



Learning Interculturality From rEligion



RELIGION EDUCATION IN SPAIN

DESK RESEARCH

Universidad San Jorge

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CONTENT

The Current Context of Religious Education in Spanish Primary Education.....	3
Introduction.....	3
Methodology.....	3
Participants.....	5
The Spanish Context.....	5
Education legislation.....	7
Religious education teachers.....	7
Catholic religious education.....	8
Evangelical and Muslim Religious Education.....	9
Development of basic regulation and RES characteristics depending on the religious faith: contents, teachers, timetables and organization.....	11
Catholic Religious Education.....	12
Muslim and Evangelical Religious Education.....	12
Key findings.....	14
Conclusions.....	15
Case Studies Religious Education in three Schools In Zaragoza, Spain.....	16
Conclusions.....	27
References.....	29



The Current Context of Religious Education in Spanish Primary Education

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Introduction

The main objective of this project is to analyse how religious education in primary schools help to promote interculturalism among the students. Religion is indeed a basic part of any culture, as the Council of Europe defines it “is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, to moral values” (2017) which is very much related to multicultural societies and intercultural societies. According to Grant and Sleeter (1989) a multicultural education approach tries to reduce and diminish prejudices and certain discrimination against certain minority groups “to provide equal opportunity and social justice for all groups, and to effect and equitable distribution of power among members of the different cultural groups” (p. 54) the main objective of this approach is reform the educational process thus it is fair for all children (Banks & McGee Banks, 1989). As Banks (2004) states a multiculturalism is the public acceptance of immigrant groups, assuming that they have the same rights as native citizens without leaving their own diversity and adapting to a certain key values.

Methodology

This study collected data following a qualitative methodology. The study had two stages. In the first one (desk research), legislation, legal regulations and syllabi about religious education in Spain, were examined. Afterwards, opinions of educators had



been taken with the semi-structured focus group method, which is one of the qualitative methods of research.

Focus groups are a qualitative research method used for collecting qualitative data, which is generated through group discussions (Krueger & Casey, 2009). This is why “they use guided group discussions to generate a rich understanding of participants’ experiences and beliefs” (Morgan, 1998, p. 11). Focus groups draw on three main strengths: 1) exploration and discovery: because focus groups are usually used to learn about topics that are usually poorly understood, 2) context and depth: helping to understand the background of participants’ experiences and thoughts about certain topics, and 3) interpretation: since participants want to understand each other, sharing thoughts and ideas provides understanding of why certain things are the way they are.

Focus groups are group interviews guided by a moderator. It is a method that promotes communication amongst the group participants and the researchers. Focus groups are in the middle of a communication process that has three steps: 1) the researcher decides what he/she needs to hear from the participants; 2) the focus group method promotes a conversation among the participants about the topics selected by the researcher; 3) the researchers summarize what they have learned from the participants at the end of the focus group (Morgan, 1998). When using focus groups the researcher decides what set of group dynamics best fits the research project. The moderator can follow a strict interview protocol or the discussion can be less structured with open-ended questions.



Participants

Six religious education teachers, a moderator and a secretary participated in this event that lasted 2.5 hours. The focus group started with the presentation of the professional role of the moderator and secretary. Following this, participants were asked to introduce themselves, with the aim of creating a trustworthy working environment, a space for reflection and participation, allowing teachers to freely express their opinions and share their experiences. The focus group took place June 2nd at one of the schools of the Grupo San Valero. There were 6 participants, one moderator and one secretary taking notes. Most of the participants did not know each other. Four of them teach Religion in primary and secondary schools in Zaragoza and two of them are English teachers who help in the schools to promote values and organize religious activities within the school community. The former are trained in formal education (counsellor certificate) and the latter have training in Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). They all have extensive teaching experience and educational management experience although the contexts where they teach is indeed very different.

Answers to the questions presented below have been transcribed. After analysing them, the key ideas and testimonies illustrating said ideas are presented in common themes and key findings.

The Spanish context

Spain was closed to the world for forty years, it is not until very recently that immigration is part of the Spanish context (in 2012 Spain was the European country with the highest immigrant population). Therefore, this report will focus on the development of Religious education since the establishment of the Spanish democracy.



