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## **School of Theology Students' Views on New Curriculum for Religious Education (2017-2019) at State Schools in Greece: An Empirical Study\***

### **Abstract**

This research draws attention to the views of currently enrolled students in Greek Theological Faculties about the New Curriculum for Religious Education. The study is based on an anonymous Questionnaire and takes into account the cultural, religious and

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ideological background of each respondent, aiming in collecting theological and pedagogical views on the Subject of Religious Education in the Greek Secondary Education System. A set of Multivariable Data Analysis methods was utilized for the study of the emerged data set. The research led to the following main conclusions: For those of the respondents believing they are closely related to the Church life, a rather critical attitude towards the New Curriculum of the Religious school Subject has been expressed. On the other hand, students who have declared themselves at a distance from the devotional life and doctrinal teaching of the Church find the New Curriculum interesting, compared to the former ones, on the ground that knowledge of all religions should be the main purpose and content of this subject.

**Keywords:** Religious Education, New Curriculum for Religious Education, Theological Faculties, Greece, Multivariable Data Analysis, Multiple Correspondence Analysis, Hierarchical Clustering, Secondary Education

## **1. Introduction**

After the recent *Court Decisions No 660/2018, No 926/2018, No 1749/2019 and No 1750/2019* of the *Hellenic Council of State (Συμβούλιο της Επικρατείας (ΣτΕ))* the public dialogue on the Subject of Religious Education in Greece, especially within its relevant legal and socio-political framework, restarts from the beginning. In this case, the mentioned Court Decisions annulled a series of corresponding Administrative Decisions and therefore educational policies, by which a new Curriculum for the School Subject of Religious Education was officially introduced in Greek primary and secondary Education, since September 2016. In particular, a) the *Decision No 660/2018* of the *Hellenic Council of State* annulled the *Decision* of the *Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs No 143579/Δ2/7.9.2016* (Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education at the High School level) and b) the *Decision No 926/2018* of the *Hellenic Council of State* *Decision* of the *Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs No 99058/Δ2/2017* (Curriculum of the Subject of Religious at the Elementary and Middle School level).

Nevertheless, this Curriculum, after being amended in its crucial points, was replaced by a newer one, which is today<sup>2</sup> in full force and effect<sup>3</sup>, by the adoption of a) the *Official Government Gazette of Greece (ΦΕΚ) 2104/B/19-6-2017, 21047-21154: Decision of the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs No 101470/Δ2/2017* (Curriculum of the Subject of Religious at the Elementary and Middle School level) and b) the *Official Government Gazette of Greece (ΦΕΚ) 2105/B/19-6-2017, 21155-21226: Decision of the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs No 99058/Δ2/2017* (Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education for the General and Educational Lyceum). In this case, no one can predict with absolute certainty if these Administrative Decisions will be annulled in the future by newer Court Decisions. However, any Greek legal theorist knows that it is almost impossible for the Hellenic Council of State to change the logic of its established case law. As a consequence, a scenario like that of its *Decisions*<sup>4</sup> No 660/2018, No 926/2018, No 1749/2019 and No 1750/2019 would certainly recur.

The mere fact that the dialogue on the Subject of Religious Education takes place in the Greek court rooms shows the difficulty of those in charge at the area of Education, on one side, and of society, on the other, to understand each other, in order to consent in commonly accepted perspectives. As far as the Subject of Religious Education in contemporary Greek society is concerned, the climate of dialogue and openness seems to be far from being peaceful and hence constructive. What dominates is a conflict between two main ideological factions about the real meaning and the acceptance of notions such as “religious”, “confessional” and “orthodox” connected

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<sup>2</sup> By the time this study was written (August 2019).

<sup>3</sup> For this, see the first remark of Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs/ Institute of Educational Policy (IEPI), *Δελτίο Τύπου 29ης Ιουνίου 2017: «Σχετικά με τα Νέα Προγράμματα Σπουδών στα Θρησκευτικά»* (Issue of press release (29/06/2017): “Regarding the New Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education”), accessed August 1, 2019, <http://www.iep.edu.gr/el/deltia-typou-genika/nea-ps-thrskoutika>.

<sup>4</sup> During the writing process of the above study, in this respect only the two first Decisions of the Hellenic Council of State, i.e. No 660/2018, No 926/2018 were announced. That’s the reason in drafting this work we have taken into consideration only those first two Decisions.

to the crucial constitutional term “consciousness”. The most prominent example is the existence of two main Greek private-law Associations, namely *PETH* (*ΠΕΘ*)<sup>5</sup> and *KAIROS* (*KAIROS*)<sup>6</sup>, composed by thousands of members, mainly by Teachers of the Subject of Religious Education.

In this context, there is no common ground not necessarily for agreement but even for understanding and discussion. Regarding the *New Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education*, the main position of *PETH* (*ΠΕΘ*) is indicative: “New Curriculum are altering and abolishing the Orthodox character of the Subject of Religious Education by mixing, in a special way, Orthodox Christian teachings with lectures about other religions, aiming at the dissemination of an individualistic religion that will be the product of syncretism and confusion through the cultivated relativism that results from all this polytheistic patchwork”<sup>7</sup>. While *PETH* welcomes and strongly supports the decision of pupils’ parents or guardians to return as “unacceptable” the teaching material of the New Curriculum<sup>8</sup>, *KAIROS* is fully supporting it by official statements like the following: “[The Subject of Religious Education] must not be catechetical, since catechism is an affair of the Church and family, not of the school. At the same time, as in previous Curricula, it also informs about the world of religions. The perception that there are "a lot of multi-religious" or "neutral religious topics" is not accurate. Nor is the case that the course promotes religious syncretism. The New Curriculum is not a pupil's book but a teacher's book-tool. In relation to the proposed material that is supportive, each instructor is free to

<sup>5</sup> *PETH*, <https://www.petheol.gr/> (accessed June 22, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> *KAIROS*, <https://www.kairosnet.gr/> (accessed June 22, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> See *PETH*, *Δελτίο Τύπου 29ης Ιουνίου 2017 (Issue of press release, 29/06/2017)*, accessed August 1, 2019, <http://www.petheol.gr/nea/epethepimeneistenkatargetsetouparontosprogrammatoskai stesyntaxeenosneou-katangelleitapsematouypourgoupaideiaskaitonempaigmotesekklesiastesellados-proteineikaizeta>.

<sup>8</sup> See the following *PETH*’s post, accessed August 1, 2019, <http://www.petheol.gr/nea/goneisepistrephounstoypourgeiopaideiastousphakelousma thetetoumathematostonthreskeutikon-ypodeigmaepistoloesgoneagiaepistrophe-tonbibliontoumathematostonthreskeutikon>

choose from or create their own. The limit and the term of this freedom are the service of all the goals and expectations of the Curriculum. The freedom that the teacher will have is unprecedented at the Greek school”<sup>9</sup>.

