

Article

The Solstice Fire Festivals in the Pyrenees: Constructing a Didactic Programme for Formal Education along with the Educational and Bearer Communities

Marc Ballesté , Anna Solé-Llussà , Sofia Isus and Ares Fernández

Chair of Education and Intangible Heritage of the Pyrenees, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Social Work, University of Lleida, 25001 Lleida, Spain

* Correspondence: marc.balleste@udl.cat

Abstract: In 2015, UNESCO inscribed the summer solstice fire festivals in the Pyrenees on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. A few years later, a didactic programme was launched to incorporate the tradition into formal education, designed and developed in collaboration with the bearer and educational communities. Specifically, to accomplish the project, both collectives priorly analyzed and validated the proposal through field work, discussion groups, and qualitative and quantitative methods. The results demonstrated the need for cross-disciplinary materials designed to incorporate the festivals into formal education, the benefits of involving the bearer and educational communities in an initiative of these characteristics, and the usefulness of the project for the valorization of ICH and the imparting of curricular contents.

Keywords: fire festivals; solstices; Pyrenees; heritage education; formal education; Spain; Andorra; France



Citation: Ballesté, M.; Solé-Llussà, A.; Isus, S.; Fernández, A. The Solstice Fire Festivals in the Pyrenees: Constructing a Didactic Programme for Formal Education along with the Educational and Bearer Communities. *Heritage* **2022**, *5*, 2519–2533. <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage5030131>

Academic Editors: Marco Gaiani and Cristiana Achille

Received: 14 July 2022

Accepted: 2 August 2022

Published: 5 September 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The summer solstice fire festivals in the Pyrenees, the name acquired for the candidature for the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity [1], are a manifestation present in numerous towns in the central area of the Pyrenees mountain range in the three border states (Spain, France, and Andorra).

In most of these towns they are celebrated on the eve of 23 June, as the date traditionally assigned by Christianity to the summer solstice. In others they take place on different dates in June or July, coinciding with the local festivals, and in two villages they occur on 24 December, the date assigned to the winter solstice [2].

The celebration is of ancestral origin and must be linked to fertility, the changing cycles of nature and work in the field. It could also be considered as a step towards adulthood, a rite of purification or protection. Today, it is the most eagerly anticipated festival of the whole year for the inhabitants, a chance to strengthen social ties, identity, and community belonging.

Fire plays the starring role, which is why the manifestation does not begin until sunset. In the regions of Catalonia and Aragon, Spain, from an elevated spot known as a *faro*, a serpentine thread of people of all ages and genders with torches resting on their shoulders descends the mountainside until reaching the village [Figure 1]. Next, they deposit these torches, called *falles* in Catalan or Spanish, in a common space or at the foot of a large log which also burns, the *falla major*, and dance around it or celebrate through the night.

In other areas, such as Andorra, the torches are spun—drawing circles of fire—and carried through the streets. In the Aran valley, Spain, they have the same type of *falla*, called *halha* in the Occitan language, and also erect a large log in the town square; in one town, Arties, they make the log fall, drag it along the ground, and jump over it while it burns.



Figure 1. The *falles* festival of the village of Bonansa (Spain) in 2017. Photo by Jordi Clariana.

In the French part, this large log— *brandon* in French or *har* in Occitan—is the star of the night and the torches, smaller in size, are spun around it and specially by children. In this geographical area, there are three easily identifiable elements: a toponym with visible fire, a more or less decorated log, and the *halhas* [3].

The making of these torches or log requires certain knowledge which, in most cases, is transmitted intergenerationally. In any event, the organization of the festivals may vary depending on the town. In some, all the preparations are handled by a cultural organization, while in others it is done by the city council, some people from the village, or one family in particular.

In the 20th century, with the Civil War, Franco's dictatorship, and the depopulation of rural zones, the festival disappeared from a significant number of villages and valleys. It is intuited that in the past, on Saint John's Eve, many serpentine lines of fire lit up the Pyrenees. At the initiative of the children or grandchildren of those who were the bearers or motivated by identity or tourism [4], beginning in the 1980s, the manifestation was recovered in many towns, especially in Spanish and Andorran areas.

Already in the 21st century and still immersed in the aforementioned recovery process, an interesting process of discovery and contact was begun between the communities that celebrated the festival. In reality, some of them were unaware that the closest valleys performed a very similar tradition to their own. This contact strengthened the Pyrenean identity itself, beyond regional and state borders, leading to the presentation of the aforementioned candidacy for UNESCO's representative list.

The recognition was received in December 2015 with a dossier incorporating 63 *fallaire* (*falles*-practising) towns [5] (26 in Spain, 34 in France, and 3 in Andorra). The preparation of this dossier and the subsequent incorporation onto the list had succeeded in creating a community of cross-border tradition bearers, which on the same day of the recognition already signed a declaration in favor of safeguarding the festivals. The signers of this document made a commitment to preserve the tradition's spirit, continue collaborating, and work for institutional involvement.

This process of discovery between valleys and the international valorization of the festivals generated various consequences and to varying degrees depending on the area. In Spain and Andorra, social and media interest increased, which provoked a greater affluence of tourists. In the same way, the tradition's recovery or incorporation into other villages of the same territory occurred. In France, however, the festivals remained a local and rather private element, which in some towns have not even managed to avoid disappearance due to depopulation.

Meanwhile, the tradition has generated numerous historical and anthropological investigations [6–10] which have demonstrated the existence of more than ninety towns where the manifestation is celebrated; that is, the 63 included in the candidacy was just a first mapping, limited by the absence of prior field research.

As far as public institutions are concerned, since 2015, they have responded to the bearer communities' request, facilitating resources to safeguard the tradition. One example is the creation of a university chair dedicated to immaterial cultural heritage (ICH) (www.catedrapirineus.org, accessed on 11 May 2022), which spearheaded and led a project, funded by the European Union, whose central thematic axis was the fire festivals.

