Managing Religion Situations in the Workplace: Roles of a Think Tank for Sharing and Implementing Management tools

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Religion is gaining prominence as a workplace issue in France. It is a sensitive question for human resources (HR) departments looking for ways to develop management tools for religion in the workplace. In this article, we first reply to this question by drawing on key concepts from the literature. It also offers an analysis of data collected during the regular meeting of a think tank focused on the religious diversity subjects in the workplace. This methodology proved to be essential for collecting new data from a large number of companies (26) on this subject, as French companies are often reluctant to talk about this issue publicly. Applied to these data, these concepts allow us to identify the specificities of the design process of the management systems of religious events in these companies. These tools are then being introduced gradually, with care, to managers who have previously been trained and strongly supported by management. This work allows to develop knowledge on the specificities of the different means to develop a management system to address religious facts in French companies.

Introduction

In the workplace context, employees may choose either to reveal their religious identity, with varying degrees of expression and demands (Hicks, 2003; King et al., 2009), to hide it or even "passing" it (Clair et al., 2005), due to perceived risks (Exline & Bright, 2011; Gebert et al., 2014). Each employee negotiates with their own various identities (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2006). They may decide to not reveal their beliefs, something that may stigmatise them (Ahmad et al., 2018), and be identified as atheist or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, to exhibit radicalised behaviours (Honoré, 2016; de Maison Rouge, 2017). For employers, this means a range of different issues they may potentially have to manage, from personal requests (e.g. absences for religious holidays, prayer time) to transgressive behaviour (e.g. refusing to shake hands or take orders) (OFRE,[1] 2019). For a long time, such issues were not disclosed as they were considered as taboo (Galindo & Surply, 2010), particularly in the context of France's strict separation between Church and State (principle of *laïcité*[2]) and employers' aversion to interfere in the private lives of their employees. Issues of religion in the workplace were therefore relegated to the part of the diversity iceberg that remains below the waterline, typically with little management interventions (Cui et al., 2015).

But workplaces have had to respond to these issues. According to the most recent (2019) survey by France's Observatory on Religion in the Workplace (OFRE),[3] more than 70% of employers surveyed reported having had to manage religious issues either regularly or occasionally in the past year, compared to 44% in 2014. While still a sensitive area (Chan-Serafin, Brief & George, 2013), more than half of such situations involving religious expression by an employee required management intervention in 2019 (compared to a

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[1] For the most recent version (in French): www.institutmontaigne. org/publications/religion-au-travail-croire-au-dialogue-barometre-du-fait-religieux-en-entreprise-2019

[2] We decided to keep in this text the principle of *laïcité*, a specific France state of secularism.

[3] *Observatoire du fait religieux en entreprise*

quarter in 2014, according to the OFRE). This topic has become a societal issue and, at the same time, is one of the most sensitive areas of HR management, where it can be tricky to assess the situation and to move towards action (Renzetti & Lee, 1993; Condomines & Hennequin, 2013).

The question addressed by this paper is: "How can management tools be designed to help manage religion in the workplace in France?" We answer this question by drawing on key concepts from the literature on management tools that has been developed in France since the early 1980s. We use this literature framework to analyse processes used to design management tools for religious issues as presented during the monthly meetings of a think tank, which for three years gathered representatives from large public and private employers operating in France. We played a central role in facilitating the group, which allowed us to collect data from numerous workplaces (26 organisations) on a sensitive topic that most employers are still reluctant to discuss publicly (Marinos, 2018). This approach is that of a generative case study (Siggelkow, 2007), producing knowledge both on how religious issues are managed and on the management tools used.

How managing religion in the workplace has evolved in France?

The literature reveals the complexity and diversity of approaches to managing religion in the workplace. It is increasingly less concerned with analysing the question of "why (is this an issue)?" (Galindo & Surply, 2010) or "what shape does it take?" (Vickers, 2015), focusing more on the question of "how (to address the issue)?" (Syed et al., 2018). The challenge for organisations and researchers today is therefore learning how to handle these types of management situations.

A significant shift in workplace practices and in the literature describing them

A literature review reveals that following an initial phase of shock, organisations gradually begin to form a structured response. We have identified four phases:

Phase 1 – Shock

Religion in the workplace is not a new phenomenon (Galindo & Surply, 2010). However, the first decade of the 2000s marked a turning point (Honoré, Galindo & Zannad, 2019). Increasingly, employees were seeking recognition of their overall identity, including practices related to their religious beliefs (King et al., 2009). Employers were initially unsettled by such expectations. While they encouraged their employees to be more open to their own identity, as part of growing work/life balance policies, they were now witnessing a new set of expectations, not only relating to their employees' private lives (*forum internum*), but also visible through certain practices (*forum externum*). This meant more and more employees were no longer concealing their faith or religious beliefs (Guillet & Brasseur, 2019), as a way to balance or, at the extreme end of things, to merge their identities.