Bearing the above-mentioned considerations in mind, it is concluded that no other school Subject except the Religious one, not only in Greece but also in any other European State, seems to cause so much ideological struggle. The public dialogue on this remains at a stalemate, even after the recent *Decisions No 660/2018* and *No 926/2018* of the *Hellenic Council of State*, which provide the education only with some general legal guidelines. This was the real reason of our research “Debate about Religious Education at State Schools. Mapping the Conceptual Framework and the Perspectives of Institutional Actors within the School and Social Environment”. As indicated by the title of our project, our goal is to map the conceptual framework and also the perspectives of institutional actors within the school and social environment regarding the Subject of Religious Education.

## 2. The empirical research

Our Research Team drew up an anonymous Questionnaire, which was addressed to and replied by a great number of currently enrolled Students (N=695) in the Theological Faculties of both the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (N.K.U.A.) (N=333) and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (A.U.Th.) (N=362). This statistical survey, recording and taking into account the cultural, religious and ideological background of each respondent, aimed at collecting theological and pedagogical views on the Subject of Religious Education at State Schools in Greek. We considered the opinions of theology students in Greece to be of particular importance. The reason that justifies this approach is the potential fact of these

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<sup>9</sup> See Panhellenic Theological Association KAIROS, “Οι Επιτροπές Εμπειρογνομόνων για τα Νέα Προγράμματα Σπουδών στα Θρησκευτικά” (“The Committees of Experts for the New Curriculum of Religion Subject”), accessed August 1, 2019, <http://www.kairosnet.gr/discussion/religion-class/530-oi-epitropes-empeirognomonon-gia-ta-nea-programmata-spoudon-sta-thriskeftika>.

students becoming future teachers of the Religious Subject in secondary education as well as scientists and researchers in the field of academic Theology. Let us note, here, that a similar research was published in Greece in 2018.<sup>10</sup>

By conducting our investigation we encountered the following limitations:

- a. Students from abroad found difficult to fully understand the questions raised, as their experiences of school Religious Education were shaped into a reality different from that of Greece.
- b. The number of students participating per academic year of study was not allocated equally. This is due to the conscious choice about the randomness of the sample used by the research.
- c. A few months after the completion of the investigation, two more Decisions of the Hellenic Council of State (*No 1749/2019 and No 1750/2019*) were announced, cancelling Curricula for the Subject of Religious Course in Greece examined during this survey (December 2018-Februar 2019).

### **3. Past research discussion and the structure of the questionnaire**

For the structure and composition of the questions included in our questionnaire, we took into consideration an earlier research, which was conducted in the autumn of 2015 and the spring of 2017 at a hundred and ninety (190) Schools in the German State of Baden Württemberg.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it is interesting to briefly refer to the results it has reached. In relation to the surveys carried out by other German Institutions (such as Shell, EKD, Sinus-Studies), this one used another "reasoning" and reached very useful conclusions.<sup>12</sup> In addition, this

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<sup>10</sup> Polykarpos Karamouzis, "Religious education between inter-school function, religious perceptions and social practices of the religious field: A case study," *Social Cohesion and Development* 13, no 1 (2018): 47-58.

<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Schweitzer, Golde Wissner, Annette Bohner, Rebecca Nowack, Matthias Gronover, and Reinhold Boschki, *Jugend, Glaube, Religion: Eine Repräsentativstudie zu Jugendlichen im Religions- und Ethikunterricht* (Münster-New York: Waxmann, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Schweitzer, "Jugend, Religion und Religionsunterricht. Stand und Perspektiven religionsbezogener Jugendforschung. Zur Einordnung der Studie," in

research team cooperated with the GESIS - Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (headquartered in Mannheim), in order to ensure the reliability of its selected sample.<sup>13</sup> Some of the many remarkable points of the mentioned Survey are the following:

**a.** The survey concerned the "Youth", i.e. seven thousand two hundred and forty-six (7.246) pupils of the 11th /12th class of Gymnasium from the age of 16 years old.<sup>14</sup> All the Christian Churches (including the Orthodox) were represented in the sample, but also those who did not "belong" to some Church and, of course, Islam. Instead of capturing the findings only over a specific period, the survey was repeated to the same individuals after eighteen (18) months (in the spring of 2017). The second time only half responded (3.001) to a slightly amended questionnaire. However, *an evolution* of religiousness was investigated in these critical years of human life in a postmodern - secularized society, which seems to favor individualism and pluralism. A third assessment of the religiousness of the same persons up to the age of 24 is also expected. In fact, qualitative and quantitative research was combined<sup>15</sup>, i.e. the interviews of different groups of teens together with the completion of a questionnaire with one hundred and twenty-two (122) questions, answered in at most 20 minutes during the time of teaching the Subject of Religious Education.

**b.** One more significant feature of the research is the fact that it did not restrict itself to checking the religiousness of young people by

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*Jugend, Glaube, Religion: Eine Repräsentativstudie zu Jugendlichen im Religions- und Ethikunterricht*, ed. by Friedrich Schweitzer, Golde Wissner, Annette Bohner, Rebecca Nowack, Matthias Gronover, and Reinhold Boschki (Münster/New York: Waxmann, 2018), 40-57. Particularly, see Ibid, 45-56.

<sup>13</sup> Annette Bohner, "Methode und Design," in *Jugend, Glaube, Religion: Eine Repräsentativstudie zu Jugendlichen im Religions- und Ethikunterricht*, ed. by Friedrich Schweitzer, Golde Wissner, Annette Bohner, Rebecca Nowack, Matthias Gronover, and Reinhold Boschki (Münster/New York: Waxmann, 2018), 60-64. Particularly, see Ibid, 63-64.

<sup>14</sup> Schweitzer, Wissner, Bohner, Nowack, Gronover, and Boschki, *Jugend, Glaube, Religion*, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 17-18.

submitting trivial questions (such as how often they participate in the Divine Liturgy and pray or the grad of the "belief" in life after death). In fact, it was proved that only 22% of the respondents characterize themselves as "religious", because young people associate religiousness with the Church as an Institution<sup>16</sup>. Although they admit the positive contribution of the Church to society, they want it to "change – be transformed to have a future". Instead, 41% replied that they are faithful, because faith - spirituality offers them hope, strength (especially in difficult situations) and orientation. Research has also highlighted how its respondents want to shape *themselves* in their relationship with God individually and how deeply they are concerned with questions of life meaning. Thus, the Religious Course proves to be important in public education for the formation of identity and the ability not only for tolerance but also to improve a fertile dialogue with other religions and cultures, elements for which the research has, in general, shown that young people are "thirsty".<sup>17</sup> It also turned out that the view of Deismus at these ages is wrong.<sup>18</sup> God is a Being with which young people want to "communicate" by a variety of means (2/3 responded that they occasionally pray, while 54% believe that there is life after death, although they admit that they have no specific knowledge on this). Indeed, in the second phase more young people perceive God not personally but as "Energy", "Nature" and/or "higher Power".

c. The research was also addressed to the vocational senior high schools, where until today the dominant view is that their students are "illiterate" on issues of religion and belief.<sup>19</sup> So far, the offer of the Religious Course (called BRU)<sup>20</sup> in the programme of these institutions is minimal. In a very sensitive space and time of human being (as young people acquire their own "home" and profession), when they confess a deficit in the field "social trust",<sup>21</sup> this is the last

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>18</sup> Schweitzer, "Jugend, Religion und Religionsunterricht," 21.

