The Professional Profile of Teachers Working with Roma Students based on their Perceptions of Cultural Diversity. A Study in Compulsory Education

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Abstract: Encouraging inclusive and intercultural education has become one of the key objectives for a number of international organisations and educational systems. However, moving towards this goal is impossible without the collaboration of teachers as their perceptions influence the way they organise and carry out their professional activities. The aim of this paper is to define the professional profile of compulsory education teachers working with Roma students in the Italian city of Messina. It is based on a study of their perceptions of cultural diversity and involves 182 teachers responsible for teaching students in the first cycle of compulsory education (6-14 year olds). A quantitative design using descriptive statistics resulted in the identification of two types of teacher profile, one with positions favourable to cultural diversity and the other with views and practices not favourable to it.

Introduction

The insecurity and lack of freedom existing in different countries, as well as the desire for better living conditions, has led to the arrival of more immigrants to Europe. These are refugees and exiles, mainly with an Arab, sub-Saharan or Asian background (European Commission 2020a). This, together with growing social inequality and discrimination (accentuated after the recent COVID-19 pandemic), has exacerbated the suffering of some minorities residing in the EU, including the Roma. Furthermore, it has intensified the need to promote inclusive and intercultural education with the aim of promoting equality and social justice, in addition to fighting all forms of exclusion and discrimination (European Commission, 2014, 2020b; Malusà & Tarozzi, 2017; Szeto & Cheng, 2018).

The Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority, with an estimated 10-12 million Roma living in Europe (European Commission, 2020b). The European Union tends to use the umbrella-term of 'Roma' to include diverse groups, including Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels, Boyash/Rudari, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as traveller communities ('gens du voyage', Gypsies, Camminanti, etc.)

Ensuring an inclusive approach to education is one of the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, approved by the United Nations General Assembly (PNUD 2015), and to which UNESCO et al. (2016) adhere. However, despite the efforts made by the different European states (including Italy) to respond, progress towards a high-quality education for all students remains a challenge. According to Echeita (2017), "we still have a very exclusive form of school education" (p.19).

In the case of the Roma community, this challenge is especially complex, because its culturally diverse and minority status is combined with its socio-economic vulnerability and migrant status (European Commission, 2020b; Liégeois, 2004). According to the European Commission (2020c), 41% of Roma have experienced discrimination in the past five years, 85% of Roma children are at risk of poverty and 62% of young Roma have no education, employment or training compared to 10% of young people in the general population. In order to alleviate this situation, the European Commission issued the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to the year 2020 (European Commission, 2011). This document establishes, for the first time, a common framework designed to promote the development of strategic state programmes aimed at rectifying the issues of exclusion and vulnerability experienced by Roma citizens. The European Commission recently ratified this commitment by setting out a new strategy, for the 2020-2030 period, to promote equality, inclusion and participation of Roma citizens living in the European Union (European Commission, 2020b).

Italy, "country of the nomadic fields," where around 180,000 Roma currently live, entrusted to the *Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali (National Office Against Racial Discrimination)* the implementation of the *Strategia Nazionale d'Inclusione dei Rom, dei Sinti e dei Camminanti 2012/2020* (UNAR, 2012). Accordingly, the Italian Ministry of Education is now in favour of intercultural education, as highlighted in the *Indicazioni per il curriculo 2012.*

> *The intercultural model is, nowadays, one which allows all children mutual recognition and the recognition of the identity of each. Schools are successfully addressing a universal challenge of openness to the world together with the practice of equality in the recognition of differences (MIUR, 2012, p.6).*

However, the results, published by the *Diversi da chi? (Different from whom?)* reports (ISMU-MIUR, 2016; MIUR, 2019), reveal that the presence of Roma students in schools has declined, especially in pre-school and primary education. Furthermore, the impact of the initiatives, undertaken in favour of their inclusion, is limited. Curcic et al. (2014) acknowledge that there has been no lessening of the inequalities existing between Roma and non-Roma students. This is, perhaps, because "the attention to the cultural diversity of Roma students continues to be an issue which has yet to be resolved" (Cárdenas-Rodríguez et al., 2019, p.89).

The limited impact of the inclusion policies implemented in Italy invites us to assess, and question, the effectiveness of those actions which have already been undertaken. It also urges us to consider new factors which are capable of contributing to an improvement in levels of achievement, in addition to reducing the gap which currently exists between Roma and non-Roma students.

Teaching staff are key to improving cultural awareness (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2014; López & La Malfa, 2020). Promoting, generalising and supporting the inclusion of culturally diverse students requires a collective commitment. This is essential when it comes to raising awareness, modifying professional and institutional cultures and improving educational practices. None of it is possible without the express commitment of teachers. The role of teachers is essential in the drive to promote cultural diversity in schools (Echeita, 2017; Grant & Gibson, 2011). The limited progress of inclusive and intercultural initiatives is closely related to the insufficient attention given to teachers, and their training, in this area (Hinojosa & López, 2016; Sleeter, 2009; Yuan, 2018).

