Introduction: Tolerance and diversity challenges in European education

Bader, V.; Maussen, M.

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Comparative report

Dr. Marcel Maussen and prof.dr. Veit Bader (eds.)

University of Amsterdam

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Tolerance and cultural diversity in schools
Comparative report

Marcel Maussen
Department of Political Science
University of Amsterdam

Veit Bader
Department of Philosophy and Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of Amsterdam

Jan Dobbernack
Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship
University of Bristol

Tariq Modood
Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship
University of Bristol

Tore Vincents Olsen
Department of Political Science and Government
Aarhus University

Jon Fox
Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship
University of Bristol

Zsuzsanna Vidra
Center for Policy Studies
Central European University

Work Package 3: National Case Studies of Challenges to Tolerance in School Life

Deliverable D 3.2: Synthesis and highlights of country reports on concepts
and practices of tolerance addressing cultural diversity in schools

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1. Introduction:
Tolerance and diversity challenges in European education

Marcel Maussen and Veit Bader [1]

1.1 Tolerance and toleration

The research project ACCEPT Pluralism investigates understandings and practices of tolerance in 15 EU countries, aiming to determine whether and how these societies have become more or less tolerant during the past 20 years. "Tolerance" as a principle and "toleration" as attitudes, virtues, practices and institutional regimes, are commonly defined as involving a negative attitude towards the life-styles, identities, values or practice of others, usually in relation to the collective identity of the other, and the conscious preparedness to refrain from acting upon this negative attitude, i.e. some form of self-restraint.

The basic concept of toleration (Bader forthcoming following King 1976) is X tolerates Y, where:

i) X does not approve of Y

ii) X has the power to interfere with Y but refrains from doing so

Tolerance and toleration thus inevitably entail a tension between their two constitutive components of *objection* and *acceptance*, and the reasons to tolerate practices and life-styles of others override but "do not cancel out reasons for rejection" (Dobbernack and Modood 2011: 10). Toleration is also not the only way of dealing with differences, nor is it always the most appropriate way. Sometimes there may be good reasons *not* to tolerate a particular form of behavior or a specific practice, and sometimes mere "toleration" may be seen as *not enough* because it entails a negative evaluation and a form of rejection of identities and practices that seem valuable and worthy of recognition to others. In order to map out the conceptual space in which "tolerance" can be situated as a way of engaging with difference the researchers in the ACCEPT pluralism project have developed a threefold concept, provisionally called "accept" (Dobbernack and Modood 2011: 31-32). It distinguishes between a space of intolerance, one of tolerance and one that is beyond tolerance and in which differences are dealt with based on equality, respect and recognition.

The space that precedes tolerance is that of *in*tolerance. Here we find actions and justifications that seek to disallow certain ways of being and practices, for example by outlawing them or by seeking to obstruct them by other means. Intolerance can be justified by reasons that we consider morally legitimate, for

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example because certain practices inflict harm on others. Liberal-democratic societies may legitimately be intolerant towards actions that violate the interests and status of others as equal moral and political subjects. Recently the concept of "liberal intolerance" has been used to critically scrutinize arguments for intolerance of certain religious or cultural practices that are said to violate liberal-secular norms. Attitudes, ideas and justifications underlying intolerance can also be morally wrong and reprehensible. For example, if intolerance is related to forms of exclusion and racism that are directed at entire minority groups (such as the ways many societies engage with Roma populations, see Fox and Vidra in this report). One aim of the ACCEPT pluralism project is to identify different practices of *in*tolerance and their justifications and to determine whether and why these are morally legitimate.

In the space of tolerance proper we speak of attitudes and ways of engagement with differences in which some form of rejection, criticism or disapproval is still present. It can be a form of "gritted teeth" toleration, in which one decides to "put up with" the life-styles and practices of others that one finds highly problematical. It can be a nearly untheorized or pragmatic way of dealing with difference which primarily aims to achieve additional values and goals, such as social peace or stability (see Olsen this report). It can also be a more developed or deliberate form of engaging with forms of value pluralism, in which one feels a strong dislike towards the values and ideas of others but also acknowledges that allowing others to live their own life is central to pluralism and democracy. In this sense tolerance becomes slightly more demanding and tolerance can be considered as "a demanding and difficult attitude that requires critical self-reflectivity" (Dobbernack and Modood this report). Identifying the justifications of tolerance and toleration and their inherent instability is an important objective of the project.