<sup>19</sup> Schweitzer, Wissner, Bohner, Nowack, Gronover, and Boschki, *Jugend, Glaube, Religion*, 21, 25-6.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 25.



chance for these citizens to have theological feedback from professionals. Indeed, it proved that these students have been more wary of religious pluralism, although they are more concerned about faith issues than others.<sup>22</sup> This reflection and the exchange of views on "spiritual issues" are generally increasing by pupils over time.

**d.** The research was also addressed to those who have not been taught the Subject of Religious Education of their Confession but Ethics. This is because the so-called *socialization* (the introduction of children to the spiritual life in the family either formally or informally urged by its own members) is actually smaller but also because they consider the Confession's Religious Course as conservative.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, this opportunity to follow Ethics in Baden-Württemberg exists only from the 9th class (age of 13). For the pupils of Ethics, the classical view that they are atheists was proven wrong. Yet 1/3 of them agree that God loves the world and cares for all people,<sup>24</sup> while the same proportion believes that course of Ethics is of interest to life and the improvement of the profession is higher.<sup>25</sup> Actually, the percentage in this area that agrees on a *personal* relationship with God is, in fact, lower than that of the pupils who attend the Confessional Religious Education, as the distance from the Church increases so increases the notion that "without religions the world would be more peaceful".<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, they appreciate Church's contribution to society, they share the view that it must transform and they are even more open to dialogue with other cultures.

**e.** Young Muslims are distinctly different from their peers.<sup>27</sup> They emphasize the need of Prayer as well as the traditional forms of their religion, as their socialization moves at higher rates (85%). They are not interested in the question of theodicy (i.e. why God allows evil) as they attribute facts to Fate. Fifty-five percent (55%) agree that "one religion is true" although 60% also agree that "there is truth in every

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 31-2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 31.

religion." Thirty-nine percent (39%) agree that the "(Christian) Church acts positively in the society",<sup>28</sup> while they also welcome the engagement with other religions. We should mention that 25% of all the respondents replied "yes, there are many Muslims in Germany" but only 6% of them replied that there are many Jews. This proves that a kind of xenophobia exists, a fear over certain forms of Islam.<sup>29</sup> The conclusion is that the Religious/ Ethics Subject is absolutely essential in all types of Education as it plays an essential role for shaping identity, externalizing fundamental questions and gaining a meaning of life, especially for teenagers. It also contributes to educating citizens to be capable of dialogue, to have tolerance and respect for both the "Other" and themselves. For this purpose, however, it must not only respond to teenagers' interests, but also evoke interest in them.

#### **4. The composition of the questions and their theoretical background.**

Taking due account of the main differences between the Greek and the German educational reality today, we amended accordingly the afore mentioned exemplar questionnaire of Professor Schweitzer's research team. More specifically, we removed some questions that were not directly relevant to the subject of our research, while we added new ones in order to explore the dimensions of the Religious Course held in Greece.

Thus, a new questionnaire emerged which consists of eighteen (18) questions categorized into three (3) Chapters of six (6) questions. Through the initial short six (6) questions of the first Chapter were recorded the necessary personal and academic profiles of each anonymous respondent. More personal data were also requested in the next six (6) questions. More specifically, in this second Chapter of the Questionnaire (from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> question), each interviewee was requested to provide additional personal information about her/his religious faith and possible relationship with the Church or other religious community. From the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> question, research not

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 33.

only culminates, but it actually approaches its essential subject in juxtaposition to the database of the previous two (2) Questionnaire's Chapters. In this final Chapter, a series of the most crucial issues was examined, regarding the scientific views of Theology students on the Greek Religious Education, particularly on its purpose, content and implementation in practice. In addition, respondents were requested to express their opinions on the New Curriculum of the Greek Religious Subject in comparison to the older Questionnaire.

The team's research resulted in the Questionnaire's structured content, after internal consultation of its members for the purpose of evaluating the following scientific perspectives:

**a.** The Research subject as well as the sample of the interviewees belongs to a distinctive cultural and national environment, on which Orthodox Church has undoubtedly great impact throughout the last two millennia.

**b.** Besides, the respondent Theology students were not treated as a simple part of the Greek public opinion. Through their university courses, parallel educational activities like conferences and published articles on both the General and the Religious Education, it is clear that they are potentially a serious part of scientific experts, even more, a potential advisory forum for the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs in its Education Policy.

**c.** Public dialogue in Greece about the Subject of Religious Education should not be conducted in a theoretical and impersonal way, with regard to an undefined philosophical and legal context. Its subject is the specific environment of modern Greek Education. Therefore, the starting reference point cannot be anything else than the established legal and educational framework. In Greece, the *New Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education (Νέο Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών των Θρησκευτικών)* is officially placed by a series of legislative acts since September 2016<sup>30</sup>. The legislative texts and the Study Guides of this

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<sup>30</sup> In chronological order, these legislative acts are the following:

New Curriculum focus on a particular Philosophy of Education<sup>31</sup>, which is evaluated in comparison with that of its previous repealed Curriculum. The matter is that on this reference starting point our research concentrates, before discussing with any other scientific approach and generally with the international bibliography.

**d.** According to the Greek predominant legal theory and established case-law, totally dependent on the *Greek Constitution*, especially on its 16<sup>th</sup> Article, Religious Education in Greece remains undoubtedly

1. Official Government Gazette of Greece (ΦΕΚ) 2920/B/13-09-2016, 30859-30974: Decision of the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs No 99058/Δ2/2017 (Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών του μαθήματος των Θρησκευτικών στο Δημοτικό και στο Γυμνάσιο (*Curriculum of the Subject of Religious at the Elementary and Middle School level*)),
2. Official Government Gazette of Greece (ΦΕΚ) 2906/B/13-09-2016, 30695-30750: Decision of the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs No 143579/Δ2/7.9.2016 (Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών του μαθήματος Θρησκευτικά Γενικού Λυκείου (*Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education at the High School level*)),
3. Official Government Gazette of Greece (ΦΕΚ) 2104/B/19-6-2017, 21047-21154: Decision of the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs No 101470/Δ2/2017 (Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών του μαθήματος των Θρησκευτικών στο Δημοτικό και στο Γυμνάσιο (*Curriculum of the Subject of Religious at the Elementary and Middle School level*)) and
4. Official Government Gazette of Greece (ΦΕΚ) 2105/B/19-6-2017, 21155-21226: Decision of the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs No 99058/Δ2/2017 (Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών του μαθήματος Θρησκευτικά Γενικού και Επαγγελματικού Λυκείου (*Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education for the General and Educational Lyceum*)).

