



This paper is taken from

Teaching Citizenship

***Proceedings of the seventh Conference of the
Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe
Thematic Network***

London: CiCe 2005

edited by Alistair Ross, published in London by CiCe, ISBN 1 85377 389 1

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Rone, S. (2005) The pedagogical aspect of multicultural civic integration in Latvia, in Ross, A. (ed) Teaching Citizenship. London: CiCe, pp 387-394.

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This paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CiCe Network.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Acknowledgements:

This is taken from the book that is a collection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- Cass Mitchell-Riddle, head of the CiCe Coordination Unit at the time of the conference, and for the initial stages of editing this book
- Lindsay Melling and Gitesh Gohel of IPSE, London Metropolitan University
- London Metropolitan University, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The SOCRATES programme and the personnel of the Department of Education and Culture of the European Commission for their support and encouragement.

The pedagogical aspect of multicultural civic integration in Latvia

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In the 1920s and 1930s the state of Latvia gave its citizens the opportunity to realise the goals and ideals of renaissance and promoted the growth of the national self-confidence of the whole nation. The roots of public integration were created by ensuring free and state-guaranteed primary and secondary education in their native language for the children and youth of minorities in the country, but after May 1934 the national ideology sometimes demonstrated exaggerated features of nationalism.

After independence was regained in 1991 the need for a Latvian upbringing was very often regarded as a key issue, but it was understood in the way that it had been during the time of the First Latvian Republic, when – as in many European countries – the dominant social ideal was of national priorities and a dominant strong national ideology. However, in the Europe which experienced and survived the second World War, the Holocaust, and outrageous ethnic conflicts in Bosnia and Serbia, respect and tolerance towards other cultures are highly valued. As Latvia joins the European Union it is of great importance to overcome the ethnic divisions and alienations in Latvian society and evaluate the pedagogical aspect of multicultural civic integration in the country in the process of the formation of a united nation.

Civic integration in Latvia is the awareness of belonging to state society and willingness to contribute professional and social activity to promote and facilitate unity and creative co-operation among all nationalities and social groups in the country.

Smith (1997) states that ‘every nationalism contains both civic and ethnic elements’. He points out that ethnic communities and nations are two different concepts and historical definitions: ethnic communities obtain the features characteristic of nations under specific social and historical conditions. As indicators of an ethnic community he mentions the name of the community, common memories of historical events and myth, peculiar elements of culture, a specific awareness and understanding of the terms ‘motherland’ and social unity (Smith, p 30), while the nation is characterised as a body of people who have a historically determined territory, common myths and history, popular folk culture, joint economy and equal rights and duties for every member of the society which are guaranteed by the law. (Smith, p 22). Smith’s definition of the nation corresponds to the democratic model of the nation: he strictly separates the concepts state and nation.

The author of this paper believes that the concept of the Latvian Nation includes both citizenship and ethnic elements and also a European dimension which finds space in the common national identity constructs of every citizen, and makes different combinations and overlaps. Civic integration in Latvia includes both the Latvian and the minority cultural identity.

Hall (1997) emphasises that the multicultural process is a creation; it belongs to the future as much as to the past, it is unstable and changing. The past plays an important role in the formation of Latvian citizenship and the Latvian integration process, but we make new interpretations of it on an ongoing basis in films, literature and drama. Multicultural civic integration is like a link with the society in which we live.

Multicultural civic integration became urgent after the renewal of independence in 1991, because a part of the population of Latvia was excluded from the community of citizens. The binary opposites 'us' and 'them' created obstacles for the process of the formation of the nation from the Latvian and the alien side, to such a degree that there was discussion about the existence of two separate communes – Latvians and Russian Speaking.

Examining the contents of articles published in Russian in the newspaper '*Cas*', and in other papers and magazines in Latvian, we find remarkable differences. There is also a sharp contrast in the statement about the official status in the country of the Russian Language expressed by Studman, a civil servant for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (EDSO). To avert the division of society on the basis of language, it is not sufficient to create a Latvian Language programme or Public Integration Foundation. The role of schools and the pedagogical process in schools should be evaluated to determine how much it facilitates the process of civic integration in Latvia. Anxiety on how to retain the Latvian mentality does not justify standing apart and disregarding minority cultures. Only mutual recognition of each other's values, and that all inhabitants of Latvia are Latvians will suffice. The very combination 'Latvian Nation' is deep-rooted in the minds of Latvians, and we often speak about 'Ethnic Latvians' to distinguish their ethnic origin.

