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## **Head teachers' attitudes towards religious diversity and interreligious dialogue and their implications for secondary schools in Catalonia**

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the attitudes of secondary-school head teachers towards religious diversity, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the role of education in fostering intercultural and interreligious dialogue. A sample comprising 275 head teachers in Catalan secondary schools answered an online questionnaire. The results revealed attitudes which were moderately favourable towards cultural and religious diversity, more strongly favourable towards interreligious dialogue, and less favourable towards education playing a major role in managing religious and cultural diversity and in fostering interreligious dialogue. We found significant differences in head teachers' attitudes in line with the specific features of the schools where they worked. Amongst these differences it was noticeable that heads of religious and private-public schools had more positive attitudes towards managing religious and cultural diversity and towards education playing a leading role in promoting dialogue. Also, we identified three groups of head teachers who showed differing degrees of positivity according to the perceived religious diversity of their schools. The more diverse the school, the less favourable the attitude, and vice-versa; the most moderate favourability was also associated with the most moderate diversity.

**Keywords:** interreligious dialogue; religious beliefs; head teachers' attitudes; secondary schools

## **1. Introduction**

Religion in state schools is a highly politicised issue, although little studied in many countries (Byrne, 2012), Spain being no exception. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 marked a break with the official Catholicism of the previous regime, opting instead for the religious pluralism which sets out citizens' basic right to freedom of worship. No specific faith is officially sanctioned by the state, therefore. A non-religious, lay model (Gervilla, 2013), incorporating cooperation between the religions present in Spain, was adopted, although in this context the Catholic Church enjoys a privileged place (Díez de Velasco, 2016). The state's official pluralism is linked to religious freedom in education through the 1980 Law of Religious Diversity. Thus, parents have the right for their children to receive a religious education in accordance with their beliefs, in line with democratic values and respecting basic civil rights and freedoms. While the law formally separates the state and the Catholic Church, this division is still not clearly established in the Spanish democratic system (Pérez Agote, 2012). Religious education is nominally Catholic, which has resulted at the very least in a social split between more conservative families who approve of Catholic teachers, chosen and trained by the Catholic Church and teaching Catholicism in both state and private schools, and families who reject the Church, seeing it as a relic of Franco-era "national Catholicism," and instead favour the legal separation (Álvarez, Rosón, & Dietz, 2011).

In recent years this situation has been radically changed by demographic shifts mostly stemming from transnational migration (Sivasubramaniam & Hayhoe, 2018), globalisation (Marshall, 2018), the growth of terrorism (Rodríguez, 2018), etc., placing religion firmly at the centre of political and socio-educational debate. Spain has become a nation with a clear presence of

religious diversity, while at the same time remaining one of the least literate in terms of religious pluralism.

In this context, religious dialogue has become a key objective in European policy and research, in an explicit attempt to promote interreligious harmony and social cohesion in societies which are now multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic (Engebretson, Souza, Durka, & Gearon, 2010). Framed within the principles of theories of interculturality going back to the 1980s (Besley & Peters, 2012), this dialogue is seen as a medium whose preconditions are freedom, democracy, human rights and a solid base for mutual comprehension. This paper aligns itself with this approach. Our main objective was to analyse the role attributed by school heads to education as a means for fostering dialogue from the standpoint of social justice, since, despite Catalan society's growing trend towards secularisation and multiculturalism, educational policy is still influenced by the historic relationship of Church and state, thereby maintaining a Catholic bias in education (Garreta-Bochaca, Macia-Bordalba, & Llevot-Calvet, 2018).

### **1.1. Religion in Catalonia: a secular, diverse society**

Since the Spanish Transition to democracy, secularization and diversity in Catalan society has grown at a much faster pace and put down stronger roots than in the rest of the country (Mellén, 2011). Elzo and Castiñeira (2012) found that figures for Catholic religious affiliation and practice were significantly lower than in other parts of Spain, while the diverse spread of religions and non-religious/atheist groups was greater.

While at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century data on religious beliefs registered relatively strong homogeneity, since 2003 there has been a notable decrease in practising Catholics and a corresponding increase in non-believers, atheists, agnostics and followers of other religions (Capdevila, 2013). A new group of Catholics has appeared: those who 'believe without belonging,' seeing themselves as Catholics and believers but with an attitude of greater freedom towards traditional religious practices (Codina, 2015). This new 'de-institutionalised religiosity' (Elzo & Castiñeira, 2012) shows that Catalan society has shifted from being Catholic in religion to being Catholic only in culture (Capdevila, 2013).