<sup>31</sup> For example, see Marios Koukounaras-Liagkis, and Manolis & M. Papaioannou, “Η θέση της Θρησκευτικής Εκπαίδευσης στο ελληνικό σχολείο του 21ου αιώνα: Ζητήματα υποχρεωτικότητας, προγράμματος σπουδών και παιδαγωγικής προσέγγισης” (“The Position of Religious Education in the 21st Century Greek School: Issues of Obligation, Curriculum and Pedagogical Approach”), in *Προγράμματα Σπουδών-Σχολικά εγχειρίδια. Από το παρελθόν, στο παρόν και το μέλλον. Πρακτικά Συνεδρίου, Μουσείο Σχολικής Ζωής και Εκπαίδευσης του ΕΚΕΑΙΣΥ, ΠΕΕ*, vol. 2, ed. Stavros Grosdos (Athens: Pierce-American College of Greece, 2016), 201-12.

“confessional”<sup>32</sup>. This is explicitly defined by the *Hellenic Council of State*, after its recent *Decisions No 660/2018* and *No 926/2018*, which identified explicitly the constitutional term “religious consciousness” (θρησκευτική συνείδηση) and its “compulsory development” (ανάπτυξη) with the “orthodox consciousness”<sup>33</sup>. All Judges of the Supreme Administrative Court agreed unanimously in this fundamental legal viewpoint, regardless of whether a minority of them interpreted in its own way the meaning of the “orthodox consciousness”, definitely not as “enforceable consciousness” similar to the religious prejudice<sup>34</sup>. Moreover, this was exactly the explanatory statement of the mentioned court *Decisions*, which annulled its previous administrative *Decisions* of the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs introducing the New Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education<sup>35</sup>.

e. Consequently, Religious Course in Greek Education, especially for the Orthodox students, is officially and undeniably recognized by Greek law in absolute dependence on what the “orthodox consciousness” means. From now onwards, the only research question

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<sup>32</sup> In particular, see the 12<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the *Decision of the Hellenic Council of State No 660/2018*, accessed August 1, 2019, <https://www.lawspot.gr/sites/default/files/images/nea/misc/ste-660.2018.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> In particular, see the 14<sup>th</sup> paragraphs of both the *Decision of the Hellenic Council of State No 926/2018*, accessed August 1, 2019, <https://www.sakkoulas-online.gr/news/oste-926-2018-akyrosi-ya-gia-to-programma-spoudon-tou-mathimatos-ton-thrisko-tytikon-sta-genika-lykeia-os-antithetis-sto-syntagma-kai-tin-esda/> and the *Decision of the Hellenic Council of State No 660/2018*, accessed August 1, 2019, <https://www.lawspot.gr/sites/default/files/images/nea/misc/ste-660.2018.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> In particular, see a) the 15<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the *Decision of the Hellenic Council of State No 660/2018*, and b) the 12<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the *Decision of the Hellenic Council of State No 926/2018*.

<sup>35</sup> To be more precise, see a) the *Decision No 660/2018* of the *Hellenic Council of State* annulled the *Decision* of the *Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs No 143579/Δ2/7.9.2016* (Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education at the High School level) and b) the *Decision No 926/2018* of the *Hellenic Council of State* *Decision* of the *Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs No 99058/Δ2/2017* (Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education at the Elementary and Middle School level).

is about the real meaning of the synonym adjectives “religious”, “orthodox” and “confessional” to the crucial constitutional term “consciousness”. Is it perceived in the context of German bibliography, as the model of the “Konfessioneller Religionsunterricht”, which is not connected to a religious faith and community, but only to a linguistic, cultural and national environment with its own identity<sup>36</sup>? On the other hand, how could a “confessional Christian religious education” be adopted, while the Greek as much as the other European Union’s States are neutral towards all religions? To be more precise, both the 13<sup>th</sup> Article of the *Constitution of Greece* and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Article of the *European Convention on Human Rights* (ECHR) fully protect religious liberty<sup>37</sup>.

f. At this point, *Hellenic Council of State* makes us reflect upon what the theory of “positioneller Religionsunterricht” (“specific interpretive perspective”) examines and proposes<sup>38</sup>. Education not only in Greece but also in the European Union and worldwide has to solve its most serious problem, derived from ideological conflicts. Many more scholars with scientific approaches similar to “positioneller Religionsunterricht” propose this link between a “confessional” Religious Education,<sup>39</sup> (in the sense of self-governed democratic

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<sup>36</sup> Mirjam Schambeck, “Για ποιον λόγο οι μετανεωτερικές κοινωνίες δεν μπορούν να αρνηθούν το Μάθημα των Θρησκευτικών με συγκεκριμένη ερμηνευτική προοπτική – Θρησκευοπαιδαγωγική θεώρηση και παραδείγματα” (Greek trans. Athanasios Stogiannidis), (“Why postmodern societies cannot dispense with confessional religious education – Religious educational approach and examples”) *ΣΥΝΘΕΣΙΣ/SYNTHESIS* 5, no. 1 (2016): 11. Athanasios Stogiannidis, “Το Μάθημα των Θρησκευτικών στη Δημόσια Εκπαίδευση: ένα Μάθημα Θέσεων, Στοχασμού και Ερμηνείας,” (“Religious Education in Public Schools: Providing Theses, Reflection and Interpretation”) *ΣΥΝΘΕΣΙΣ/SYNTHESIS* 5, no. 1 (2016): 53.

<sup>37</sup> See *The Constitution of Greece*, (transl. by X. Paparrigopoulos & St. Vassilouni), Hellenic Parliament 2004, 26. *European Convention on Human Rights*, European Court of Human Rights – Council of Europe, 6.

<sup>38</sup> Schambeck, “Για ποιον λόγο οι μετανεωτερικές κοινωνίες δεν μπορούν να αρνηθούν το Μάθημα των Θρησκευτικών με συγκεκριμένη ερμηνευτική προοπτική – Θρησκευοπαιδαγωγική θεώρηση και παραδείγματα”, 15. Stogiannidis, “Το Μάθημα των Θρησκευτικών στη Δημόσια Εκπαίδευση”, 45-46.

<sup>39</sup> Iraklis Rerakis, *Ο «άλλος» στο ελληνικό σχολείο. Ορθόδοξη χριστιανοπαιδαγωγική θεώρηση* (*The “other” in the Greek School. Christian*

States with their own cultural identity and openness to any religion, as well as to atheists and agnostics, in the sense of a multi-cultural world, which attempt to be unified in the light of a supranational or universal law.