The initial reaction of employers is often to bypass or ignore such issues. Diversity representatives report being "powerless" or "paralysed" in their ability to respond to them (Galindo & Surply, 2010). Kirton & Greene (2015, p. 3) also point out that although preventive measures exist particularly in western countries to eliminate religious discrimination, organisations usually take a less proactive approach to addressing such issues. While managers are initially encouraged to resolve issues on a case-by-case basis (Banon & Chanlat, 2014), this eventually gives way to a need for a standardised response.

Phase 2 – Turning to legislation

After the shock phase, many employers (primarily large organisations) decide to search laws to help them address religion in the workplace. Since the principle of separation of Church and State does not concern the private sector, there are three legal principles on which private-sector companies can base their policies. The first is to guarantee their employees' freedom to hold or not hold religious beliefs (according to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen [1789] and Article L.1121-1 of France's Labour Code). Employers must also allow their employees to manifest their religion or beliefs (Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights). They must also ensure that employees receive equal treatment (Article 1 of the French Constitution [1958] and Directive 78/2000/EC) and are not discriminated against for their beliefs (Article L.1132-1 of the Labour Code). However, in searching for a legislative basis for their actions, employers find that there are grey areas. How, for example, can they guarantee the freedoms of some individuals while still ensuring equal treatment for all in the workplace?

Phase 3 – Producing best practice guides for employers

Faced with these legal uncertainties, organisations began seeking out other resources (Pastor, 2016). The early 2000s saw the development of corporate guidelines in the United States. Cash & Gray (2000), for example, list the factors that employers should consider for determining the most effective managerial response to requests for religious accommodations. In France, in a decision of 04/06/09, the HALDE (Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination Commission[4]), ruled that an employee's freedom of religion and belief ends at the point where it constitutes misuse of the right of expression, proselytising or an act of pressure toward other employees. It ensures the organisation is able to operate effectively (an expression of religion must not hinder the performance of work, how work is structured or the organisation's business interests), preventing any kind of proselytising and protecting the health and safety of employees. There are also organisations that produce guides to address employers' concerns[5]. Such guidance, not produced in-house by the employer but by non-profit or academic third parties, helps

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[4] Now named *Défenseur des droits* "the Defender of Rights"

[5] An example: "Comment gérer la diversité religieuse en entreprise", a guide on managing religious diversity in the workplace published by non-profit organisation IMS-Entreprendre pour la Cité, 15 May 2009.

clarify the issues surrounding religion in the workplace and contextualises the response to these issues. However, there is no way to ensure that all managers have access to these resources or the appropriate approaches to respond to their employees or colleagues.

Phase 4 – Producing in-house management rules
Faced with a wide range of questions and a need to disseminate best practices throughout the organisation, employers have increasingly begun formalising their practices and responses by designing management tools (Cintas et al., 2013; Galindo & Zannad, 2014). This results in each organisation producing its own in-house guidance, which is developed and structured according to its own criteria (Chan-Serafin et al., 2013). The objective of these new management rules is to influence how employees are governed, to attempt to manage the areas of freedom and autonomy they make for themselves (Reynaud, 1988, p. 10). Often, religion-specific guides are developed that include explanations on legal concepts and practical examples with FAQs on managing religious situations (Ludlum, 2016). Employers also use a range of other methods, such as training (Gaillard & Jolivet, 2019), to educate as many people as possible about such issues and how to respond to them.

The progress made by organisations on the sensitive issue of religion in the workplace has been a step by step process. Many large organisations have gone from a passive stance to an active one, deciding to produce their own management rules and introducing new management tools.

The literature on management tools
Building on the work of Girin (1981) and Berry (1983), a robust literature has been developed, particularly in France, on management tools. There are concepts from the literature that are particularly useful for offering solutions to employers looking to design management tools for religious issues.

