other Autonomous Communities. With a total of 4,198 fishing vessels, it boasts almost half of the 8,549 registered in Spain as a whole (Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, 2024).

Another trade with deep roots in Galicia is the canning industry, in which women represent 80% of the total number of employees (Gómez, 2024). According to data provided by Anfaco-Cecopesca, Galicia is the largest producer of canned fish and shellfish in Spain (Xunta de Galicia, 2025), with eight out of the ten canning companies with the highest turnover in the country. The top three companies alone are responsible for almost 75% of the revenue in this sector, with their main markets in European countries. Galicia is the most important region of Spain in terms of number of companies, production, turnover and exports, as well as employment created, with almost 260 companies employing 26,300 people, and more than 90% of national production, 80% of exports and 70% of turnover (Xunta de Galicia, 2024a). Thanks to the exports of the Galician canning industry, Spain is the leading producer of the European Union and lies second on a worldwide level, with only Thailand exporting more (Directo Ingeniería, 2023).

Vigo is the top port in Spain and the world in terms of fish sales for human consumption, obtaining a world record figure in 2014 of more than 865,000 tonnes of fish for human consumption (Fundamar, 2022; Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, 2023).

One of the biggest and most important canning companies in Europe belonged to the Massó family. Located in the town of Bueu (Pontevedra, Galicia), the company's premises have now been restored and opened to the public as a museum (Bluscus, undated).

The sea in Galicia is not only an economic resource of great importance, as has been shown, but it also provides breathtaking scenery and is worthy of note as an attraction for tourists and for its heritage. The region has a great deal of heritage linked to the sea, which for many years was the means of transmitting knowledge and communicating with other peoples. Thus, ways of life were developed which depended on the sea and left their mark on history. The social, economic and cultural progress of humanity has always been closely linked to the sea, which has played a key role in the development of coastal regions and the understanding of human history (Henderson, 2019). Maritime heritage is understood to be a cultural and social construct which arises due to the relationship of living people and their ways of interacting with the sea (Rubio-Ardanaz, 2009). As such, it includes elements of different categories which give an idea of the broadness and variety of its wealth (Xunta de Galicia, 2024b): a) industrial, popular, port and religious architecture, social housing, coastal and underwater archaeology and spaces for socialization; b) fishing equipment, tools, implements such as baskets, clothing and footwear, shipwrecks and traditional vessels; c) oral tradition (folklore), festivals, the naming of seas and oceans, culinary traditions, artistic representations, marine iconography and museums; d) trades related to the sea, ranging from fishing, gathering and processing to manufacturing and services.

In spite of its great wealth, the legacy of the sea in Galicia (the people's own way of speaking, brands, songs, traditions, legends, oral memory, buildings, etc.) seems to be being forgotten and is in danger of disappearing. In a recent study of Galician schoolchildren aged from 7 to 8 years old from an inland area, a lack of knowledge regarding trades related to the sea was detected, although members of the children's own families had worked in these same trades. This demonstrates the need to implement projects which lend visibility to maritime heritage and lead to Galician schoolchildren gaining an interest in such topics (Feijóo-Outumuro & Castro-Fernández, 2023)

It is reasonable to say that from the early years of their education children should be presented with reliable sources which provide information about the different dimensions of maritime culture in order for them to understand it in a holistic way. Rubio-Ardanaz (2009) put forward an interesting perspective of whether heritagization processes are merely oriented towards consumption. In this regard, the Dorna festival, which has long attracted a large number of tourists to the coastal town of Ribeira (A Coruña, Galicia), can be highlighted as an example of the alteration of the traditional meaning of a festival to its current commercial aims. Along these lines, Breton (1995) stated that there are two types of heritage: one of a more commercial nature subject to dissemination and another



which is neglected and forgotten and is a cause of embarrassment. In the case of Galicia, while its beaches, festivals, gastronomy and certain buildings such as lighthouses are given a great deal of visibility and are of importance for tourism, other elements, such as ports, fish markets, fishing vessels, fishermen's houses and trades occupied by women receive very little recognition from the tourist industry and are becoming largely forgotten parts of Galician maritime heritage.