**g.** Especially regarding the Hellenic Republic, the most impressive chapter of both the *Decisions of the Hellenic Council of State No 660/2018* and *No 926/2018* is the one referring extensively to the preamble of the Greek Constitution: “*In the name of the Holy and Consubstantial and Indivisible Trinity*”. Although the relevant legal theory used to remain silent in the past, implying that the preamble of the Greek Constitution is only a historic symbol after the era of the Greek Revolution, recent case-law recognizes it as legal wording with

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*pedagogical perspective*) (Thessaloniki: Πουρνάρας, 2006). Ioanna Komninou, “Η ευρωπαϊκή διάσταση της διδασκαλίας του μαθήματος των θρησκευτικών: η συμβολή του στη διαμόρφωση της ευρωπαϊκής ταυτότητας” (“The european dimension of the religious education teaching: its contribution to the development of european identity”) (PhD diss., National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2012). Id. “Η διαμόρφωση θρησκευτικών ταυτοτήτων σύμφωνα με τις αλλαγές του μοντέλου διδασκαλίας του μαθήματος των Θρησκευτικών στην Ελλάδα από το 2011 και μετά,” (“The formation of religious identities in accordance with the changes of the teaching model of the Religion Subject in Greece from 2011 onwards,”) *Κοινωνική Συνοχή και Ανάπτυξη* 13, no. 1 (2018): 33-46. Evangelos Pepes, “Θρησκευτική ταυτότητα και ορθόδοξη θρησκευτική αγωγή στην εποχή της παγκοσμιοποίησης: Η πρόταση της εκκλησιαστικής Παράδοσης,” (“Religious identity and Orthodox Religious Education in the age of globalization: the proposal of the ecclesiastical tradition,”), in *Πρακτικά Επιστημονικού Θεολογικού Συνεδρίου: Παιδεία, Διαφωτισμός, Παγκοσμιοποίηση: Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησιαστική Θεώρηση*, ed. Evangelos Pepes (Θεσσαλονίκη, 2016), 87-133. Id., *Η θρησκευτική παιδεία των μεταναστών στον ελληνικό χώρο (The religious education of immigrants in the Greek territory)*, (Thessaloniki: ΚΟΣΜΟΣ, 2018). Konstantinos Georgiadis, “Τα ιδεολογικής φύσεως ψευδοδιλήμματα γύρω από το Μάθημα των Θρησκευτικών – Μια εναλλακτική ερμηνεία του Συνταγματικού όρου «Θρησκευτική Συνείδηση»,” (“The ideological false dilemmas around the Religion Subject in Greece - An alternative interpretation of the constitutional term "Religious Consciousness,"), in *Ζητήματα Διδακτικής των Θρησκευτικών*, Vol. 2 – *Πρακτικά του 2ου Πανελληνίου Συνεδρίου Θεολόγων (με Διεθνή Συμμετοχή): Προκλήσεις και προοπτικές της Θρησκευτικής Εκπαίδευσης στο σύγχρονο σχολείο* (Thessaloniki: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki/ School of Theology, Περιφερειακή Διεύθυνση Πρωτοβάθμιας και Δευτεροβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης Κεντρικής Μακεδονίας, 2018) 79-91.

“limited enforceability”.<sup>40</sup> Hence, a particular spirit of law is revealed, a “political Theology” in its classical sense, given by Carl Schmidt.<sup>41</sup> Especially for the modern Greek society, Orthodox spiritual and cultural heritage, either with its metaphysical dimension or merely with its moral, social and political symbolism, is accepted as the general principle that gives birth to the Greek Constitution and Democracy. This is clear through any of the “national symbols”, like the Greek Constitution's preamble, the cross of the Greek flag, the religious holidays identified with the national ones, etc.

**h.** In conclusion, the major challenge for the Public Dialogue on Greek Religious Education is to find out the way of bridging the gap between “confessional” Religious Subject and “inviolable religious freedom” in the Greek legal and educational reality. In the limits of the Greek State and Constitution, a legal solution is given by the *Hellenic Council of State* by its *Decisions No 660/2018* and *No 926/2018*. Although no court Decision would provide educational definitions and proposals since no Judge is responsible for or expert on the pedagogy science, some legal guidelines of the mentioned Decisions are significant for our research or even any other discussion on the Subject of Religious Education in Greece.

## 5. Demographic features of the research

<i>Table 1: Frequency Distributions by Gender</i>		
	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Men	273	39,3
Women	422	60,7

<sup>40</sup> In particular, see a) the 12th paragraph of the *Decision of the Hellenic Council of State No 926/2018*, and b) the 14<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the *Decision of the Hellenic Council of State No 660/2018*.

<sup>41</sup> For this definition, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political\\_theology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_theology).



<i>Table 2: Frequency Distributions by University Department</i>		
	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
School of Theology NKUA	121	17,4
School of Social Theology and Religious Studies NKUA	212	30,5
School of Theology AUTH	198	28,5
School of Pastoral and Social Theology AUTH	164	23,6

<i>Table 3: Frequency Distributions by Academic Year of Attendance</i>		
	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> year (1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester)	214	30,8
2 <sup>nd</sup> year (3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> semester)	194	27,9
3 <sup>rd</sup> year (5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> semester)	96	13,8
4 <sup>th</sup> year (7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> semester)	115	16,6
Before the graduation	76	10,9

<i>Table 4: Frequency Distributions by Place of birth</i>		
	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Born in Greece	593	85,3
Born abroad	102	14,7

**Table 5: Frequency Distributions  
by Religious Education in Familiar Environment**

	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
They have received religious education and they embrace its principles	74	10,6
They have received religious education but have moved away from its principles	75	10,8
They believe that religion in their family does not play an important role on them	546	78,6

The research was conducted between December 2018 and February 2019, using a questionnaire in printed form. A total of six hundred and ninety-five (N=695) students of Theological Schools of Greece participated. Two hundred and seventy-three of them (39,3%) were men and four hundred and twenty-two of them (60,7%) were women (Table 1). Among the respondents, a hundred and twenty-one of them (17,4%) study at the School of Theology of NKUA, two hundred and twelve (30,5%) at the School of Social Theology and Religious Studies of NKUA, a hundred and ninety-eight (28,5%) at the School of Theology of AUTH and a hundred and sixty-four (23,6%) at the School of Pastoral and Social Theology AUTH (Table 2). At the time of the survey two hundred and fourteen of them (30,8%) were at the 1<sup>st</sup> year of their studies (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester), a hundred and ninety-four (27,9%) were at the 2<sup>nd</sup> year (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semester), ninety-six (13,8%) of them at the 3<sup>rd</sup> year (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> semester), a hundred and fifteen (16,6%) at the 4<sup>th</sup> year (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> semester) and seventy-six of them (10,9%) were undergraduate Students (Table 3). Of the total of the respondents five hundred and ninety-three of them (85,3%) were born in Greece, while a hundred and two of them (14,7%) were born abroad (Table 4). Finally, seventy-four of them (10,6%) have received religious education and they embrace its principles, seventy-five

(10,8%) have received religious education but have moved away from its principles and five hundred and forty-six (78,6%) believe that religion in their family does not play an important role on them (Table 5).