The literature defines management tools as a formalisation of structured action (Moisdon, 1997, p. 7) and shows that they are social constructs (Gilbert, 1998; Akrich et al., 2006). This concept is important; due to their technical nature, management tools are often perceived by those who use them in workplaces as "given" (Lorino, 2005). Specifically, users assume these tools must be used as it is, that there is no other form they could possibly take and that they cannot be altered. This point is illustrated by Bayart (1995). In tracing the history of the concept of "quality" in industry, the author shows that what we intuitively believe to be given, immutable and unquestionable (a product is either of good quality or it is not) is actually the result of a real history, a social construct, something that takes time and involves developing tools and knowledge (including, specifically, a theory of statistical control). Research on management tools has shown this "representationalist" perception of management tools, in which they are considered to be an accurate reflection of an operational reality, is not an appropriate conceptualisation of management tools (Lorino, 2018). On the contrary, such tools are

social constructs, the result of complex interactions between stakeholders with different interests (Chiapello & Gilbert, 2013). Because of this, the final form of any tool is not given and could have ended up being very different. But the final form chosen for a management tool causes the swarm of social conditions influencing its design to disappear (Woolgar & Latour, 1988; Latour, 1992; Dreveton, 2010).

This concept is crucial for devising management tools for issues of religion, as it indicates that their design is not only based on the aforementioned legal framework, but is also influenced by the thought processes of individuals and by the specific context of organisations. The design of such tools should therefore be analysed as a true managerial act, through which different coalitions of stakeholders within an organisation collectively reach a compromise on how to manage religious issues.

The literature also shows that management tools can take a wide variety of forms (memos, guides, formal or informal reward/punishment systems, etc.) (Brivot & Gendron, 2011). This highlights the importance of not limiting analysis to a single type of management tools (Rabardel, 1995; Rabardel & Bourmaud, 2003). By looking at only the technical aspects of a single tool, the analysis will overlook what constitutes the essence of a management tool (Hatchuel & Weil, 1992; Labatut et al., 2011). The literature therefore shows that it is necessary to look at management tools, that some researchers call management "frameworks", in other words the complex arrangements of multiple human and non-human components, with stakeholders and management tools given equal consideration (Boussard & Maugeri, 2003; Akrich et al., 2006). Management "frameworks" should therefore be thought of as being central to interactions between individuals, their work and the organisation (Rabardel & Bourmaud, 2003).

Lastly, the literature highlights the importance of analysing how management tools are used and how they evolve. In this respect, the concept of assimilation plays a central role (De Vaujany, 2006). Management tools are never employed in the exact way their designers envisioned (Aggeri & Labatut, 2010). While sometimes used as designed, in most cases these tools are not used as their designers initially planned (Grimand, 2012). Uses not considered by the original designers are therefore central to the assimilation process. Such uses are so common that, as a feedback effect, they often contribute to transforming the management tool itself (Oiry, 2011).

In summary, the literature on management tools that has been developed in France since the 1980s offers concepts that we consider to be particularly useful for identifying how to design management tools for religious issues in the workplace. Specifically, it proposes considering management tools:

• as complex arrangements (and not only isolated management tools)
• co-developed by multiple stakeholders in the workplace
• designed to address specific workplace challenges
• that undergo a transformation over the long term.

Research study design

Our methodology is that of a generative case study (Siggelkow, 2007). The case study approach enabled us not only to analyse our data using the concepts found in the literature on management tools, but also to add to this literature, as well as to the literature on religion in the workplace. Although it is a highly topical issue, it remains a sensitive subject (Chan-Serafin, Brief & George, 2013) and employers are still reluctant to speak up about the challenges they face, and allow researchers to study their practices. To overcome this difficulty and collect a large number of case studies, we conducted an action research study (David, 2001), facilitating think tank meetings over a three-year period.

Think tank as data collection method

A group of managers can be likened to a network of organisations: a group of stakeholders seeking to establish and maintain relationships with each other, but without any kind of official organising authority (Podolny & Page, 1998). There are numerous benefits to be gained from this type of forum for collaboration or discussion (Marinos, 2018). Tacit knowledge is developed as information and experiences are shared, which makes organisations more inclined to adopt innovative solutions (Bevort, 2006, in Marinos, 2018). It is an opportunity for group members to build up their social capital; the group allows them to solidify their relationships and occupy a position at the crossroads between their own organisation, other organisations and their broader environment. These group members belong to an intellectual community (Cucchi, 1999; Polge, 2009) organised around a mutual commitment (there is reciprocity in giving one's time for something in return), a joint undertaking (there is a structure) and shared resources (such as resources for communicating) (Marinos, 2018, p. 124).

Our data were collected during a think tank meetings, dedicated to sharing information and practices on the issue of religion. The objective of this group is consistent with that of other groups: the members work in different fields in different organisations, and the knowledge that is produced gives rise to tools that can be operationalised as opposed to directly operational best practices (Polge, 2009, p. 229). The group met once a month over three – to five – month periods from 2016 to 2019, bringing together HR managers, diversity managers, legal executives and security executives (Table 1).