It was named Prometheus, in honor of the Greek titan who offered fire to humanity (www.prometheuspoctefa.eu, accessed on 11 May 2022) and was brought to term between January 2020 and May 2022. Its main goal was to transfer the knowledge generated in the university research process on the solstice fire festivals to society through educational and informational products aimed at public institutions, bearers' associations, and companies from the cultural sector.

Specifically, the actions completed through Prometheus were the planning of an international symposium to reflect on the festivals' present and future state, the design of a cross-border upper-level study programme on ICH in the Pyrenees, a communication kit for the signage of the *fallaire* towns, a virtual museum on the festivals, and pedagogical materials for primary and secondary schools in the Pyrenees.

This last action is the focus of the present text, which will explain how it was designed and brought to term: the prior analysis, validation of the bearers, and pedagogical pilot [11]. It is an example of what UNESCO stressed in the 2003 Convention: the incorporation of ICH into formal education as a tool for preserving it.

2. Theoretical Framework

With the passing of the aforementioned Convention in the early 21st century, live or immaterial manifestations were officially and particularly recognized and an instrument was introduced for the sustainable management and maintenance of their value and function. Among the safeguarding measures proposed, in Article 14, the Member States were urged to promote educational and training programmes aimed at various audiences, especially at young people and the communities in question (p. 10, [12]).

In the subsequent publication of the Basic Texts of the Convention and, specifically, in the Operating Directives for its application, this aspect is further explored, citing formal and non-formal education as a tool for the recognition, respect, and valorization of ICH, and it advocates for implementing school programmes with the participation of educators, families, and associations (pp. 50–68, [12]), i.e., what is known as the educational or learning community.

UNESCO had already begun to recognize festive, folkloric, and living heritage years before, in 2001 with the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, in 1989 with the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, and in 1972 with the Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, among others [13].

In the same way, education has been at the center of the institution since its creation, as a tool for peace and sustainable development. Thus, the link between education and heritage is nothing new, as in the cited texts or measures proposed, UNESCO alludes to educational programmes as a guarantor of respect for heritage [14].

The states' subsequent ratification of the 2003 Convention has generated new laws and plans which urge educational measures to be taken for the knowledge, valorization, and transmission of ICH. In Spain, for example, it was ratified in 2006 and followed by the National Plan for the Safeguarding of Immaterial Cultural Heritage (2011), the National Education and Heritage Plan (2013), and Law 10/2015 for the Safeguarding of Immaterial Cultural Heritage.

In this vein, over the last decades pedagogy has recognized heritage as a tool with great didactic potential that goes even beyond the safeguarding of a cultural element. Such is its reach that currently, heritage education is no longer a discipline under construction: it is established on an academic, social, and institutional level and has the capacity to generate research projects, programmes, and laws [15].

Its usefulness in the field of ICH management or conservation is evident. Knowledge transmission—whether intrinsically through the bearer community, with the teaching and learning of techniques and active participation, or extrinsically for those who coexist with these bearers or merely visit them—is essential for the perpetuation of any manifestation. The chain of “knowledge-comprehension-valorization-appropriation-care-enjoyment” identified by Fontal [16], which can be achieved through education, ensures conservation and transmission.

At the same time, heritage offers other possibilities apart from the aforementioned valorization: for example, the reinforcement of identity, our awareness of the characteristics of the place we come from and everything which defines us as a cultural subject [17]. It facilitates our interpretation of the past and helps us reflect on the future [18]. It is a resource for understanding our social, cultural, and natural environment, for “promoting a sense of belonging and involving young people in the construction of their knowledge and their present and future action” [19] (p. 125), turning them into critical, engaged, and independent citizens capable of decoding information [20].

ICH has also been used, especially, for recognizing diversity and respecting it. On the premise that everyone has their own history [21], the local can be transposed to the universal, to the defense of heterogeneity. Heritage is understood to be a tool for coexistence and sociability [22].

In the school environment it has even more possibilities, with the potential to become the center of interest of multiple subjects. If used in a cross-cutting or interdisciplinary way, as something more than an item of study for historical or artistic subjects, the teaching-learning process can be significant. However, the instructional bias shown by teachers and the official curricula [23], heavily defined by the fragmentation of disciplines and knowledge, must be overcome.

Additionally, various studies have confirmed, at least in the Spanish context, that the heritage addressed is mainly historical or artistic. In reality, teachers view the various types of heritage goods differently, with ethnological goods being among those which enjoy the least recognition [23,24].

In a non-formal space, the presence of heritage is greater in spite of the fact that the official curricula contain terms such as heritage, culture, memory, or identity [19,25]. It is, in addition, a global trend, as in UNESCO's own record of good practices, the actions in formal education are fewer [26]. However, this does not impede the design and implementation of interesting projects in the school environment [27].

The project described in the present article incorporated ICH into educational centers in an interdisciplinary way and with the participation of the entire bearer and educational community as per Article 15 of the Convention, which incites the Member States to accomplish an implication or coordination as such. It was designed like this, moreover, while aware that all action produces inevitable transformations in the members of the bearer cultures [28], whether to modify or strengthen discourses, meanings, dynamics, or relationships.

At the same time, the educational project in question was imagined mainly for the schools in the festival territory so that the actions to be brought to term would raise appreciation for the tradition in the sphere of its own protagonists and not in a foreign environment. The territory's children, in essence, will be the future bearers, facilitators, or managers of the festival and the ones who will have to make decisions in this sense.

Nonetheless, it was designed in a cross-border and global manner to facilitate the exchange of knowledge between valleys and contribute to valorization. The festival community is framed in a mountainous and sparsely populated area, with complicated and non-homogeneous communications. In France, for example, the manifestation lacks the vitality of the Spanish and Andorran regions; it is one more element of the annual calendar [29,30]. A project like the one at hand can be used to contribute to the previously mentioned educational chain, to sharing good practices or strategies and, consequently, to safeguarding tradition.

