A PSYCHO-PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO THE CONCEPT OF TOLERANCE

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to define the concept of tolerance from a psycho-pedagogical perspective. Our literature review is an attempt to reveal the current state of the art regarding studies and research on the concept of tolerance and psycho-pedagogical approaches to tolerance. Our findings will also highlight the need to clarify the semantic area of pedagogical tolerance in order to reveal the relevance of the values associated with tolerance in education. Our present study is part of our wider research project which aims to see whether and in what way intercultural education may be used to build and promote the values of tolerance.

Key words*: intercultural education, psycho-pedagogical approach, tolerance*

Introduction

Tolerance (lat. *tolerantia*, "endurance, bearing") is a social, ethical and religious notion that may describe a group or individual, denoting respect of the freedom of others, their way of thinking and behaviour, and opinions of any kind (political, religious, etc.) (Cojocariu, 2006). The current paradigm of the pedagogy of tolerance is asserted in contemporary society by the active promotion of the *values* of the culture of tolerance in the last decade: *humanistic coexistence*, *respect for differences*, *free choice of value orientations* and *nonconflictual acceptance of the rights of others* in the context of the *Declaration on the principles of tolerance* (ref). The actuality of the theme is determined by the contemporary social processes characterized by confrontational and disintegration tendencies occurring in the context of the spiritual crisis of society, reflected also in the field of education. Under these circumstances, tolerance is more necessary than ever,

because confrontations, which are widespread, constitute a potential universal threat to any person or region. Researchers in the field of education combine their efforts to demonstrate that tolerance is a universal value and axiological form of human coexistence and, at the same time, one of the most contradictory values of the contemporary world (interpreted as patience and self-sacrifice) and describe the content of tolerant consciousness, thought, action and mentality.

The semantic field of the notion of tolerance has been enriched with syntagms scientifically anchored in the field of the Pedagogy of Tolerance: Voltaire's view of *social tolerance* (Simon, 2000, p. xiii); *psychophysiological tolerance* (Kuhn, 1999, p. 296); *interpersonal tolerance* (Thomae et al., 2016; Tucicov, 2001; Cara, 2011); *interethnic tolerance* (Silistraru, 2003; Reardon, 2010); *religious/interconfessional tolerance*; Macavei, 2004; Goraş-Postică, 2004; Goraş-Postică, 2010); *gender tolerance* (Silistraru, 2003; Goraş-Postică, 2004; Reardon, 2010); *political and ethnic tolerance* (Guzun, 2005); *communicative tolerance* (Cramarenco, 2010); *pedagogical tolerance* (Ţurcan, 2015; Grey, 2016); *the pedagogy of positive tolerance* (Loewen, 2013; Pâslaru, 2013); *tolerance as a derivative of the person's identity* (Pâslaru, 2003); *the culture of family tolerance* (Cuzneţov, 2013); *education for tolerance* (Stan, 2005); Toes (2013); stress tolerance (Şova and Balţat, 2014) - *stress tolerance*; *the pedagogy of tolerance* (Ţurcan, 2013); *education for tolerance* (Ţurcan, 2014). In different cultures, the concept of tolerance is interpreted differently.

Research sources include theories, concepts, ideas, opinions, suggestions in the field of psycho-pedagogy, social psychology, psychology of education, pedagogy of emotional culture, philosophy of education, etc. The epistemological benchmarks of the research are represented by: sociological theories (Durkheim, 1956); social interaction theory (Felson, 1984); conflict theory (Weber, 1968), frustration-aggression theory (Berkowitz, 1989); theories of education - the theory of constructivism (Bourdieu, 1977); the theory of emotional culture (Darwin, 1965), the theory of affective maximization (Hammond, 1990); the theory of emotional discipline (Manz, 2003); the theory of education based on emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2005); the theory of the pedagogy of tolerance (Ţurcan, 2015; Grey, 2016); the theory of emotional work; emotional culture theory, research methodology and technology of emotional culture development, the theory of the pedagogy of emotional culture (Cojocaru-Borozan, 2010).

The teacher training system is a space of moral-spiritual formation through the values of tolerance with the aim of strengthening the system of existential values of educational agents. From this perspective, the tolerant vision of teacher training involves the formation of a deontological behaviour oriented towards communication based on the values of the culture of tolerance as an expression of empathy, compassion, self-esteem and respect for others, accepting

compromises in tense professional situations. These trends update the need for tolerance education to respond adequately to conflicting and destructive challenges in human interactions.