As shown in the table, the group's members were mainly large French organisations (public undertakings, private companies and EPICs[(6)]). Each meeting included presentations by researchers and the group's scientific lead, as well as presentations by managers (from both member and non-member organisations).

Role of the researcher/facilitator

The challenge for the researcher was in serving both as a source of knowledge and perspective and as facilitator of the discussions. Over time, the interactions and documents collected from the meetings became sufficiently valuable to be useful for research purposes. The researcher guided interactions between group members without being forced to intervene for each of the organisations represented. Our role could therefore be described as participant observation, a research method involving situations where the researcher is a member of the social community he is observing (Platt, 1983, in Berger-Douce, 2010, p. 135). It involves both participating in discussions and observing the data that is being collected through the lens of a researcher. As a method, it was useful for gaining access to highly confidential information on the taboo subject of religion in the workplace, and for achieving a rare level of understanding and discussion afforded by a situation where the interactions are not originally designed to be a research opportunity (Crespo-Febvay & Loubès, 2019, p. 85). The quality of the data is a clear testament of the trust that the group members placed in the researcher, who self-identified as such.

[(6)] Établissements publics à caractère industriel et commercial (public organisations of an industrial and commercial nature)

Year	Number of meetings	Members	Number of presentations by researchers	Number of presentations by employer representatives
2016	5	ADP, Atlantic, Bouygues, CDC, Covea, EDF, Egide, Danone, MMA, Michelin, Orange, Pôle Emploi, RTE, SNCF, Société Générale, Veolia	9	5
2017	3	Atlantic, BPCE, CDC, Covea, Leroy Merlin, Orange, RATP, RTE, Safran, SEB, SNCF, Veolia	5	5
2017	1	Open meeting (group members and other organisations)	2	-
2019	3	BPCE, Enedis, Essilor, Française des Jeux, Pôle Emploi, Leroy Merlin, Orano, RATP, RTE, Safran, Total	4	5

Table 1: Group meetings and members

Data collected

We used our privileged position as scientific lead and facilitator of the group's various sessions to collect a variety of data **(Table 2)**. We conducted interviews with managers in advance of their presentations (ranging from 30 minutes to 2.5 hours). Detailed notes were taken during each session, supplemented by recordings of some discussions and minutes of the sessions taken by a third party. Documents (e.g. PowerPoint slides, guides, charters) were also collected at these sessions.

Using the step-by-step thematic analysis described by Braun & Clarke (2006), we first sought to familiarise ourselves with the range of research materials. To do this, we independently reviewed each type of data that had been collected, in order to begin identifying key concepts and ideas.

From this detailed review, we identified the main themes of our analysis: triggers, stakeholders, steps in the process, durations, tools introduced, barriers, levers, adjustments made to management tools. Next we conducted:

• Vertical thematic analyses, where each type of data was divided into different themes (primary, secondary, emerging),
• Horizontal thematic analyses, where data on each theme was reconciled, from which we were gradually able to triangulate the data.

We found this "bricolage" approach to data analysis, described by Dumez (2016), to be necessary to preserve the variety of the data and continue working toward reconciling the data. It was never a matter of trying to idealise the processes, but of recognising potential biases (Creswell, 2013) and identifying incidents or outliers (Bisel & Barge, 2011) that disrupt the homogeneity of the organisations' approaches.

Results

The data collected from the think tank reveals both the diversity of issues being addressed by the organisations and their gradual progression towards designing more "systemic" management tools.

Employers compelled to think about management tools

Confirming what has long been documented in the literature, the French organisations participating in the think tank adopted reactive attitudes with regards to the situations encountered on these religious issues. Some had joined the group as a way to take action ("*We're looking for a firm position on the matter*").[7] However, most organisations had already undertaken a process of developing rules in response to three types of events:

• Alignment with legislation: For public employers, there is sometimes the need to clarify the scope and application of the principle of laïcité. The drafting of a neutrality clause can therefore open the door to broader conversations on how to enforce such a clause, instigating a process of designing applicable tools.

• Integration as part of a broader inclusivity initiative: Many employers also have more wide-ranging diversity policies, in which religious diversity is just one component. For example, one organisation has a diversity and inclusion policy with five priorities, oneof them is on the origins divided into sub-topics: minorities, interculturality and religion. The issue of religion is therefore introduced as part of other rules put in place, and becomes a subject addressed by management rules.