### ***1.3. Lending visibility to maritime heritage from the field of education***

In order to recognize all the dimensions of maritime heritage, socio-educational interventions must be carried out which combine a human, relational and holistic approach. An example of this is the Plan da Cultura Marítima de Galicia: Horizonte 2030 (PCUMA) [Galician Maritime Culture Plan: Horizon 2030] (Xunta de Galicia, 2024b), which seeks to ensure that future generations maintain a connection with their maritime roots to understand the history, culture and economy of Galicia. This Plan demonstrates the relevance of maritime culture in the construction of Galician identity and the importance of water as an element of social identification and cohesion (Xunta de Galicia, 2023).

These types of plans and projects are mainly aimed at an adult population. However, there is an urgent need to begin the implementation of such projects in schools to contribute to the minimization of indifference, disconnection, detachment and disinterest towards the legacy of the children's ancestors or even towards the life their relatives still live from day to day. According to Ciampa et al. (2024), the disuse, abandonment or degradation of an area may be due to a low level of knowledge of its places, leading to a lack of responsibility for them, a low sense of belonging to the community and a lack of awareness regarding how to care for its heritage. Therefore, citizens must participate actively in order to achieve an integral management of their heritage which is more sustainable and long-lasting and to increase social cohesion.

Schools must promote activities to disseminate, preserve and encourage any manifestation of culture produced by maritime communities, a culture born in Galicia of the resources of its territory and with the sea at its centre (Xunta de Galicia, 2024b). In order to achieve this, it is also important to highlight existing conflicts deriving from the different dimensions of maritime heritage, among which can be found the role of women at sea, poaching, coastal pollution, the exploitation of resources, new meanings attributed to ancient festivals and the restoration of abandoned buildings of great historical value, such as salting factories, canning factories or old fishermen's houses. Through these issues, students can learn to develop critical thinking, which can provide them with criteria for developing links with maritime heritage. Thus, they can learn to take part in the taking of decisions about its management. Only in this way, via relating people with the sea, can the preservation of Galician maritime culture, which has left a deep mark on the region's cultural identity, be guaranteed.

Although heritage offers many advantages when it is used as a classroom resource, it is often used sparingly due to the lack of training regarding its understanding from a holistic

point of view (Chaparro et al., 2022) and due to the difficulty in transforming heritage assets into teaching resources (Fontal, 2013). Therefore, subjects which teach a correct and meaningful use of heritage must be included in training programmes for future primary education (6-12 years of age) teachers. Training courses regarding heritage should also be offered to in-service teachers as this concept is largely absent from the classroom, in part due to teachers' lack of knowledge, difficulties and needs (Castro-Fernández et al., 2020).

#### **1.4. The educational use of maritime heritage in Galicia**

One of the keys to understanding the growing sense of detachment concerning maritime heritage in Galicia can be found in the legislative context which establishes the guidelines for the design of study plans in obligatory education, the so-called curriculum.

Bearing in mind the words of Estepa and Cuenca (2006), when including the concept of heritage in the curriculum (DECRETO 155/2022), the purpose of educating in relation to heritage, what type of heritage education we wish to promote and how this is going to take place should all be taken into account.

In spite of the fact that heritage offers a number of advantages and tools for education, it is scarcely mentioned in the primary education curriculum (Pinto & Molina, 2015). While it is true that the presence of heritage in education legislation has increased (Fontal, 2003, 2011), it is still residual and superficial, going against what the Faro Convention of 2005 set out for the different stages of education (Council of Europe, 2005). Heritage is mainly connected to artistic and cultural competences, making no reference to social and citizenship competences (González-Monfort, 2011). In addition, the historical dimension still prevails over the symbolic-identity dimension. To this is added the lack of initial training of primary education teachers in Spain (Fontal, 2016; Fontal et al., 2017) and the negligible presence of heritage in the primary education curriculum (Fontal et al., 2017). Prior studies have shown that, in spite of the increase in the presence of heritage in Organic Law 8/2013, of 9 December (LOMCE) (Ley Orgánica 2/2006), its presence is still insufficient (Fontal, 2011; González, 2011; Pinto & Molina, 2015; Ponce et al., 2015).