The basic legal framework governing RES and the justification of its presence in the Spanish education system is defined according to the Spanish Constitution (1978) *“The public authorities guarantee the right of parents to ensure that their children receive religious and moral instruction in accordance with their own convictions”*. Thus it is determined that those interested shall be allowed to offer their children their preferred religious and moral instruction relying on the help of a third party or an educational institution. Additionally, it is established that this religious and moral instruction in accordance with one’s own convictions shall be included in formal education. In this sense, the parents’ right to choose the religious and moral education their children shall receive is derived from the right to religious freedom itself and from educational rights, namely, the fundamental right to education and to freedom of education. Spain has agreements with Religious Faiths: Catholic Church, Evangelism, Islam, Judaism. The International Treaty with the Catholic Church, establishes a regulation in educational institutions, which is included in the Agreement between the Spanish Government and the Holy See concerning Education and Cultural Affairs, signed in the Vatican City on 3 January 1979. This agreement has been legally considered as an international treaty, since the Holy See has international legal personality. There are also Agreements with Islam, Evangelism, Judaism. In all the three cases, Article 10 holds that:

In order to make the provisions of Article 27.3 of the Constitution, and General Act 8/1985 of 3 July, regulating the right to education, and General Act 1/1990, of 3 October, concerning the General Provisions of the Educational System, students, their parents and those school organisms so requesting, shall be guaranteed the right to receive [Muslim, Evangelical, Jewish] religious classes in public and private subsidised schools, at the primary, elementary and secondary levels, as long as the exercise of this right is not in conflict with the nature of the centre.



Education legislation

The applicable Organic Law 2/2006, 3 May, on Education, consolidated by the Organic Law 8/2013, 9 December, on the Improvement of the Quality of Education, in its second Additional Provision, holds that Catholic religious education shall be adjusted to the Agreement concerning Education and Cultural Affairs between the Spanish Government and the Holy See. That is why Catholic religious education shall be included as an area or subject in the corresponding educational stage, and it shall be compulsorily offered by educational centres and taken voluntarily by the students.

Diversity and multiculturalism is respected in this matter since other religious education shall be adjusted to the Cooperation Agreements between the Spanish Government and the Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities of Spain, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain, the Islamic Commission of Spain. The syllabus and learning outcomes are determined by the corresponding religious authorities, as well as the supervision and approval, in accordance with the Agreements signed with the Spanish Government.

Religious Education Teachers

The legal framework of RES teachers is regulated, in general circumstances, by the Royal Decree 696/2007, 1 June. This Royal Decree establishes the employment relationships of Religious Education teachers provided by the third Additional Provision of the Organic Law 2/2006, 3 May, on Education.

The following requirements shall be fulfilled to teach Religious Education:



1. Hold the same qualifications, or equivalent, required to government-employed school teachers in compliance with the Organic Law 2/2006, 3 May, on Education.
2. Recommendation by the religious authority to teach Religious Education.
3. Provide determination of suitability or equivalent certification, prior to the teacher's employment by the competent authority.

Catholic Religious Education

Catholic Religious Education is regulated by Order of 9 April 1999 presenting the agreement on the economic and labour related system for teachers not employed by the government in charge of Catholic Religious Education in Public Schools for Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education. The State finances the teaching of Catholic Religious Education in Public Schools for Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education. Teachers of Catholic Religious Education shall be remunerated in accordance with the salaries of interim teachers at the educational stage.

Teachers in charge of Catholic Religious Education shall provide service under the recruitment system with a full-time or part-time fixed-term contract coinciding with the academic year. They shall be included under the general social security scheme, to which teachers of Early Childhood and Primary Education schools shall be incorporated. To this effect, the employer shall be the corresponding Education Authority.



Evangelical and Muslim Religious Education

Evangelical and Muslim Religious Education are regulated by the Resolution of 23 April 1996 of [of the under-secretariat of] the Prime Minister's Office provides for the publication of the agreement of the Council of Ministers of 1 March 1996, and the agreement on the appointment and remuneration of the persons who dispense Evangelical religious education in public primary and secondary schools. Resolution of 23 April 1996 of [of the under-secretariat of] the Prime Minister's Office provides for the publication of the agreement of the Council of Ministers of 1 March 1996, and the agreement on the appointment and remuneration of the persons who dispense Islamic religious education in public primary and secondary schools.

Teachers shall depend on the corresponding religious authorities. Additionally, these authorities shall be able to determine the system of these teachers, in accordance with the specific service they provide. The State shall pay the religious authorities for the services provided by individuals teaching RES in public primary and secondary schools.

The Spanish law holds that the students that voluntarily do not choose religious education in school shall take an alternative subject, guaranteeing in this way the non-discrimination of the students that receive religious education. As for Primary Education comprises six academic years, is ordinarily attended by students between six and twelve years old, and is organized in areas, which shall have a global and integrating nature.



