IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION IN FEDERAL COUNTRIES: LANGUAGE SKILLS, CIVIC KNOWLEDGE AND IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

A number of countries have adopted laws or developed programs to further newcomers' language skills and the adoption of core civic and social values. Drawing on a study of seven federal countries sponsored by the Forum of Federations, this article addresses some of the main policy instruments used for language learning and building civic knowledge – familiarity with the core values, institutions and history of the receiving society. It includes a brief discussion of how government action (notably the education system) is used to influence the identity of newcomers and their descendants, including within Quebec and other subnational communities.

RÉSUMÉ

Un certain nombre de pays ont adopté des lois ou développé des programmes pour améliorer les compétences linguistiques des nouveaux arrivants et pour favoriser leur adoption des valeurs fondamentales civiques et sociales. S'appuyant sur une étude de sept pays fédéraux parrainée par le Forum des fédérations, cet article aborde quelques-uns des principaux instruments utilisés pour l'apprentissage et l'acquisition de connaissances civiques – la familiarité avec les valeurs fondamentales, les institutions et l'histoire de la société d'accueil. Il comprend une brève discussion de la façon dont l'action du gouvernement (notamment le système éducatif) est utilisée pour influencer l'identité des nouveaux arrivants et leurs descendants, y compris au Québec et dans d'autres communautés nationales.

The integration of immigrants has become an important, sometimes contentious, public policy issue, even in countries whose flows of newcomers are only a fraction of Canada's. In some cases, governments have enacted legal measures intended to ensure that immigrants accept the receiving society's core values. The Netherlands was probably the 'first mover' in this regard, and some of its requirements – such as civic knowledge tests administered outside the country to applicants for family reunification – have been labelled "integration from abroad" (Joppke 2007). Although a number of other countries have adopted laws to encourage the adoption of core civic and social values, more often they use multiple policy instruments to foster immigrant integration. This fits with the fairly widely accepted view that immigrant integration is multi-faceted, comprising economic, social, civic and political dimensions; and that the process continues for quite some time after arrival in a new country – even beyond naturalization.[1]

In federal countries, policy making in this area gives rise to additional questions. Which order of government – federal, subnational (i.e. provinces, states, etc.), local – is

best suited to provide programs and services directed at the different dimensions of immigrant integration? Does the federal government fund the activities of subnational and local governments; and, if so, what means are used? In federal countries with more than one language group (often referred to as multination federations), do regulations and programs vary among the subnational units? These are some of the issues addressed in a recently completed Forum of Federations project on immigrant integration in Canada, Australia, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Switzerland and the United States. (Joppke and Seidle 2012).

This article draws on the main findings of this project. The first section, on language training, highlights some of the different approaches used among these countries. The second section addresses programs to build civic knowledge – newcomers' familiarity with the core values, institutions and history of the receiving society. The final section discusses briefly how these programs and others (notably the education system) are used in efforts to mould identity, including within Quebec and other subnational communities.

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Immigrants' competence in the language, or one of the languages, of their new country is crucial to their economic, social and civic integration. Even countries (such as Canada and Australia) that select a large share of their immigrants and test language at the application stage provide language training for many new arrivals. In some other federal countries, language learning programs may not be targeted solely at immigrants, but at least some newcomers (including children) are reached through these avenues.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has funded for decades a range of 'settlement services' through its Integration Program; total spending in 2009-10 was $966 million (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2010). CIC administers settlement services for immigrants in seven of the 10 provinces. Language training, a major component of the Settlement Program, is delivered by service provider organizations (SPOs), many of which (but not all) are non-profit. Although attendance is not obligatory, the programs reach a significant proportion of immigrants: in 2009-10, 56,823 newcomers received language training under CIC programs (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2010). Under its 1991 accord with the federal government, the Quebec government, in addition to acquiring the responsibility for selecting all economic immigrants to the province, took over reception and integration services for new arrivals.[2] The federal government provides it with an annual grant.[3] In the late 1990s, administration of settlement services was also devolved to Manitoba and British Columbia. Language training was expanded in these two provinces, and a number of innovations in programming were introduced (Seidle 2010). However, in April 2012 Jason Kenney, the federal immigration minister, announced that the federal government would, within the following two years, resume management of federally funded settlement programs in British Columbia and Manitoba.