The most recent research data on religion (Àrea d'Enquestes, Estudis i Treballs del CEO, 2016) showed that half the population (50.9%) saw themselves as believers, while only half of this percentage actually practised their religion, thereby demonstrating the advanced secularisation of Catalan society. 58% considered themselves to be Catholic, 16% atheists and 11.9% agnostic. These last two figures have a much greater weight in Catalonia than the rest of Spain and represented a clear distinguishing feature. Islam was at 4.8% and also had a greater presence than in the rest of the country, Catalonia being the region with the largest number of Muslims (Albareda-Tiana & Gas-Aixendri, 2016). Evangelical and protestant Christianity were at 3%, Buddhism 1.3%, orthodox Christianity 0.9% and Jehovah's Witnesses 0.6%. Judaism appeared to be absent; the existence of this community, however, goes back to medieval times, disappearing with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and finally beginning to take up its place in the public sphere once again at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Álvarez et al., 2011). This religious pluralism is also illustrated by the 1,366 non-Catholic places of worship currently found in Catalonia. After the Catholic churches, the evangelical have shown a marked increase (725), followed by 266 Islamic mosques.

This growth in the spread of religious practices has occurred just as Catalan society has freed itself from the traditions of the Catholic Church and begun a wider process of secularisation. On the one hand, inherited traditions are being re-examined; on the other, society as a whole is becoming more diverse in its beliefs (Domingo, 2016). As a consequence, the new map of faiths drawn by immigration has placed religion at the centre of the political agenda (Rodríguez, 2018). At the same time immigrants' places of worship have become cultural and moral focal points for their communities, as the minorities centre their efforts on mutual material aid and integrating their fellow believers into Catalan society (helping them to find sustenance, accommodation and jobs), and on activities reinforcing their beliefs (Albareda-Tiana & Gas-Aixendri, 2016). Thus religion has returned to the public sphere, giving rise to substantial debate in the context of this apparently paradoxical situation (Jarabo & Navarro, 2016). While in Catalan society Catholicism has become a matter of private conscience and disappeared from the public eye, immigration has brought new religious phenomena which are now taking their place in public life.

### **1.2. Religions in the education system**

During the Franco era religion was studied in schools; the Catholic religion, that is, since the dictatorship (which referred to itself as "National Catholic") stressed the unity of Church and state, claiming that being Spanish also meant being Catholic, making Spanish identity synonymous with Catholicism (Gervilla, 2013). With the transition to democracy and the Constitution of 1978 the state was declared non-confessional (article 16) and there was a marked drive towards the secularization of society (Pérez, 2016); however, it was decided to maintain the subject of the Catholic religion in school curricula, as a positive cultural heritage worthy of preservation. At the same time, religious education was no longer compulsory for pupils who were of a different faith or who did not wish to study it. A segregated system was set up, dividing school students between those who took religious education and those who studied an alternative subject (Díez de Velasco, 2016).

Since then the Spanish state has passed six different education bills. Governments both of left and right have never considered taking religious education out of schools (Giménez, 2015); in fact the subject's preservation was cemented by a 1979 agreement between the Spanish state and the Vatican, still in force. This pact established Catholic RE at all levels and in all schools, on an equal footing with all other basic subjects. It also stipulated that RE teachers should be hired by the Church, i.e. outside of the normal system, in which state-run official exams provide access to a career in education. Thus, it is the bishops' conferences rather than the Ministry of Education which set the RE curriculum and decide on textbooks and materials. Despite this, the teaching of Catholicism in both schools and universities (on Education degrees) is still funded by the Spanish state (Jarabo & Navarro, 2016).

The teaching of other religions was agreed in the 1992 cooperation accords between the Spanish state and the Federation of Spanish Evangelical Religious Associations, the Spanish Federation of Jewish Communities and the Islamic Commission. Thus evangelical Christianity and the Jewish and Islamic religions are accounted for within the traditional "Three Cultures-Three Religions" image of the country's past (Díez de Velasco, 2016). These agreements are very similar to that with the Vatican: each religion assigns its teachers and decides the curriculum and textbooks, although implementation is rare (Tarrés & Rosón, 2009). This wide difference about Catholicism

results from the obligation to prove that there is sufficient demand for a class in another religion (a minimum of 10 students).

