

Attitudes toward Cultural Diversity: A Study of Russian Teachers

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Abstract : The paper presents results of an exploratory study of teachers' social attitudes toward ethnic and religious diversity, and variables influencing such attitudes. The study was conducted in Russia and is focused on school teachers, given their special role in culturally diverse modern societies. Using the social distance scale (adapted from Bogardus, 1926), we sampled 355 school teachers from two Russian regions known for their high cultural diversity: Moscow and Moscow region, Kazan and Republic of Tatarstan, and measured teacher attitudes toward large religious and ethnic groups (including migrants). The findings showed that teachers hold mostly tolerant attitudes with respect to members belonging to culturally and religiously diverse groups. The social distance between respondents and native residents of their region was minimal. Social distance was larger with respect to such ethnic groups as migrants from the Caucasian and Central Asian countries. The analysis of perception of different religious groups also showed positive attitudes toward these groups and readiness to interact with them. Teacher attitudes were not related to their age or ethnicity. The findings indicated that there was a significant correlation between social distance and the region of residence on the one hand, and between social distance and the degree of social interaction on the other. The results of this study will be used to develop a large-scale study to contribute to a better understanding of teacher attitudes toward immigrant students in public schools.

Keywords : attitudes of teachers, cultural diversity, migrants, social distance

Conference Title : ICCIC 2019 : International Conference on Cross-Cultural and Intercultural Communication

Conference Location : Los Angeles, United States

Conference Dates : October 30-31, 2019