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[7] All quotations from participating organisations have been translated from French. For confidentiality reasons, we are unable to attribute quotations to specific organisations (refer to the methodology table for the full list of participants).

Year	Type of data collected
2016	5 semi-structured interviews in preparation for group sessions Preparatory questionnaire on actions implemented to manage religion in the workplace (11 responses) 5 sets of minutes from work sessions 4 guides/charters 3 PowerPoint presentations on measures introduced by organisations Audio recordings of discussion sessions Notes taken during every session
2017	5 semi-structured interviews in preparation for group sessions 5 PowerPoint presentations on measures introduced by organisations 2 guides/charters Audio recordings of discussion sessions 4 sets of minutes from work sessions Notes taken during every session
2019	5 semi-structured interviews in preparation for group sessions 4 PowerPoint presentations on measures introduced by organisations 2 guides/charters 3 sets of minutes from work sessions Notes taken during every session

Table 2: Data collected for the research study

• In response to an event: For some employers, the instigator is a significant event. At one organisation, a secret prayer room was found at the head office and HR management wanted to "come on strong". At another, an employee was photographed in his uniform praying next to their vehicle. Sometimes an employer's reaction is the result of a succession of events, none necessarily significant in themselves, but that cause religion to be identified as a management issue. Another reason cited for developing a management tool is feedback from the field, most often in the form of questions. It is therefore a matter of shifting away from making calls for "common sense" or "peaceful coexistence" and towards managing this type of organisational situation. The challenge is to "provide managers with keys to understanding" that are shared by all.

Management tools for religious issues are therefore often introduced either in response to a context that is conducive to this type of discussion, or where a swift response is expected. For others, participating in the group was also a way to learn more about the topic and start to think about tools they might want to introduce if they were to initiate such a process.

Tools that include training and a structured rollout plan

For these organisations, there are three complementary dimensions that went into the design of their management tool.

Tools, the central components of the process

In searching for a way to manage the situation, some employers opt to produce their own guidance. The aim is to equip managers to handle situations (*"to give managers the key to understanding"). Depending on the situation, they may decide to draft a charter or guide or adopt an existing guide ("during the training, we handed out packages including a guide developed by the Ministry of Labour").* In all cases, these management resources include explanations of legal concepts and practical examples for direct managers. A formalised tool is therefore deemed necessary to outline the policies and practices currently in effect and those to be adopted in the future. These tools are seen as a way to ensure a standardised and consistent response, and to engage in discussions around shared concepts, particularly legal guidance *("It's a tool for discussions with employees").* These tools are an internal indication that rules and responses exist and that everyone is expected to be familiar with them. They are central to all of the processes undertaken on this issue. However, they are non-binding and do not have any legal value (it is about "*producing a best practices guide in response to requests from managers*"). In rare cases, charters are presented as more binding on employees ("*Everyone has to sign it*").

Training perceived as essential

All organisations of the group made training central to their process. In-person sessions were used to help managers understand the context (namely the legal context) of these workplace situations, to conduct role-playing exercises or to provide information about sensitive topics such as radicalisation ("*It creates meaning, provides a frame of reference*"). Some training was also provided online, via educational games or short videos on specific topics (e.g. *laïcité*). During the training, direct stakeholders are able to speak openly about this sensitive subject ("*People start opening up as the day goes on*"), to discover and familiarise themselves with the tools, and to sometimes bring up cases that are not known to management. Training sessions are also spaces for managers to talk to other managers, to help them feel less alone in handling these situations.

Structured rollout plan

The methods used to disseminate the tools vary from organisation to organisation. At one, physical copies are handed out at the end of a training session ("*You have to complete the day of training to get the guide*"), another publishes them on the workplace intranet ("*Buried 15 clicks deep*") and another limits distribution to diversity and HR managers ("*Just in case*"). To help users grasp the content of the tools, some employers use a question/answer game or multiple-choice quiz. In most organisations, there are phases to the rollout plan. For example, one organisation planned to roll out the tools to managers and HR in an initial phase, with a second rollout (still to be determined) "*Possibly organisation-wide or broader*". In some organisations, distributing the tools is also optional ("*Guides are distributed as managers see fit; there's no obligation*"). The group members seemed to be more in favour of distributing the tools "naturally" rather than on a "forced schedule" ("*People are talking about the training... word is spreading*").

Using the example of Organisation A, we can see how these three dimensions can be combined in practice.