The model of religious instruction in Catalonia is built around the negation of diversity (Díez de Velasco, 2016) and segregates students according to their beliefs. The teaching of religion, whichever it may be, is in the student's own faith, and when other religions are studied it is according to this faith's precepts that they are seen (Garreta-Bochaca et al., 2018). There is also an alternative subject, which is non-confessional and plural, although still in this situation of segregation. It has been redesigned three times since the Transition: in 1995 the Socialist government set up the subject of "Society, Culture and Religion;" the second attempt under the conservative People's Party failed; and, after the third reform, once again under a Socialist administration, it was renamed "The History and Culture of Religions." The contents of the alternative subject were not previously part of the general curriculum. The education law currently in force (the LOMCE) does not stipulate any specific subject for the non-confessional, plural study of religions. The alternative to religious instruction is "Social and Civic Values" in primary education and "Ethical Values" in secondary. The widespread debate provoked by this law, apart from polarising public opinion around whether religion should be taught in schools or not, has mainly centred on the assessment of the subject, which now counts in students' yearly marks, since it is no longer optional.

### **1.3. Catalan society's attitudes towards religious education in schools**

In matters of religion Catalan schools are subject to Spanish state directives, and there is much public debate on the teaching of religion in schools. The great majority of inhabitants (73%) give no or little importance to religion (42.3% and 30.7% respectively), while 86.7% agree or strongly agree that religion should have no influence on politics (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2015). Likewise, only 15.9% of Catalan society considers itself very or quite religious, while at the same time 68.1% of Catalans think that it is very or quite important that people should have knowledge of other religious faiths (Àrea d'Enquestes, Estudis i Treballs del CEO, 2016). This shows that support for teaching religious culture at school (i.e., a new subject on the main world religions) is growing.

In schools, pupils are "fully in possession [...] of their rights to freedom of belief and moral integrity," which means that they therefore should have "the legally guaranteed possibility of adapting their religious conduct and way of life to their own faith [...] regarding other persons or social groups." Also, religious diversity has not been a problem up to now in the proper functioning of schools and is not incompatible with the identification and treatment of specific cases, while at the same time there is no clearly set out approach to religious issues (Vergés et al., 2017).

There is also a tendency to confuse the treatment of religious diversity with that of newcomers or immigrants, typically in state schools; and approaches to diversity tend also to be identified with conflict management, despite the schools' view that diversity causes only low-level conflict. Most schools state that the religious education they provide is based on Catholicism (Garreta-Bochaca et al., 2018), although their most religious students are not actually Catholics. Lastly, there is a general consensus that information and training is lacking, and that especially in state

schools more training in cultural diversity has become a pressing need (Freixa, Vilà, Rubio, & Belghirane, 2017).

## 2. Method

A survey, in the form of a quantitative and descriptive-explanatory questionnaire (Wolf, Joye, Smith, & Fu, 2016), was used to:

- Identify the attitudes of the school heads towards religious diversity, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the role of education in fostering intercultural and interreligious dialogue.
- Explore the relationship between these attitudes and the specific features of each school.
- Identify different head teacher profiles according to their attitudes.

The measuring instrument adopted (Table 1) included socio-demographic questions, questions characterising the school in terms of its religious diversity, and a scale measuring attitudes towards intercultural and interreligious dialogue. This questionnaire was administered online to school heads in June 2016, guaranteeing confidentiality in their replies. The attitude scale was made up of 30 Likert items (1 = “completely disagree” and 5 = “completely agree”) divided into three dimensions: (a) religious diversity, (b) intercultural dialogue, and (c) the role given to education in fostering intercultural and interreligious dialogue. The reliability study showed an internal consistency of .617, .747 and .866 respectively for the subdimensions and .887 for the scale total; while Lawshe’s (1975) content validity index yielded a total scale value of .58, which Lawshe sees as acceptable. The questionnaire was validated by seven experts, who each verified the relevance of all the scale items.