## 6. Methodology of the research

A set of Multivariable Data Analysis methods was utilized for the processing of the Questionnaires used. The reason for this choice was the fact that this particular methodology of research in the field of statistics does not set out the formulation of assumptions as the starting point.<sup>42</sup> By this Data Analysis approach the most important aspect is data and not assumptions. Through computer aided Data Analysis correlation assumptions emerge *afterwards*.<sup>43</sup> In addition, Data Analysis methods provide the researcher with a geometric representation of the phenomenon under consideration, which illustrates the correlations between classes/categories of variables used.<sup>44</sup> Let us note here that Multivariable Data Analysis methods were also applied in the area of Teaching Analysis of school textbooks and Curricula.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See François Djindjian. *Fifteen years of contributions of the French school of data analysis to quantitative archaeology*, accessed June 22, 2020. [https://ub01.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10900/60877/19\\_Djindjian\\_CAA\\_1989.pdf](https://ub01.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10900/60877/19_Djindjian_CAA_1989.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> See Giannis Papadimitriou, *Η Ανάλυση Δεδομένων. Παραγοντική ανάλυση αντιστοιχιών. Ιεραρχική ταξινόμηση και άλλες μέθοδοι* (Athens: Τυπωθήτω, 2007) 27.

<sup>44</sup> See Ibid, 32. Also, see Theodoros Mpechrakis, *Πολυδιάστατη Ανάλυση Δεδομένων* (Athens: Νέα Σύνορα – Α. Α. Λιβάνη, 1999) 14-15.

<sup>45</sup> For more, see: a) Athanasios Stogiannidis and Nikolaos Koutsoupas, “Geometric Didactical Analysis-GE.DI.AN. – Ein neuer methodologischer Vorschlag für die empirische Bildungsforschung,” in *ΣΥΝΘΕΣΙΣ/SYNTHESIS* 2, no. 2 (2013): 200–21, b) Athanasios Stogiannidis. *Η Διδακτική Ανάλυση στα Σχολικά Εγχειρίδια του Μαθήματος των Θρησκευτικών. Εμπειρική έρευνα με εφαρμογή της Γεωμετρικής Διδακτικής Ανάλυσης (Ge.Di.An.)* (Thessaloniki: Δέσποινα Κυριακίδη, 2014), c) Athanasios Stogiannidis and Nikolaos Koutsoupas, “Geometric Didactic Analysis (Ge.Di.An.) – methodologische Überlegungen zu einer didaktischen Schulbuchforschung und Fallstudie (Aufgabenanalyse),” in *Methodologie und Methoden der Schulbuch- und Lehrmittelforschung*, ed. Petr Knecht, Eva Matthes, Silvia Schütze, Bente Aamotsbakken (Hrsg.) (Bad Heilbrunn: Verlag Julius Klinkhardt, 2014), 99–110, d) Athanasios Stogiannidis and Nikolaos Koutsoupas,

Specifically, regarding the processing of the data we collected from our survey's questionnaires, in the first phase, we resorted to the Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) Method.<sup>46</sup> This method provide us with the ability of a geometrical display of the two main trends in the variables and classes of the phenomenon under investigation, i.e. in our case two main tendencies in the responds. These trends are essentially two groups which differ in their qualitative features, i.e. in the case of our questionnaire these two tendencies characterize two groups of replies. The difference in the qualitative features of the trends is perceived as following: on the axes, the groups/trends of the responses are displayed geometrically at diametrically opposite regions. From this geometrical contrast in the display of the points on the axes, two groups are formed. Therefore, MCA visualizes and provides tools for the interpretation of quality features, by which two groups/response tendencies are differentiated.

In a second phase, we applied the Hierarchical Clustering (HC) Method,<sup>47</sup> which enables to cluster variables and their categories i.e. the formation of groups (clusters) with common qualitative features. As part of our research, these groups are translated as aggregations of interviewee responses. The grouped replies express the common qualitative features of the groups of individuals from all the respondents.

## 7. Results of the research with Multiple Correspondence Analysis Method

The first displayed factorial axis (Figure 1) comprises the highest percentage (10%) of the total information (inertia) provided by the data. We find that on its left side there is a main tendency, which forms a group of people who, based on their replies, have the following features: Recalling their Lyceum education, they fully agree

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“Elementarisierungsansatz und Geometric Didactic Analysis im Dialog: Neue Perspektiven für die Lehrplanforschung im Fach Religion,” in *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik und Theologie* 70, no. 1 (2018): 82-94.

<sup>46</sup> For this method, see Nikolaos Koutsourias, *Πολυμεταβλητή Ανάλυση Δεδομένων με τη Γλώσσα R*. (Thessaloniki: University of Macedonia Press, 2018), 51-70.

<sup>47</sup> For this method, see *Ibid*, 36-42.

that the Religious Course was offering pupils a subject they were really interested in (REI5), it was helping them to face difficult situations in their lives (REL5), it was giving pupils a reason for thought (RRE5) and they also agreed that during the time of the Religious Course pupils were discussing very interesting topics (DRE5). Moreover, they attend Church's liturgies more than once a year (CAF3) and they fully agree that Church's sacred liturgies sparkle their interest and they do not feel bored when they participate in them (RSL5). In addition, they are sure that their faith relies on the Doctrines of the Church (DFR5) and so they totally agree that the Doctrines and Life of the Church give answers to the questions that really occupy their minds (DAL5). Finally, regarding the question of "how the world was created" they believe that God created Big Bang and so He is the Creator of the world (COW3).

On the right side of the same axis lies another trend of individuals whose responses have the following main features: when asked about Religious Education during their Lyceum years, they believe that the Religious Course: was not supporting pupils when they were facing difficult situations in their life (REL1), that it was not giving them a reason for thought (RRE1), that it was not offering them something that was really interesting to them (REI1) and that during the time of its teaching, pupils were not discussing topics of particular interest (DRE1). They are also indifferent to the question about the frequency of their participation in Church's worship (CAF6). Their faith is not based on Church's Doctrine (DFR1), the divine services do not stimulate their interest, therefore, when they participate in them, they are feeling bored (RSL1). However, regarding their relationship with the Church they feel it is important for them to be its members (SBC2). Furthermore, they only believe in something that can be scientifically proven (SOF3) and they believe that Church's Doctrines and Life do not provide answers to the questions that really concern them (DAL1).

On the basis of the above, the two main tendencies formed in the 1st factorial axis are: on one hand, there is a group of people who maintain strong ties with the Church, with its Doctrine and worship, while at the same time these persons believe that the Religious Course has offered them a lot as Lyceum pupils, so, indirectly, they are expressing a positive attitude and acknowledgment of the beneficial

role previously played by the Subject of Religious Education in Public Education. On the other side of the axis, the group/trend that is formed refers to individuals for whom Religious Course, during their Lyceum years, has not offered them that much and therefore implicitly suggests a negative image of the role and position of the Religious Subject in Public Education in the past. At the same time, participants in this group do not want to have strong ties with the Church community.