Method

Searching and selection procedure

The key words for our search included the terms "tolerance", "tolerance pedagogy", "tolerance education". Documentation was conducted in Romanian libraries and online electronic databases. The electronic databases used for our literature search have included, among others: PsycARTICLES, ERIC, EdITLib Digital Library and Academic Search Premier. Our search yielded a large number of books, treatises, dictionary entries and articles on tolerance. We have already briefly presented the semantic field of the concept of tolerance and the fields and main theories associated with it in the introductory section of our paper.

Data analysis

The purpose of a literature review is to summarize the accumulated knowledge on a topic of interest and pinpoint aspects that have not been sufficiently studied or that still need further clarification (Creswell, 1994). Our main research question or aim is to provide a definition of the *concept of tolerance from a psycho-pedagogical perspective. Our literature review is an attempt to reveal the current state of the art regarding studies and research on the concept of tolerance and psycho-pedagogical approaches to tolerance.*

Findings and discussions

Approaches to the concept of tolerance

The genesis of tolerance as a pedagogical problem requires an excursion into the history of the emergence and development of the concept of tolerance in the scientific literature, the examination of the multiple meanings attributed to it along its evolution as a term, the specification of its constitutive elements, in order to identify the lexical premises of the concept in the transformations of the representations of the phenomenon concerned as a pedagogical issue. Our study of the concept of tolerance is organized by presenting the results of our theoretical investigation on the following dimensions: etymological, historical, psychological and social.

The etymological dimension and significance of the term 'tolerance' addresses the notion of *tolerance* in the history of European culture at the beginning of the 16th century, reflecting the humanistic thinking represented by Erasmus of Rotterdam in his effort to combat religious fanaticism, as well as John Locke (1632-1704), Voltaire (1694-1778) and Gotthold Lossing (1729-1781). In *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), Locke recommends tolerance as a

reaction to inappropriate behaviour. Similar in meaning and analogus to the concept of tolerance, there appeared, in Romanian, the term 'patience' (Rom. *răbdare*). From the concept of patience there derived the meaning of *bearing, by showing insistence and resistance, with a certain activity*, which allows us to associate the significance of *tolerance* with voluntary self-regulation and discernment. Tolerance is interpreted differently in the languages of the peoples of the world. We here present the meaning of this term in the following languages: Romanian '*toleranţă*' - acceptance, observance, indulgence, resistance; French '*tolerance*' - acceptance of the different way of thinking and acting; Spanish '*tolerancia*' - ability to accept ideas and opinions different from one's own; English '*tolerance*' - willingness to be sympathetic, patient in relation to other ideas; Russian language '*толерантность*' - the quality of bearing with something or someone, being in control of oneself, being resistant, to accept, to take into account the opinions of others; Chinese '*kuang rong*' - to allow, to accept, to be generous; Arabic 'tasamul' - forgiveness, indulgence, gentleness, charity, compassion, goodwill, patience; all these meanings, although different in a first analysis, indicate nevertheless the sense-community in interpreting the scientific essence of the concept of tolerance (Dobrescu, 1998, p. 231).

Dictionaries include a system of other meanings that support us in deciphering deeper connotations of the term: indulgence, indulgent attitude, the ability of the body to bear negative influences of different environmental factors; - to bear other opinions, beliefs and behaviours (*Dicţionar explicativ al limbii române*, 2003); in philosophy, wisely accepting opposing opinions, integrating into personal beliefs good, beauty, truth; indulgence in evaluations through profound and detailed reflections (*Dicţionar de psihologie*, 2001); respect for opposing ideas or feelings, the attitude of recognizing the right of others to behave and think differently, particularities of the organization of human conduct under unfavourable conditions of professional activity and everyday life (*Dicţionar de pedagogie*, 1998); the lack of violent reaction to destructive factors as a result of decreased sensitivity, the ability to resist, to bear or not to observe the negative influences from other people, absence or weakening of response to negative factors by reducing the sensitivity to its effects, liberal acceptance of behaviours, beliefs and values of others, tolerance of stress, tension, pain, etc. (*Dicţionar de psihologie*, 2001); the phenomenon of interpersonal communication that shows that the communicating subject bears the individual particularities of the interlocutor, accepting it without expressing dissatisfaction, - the existence of affinities that increase the level of acceptance (*Dicţionar de sociologie*, 2001).