## **2. Materials and Method**

Due to the decentralization of the education system in Spain and the adaptation of each Autonomous Community to the national law (Martínez & Fontal, 2020), it might be thought that the presence of maritime heritage in certain coastal areas would be significant in order for students to learn about and understand their own context. However, this does not appear to be the case, at least in Galicia. Therefore, the hypothesis of the present study is that, in spite of its importance, this type of heritage receives little attention in Galician schools due to its lack of presence in the curriculum which establishes the study programmes for primary education (6-12 years of age). Thus, the research question is as follows: To what degree is the sea present as an

element of heritage in the curriculum for the stage of education ranging from 6 to 12 years of age in Galicia?

To answer this question, the presence of maritime heritage as an element of identity and heritage in the current curriculum was analysed via a review of the terminology. Two prior studies were taken as a basis as they analysed the presence of heritage in the curriculum (Fontal & Martínez, 2016; Fontal et al., 2017). These studies were adapted to heritage related to the sea. Focusing on the levels of primary (6-12 years of age) and secondary education (12-16 years of age), these studies analysed the frequency with which six terms (heritage, identity, intangible, manifestation, tradition and folklore) appeared in the 17 decrees of the education law Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación (Organic Law 2/2006 of 3 May, on Education, hereinafter LOMCE) (Ley Orgánica 2/2006), one for each Autonomous Community in Spain. Along the lines of these studies, the present study applied an analytical methodology and a comparison of contents (Piñuel, 2002), in line with what Creswell and Creswell (2018) call mixed research methods, combining the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data.

In other words, this study, based on text mining techniques, is part of a quantitative analysis methodological approach, complemented by a qualitative contextual analysis phase. This methodological strategy allows not only to identify the presence of certain terms in a document, but also to assess their relevance in relation to the object of study, in this case, maritime heritage in the regional curriculum decrees of Spain.

According to Bardin (2002), content analysis is a research technique that aims to provide an objective, systematic, and quantitative description of content. On this basis, a lexical word frequency analysis was used, followed by a context or co-occurrence analysis to filter out irrelevant terms. This is a modality within content analysis that allows the occurrence of relevant terms in a set to be quantified (Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017).

## **2.1. Sample**

The sample consists of the curriculum decrees current at the time of the analysis (year 2025) corresponding to primary education in the different autonomous communities of Spain. A total of 17 official documents were collected.

## **2.2. Procedure**

The analysis was carried out in two complementary phases:

### **1. Quantitative lexical analysis:**

In the first phase, a document corpus was constructed comparing the 17 regional decrees regulating the primary education curriculum in each autonomous community. A quantitative keyword search strategy was applied to this corpus to identify the frequency of occurrence of the following ten key terms related to maritime heritage: boat, conserv\*, embarca\*, fish market, sea\*, pier, maritime heritage, fishing, beach, and port. This

search, which responds to an initial exploratory approach focused on frequency analysis (Liu, 2012), was carried out using digital text analysis tools and manual review, counting the frequency of occurrence of each term within the documents.

Following the example of Castro-Fernández, et al. (2024), the search words were sometimes used accompanied by the symbol (\*) so that the search engine would reflect those that shared a similarity, even if it was not total, automating the procedure, such as sea, which could include words such as tide, seas, marine, or maritime, or conserv\*, which could include conservation, preserves, cannery, or conserve.