In Australia, the budget of the Commonwealth government's immigration department for settlement, citizenship and social cohesion programs was $A276 million in 2008-09. Delivery is largely managed by state governments, with nongovernmental organizations playing a significant role. One of the most important federally funded programs is the Adult Migrant English Program, which provides for language training upon arrival, followed by employment-related English courses.

Although Germany took decades to accept that it had become a country of immigration, this is now reflected in policy. Following adoption of a new immigration law in 2005, a new national integration course – one part of which is directed at language learning and the other at civic knowledge – was introduced. As the *Länder* governments are responsible for administration in most policy fields, it was expected they would deliver the courses. However, they declined to provide funding, so management authority was assigned to a federal office. Participation is usually obligatory for new immigrants from outside the European Union. The course is also open to people who have lived in Germany for a time but have not yet learned sufficient German. Qualifying immigrants receive up to 900 hours of language training (delivered by a range of organizations outside government), the objective of which is to "teach [them] about the language and the circumstances in Germany such that they are able, without the help or mediation of third parties, to deal with all day-to-day matters independently" (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* 2008). Between 2005 and 2008, 484,322 people participated in the integration courses (Heckmann 2010).

Unlike Canada, Australia and Germany, the United States federal government does not have a program devoted explicitly to language training for immigrants. However, as Gary Freeman and Stuart Tendler explain in their chapter for the above-noted book, certain federal programs support the learning of English as a second language (ESL). For example, under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the US Department of Education allocates formula grants to the states, which have flexibility to prioritize spending. As of 2007, this program funded at least 3,100 adult education programs nationwide, with

more than half of the 2.4 million participants enrolled in programs for ESL education. Another funding program, for English language instruction in the public education system, is governed by the 2001 *No Child Left Behind Act*. Again, the US Department of Education provides grants to state governments; the latter then distribute grants to local education authorities. The program's 2010 budget was $750 million. The governments of some states, especially those with large immigrant populations, have language training programs that specifically target immigrants, as do some of the larger cities and even some smaller centres.[4]

It is not only in the US that the school system plays an important role in language acquisition for the children of immigrants. Except in cases where public education is offered in more than one language, children from a migration background are most often schooled in the language of the country or the subnational unit (e.g. in French in the French-speaking cantons in Switzerland and in German in those where that is the official language).[5] This has important implications for the children's overall integration and even their sense of identity (this is discussed further below).

CIVIC LEARNING

Many countries have programs aimed at familiarizing immigrants with the values, ways of life and institutions of their new country. Integration courses, which in some cases are obligatory, have become a fairly popular avenue in Western Europe. In other cases, governments provide less formal services directed at familiarizing immigrants with their new environment and helping them build links with the receiving society.

In Canada, CIC has long had voluntary programs that fund SPOs to help immigrants integrate into their community; in addition to language training, these include reception and orientation services, translation and interpretation, employment assistance and counselling. One of the 'streams' under the Settlement Program is Community Connections. In 2009-10, 8,292 newcomers participated in activities to be better connected to their communities in the seven provinces where CIC still manages settlement programs (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2010).[6] Civic learning also occurs when immigrants prepare for naturalization. The 53-page study guide opens as follows: "Canadian citizens have rights and responsibilities. These come to us from our history, are secured by Canadian law, and reflect our shared traditions, identity, and values (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2011)." According to the guide, responsibilities of citizenship include obeying the law, voting, helping others in the community and protecting the environment and Canada's heritage.

Immigrants in Germany who have completed the language training described above take the orientation course. Participants spend 45 hours learning about democratic values and the legal system, culture and history of Germany. The objectives of the course include the following:

- developing an understanding of the German political system;
- developing a positive assessment of the German state;
- teaching about rights and obligations as a resident and citizen;
- enabling immigrants to participate in community life.[7]