> **Box 1: Example of a management tool introduced by Organisation A**
>
> 1. A guide on "coexisting in diversity" is put together by a working group involving field workers. The guide includes case studies and a managerial decision-making tool.
>
> 2. The guide is distributed during rollout meetings to all on-site employees.
>
> 3. Training is delivered to all stakeholders, along with a card game to help employees understand the different types of stakeholders and reactions in the organisation.
>
> 4. Diversity managers are appointed and receive training ("*The representatives pass on messages and, in the event of an incident, encourage the person to speak with the other person involved instead of leaving the situation unresolved*").

Features of the tools

The approach taken to develop these tools can be described as cautious and "inclusive":

Long implementation period

The organisations took their time (between 1 and 2.5 years) between taking the first step and rolling out the management tool. It was a process, often described as a succession of key steps (e.g. presenting to management, putting together working groups, delivering the first training workshops). Notably, in most cases, the tools that ended up being introduced were tweaked or even redesigned after a few months or years.

As shown in the timeline above, Organisation E took several years to roll out its framework.

This is a prime example of a management tool that was introduced gradually over time involving different versions. Other organisations also reworked their tools (mainly updating guides), but above all they reviewed their entire process by involving additional stakeholders and making a communication plan for the rollout and update.

Caution taken by senior management

Throughout the process, some group members reported encountering resistance, or even outright rejection, from management at first (from a diversity manager: "*The president initially vetoed it, saying: 'We're not going to do it that way', and then they forced us to start by interviewing the organisation's 100 managers in France and he told us: 'Start at the top'*"). It is clear that even if requests are coming from the field, the process is initiated by management, in a top-down approach, with the objective of ensuring consistency but also protecting the organisation's reputation, since some see it as a strategic issue ("*In our organisation, it's a way of affirming that we have values*"). This sense of caution results in having to "*weigh every word*" and accept that measures will be carried out "*step by step*". Managers position themselves as the "owners" of the process and requires approval over every step of the development process. Reactions to management making it a strategic issue are mixed: sometimes it speeds up the process ("*The issue is led by senior management in order to attach importance to it*"); other times it slows things down due to requests for additional clarification.

Co-development by a wide range of stakeholders

In all the organisations, the process of introducing a management tool involved a variety of stakeholders, which on the one hand ensures a diversity of viewpoints
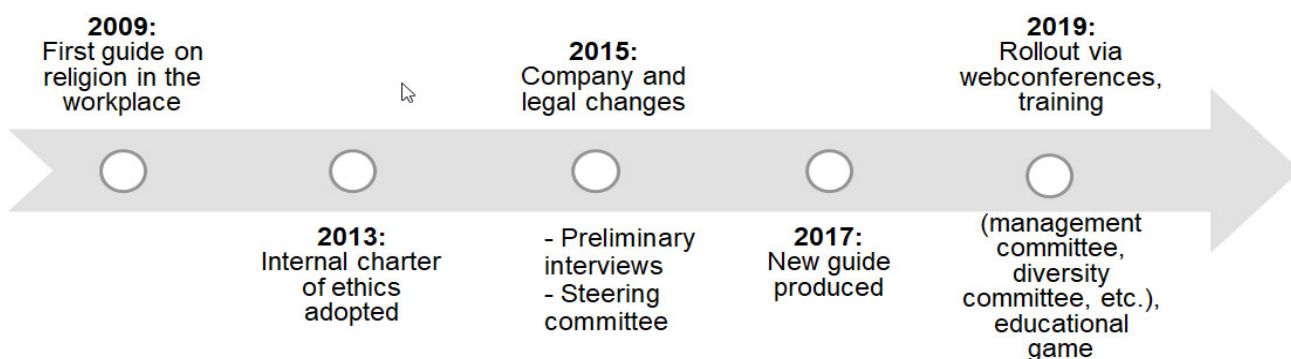

FIGURE 1: A TOOL INTRODUCED OVER TIME IN ORGANISATION E

BOX 2: KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MANAGEMENT TOOL INTRODUCED BY ORGANISATION E

Although the first version was considered to be "*rather weak compared to the organisation's position*", it was a way to begin the process and plan for future changes.

1. To fine-tune the new approach, interviews were conducted with business line managers to identify situations, two field visits were organised, meetings were held with researchers, etc.

2. A steering committee (comprising innovation, diversity and job performance units, managers from the business lines and the ethics, security and business intelligence functions) then tackled the more detail-oriented task of reworking the content for the new version of the guide, which was more focused on "*case studies and managerial decision-making tools*". This enabled the organisation to transition from a stance where it is "*focused solely on the employee making the request*" to one where the organisation is asking questions: "*What are the employer's rights vis-à-vis the employee? And what are the employee's obligations to the employer?*" (diversity managers).

