

Chapter 1

Teaching Tolerance in a Globalized World: An Introduction



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Abstract The increasing diversity of student populations is a global educational trend. The relatively recent rapid influx of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, coupled with issues of increasing intolerance, social exclusion and feelings of alienation, and extremism among young people, are posing complex challenges for educational systems around the world. Education has a key role to play in preparing future generations to address these problems and ensuring that young people acquire the social, civic, and intercultural competences needed for active and successful participation in society. This book presents five empirical studies, designed to examine differing factors and conditions that may help schools and teachers in their endeavors to promote tolerance in a globalized world. The 2009 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) provided the research data. This introductory chapter describes the overall theoretical framework, discusses key constructs, and outlines the aims guiding the five studies, concluding with an overview of all chapters.

Keywords Diversity • Egalitarian attitudes • International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) • International large-scale assessments
Tolerance

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1.1 Introduction

Diversity in education is no longer a phenomenon specific to restricted cultural contexts. In contemporary times, increasing diversity¹ of student populations is a global educational trend (Hastedt 2016; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2015). The discourses on diversity in educational settings are mainly focused on the relatively recent rapid influx of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, coupled with issues of increasing intolerance, social exclusion and feelings of alienation and extremism among young people. Nevertheless, these sources of difference intersect with other dimensions and identities such as gender, socioeconomic status, religion, disability and sexual orientation, creating complex challenges for schooling.

Educational systems are often overwhelmed by issues of equality and the inclusion of diverse populations, while simultaneously striving to achieve excellence and prepare young people for active and efficient participation in the labor market and society. Many policy actions tend to focus primarily on topics such as enhancing the academic outcomes of immigrant students, mainstream language acquisition or ethnic mixing. Less attention is being paid to curricular aims and activities directed at creating inclusive classrooms that can embrace diversity and nurture attitudes of mutual tolerance among youth. This is only recently becoming the focus of attention within educational practice.

Holding attitudes of tolerance toward other groups is a fundamental feature of a mature citizenship in democratic societies (Almond and Verba 1963; Sherrod and Lauckhardt 2009). Yet tolerance is certainly a controversial, multifaceted and complex concept (Forst 2003; Green et al. 2006; Mutz 2001; Van Driel et al. 2016). While in a broad sense, tolerance can be understood as respect, acceptance and appreciation of diversity (Unesco 1995; Van Driel et al. 2016), in educational settings, tolerance is often conceptualized in relation to civic and intercultural competences and in terms of positive attitudes toward equal rights for different groups (Green et al. 2006).

Attitudes of tolerance may take various forms, depending on their underlying conceptualization and the groups involved. Weldon (2006), for example, distinguished between political and social tolerance (see also Quintelier and Dejaeghere 2008). Political tolerance concerns granting democratic and political rights to different groups in society while social tolerance refers more to the evaluation of direct contact with people from out-groups (e.g. inter-ethnic friendships). Other scholars (Forst 2003; Green et al. 2006; Mutz 2001) draw attention to the distinction between different types of tolerance according to the differing contexts and the “subjects of toleration”. In this respect, individuals may experience and exhibit attitudes of tolerance concerning a wide range of groups based on, among other factors, ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, and lifestyle choices.

¹In this publication we focus primarily on diversity relating to immigration status, ethnicity and, to some extent, gender.

Moreover, conceptualizations of tolerance may often include differing perspectives. For example, one perspective is oriented to the rejection of social groups and another oriented to the respect or acceptance of other social groups (Freitag and Rapp 2013). These approaches are not necessarily in opposition (Van Zalk and Kerr 2014), but rather are different dimensions of the development of recognition of social rights and liberties (Rapp and Freitag 2015). On the one hand, the rejection approach is focused on the negative attitudes toward difference, such as intolerance or prejudice. On the other hand, the acceptance approach is focused on the development of democratic principles and its application to all sociopolitical groups (Freitag and Rapp 2013).