The study of the meanings of tolerance helps us conclude that it is perceived not only as a *value* of the contemporary world, but also as an *effect* of education (Neculau, 2011, p. 34). In the psychological sense, tolerance denotes the respect of ideas or feelings contrary to personal ones,

the body's ability to bear inconveniences without showing signs of aggressive conduct (*Dicţionar de psihologie*, 2001, p. 80). The content and meaning analysis of the psychological model of tolerance (comprising personality traits, positive orientation/empathy and psychological stability) proves that tolerance is a mechanism of self-defense that involves diminishing the sensitivity to the influence of unfavourable external factors (Belasheva and Petrova, 2016, p. 3368). Interpreting tolerance as an integrative feature of personality implies internalizing the values of emotional culture values in interaction with personality traits, generating a positive personality orientation. Tolerance should not be mistaken for liberty defined as acceptance of unacceptable social phenomena, exaggerated indulgence and, unlike empathy, tolerance is characterized by its reflexive feature. Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the richness and diversity of our world's cultures, ways of speaking and expressing our quality of human beings (Boghian, 2016, p. 136).

The literature in the field of tolerance pedagogy advances various approaches (axiological, philosophical, pedagogical, sociological, humanistic) of the concept of 'tolerance' which elucidate the priority issues in the research on pedagogical tolerance.

From a *historical* perspective, the meaning of tolerance has been approached as patience, tendency and ability to establish and maintain communion with people in the spirit of humility promoted through religious values. Tolerance emerges as a result of the rational, balanced and pertinent analysis of the difficulties in the process of knowing reality.

From a *social* perspective, the concept of tolerance is used in the approach of ethnic, political, gender tolerance, etc. Tolerance understood as patience is designated in the literature by the term of *psychosocial tolerance*; tolerance understood as physical endurance is called *psychophysiological tolerance*. Tolerance involves respecting the norms of social cohabitation and understanding of the essence of human behavior, being an auto-educative attitude. In a broad sense, tolerance means accepting that people are different, each having an individual position with certain grounds and justifications (*Dicţionar de sociologie*, 2001, p. 22). Tolerance is the power to accept the other as a bearer / exponent of other values, of another way of thinking, of other forms of behavior; through the awareness of the right to be different, accentuating this difference; by looking at the other "from within", by treating the world from both points of view: mine and the other (Cucoş, 2013, p. 45).

Tolerance as value

Axiologically, tolerance is approached as a general human value: the term *value* designates all the things that are relevant to man; one thing is acknowledged as value only when man is personally related to this; tolerance is a form of human interaction required by social coexistence. The

values of education employ all kinds of values created or uncreated by man, provided that they represent the message promoted by the teleology, content, methodology, and epistemology of education (Pâslaru, 2003, p. 104). Derived from human experience, the values of tolerance support the evolution of society. The contemporary generation is concerned with the clarification of the origin and content of values, selection criteria and, in particular, with the strategies of interiorization in consciousness and individual conduct of values. Constantly faced with alternatives, young people have to choose responsibly (Pichiu & Albuţ, 1994: 68). The mere fact of addressing the fundamental values of mankind and reflecting on their significance brings a plus of culture growth to what we call level of education. Tolerance is acquired through education, which means that it is/ must be included in the finalities of education. Speaking in strictly pedagogical terms, tolerance is not an end in itself but a means and the goal of education in the spirit of tolerance lies in "recognizing and respecting the dignity and integrity of all human beings" (Cristea, 2004, p. 19). Tolerance is, therefore, a *general-human value of education* (Reardon, 2004, p. 103). Any education that relates to peace, human rights and democracy is an education for values (axiological education). Reardon argues that "tolerance education actually designates the education of a culture of peace that involves the development and maintenance of positive relationships, social responsibility and ethical maturity in decision-making concerning social behaviors and relationships" (Reardon, 2004, p. 26). The tendency to use values is a sign of the psychological maturity necessary for the positive orientation of human existence. Focusing on the positive principle in education is the condition of Good, Beautiful, Truth, Justice and Freedom - fundamental values of mankind, over which Sacrality continues forever; values continue to be a source of possible difficulties for educators because the most widespread values are subject to variable interpretations, and parents often perceive the values of education as a threat to the values they strive to form for their children (Pâslaru, 2003: 105). German philosopher Fr. Nietzsche believes that the development of personality is a supreme value, the purpose of education being the formation of the man capable of creating new values. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to consider the hereditary factors, the potential of one's personality and its tendency towards self-development, creating conditions for the development of individuality; Plato drew the first classification of values that reflects the essence of the higher good - the valorisation of the individual's uniquel potential. In connection with this, Aristotle stressed the importance of education as a prerequisite for a dignified life: man becomes virtuous only through the process of educating the three parts of the soul (physical, volitional, intellectual). In Plato's view, values are qualities "by themselves", ideas that transcendently hover above the sensible world forming, together with other ideas, a "world of ideas" ruled by the values of *good*, *beauty*,