The factors that impact on the civic integration process in Latvia are the cultural environment in the family, the physical environment, school, and social, political and natural environments. Dialogue is of the greatest importance as the grass-root process of civic integration. The process is also affected by those people with whom the child, teenager or youth identifies – heroes from folklore (Latvian or other), famous people, listening to and singing songs, observing the nature of Latvia. The citizens of Latvia develop through interrelations in different social activities and processes, learning the many aspects of Latvian culture, being aware of and observing human rights, respecting others for bringing in something new to the cultural processes of Latvia. Here is a schematic picture of the civic integration process:

Diagram 1: The formation of civic integration in Latvia

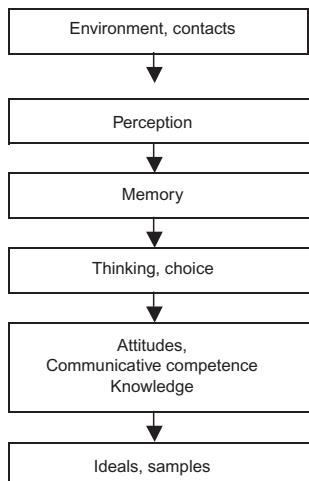
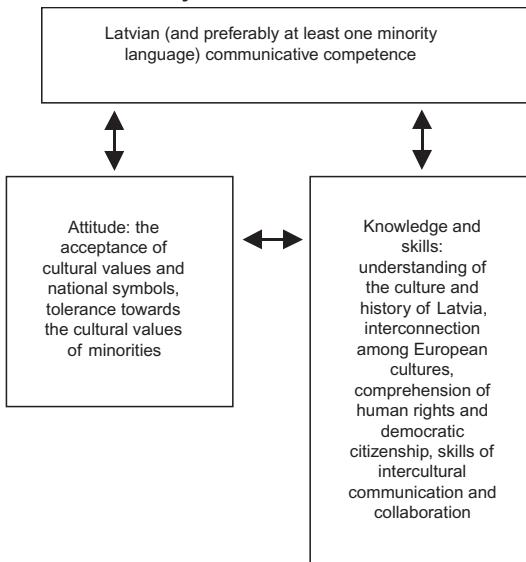


Diagram 2: Pedagogical criteria for civic integration in multicultural society in Latvia in the 21st century



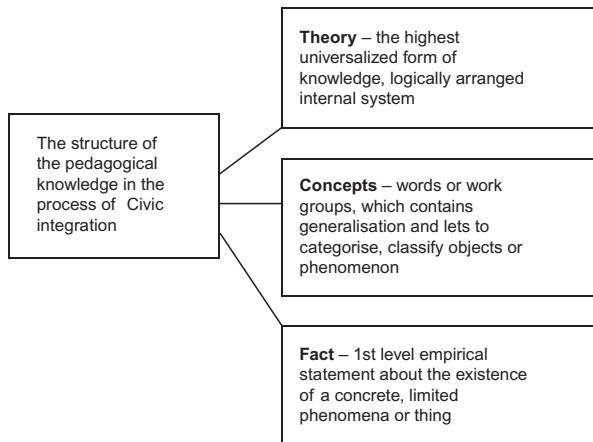
The investigation into the development of civic integration in Latvia was based on these criteria. The acquired language level influences knowledge about the Latvian culture, the skills to express oneself, and helps a person to feel at home in Latvian society. Good language skills allow communication among persons from different nationalities. At the same time, the bilateral principle requires the acquisition of at least one minority language, expressing a mutual respect and willingness to understand each other and communicate. The communicative competence of the Latvian language manifests itself as the mastering of four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Every skill has three levels: lower, average and higher. Communicative proficiency includes linguistic competence, sociolinguistic skills and discourse competence as well as compensation strategies which are used when vocabulary is insufficient.

Byram, (1998, p 95) considers that communicative competence consists of linguistic competence and sociolinguistic competence as well as discourse competence that is important within making dialogues and presenting monologues and while interpreting the eligible norms of the other speaker. Kramina (2000, p 68) characterises communicative strategies as the means used by the language user to mobilise his/her resources in order to realise their intentions as precisely and simply as possible, according to the communicative situation. As Latvian and civic integration in Latvia are a part of European and global integration, the learning of English or any other European language is advisable. Both Latvians and Non-Latvian residents should thus know at least three languages, e.g. Latvian, Russian and English.

