

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Rethinking Citizenship Education in European Migration Societies Political Strategies - Social Changes - Educational Concepts

Conference Paper

Contribution to Workshop 2, Session 1: Remembrance, Responsibility and Future: Citizenship Education and European Public Memory

“The feet of the eagle are...? Red. Integration tests for immigrants^{*}”
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Recent discussions about integration tests and integration courses in France, Germany and the Netherlands have shown that these tests and courses pursue very different objectives although, on a general scale, they all ask for more adaptation from the side of the immigrants. This corresponds to recent changes. Yet even in the middle of the 1990s claiming such efforts of adaptation (participation in a language course, knowledge of the host society and of a citizen's rights and duties) from migrants would have been unthinkable in many European countries. Today, however, it is possible to observe a convergence of such practices in Europe.

Hence, besides Germany, France and the Netherlands, other countries have started to set up integration requirements for different categories of immigrants: 1) those who want to naturalise, 2) those who want to access permanent residence and 3) those who want to immigrate. Setting up integration requirements for the latter is the most recent development in Europe. Although Germany already introduced language tests for ethnic Germans in 1997, this remained a very special category of immigrants who obtain German nationality shortly after their immigration. Rather contrary to this very special policy that includes language courses in the regions of origin, the Netherlands have, in March 2006, introduced integration tests, which candidates for family reunification as well as other potential immigrants have to pass in their country of origin before being allowed to immigrate to the Netherlands. In a new German draft law, this idea of integration tests for family migrants in the country of origin has been taken up, and also French presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy has announced that if he is elected president, he will introduce a measure comparable to the Dutch one. As to access to permanent residence, a study undertaken for the European Commission¹ has shown that in the year 2000, Germany was the only country within the EU 15 that linked permanent residence to a basic knowledge of the

^{*} This presentation at the NECE-conference in Lisbon (26-28 April 2007) is partly based on a contribution published in German language in: Baringhorst, Sigrid/ Hollifield, James F./ Hunger, Uwe (eds.), Herausforderung Migration - Perspektiven der vergleichenden Politikwissenschaft, Festschrift für Dietrich Thränhardt, Münster, 2006, pp. 79-103.

¹ Groenendijk, Kees/ Guild, Elspeth/ Barzilay, Robin (2000), Le statut juridique des ressortissants de pays tiers résidents de longue durée dans un Etat membre de l'Union européenne, Rapport pour la Commission Européenne, publié en 2001.

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German language. Today, however, all three countries compared here have linked access to permanent residence to certain integration measures and conditions. Last but not least, naturalization is a rather classical moment when integration conditions such as language skills or, as it is formulated in the French nationality act "assimilation to the French community", are set up.

However, such integration tests are not always combined with integration courses. Especially the integration tests in the country of origin, newly introduced by the Dutch government renounce on any proposition of a language or a civic education course; the candidate for immigration has to prepare for the test alone. Hence, it can be argued that tests and courses or tests accompanied by courses mainly aim at citizenship education while language and integration tests without courses such as tests in the country of origin pursue the objective of immigration control.

The content of the courses mainly concentrates on three issues which are 1) knowledge of everyday life and customs in the receiving countries, 2) rights and duties of a citizen of the host country or of an inhabitant of the receiving country and 3) formal knowledge such as information about the political system or about the history of the receiving society. Information and knowledge of everyday life (1) aims at the mobilization of the immigrant and at helping him to find his way in common social interactions. It contains information about using public transport, about housing, education, work or the health system. Furthermore, information about daily life can also comprise basic customs or rules of politeness. Rights and duties (2) are transmitted in different ways in the three countries: French civic education courses for adult migrants use a lot of text and refer to universal rights and duties such as the general declaration of human rights as a basis for individual rights and duties including the equality between men and women. The new Dutch film for autodidactic preparation in the home countries, on the contrary, does not talk much about norms and values but rather works with the normative force of images, transmitting norms and values through filmed interaction between Dutchmen and immigrants. In Germany, still another way is pursued by treating norms and values as an issue of discussion among integration course participants, who are asked to discuss and compare their own experiences and opinions. Finally, formal knowledge contains information about national symbols, about the political system and about the main historical steps of the respective nation state.

Besides the differences concerning the didactics and the emphasis put as regards the contents, there are several resemblances between the three countries: First, in all three countries, norms and values are part of the citizenship education. However, none of the countries require that specific French, Dutch or German norms and values should be respected by immigrants. On the contrary, the norms and values that are part of the course are 'restricted' to universal or general liberal norms and values such as the respect of democracy, freedom of the individual and general law-abidance. The paradox, then, is a strong public rhetoric about the necessity that migrants integrate or even assimilate in the sense that they should not only know about certain values but make them their own (e.g. the respect of homosexuality) on the one hand and real requirements that are not migrant-specific in the sense that they refer to laws and principles that apply to all nationals as well on the other hand. The only migrant-specific requirements that have been formulated in France, the Netherlands and Germany are language requirements or, in the case of the French naturalization procedure, the requirement of assimilation to the French community.

To conclude, it has to be underlined that integration courses and integration tests play, above all, a very important symbolic role since they send out a message to the receiving society about the straightforwardness of the state integration policy as well as a message of strictness towards the immigrants who are told that they are expected to undertake import efforts of integration. However, the reality of the courses and programs in France, Germany and the Netherlands shows that there are limits to a policy of assimilation. Instead, the three countries compared in this context approach Habermas' notion of constitutional patriotism.² This approach could even be enforced if the countries not only presented their liberal values as an ultimate cultural heritage but also as an open political project which is attractive beyond cultural bonds. Christian Joppke and Ewa Morawska³ point to the same phenomenon of limited assimilation and explain it as a result of liberal nation-states dealing with

² Habermas, Jürgen (1990), *Die nachholende Revolution*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 147 ff.

³ Joppke, Christian/ Morawska, Ewa (2003), *Integrating immigrants in liberal nation-states: policies and practices*, in: Joppke/ Morawska (eds.) (2003), *Toward assimilation and citizenship. Immigrants in liberal nation-states*, Basingstoke.

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migration. From their point of view, liberal nation-states because they are liberal cannot restrict immigrants' rights to the free choice of religion or one of the many other individual rights which finally creates some sort of *de facto* multiculturalism.