In the particular case of Galicia, a further quantitative comparison was carried out of the frequency of the presence of 31 terms associated to heritage (including the nine previous terms) in DECRETO 105/2014, de 4 de septiembre, por el que se establece el currículo de la educación primaria en la Comunidad Autónoma de Galicia (DECRETO 105/2014, of September 4, which establishes the curriculum for primary education in the Autonomous Community of Galicia, hereinafter DECRETO 105/2014) (DECRETO 105/2014), corresponding to the previous LOMCE education law (2006) (Ley Orgánica 2/2006) and DECRETO 155/2022, de 15 de septiembre, por el que se establecen la ordenación y el currículo de la educación primaria en la Comunidad Autónoma de Galicia (DECRETO 155/2022, of September 15, which establishes the organization and curriculum of primary education in the Autonomous Community of Galicia, hereinafter DECRETO 155/2022) (DECRETO 155/2022) corresponding to the current law, Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación (Organic Law 2/2020, of 29 December, modifying Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education, hereinafter LOMLOE) (Ley Orgánica 3/2020).

## **2. Contextual qualitative review**

Subsequently, a manual qualitative analysis was carried out of the context in which the identified terms appeared, examining qualitatively the use given to those terms, especially in relation to maritime heritage. An attempt was made to identify how many times, how, and in what context each term appeared and to determine whether they had an explicit, implicit, or non-existent relationship with maritime heritage, in order to ascertain the presence of the sea as an element of heritage.

To this end, a manual review of each recorded occurrence was carried out to assess the semantic and thematic context in which each term was inserted, which is essential in research with an educational and heritage focus (Biber et al., 1998; Krippendorff, 2018). This phase made it possible to distinguish between:

- *Uses in a heritage context:* when the word appears associated with cultural, historical, economic, or educational elements linked to the sea and its heritage.
- *Uses outside of context:* when the mention is generic, decorative, or unrelated to maritime heritage. For example, the term sea in primary education often appears in texts without direct reference to heritage, such as in descriptions of natural environments. In turn, there are numerous terms that begin, contain, or end with this word, such as primary.

This procedure follows the methodological recommendations of Krippendorff (2018), who highlights the need to contextualize the units of analysis to avoid misinterpretations, especially in normative or institutional texts, where language can be ambiguous.

Therefore, expressions in which the terms were clearly linked to the following were considered relevant mentions:

- Cultural or heritage elements associated with the sea.
- Social, economic, or educational practices related to fishing, knowledge of the maritime environment, or the historical use of the sea.

All occurrences in which the keywords did not have a clear relationship with maritime heritage from an educational, heritage, or cultural perspective were excluded.

In short, the methodology combines text mining tools with content analysis techniques, allowing us to detect not only the lexical presence of maritime elements in educational regulations, but also their curricular interpretation in relation to maritime heritage.

In accordance with Andreu (2002), this content analysis serves as a tool for obtaining the expressed data, but also those which are implied.

In this way, the general objective (GO) of the research and its corresponding specific objectives (SO) are as follows:

- GO: To identify to what degree maritime heritage is employed as an educational content with children aged from 6 to 12 who live in the coastal region of Galicia in northwest Spain, taking into account the fact that it is one of the main fishing powerhouses of Europe.
- SO1: To carry out a content analysis of the 17 curriculums of the Autonomous Communities of Spain in order to verify the perspective from which maritime heritage is presented.
- SO2: To identify which topics are related with the sea in these documents in order to discover whether they take into account a holistic conception of heritage.
- SO3: To ascertain to what degree the approach to maritime heritage has changed in the current education law (LOMLOE, 2020) compared with the previous law (LOMCE, 2006).

### 3. Results

#### SO1: Content analysis

The results are presented in a table (Table 2) which shows the frequency with which the ten search terms linked with maritime heritage appear.

Barco <i>Boat</i>	Conserva* <i>Canning*</i>	Embarc* <i>Embark*</i>	Lonja <i>Fish market</i>	Mar* <i>Sea*</i>	Muelle <i>Dock</i>	Patrimonio <b>marítimo</b> <i>Maritime heritage</i>	Pesca <i>Fishing</i>	Playa <i>Beach</i>	Puerto <i>Port</i>
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Andalusia	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Aragón	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Asturias	0	36	0	0	0	0	0	10	2	0
Cantabria	0	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Castilla-La Mancha	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Castilla y León	0	64	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Catalonia	0	75	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Extremadura	0	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Galicia</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Balearic Islands	0	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Canary Islands	0	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
La Rioja	0	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Madrid	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Murcia	0	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Navarre	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Basque Country	0	92	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Valencia	0	78	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ceuta and Melilla	0	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2. An analysis of the presence of maritime heritage and elements connected with it in the 17 primary education curriculums of Spain's Autonomous Communities. Own elaboration.