Every academic year, students shall take one of the following subjects included in the area of specific subjects: Religious Education or Social and Civic Values, at parents' or legal guardians' choice.

Students aged between six and sixteen attend Basic and Compulsory Education in Spain. Compulsory Secondary Education is organized in subjects and includes two stages: the first one comprises three academic years and the second one lasts one year. Students aged between twelve and sixteen are ordinarily enrolled in these four courses.

The second stage or fourth year of Compulsory Secondary Education shall have a propaedeutic nature. High School comprises two academic years and is attended by students aged between sixteen and eighteen.

As for Compulsory Secondary Education, Every academic year students shall take one of the following subjects included in the area of specific subjects: Religious Education or Ethical Values, at parents' or legal guardians' choice or, if applicable, at the student's choice. In High School during the 1st year students shall take one the following subjects included in the area of specific subjects:

a. Physical Education.

b. Depending on the regulation and the syllabus of the courses available established by each Education Authority and, where appropriate, on the courses available in each educational centre, a minimum of two and a maximum of three subjects among the following:

Table 1: Subjects available during 1st year

Musical Analysis I	Applied Anatomy	Scientific Culture	Artistic Drawing I	Technical Drawing I	Musical Language & Practice
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Religious Education	Second Foreign Language I	Industrial Technology I	Information & Communication Technologies I	Volume	One subject from the area of core subjects not previously taken by the student
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During the 2nd year depending on the regulation and the syllabus of the courses available established by each Education Authority and, where appropriate, on the courses available in each educational centre, a minimum of two and a maximum of three subjects among the following:

Table 2: Subjects available during 2nd year

Musical Analysis II	Earth & Environmental Sciences	Artistic Drawing II	Technical Drawing II	Basics of Administration and Management	History of Philosophy
History of Music & Dancing	Audiovisual Communications	Psychology	Religious Education	Second Foreign Language II	Graphic and Plastic Expression Techniques
Industrial Technology II	Information & Communication Technologies II	One subject from the area of core subjects not previously taken by the student, which shall be considered as a specific subject for all intents and purposes			

Development of basic regulation and RES characteristics depending on the religious faith: contents, teachers, timetables and organization

The basic regulation and organization of religious education depends on if it is Catholic religious education or Evangelical and/or Muslim.



Catholic Religious Education

Catholic RES shall be included in the curriculum with the other core disciplines of the curriculum under comparable conditions. It is compulsorily offered by the school centres and voluntarily taken by the students. The ecclesiastical hierarchy shall be responsible for determining the contents of Catholic religious education, as well as suggesting textbooks and instructional materials for this purpose. The Spanish government assumes the funding of Catholic religious education in public schools for Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Education. In this case, the teachers are designated by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which can revoke suitability and put an end to the working relationship with the Government. Thus there is an alternative subject in Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education, but there is no alternative subject in High School.

Muslim and Evangelical Religious Education

The students' parents or guardians, or the students themselves if they are over eighteen, shall voluntarily express to the headmaster their wish to attend religious education at the beginning of every educational stage or when they first enrol in the centre, although the decision may be modified at the beginning of every academic year. The religious authority shall be responsible for determining the contents of religious education, as well as suggesting textbooks and instructional materials for this purpose. Before the beginning of every academic year, the religious authority shall inform the corresponding Education Authority who the suitable persons to teach Religious Education at different educational stages are. The teachers in these cases depend on the corresponding religious authorities that have designated them. Likewise these



authorities shall be authorized to establish the labour system of the teachers, in accordance with the specific nature of the service provided.

RES classes shall be paid by the State when the number of students attending RES classes is equal to or larger than ten. Every year, the Spanish government shall transfer the total amount resulting from the application of the previous clause for the service provided during the preceding academic year by the teachers of Religious Education who are not government-employed schoolteachers. As in the case of Catholic religious education, there is an alternative subject in Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education, but there is no alternative subject in High School.

It is interesting to highlight that Jewish religious education is neither regulated nor taught in public schools in Spain.

As for how many hours are taught depending on school level, each autonomous community establishes, in conformity with the State's basic regulation, the timetables for each subject. Timetables regarding the autonomous community of Aragon are presented below. Timetables are the same for all RES.

Table 3: Times for RES in Aragon

Educational Level	Time	Grades
Primary Education	45 minutes of class every academic year	from 1st to 6 th grade
Compulsory Secondary Education	1 hour of class every academic year	from 1st to 4 th grade
High School	1 hour of class every academic year	from 1st to 2 nd grade



Key findings

There are similar findings between the desk research and the common themes from the focus group. There is indeed a reduced class time that punishes RES and their teachers, this makes them feel less important than teachers from other subjects. The importance of access and freedom to choose was also highlighted.