truth (Cristea, 2004, p. 49). In his theory of ideas, Plato revealed an axiological perspective with his system of the "nature of values." Good is the highest value pursued by the human being and, at the same time, the criterion for assessing the quality of man (Aiftinică, 1994, p. 40). In this line of thought Pâslaru resumed the hierarchy of the values offered by T. Vianu and classified the dominant values of education at certain ages: the *vital values* - at the age of young childhood; *vital and moral values* - at an early age; *vital, moral and religious values* - at the age of small childhood; *vital, moral, religious and theoretical values* - at the age of early adolescence; *vital, moral, religious, theoretical and aesthetic values* - at the age of mature adolescence; *vital, moral, religious, theoretical, aesthetic, legal, political and economic values* - at the age of maturity (Pâslaru, 2003, p. 205).

The constructivist model of tolerance

In *social psychology*, the meaning of tolerance ranges between the boundaries of passive acceptance of an abnormal or inadequate situation or conduct and the defamatory, defensive and normative reactions; in clinical psychology, tolerance is a variable property of individuals of bearing a certain degree of exposure to excitation or stimulation without inappropriate reactions or pathological symptoms. In political sciences, tolerance means "the deliberate option of someone who possesses the necessary power and knowledge, not to hinder or control any conduct with which one disagrees", having as a sphere of action individuals, institutions and society, involving axiological norms of, particularly education for tolerance, of moral order, because otherwise "to tolerate would be equivalent to allowing an evil thing to happen"; therefore, "tolerance can nevertheless be distinguished from simple consent" (Cristea, 2004: 29). Tolerance "guides one's way of thinking in relation to the other in difficult situations when only understanding is of help"; "tolerance involves the permanent confrontation of one's beliefs, thought stereotypes, preconceived ideas so that the mind may be prepared to accept different ideas, opinions, and ways of being to others (Racu, 2005, p. 87).

Studies in the field of *psycho-pedagogy* operate with the terms of *active tolerance* expressed through involvement in life and actions to achieve the interests of others, attitudes of cooperation and co-participation, respect and a benevolent tendency to coexistence. In this context, it is necessary to emphasize that the enumerated meanings describe in particular the humanism of social relations, characterized by mutual dialogue and understanding, constructive interpersonal communication. *Passive tolerance* signifies the disadvantageous meanings of tolerance - endurance, indulgence, long acceptance of inconveniences, etc.

A sociological approach recalls the meaning of the term tolerance as the attitude of bearing something (the negative example of "tolerance houses" in the West). The evoked model of using

the concept is disadvantageous for generations in the process of training under the current social conditions, advancing challenges and issues that call for optimal mobilization of educational actors, as there is a risk of misinterpretation of the values of the culture of social tolerance.

The *constructivist model of tolerance* in analyzing daily behaviour studies the human personality from the following perspectives (Joiţa, 2008, p. 127): (a) the personality perspective examining the personality as a bio-psycho-socio-historical and cultural synthesis, the finality of the dynamics of personality development being the action, valorisation, integration and assertion in social reality, the success of the personality is determined by social efficiency; the enactment of the personality cannot therefore be conceived outside of the social, which impinges on the individual's development, shaping one's behavior and style of thinking; (b) the perspective of the entourage is important as a singular part of the conventional value system, represented by the family, church, school, and other social institutions; (c) the societal perspective presents the authority of social institutions, the human societies being socially stratified according to various criteria.

Approaches to pedagogical tolerance

Our literature review enabled us to draw a comparative analysis of various definitions of tolerance in order to be able to highlight the similarities and differences of the pedagogical views on tolerance (Table 1).

Table 1. Approaches to pedagogical tolerance

Authors	Tolerance - definitions
Afdal (2004)	tolerance is a virtue, a must-have for all teachers; a tolerant teacher is an able teacher.
Cojocariu (2006)	a social, ethical and religious term that may define a group or individual, designating respect of the freedom of others, their way of thinking and behaviour, as well as their opinions of any kind (political, religious, etc.).
Cojocariu (2004)	tolerance is a central value of the 21st-century education.
Cramarenco (2010)	tolerance involves the positive orientation of affective behavior of partners in the family couple, which is a serious indicator of the level of emotional culture of the family both in the intrapersonal dimension and in the interpersonal dimension.
Cristea (2004)	tolerance is defined at the level of political science, meaning the deliberate option of someone who possesses the necessary power and knowledge not to hinder or embarrass any conduct with which he disagrees.
Cucoş (2008)	the ability to accept the other as a bearer / exponent of other values.
Cuzneţov (2013)	The culture of family tolerance includes: adequate and conscious perception of reality, the freedom of prejudice, acceptance of one's own, of others and others as they are, spontaneity of manifestations, simplicity and naturalness; friendship with other personalities that are self-updating; wide circle of human relationships, openness to collaboration; democratic spirit in interactions; willingness to learn from others; the acceptance of other views, philosophical sense of humor; moral beliefs, stable value attitudes.

