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SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL POTENTIAL OF A CRITERION-REFERENCED DIAGNOSTIC APPROACH TO ASSESSING SCHOOL TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL TOLERANCE COMPETENCE

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ANNOTATSIYA:

The article substantiates the scientific and practical possibilities of a criterion-referenced diagnostic approach to assessing the pedagogical tolerance competence of school teachers. The study treats pedagogical tolerance not as passive endurance of differences, but as a professionally regulated capacity to recognise learners' dignity, interpret diversity without stereotyping, maintain dialogic communication, and select non-discriminatory pedagogical actions in situations of disagreement, behavioural difficulty, cultural difference, or unequal educational opportunity. A targeted analytical review, comparative analysis of existing tolerance and teacher–student relationship measures, criterion modelling, and methodological triangulation were used. The main result is a four-criterion diagnostic framework comprising axiological-motivational, cognitive-interpretive, communicative-behavioural, and reflective-regulatory components. For each criterion, observable indicators, evidence sources, diagnostic tasks, and provisional level descriptors are proposed. The model combines self-report, scenario-based professional judgement, structured classroom observation, student feedback, and reflective case analysis; therefore, it reduces the risk of equating declared attitudes with actual professional conduct. The article also proposes an integrated scoring

procedure and explains how diagnostic outcomes can be used for individual professional development, mentoring, school-based quality assurance, and the evaluation of tolerance-oriented training programmes. The scientific significance of the approach lies in linking the value, knowledge, action, and self-regulation dimensions of competence within a single assessment logic. Its practical significance lies in producing development-oriented evidence rather than a punitive label. The framework requires subsequent psychometric validation in representative samples, but it offers a transparent methodological basis for constructing valid instruments in the context of general secondary education..

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary schools operate in conditions of increasing social, cultural, linguistic, cognitive, and behavioural diversity. The teacher is expected not only to transmit subject knowledge but also to organise interaction in which differences do not become grounds for humiliation, exclusion, or unequal educational expectations. In this context, tolerance is a professional requirement rather than an optional personal virtue. The UNESCO Declaration of Principles on Tolerance defines tolerance through respect, acceptance, and appreciation of the diversity of cultures and forms of human expression, while explicitly distinguishing it from indifference or the abandonment of one's convictions [1]. For educational practice, this distinction is essential: a tolerant teacher does not avoid pedagogical demands, but applies them without degrading the learner's dignity and without converting difference into a deficit label.

A competence-based interpretation expands the concept beyond attitude. The Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture organises competence through values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding [2]. Its descriptors demonstrate that democratic and intercultural conduct becomes assessable only when general values are translated into observable performance: listening to different viewpoints, suspending premature judgement, managing ambiguity, cooperating, and critically examining stereotypes [3]. Consequently, pedagogical tolerance competence should be understood as an integrated capacity that regulates teachers' perception, interpretation, communication, decision-making, and reflection in pedagogically sensitive situations.

The methodological problem is that tolerance is often assessed through broad self-report statements. Such instruments are useful for identifying declared orientations, but they are vulnerable to socially desirable responses, especially when the respondent recognises the

normatively preferred answer. The Teacher Tolerance Scale developed by Tanhan and colleagues demonstrates that teacher tolerance can be measured with acceptable reliability and a multidimensional structure [4]. Teven's Teacher Tolerance for Disagreement measure also shows that students' perceptions of teachers' openness to disagreement are connected with perceived teacher caring [5]. These studies provide important foundations, yet a school-based competence assessment requires a wider evidence system that distinguishes what teachers value, what they know, how they act, and how they correct their own actions.

The quality of teacher–student relationships provides an additional empirical basis for such a diagnostic system. Pianta's Student–Teacher Relationship Scale operationalises closeness, conflict, and dependency in dyadic relationships [6]. Longitudinal evidence indicates that early conflictual teacher–child relationships can predict less favourable academic and behavioural trajectories [7], while meta-analytic findings show that affective teacher–student relationships are associated with school engagement and achievement [8]. Relationship quality also affects teacher wellbeing and professional stress [9]. These findings do not imply that tolerance and relationship quality are identical constructs; however, they show that the interpersonal consequences of teachers' communicative and regulatory choices are measurable and educationally significant.