3. Materials and Methods

This project was developed in phases with different objectives. In each phase, different investigations were realized using diverse methodologies.

3.1. Didactic Proposal

The didactic project was designed, from the start, in the form of a pedagogical suitcase, as a compendium of activities to provide instructors with materials and resources for studying the fire festivals in class. In this sense, they are framed with Vygotsky's theory of development, which focuses on the autonomous development of each student, providing the necessary scaffold to support its learning process [31].

They also had to be cross-cutting, making it possible to approach the competencies and content of official curricula through an interdisciplinary practice. The aforementioned festivals would be transformed into a tool for linking distinct subjects and reaching plural goals, in a "privileged setting for acquiring knowledge on the sociohistorical and natural reality" [23] (pp. 46).

The activities were intended to be fun and hands-on in nature, to facilitate student motivation, stimulation, and absorption [32,33] in pursuit of truly meaningful learning; in addition, the teacher was supposed to be able to use them in a flexible way, as a complement to an ordinary activity, as a monographic project or a center of interest, or as an instrument for project-based learning (PBL) [34].

3.2. Prior Analysis

To obtain truly useful materials and avoid duplicities or repetitions, a prior qualitative analysis was completed of all the pedagogical practices being conducted in the community of bearers in both the formal and non-formal sphere. For this purpose, town councils, cultural associations, and schools were involved.

First, seven people were interviewed, one per county or territory (Alta Ribagorça, Andorra, Aran, Aragón, Berguedà, Occitanie, and Pallars) and located through prior field work, facilitated by representatives of the bearers. These people, technicians of public administrations, members of associations, and educators, made it possible to broaden the investigation to six additional people from the festival spaces themselves. They were asked, over the phone or online, about the existing practices and these practices' promoters, goals, beneficiaries, execution, and results.

In summary, the interview subjects included five education or culture technicians (Sahún City Council, Comú d'Andorra la Vella, Alta Ribagorça County Council, EMD Arties, and Schools UNESCO Andorra), five members of cultural associations involved in the non-formal education of the entity (Fallaires d'Isil, Fallaires de la Pobla de Segur, Associació Fia-faia, Eth Ostau Comenges, and Halhaires de Les), and four educators committed to transmitting the festive element (School of Alins, Els Raiers School in La Pobla de Segur, School of Les, and School of Sahún).

The information compiled was categorized by activity type, which enabled a statistical analysis, and all their characteristics were qualitatively explored.

3.3. Validation of the Bearers

The results of the previous stage were used to design the aforementioned didactic proposal, basing its content on all the published works about the festivals and considering the official curricula. Additionally, the previously completed studies on heritage and current law were also used [35].

With this first design created, the materials were validated by the bearers in the hope that they would prove representative, with up-to-date content and a suitable discourse. In this case, the methodology employed consisted in a discussion group, again a qualitative methodology, which allowed us to gather different people to assess a specific element, in this case the didactic suitcase.

Given the social and geographic reality of the towns in which the festivals are celebrated, seven different groups had to be formed, one per territory, in the same way as in the initial analysis. This circumstance entailed certain inevitable particularities when it came to methodology.

The participant's target in the meetings was clear; they were the bearers of the tradition. Their involvement was voluntary, and they were recruited by individuals familiar with the cultural reality of each region. This recruitment was unable to follow one of the recommendations indicated for the discussion group method, as it was impossible to prevent some participants from having met each other before. In representing small, sparsely populated territories in which practically everyone knows everyone else, it was a nearly impossible feat to achieve. Nonetheless, this shortcoming provided the naturalness which tends to be absent from this methodology [36].

The meetings took place in a neutral space and the only topic discussed was the pedagogical material designed, with a maximum of ninety minutes to debate. Later, in the analysis of these meetings, the resulting information was segmented and categorized.

3.4. Pedagogical Pilot

In response to the validation given by the bearers, the didactic proposal was re-designed, obtaining a second version of the suitcase. This was subsequently developed with the educational community of the territory in which the fire festivals are held in order to obtain pedagogically efficient activities. This process involved the participation of eight primary or secondary schools, 18 educators or managers of pedagogical resource centers, and 138 students between 10 and 12 years of age, a significant sample given the territory's total population [37]. The teaching professionals involved agreed to work with the materials voluntarily, in some cases as a standalone activity, in others as a class project.

To successfully pilot the suitcase in a cross-cutting way, three assessment tools aimed at three distinct groups were designed: two surveys addressed to educators and the technicians of pedagogical resource centers and a questionnaire for students. Before being administered, from March 2020 to June 2021, the three tools were subjected to validation by a group of experts formed by people linked to the tradition and educators with over 10 years of experience. The validation process was completed using an instrument designed by Carrera, Vaquero, and Balsells [38] in which univocality and belonging are asked about.

The surveys included questions on the use of the materials, their utility, management, potential, design, durability, degree of satisfaction, the issues which emerged, student response, and teacher training, and they were administered after the materials had been employed. The questionnaire for children, meanwhile, which asked about the content imparted through the suitcase, was distributed before and after the materials were used, with no modifications, for the purpose of measuring the degree of knowledge acquired. It had twelve questions, two of which could be linked to each activity.

These tools allowed for a quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics—the result of the items with closed responses—as well as a qualitative analysis derived from open responses [39].

4. Results and Discussion

Each phase had different results in accordance with its objectives and methodology employed. The achievement of each phase allowed to continue with the subsequent one.