According to Hinojosa and López (2018) and Sharma (2020), training programmes should encourage teachers to immerse themselves in culturally diverse contexts in addition to introducing new methodologies. These methodologies include service learning and project work, to stimulate critical thinking, reflection on classroom practices, and thus intensify

teachers' commitment to the inclusion of all learners. Sharma (2020) believes that teacher education programmes should include training experiences abroad. In her opinion, these experiences help to change teachers' perceptions not just of themselves but of others. In addition, they foster their multicultural knowledge, and contribute to the development of a more global mind-set. Furthermore, they help them develop new competencies with regard to those school practices which respond more positively to cultural diversity.

With regard to Italy, the 107/2015 Law, promoted by the Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (MIUR, 2016), points to the need for each educational centre to guarantee the presence of a nucleus of teachers who are able to undertake reception duties and literacy and cultural mediation in areas which experience high levels of immigration. These measures, which represent an important advance over the initiatives mentioned in previous statements, responds to a clearly limited view of what is involved in training and assisting teachers to manage cultural diversity from an intercultural perspective. This is because it is limited to teachers working in certain contexts and not to the entirety of the teaching profession. This is contrary to what has been stipulated by international organisations and experts (European Commission, 2016; Gay, 2013; Hinojosa & López, 2018; UNESCO, 2016; Sharma, 2020). In addition, Italian education is failing to translate the EU recommendations into teacher training programmes (although the law itself invites teachers to embrace initiatives which foster inclusion). As a result, this commitment is left to the will of teachers who, swamped by a multitude of professional tasks, tend to postpone their training in this matter (Velasco et al., 2013). As a consequence, they jeopardise the implementation of truly inclusive educational practices.

The incorporation of cultural diversity into teacher training programmes has not been prioritised (Gay, 2013; Sharma, 2020; Yan, 2018). Furthermore, those approaches which have been adopted (mostly assimilationist, integrationist or compensatory), must be questioned (Pena-Shaff et al., 2019). This is because they have frequently relied on essentialist views of culture which link cultural diversity to deficit (Gorski, 2009; Hamilton, 2018; López & La Malfa, 2020). The adoption of these approaches in teacher training programmes has placed teachers in a position of epistemological weakness when responding to the complexity involved in incorporating cultural diversity in schools. "Teachers are doing their job in schools without a foundation of professional knowledge regarding multicultural education" (Coronel & Gómez-Hurtado, 2015, p.400). This epistemological weakness results in operative limitations, which hinder the implementation of an inclusive and intercultural approach to professional practice (Hinojosa & López, 2018; Nieto & McDonough, 2011).

From within this context, it is not unusual for teachers to perceive the presence of culturally diverse students as a problem. Hinojosa and Lopez's (2016) international revision acknowledges that there are numerous studies which influence the negative perceptions, held by teachers, towards cultural diversity. These perceptions include low expectations, poor training and lack of commitment to the improvement of practice. Issues such as these contribute to the fact that teachers tend to link cultural diversity with inequality, marginalisation and social exclusion (Carrasco & Coronel, 2017; Díez, 2014). "Prospective teachers often have a narrow and limited view of cultural diversity, and tend to associate it with immigration, educational failure and marginal poverty" (Hinojosa & López, 2018, p.88). The Roma community, the minority which is the focus of this study, are an excellent example of this (Cárdenas-Rodríguez, et al. 2019; Hamilton, 20018).

Changing this trend, and embracing cultural diversity within education, is key to mutual enrichment. It requires, among other things, focusing more on teachers, their professional identity, their training, and their approach to cultural diversity (Gay 2013; Gutentag et al., 2018; Tangen & Beutel, 2017;).

Reflective and committed teachers are needed. They must be professionals who are willing to explore and exploit the educational potential offered by cultural diversity. They must also assess their contribution to personal and collective development and reconsider their view of cultural diversity in a responsible manner, as well as from an ethical perspective (Fiorucci, 2017; Necochea, 2018; Tarozzi, 2014). Shulman (2005), Markic and Eilks (2013) and López and La Malfa (2020), among others, have highlighted, the link between the perceptions of teachers and the way in which they organise and develop their professional activity and, therefore, the commitment that they, give to cultural diversity within the context of their professional practice.

This paper takes into account:

- the limited impact of the initiatives, aimed at promoting the inclusion of Roma students, undertaken in accordance with Italian educational policy (ISMU-MIUR, 2016; MIUR, 2019)
- the lack of attention given to teachers and their training in this matter,
- the risks that the new migration policy entails for coexistence.

We believe that it is necessary to re-launch the commitment of educational research to the issue of cultural diversity and its inclusion in schools, as stipulated by UNESCO (2016). Furthermore, it is important to emphasise the fact that teachers themselves are a key factor in the need for change (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2014).