The term “patrimonio marítimo” (*maritime heritage*) does not appear in any of the laws (Table 2).

As far as the terms connected with maritime heritage are concerned, only the words “pesca” (*fishing*) and “playa” (*beach*) appear, albeit rarely, in some of the regional curriculums. (Table 2).

While “pesca” (*fishing*) appears in Aragón, Asturias and La Rioja, the word “beach” only appears in Asturias and Cantabria. The other terms related to the sea, “barco” (*boat*) (0), “embarc\*” (*embark\**) (0), “lonja” (*fish market*) (0), “muelle” (*dock*) (0) and “puerto” (*port*) (0), do not appear in any of the documents consulted. In the case of La Rioja, the use of the word “pesca” (*fishing*) is not linked to the fishing sector. In the curriculum of Aragón, fishing is related to sustainable education: “How does **fishing** and how we fish affect the health of the oceans?” (p.48). The Autonomous Community of Asturias is that which makes most mention of fishing, making reference to its heritage and cultural dimensions and taking into account the issue of gender. It also refers to the relationship of humans with their environment:



*“3.4 Recognizing simple and direct connections between social organization and different elements of the humanized Asturian landscape (agriculture, livestock rearing, autochthonous breeds, **fishing**, etc.) avoiding sexist roles and stereotypes.” (p.173)*

*“Basic knowledge. Block A. Traditional culture. Traditional Asturian trades of the countryside and coast: livestock rearing, agriculture and **fishing** with a gender perspective.” (p.175)*

*“Block C. Society, history and cultural heritage of Asturias. Social organization and different elements of the humanized Asturian landscape: agriculture, livestock rearing and autochthonous breeds, **fishing**, mining, industry” (p.177)*

As for the term “beach”, it appears three times in similar ways in the law from Cantabria in each of the three stages of primary education. Firstly, it is related with sustainable interaction with the environment: *“The practice of physical activities in the natural and urban environments: parks, **beaches**, mountains.” (p.108)*. In Asturias, it appears twice as a natural element: *“To identify basic and simple elements of the climate and relief of Asturias (precipitations, mountains, rivers, **beaches**...)” (p.171)* and *“The natural and physical environment of Asturias. Elements of the coastal relief and mountains and valleys. The river basins of Asturias. **Beaches** of Asturias.” (p.178).*

## **SO2: To identify which topics are related with the sea in these documents in order to discover whether they take into account a holistic conception of heritage**

Although the word “mar” (sea) appears many times in the documents analysed (Table 2), with a total of 5,818 references, only thirteen of them correspond to the sea as the combination of seas and oceans. All other references are of words that have the combination of the letters “mar”. None of the eight references to the sea are related with maritime heritage or with the sea as a heritage element (Table 3).

<i>Autonomous Community</i>	<i>“Mar” (sea) as a heritage element</i>	<i>“Mar” (sea) as the combination of seas and oceans</i>
Andalusia	0	7
Canary Islands	0	2
Madrid	0	2
Navarre	0	2

Table 3. Analysis of the context of the presence of the word “sea”. Own elaboration.

In Andalusia, the sea appears as a natural element: *“The geographical limits of Spain. **Seas** and oceans which surround it.” (p.35)*. Mention is also made of marine artefacts: *“Flying artefacts. Basic principles of flight. **Marine** artefacts and the basic principles of floating and immersion. Land-based artefacts and the basic principles of movement via friction.” (p.33)*. In the Canary Islands, mention is made of maritime means of transport: *“... identifying **maritime** and aerial means of transport...” (p.346)*. In the case of the

Community of Madrid, the sea is mentioned as a natural element: “*The existence and distribution of water on the Earth: oceans, seas, rivers and lakes*” (p.34) and “*The geographical limits of Spain. Seas and oceans which surround it. Islands and archipelagos. Locating on maps.*” (p.36). Last of all, the word “sea” appears as a natural element in the curriculum of Navarre, “*The hydrosphere. Continental and marine waters. The seas and main rivers of Spain. The oceans.*” (p.34).