Researchers and educational practitioners have long been concerned with identifying factors and conditions that have the potential to help schools and teachers promote tolerance (Côté and Erickson 2009; Rapp and Freitag 2015; Van Driel et al. 2016). However, the body of existing research is largely dominated by individual-level theoretical explanations (e.g. Allport's 1954 contact hypothesis; the social identity perspective advanced by Tajfel and Turner 1979) emerging largely from social-psychological research (Quintelier and Dejaeghere 2008; Weldon 2006). Research that has the potential to take into account the multiple contexts shaping tolerance, as well as individual- and societal-level explanations, is still largely needed.

International large-scale assessments (ILSA) such as the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2009 of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), have the potential to tremendously improve the study of tolerance in youth² by providing the opportunity to analyze differing explanatory mechanisms in a multitude of multi-leveled contexts. Existing secondary analyses of ICCS 2009 and its predecessor, the 1999 Civic Education Study (CIVED), have already made important contributions to the field. With minor exceptions (Caro and Schulz 2012), most studies (Barber et al. 2013; Elchardus et al. 2013; Isac 2015; Isac et al. 2012; Janmaat 2014; Torney-Purta et al. 2008; Torney-Purta and Barber 2011) operationalize tolerance in terms of positive attitudes toward immigrants or, applying Weldon's (2006) conceptualization, in terms of political tolerance toward immigrants. Taken together, these findings have pointed to the importance of different explanatory mechanisms. The factors identified by these studies concern characteristics of schools, classrooms and educational systems, but also individual student traits and background.

The work of Torney-Purta et al. (2008), for example, was among the first in a consistent body of research to show the importance of open class and school climates for promoting more positive attitudes toward immigrant rights. Other research (Isac et al. 2012; Janmaat 2014) has shown that heterogeneous class and school contexts (e.g. the proportion of immigrant students in a school or the

²Although not the subject of this volume, we acknowledge that other ILSAs (e.g. the World Values Survey, European Social Survey, and Eurobarometer Surveys) have a similar potential when it comes to the study of tolerance in adult populations.

opportunity to interact with immigrant peers) are linked with more positive attitudes among non-immigrant students toward immigrants in general.

Moreover, studies with a particular focus on country and educational system characteristics put forward macro-level explanations of tolerance. These studies (Barber et al. 2013; Elchardus et al. 2013; Janmaat and Mons 2011) highlight the role of sociocultural country characteristics (e.g. levels of economic and democratic development, policies toward immigrants) and features of educational systems (e.g. public steering and levels of differentiation within educational systems). These studies highlight the relevance of studying tolerance in context.

In addition, many studies (see e.g. Isac 2015; Torney-Purta et al. 2008) have shown consistent individual differences in political tolerance. Female students, students with more civic knowledge, higher educational expectations and a higher socioeconomic status tend to have more favorable attitudes toward immigrants. Such work indicates the importance of the individual student's background in relation to tolerance.

The existing research on the topic of tolerance among youth based on analyses of the CIVED 1999 and ICCS 2009 data provides valuable indications concerning potentially relevant factors at the student, classroom/school, and country levels. These factors are generally expected to be positively related to the tolerance levels of young people. Yet, some important knowledge gaps remain in the field and these IEA studies can provide further opportunities for data analysis relevant for a large number of educational systems worldwide. For example, and partially due to a lack of data, most previous studies have largely conceptualized tolerance in a somewhat narrow framework (e.g. focusing preponderantly on tolerance toward some groups like immigrants). Moreover, the majority of studies have looked at average relationships across countries and focused mainly on direct effects of differing explanatory factors.

This report aims to fill some of these gaps by taking into account: (a) broader conceptualizations of tolerance, including attitudes toward the rights of three different social groups: immigrants, ethnic groups and women; (b) the potential relationships between these types of outcomes; (c) the strength of relationships within different levels (individual, school, educational system level); (d) the complexity of direct and indirect (e.g. mediation, moderation) relationships; and (e) the variation of these relationships among countries (common and country-specific, differential effects³).