Cultural, religious and ethnic diversity in the classroom, caused by the arrival of immigrants and refugees, require the creation of spaces that promote coexistence and increases an interest in knowing other people. Religion courses create a space where a real dialogue takes place and where religion does not separate but unite. The impact of Muslim students within the class of Catholic religion subject was seen as an important element to promote intercultural dialogue and knowledge about the “other” who is different, “the multicultural other”. Religious education plays a crucial role in integration, since religion courses allow for the understanding of people’s internal reasons for moving, they set up a space to answer questions about the meaning of life. In short, religion courses contribute to the students’ total, absolute and comprehensive education. It should be pointed out that these courses use different teaching methods and during the course it is possible to “stop” and reflect, this last action being essential for intercultural competence development (Deardorff, 2006).

One of the key findings in the focus group discussion is that RES promotes multicultural understanding and its importance in the school. Its teachers use different methodologies that help promote reflection and knowledge about other religions and cultures. Knowledge of oneself thanks to religious education contributes to knowing other cultures. It is a two-way learning process.



One of the elements highlighted by the teachers and with which all of them agreed is that religion courses provide a humanizing service, since they create a space where the deepest unanswered questions asked by everybody can be articulated. Questioning oneself and wondering why help understand that we are all cultural beings (Paige, 1993). Religious education promotes reflection, philosophy and transcendence. It contributes to training students to think, an essential element in the process of intercultural competence development.

One of the difficulties is the changes introduced in the curriculum in recent years, especially after the last Education Reform of 2013 (LOMCE, 2013), are seen as a difficulty. These changes do not promote the potential of religious education as one of the key elements for structuring a multicultural society. The teachers highlight some failures in the contents and, especially, a lack of time to teach these contents.

Conclusions

The focus group discussion with RES teachers really helped to enrich the vision from the legal and theoretical point of view with the one from the practitioners. Focus group participants were very grateful that a project about RES was being developed because they feel as outsiders in the school life and somehow marginalized, due to a reduction of their class time among other factors. In order to really understand RES teachers' reality it is key that they are asked about their impressions and daily life within the new educational reform, the changes in the curriculum and in their student body demographics. This is indeed the only way to construct social understanding and knowledge.



Case Studies

Religious Education in three Schools In Zaragoza, Spain

Religious education in schools [RES] is an academic discipline taught in the Spanish education system. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 guarantees that those interested shall be allowed to offer their children their preferred religious and moral instruction relying on the help of a third party or an educational institution. Additionally, the applicable law develops this constitutional guarantee and regulates religious education in schools regarding programmes, timetables, suitability and qualifications of the teachers, etc. All these aspects derive from the agreements that the education authority has reached with the different religious faiths with whom, in turn, the Spanish Government has signed agreements or conventions for the regulation of religious education.

The regulation on Catholic religious education is included in the Agreement between the Spanish Government and the Holy See concerning Education and Cultural Affairs, signed in 1979, and legally considered as an international treaty. The Spanish Government has also signed agreements with three other religious faiths (Islam, Judaism, and Evangelism), which have organic law status and regulate the right to receive religious education in the Spanish education system taught by people that belong to one of these religious faiths. These cooperation agreements were signed in 1992 between the Spanish Government and the Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities of Spain, the Islamic Commission of Spain, and the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain. They have a common article (Article 10) that establishes the general framework for the cooperation between the Spanish Government and the three aforementioned religious faiths:

In order to make the provisions of Article 27.3 of the Constitution, and General Act 8/1985 of 3 July, regulating the right to education, and General Act 1/1990, of 3 October, concerning the General Provisions of the Educational System, students, their parents and those school organisms so requesting,



shall be guaranteed the right to receive [Muslim, Evangelical, Jewish] religious classes in public and private subsidised schools, at the primary, elementary and secondary levels, as long as the exercise of this right is not in conflict with the nature of the centre.

Religious education shall be taught by teachers designated by the corresponding religious faith (Catholicism, Evangelism, Islam or Judaism). Likewise, contents are stipulated by the religious faiths.