During the process of civic integration in Latvia it is important to acquire knowledge about the history and culture of Latvia in the European context as well as concepts and theory about cultural interrelationships. The pedagogical process in High Schools welcome acquiring such terms as culture, cultural iceberg, cultural common features and

differences, cultural identity, stereotypes, preconceptions, symbols and values. Communication and cooperation skills in different cultures contain empathy in verbal and non-verbal expressions, active listening skills, receptiveness and the ability to control one's own emotions and skills to solve conflicts.

Diagram 3: The structure of pedagogical knowledge in the process of civic integration



Attitudes are formed in the pedagogical process from personally experienced knowledge, and attitudes as the personal characteristic of an integrated person and their inner orientation explain a person's behaviour through several aspects – emotional, evaluative, cognitive and the disposition or tendency to certain action. This is expressed through values, which change and develop continuously. Spona (2001) defines attitudes as the characteristics of a person who has undergone civic integration, formed over a lifetime in the unity of emotional experience and manifested in values, goals, ideals and norms. One can separate the situations created, habitual and self-regulative attitudes which are in mutual correlation and continuous development.

Zelmenis (2000) describes attitude as a mental link with a person, thing, phenomenon, action, value, observation, idea or opinion about life in general. Spona (1996) points out that the situation-created attitude is the simplest and the origin of the self-regulated attitude. It is desirable to facilitate both Latvian and European civic integration in the school pedagogical process, because each process supplements the other. Dirba (2003) has pointed out three civic integration models in the pedagogical process according to the dominating criterion. Linguistic communicative competence, knowledge or attitude can develop civic integration.

All three components correlate: the dominating criteria activates the others. For example if a person receives deep positive emotions during the Song and Dance Festival – respect for the Latvian culture – the person is encouraged to learn more about it and study the Latvian language. The dominating criterion creates the basis for civic integration. Learning the words and melody of the Anthem of Latvia enables a person sing it together with others on the 18th November – the Proclamation Day of the State of Latvia – or at a

school graduation party. The range of emotional intensity could vary from feelings of pride and deep excitement to neutral. If a person can speak Latvian freely, communication becomes informal and the categories ‘us’ and ‘them’ start disappearing.

To investigate students’ attitude towards Latvian national symbols, culture and history as well the State of Latvia, Dirba developed a questionnaire that evaluated sixty national symbols. The questionnaire was completed by 154 Latvians, 72 other nationalities and 38 students from mixed ethnic families. The author compared how Latvians, other nationalities and students from mixed families where one of the parents is Latvian evaluate and rank the national symbols. The results show that the ranking and evaluation differs slightly according to the nationality, but there are symbols which are ranked high in all groups – those representing statehood. The symbols related to civic integration are equally important to both Latvians and other nationalities, Latvian related – more with Latvians.

Table 1: The importance of symbols on a five-point scale

| National symbol | Latvians | Other nationalities | Students from mixed families | Form |
|-----------------------------|----------|---------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Latvian language | 4.98 | 4.38 | 4.91 | Ethnocultures |
| The Flag of Latvia | 4.74 | 4.24 | 4.49 | State |
| Anthem of Latvia | 4.74 | 4.14 | 4.73 | State |
| Coats of Arms of Latvia | 3.96 | 3.86 | 4.09 | State |
| May 4, 1991. | 4.3 | 2.95 | 4.36 | Historical, State |
| Folk song, Melody and words | 4.19 | 3.19 | 4.0 | Ethnocultures |
| Music by R. Pauls | 3.89 | 3.95 | 4.18 | Cultural |
| I. Kalnīns | 3.95 | 2.10 | 3.82 | Cultural |
| Song and Dance Festivals | 4.45 | 3.24 | 4.0 | Cultural |

This pedagogical model of multicultural integration is based on principles formulated by Hapgood and Femness (1997):

- recognition of the diversity of cultures and respect towards the different
- bilateral and mutual experience and learning from other cultures.

These principles originate the pedagogic aspect model and tasks in civic integration:

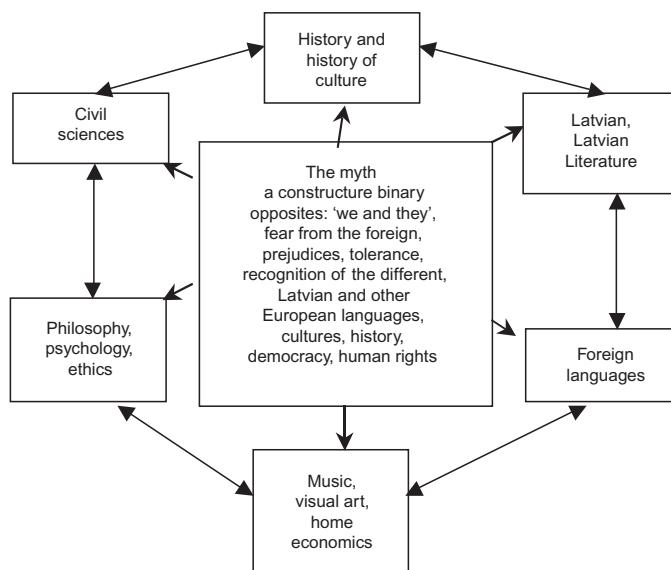
- overcoming of ethnocentrism
- rapid development of empathy
- openness to the foreign and different.