The third space is about that which is "beyond tolerance", when the undertone of disapproval that goes with tolerance is seen as *not enough* in the way people should deal with differences. Sometimes what is asked for is not mere toleration, but genuine equal respect for differences in life-styles, in cultural expressions and practices, for different "conceptions of the good life" and different "comprehensive doctrines". As Charles Taylor famously put it, what may be at stake is a "politics of recognition" because "a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves" (1992: 25). Minority groups that mobilize for recognition argue that they do not want to be merely "tolerated". They merit respect as human beings, but they also want to be accepted as groups of equal value and claim that their collective identity merits recognition. In this third space what is asked for is positive acceptance (Modood 2007). The need to move beyond tolerance also acknowledges that "the giving of a new public status to an identity group is not just to legitimize their presence and to include them in the self-definition of one's society or country, it is also to allow them to influence, the attitudes, mores and practices of the rest of society" (Dobbernack and Modood 2011: 23). Some differences may become so commonly accepted that they become "invisible", at other times the struggle against being perceived as "abnormal" is deeply political, and minority groups will raise demanding claims for positive acceptance and recognition.

Building on this conceptualization, the empirical phase of the ACCEPT pluralism project investigates the way tolerance is of importance in contemporary diversity challenges in European states. It explores the ways in which increasing cultural diversity in post-war Europe presents challenges to ideas and theories of toleration, in view of how toleration may relate to new claims of cultural difference and how it "works as a device of social regulation, boundary drawing and the demarcation of what is tolerable and what is not" (Dobbernack and Modood 2011: 9). Its focus lies with diversity challenges related to ethnic, national and religious minority groups, less than for example sub-cultural groups (e.g. sex and gender minorities). Moreover, the ideas about identities and appropriate ways of dealing with difference need to be situated

in the context of narratives of national identities, which are sometimes challenged by minority groups, but which also are at the core of more established traditions of nationhood.

The ACCEPT pluralism project also explores the way comparable challenges are dealt with differently in different countries and different fields, notably in the fields of education and politics. The ways challenges of diversity arise in different countries are shaped by the distinctive national and local contexts. The aim of the first phase of the project has been to map out the most important aspects of national difference, which are related to different histories of state-formation and traditions of citizenship and nationhood, different institutional contexts (notably with regard to church-state relations and political institutions), different societal context marked by different types of minority groups with different histories, and different balances of power between minorities and majorities, and finally different vocabularies that structure the national discursive spaces in which ideas about (in)tolerance are being articulated.[2] For the project as a whole, the focus on justifications, discourses and ways of defining what is intolerable, tolerable and beyond tolerance is of crucial relevance. Furthermore, challenges of diversity arise in specific societal fields, which are shaped by their own institutionalized regimes of governance. In different societal field different issues and political struggles will set the stage for discussions on tolerance and its limits. In the next section we introduce the ways challenges of diversity and tolerance arise in the field of education.

1.2 Tolerance and diversity challenges in the field of education.

The aim of the research on "tolerance in education" was: (1) to investigate the meaning and practices of tolerance when it comes to cultural diversity in school life and/or education-related issues; (2) to investigate what kind of cultural diversity is tolerated in schools – what practices are considered tolerant or intolerant and what values/norms are considered to promote or undermine tolerance in schools; (3) to investigate how the embodiment of tolerance in school life (norm and) practices relates to concepts such as multiculturalism, liberalism, respect, understanding, national heritage and national traditions (Project Description 2010).

In the project the focus was on education at the level of primary and secondary schools.[3] In order to situate the way issues of diversity and tolerance arise in the field of education we briefly introduce some distinctive elements of this institutional sphere. Four aspects of the field of education need to be highlighted (some of which are obviously interrelated):

1. Education is not merely one of the various spheres of society, it is also **one of the major institutions of socialization in modern societies**. In schools, societies and the liberal state can more or less deliberately contribute to the forming of "new citizens". For this research it is important to pay attention to the ways schools are seen as crucial in the forming of democratic citizens, who acquire the skills necessary to live in pluralistic societies, and who are (becoming) members of a national community (Miller 1995). Also when considering the role of teachers and management we need to keep in mind this aspect of education as an institutional sphere. Teachers and educa-

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2 For the results of this part of the project on national discourses on tolerance and diversity see the country reports available at: *http://www.accept-pluralism.eu/Research/ProjectReports/NationalDiscourses.aspx*

3 With the exception of some case studies, such as the case study in Turkey that dealt with the issue of headscarves in universities (see Kaya and Harmanyeri 2011).

tional officials need to relate to demands coming from society at large, from the state, to ideas and wishes of parents and cultural or religious communities, and the values and objectives they want to pursue in education.