4.1. Didactic Proposal

The pedagogical materials designed were titled “The Fallaire Suitcase”, in reference to the beacons used in the Pyrenean fire festivals, the *falles*. This topic is the project’s central axis, but, as previously mentioned, it serves to develop different curricular aspects. Specifically, the six activities are framed in a field (Nature and Sustainability, Languages, Social Studies and Culture, or Dance and Music) and in an official knowledge area, which demonstrates the multidisciplinary potential of heritage [19].

The first activity consists in becoming familiar with the natural environment, exploiting the fact that each location uses different species of plants to construct its *falles*, depending on tradition and the forests surrounding it. This diversity allows participants to get to know the Pyrenean habitats and the varieties of species which comprise them.

This is followed by another activity which aims to raise students’ awareness on the use of natural resources and our forests’ equilibrium. A role-playing game is used to inspire reflection on how we use the natural space and, more specifically, on the strategies to follow to ensure the festival’s sustainability.

The third activity demonstrates the linguistic diversity of the Pyrenees (Aragonese, Catalan, Spanish, French, Occitan, and Basque) and the *fallaire* areas in particular, including the distinct local dialectal varieties [Figure 2]. Participants acquire an awareness of this wealth and are awarded for learning place names and words associated with the tradition.

On the pretext that the *falles* are celebrated in a large number of Pyrenean towns, activity four explores the Pyrenees’ geography and ethnography, as well as the administrative organization of Andorra, France, and Spain, through an outdoor game. In addition, possible trips for discovering the region are suggested.

The fifth activity reveals the importance of the Sun and fire in diverse cultures from an anthropological perspective. To do so, rites of passage, festivals, and legends are introduced. On a pedagogical level, participants are taught to build a manual tool for understanding the sun’s movement and the solstices.

Finally, the last activity focuses on experiencing typical music and dances of the cultural manifestation inside the classroom, in order to encourage all students to practice them in the school. The song tracks are accompanied by videos, scores, lyrics, and charts to execute the dances. Students are also asked to expand on the information in their own homes, with their grandparents or parents.



Figure 2. A sample of the materials of the didactic suitcase.

The physical elements of the suitcase can be found in the region's pedagogical resource centers, a public space which stores and facilitates didactic materials [40]. Seven replicas were produced and made available to local teachers and cultural associations, ready to be used when desired.

The suitcase is complemented by an online game, designed to reinforce content and facilitate pedagogical assessment, in which students are required to locate the various types of *falles* or torches and answer multiple-choice questions (www.objectiuexplora.com/festesdelfoc, accessed on 11 May 2022). There is, in addition, a virtual museum for children within the Virtual Museum of the Solstice Fire Festivals of the Pyrenees (www.prometheus.museum, accessed on 16 May 2022), also created in the context of the Prometheus project. In this sense, the didactic proposal is completed with educational technology, following the Operational Directives of the Convention of 2003, which promote the use of technology to safeguard ICH, and in a similar way to other initiatives (p. 51, [12,41]).

The pedagogical materials are also supplemented with a virtual platform dedicated to heritage education, containing resources, good practices, news, and a forum for debate (www.debatabat.eu, accessed on 16 May 2022) [42] see Supplementary Materials. This online space is intended to build relationships between teachers, families, and the territory's social fabric, thereby contributing to the creation of a learning community in which all members of the teaching–learning process are important [43,44], facilitating networking and strengthening community collaboration and identity.

4.2. Prior Analysis

The survey completed at the start of the project evidenced the need to launch an educational initiative within the community. Only 14 of the 63 towns inscribed in the UNESCO candidacy, or 22%, were implementing, at the time, any type of pedagogical activity associated with the cultural element, and basically only in Andorran and Spanish territory, yet another illustration of the different social consideration of the fire festivals in the French territory.

The results also confirmed the aforementioned tendency of heritage education to be practiced more assiduously in the non-formal sphere and in many cases without a defined didactic design, that is, with no clear objectives, methodology, timing, and assessment, as if outside the school proper planning was not necessary [20,25]. In practically all regions, we identified the occasional organization of workshops or games, whether at the initiative of an educator and in the school context or at the initiative of a town council or cultural association, on dates close to the festivals and for a general public.

Only four schools from various locations, of the sixty-three towns included in the candidacy, had led some type of activity on the topic; out of these four schools, only two approached it as a project with a pedagogical design. In Andorra, the actions identified in the formal sphere were being conducted at the initiative of the UNESCO school network and in addition to workshops, they held talks and travelling exhibitions.

In any event, we once again were seeing a common trait [25]: the beneficiaries were, in most actions, primary school students, thereby confirming the lack of interest in, or the difficulty of, incorporating ICH into the initial or final levels of compulsory, university, or professional education [26].

In accordance with these results there was an evident deficit. A proposal like the Fallaire Suitcase, geared toward formal education and to students in the last years of primary and first years of secondary school, was a necessary project which could produce fruitful results [45].

4.3. Validation of the Bearers

After the previously mentioned materials—very propitious ones, considering the priorly conducted analysis—had been designed, they were evaluated with the festival tradition bearers through local discussion groups. Generally speaking, the suitcase received a very good response and was viewed as a worthwhile initiative. Comments and opinions were classified in two large categories: design-related or content-related, the latter being the one which generated more information.

In terms of design, they made comments associated with the visibility of the entire territory. They insisted, in six of the seven meetings, on illustrating the particularities of each region, for example, reiterating the different types of *falles*, broadening the music and dances to address or highlight the distinct reality of the festivals depending on the valley or county.

Furthermore, in every case opinions were voiced on the approach to some activity. The ideas included using real forest materials to explain how the torches are made, incorporating some type of *falles*-building workshop, opening the vision of the fire festivals to an international sphere, or incorporating a section on the woman's role in the manifestation. In essence, without being a didactic validation, pedagogical issues were addressed. The most notable was the need to adapt the materials to each country's educational system and even, in the case of Andorra, to all three (Andorran, Spanish, and French).