The aim of this paper is to characterise the professional profile of teachers who work in compulsory education centres in the Italian city of Messina where a number of Roma students study. It takes into account their perceptions of cultural diversity as well as the independent variables explored in our research. It is a novel initiative because it follows several research projects already underway in other countries and focuses on the analysis of the teachers' views on cultural diversity (Carrasco & Coronel, 2017; López & La Malfa, 2020; Mazi, 2020; Sharma, 2012;). Its goal is to define the professional profile of teachers working in contexts of cultural diversity. This can provide relevant data that can help educational leaders, and teachers, to reconsider their attitudes and the decisions they make regarding cultural diversity. Furthermore, it can help them promote, with greater guarantees of success, the inclusion of Roma students in those schools which provide compulsory education.

Methodology

This is a quantitative research project and its methodology responds to an ex post-facto design of a descriptive type. This, more specifically, can be considered a comparative-casual design (Cohen et al., 2010). Thus, it differentiates the independent variables of attributive (non-manipulable) character from the dependent variables. The former corresponds to the eleven identification variables examined in the study: school, gender, age, type of contract, teaching experience, level of education, teaching speciality, subject, pedagogical qualification, teacher training in cultural diversity and degree of satisfaction with the training.

Context and Participants

This research was carried out in the city of Messina because it is one of the thirteen Italian cities currently participating in the *Progetto Nazionale per l'Inclusione e l'Integrazione dei Bambini Rom, Sinti e Camminanti – PON 'Inclusione' 2014-2020*

(Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Social 2014)[1], implemented to facilitate the inclusion of Roma students in compulsory education.

In Italy, compulsory education (for 6-16 years olds) is structured in two cycles. The first cycle, which lasts eight years (6-14 years olds), covers primary education (6-11 year olds) and lower secondary education (11-14 year olds). The second cycle, which also lasts two years, corresponds to students from 14 to 16 years old.

The research involves 182 teachers out of a total of 308 working in the first cycle of compulsory education in the schools participating in this study. They come from four schools (School of Comprehensive Institute-SCI) which were selected through intentional sampling (Bisquerra, 2016). This is because they are the only schools in Messina which host Roma students. In order to determine a representative sample, we started with a confidence level (1-α) of 0.95, with a sampling error of approximately ±4.5% and unknown proportions p=q=0.5.

Of the teachers surveyed, 33% corresponded to SCI_1, 24.2% to SCI_2, 18.7% to SCI_3, and 24.2% to SCI_4. In total 13.2% are men and 86.8% women, 68.2% teach in primary education, and 31.8% in the first grade of secondary education. The majority (89.8%) have no specific training in cultural diversity and 10.2% have undertaken training related to this subject area.

Collection and Analysis of Information

For the collection of information, the Inventory of Future Teachers' Beliefs About Cultural Diversity, by López and Hinojosa (2016), was used. This inventory was translated, adapted and validated into the Italian context following the suggestions of Hambleton and Zenisky (2011), who believe that a contextual, linguistic and cultural adaptation is necessary.

The inventory uses a Likert scale response (the scale's response options are: 1. I strongly disagree, 2. I disagree, 3. I fairly agree, and 4. I strongly agree) to 71 items grouped into four factors:

- Factor 1: *Approach to cultural diversity as a problem.* It includes statements in which cultural diversity is perceived in a negative way (items: 6, 8, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18 and 21).
- Factor 2: *Positive approach to cultural diversity.* Considerations that present cultural diversity as a mutually enriching factor (items: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 19, 23 and 24).
- Factor 3: *Training practices favourable to cultural diversity.* Actions that demonstrate the commitment of teachers towards the inclusion of cultural diversity in educational practice (items: 22, 26, 27, 29, 32, 35, 36, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 47, 49, 50, 56, 57, 58, 61, 62, 63, 64, 69 and 70).
- Factor 4: *Training practices not favourable to cultural diversity.* Actions of a basically curricular nature which do not contribute to the inclusion of cultural diversity (items: 20, 25, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37, 39, 44, 46, 48, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 59, 60, 65, 66, 67, 68 and 71).

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[1] National Project for the Inclusion and Integration of Roma, Sinti and Walking Children (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2014).

For the validation of the content of the instrument –bearing in mind that it starts from a previously validated scale (López & Hinojosa, 2016[2])– a reverse translation was carried out. Face validity was established by experts. Four professors participated from several departments of the Università degli Studi Messina (COSPECS: Dipartimento di Scienze Cognitive, Psicologiche, Pedagogiche e degli Studi Culturali, and DICAM: Dipartimento Civiltà Antiche e Moderne). All of them assessed the totality of the items according to their clarity, significance and relevance.

Next, we showed the values of Cronbach's alpha, which determined the reliability of the instrument understood as internal consistency.