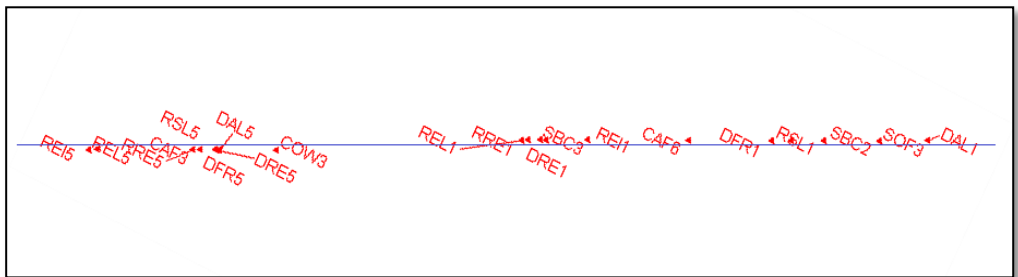


Figure 1: 1st factorial axis - (10% of the total information (inertia))

Particularly interesting for our research is the third factorial axis (Figure 2), as it reflects replies related to the content and purpose of the Religious Course. We observe that on the left side a main tendency of individuals is formed, the responds of which have the following characteristics: regarding their experience as Lyceum pupils from the Subject of Religious Education, they estimate that this course was not giving them a reason for reflection (RRE1), was not offering them something they really cared about (REI1), was not helping them when they were facing difficult situations in their lives (REL1) and also during the lesson pupils were not discussing topics interesting enough (DRE1).

On the diametrically opposite side of the same axis (Figure 2) another main trend of people is depicted: The answer "Never" (CAF1) dominates in the question "How often do you participate in worshipping events of the Church?" People in this group primarily believe only in something that can be scientifically proven (SOF3). They believe that the Religious Subject in Greece should aim to make

pupils acquire knowledge of various religions (ARE3). In terms of content, they argue that the course should have as a point of reference questions that concern every person in the world regardless of religion, to describe how religions respond to these questions, but all these issues should be centered on the interpretative view of Orthodox Theology and at the same time the quantity of the matter concerning Orthodox Theology to prevail (LRE3). These people believe that their faith is not based on the Church's Doctrine (DFR1) and that the Doctrines and Life of the Church do not provide answers to the questions that really concern them (DAL1). However, they consider it important to be members of the Church (SBC2). Recalling their Lyceum years, they estimate that during the Religious Course pupils were probably discussing very interesting topics (DRE4), that this subject offered them something that they really cared about (REI4), while they are sure it was giving them a reason for reflection (RRE5).

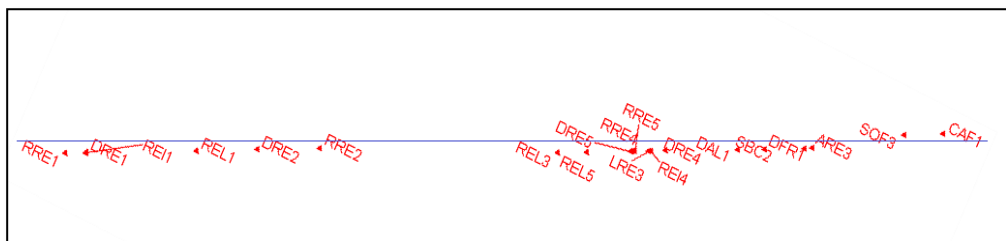


Figure 2: 3<sup>rd</sup> factorial axis - 4,1% of the total information (inertia)

## 8. Research results using the Automatic Hierarchical Classification method

In order to further investigate distinct group differences in our sample, we referred to the Automatic Hierarchical Clustering (HC) method. According to the analysis, the following six groups were formed (Figure 3 and Figure 4).

i. The first group includes a hundred and forty individuals (**N=140**, i.e. **20%** of the respondents) and it is the second larger group of the survey. Drawing on their experience of religious education during their Lyceum years, they believe that the Religious Course was actually offering pupils something they were really interested in (REI5), was helping them when they were facing difficult situations in their lives (REL5) and was giving them a reason for reflection (RRE5), as they were discussing very interesting topics (DRE5). People in this group have not studied the New Curriculum and therefore have not yet developed a well-grounded view of the topic (CRE4). In their opinion, the purpose of Religious Course in Greece is to help pupils develop a substantiated view of the religion they belong to, while at the same time to learn about other religions and cultivate respect for them for the sake of peaceful coexistence (ARE4). They also believe that the subject should take as starting point the basic principles of the Orthodox Church's Doctrine, include evidence from the teachings of other religions, engage in a dialogue with other religions (LRE1) and, finally, that it should be a compulsory-elective course for all pupils with the possibility of exemption. In the event that someone prefers to request exemption from the Religious Course, the Greek Education System should provide an alternative course, e.g., Ethics (RCS2).

ii. The second group includes a hundred and seventeen persons (**N=117**, i.e. **17%** of the interviewees) and it ranks third in terms of number of participants. They claim that their faith is based on Church's Doctrine (DFR5), that the doctrines and Life of the Church offer answers to the questions they really have (DAL5). Although they participate in Church's worship more than once a year (CAF3), however, the divine liturgies stimulate their interest, so, when they participate in them, they do not feel bored (RSL5). Regarding the content of the Religious Course, it is estimated that this should only refer to Orthodox Church's doctrines and not include elements from other religions (LRE6). Regarding the New Curriculum of the Religious Course, it is estimated that this has brought about a change in educational practice, but it does not respond to the needs and the pupils' quest for this subject (CRE2).



iii. The third and largest group includes a hundred and ninety-nine questionnaires (**N=199**, i.e. **29%** of the respondents), that probably agree that Church's doctrines and Life offer answers to the questions that really concern them and are almost certain that their faith is based on Church's Doctrine. To the question, if the divine liturgies of the Church stimulate their interest, they adhere neither to a negative nor to a positive attitude; despite this uncertainty, they do attend the Church once a week or even more frequently. As far as the content of the Religious Course is concerned, they think it should provide a description and analysis of Orthodox Theology in a scientific way, while regarding the purpose of this subject they express the opinion that it should help pupils become faithful members of the religion to which they belong. Finally, in their view, the New Curriculum of the Religious Course has not brought any significant change compared to the older one.

iv. The fourth group includes ninety-one cases (**N=91**, i.e. **13%** of the interviewees). Recalling in their memory the educational experiences they had as Lyceum pupils, they estimate that Religious Course was not giving them reasons for reflection (RRE1) and was not offering anything really interesting for them (REI1), as they were not discussing quite interesting subjects (DRE1) at that time and therefore this subject was not helping pupils when they were facing difficult situations in their lives (REL1). This group, when asked about the purpose of the Religious Course, thinks that this subject should help pupils discover how important religion is in general to human beings (ARE2); however, this can be accomplished when the content of the course is a description and analysis of Orthodox Theology in a scientific way (LRE5).

v. The fifth group includes ninety-eight individuals (**N=98**, i.e. **14%** of the respondents) who do not want or are not interested in externalizing their view about their relationship with Church (SBC3). Their belief probably is not based on Church's Doctrine (DFR2), divine liturgies probably do not stimulate their interest and, as a result, when they participate in them they rather feel uninterested (RSL2), while the Doctrines and Life of Church probably do not provide answers to the questions that really concern them (DAL2). As to the content of the

Religious Course in Greece, they argue that this should be a subject about the history of religions and thus, various religions should be taught with an equal distribution of syllabus and therefore the purpose of teaching should be to acquire knowledge about many different religions.