Existing approaches therefore leave a practical gap. A school needs an assessment model that is conceptually grounded, transparent to participants, sensitive to context, and directly connected with professional development. A criterion-referenced diagnostic approach is appropriate because it compares performance with explicitly defined indicators rather than merely ranking teachers against one another. The purpose of this article is to substantiate the scientific and practical potential of such an approach and to develop a diagnostic matrix for assessing school teachers' pedagogical tolerance competence. The research questions are: which components should form the structure of the competence; which indicators make them observable; which methods provide sufficiently diverse evidence; and how can results be interpreted without reducing tolerance to a single questionnaire score?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research used a theoretical-methodological design. The materials included international normative documents on tolerance and democratic competences, validated or conceptually established instruments for measuring teacher tolerance and teacher–student relationships, and peer-reviewed studies concerning tolerance education, relational pedagogy, and teacher professional wellbeing. The analysis was selective rather than exhaustive: sources were included when they contributed directly to one of four tasks—defining the construct, identifying assessable components, selecting evidence sources, or establishing rules for interpretation.

Four mutually connected methods were applied. First, conceptual analysis was used to separate pedagogical tolerance from permissiveness, conflict avoidance, and emotionally neutral endurance. Second, comparative analysis was used to identify the strengths and

limitations of self-report scales, relationship inventories, observation protocols, and situational judgement tasks. Third, criterion modelling transformed the construct into criteria, indicators, evidence sources, and level descriptors. Fourth, methodological triangulation was used to combine evidence produced by different participants and procedures. This choice follows the assumption that competence is manifested through consistency between declared values, professional reasoning, observable behaviour, and reflective correction.

The design was governed by five methodological principles. The principle of construct relevance requires each diagnostic task to measure a defined component of pedagogical tolerance rather than general professional popularity. The principle of contextuality requires scenarios and observations to reflect authentic school situations. The principle of multiple evidence requires at least three independent sources before a summative conclusion is reached. The principle of fairness requires that indicators do not penalise teachers for legitimate cultural or stylistic differences. The developmental principle requires results to be presented as a profile of strengths and needs, accompanied by recommendations for professional learning. The proposed scoring boundaries are therefore provisional and must be verified through pilot studies, reliability analysis, factor analysis, and examination of criterion-related validity.

RESULTS

The analysis resulted in a working definition and a four-criterion structure. Pedagogical tolerance competence is defined as a teacher's integrated professional capacity to recognise the equal dignity of learners, interpret difference without discriminatory simplification, sustain respectful and demanding dialogue, make fair pedagogical decisions in situations of disagreement or diversity, and reflectively regulate personal reactions. This definition contains a normative core, but it is operational because every element can be connected with evidence.

The axiological-motivational criterion expresses the teacher's orientation toward human dignity, educational equity, non-discrimination, and dialogue. It includes a readiness to understand the reasons behind a learner's behaviour before imposing a judgement, a willingness to hear an alternative viewpoint, and motivation to preserve demanding but respectful interaction. The cognitive-interpretive criterion comprises knowledge of tolerance, stereotypes, prejudice, inclusive education, conflict dynamics, ethical communication, and the distinction between accepting a person and approving every action. It also includes the ability to analyse ambiguous situations and recognise how expectations may be influenced by labels or prior assumptions.

The communicative-behavioural criterion concerns performance in interaction. Its indicators include dialogic listening, clear explanation without humiliation, proportional response to misconduct, equal distribution of participation opportunities, constructive treatment of disagreement, culturally sensitive examples, and the use of language that separates the learner's personality from the evaluation of a specific action. The reflective-

regulatory criterion concerns awareness of emotional triggers, control of impulsive reactions, review of one's own decisions, readiness to acknowledge an error, and deliberate adjustment of communication strategies. This component is crucial because tolerant conduct cannot be reduced to stable benevolence; it must also function under fatigue, time pressure, conflict, and uncertainty.

Table 1 presents the diagnostic matrix. It is designed as a modular framework: schools or researchers may adapt individual tasks to age groups and local conditions, while preserving the correspondence between criterion, indicator, and evidence source.

Table 1. Criterion-referenced diagnostic matrix for pedagogical tolerance competence

Criterion	Core indicators	Preferred methods	Diagnostic evidence	Developmental interpretation
Axiological-motivational	Dignity, equity, dialogue, rejection of discriminatory labels	Controlled self-report; value-ranking; interview	Consistency of choices and justifications	Ethical orientation for inclusive conduct
Cognitive-interpretive	Tolerance concepts, stereotypes, contextual interpretation, ethical limits	Knowledge test; vignette; error detection	Conceptual accuracy and recognition of hidden bias	Conceptual gaps affecting judgement
Communicative-behavioural	Respectful language, listening, fair disagreement response, participation equity	Observation; situational judgement; student feedback	Actions in authentic or simulated interaction; evidence convergence	Translation of values into behaviour
Reflective-regulatory	Self-regulation, trigger awareness, decision review, communication correction	Reflective diary; critical incident; interview	Depth of reflection, alternatives, behavioural adjustment	Capacity for sustained improvement