Dimensions/Total test	Cronbach's α	No. items
Approach to cultural diversity as a problem	0.62	8
Positive approach to cultural diversity	0.62	14
Practices that favour cultural diversity	0.67	25
Practices that do not favour cultural diversity	0.66	24
Total	0.74	71

Source: Prepared by the authors.
Table 1: Scores of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, total and by dimensions

As can be observed, Cronbach's alpha value, both in the total scale and in the different dimensions, reaches values above 0.6 in all cases. According to Zumbo et al. (2007), minimum values of 0.6 in Cronbach's α coefficient are considered sufficient in investigations of an exploratory nature such as this one. While it is true that Cronbach's α coefficient <0.60 is, generally, not recommended, it should be noted that the scale, as a whole, has a Cronbach's α coefficient = 0.74.

To determine the concurrent criterion validity, the corrected item-total correlation was calculated. In this case, some items obtained $r<\pm0.20$, although the scale, as a whole, presented a majority of items with $r>\pm0.20$. Following Martínez-Arias et al. (2006), we conclude that items measure, individually, the total of the scale in its entirety.

Once the validity and reliability of the inventory was determined, it was applied directly to the teaching staff of the four schools selected for this research project.

The development of research follows the ethical criteria endorsed by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2016): clarification of responsibilities, voluntary participation, informed consent, no conflict of interest, transparency, respect for integrity, confidentiality and anonymity.

To carry out the data analysis, and the establishment of teaching profiles, we developed a data analysis integration strategy, using the statistical package SPSS v.24. The logic of integration is materialised through three basic strategies: complementation, triangulation and combination (Rodríguez-Sabiote, 2019; Rodríguez et al., 2019). For the data analysis, we used triangulation (between an inferential and a multivariate analysis technique), incorporating an adaptation of the implicants analysis or logical minimisation. All this took, as a reference, the synthesis of meta-analysis strategy. This minimisation strategy is based on the application of Boolean algebra, introduced by Ragin (1987), and based on the Quiney-McCluskey algorithm and the Karnaugh map or KV map. In essence, and according to Gürtler and Huber (2012), it consists of reaching a series of conclusions starting from the

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[2] The authors of this paper conducted an exploratory factor analysis to ensure construct validity and inferred factors that can be merged into the four factors included in the present study.

combination, or combinations, of conditions resulting in the concurrence of the result we were investigating. The procedure used is based on the Establishment of Profiles through Data Integration (EPDI), already implemented in other studies (Rodríguez-Sabiote, 2019; Rodríguez et al., 2019). For its application, all the items on the scale were crossed with each one of the 11 identification variables capable of forming the teachers' profiles. The aim was to determine the degree of influence of each profile variable in relation to each item. This was done by means of the implementation of tests of statistical significance. However, the substantive way could also be used.

Results

We present, below, a table illustrating the resulting dominance, which includes the items that offered statistically significant (at least, $p<.05$), or substantive ($d>.30$) differences, depending on the approach used. The approach used in our research is the one based on the statistical significance. This table also includes the dimension to which the items belong, as well as the level of the dominant profile variable with higher (more favourable perspective) and lower (less favourable view) mean or average, in the individual comparison made.

Items $p<.05$	Dimension to which it belongs	School of < mean	School with > mean
11	Diversity +	School$_1$	School$_3$
17	Diversity +	School$_1$	School$_4$
19	Diversity +	School$_1$	School$_2$
26	Practices favouring diversity	School$_2$	School$_4$
29	Practices favouring diversity	School$_2$	School$_3$
36	Practices favouring diversity	School$_1$	School$_4$
41	Practices favouring diversity	School$_2$	School$_3$
56	Practices favouring diversity	School$_2$	School$_4$
70	Practices favouring diversity	School$_1$	School^4
14	Diversity -	School$_2$	School$_1$
20	Practices not favouring diversity	School$_2$	School$_3$
25	Practices not favouring diversity	School$_1$	School$_4$
31	Practices not favouring diversity	School$_1$	School$_3$
39	Practices not favouring diversity	School$_4$	School$_1$
46	Practices not favouring diversity	School$_2$	School$_3$
48	Practices not favouring diversity	School$_4$	School$_1$
68	Practices not favouring diversity	School$_4$	School$_1$
Items $p<.05$	**Dimension to which it belongs**	**Gender of < mean**	**Gender with > mean**
2	Diversity +	man	woman
3	Diversity +	man	woman
10	Diversity +	man	woman
47	Practices favouring diversity	man	woman
37	Practices not favouring diversity	woman	man
44	Practices not favouring diversity	woman	man
67	Practices not favouring diversity	woman	man
68	Practices not favouring diversity	woman	man
Items $p<.05$	**Dimension to which it belongs**	**Grade of < mean**	**Grade with > mean**
4	Diversity +	secondary	primary
21	Diversity -	primary	secondary
46	Practices not favouring diversity	primary	secondary
51	Practices not favouring diversity	primary	secondary
68	Practices not favouring diversity	primary	secondary

Items p<.05	Dimension to which it belongs	Speciality of < mean	Speciality with > mean
24	Diversity +	religion	art
26	Practices favouring diversity	curricular	art
42	Practices favouring diversity	art	religion
14	Diversity-	religion	support
33	Practices not favouring diversity	art	support
52	Practices not favouring diversity	religion	curricular

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table 2: Table of dominance regarding the items with statistically significant differences, dimensions of belonging and level of the dominant identifying variables in the lowest and highest means

Regarding the influence of the 11 variables, only four offer statistically significant differences in the crosses implemented with the items individually. These variables are:educational centre, gender, grade in which he/she teaches, and speciality.