Although the Spanish Constitution unequivocally and firmly stipulates the right to religious education, its practical implementation in the educational centres, especially in those that do not belong to higher education, has been highly controversial from the very beginning of the re-enactment of the democracy in Spain with the entry into force of the constitutional text in 1978. The controversy around this issue has been used by the political organizations with a vast majority that aspire to govern Spain with a vast majority (as they have actually done alternatively) to determine their differences, probably due to the difficulty or inconvenience of showing divergent opinions about other programmatic issues. Consequently, religious education has been a constant in the legislative evolution and the resulting laws adopted in order to regulate the practical implementation of religious education in schools, mainly regarding public schools and especially in relation to Catholic religious education. The controversy has alternated between the will to strengthen and develop the prominence of religious education in the education system and the attempts to diminish its relevance in the curriculum in order to include more pluralistic views according to the present cultural diversity of Spanish society.

Generally speaking, the Constitution, the enacted education laws and the legal framework that has been configured since the Spanish transition to democracy have contributed to create a situation in which religious education in schools is defined by willingness. This willingness is based on the respect for freedom of conscience and for the right of the families to decide on the religious education that their children receive. Besides, religious education and other academic disciplines shall be taught in equal terms, which means religious education



cannot be the cause of discrimination in school and shall be taught from Early Childhood to High School.

Concerning Catholic religious education, the most followed in Spanish society in comparison with other religious faiths, the different regulating laws of the education system that have been passed since the approval of the Constitution in 1978 have always stipulated that it shall be compulsorily offered by educational centres and taken voluntarily by the students. In order to avoid discrimination in schools, educational centres shall offer an alternative course to Catholic religious education. The religious faiths with whom agreements have been signed (Evangelism, Islam, Judaism) can also be taught in educational centres according to their own school programs, providing there are enough students, the educational centre organises and offers this education, and it is requested to the school administration of each autonomous community, which hires the qualified teachers for each religious education.

The applicable Organic Law 8/2013, on the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE according to its Spanish name) includes religious education in the organization of the different educational stages and refers to the agreements between the Spanish Government and the different religious faiths for its justification. The greatest novelty introduced by this law in comparison with previous laws is the creation of a new course called Social and Civic Values in Primary School, and Ethical Values in Compulsory Secondary Education. Religious education and these new courses have equal academic value and are assessed under the same conditions. In addition, both courses can be attended since they are elective and can be selected from the group of specific courses as first or second option.

Against this background, and regarding a Spanish medium-sized city, Zaragoza, religious education situation in three educational centres with diverse ownerships is depicted. These centres are located in different districts, and therefore they have very different students regarding their socioeconomic status.



First of all, some general information on the city of Zaragoza will be presented, and then the districts where the educational centres are located will be briefly described. Finally, the educational centres will be characterized and data concerning the religious education received by their students will be presented.

Zaragoza

Zaragoza is the fifth Spanish city in relation to its population, which increased considerably during the 20th century. It grew six fold during the century, primarily absorbing rural population of its region. Unlike what happened in other Spanish autonomous communities in the middle decades of the century, the migration to Zaragoza from other areas of Spain was relatively small. The 1970s were the period in which the migratory flow was more intense. And in the last two decades the growth of the population was still dynamic, although this growth was generally weak.

In the past Zaragoza attracted people from the surrounding rural areas, but since 2000 it has become a focus for migrant population from different and distant places. 93,808 foreign people live in Zaragoza, 13.4 % of the total population of its 698,978 residents, according to the data provided by the municipal register on January 1st 2017. Concerning their origin, the migrant population with a larger number are Rumanians (36 %), followed by Moroccans (7 %), and Chinese (5.8 %).

The average age of the people living in Zaragoza is 44 years. It has a relatively young population, considering that 51.4 % of them are under the age of 45, and 14 % are under 15. Its population is also productively strong. Two out of three people from Zaragoza are economically active population. 20.3 % are older than 65, and 18.6 % are under the age of 19. There is a slight majority of women (with a female ratio of 107 %), and a motherhood rate of 18.95 %, which means that one out of five fertile women in Zaragoza has a child under the age of 4.