The matrix implies a staged diagnostic procedure. At the preparatory stage, the purpose of assessment is communicated, the criteria are explained, and confidentiality rules are established. At the evidence-collection stage, the teacher completes a short self-report and a set of scenario-based tasks; an observer records behaviour during at least two lessons or comparable educational activities; students provide anonymous feedback using age-appropriate statements; and the teacher analyses one critical incident. At the integration stage, assessors compare evidence across sources. A high self-report score accompanied by repeated observation of dismissive or humiliating responses is treated as inconsistency requiring further analysis rather than averaged into a deceptively moderate score.

For practical use, each indicator may be scored on a four-point scale: 0—evidence of a professionally unacceptable response; 1—fragmentary or unstable manifestation; 2—generally appropriate manifestation requiring occasional support; 3—consistent, context-sensitive, and reflectively justified manifestation. Scores are first calculated within each criterion, producing a profile rather than a single label. An integrated index may then be calculated as the arithmetic mean of the four criterion scores. Equal weighting is recommended at the initial stage because there is insufficient empirical evidence to justify differential weights. Provisional interpretation can use the following intervals: 2.40–3.00, advanced; 1.70–2.39, functional; 1.00–1.69, developing; below 1.00, risk zone. These boundaries are methodological hypotheses and should not be treated as national norms before validation.

The criterion-referenced format has several scientific advantages. It improves content validity because each task is tied to an explicit indicator. It supports diagnostic validity because a low result can be traced to a specific component—for example, insufficient knowledge of implicit bias, weak emotional regulation, or limited dialogic technique. It also makes longitudinal assessment possible: the same criteria can be used before and after training, while tasks are varied to prevent mechanical repetition. Finally, it allows researchers to test structural hypotheses. If the four-component model is valid, scores within criteria should show internal coherence, and the criteria should be related but not redundant.

The practical possibilities are equally significant. At the individual level, the profile can guide a professional development plan. A teacher with strong values but weak communicative performance may need coaching, video-based reflection, and rehearsal of conflict scenarios. A teacher with adequate interaction skills but limited conceptual understanding may benefit from modules on stereotypes, inclusive education, and ethical decision-making. At the school level, aggregated anonymous profiles can inform staff development priorities without publicly ranking teachers. At the programme level, the matrix can evaluate whether tolerance-oriented courses change only declared attitudes or also professional reasoning and behaviour.

The model is compatible with the bidimensional approach proposed by Guțu and Boghian, which links the development of teachers' own tolerance with their capacity to cultivate tolerance among learners [10]. It also responds to systematic-review findings that

tolerance education should involve virtual environments, multiple stakeholders, behavioural outcomes, and stronger use of digital tools and analytics [11]. In diagnostic practice, however, analytics should remain subordinate to pedagogical judgement. Frequency of messages, speaking time, or disciplinary interventions may indicate patterns, but they cannot independently establish tolerance because identical numerical patterns may have different meanings in different classrooms.

ILLUSTRATIVE INTERPRETATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAY

An illustrative profile demonstrates how the framework may support professional decisions without imitating empirical results. Suppose a teacher receives criterion means of 2.7 for axiological-motivational orientation, 2.1 for cognitive-interpretive competence, 1.5 for communicative-behavioural performance, and 1.8 for reflective-regulatory capacity. The integrated mean would fall within the functional range, yet the profile would reveal a significant behavioural weakness. A conventional single score could conceal this discrepancy. In the criterion-referenced model, the conclusion would emphasise that the teacher endorses tolerant values and possesses basic conceptual knowledge, but does not yet enact them consistently during demanding interaction. The recommended response would therefore focus on observation-based coaching rather than on another general lecture about tolerance.

A development plan may be organised as a short cycle. In the first phase, the teacher reviews two recorded or observed episodes in which disagreement, correction, or unequal participation occurred. In the second phase, the teacher reconstructs alternative responses using scripts that preserve both educational demand and learner dignity. In the third phase, the alternatives are rehearsed through role play or microteaching. In the fourth phase, a follow-up observation examines a limited set of indicators, such as interruption patterns, response to an incorrect answer, and opportunities offered to quieter learners. The final reflection compares intended and observed changes. This procedure converts diagnostic language into actionable professional learning.

For programme evaluation, the same logic can distinguish superficial from substantive effects. A tolerance-oriented course may increase the accuracy of conceptual answers immediately after instruction while producing little change in classroom interaction. If only a knowledge test is used, the programme will appear successful. A multi-source criterion profile can show whether improvement extends to scenario judgement, observed communication, student experience, and self-regulation. Repeated measurement should use equivalent rather than identical tasks, and assessors should be blinded to pre-training results where feasible to reduce expectancy effects.