Therefore, while the sea is mentioned, albeit scarcely, in the curriculums of one Autonomous Community of an inland region (Madrid), in eight of the ten coastal Autonomous Communities (Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, the Basque Country, Aragón, Catalonia, the Valencian Community and Murcia) it is not present at all. In those in which it is mentioned to some degree, it is not considered as a heritage element, thus making it difficult to understand it from a holistic point of view.

**SO3: To ascertain to what degree the approach to maritime heritage has changed in the current education law (LOMLOE, 2020) compared with the previous law (LOMCE, 2006)**

The results are presented in Table 4, which shows the frequency with which the 31 terms searched for in the two Galician curriculums (LOMCE and LOMLOE) appear.

Search terms associated with heritage/Frequency	LOMCE 2006 in DECREE 105/2014	LOMLOE 2020 (current law) in DECREE 155/2022
Patrimonio <i>Heritage</i>	35	61
Patrimonio marítimo <i>Maritime heritage</i>	0	0
Herencia <i>Inheritance</i>	35	65
Tradici* <i>Traditi*</i>	52	50
Folclor* <i>Folklor*</i>	5	1
Cultura* <i>Cultur*</i>	317	685
Identidad <i>Identity</i>	15	89
Memoria <i>Memory</i>	6	6
Paisaje <i>Landscape</i>	45	7
Entorno <i>Environment</i>	230	365
Mar* <i>Sea*</i>	859	270
Pesca <i>Fishing</i>	0	0
Puerto <i>Port</i>	0	0
Lonja <i>Fish market</i>	0	0
Playa <i>Beach</i>	0	0
Historia <i>History</i>	70	56
Embarc* <i>Embark*</i>	0	0
Muelle <i>Dock</i>	0	0
Agua <i>Water</i>	41	11
Barco <i>Boat</i>	0	0

Gastronomía <i>Gastronomy</i>	1	1
Fiestas <i>Festivals</i>	5	1
Oficios <i>Trades</i>	1	1
Mujer <i>Women</i>	25	43
Conserva* <i>Canning*</i>	44	62
Pueblo <i>Town</i>	0	1
Monumento <i>Monument</i>	6	0
Escultura <i>Sculpture</i>	0	0
Costumbre <i>Custom</i>	19	9
Manifestaci* <i>Demonstrati*</i>	37	212
Inmaterial <i>Intangible</i>	0	1

Table 4. Comparative analysis of the presence of maritime heritage in the primary education curriculums of Galicia (LOMCE and LOMLOE). Own elaboration.

Following the change in law, the specific terms connected with localized maritime heritage still find no place in the Galician curriculum: fishing (0), port (0), fish market (0), beach (0), embark\* (0), dock (0), boat (0) (Table 3).

Furthermore, in spite of the importance of maritime heritage in terms of revising Galician cultural identity, this term still does not explicitly appear in the current primary education curriculum in Galicia (Table 4). However, the term “heritage” appears a total of 61 times in DECRET 155/2022, corresponding to the current LOMLOE law, of which, in some cases, a relationship can be established with heritage linked to the sea: “to recognize the value of cultural heritage, to preserve it, enhance it and undertake actions for its responsible use” (DECRETO 155/2022, p.78); “To show a respectful attitude to natural and cultural heritage, recognizing it as common property” (DECRETO 155/2022, p.83); “Artistic expressions and productions over time. Local tangible and intangible heritage. Care and preservation” (DECRETO 155/2022, p.86); “To protect natural and cultural heritage and to appreciate it as common property, adopting respectful behaviour to enjoy it and proposing actions for its preservation and enhancement” (DECRETO 155/2022, p.88).