Regarding the influence of these variables, we detected the presence of statistically significant differences in 17 items when the crossing variable was school: eight when related to gender, six when it related to specialisation and five when it related to grade. According to these data, the variables with the greatest influence are: educational centre, followed by gender and then specialisation and grade.

In order to obtain a quantitative view of the content of the dominance table, we transformed it and broke it down into two contingency tables, based on the value of the means. Starting from there, we implemented two simple correspondence analyses, one for each type of mean (low *vs.* high). The results are shown below.

Dominant level with lower means	DIMENSIONS			
	Diversity+	Diversity-	Practices favouring div.	Practices not favouring div.
School$_1$	3	0	2	2
School$_2$	0	1	4	2
School$_3$	0	0	0	0
School$_4$	0	0	0	3
man	3	0	1	0
woman	0	0	0	4
primary	0	1	0	3
secondary	1	0	0	0
religion	1	1	0	1
art	0	0	1	1
support	0	0	0	0
curricular	0	0	1	0
Active margin	**8**	**3**	**9**	**16**

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table 3: Correspondences between dominant levels with lower means and dimensions (cross tab for low means)

Dominant level with lower means	DIMENSIONS			
	Diversity+	Diversity-	Practices favouring div.	Practices not favouring div.
School$_1$	3	0	2	2
School$_2$	0	1	4	2
School$_3$	0	0	0	0
School$_4$	0	0	0	3
man	3	0	1	0
woman	0	0	0	4
primary	0	1	0	3
secondary	1	0	0	0
religion	1	1	0	1

art	0	0	1	1
support	0	0	0	0
curricular	0	0	1	0
Active margin	**8**	**3**	**9**	**16**

Source: Prepared by the authors.

**Table 4: Correspondences between dominant levels with higher means and dimensions (cross tab for higher means)**

Taking as a reference the content of both contingency tables, we proceeded to establish the correspondences between two variables (dimension and dominant level with higher or lower mean). In order to do this, we implemented two analyses of simple correspondence. We took the license to consider the different levels of the four variables that generated statistically significant differences in a single deconstructed block (one for when the means are lower, another for when the means are higher). In essence, correspondence analysis is a dimension reduction technique for visualising a multi-dimensional point cloud in two dimensions. It was chosen for our research because it is an unrestrictive technique (Greenacre, 2017). It also works with qualitative variables and focuses on creating a map of the relative position of the qualitative variables (the various aspects considered versus the dimensions of the scale) with each of their possible values. In line with Benzécri (1992) we emphasise that it is a multivariate technique capable of determining the degree of association between the various aspects in relation to the different dimensions of the scale. This is undertaken on the basis, as in this particular case, of the data supplied by our two reference cross tabs (tables 3 and 4) resulting, in turn, from the dominance tables (tables 1 and 2).