At school level, individual results should remain confidential, whereas aggregated data may be used to identify organisational conditions. If many teachers show difficulty in the reflective-regulatory criterion, the issue may be connected with workload, insufficient collegial support, or a punitive observation culture rather than solely with personal deficits.

If student feedback consistently indicates unequal participation across classes, school-wide work on inclusive questioning and discussion design may be justified. Thus, diagnostic interpretation moves from individual correction to analysis of the environment in which tolerance competence is expected to operate.

Implementation should proceed through pilot validation. The first pilot should test item clarity and cultural relevance through cognitive interviews with teachers. The second should estimate inter-rater agreement for observation indicators and examine whether student feedback items are understood similarly across age groups. A larger field study should then analyse internal structure, reliability, convergent relations with established tolerance and relationship measures, and discriminant relations with unrelated constructs. Only after these stages should stable cut scores or weighted indices be considered. This phased pathway preserves the practical usefulness of the model while preventing premature standardisation.

DISCUSSION

The proposed approach changes the object of assessment. Instead of asking whether a teacher is generally tolerant, it asks how professional tolerance is manifested in specific functions: recognising dignity, interpreting difference, communicating under disagreement, regulating emotion, and revising decisions. This shift is important because global personal labels have weak developmental value. A teacher may demonstrate high tolerance toward cultural differences yet respond rigidly to behavioural nonconformity, or may use respectful language while unconsciously distributing attention and expectations unequally. A criterion profile preserves these distinctions.

The model also addresses the gap between attitude and conduct. Self-report is retained because internal orientation matters, but it is not granted exclusive authority. Student feedback captures the recipient's experience; observation captures visible behaviour; situational tasks capture professional reasoning under controlled conditions; and reflection captures the capacity for self-correction. No single source is sufficient. Students may interpret necessary pedagogical limits as intolerance, observers may miss the history of a relationship, and teachers may provide socially desirable self-descriptions. Triangulation does not eliminate error, but it makes contradictions visible and therefore diagnostically useful.

A further issue concerns the boundary between tolerance and permissiveness. The proposed criteria require respectful insistence on educational norms. A teacher who ignores bullying, academic dishonesty, or systematic disruption cannot be considered professionally tolerant, because such non-intervention sacrifices the dignity and learning rights of others. Conversely, intolerance is not defined by the mere use of sanctions; it appears when sanctions are disproportionate, humiliating, inconsistent, identity-based, or imposed without an opportunity for explanation and restoration. Scenario-based tasks are especially valuable for testing this boundary.

Ethical safeguards are essential. Diagnostic results should not be used as a single basis for employment decisions until instruments demonstrate reliability, validity, measurement

invariance, and resistance to manipulation. Student feedback must be anonymous and developmentally appropriate. Observers require calibration, and teachers should have access to the criteria before assessment. The teacher must also be able to comment on contextual factors and contest factual inaccuracies. These safeguards are consistent with a development-oriented view of competence assessment and reduce the risk that tolerance becomes an ideological or administrative label.

The main limitation of the present study is that the framework is theoretically derived and has not yet undergone psychometric testing in a representative sample of school teachers. Future research should construct an item bank, conduct cognitive interviews, pilot the observation protocol, estimate inter-rater reliability, examine factor structure, and test convergent and discriminant validity. Criterion-related validity may be investigated through associations with classroom climate, student perceptions of fairness, conflict frequency, and teacher–student relationship measures. Longitudinal studies should determine whether improvements in diagnostic scores correspond to stable changes in classroom practice.

CONCLUSION

A criterion-referenced diagnostic approach provides a scientifically coherent and practically usable basis for assessing school teachers' pedagogical tolerance competence. Its central advantage is the transition from an abstract moral judgement to a transparent system of criteria, indicators, evidence sources, and developmental interpretations. The four proposed criteria—axiological-motivational, cognitive-interpretive, communicative-behavioural, and reflective-regulatory—represent complementary dimensions of professional competence. Their assessment through self-report, situational judgement, classroom observation, student feedback, and reflective analysis makes it possible to identify both strengths and specific development needs. The framework should be treated as a model for empirical validation rather than a final standard. After psychometric and contextual verification, it can support teacher education, school mentoring, professional certification, and evaluation of tolerance-oriented pedagogical programmes while preserving the primary purpose of diagnosis: improvement of educational interaction and protection of every learner's dignity.

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