One aspect repeated in multiple encounters, and linked to the intangible nature of ICH, were the sensations and emotions of the festivals and how they could be transmitted through the materials. The bearers viewed the sounds, songs, smells, atmosphere, or mood experienced during the night of fire as an essential element [46]. In this vein, they proposed working with ashes, burnt wood, or tree bark, elements closely associated with the festivals.

In terms of content, the bearers prompted small corrections and, in particular, provided information to expand the data on the tradition. Again, this information was frequently linked to the differences between territories.

For example, "festival" data was gathered on the number of people who participated, vocabulary associated with the manifestation and dialectical details, as well as local stories and sun worship legends. At the same time, the bearers' contributions enriched the data's natural content: the plant species used for the torches, these species' local names, or the reality of their forests in terms of sustainability.

The results of this validation process proved even richer than what had been anticipated, as interesting sociological and anthropological data was gathered.

It evidenced, for example, the festival's different reality depending on the territory. In Occitania, France, it was very difficult to get the bearers to participate in the discussion group, as they proved unable to imagine a project as such for a manifestation like the one which concerns us. Thus, the process demonstrated, yet again, the low valorization of the festival in that territory [30] and, consequently, how necessary it is to adapt the materials to French schools for the purpose of helping to reverse this identified trend.

Interesting ideas about identity also arose: the bearers transmitted a sense of belonging to a society and culture local to a mountain range, the Pyrenees, which transcends divisions between states and, like the fire festivals themselves, has a cross-cutting character.

In addition, themes arose related to the management of, or current news about, the cultural manifestation which generated interesting debates among the participants themselves, repeated some time later at the symposium held in 2021 [47]. They spoke of the gathering of raw material and the possible need to regulate this activity to prevent the disappearance of species; the active participation of non-locals in the festivals and the consequent amplification of these festivals, with everything this entails; torch-building methods, new and old techniques; as well as the links between towns, reinforced after the UNESCO candidacy.

4.4. Pedagogical Pilot

In accordance with the results of the bearer validation process, the didactic proposal was redesigned, incorporating a few pedagogical changes, such as a greater use of the torch replicas [48] or more supplementary activities. Nonetheless, the structure was maintained, and the basic idea of each activity did not change. The primary modifications involved broadening the information on the solstice fire festivals, which helped improve the regional representativeness, in consonance, thus, with the protagonists' interests.

This new version of the Fallaire Suitcase was used to execute the pedagogical pilot, in this case with the members of the region's educational community, 81.25% of whom—taking the survey results into account—had admitted to not having knowledge on heritage education. This demonstrated the problem of training with respect to heritage and the consequent absence of its use in the school context [19]. Of the scant 18.75% who possessed knowledge, half had learned it on their own, which is why providing ongoing training in the field that concerns us would foster the incorporation of ICH in the non-formal sphere [49]. In reality, due to depopulation, we were faced with a significant number of educators from outside the Pyrenees, from urban areas, and who were unfamiliar with the region's traditions. In spite of this absence of knowledge, 63% of the educators used the suitcase in the context of a class project on immaterial culture, using the festivals as a focal point.

As for pedagogy, notes were taken on the durability of the materials or how certain activities were explained. The suggestion was made to incorporate more complementary activities, focused for example on the local area, as well as adaptations for other academic levels. The teachers remarked on the materials' educational design, their quality, hands-on nature, versatility, the content provided, and student response.

In fact, according to their perception, 81.3% rated the children's satisfaction as very good or excellent and affirmed they would use the materials again, linking them to specific class or school projects or further exploring the topic. In addition, 84% of teachers rated the motivational capacity of the materials with a score above 7 on a scale of 1 to 10 points, which confirms the student's absorption and stimulus [33] and, consequently, the desired meaningful learning.

The questionnaire administered to students also provided results with regard to the assimilation of content of the suitcase. The answers to the twelve questions given showed a positive change after the use of the activities, with an average improvement of 15.83 points and a general increment of 35.95%. The instructors used the activities freely and not necessarily in their entirety. In spite of this, thanks to the thematic axis, cross-disciplinary learning occurred, valid for the different areas or spheres of the curriculum.

As can be seen in the following table, practically all the responses improved after the pilot test [Table 1]. Only one had a slight descent, with a little significant differential of less than one point. However, the conclusion of the pilot test included a reflection on the design of the activity addressing its content [50].

Table 1. Results of student questionnaires in percentages (the correct response is highlighted in grey). Improvement differential and percentage of increment. Activity to which the question could be linked most directly and percentage of students who have piloted it.

	Before Pilot			After Pilot			Differential	Increment	Activity/ Students
	True	False	Doesn't Know	True	False	Doesn't Know			
Question 1 In all towns, the <i>fallas</i> festival is celebrated on Saint John's Eve.	47.8	39.9	12.3	37.7	53.6	8.7	13.7	34.55	Activity 1 - 86.23
Question 2 All <i>falla</i> torches are made of pine.	10.1	48.6	41.3	15.2	79.7	5.1	31.1	64.18	
Question 3 The forest's natural resources can be used up.	42	24.6	33.3	67.4	17.4	15.2	25.4	60.34	Activity 2 - 42.03
Question 9 <i>Falla</i> torches are the only natural resources which can be extracted from the forest.	15.9	61.6	22.5	16.7	70.3	13	8.7	14.12	
Question 4 Catalan, Occitan, Spanish and French are languages spoken in the Pyrenees.	48.6	25.4	26.1	65.9	15.9	18.1	17.3	35.82	Activity 3 - 52.17
Question 10 The terms "falles", "haros" and "brandons" are used to name the Pyrenean fire festivals.	44.9	12.3	42.8	63	8	29	18.1	40.32	
Question 5 The <i>fallas</i> festival is only celebrated in Spain and France.	13	60.1	26.8	8.7	78.3	13	18.2	30.12	Activity 4 - 100
Question 8 "Brandons" are tall, decorated logs, erected in the square, which are found in the French Pyrenees.	15.9	14.5	69.6	23.2	26.8	50	7.3	45.45	
Question 6 The shortest night of the year is in June and marks the start of summer.	55.8	16.7	27.5	72.5	15.9	11.6	16.7	29.87	Activity 5 - 29.71
Question 11 The shadow cast by a person is longer at 12 noon than at 5 in the afternoon.	32.6	26.8	40.6	30.4	36.2	33.3	9.4	35.07	
Question 7 The <i>fallaires</i> dance on their way down the mountain.	28.3	47.1	24.6	40.6	46.4	13	-0.7	-1.54	Activity 6 - 43.48
Question 12 During the festival of the <i>fallas</i> , dances are performed around the fire.	57.2	18.8	23.9	81.9	8.7	9.4	24.7	43.04	
							15.83	35.95	
							Average improvement	General increment	