Therefore, this volume presents five empirical studies that aim to address some of the gaps in the literature mentioned above. Each of the studies tries to take into account the hierarchical layers of relationships (by controlling for relevant factors at each level) but give in-depth attention to a particular level of analysis. The

³It is important to point out that, as is customary in describing the results of path analysis and/or structural equation models, we use the word "effect" to describe the association between variables rather than to ascribe a causal nature to the observed pattern of associations.

combined results aim to provide additional evidence regarding factors and conditions that have the potential to help schools and teachers promote tolerance.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

This section elaborates further on the description of the concept of tolerance as operationalized in the current publication. A brief description of the most important groups of explanatory factors considered across the volume is also presented. For further detailed presentations of key concepts, we refer the reader to each of the chapters.

1.2.1 *Attitudes Toward Equal Rights*

As already stated in this introduction, the concept of tolerance is complex and multifaceted, as is usual in the arena of citizenship aspects (Miranda et al. 2017). We here operationalize it in terms of attitudes toward equal rights for three different social groups: immigrants, ethnic groups and women.

The conceptualization of tolerance in terms of attitudes toward equal rights for different groups is common in available definitions of citizenship competences. Hoskins and Mascherini (2009), for example, located the idea of support toward egalitarian attitudes within the wider discussion about active citizenship behaviors. This concept assumes that the dispositions of equality are expected qualities that any person shall possess and manifest as a good citizen (Hoskins and Kerr 2012; Hoskins and Mascherini 2009; Schulz et al. 2016). This operationalization corresponds to a large extent to the one advanced in the ICCS framework, where attitudes and beliefs regarding the right of all people to be recipients of the same fair treatment, stand out among the most relevant democratic principles (Schulz et al. 2016).

The present work defines tolerance as the degree to which people support equal rights for different groups in society (Schulz et al. 2008; Van Zalk and Kerr 2014). Although we acknowledge that tolerance can be directed toward any group in society, we situate our conceptualization in the context of the ICCS study and, building on its framework and available information, focus on attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants, ethnic groups and women. Therefore, the present work is largely situated within the political tolerance and the acceptance approach lines of research.

As previously mentioned, other studies use a similar approach to conceptualize and measure tolerance (Barber et al. 2013; Bridges and Mateut 2014; Dotti Sani and Quaranta 2017; Isac et al. 2012; Janmaat 2014; Strabac et al. 2014; Van Zalk and Kerr 2014) but often focus only on attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants. Significantly fewer studies have focused on support for equal rights toward ethnic

groups and women (Bolzendahl and Coffé 2009; Dotti Sani and Quaranta 2017). This work in this book considers all these demographic groups, as well as the potential relationships between them.

1.2.2 Explanatory Factors

Building on results and insights from previous studies, the research presented here strives to take account of both the conceptual and the empirical complexities of educational systems and of other, less formal, influences on student attitudes toward equal rights.

Our conceptual framework (Fig. 1.1) is used to structure factors and conditions at the student and school levels that have the potential to help promote positive attitudes toward the rights of immigrants, ethnic groups and women. In line with previous researchers (e.g. Isac et al. 2012; Janmaat 2014; Torney-Purta et al. 2008; Torney-Purta and Barber 2011), we acknowledge that several explanatory mechanisms must be taken into account when studying attitudes toward equal rights. We expect that the attitudes of young people toward equal rights may be impacted along different lines and that explanatory variables can be situated at different levels, including, individual background characteristics and experiences (e.g. gender, socioeconomic status, and the quantity and nature of discussion about equal rights with peers), and school environment (e.g. school composition, classroom climate, and teaching practices). We also acknowledge that these factors operate in diverse national contexts.