The city is geographically divided in districts distributed in the urban area and the rural area. These districts are geographical divisions with their own management authorities in favour of administrative decentralization and citizen participation in the management and improvement of municipal issues. The management authorities in the 14 urban districts are called Municipal Boards (*Juntas Municipales* in Spanish). The rural area of Zaragoza has 14 rural neighbourhoods and their management authorities are Local Assemblies (*Juntas vecinales* in Spanish). The limits of the Municipal Boards and the Local Assemblies are decided in the meeting of the Municipal Council. The following districts or neighbourhoods are managed by Municipal Boards: Centro, Casco Histórico, Delicias, Universidad, San José, Las Fuentes, Almozara, Oliver–Valdefierro, Torrero, Actur–Rey Fernando, El Rabal, Casablanca, Santa Isabel, and Miralbueno. The Local Assemblies of the rural neighbourhoods are: Alfocea, Casetas, Garrapinillos, Juslibol, La Cartuja Baja, Montañana, Monzalbarba, Movera, Peñaflor, San Gregorio, San Juan de Mozarrifar, Torrecilla, Venta del Olivar, and Villarrapa. The educational centres described in these case studies belong to the Municipal Board of Las Fuentes, Universidad, and Casablanca.

The most densely populated Municipal Boards are Delicias, where 14.7 % of the population of Zaragoza live (102,998 residents), El Rabal, where 11.2 % live (78,082 residents), and San José, where 9.3 % live (66,039 residents). One out of four foreign residents in the urban districts lives in Delicias; 12.1 % of foreign population lives in San José, and 10.8 % lives in Casco Histórico. Regarding the districts where the educational centres under study are located, 7.6 % of the foreign population lives in Las Fuentes, 6.3 % in Universidad, and 6.3 % in Casablanca.

The educational centres

SANTO DOMINGO DE SILOS SCHOOL

Santo Domingo de Silos School is located in the district of Las Fuentes. 42 192 people live in this district, being 7 092 of them foreign people, so 83.19 % of the population registered in this



district is Spanish. The migrant communities most represented are Rumanians (2,736 residents), Moroccans (549 residents), and Ecuadorians (413 residents). The average age in the district is 46.5. There is a dependency ratio of 57.13 %, an ageing index of 213.7 %, a youth ratio of 44.79 %, and a motherhood rate of 11.7 %. The average household wage in the district is 24,844 euros.

The neighbourhood was born at the beginning of the 20th century, thanks to the settlement of three industrial facilities: the municipal slaughterhouse, the Utrillas railway station and its units where the coal from the mines was unloaded, and the depots and maintenance services for tramways. These facilities, together with the building of the Castellón road, an axis of circulation connecting Bajo Aragón and Levante areas, encouraged people to settle and build houses.

In the 1950s the district received an important migration flow from the rural areas caused by the emerging industrial development of Zaragoza. Its population went from 8,000 residents in 1957 to 34 952 in 1970. During this last decade, a strong neighbouring movement arose around some Catholic churches, the trade unions, and the democratic political parties that were still clandestine. This neighbouring movement started to claim basic rights for a respectable civic life: having a taxi service (because taxis in that period did not go to the neighbourhood due to the condition of its roads), road paving, streets lighting, enough water pressure to supply the apartments, healthcare services, schools, etc.

Thanks to the neighbouring movement of the 1970s, the resources of the district increased and, with the settlement of the first democratic City Council, whose first milestone was the Development Plan of 1986 that included many urban infrastructures, the district improved and was remodelled. At the beginning of the Spanish transition to democracy, this was one of the youngest districts with the largest demographic growth. On the contrary, during the 1980s population growth stopped, as in the rest of Spain, and the district started a process of slow



ageing. Many young people moved from Las Fuentes to the new neighbourhoods that were built in the suburbs, with a lower maintenance cost and affordable prices. Even though the district has lost a considerable amount of its youngest population, Las Fuentes is still the second most densely populated neighbourhood, after Delicias, with 6,681 residents per square kilometre, and the housing construction has not been entirely stopped, especially in its surrounding area.

Santo Domingo de Silos School is a charter school. It is confessional, Catholic and funded by private finance initiative. It is owned by the Canonical Institution Obra Diocesana Santo Domingo de Silos, that belongs to the archdiocese of Zaragoza, it has legal personality and is self-governed according to the applicable law.

Julián Matute Hervías, a priest member of the Metropolitan Council of Canons, founded the school around the Santo Domingo de Silos church in Zaragoza in 1959, aware of the situation of the migrant people that had arrived from the Aragonese rural areas to the district of Las Fuentes during the 1950s and did not have enough public educational services.

In this urban settlement, located near the river Ebro, one kilometre and a half from the Basilica of Nuestra Señora del Pilar, many cheap houses were built for the working population who arrived due to the industrial development of Zaragoza launched by the development policy of the Franco regime. The growth of the neighbourhood was very fast, thanks also to the construction of the tramway line that connected it to the city centre. This construction was promoted by a very active family of businessmen, the Escoriaza, real-estate developers who not only owned the tramway network but also many plots of land.