The pedagogical aspect of civic integration is linked to the awareness and observance of human rights. The awareness of multicultural processes facilitates the democratic understanding of citizenship and human rights by respecting diversity of identities and cultures. The experience and opinions of every student should be valued. The pedagogical aspect of multicultural civic integration is like learning a dialogue, comparing different

aspects of one's own native culture and those of others. Through being introduced to other cultures, an individual sees his own culture from a new perspective. The learning of multicultural civic integration is a kind of social learning and encompasses solidarity as the opposite of competition. It is teamwork in the class and within the staff, not activities in isolation. The multicultural civic integration process is the process of endless learning. The learning is like moving along a spiral – again and again you are in the same place but on a different level. According to the educational principles and tasks of multicultural civic integration, teaching materials and themes about the minority cultures should be chosen, and the school should help students to overcome the understanding of Latvian identity as something apart. The main goals to understand the civic integration process better in the 21st century:

- to understand one's own self, be aware of one's own prejudices and attitudes;
- understand and be aware of one's own and other cultural values,
- understand the impact of values on behaviour;
- recognise and respect the diversity of cultures;
- be prepared to constructive conflict solution;
- in communication to make use of the verbal and non-verbal means to which the individuals are familiar with,
- to develop empathy.

Diagram 4: The pedagogical model of multicultural civic integration



Significant pedagogical aspects of civic integration include understanding and observing human rights, intercultural education, educational and human rights, and learning principles, values and methods. Reardon (1995) characterises human rights education as value-orientated education depending on students' age, gradual mastering of more and more complicated concepts and values arising from the central value – human respect.

Educational programmes should reflect the diversity of multicultural civic integration: there should be a balance between the learning of Latvian culture and the minority cultures of Latvia. One of the most significant pedagogical criterion in the multicultural civic integration is tolerance towards the minority cultures of Latvia. Lakritz (1999) defines tolerance as a feature of personality characterised by recognition and respect for the values, opinions, views and behaviour other people. Sometimes we find the behaviour of other people provocative – our tolerance could be lower or higher depending on our relationship with this person. Lakritz suggests a discussion about annoying habits and the reaction of students in similar situations. We need to be tolerant over a very wide spectrum: towards people from other nationalities, persons with disabilities and special needs, towards nature, old people, poor people, towards those who think differently. An individual who is intolerant towards the poor could become intolerant also towards the people from other nationalities, so it is important to facilitate tolerance in communication with any person, although an exception might be a person who deliberately hurts others. Looking from the pedagogical aspect in teaching tolerance, the personal example of parents and teachers is of the greatest importance. Often students are aggressive, impatient and offend others, thus expressing their own insecurity and uncertainty. The methods for teaching tolerance might include discussions about how students would behave in the place of film heroes or examples from history. Birzea (1996) stresses that in post-communism situations values which were not acceptable because of the regime – like freedom, personal initiative, social dialogue and tolerance – now become essential. He mentions tolerance as one of the post-materialistic values that are characteristic of post-modern societies, but for post-communism youth material values are dominant – largely the acquisition of money and a well-paid job. The heritage of the Soviet years, when the leading truth was the only truth and intolerance towards the different-thinking population and flatness made the teaching of tolerance difficult, will take a long time to overcome.

Burton and Dimbleby (1995) describe empathy as an ability to visualise the emotions and feelings of another person as if experiencing them, thus imagining why the other person behaves in one way and not another. Empathy is characteristic of persons with self-confidence who are open and confident in communication, sincere, brave, who respect other persons. One of the main pedagogical aspects is to allow the student to experience the feelings of a person who is discriminated against, as we consider this could help to diminish discrimination. A very significant pedagogical aspect of multicultural civic integration is a positive teaching environment in schools and classrooms which clearly expresses the most essential values at school – respect and trust, encouragement, cooperation, the feeling that nobody is rejected.. The pedagogical model of civic integration is clearly marked in the verities realised by human pedagogues and psychologists (Rone; 2001).

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