With these results, it is evidenced that the materials were useful for the assimilation of the content presented, moreover, in a comprehensive way given that a differential of over 10 (1, 4, 5, 6, 10) or 20 points (2, 3, 12), as well as an increment superior to 40% (8, 12) or 50% (2, 3), is found in 9 of the 12 questions. Evidently, not all activities were done by the same number of students; even so, the aforementioned thematic axis ensured improvement in the responses.

In accordance with the freedom granted to instructors when it came to using the suitcase, we found ourselves with four different groups: those who had done just two, three, four, or all six activities. As can be seen in Table 2, in the first three groups there is a rising trend, which confirms that a greater use of the materials aids in the process of teaching and learning the content.

Table 2. Student groups by number of activities done and associated average improvement in the questionnaire.

	2 Activities (1 and 4)	3 Activities (3, 4 and 6)	4 Activities (1–4)	6 Activities (1–6)
Percentage of Students	47.83	13.77	8.6	29.7
Average Improvement	7.94	19.3	29.88	22.76

In the last group we see a slight descent, partly due to the characteristics of the activity not done by the other groups (5), as it addresses aspects tangential to the Pyrenean fire festivals and it does not go too far into depth in the manifestation as such; but specially, because of the way the activities were applied in the classroom by this group since, through the survey responses given by educators, we know they were adapted to their interests.

Having finalized the pedagogical validation, the definitive version of the Fallaire Suitcase was established, taking all survey and questionnaire results into account. More heritage content for teachers, and more information on activity procedure, was incorporated. Tutorials or answers sheets were even created for certain games or crafts and added to the digital platform “Debat a bat” (open debate).

5. Conclusions

The project presented here fulfilled the goal proposed and successfully incorporated pedagogical materials associated with an element inscribed by UNESCO, the solstice fire festivals in the Pyrenees, into formal education. As demonstrated by the prior analysis, it was a necessary initiative which would contribute to the sustainable management or safeguarding of the cultural element.

It was developed, furthermore, jointly with the bearer community, following the recommendations of the 2003 Convention. The participation of the protagonists was essential for achieving a useful and truly representative design [51]. It facilitated the shaping of the programme and prevented distortions of the content or possible tensions between regions.

At the same time, the educational community—an influential actor in the territory and, in essence, the future user of the didactic proposal—was involved. Thanks to this group’s participation, we were able to confirm that using ICH in the school context is advantageous to ICH’s valorization, the teaching-learning process of distinct curricular areas, and innovative instruction methodologies. The solstice fire festivals in the Pyrenees served as an example to demonstrate the cross-cutting potential of heritage.

The replicas of the Fallaire Suitcase are available in the pedagogical resource centers of the Pyrenees, ready to keep the flame of the tradition alive, aid in its continued existence, and maintain its essence. Both communities, bearer and educational, valued the initiative and, with their involvement, enabled the creation of a project which may serve as a model for future actions, in or outside of the Pyrenees.

Supplementary Materials: The suitcase’s six activity files can be accessed through the following link: <https://www.debatabat.eu/maletes-viatgeres/la-maleta-fallaire> (accessed on 12 July 2022).

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, M.B. and S.I.; methodology, M.B., A.S.-L. and S.I.; formal analysis, M.B., A.S.-L., A.F. and S.I.; investigation, M.B., A.S.-L., A.F. and S.I.; writing—original draft preparation, M.B.; writing—review and editing, M.B., A.S.-L. and A.F.; supervision, S.I. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research has been completed in the framework of the Chair of Education and Immaterial Heritage of the Pyrenees at the University of Lleida and funded by the Cultural Institute of the Spanish Ministry of Culture and Sport through the project “Design and Implementation of a Model for Safeguarding the Summer Solstice Fire Festivals in the Pyrenees” (Code a12) of the grants for Immaterial Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Projects (2018), ERDF funds through the project POCTEFA Interreg “PROMETHEUS: the Summer Solstice Fire Festivals in the Pyrenees (EFA 309/19)”, as well as by the Department of Culture of the Government of Catalonia (CLT924/18/00005, 924/19/00001, 406/20/00001, 405/21/000001, 406/22/000001), the Provincial Government of Lleida (Decree 638, 301, 3268, 1402, 1537), and the Institute for the Development and Promotion of the High Pyrenees and Aran (IDAPA) (31/2018, 13/2019, 06/2020, 67/2021, 27/2022) with their respective annual grants (2018–2022).