The school supported by canon Matute answered to the educational needs of the children of the migrant working population who were unattended by the public authorities. Together with its founder, 11 nuns (Operarias del Divino Maestro) were responsible for the organisation and management of the 8 school units, the school and house for young mothers, supplementary



courses on commercial calculations, typing and languages, teambuilding activities, Catechism and cinema shows.

In the 63/64 school year, 2 affiliated sections of the Miguel Servet and Goya High Schools were created and they were increased to 4 in the 67/68 academic year. During that period, professional training courses were also activated. The growth of this educational centre was extraordinary, reaching almost 7,000 students (6,753 students during the 82/83 academic year). The Canonical Institution Obra Diocesana Santo Domingo de Silos assisted in the growth and development of the district Las Fuentes from the very beginning.

At present Santo Domingo de Silos School comprises the following educational stages: Early Childhood and Primary School, Compulsory Secondary Education, High School, Advanced Vocational School, and Basic Professional School. Additionally, it offers some courses programmed el Centro de Formación para el Empleo (an occupational training centre) and la Escuela de Tiempo Libre (a leisure activity centre).

In 2006, its professional training section won the Medal of Honour of Education in Aragon. It currently has 1,663 students from Early Childhood to High School, not considering the students that attend the different branches of professional training.

The following table shows students distribution according to their choices in relation to religious education or alternative courses (social and civic or ethical values) divided by their educational stage:

COURSE	NUMBER OF REGISTERED STUDENTS IN EACH EDUCATIONAL STAGE	CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	EVANGELIST RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	MUSLIM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	SOCIAL AND CIVIC OR ETHICAL VALUES
EARLY CHILDHOOD	311	291	-	-	20
PRIMARY SCHOOL	711	657	-	-	54



COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION	465	426	-	-	39
HIGH SCHOOL	176	163	-	-	13
TOTAL	1 663	340	-	-	126

"EL SALVADOR" (JESUITAS) SCHOOL

El Salvador-Jesuitas School is located in the district of Universidad. 49 745 people live in this district, and 5 947 of them (11.95 %) are foreign people. The migrant communities most represented are Rumanians (1,841 residents), Nicaraguans (707 residents), Chinese (384), and Ecuadorians (301 residents). The average age in the district is 46 years and a half. It has a dependency ratio of 59.9 %, an ageing index of 214 %, a youth ratio of 46.7 %, and a motherhood rate of 10.65 %. The average household wage in the district is 39,021 euros.

The district of Universidad was born after the Spanish Civil War, thanks to the urban development of the Gran Vía street and the tramway line that connected Parque Grande with the city centre. The construction of the largest hospital in the city, "Casa Grande", and the new campus of the University of Zaragoza gave the final boost to this area, absorbed by the city in the following decades. Other great and emblematic sites were built in the district: the diocesan seminary, La Romareda stadium, and the military hospital near the adjacent district of Casablanca.

El Salvador-Jesuitas School is a charter school owned by the Society of Jesus that has inherited the long educational tradition of the Jesuits in the city. It was founded in Zaragoza in 1556. During that period the Royal Seminary of San Carlos was built and had to be abandoned by the Jesuits in 1767 when they were expelled from Spain. They came back to Zaragoza in 1871 and since then the school has occupied different locations. It was finally located in the district of Universidad in 1971. It offers 8 bus lines for the students coming from all the neighbourhoods of Zaragoza, which means its students do not necessarily belong to the resident population of



the district where the school is located. The school is aimed at children from wealthy families.

There are 70 teachers for early Childhood and Primary School, and 52 teachers for Secondary Education and High School.

The following table shows students distribution according to their choices in relation to religious education or alternative courses (social and civic or ethical values) divided by their educational stage:

COURSE	NUMBER OF REGISTERED STUDENTS IN EACH EDUCATIONAL STAGE	CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	EVANGELIST RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	MUSLIM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	SOCIAL AND CIVIC OR ETHICAL VALUES
EARLY CHILDHOOD	373	373			
PRIMARY SCHOOL	751	751			
COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION	559	559			
HIGH SCHOOL	198	198			
TOTAL	1 881	1 881			

VALDESPARTERA PRE-SCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Valdespartera pre-school and primary school is located in the district of Casablanca. There are 44 943 people living in this district, and 2 309 of them are foreign people, so 94.7 % of its residents are Spanish. The migrant communities most represented are Rumanians (683 residents), Moroccans (160 residents), Colombians (118 residents), Ecuadorians (111 residents), and Nicaraguans (94). The average age in the district is 35 years and a half. There is a dependency ratio of 43.9 %, an ageing index of 39.2 %, a youth ratio of 254.8 %, and a motherhood rate of 31.1 %. The average household wage in the district is 37,590 euros.