The resulting biespatial diagrams, after applying the simple correspondence analyses, are:
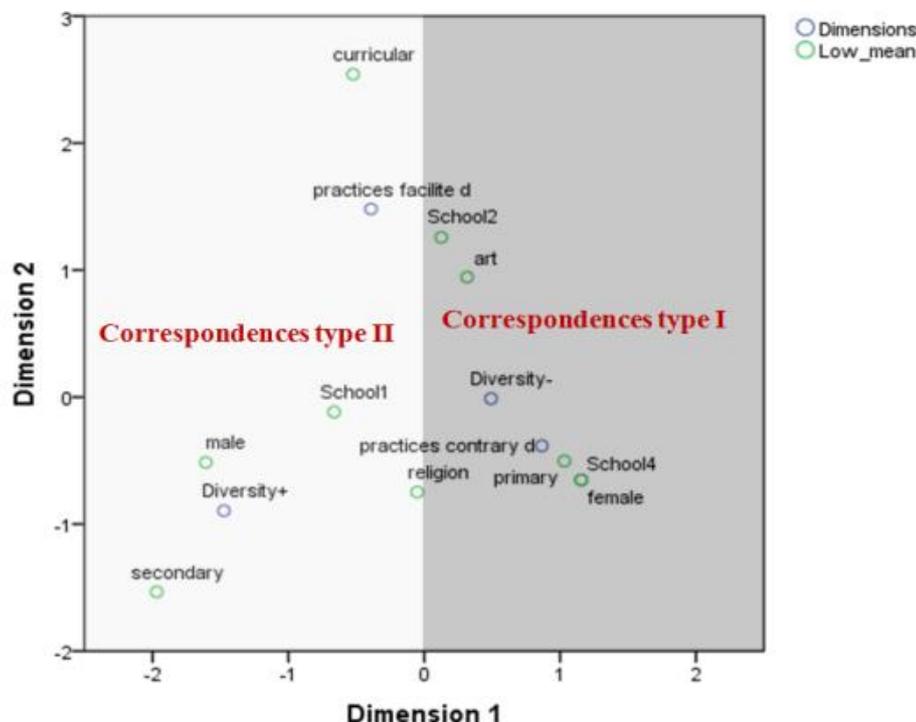
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Graph 1: Biespatial diagram when the means are low
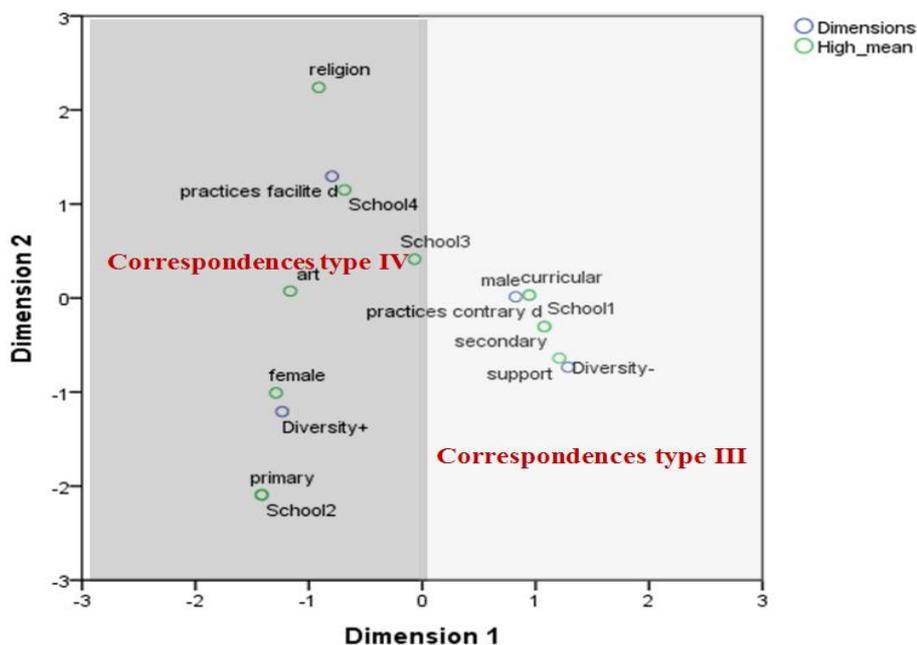
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Graph 2: Biespatial diagram when the means are high

In the two resulting biespatial graphs it can be seen that axis 1 (of abscissas) differentiates, in both cases, between unfavourable versus favourable to cultural diversity. On the other hand, axis 2 (of ordinates), differentiates between levels of the variables school, gender, grade and specialisation, with greater or lesser prominence of domain.

With these precedents, and taking into account the four inferred correspondences (types I, II, III and IV), and their belonging to the two situations contemplated (low means *vs* high means), we obtained two very different profiles:

Lower means		Higher means
Correspondences type I		Correspondences type III
Correspondences type II		Correspondences type IV
Type II + Type III = Profile 2		Type I + Type IV = Profile 1

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table 5: Resulting profiles

Profile 1, favourable to cultural diversity, is configured by the addition of type I and type IV (inverse to type I) correspondences. It can be seen that diversity, as a problem and practices unfavourable to its inclusion, is associated with low means. Here female primary school teachers, who specialise in the arts and religion, and belong to School2 and School4 (type I correspondence), are dominant. On the other hand diversity, and practices in favour of it, is seen as something positive when associated with high means in which female primary school teachers, specialising in the arts and religion and from School2, School4 and School3, predominate.

Although, a priori, these results seem contradictory, on closer inspection they are not, since correspondences I and IV refer to low and high means respectively, and the dimensions assessed are inverse. In the first case (correspondence I), the low means appear when negative aspects are valued (diversity as something negative and practices against diversity, and these aspects are associated with the condition of being a woman, teaching in schools 2 and 4, and teaching art and religion at primary education level). In the second case

(correspondence IV), high means emerge when positive aspects are rated (diversity as something positive and practices that facilitate diversity, and these aspects are also associated with being female, teaching in schools 2, 3 and 4, and teaching art and religion in primary education).

The sum of both correspondences (type I and IV) gives as a final result –discounting repeated elements– a faculty profile favourable to cultural diversity. This is made up, fundamentally, of women who work in primary education, and who specialise in teaching the arts and religion. Moreover, they are from School$_2$, School$_4$ and School$_3$.