2. In schools we are dealing with **maturing children, not with adults** (Olsen this report). With regard to issues of identity, values, ideas, cultural and religious practices, convictions and choices, the fact that school-life is a period of "growth towards maturity" and "gradual increase in autonomy" is important, because this may lead to relevantly different situations and considerations compared to spheres in which we are dealing with adults. Given this growth towards maturity and socialization, parents have a strong interest in school-life since their concern often is to reproduce specific cultural, for example religious, traditions. Also, teachers play a dualistic role given the pedagogical nature of their relationship with pupils; they are both to guide and correct, and to show respect for the ideas and wishes of pupils (and parents).

3. Schools are institutional environments in which challenges of diversity tend to become **relatively acute and unavoidable** because of (at least) three reasons: first, nearly all countries have compulsory education, which means that children will necessarily attend school and meet children with other (cultural, class, religious) backgrounds. Of course, the degree to which governmental and non-governmental schools are mixed matters a lot.[4] Second, in the school context social interaction is intensive and extends across a fair amount of time (in terms of school days, but also in terms of years over a life-time). Third, the school is an arena for different stakeholders who may advocate specific ways of dealing with challenges of diversity and issues of (in)tolerance, notably school managers and teachers, school boards, parents and parents' associations, state agencies (such as Inspectorates of Education), community leaders, churches, NGOs (e.g. minority organizations challenging educational practices and curricular content).

4. Education is an institutional sphere that is marked by important **power asymmetries**. At the level of society as a whole these include differences in power between majorities and minorities, between established, native minorities and immigrant communities, between religious and ethnic communities that are seen as crucially belonging to the nation or as constitutive of the national identity and those who are positioned as "outside" of the national community, etcetera. At the level of the educational sector we find differences in power between various (institutionalized) stakeholders, such as government institutions (Ministries, Inspectorates of Education), government authorities at different administrative levels (municipal, regional, state), organized religions, interest organizations representing minorities, professional organizations representing teachers and staff, etcetera. At the level of schools we may find differences in power between school management, teachers, parents of different backgrounds and with different resources (economic, cultural, social) and pupils. These power asymmetries are of special relevance because discussions about intolerance, tolerance and recognition are inevitably about the drawing op boundaries and one should be sensitive to "how the relationship between tolerator and tolerated entails elements of power, authority and domination" (Dobbernack and Modood 2011: 31).

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4 Obviously, the existence of (intentionally or unintentionally) segregated schools, along lines of class, ethnicity, nationality or religion, will diminish the degree of diversity within the school context. In some types of schools, such as Islamic schools in the UK and the Netherlands or Protestant schools in Ireland, children will encounter less "challenges of diversity" than they may encounter in other spheres of their life (sports, neighborhood, work).

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1.3   Comparing countries, events and qualitative case studies

The research carried out in the field of education aimed to analyze the shifting meaning and practices of toleration in different countries by conducting qualitative case studies that were illustrative of diversity challenges that were of particular relevance for each individual country. In order to identify possible case studies the concept of "**key event**" was used, being issues or events that (1) resulted in public debates, interactions and forms of governance in the respective country; (2) were felt to be genuine concerns for (at least some) practitioners within the schools or educational system; and (3) had resulted in actions and/or forms of governance that were justified in terms of (in)tolerance and respect. The time-frame for the selection of these key events was between 2000 and 2011. This empirical perspective on the issue of toleration in the form of qualitative case studies makes it possible to move away from highly idealized and ideologically loaded views on conflicts and national models to "local practices of accommodation and conviviality that are often supported by pragmatic reasons, as well as with local and contextualized moral reasons for granting toleration" (Dobbernack and Modood 2011: p.16).

In view of developing a research agenda that would allow us to meaningfully compare different case studies each national team collected and analyzed information with regard to four dimensions:

1. The dimension of **structural problems**: in this dimension the case studies were related to structural tensions in the respective society and how these are played out in the educational sector. As it turns out, educational systems in Europe encounter a similar set of structural problems. They need to find ways of balancing between available budgets and the need to achieve educational (and other) goals, and they are under constant pressure of educational reforms and contradictory political efforts to "centralize or decentralize" education, or to strengthen state-involvement or to grant more autonomy to private "marketized" or "associational" education. Another set of structural problems can be found at the intersections of cultural diversity and social inequality, notably in the form of ethnic, religious and class segregation between schools and in the form of the reproduction of inequalities in education. Finally, an important set of structural issues relates directly to the issue of accommodation or non-accommodation of diversity in schools, both with regard to curriculum and educational culture and with regard to specific practices, symbols and forms of behavior.

2. The dimension of **political mobilization and framing**: in this dimension what is at stake is the way a specific crucial event is being raised as a political issue, by whom and in what terms.

3. The dimension of **policies and practices**: in this dimension the analysis of the case studies included attention for the relevant policies that were related to the challenges under investigation and the practices of accommodation and confrontation that developed in specific situations.