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this project, because no medical research was conducted on human subjects.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: The authors would like to thank Francesc Rodríguez and Monste Ballbè, managers of Obaga Activitats, for their contribution to the development of The Fallaire Suitcase.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References and Notes

1. UNESCO. Summer Solstice Fire Festivals in the Pyrenees. Available online: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/summer-solstice-fire-festivals-in-the-pyrenees-01073> (accessed on 11 May 2022).
2. This particularity has led the bearer community to request that the name of the element inscribed lack the specificity of “summer”.
3. Heiniger-Castéret, P. Quand le processus de labellisation UNESCO révèle le rituel: Le cas des brandons, halhars et falles en Pyrénées centrales. In *II Congrès Internacional d’Història dels Pirineus. Actes i Comunicacions*; Institut d’Estudis Andorrans: Sant Julià de Lòria, Andorra, 2019; pp. 601–616.
4. Roca, A. Pròleg. In *Les falles del Pirineu. L’Alta Ribagorça i el Pallars Sobirà*; Oriol, R., Ed.; Pagès Editors: Lleida, Spain, 2015; pp. 9–16.
5. The term “fallaire” is derived from “falla”—as previously mentioned, the word used to define the torch burned on the night of the festival. The *fallaire* is the one who bears or spins the *falla*. The word *fallaire* may also be used as an adjective: A *fallaire* town, that is, a town where the *falles* festival is celebrated.
6. Ricart, S.; Farré, X. *Foc al Faro, la Festa de les Falles al Pirineu*; AlpinArt: Taüll, Spain, 2012.
7. Riart, O.; Jordà, S. *Les Falles del Pirineu. L’Alta Ribagorça i el Pallars Sobirà*; Pagès Editors: Lleida, Spain, 2015.
8. Pedrals, X.; Escobet, M. *Fia-Faia. La Festa de Falles Nadalena*; Farrell: Bagà-St. Julià de Cerdanyola, Spain, 2017.
9. Ferré, J.P.; Ménétrier-Marcadal, B. *Era Sent Joan. Comminges et Barousse*; Eth Ostau Comengés: Sarp, Spain, 2018.
10. Roig, A. *Roda el foc. 30 anys de Falles a Andorra la Vella*; Pagès Editors: Andorra-Lleida, Spain, 2018.
11. In 2021, the project was presented at two symposiums: Ballesté, M.; Solé-Llussà, A. Educación y Patrimonio UNESCO: Una propuesta didáctica interdisciplinar en Educación Primaria. In *Repensar el Currículum de Ciencias Sociales: Prácticas educativas para una Ciudadanía Crítica*; Bel, J.C., Colomer, J.C., Alba, N., Eds.; Tirant Lo Blanch: Valencia, Spain, 2022; pp. 477–486; Ballesté, M.; Isus, S.; Fernández, A.; Solé, A.; Rodríguez, F.; Ballbè, M. El projecte Prometheus i l’Educació Formal: La Maleta Fallaire. In *Actes del Simposi Internacional Festes del Foc dels Solsticis als Pirineus*; Generalitat de Catalunya, Ed.; Generalitat de Catalunya: Barcelona, Spain, 2022; pp. 178–185.
12. UNESCO. *Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*; UNESCO: Paris, France, 2020; pp. 10, 50–68, 51.
13. Kahalaf, R. The Implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention: Continuity and Compatibility as Qualifying Conditions of Integrity. *Heritage* **2020**, *3*, 23. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
14. Fontal, O.; Ibáñez-Echeberria, A. Research on Heritage Education. Evolution and Current State Through analysis of High Impact Indicators. *Rev. Educ.* **2017**, *375*, 184–214. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
15. Fontal, O.; García Ceballos, S.; Ibáñez, A. (Eds.) *Educación y Patrimonio. Visiones Caleidoscópicas*; Trea: Gijón, Spain, 2015; p. 15.
16. Fontal, O. *La Educación Patrimonial. Del Patrimonio a Las Personas*; Trea: Gijón, Spain, 2013; p. 15.
17. Wróblewska, M. Museum Practices as Tools to (Re)Define Memory and Identity Issues Through Direct Experience of Tangible and Intangible Heritage. *Heritage* **2019**, *2*, 148. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
18. Arendt, H. *Entre el Pasado y el Futuro*; Ocho Ejercicios Sobre la Reflexión Política; Península: Barcelona, Spain, 1996; p. 104.
19. Pinto, H.; Molina, S. La educación patrimonial en los currículos de ciencias sociales en España y Portugal. *Educ. Siglo XXI* **2015**, *33*, 103–128. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