3. Dimensions of the questionnaire	Items	Measurement scale			
		Positive items	Negative items	Items total	Cronbach's Alpha
Socio-demographic and contextual data	School population	Open question			
	Type of school	Nominal scale: state, private or public-private school			
	Age of respondent	Numerical scale			
	Sex of respondent	Dichotomous question			
Features of the school in terms of religious diversity	Religion in the school	Dichotomous question			
	Whether there is a reception class in the school	Dichotomous question			
	Whether there are adaptations or specific treatment for groups according to their religion	Dichotomous question			
	The school's cultural and religious diversity	Dichotomous question			
	Opinion on whether training received in promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue is sufficient	Dichotomous question			
	The importance of being trained in promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue in school	Dichotomous question			
Dimensions of the attitudes scale	Subdimension	Positive items	Negative items	Items total	Cronbach's Alpha
1. Religious diversity	2.1 Factors favouring / hindering religious diversity	4	2, 3	3	-
	2.2 Discrimination: discrimination against specific religions as a source of conflict, discrimination against women	5, 6	7, 8	4	-
	2.3 Presence in the public sphere	1	9, 10	3	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>.617</b>

<b>2. Intercultural and interreligious dialogue</b>	<i>3.1 Concept of religion and interreligious dialogue</i>	11, 12, 13, 19, 20	18	6	-
	<i>3.2 factors favouring interreligious dialogue (conceptions of interreligious dialogue, promoting shared values and networking...)</i>	14, 16	15, 17	4	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>.746</b>
<b>3. The role of education in fostering intercultural and interreligious dialogue</b>	<i>4.1 Formal education</i>	21, 22, 23, 25, 26	27	6	-
	<i>4.2 Other socio-educational actors</i>	30	24	2	-
	<i>4.3 The training of future socio-educational actors at university</i>	29	28	2	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>.866</b>
<b>Scale total</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>.887</b>

Table 1. Data-collection instrument

### 3.1. Sample

From the four provinces of Catalonia 275 secondary school head teachers took part in the study, chosen according to convenience. The largest number were from the province of Barcelona (73%), while 12% were from Gerona, 7% from Tarragona and 4% from Lerida. 58% of the schools were situated in cities and large towns, and 38% in municipalities with less than 20,000 inhabitants. Most of the head teachers worked in state (60%) and public-private schools (40%) - private schools partially subsidized with public funds-, and only two private schools agreed to take part in the survey. 52% of respondents were men and 48% women. The mean age was 50, the youngest participant being 29 and the oldest 72. These ages corresponded to the responsibility of the posts participants held, showing that they all had proven professional track records.

### 3.2. Data Analysis

To address the first aim of the study we made a descriptive statistical analysis of the results, attending to the usual indices of frequency, position, and dispersion. To identify different head teacher profiles according to their attitudes we used a cluster analysis. Clustering is a classification technique used to identify and characterize groups of subjects or homogeneous variables based on the observed values within an apparently heterogeneous set. The task of grouping is based on the study of the distances between those values, which allows to quantify the degree of similarity in the analysis, in the case of the proximities, and the degree of difference, in the case of distances (Vilà et al., 2014). We employed a two-step cluster analysis, which enabled us to choose automatically the optimum number of clusters (Bacher, Wenzig, & Vogler, 2004). Since all the variables in the procedure were continuous, the result of the two-stage cluster analysis, once the optimum number of clusters was known, was validated by applying K-means clustering (MacQueen, 1967) to the same data. These operations were carried out using the statistical package SPSS 18.0.

## 4. Results

Of the schools participating 63% were non-religious and 37% religious. 67% had no reception classes. More than half (54%) stated that they did not have any kind of adaptation or specific treatment for different religious groups. This has particularly serious consequences when we consider that 39% of participants affirmed that their schools had wide cultural diversity. 55% of

respondents believed that they were not sufficiently trained in promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue in schools, and 76% said that such training was important.

#### 4.1. Attitudes towards religious diversity, interreligious dialogue and the role of education

Our findings show that participants' attitudes had a strong tendency towards moderation, especially regarding the role of education, where a mean of 37 points out of 50 was obtained. Thus, the head teachers were moderately favourable to cultural and religious diversity (39 points out of 50), more strongly favourable to interreligious dialogue (42 out of 50), but notably less favourable to education playing a major role in managing cultural and religious diversity and fostering interreligious dialogue (37 out of 50).

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Stand. dev.
Religious diversity	275	18	50	39.15	5.40
Interreligious and intercultural dialogue	275	26	50	41.46	5.30
Role of education	275	12	50	36.72	8.86
Scale total	275	60	144	117.33	16.66
Valid number (according to the list)	275				

Table 2. Descriptors in the attitudes scale and subscales.