3. Unlike with the first version, a series of activities were planned: before being rolled out, the guide was reviewed and presented to various stakeholders (selected managers, top management, HR, legal affairs, unions, etc.).

4. The rollout strategy included training, educational games, etc. to allow stakeholders to "*assimilate*" the tools.

5. Long-term monitoring and steering activities were planned, via a network of diversity and business line managers and the ethics and compliance department, to ensure consistency in the organisation's responses and to identify any potential issues that arise.

on the issue, but on the other hand inevitably slows down the process. Some stakeholders are considered "*obvious*" drivers of the process. Diversity managers are often on the front line, as initiators, sponsors and owners of these tools. They work in collaboration with other functions in the organisation ("*The process was initiated by the group's HR management in conjunction with managers from diversity, legal, ethics and security*"). A variety of stakeholders, with different practices and timelines, are therefore involved in the process, sometimes in the form of a project group devoted to producing tools or at least responses to the most common situations ("*We put together a working group on the issue of how to respond to a female employee wearing a headscarf*"). Unions also play different roles: as a driving force in one organisation ("*You didn't go far enough, you could have even been more strict*"), as collaborators in some ("*The charter was co-written with the unions*", "*The unions were receptive to finding solutions together*"), or followers in others ("*The unions have kept a low profile*"), but very rarely do they interfere.

Box 3: Example of a co-development approach between stakeholders in Organisation C

1. The state of play of the situations needing to be addressed : by diversity managers.

2. A survey was sent to all employees and managers.

3. A project group (14 people) was put together to conduct awareness-raising activities and share the results of the survey.

4. The project group produced a set of recommendations.

5. The project group produced a guide.

Taking caution and involving a variety of stakeholders at different stages slows down the process, sometimes even impeding it or resulting in a change of plans. In all cases, the organisations proceeded cautiously in the face of these issues and did not hesitate to slow down the project to make it as secure as possible. The time taken to develop the tool allowed them to consider how practices might work together as part of the process.

Country-specific tools
These management tools are often presented as being specific to France. Country-level differences are used to justify limiting tools to national level ("*We're being extremely cautious in terms of adopting a global perspective*", "*There is no way to have a one-size-fits-all policy; France is a special case in this area*"). The management tools therefore do not concern and are not used in other contexts, for example in the United States, where "*Religion is everywhere*", or in countries where "*Women wear headscarves and there is no issue with it*". However, many of these organisations also mentioned how France is seen as an "*example*" ("*France's position on the issue has attracted international attention*").

Tools that address managers' challenges
"Before, managers were on their own. Now they have a tool for having discussions" or "For managing discomfort"; "Information is being provided"; "The act of clarifying a rule has a big impact". These frameworks help employers produce clear and consistent responses ("There's consistency in our responses") and extricate themselves from contentious and/or risky situations for the organisation's image ("It helped us defuse the issue"; "We've put up firewalls"). In this context, the ultimate objective is "getting along", "working well together" or "peaceful coexistence", expressions widely used in the think tank to consider the issues at stake in the ongoing process. However, it should be emphasised that the aim is not to arrive at an ideal response, but rather a managerial response that is in line with legal principles and the culture of the organisation.

Discussion

Our analysis of the data using the concepts provided by the literature on management frameworks has yielded a number of theoretical and managerial insights.

Theoretical insights
While many studies point to the pervasiveness of "management-itis", i.e. the tendency to constantly and rapidly develop new tools, which are not always appropriate in relation to managers' practices (Detchessahart & Journé, 2007), our data shows that, on the issue of religion in the workplace, organisations have demonstrated what might be called a "model" approach to designing their management tools. Our data show that organisations take their time, make adjustments to their tools, develop sophisticated process combining different tools, and think through training and communication plans. These are all the features of polyphonic change management (Pichault, 2013). Organisations then complain of resistance to change (Bareil, 2009) or tools that do not produce the anticipated effects and are quickly abandoned (Chiapello & Gilbert, 2013). Faced with sensitive HR management issues (Renzetti & Lee, 1993; Condomines & Hennequin, 2013), it appears that organisations are rediscovering the importance of these aspects of polyphonic management: as part of a long-term process, they take a cautious approach and attach importance to their tools by involving as many stakeholders as possible. The caution taken by organisations in developing policies on sensitive HR topics appears to be a best practice that should possibly be followed in all areas of HR management.