4. The dimension of **justifications and arguments**: in this dimension the analysis of arguments for and against tolerance were analyzed as they were articulated by different actors around specific situations of conflict. These arguments were analyzed through the lenses of the ACCEPT pluralism conceptual framework as well as situated in the distinctive national discursive and institutional repertoires.

1.4 A typology of challenges

In relation to education diversity challenges and the question of toleration may arise in different ways. They may be related to the education system as a whole, for example whether it provides sufficient room for minority groups or whether some minorities can have their own schools. They may be articulated in relation to broader societal trends, such as inequality, racism or exclusion. But it may also be the case that very concrete issues arise, about whether a school should revise a curriculum, whether religious symbols or specific forms of dress are allowed in the school or not, etc.

In order to address this diversity in the type of challenges that arise in relation to education, a first step was to distinguish between three types of issues. The first type of issues is related to the presentation of self and interactions in the school context. In educational institutions specific forms of interactions occur and issues arise about ways of engaging with specific self-presentations (in dress, symbols, practice, speech) and with practices, interactions and encounters in this context (for example with regard to the request to perform prayer in the school). This type of issues is about whether and how the school (individual schools, the school system, teachers, pupils) should practice and institutionalize (in)tolerance and respect (Olsen this report).

A second set of issues is related to the way the content and practice of education and teaching (in a broad sense as involving curriculum, pedagogy, educational culture) involves questions of engaging with difference.

A third set of issues is about the ways the education system as a whole institutionally addresses diversity (e.g. by granting autonomy to religious schools, by setting up separate classes for immigrant or Roma children etc.) and how this is related to tolerance, social integration and equality.

Key events and case studies could thus be classified as belonging to one of these three types of issues. The focus of the study was on identifying the ways toleration serves as a device of social regulation and **boundary drawing**. We explored the practices and arguments involved in drawing the boundaries between what is intolerable and tolerable, and between what is tolerable and what should be positively accepted. These boundaries are empirically contested and shifting and the empirical studies aim to understand what is being accepted/not accepted, by whom, for what reasons and motives and in different contexts and countries.

Table 1: Types of issues and challenges of diversity in education

		Presentation of self and interactions in the school context	Curriculum, pedagogy, educational culture	Structure of education system
BOUNDARY I →	Non-toleration	(1)	(2)	(3)
BOUNDARY II →	Toleration	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Respect/ recognition	(7)	(8)	(9)

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1.5 Clusters of case studies and comparison

On the basis of the (formal) typology of issues each country teams sought to explore and select possible case studies [5] These were subsequently grouped into four clusters in order to bring out the relevant comparative observations. The first cluster contains case studies related to issues of curriculum, educational culture and teaching tolerance; the second cluster is about the accommodation of diversity in everyday school life; a third cluster contains case studies on the issue of Roma segregation in educational institutions; and the fourth cluster contains studies on religious schools..[6]

The remainder of this report consists of four chapters in which a comparative analysis is given of a selection of case studies. Dobbernack and Modood compare cases that deal with curriculum, educational culture and teaching tolerance in Turkey, Germany, Spain, Britain, France, Bulgaria, Italy, Hungary and the Netherlands. They focus on three broad dimensions in order to evaluate the place of tolerance in European education: the politics of curriculum reform, claims for national narratives to be pluralized, and the representation of diversity, citizenship and group differences in education.

Olsen compares arguments for and against toleration in relation to the accommodation of cultural and religious diversity in everyday school life in France, Turkey, Ireland, Sweden, Germany, Britain, Denmark, Romania, Poland and Greece. In particular he looks at the relative prevalence of liberal intolerance, the way national controversies revolve around the freedom to express religion in school on the one hand and the freedom from religion on the other, and finally the tension between clear national rules defining the limits of tolerance and local school autonomy

Fox and Vidra examine Roma educational segregation and its aftermaths in five countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. They provide an overview of the types of educational segregation and discuss the factors that contribute to segregation. Their contribution then analyses the implications of segregation and the failure of integration efforts for questions of tolerance.

Bader and Maussen compare discussions on religious schools in six countries: Denmark, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden. Public and political debates on whether religious schools merit "toleration" or "recognition" are situated against the background of different institutional regimes and different policies with regard to the financing of religious schools and their associational freedoms. The chapter then discusses three major issues that appear in the different education: the relation between religious schools and segregation, the associational freedoms of religious schools and the issue of public funding.

1.6 References

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5   The case studies on school life can be found at the website of the ACCEPT pluralism project: *http://www.accept-pluralism.eu/Research/ProjectReports/CaseStudiesSchool.aspx*. Full references can be found in annex II of this report.

6   The research questions that were formulated in view of the comparative analysis can be found in annex I of this report.

Introduction: Tolerance and diversity challenges in European education

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