These figures showed some significant differences according to the type of school, its degree of religiosity, the density of its catchment population, the training of its staff, whether it had a reception class, whether adaptations were made on the basis of religion and whether it was seen as having wide cultural diversity (Table 3). Specifically, the head teachers of public-private religious schools in large towns or cities, without reception classes, with adaptations on a religious basis, who believed that it was important to have training to promote interreligious dialogue, and who saw their school as having little cultural diversity had the most favourable attitudes towards religious diversity and interreligious dialogue and towards schools playing an active role in these issues.

<b>Is there a reception class in your school?</b>	Yes	38.81	-.730	.466	40.20	<b>-2.777</b>	<b>.006</b>	33.94	<b>-3.705</b>	<b>.000</b>	112.96	<b>-3.085</b>	<b>.002</b>
	No	39.32			42.07			38.07			119.46		
<b>Religiosity of the school</b>	Yes	39.72	1.328	.185	44.01	<b>7.118</b>	<b>.000</b>	43.05	<b>12.484</b>	<b>.000</b>	126.77	<b>8.803</b>	<b>.000</b>
	No	38.82			39.95			32.99			111.76		
<b>Do you have specific adaptations or treatment?</b>	Yes	39.49	.957	.339	42.50	<b>3.040</b>	<b>.003</b>	39.45	<b>4.995</b>	<b>.000</b>	121.44	<b>3.939</b>	<b>.000</b>
	No	38.87			40.58			34.41			113.85		
<b>Do you see your school as having high cultural diversity? (High diversity context)</b>	Yes	38.74	1.013	.312	40.46	<b>2.489</b>	<b>.013</b>	35.48	1.844	.066	114.68	<b>2.104</b>	<b>.036</b>
	No	39.41			42.08			37.50			118.99		

Table 3. Statistics comparing socio-demographic and context variables

We found statistically significant differences between state and public-private schools in the interreligious dialogue scales, the role of education and the scale total, showing that the attitudes of the state school heads were less favourable to interreligious dialogue and to the school playing an active role. Similarly, the religious school heads had a much more favourable attitude towards interreligious dialogue, and particularly towards education playing a role in these issues, showing by contrast that non-religious school heads held a less favourable attitude to interreligious dialogue, and especially stressing that they did not think education should play

an active role in religious diversity or in boosting interreligious dialogue. Also, schools with no reception classes but which offered adaptations and specific treatment to different groups on a religious basis were those whose head teachers had a much more favourable attitude towards interreligious dialogue, and particularly towards education playing a role in these issues. School heads who believed that it was important to have training for fostering interreligious dialogue, and those whose schools were in large population centres, also showed a much more favourable attitude in all the scale dimensions. Finally, the differences were statistically significant between head teachers who saw their school as having wide cultural diversity and those who did not, in terms of their attitudes towards intercultural and interreligious dialogue and in the scale total, demonstrating that those who perceived wide cultural diversity were those who scored least in intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Contrastingly, there were no statistically significant differences between head teachers who felt themselves to be sufficiently trained in these issues and those who did not.

#### 4.2. Head teachers' profiles

The two-step cluster analysis of the two variables (wide diversity and scale total in attitudes towards religious diversity, interreligious dialogue and the role of education) identified three good-quality clusters (profile cohesion mean higher than 0.5), as shown in Figure 1.

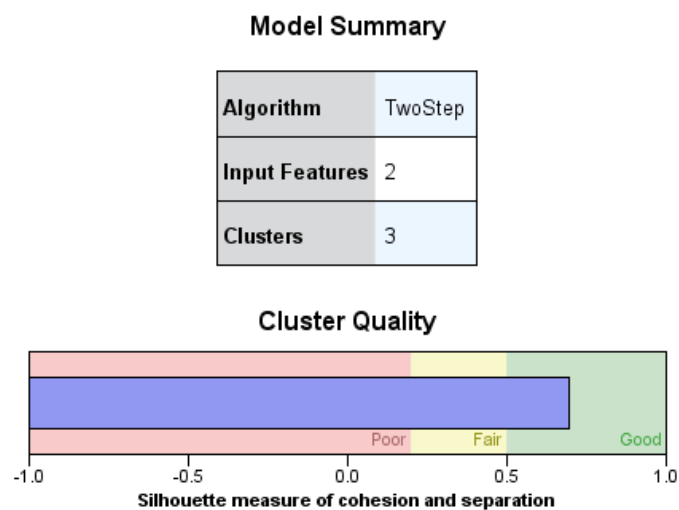


Figure 1. Quality of clusters in two-step cluster analysis

These three clusters represent three different profiles (Figure 2), according to the head teachers' attitudes:

**Cluster 1** (highly diverse school, moderate attitude) comprised the 38.5% of the sample (n=106), namely, those heads who saw less religious diversity in their schools and had a moderate attitude towards religious diversity, interreligious dialogue and the role of education. In this group most respondents were from state schools, mostly non-religious, in towns and cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants, with reception classes, in general making no special adaptations for groups on a religious basis, and with ambivalent attitudes towards training in managing religious diversity in their schools.