Our data also show a number of cases of "successful" incentive-based (as opposed to restriction-based) management tools. These results show that management tools, developed with the abovementioned features in mind, do not need to adopt a reward/punishment model to be used and yield results in organisations. To draw a parallel with research on variable compensation (Landry et al., 2017), it appears that management tools for religious issues should be "informational" rather than "controlling". The methods expected by the organisation for managing religion in the workplace should therefore be further developed after the fact as opposed to being imposed as-is from the outset.

Our work therefore proposes an alternative perspective: a positive perspective that showcases "model management tools" that have been introduced by organisations, in contrast to the majority of the literature on managing religion in the workplace, which focuses on the difficulties that are encountered, as recently pointed out by Miller (2020).[8] Like Miller, without denying the "conflictual forces" on the issue, we demonstrate how management frameworks can support a "faith-friendly" approach (Miller & Ewest, 2015) or an accommodation-based approach (Galindo & Zannad, 2014), focusing on common guidelines for action, even though the topic of religion is considered to be highly contextualised (Honoré et al., 2019).

This research also repositions management tools as central to diversity initiatives. In this way, it differs from many studies centred on policies introduced by organisations and their related issues, or on individual expressions and specific features of diversity (Héliot et al., 2020). It falls somewhere in between, shedding light on practices and processes effectively introduced in organisations. It places these actions within an emerging approach for managing diversity identified by Thomas and Ely (1996) which they call the "learning-and-effectiveness" paradigm. The challenge faced by organisations does indeed correspond to this new approach: wanting to both recognise and value employees' differences, as part of a shared learning effort. Our research therefore departs from the diversity management approaches traditionally used in the first two paradigms identified by Thomas and Ely, which are based on a normative perspective (where all individuals are held to a common standard) and a differentiating perspective (where individuals are recognised for their differences). Our results, which focus on articulation of several management tools (as opposed to isolated tools) and the caution taken in designing them, present an opportunity to provide real substance for this new and inclusive approach to diversity.

Managerial insights

Our research offers pragmatic guidance for organisations looking to introduce or expand measures for managing religious diversity in the workplace. It encourages thinking systemically about the approach, expanding on a perspective that is often focused on a single tool (a guide) and driven by a copy-paste impulse. It also highlights the need to involve stakeholders from across the organisation: not only senior management, to help attach importance to the initiative, but also all managers and employees, to ensure they fully assimilate the tool. While diversity initiatives often follow a top-down approach (Thomas & Ely, 1996), our research highlights the role of a bottom-up approach, in order to understand the expectations of managers, and employees more broadly, and to get their feedback on the tool after it is introduced. It also confirms that processes should be guided by caution, even when that means delays if it seems the tool is not meeting the needs of all stakeholders. Lastly, our research shows

the value of a think tank for employers, as a source of finding and sharing improvements, both formal and informal, and of encouraging action between, over and above the information they set out looking for.

Future research directions

Like all research studies, our analysis has its limitations, which also present avenues for future research. Specifically, this study is based on data collected during group meetings from discussions between members of organisations that had already introduced tools or were beginning to do so. These members therefore had a benchmark and benefited from each other's lessons learned, which led them to adopt the systemic and cautious approach described above. For a future study, it would be interesting to analyse management frameworks introduced by other organisations, not belonging to this group, with different features, such as small businesses or mid-sized companies. Would they take the same type of approach to this sensitive issue? The same question could be put to organisations operating in other countries, namely English-speaking countries, where historical, legal and cultural differences likely influence how religion is managed in the workplace (Honoré et al., 2019).

It would also be interesting to study the application of these methods to other aspects of diversity. Policies and practices have been introduced for visible aspects of diversity (gender, age, disability) and then applied to other invisible aspects (Cui et al., 2015). Could management of religious diversity initiate a reverse process, providing a renewed perspective of approaches that have already been used for other types of diversity?

Finally, the future of these processes is a subject for investigation. The organisations in our sample went beyond the "emerging learning" described by Galindo & Surply (2013). With these management frameworks, they entered into an integration phase, which allowed them to move towards a shared understanding of the subject internally and towards coordination through mutual adjustment. It would be interesting to see how they could reach the final step of the learning process: institutionalisation (Crossan et al., 1999), or the implementation of routines and repeated actions. That said, the question is whether the organisations want to systematise their responses on an issue as sensitive and unpredictable as religion in the workplace.

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[8] According to Miller (2020), religion in the workplace is divisive and leads to harassment, proselytising and quid pro quos, and accommodations are disruptive to the work environment.

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