Profile 2, not favourable to cultural diversity, is made up of the addition of type II and type III (inverse to type II) correspondences. Here it can be seen that the practices that favour cultural diversity, and embrace a positive view of it, are associated with low means in which male teachers from secondary education and curricular speciality and School$_1$ (type II correspondences) are dominant. In a complementary way, practices that are unfavourable in terms of cultural diversity, and view diversity as a problem, are associated with high means in which teachers from secondary education, and with support and curricular specialities, in School$_1$ (type III correspondences) are dominant. The result of the sum of both correspondences (type II and III) gives as a final result –discounting redundant elements– a faculty profile unfavourable to cultural diversity. This is made up, fundamentally, of men who teach in the first grade of secondary education in support and curricular specialities, from School$_1$.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of this study reveal the existence of two teaching profiles which confirm that it is possible to establish different teaching profiles which relate to perceptions of cultural diversity in schools (Hill-Jackson et al., 2007; Hinojosa & López, 2018). In our research these profiles, one favourable to inclusion of cultural diversity, and the other not particularly favourable to it, are defined around the four variables that present significant differences in relation to teaching perceptions. These variables are: educational centre, gender, level of education and speciality.

The data obtained show that teachers' views on cultural diversity differ according to the educational centre in which they work, thus confirming Mazi's (2020) findings in his recent study relating to Turkey. Specifically, in our study, teachers from School$_2$, School$_4$, and School$_3$ appear to be more in favour of cultural diversity than the school teachers from School$_1$. This means that there are aspects (organisational, functional and cultural) in the educational establishment that influence the stance of teachers in terms of diversity and the possibilities of favouring, or not favouring, inclusive education in schools (Angelides & Antoniou, 2012; Miesera & Gebhardt, 2018, Mazi, 2020). However, the quantitative approach of this study does not allow for the identification of the institutional factors that affect the perspectives adopted by the teachers in relation to the cultural diversity of their students. It would, therefore, be desirable to extend this research by means of fresh enquiries which can help reveal possible aspects for future consideration.

Blandford (2013), Miškolci et al. (2016), and Szeto and Cheng (2018), among others, consider that the success of inclusion programmes is largely attributable to the leadership style of school management teams and their capacity to create an inclusive school based on shared values. Taking into account the cultural diversity of students, and favouring their inclusion in the school, requires a form of leadership which is committed to social justice and an inclusive school culture. This is what Ryan (2006) calls "inclusive leadership". It is one which is open to collaboration with other institutions which promote the participation, and

empowerment, of all members of the educational community. It fosters collaborative work between teachers and encourages the creation of professional learning communities which allow teachers to reflect on their practice and question the educational models they adopt (Causton & Theotaris, 2017; MacRuaire 2018). We believe that it would beneficial to conduct further studies focusing on the actions, taken by school leaders, in order to promote the inclusion of Roma students. This could mitigate the exclusionary management practices adopted by school leaders (Cardno et al., 2018; Okoko,2019), their lack of reflection on curricular approaches and their impact on culturally diverse learners (Boscardin & Shepherd, 2020). This is in addition to the significant influence school leaders have on the way teachers think, feel and act (Poon-McBrayer,2017; Wang, 2018).

The results obtained in this study also reveal the existence of significant differences between teachers according to their gender. In this regard, it is the female teachers who tend to show more favourable attitudes towards cultural diversity. This is contrary to the findings of Mendoza et al. (2017), which indicate a greater sensitivity shown by male teachers when it comes to students' cultural diversity. It is also at odds with the findings of Mazi (2020), which suggest that there is no difference in teachers' perceptions when it comes to gender. Furthermore, females are more critical of the theories and practices that hinder inclusion. This confirms, and upholds, the results of a number of studies which reveal a greater degree of commitment from female teachers towards cultural diversity and its inclusion in schools (Ford & Quinn, 2010; Koç & Köybasi, 2016). However, given that our results are not based on a gender-equitable sampling, it would be advisable, in order to verify the results obtained, that future studies could be based on a more balanced sampling.

The fact that female teachers hold the most positive attitudes towards cultural diversity could be due to upbringing and socialisation, because they are more prosocial than men (Richaud de Minzi, 2009; Malonda et al., 2018), and also because they tend to be more committed to qualities such as care, protection and helping people. It is also possible that the results of our study are related to the fact that we are examining a highly feminised profession. This can be seen from the sample of this study which is composed, mostly, of women. Furthermore, it is associated with the adoption of discourses and positions close to feminist theories which, as highlighted by Gilligan (1982) and Comins (2010), are committed to the ethics of care. This is an ethical stance which involves the development of empathy, commitment, responsibility, tenderness and altruism, characteristics which, traditionally, have been cultivated by women more than by men. However, studies that have, so far, analysed the relationship between gender and teachers' perceptions of diversity are inconclusive (Mendoza et al., 2017; Mazi, 2020). Further research on this issue is, therefore, desirable.