In contrast to the Canadian and German models, the US federal government has virtually no dedicated programming directed at civic learning. One exception is a program under which the Office of Citizenship provides grants to a range of organizations for immigrant integration initiatives, with a focus on preparing for naturalization. In financial year 2010, US$11 million was provided, with about $7 million for citizenship education, including civics-focused ESL instruction, citizenship instruction, resources such as textbooks, language software and computers, and assistance with naturalization applications. Approximately 45 grants of up to $100,000 were available for locally based citizenship service providers. For a country with such a large population and high immigrant flows, this is a modest level of activity. It is nevertheless supplemented by a range of programs sponsored by state and local governments, foundations and civic organizations, some of which focus on the role of communities in welcoming newcomers.[8]

The Belgian federal government has no overall immigrant integration policy. Rather, as Marco Martiniello recounts in his chapter for the above-noted book, the regions and linguistic communities have a range of programs. Flanders has a two-part integration course that is obligatory for newcomers. The first phase is comprised of Dutch language training, social orientation (covering the norms and values of Flemish society) and career counselling. The second phase, for those who succeed in the first, includes professional training and advanced Dutch classes. French-speaking Wallonia has no integration course, but regional integration centres provide language training and labour market and social orientation services. In Brussels, the French-speaking part of the government provides services (including language training) for newcomers and their children, and the Flemish part has an integration course that is similar to the one in Flanders but is not obligatory.

Looking to some of the other federal countries studied in the Forum of Federations project, further variety is evident. Switzerland, like Belgium, does not have a countrywide integration policy. Some of the cantons and

larger cities have programs, but there are no integration courses such as the one in Flanders. Further examples of policy difference among federal countries could be provided. It is nevertheless fair to observe that, despite growing interest in the civic integration of immigrants, approaches vary considerably – in part, a reflection of whether or not the federal government is taking an active policy and funding role.

IDENTITY

Although immigrant integration policies may underline the importance of developing newcomers' capacity to become engaged with the broader community, they often also reflect an implicit objective: building a sense of belonging to their recently adopted country. In federations where more than one language has official status, the situation is often more complex: the federal and subnational governments (or at least some of the latter) may both have policies aimed at identity formation on the part of immigrants and their descendants. This has been the case in Quebec and Catalonia.

Since the late 1960s, various steps have been taken to safeguard the primacy of the French language in Quebec. One of the most contentious parts of this campaign concerned access to public schools for the children of immigrants. For decades, a considerable share of immigrant parents sent their children to English-language schools. As immigration to Quebec rose, Francophone leaders began to argue for measures to direct these children to French schools. Initial efforts at regulation were highly controversial, even leading to violent clashes in the Saint-Léonard neighbourhood of Montreal (with its large concentration of Italian-background residents). Following the election of Quebec's first *Parti québécois* (sovereignist) government, Bill 101 was adopted in 1977. One of its key provisions stipulated that the children of immigrants to Quebec must attend French public schools (there are some exceptions, notably for those who have at least one parent who was educated in English in Canada).

This important component of Bill 101 has been a major instrument of Quebec's continuing *francisation*. But there are potential impacts beyond language. Research has suggested that the children of immigrants who have gone to school in French, sometimes referred to as "*génération 101*," have become more supportive of the *Parti québécois* and of Quebec sovereignty. An empirical study based on a 2006 survey of francophone, anglophone and allophone Quebec youth[9] suggests there has not been such a clear shift. According to Éric Bélanger and Andrea Perrella (2008), 62 percent of young francophones were in favour of sovereignty-partnership,[10] compared to 29 percent and 14 percent for allophones and Anglophones respectively.

The Canadian federal government, for its part, has numerous programs that seek to promote Canadian identity in Quebec (as elsewhere). According to one assessment: "It is evident that ethnocultural minorities are targeted directly by both levels of government. Their loyalty is solicited, politicized and ultimately instrumentalized by politicians who use them for their own aims of consolidating the identity within their respective spaces." (Labelle and Rocher 2009: 74) It is difficult to measure the impact of the two governments' activities on the complex process of identity formation. For now, a large share of Quebecers from an immigrant background seem to combine a relatively strong Canadian identity with a Quebec identity. According to a 2010 survey, 59 percent of allophones selected one of the following three categories: Canadian only, Canadian first and also a Quebecer, and equally a Quebecer and a Canadian. In contrast, 28 percent of francophones fell into the three categories (for further details, see Table 1).[11]

Table 1: Identification of Quebecers by first language

	FRANCOPHONE	ANGLOPHONE	ALLOPHONE
Quebecer only	31%	2%	6%
Quebecer first, also Canadian	39%	12%	19%
Equally Quebecer and Canadian	20%	21%	26%
Canadian first, also Quebecer	7%	45%	20%
Canadian only	1%	18%	13%

The question, asked in a web panel survey carried out in December 2012, was: "People have different ways of defining themselves. Do you consider yourself to be: [five choices as in table]?" Source: Jedwab 2010.