**Cluster 2** (low diversity school, strong attitude) was made up of the 33.5% (n=95) of the sample who saw less religious diversity in their schools and who had a more favourable attitude towards religious diversity, interreligious dialogue and the role of education. In this group we found the largest number of public-private religious schools, from towns and cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants, without reception classes, making special adaptations for groups on a religious basis, and who believed that it was important to be trained in managing religious diversity in their schools.

Lastly, **Cluster 3** (low school diversity, low attitude) comprised the 28% (n=77) of the sample whose schools had less cultural diversity and who had a less positive attitude towards religious diversity, interreligious dialogue and the role of education. In this group we mainly found both state and public-private schools, both religious and non-religious, from population centres with less than 20,000 inhabitants, with lesser numbers of reception classes, making fewer special adaptations for groups on a religious basis, and giving less importance to training in managing religious diversity in their schools.

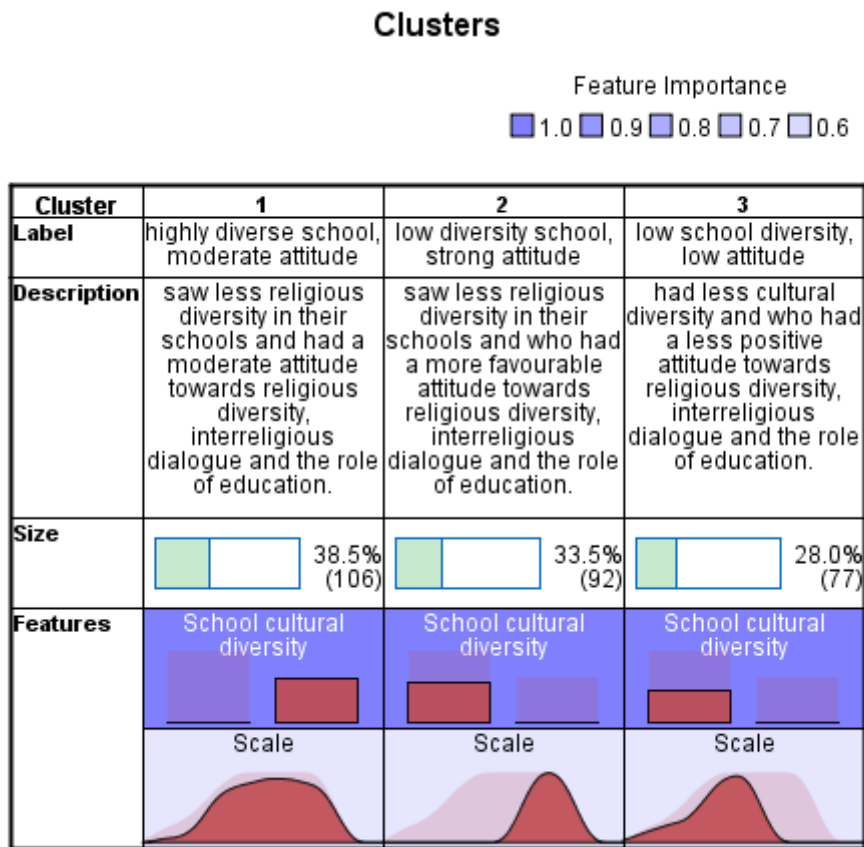


Figure 2. Cluster analysis

## 5. Discussion

In a plural society such as Catalonia there is a clear need for educators to have a basic and accurate knowledge of religious issues, since this is one of the main keys to understanding both cultural diversity and social coexistence (Jarabo & Navarro, 2016). In this regard, we found that school head teachers had a moderately favourable attitude towards cultural and religious

diversity, while at the same time being noticeably less keen for education to promote interreligious dialogue and to play a major role in managing diversity. These attitudes coincide with the views of trainee teachers on religious issues (Freixa et al., 2017). They also coincide with the fact that, while Catalan society is becoming ever more complex in terms of diversity (Martínez-Ariño, Griera, García-romeral, & Forteza, 2011), no official initiatives had been undertaken which would affect the treatment of religion in Catalonia, whether from multi-religious or lay standpoints (Díez de Velasco, 2007), although there do exist agreements such as Law 26/1992, reached more than 25 years ago between the Spanish state and the Islamic Commission of Spain (Rodríguez, 2018).