Valdespartera is a recently built neighbourhood that gives its name to the school and is located in the district of Casablanca. This district has three clearly differentiated areas. The oldest area



is located near to the Military Hospital and the Incrédulos Fountain, and its urban development started in the 1950s. The two other areas, Montecanal and Valdespartera, were born a few years ago. The development of Montecanal started in 1990, and Valdespartera was planned in 2001.

The most remarkable characteristic of Valdespartera is the fact that it was planned and built according to sustainability principles. The site where the neighbourhood was built was previously used by the military quarters of Valdespartera, and was transferred by the Ministry of Defence to the City Council of Zaragoza in 2001.

The neighbourhood promoters were the City Council of Zaragoza, the Autonomous Community of Aragon, and the savings banks Ibercaja and Caja de Ahorros de la Inmaculada. All four contributed to the construction of a green development project, in line with the experiences developed in different European cities by that time. Once the Partial Building Plan was approved in 2002, development started the following year and finished in 2010.

There are 9,687 apartments in Valdespartera, and 9,367 of them (97 %) are subsidised housing, with a basic price or a maximum price. 116 million euros have been invested in the project..

The neighbourhood project is addressed to people with different social status, with the aim of contributing, thanks to a varied offer, to the integration of people with different socioeconomic characteristics in an urban area characterised by sustainability. The residential area offers a great variety of leisure, sports, and cultural facilities addressed at not only the neighbourhood population but also the rest of the city. One of the most remarkable traits of its buildings is their bioclimatological conception, thanks to which dependence from non-renewable resources is reduced in favour of alternative energy sources.

Valdespartera School is a public school that opened its doors in the 08-09 academic year. It offers all the educational levels of Early Childhood and Primary School stages, but the most requested are those of Primary School, since young couples that have moved to this neighbourhood mainly form the population.



This public pre-school and primary school is included in the Bilingual Program (English-Spanish) of the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and the British Council, and currently all the educational levels in the school follow this program. There are two other educational centres in the neighbourhood: San Jorge pre-school and primary school, and Valdespartera High School.

The following table shows student distribution according to their choices in relation to religious education or alternative courses (social and civic or ethical values) divided by their educational stage:

COURSE	NUMBER OF REGISTERED STUDENTS IN EACH EDUCATIONAL STAGE	CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	EVANGELIST RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	MUSLIM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	SOCIAL AND CIVIC OR ETHICAL VALUES
EARLY CHILDHOOD	226	103	5	-	118
PRIMARY SCHOOL	468	237	2	7	222
TOTAL	694	340	7	7	340

Conclusions

The choices concerning religious education made by the students in each of the studied centres are different. Their differences are related to the schools ownership and their location. Regarding the ownership, despite the first two are charter schools and operate within the public educational system, it is understandable that there is an important bias towards Catholic religious education in comparison to the alternative courses. This statement is put into context by the socioeconomic environment of the educational centre. Thus, in El Salvador School, an educational centre chosen voluntarily by parents –since there are other educational centres in the area and those children coming from other districts have to pay additional costs – the acceptance



of the confessional character of the centre is somehow logical. Claiming an alternative to religious education in a Catholic school chosen by the parents does not make much sense. For this reason, the fact that all the students in this centre receive Catholic religious education is quite coherent.

The case of Santo Domingo de Silos School is more complex. Although it is owned by the archdiocese, part of the students attends this school because there are no other public schools in the area. Therefore, the owners of the educational centre respect this situation and offer the possibility to attend alternative courses. Nevertheless, there are not that many students who chose the alternative to Catholic religious education -only 7.6 % of the total of students registered in all the educational stages.

The most contrasting situation is lived in Valdespartera public school, where the students are divided symmetrically between those who prefer Catholic religious education and those who have chosen alternatives to religious education. 49 % receive Catholic religious education, 49 % attend alternative courses, and 2 % receive other religious education (1 % Evangelist education and 1% Muslim education). Regarding Muslim religious education, interestingly it is offered in a context without a high number of migrant residents coming from areas where this faith is culturally predominant. As previously mentioned, there are 160 Moroccans living in this district (0.36 % of the total population), and residents coming from other Muslim cultural areas are very scarce, a fact that differs from the 1 % of students who receive Muslim religious education.



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