Regarding the New Curriculum of the Religious Course, they believe that there is a change that does not meet the pupils' needs and aspirations about this subject (CRE2).

vi. The last group is also the smallest one since it includes only fifty persons (**N=50**, i.e. 7% of the interviewees). Students in this group believe that the Doctrine and the Life of Church do not provide answers to the questions that really concern them. Divine services of the Church do not stimulate their interest, hence when they participate in them, they feel bored. Their faith is not based on Church's Doctrines, but, nevertheless, it is important for them to be members of the Church. In their view, the aim of the Religious Course in Greece is to acquire knowledge of many different religions and it should be compulsory for all pupils without the possibility of exemption. As far as the New Curriculum of the Subject of Religious Education is concerned, they argue that this brings about a change that responds to the needs and the pupils' quest for this subject.

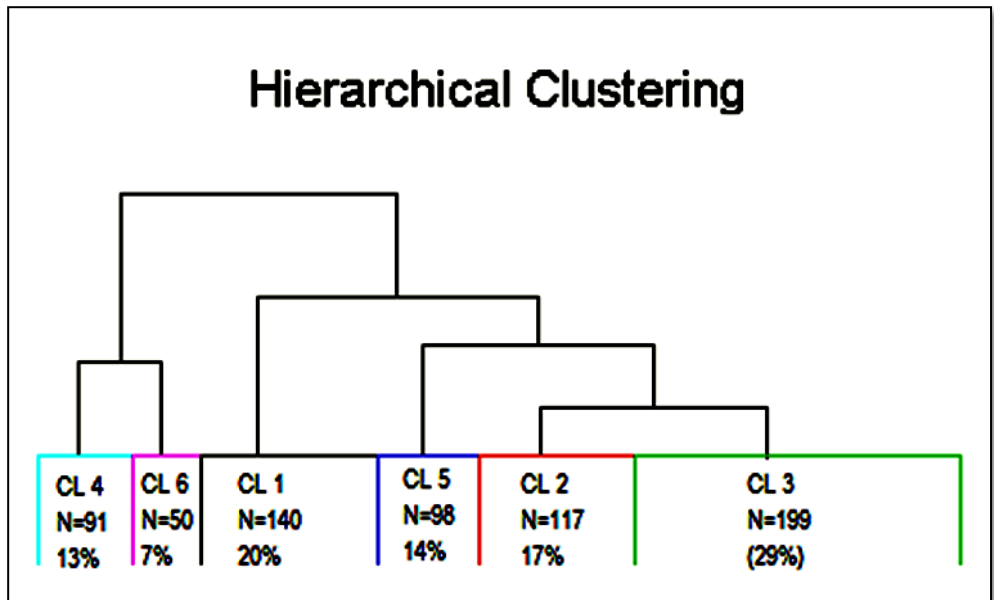


Figure 3: Dendrogramm

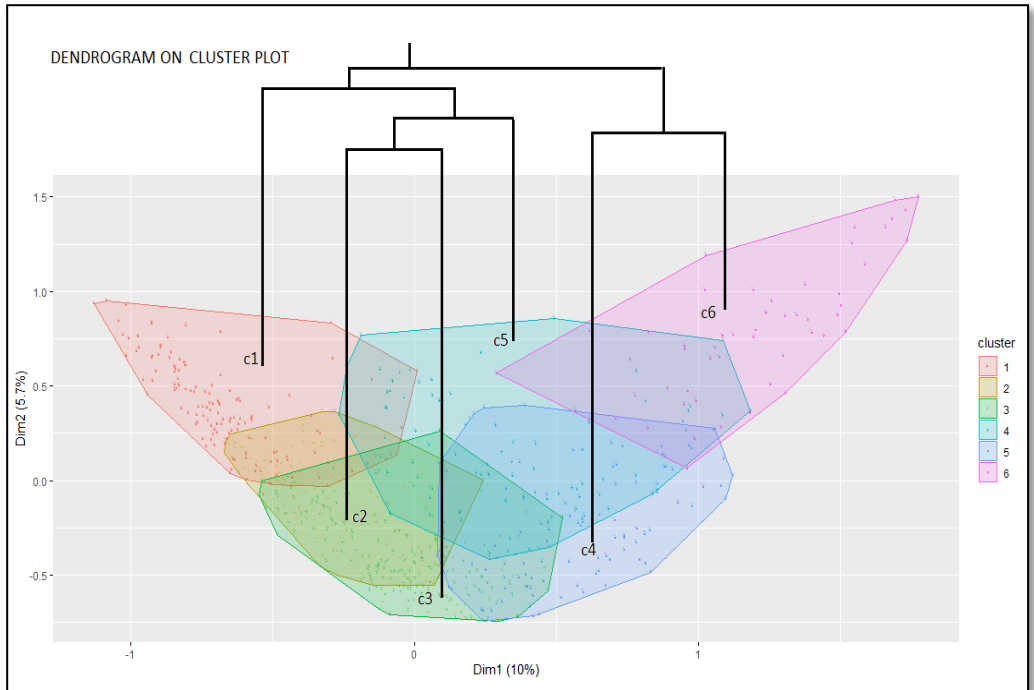


Figure 4: Dendrogramm on Cluster Plot

## 9. Conclusions

For those of the respondent students believing that they are closely related to the Church life, a rather critical attitude towards the New Curriculum of the Religious school Subject has been expressed in the Questionnaire. This is probably due to the students' fond memories of a Religious Subject with different character, describing itself as "confessional", according to its former Curriculum, which was abolished by the new one through a series of administrative Decisions and laws since September 2016. In the Questionnaire, also, a part of the mentioned students states its preference for a Religious Subject in Greek Education exclusively referring to Orthodox faith and tradition in contrast to another part that agrees with a Subject "open" to all religions.

On the other side, for those of the students declaring being at a distance from the devotional life and doctrinal teaching of the Church, the experience and, subsequently, the impression about Religious Education in the secondary education is rather negative. To be more precise, despite their critical stance towards Church they avoid admitting that they do not belong to it as members. In any case, this contradiction is likely to showcase the reason why these students find the New Curriculum of Religious Subject interesting, compared to the former ones, on the grounds that the knowledge of all religions should be the main purpose and content of this Subject. Ultimately, correlations like that between the profile of the mentioned students and their preferable character of the Religious Subject are also particularly interesting for further research.

Finally, in the first section of the Questionnaire regarding the required demographic data, a vast majority (78,6%) of the respondents stated that religion does not play any role within their family environment. This is a highly interesting piece of information that may have to be taken into account with the two or rather three more general trends being shaped.

### **10. Future work**

In September 2019 the Hellenic Council of State has announced two more Decisions regarding Religious Education (1749/2019 and 1750/2019). In particular, these Decisions annulled the applicable at that time Curricula for the Subject of Religious Education at State Schools in Greece. This announcement was made just a few months after the finalization of our work.. Perhaps the participants' responses, as far as our survey is concerned, were characterized by different accents if the research was carried out after the above-mentioned announcement had been made to the public. In this regard, we believe that our study should be further established in this direction, taking into account the new data on the position and profile of the Religious Course in Greece.

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