Besides, this paper responds to the need identified by other scholars to explore the complex relationship between professional, personal and socio-cultural factors on the one hand and specific attitudes towards diversity in education and its management on the other (Everington, Avest, Bakker, & Want., 2011). Our findings show the head teachers of public-private and religious schools had a more favourable attitude towards the management of religious and cultural diversity and towards education playing a major role in promoting dialogue. If the school did not offer reception classes but made curricular adaptations on a religious basis, the head tended to have more favourable attitudes. Head teachers in larger population centres who felt that training in these issues was necessary also showed more favourable attitudes. In fact, other studies have suggested that in Catalan towns and villages of less than 3,000 inhabitants there is little social cohesion and scarce acceptance of new residents from immigrant backgrounds (Vilà & Del Campo, 2009).

Public-private religious schools were those which were most clearly tackling religious issues (Vergés et al., 2017), and this affords them a certain awareness in the field, possibly because their teachers, when dealing with potentially sensitive issues, have begun to uncover the “secret stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) that can impede the fulfilment and management of the school community’s religious needs. In contrast, state schools’ attitudes tended towards “safeguarding” (Vergés et al., 2017), which can at times become a pronounced secularism (Pérez, 2016). Finally, having a perception of low cultural diversity in the school was also associated with a more favourable attitude to religious diversity, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the school’s role. This variable was important when responding to our third aim.

Regarding our third objective, while Vergés et al. (2017) found that secondary schools in Gerona opted much more often than primary schools to offer a subject of religious culture for all students, arguing reasons of security (i.e. to counter the potential radicalisation of some students), the attitudes we found here were clearly uneven. We identified three groups of head teachers with more favourable, neutral and less favourable attitudes and in all three cases the main defining feature was the perceived religious diversity of the school. While it is already known that in richly diverse contexts more positive attitudes, more open to the particular development of all cultures, can develop, it seems desirable for educators to be aware of the social value of the teaching of religions in schools using approaches firmly based on peace values (Díez de Velasco, 2007). Furthermore, our findings show that with more diversity there was less favourability and vice-versa, the most moderate favourability also being associated with more moderate diversity. This might be suggesting that in certain contexts contact and coexistence in

schools can arouse attitudes of resistance (Gratacós & Ugidos, 2011), highlighting then the importance of building an “intercultural ethos” (Tarozzi, 2014). The most numerous cluster (128 participants) was that which combined more positive attitudes with lower diversity, and this group’s schools were religious, public-private, from towns/cities of more than 20,000 inhabitants, without reception classes but with adaptations to specific groups on the basis of religion, and believing that training for managing religious diversity in their schools was important. As these were public-private schools, possibly they were making endeavours in this area for their own survival. A possible explanation of this might be that while for many years in Catalonia people tended to see public-private schools as better than state schools, this bias is now changing, as state school enrolments have risen considerably in the current year. Religious and public-private schools are implementing new ideas for dealing with religious diversity; the strong tendency towards secularization in Catalan society, however, means that families are now turning to state schools, which have always identified themselves as secular, probably from the standpoint of a poorly understood laicity.

Taken together, the challenge of improving or changing attitudes and behaviour among teachers cannot be met simply through the “transmission of knowledge,” but rather by engaging people themselves in action. In teacher training it might be advisable not only to incorporate contents pertaining to religious issues and religious cultures, but also meaningful and reflexive learning through real practice in schools with religious diversity to widening, enriching or building new mental models.

In addition to this, while currently there is a strong predominance of Catholic education, this does not prevent us from addressing other religions through an approach based on interreligious dialogue. The state should respect without privilege or discrimination all religious faiths present in schools, and regardless of the number of students represented, since the practice of human rights is not a question of quantity but of the inherent dignity of each and every person (Gervilla, 2013). But while this remains a matter of political and ideological debate, such a possibility seems to be only a utopia. Apart from further diagnostic studies on the importance of a school subject dealing with religions, a reawakening of society and its mobilization for its rights **may be** required.

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