Goraş-Postica (2004)	tolerance towards the person and tolerance towards deed / behavior, to certain things in the environment are aspects that should be delimited, for according to the principles of tolerance, we respect and accept the person as human individuality, but we will not tolerate indecent behavior, actions that defy moral values and harm others or the rights and freedom of others.
Handrabura (2006)	tolerance is equidistant, reflexive and harmless and involves a certain reaction to intolerance. Tolerant individuals have a strong identity and are open.
Hopkins (2004)	tolerance creates conditions to reduce the use of stereotypes and the acceptance of cultural differences.
Likona (2016)	tolerance - an essential civilizing virtue: "Tolerance as an ethical virtue does not require us to accept other people's beliefs or behaviors. Tolerance does require us to respect every person's human dignity and human rights, including legitimate freedom of conscience. Freedom of conscience, however, is not absolute. It is the liberty to make personal moral choices as long as those choices do not infringe on the rights of others or undermine the common good" (p.2).
Loewen (2013)	Tolerance is the ability to build peace between different peoples. Education opens the way to tolerance and its scope is continuously expanded. This expansion will be tempered by the basic values of human dignity and integrity.
Pâslaru (2009)	Tolerance is a component of the consciousness of identity, inherent in the consciousness of alterity, that is, the awareness and acceptance of the other.
Popescu-Neveanu (1978)	Lack of firmness towards violation of social cohabitation rules, etc.
Reardon (2004)	Tolerance is perceived as a psychological norm of communicative behavior of the individual that allows him to survive in the complex and varied conditions of the human community.
Şahin (2011)	Tolerance gives life to the different societies in which we live. It makes societal diversity possible. For healthy communication, one should always give place for tolerance and reach for the wisdom to tolerate the other. It then becomes necessary to establish a functional communication process based on mutual love, respect, trust and understanding. Tolerance is a culture-related notion.
Stan (2004)	Education always involves positivity, and tolerance, besides making a certain, unproblematic entry in the register of positivity, is even one of the assumptions of education. To be tolerant means to prefer to laugh rather than to criticize in a world where we need to share our joys, to help us in times of distress, to achieve personal or group goals for the social and economic progress of all.
Toes (2013)	Pedagogical tolerance is a professional competence that addresses physiological, psychological and social resistance to the diversity and complexity of influences from the socio-educational environment.
Tucicov-Bogdan (2001)	To practice tolerance does not mean making concessions, being indulgent, or giving up your own beliefs. It is not compulsory, but absolutely necessary in the family, school and society.
Ţurcan (2013)	Education for tolerance is a new dimension of education, which through specific objectives, contents and strategies ensures the development of human values of tolerance (acceptance of diversity, empathy).
Voltaire (2010)	Tolerance - the attribute of humanity

Consciousness and tolerant thinking generates communicative tolerance that involves philosophical, ethical, aesthetic approaches to the basic characteristics of the teacher (in the true sense of the word): psychological stability and balance, spirit of justice, pedagogical tact, humanity, goodness, goodwill, closeness to students, wisdom, patience, receptivity, kindness and

exigency, authenticity (lack of hypocrisy) in communicative interaction with students, nonviolence.

Conclusions

The social interpretation of the tolerance achieved in the context of the current evolution of the theory of tolerance through the axiomatic analysis of this complex and contradictory social phenomenon has profound implications. In contemporary scientific research, the problem of expressing tolerance in pedagogical context is particularly present, being little studied. From these reasoning, the scientific discourse in the pedagogy of tolerance provokes reflections on the value mutations registered in the postmodern society at the level of the national culture (continuously developed in interaction with other cultures), social group (beyond any minority/ ethnic, linguistic, confessional, community, sexual, etc.), evaluating the educational process (on the criterion of its contribution to reducing or even eliminating inequalities/ cultural, linguistic, group, etc.) (Cristea, 2004, p. 55) and would make it possible to understand the socioprofessional architecture of the phenomenon concerned. The theoretical study of tolerance in a social context updates the need to decipher the significance of sociological theories that facilitate the understanding of multiple phenomena of intolerance in the socioprofessional life of teachers and the values of pedagogical tolerance that can be deduced from their scientific essence.

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