While in DECRET 105/2014, corresponding to the 2006 LOMCE law, the term “trade” had no relation to the sea and in the current law of 2020 there is no clear reference made to typical trades related to the sea (such as net makers, shellfishers or fishing), the term “trade” does appear once, giving the opportunity to mention these trades in the classroom: “*The marks of history in places, buildings, objects, trades or traditions of the place. Museums as a space for learning and entertainment*” (DECRETO 105/2014, p.92).

As far as the role of women and the sea is concerned, the current law only makes reference in the following way: “*Occupation and work. Identification of the main professional activities of women and men in their local context*” (DECRETO 105/2014, p. 81).

While the 2006 law made no mention of the term “gastronomy”, the 2020 document clearly links it with identity, referring to it in the first year in the subject of Social Sciences

in the third unit on “Living in Society”: *“Identity and spheres of belonging: family, school, village/town/neighbourhood and city, Galicia. Traditional Galician festivals and popular gastronomy”* (DECRETO 155/2022, p. 83).

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

Maritime heritage has a scarce presence in the Galician curriculum, despite the fact that Galicia is an Autonomous Community which lives from and depends on the sea as an economic, heritage and touristic resource. Maritime heritage as such is not mentioned in the Galician legislative documentation, which is surprising in this region which has such a great dependence on the sea in terms of heritage, economy, in spite of tourism and leisure, where a large part of the population works in the fishing industry.

The following educational implications of the present study can be highlighted:

- a) Encouraging the teaching of maritime heritage through projects promoting awareness of heritage (Fontal, 2003) and cultural identity (Gómez Redondo, 2012).
- b) The critical resignification of maritime heritage as a social construct (Prats, 1997), an emotional connection (Fontal, 2003, 2020) and a lifestyle leading to a unique Galician cultural identity.
- c) Lending visibility to maritime heritage to ensure that it is appreciated and preserved and that its traditions, way of life, customs, etc. are passed on from one generation to the next, highlighting the fact that these traditions have served as a survival mechanism for past generations.
- d) Promoting, through excursions to local sites, an interest in maritime heritage, as well as an emotional connection with it and its symbolic appropriation, as an element of reference on a local scale but with a global projection.
- e) Lending visibility to the educational potential of maritime heritage for the construction of a citizenship which is socially committed with its environment and community.

On a prospective level, it is necessary to carry out an analysis of the presence and use of maritime heritage in primary education textbooks in Galicia in order to identify the resources aimed at teaching children about this topic which has such an impact on the region and its community. Furthermore, an analysis of school textbooks would make it possible to identify the perspective with which this heritage is associated and to reveal the different dimensions of maritime heritage about which children are taught. It would also be of interest to verify whether the presence of maritime heritage increases in the secondary education curriculum in Galicia in order to identify if there is merely a gap to be filled in primary education or if there is a lack of visibility throughout all stages of education. This would lead to the idea that this type of heritage is becoming increasingly neglected by the political system and, as a result, will become of little interest to younger generations.

In spite of the great importance of maritime heritage in Galicia, its presence in the primary education curriculum is scarce and severely lacking. It is barely taught in the classroom and a growing sense of detachment and disinterest can be noted among students regarding this historical legacy which is essential to understanding their present. Therefore, there is an urgent need to implement educational projects which encourage students to approach this heritage in such a way that connections and an emotional relationship can be established with the sea in order to lend it new meaning as a symbol of collective identity.

## 5. Contributor Role Taxonomy (CRediT)

1. Conceptualization: J.F.-O. and B.C.-F.; 2. Data curation: J.F.-O. and B.C.-F.; 3. Formal analysis: J.F.-O. and B.C.-F.; 4. Investigation: J.F.-O. and B.C.-F.; 5. Methodology: J.F.-O. and B.C.-F.; 6. Project administration: B.C.-F.; 7. Resources: J.F.-O. and B.C.-F.; 8. Supervision: B.C.-F.; 9. Visualization: J.F.-O. and B.C.-F.; 10. Writing -Original draft preparation: J.F.-O. and B.C.-F.; 11. Writing—review and editing: J.F.-O. and B.C.-F.

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