If we focus on the educational stages of teaching of our subjects, we find that primary teachers tend to have a more favourable attitude towards the inclusion of culturally diverse students. These results ratify the findings of Arslan and Calmasur (2017) and López and La Malfa (2020). The lack of willingness of secondary school teachers to promote cultural diversity is highlighted in Díez's (2014) study. Here it is recognised that, although secondary school teachers have incorporated the concept of intercultural education into educational discourse, they are still reluctant to incorporate it into their professional practice. For Bagant et al. (2005) and Dusi (2017), these findings could be attributable to the different methods of pedagogical training given to both professional groups in countries like Spain and Italy.

Within the Italian context, the first grade of secondary education represents one of the weaker aspects of the school system (Malusà & Tarozzi, 2017), as well as a deficiency in pedagogical programmes. Furthermore, the existing splits between initial training and professional practice are frequently highlighted as influential factors (Dusi, 2017). It would be interesting, at this point, to study the teacher training programmes for primary and

secondary teachers in other countries, in addition to their impact on both professional groups, in order to determine whether these differences remain or not. On the other hand, escalating the importance given to cultural diversity in teacher training proposals and programmes and the way in which they are incorporated into the curriculum, as well as in the adopted models, can be a key to understanding the cultures and identities of teachers better, particularly when it comes to cultural diversity (Tangen & Beutel, 2017; Hinojosa & López, 2018). According to Vervaet et al. (2018), a teaching culture which is more sensitive to multiculturalism is associated with less prejudice towards ethnicity. This can also be a strategy for promoting teachers' commitment to the articulation of more equitable school experiences for those students belonging to minority cultural groups, such as the Roma (Hamilton, 2018; Pena-Shaff et al., 2019).

Having analysed the impact of different initiatives aimed at training and qualifying teachers for the management and implementation of cultural diversity in schools, Hinojosa and López (2016) conclude that the results of the investigations are conclusive. In their words:

We affirm that training programmes that are focused on linking theory and practice and incorporating critical reflection, dialogue, exchange with peers, case studies and collaborative work, usually have a more positive impact on the attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and prospects of future teachers towards cultural diversity (p.102).

Finally, our study shows significant variations in teachers' perceptions according to the subjects they specialise in. This is an aspect which is highlighted by Hinojosa and López (2018). In our study, perceptions which are more favourable to the inclusion of Roma students are associated with those teachers who specialise in religion and the arts. These differences also invite us to explore other variables which could affect teachers' perceptions of, and commitment to, the inclusion of cultural diversity in schools. They include personal and professional biographies, ideology, religion, immersion in culturally diverse contexts, contact/experiences with diverse people and access to concrete testimonies. From this perspective authors like Waddell (2011) and Necochea (2018), highlight the positive impact of immersion experiences, as well as access to reliable racial testimonies relating to the development of educational perspectives and attitudes which are more favourable to cultural diversity. According to Sharma (2020) teacher education programmes, which incorporate immersion experiences in diverse schools abroad, help to increase teachers' capacity for critical reflection. Moreover, they change their perceptions of diversity and develop new competencies aimed at a more culturally responsive classroom practice.

In line with the above, and taking into account the perceptions of the teachers involved in this research and the variables that determine the existence of significant differences between them, we conclude that the professional profile of teachers working with culturally heterogeneous students (in our case Roma students) is related to the type of school, the teachers' gender, the level of education which they teach and their speciality subject/s. This study shows that the profile of teachers, who are more supportive of cultural diversity, and working with Roma students in the city of Messina, corresponds to female primary school teachers specialising in the arts and religion. These are, precisely, the teachers who work in School$_2$, School$_4$ and School$_3$. However, it would be advisable to extend this type of study to other contexts in order to compare the results.

In summary, and keeping in mind that multiculturalism is a global phenomenon requiring the commitment of teachers and schools worldwide, the results of this study reveal the need to:
1.   seriously focus on teachers' perceptions of cultural diversity in compulsory education, and especially those teachers working in secondary education

2.   extend and encourage commitment to the development of inclusive practices for teachers engaged in all educational levels and specialities, together with new teacher training proposals aimed at being more receptive to the cultural diversity of students.

3.   include, in future studies, the analysis of organisational and functional aspects of the institutional cultures of primary and secondary schools.

These measures would facilitate the transition from an exclusive school culture to an inclusive school culture, as proposed by Angelides and Antoniou (2012) and Szeto and Cheng (2018). They would also contribute to the shaping of teachers' more inclusive professional identities (Tangen & Beutel, 2017; Hinojosa & López, 2018) and would help to break down some of the barriers that hamper the inclusion of Roma students in schools (Cárdenas-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Mazi, 2020).

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