Some see a similar dynamic in Catalonia. In his chapter for the above-noted book, Ricard Zapata-Barrero recounts that in 2009 the Catalan Parliament passed an immigrant reception bill aimed at providing immigrants with the capabilities to be autonomous within Catalan society. It thus recognizes the need for immigrants to have a minimum ability in Catalan and to acquire knowledge of the government, history, politics, economy and culture of Catalonia. The education system also has potential impacts on the identities of children from a migration background: as in Quebec, they have no choice but to pursue their schooling in Catalan. For Zapata-Barrero, such measures to protect the Catalan language (which apply not only to immigrants), are a condition for maintaining the considerable capacity for self-government Catalonia has acquired during Spain's federalization process.

In conclusion, it is evident that federal countries such as the ones mentioned in this article have chosen quite a variety of routes to promote (actively or otherwise) improved language skills and civic learning for immigrants. This variation may be seen as a logical response to differences in local conditions such as language and public values – one of the purported strengths of federalism. However, this may result in inequities if immigrants have considerably different rights (and obligations) depending on where they settle in a given country. In this regard, the key consideration is not which order of government administers the programs. Rather, it seems important to strike a balance between legitimate policy variation and common objectives for the country as a whole. In the absence of the latter and a reasonable level of coordination among the governments involved, even well-designed programs may not have the intended impact.

NOTES

[1] For an expansion of this view of immigrant integration and a discussion of relevant studies and reports, see the "Introduction" in Joppke and Seidle [2012].

[2] Starting in the 1960s, Quebec policy-makers, concerned about the province's slowing population growth, sought to attract more immigrants. A key argument was that the Quebec government was better suited to select newcomers who could be expected to integrate into Quebec society. A modest agreement with the federal government in 1971, followed by two others, led to the 1991 accord. Under the latter, the federal government can overrule candidates selected by Quebec only for serious security or medical reasons.

[3] In contrast to the situation in the other provinces, most of Quebec's language training is provided by public servants; only about 7 percent of the Quebec government's spending on this goes to nongovernmental organizations (Reichhold 2011).

[4] Such as Littleton, Colorado; see Jones-Correa, *All Immigration is Local*, 17.

[5] Although immigrant parents have some choice in the three officially bilingual (German-French cantons). In Belgium, the children of immigrants attend Flemish schools in Flanders and French schools in Wallonia. In Brussels, which is a bilingual (though largely French-speaking) region, they have the choice of public education in French or Flemish.

[6] For example, funding is provided for activities that introduce newcomers to 'host families' who help them improve their language ability, learn about Canadian society and develop networks. Other activities that qualify for funding are youth leadership projects, conversation circles and mentoring (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2009).

[7] *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*, "Concept for a Nationwide Integration Course": 24-25.

[8] A number of examples are provided in Jones-Correa, *All Immigration is Local.*

[9] Allophones are Quebecers whose first language learned and still understood is neither French nor English. The age group for the 1212 respondents was 18 to 34 years.

[10] The option that was put to Quebecers in the 1995 referendum.

[11] A recent study (Bilodeau, Nevitte and White 2010) used a number of survey questions to explore the federal and provincial loyalties of immigrants in Quebec. The authors found that immigrants who speak English or another language at home are more oriented to the federal than to the Quebec government. Those who speak French at home (which would include some immigrants from France and North African countries) have political loyalties similar to those of the native-born francophone population. Using results from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, Keith Banting and Stuart Soroka (2012) find that racial-minority immigrants to Quebec have considerably stronger attachment to Canada than to the province; however, there is a notable decline in the former attachment among the second generation. The book by Denise Helly and Nicholas van Schendel (2001), which is based on extensive qualitative research, provides a nuanced analysis of the sense of belonging of immigrants to Quebec from various backgrounds.

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