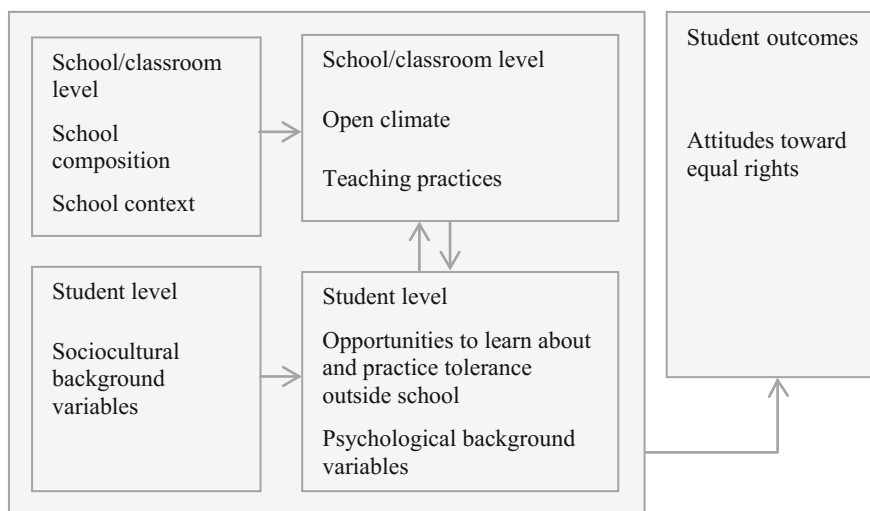


Fig. 1.1 Conceptual framework for the concept of tolerance considered in this book

Each chapter takes into account this complexity of multiple hierarchical layers of explanatory mechanisms, while giving in-depth consideration to a particular set of explanatory variables.

1.3 Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 introduces the IEA's International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS 2009; see www.iea.nl/iccs), its main objectives, assessment design and the specific operationalization of the variables used in our research. We explain the characteristics of the data and describe the methodological approaches used in the analytical chapters of this book and their common features.

Chapter 3 examines, from a comparative perspective, the reliability and validity of the main constructs used to measure tolerance (attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants, ethnic groups and women). As all the statistical models presented here take a comparative approach, the issue of measurement invariance of latent variables across countries is highly relevant. The chapter thus investigates cross-cultural comparability of latent variables through the empirical analysis of measurement invariance conducted in a factor-analytical framework.

Chapter 4 evaluates the capacity of schools and other agents to promote attitudes toward equal rights. Arguing that school communities engaging a variety of actors (such as school principals, teachers and families) play a central role in the development of egalitarian attitudes, this assumption is tested empirically taking into account the complexity of multilevel explanatory mechanisms and the importance of looking at country-specific relationships. Based on the literature and building on the results of Chap. 4, the subsequent chapters explore in deeper detail the relationship between the outcomes and selected explanatory variables.

Chapter 5 focuses on one of the most relevant sources of diversity in contemporary education, immigration. This chapter gives particular attention to the mechanisms that educational systems employ to address this type of diversity and discusses in depth the issue of educational segregation of immigrant students. Analyses are conducted to describe from a comparative perspective, patterns of segregation in different educational systems and to relate them to student attitudes toward equal rights.

In Chap. 6, the importance of the school environment for the development of egalitarian attitudes is brought to the fore. Echoing one of the main findings in this field of research, the investigation focuses on the importance of stimulating open classroom discussion in which free dialogue and critical debate are encouraged among people of diverse backgrounds. The analyses go deeper into the potential role of open classroom discussion, identifying moderation effects.

Highlighting the documented impact of student background (as opposed to school characteristics) on attitudinal measures toward equal rights, Chap. 7 gives particular attention to the role of student socioeconomic status. Both conceptually

and empirically, there is a need to use more refined measures of family background when describing the link of this variable to tolerance.

Finally, Chap. 8 summarizes the findings of the empirical studies, discussing their implications for policy and practice and reflecting on potential avenues for further research.

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