20. Estepa Giménez, J.; Wamba Aguado, A.M.; Jiménez Pérez, R. Fundamentos para una enseñanza y difusión del patrimonio desde una perspectiva integradora de las ciencias sociales y experimentales. *Investig. En La Esc.* **2005**, *56*, 19–26. Available online: <http://hdl.handle.net/10272/10694> (accessed on 26 April 2022).
21. Vlachaki, M. Crossing Cultures through the Intangible Heritage: An Educational Programme about Migrations in Greece. *Int. J. Intang. Herit.* **2007**, *2*, 94–102.
22. There is also an interesting vision in relation to the interpretation of heritage more critical or reflective: Ablett, P.; Dyer, P. Heritage and Hermeneutics: Towards a Broader Interpretation of Interpretation. *Curr. Issues Tour.* **2009**, *12*, 209–233; Uzzell, D. Interpreting Our Heritage: A Theoretical Interpretation. In *Contemporary Issues in Heritage and Environmental Interpretation: Problems and Prospects*; Uzzell, D., Ballantyne, R., Eds.; Stationery Office: London, UK, 1998; pp. 11–25.
23. Cuenca López, J.M.; Estepa Giménez, J.; Martín Cáceres, M.J. El patrimonio cultural en la educación reglada. *Rev. De Patrim. Cult. De España* **2011**, *4*, 45–58. Available online: <http://hdl.handle.net/10272/9437> (accessed on 26 April 2022).
24. Estepa, J.; Ávila, R.M.; Ruiz, R. Concepciones sobre la enseñanza y difusión del patrimonio en las instituciones educativas y los centros de interpretación. Estudio descriptivo. *Enseñanza Cienc. Soc.* **2007**, *6*, 75–94.
25. Fontal, O.; Martínez, M. An Analysis of Educational Designs in Intangible Cultural Heritage Programmes: The Case of Spain. *Int. J. Intang. Herit.* **2018**, *13*, 190–202.
26. Ballesté, M.; Isus, S.; Solé-Llussà, A.; Fernández, A. PCI y Educación: Análisis del Registro de Buenas Prácticas de Salvaguardia UNESCO. In Proceedings of the 1st International Congress of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Barcelona, Spain, 12 May 2022.
27. Doorselaere, J.V. Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage through formal education in Flanders: A critical analysis of the implemetattion of the 2003 UNESCO Convention. *Int. J. Intang. Herit.* **2021**, *16*, 32–44.
28. Muñoz, A. El patrimonio cultural material y el inmaterial: Buenas prácticas para su preservación. *Mediac. Soc.* **2008**, *3*, 495–534.
29. Ballesté, M.; Isus, S. Salvaguardant les Festes del foc dels solsticis als Pirineus: Estat de la qüestió i proposta didàctica. In *Les Simbologies i els Rituals al Voltant del Foc*; Barrull, C., Mach, A., Eds.; Editorial Afers: Catarroja-Barcelona, Spain, 2020; pp. 29–39.
30. Lamothe, M. Quand la communauté du brandon se dévoile. In *Actes del Simposi Internacional de les Festes del Foc dels Solsticis als Pirineus*; Generalitat de Catalunya, Ed.; Generalitat de Catalunya: Barcelona, Spain, 2022; pp. 122–138.
31. Vygotsky, L. *Mind in Society*; Havard University Press: Cambridge, UK, 1980; p. 89.
32. Dewey, J. *Dictionary of Education*; Greenwood Press: Connecticut, CO, USA, 1972; p. 219.
33. Calaf, R. *Didáctica del Patrimonio: Epistemología, Metodología y Estudio de Casos*; Trea: Gijón, Spain, 2009; p. 80.
34. Krajcik, J.S.; Blumenfeld, P.C. Project-based learning. In *The Cambridge Handbook of the Learning Sciences*; Sawyer, K., Ed.; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2006; pp. 317–334.
35. Fontal, O.; Martínez, M. *Análisis del Tratamiento del Patrimonio Cultural en la Legislación Educativa Vigente, Tanto Nacional Como Autonómica, Dentro de la Educación Obligatoria*; IPCE: Madrid, Spain, 2016.
36. Callejo, J. *El Grupo de Discusión: Introducción a una Práctica de Investigación*; Ariel Practicum: Barcelona, Spain, 2001.
37. The pedagogical validation procedure was only done in Catalan-speaking territory, that is, in Spain and Andorra, because the pilot version of the suitcase was in this language. The suitcase was later translated into Spanish, Occitan and French.
38. Carrera, X.; Vaquero, E.; Balsells, M.A. Instrumento de evaluación de competencias digitales para adolescentes en riesgo social. *Rev. Electrónica De Tecnol. Educ.* **2011**, *35*, 1–25. [[CrossRef](#)]
39. Creswell, J. *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research*; SAGE Publications: Washington, DC, USA, 2014.
40. These centers depend on the public administration, specifically the education departments of each area or region.
41. Another project that has also linked educational technology with ICH is: Espinoza, E.M. Augmented Reality as an Educational Resource Applied to the Teaching of Pre-Columbian Cultures Settled in the Pumapungo Archaeological Park. *Commun. Comput. Inf. Sci.* **2020**, *1294*, 359–366.
42. Galofré-Papiol, G.; Solé-Llussà, A.; Ballesté, M. Diseño y validación de un instrumento de evaluación de la plataforma educativa Debat a bat. In *Convergencia entre Educación y Tecnología: Hacia un Nuevo Paradigma*; Aveleyra, E.E., Proyetti, M., Bonelli, F., Mazzoni, D., Musso, G., Perri, J., Veiga, R., Eds.; EUDEBA: Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2021; pp. 1081–1085.
43. Wenger, E. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*; Cambridge Univesity Press: Cambridge, UK, 1998.
44. Perry, M. Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Metacognitive Reflection: A Case Study of Faculty Teaching in Learning Communities. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Texas, Arlington, TX, USA, 2017.
45. As can be seen in different formal education projects related to ICH: Doorselaere, J.V. Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage through formal education in Flanders: A critical analysis of the implemetattion of the 2003 UNESCO Convention. *Int. J. Intang. Herit.* **2021**, *16*, 32–44; Vlachaki, M. Crossing Cultures through the Intangible Heritage: An Educational Programme about Migrations in Greece. *Int. J. Intang. Herit.* **2007**, *2*, 94–102; Zeren, Merve G. Safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage through teaching practices within the scope of transmission: The case of traditional turkish archery. *Milli Folklor* **2021**, *17*, 176–189.
46. This aspect was compensated, to a certain extent, by the audiovisual materials incorporated into the aforementioned virtual museum of the Solstice Fire Festivals in the Pyrenees.
47. Generalitat de Catalunya. *Actes del Simposi Internacional de les Festes del Foc dels Solsticis als Pirineus*; Generalitat de Catalunya: Barcelona, Spain, 2022.
48. The suitcase includes miniature replicas of all types of *falles*. These typologies were selected according to the bibliography published at this point in time.

-
49. In light of these figures, the University of Lleida is offering heritage education courses for teaching professionals on a regular basis through the territory's pedagogical resource centers.
 50. In the final design of the activity, the moment when the dances occur was emphasized.
 51. In the same way that happened in other educational projects linked to the ICH: Ktori, M. Lefkara Lace: Educational Approaches to ICH in Cyprus. *Int. J. Intang. Herit.* **2017**, *12*, 78–92; Zeren, Merve G. Safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage through teaching practices within the scope of transmission: The case of traditional turkish archery. *Milli Folklor* **2021**, *17*, 176–189.