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Adult Education of immigrants in the Czech Republic

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Abstract

The article considers problems of adult education with a focus on immigrants to the Czech Republic. Economic exclusion is the key underlying factor which helps to explain social, cultural and political exclusion. Community Development perspectives in the North Moravian region are examined in particular: life-long learning is a paramount necessity of a present-day life. Education is a means to combat and to break the vicious circle of exclusion. The networks of national and regional organizations in which values of participation and empowerment are mentioned and fulfilled: institutions and projects.

Contemporary challenges

Czech society is facing a variety of complex challenges nowadays. It should harmonise relations between different national and ethnic groups settled on its territory (the problem of a majority and minorities) in the context of the neo-liberal economy. Further, it should be prepared to deal with increasing waves of immigrants and refugees from non-European cultures (the problem of the general public and newcomers or, looking at it from a different angle the problem of citizens and non-citizens). Moreover, Czech society has to deal with the challenge of European integration in order to be an active participant in the process of integration and to be a full-fledged member of the EU. Last but not least, it will have to face the negative consequences of the process of globalisation and cultural unification. (The sequence of tasks mentioned above does not reflect their political importance, but it is determined by a latent logical order from internal to external inclusion).

Immigration to the country

The Czech Republic (as its predecessors used to lie in this territory) lies at the crossroads of Central Europe. Even the existence of the Iron Curtain before 1989 did not prevent spatial mobility here, but it did decrease it. Yet at the beginning of the 1990s waves of migration started to roll again. 'In contrast to previous decades, now immigration and transit migration clearly outweigh emigration' [Drbohlav 2001: 203].

The Czech Republic (CR) became a transit and receiving country in the 1990s. The major part of the migration structure consists of *economic immigration* (the work and business activities of foreigners). The number of economic migrants on the Czech labour market has risen from 91,000 up to 173,000 persons from 1994-2004 [Horakova 2005].

Permanent immigration (this consists of foreigners with a permanent residence permit) constituted a lesser part and its status was based, to a large extent, on family reunion. The number of those who have this status has grown steadily from 27,000 to 142,000

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(1991-2007).

Asylum seekers and refugees make up another proportion of the international migrants in the Czech territory. 3,085 asylum seekers were granted asylum, from a total number of 84,367 submitted applications (an average of about 3-4 % during the period of 1990-2006, actually valid asylums: 1,887).

In the period of 1992 - 1996 due to the conflict in the countries of the former Yugoslavia the CR provided *temporary refuge* for more than 5,500 war refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina (700 persons were repatriated by plane later, 120 seriously handicapped individuals were granted permanent residence status and were allowed to participate in the integration programme).

Between 1991 - 1993 1,800 *Ethnic Czechs*, i.e. Czechs by birth but non-citizens of the CR were repatriated back from Volhyn in the Chernobyl region of the Ukraine to the CR. Compatriots from Kazakhstan, Bosnia and Herzegovina were also repatriated, together with re-emigrants from Western nations (the USA, Great Britain, France, South Africa).

Transit migration comprises those who do not consider the CR to be their final migration destination. They place a certain pressure on the Czech border with their – successful or unsuccessful – illegal crossing (trespassing). The renowned Czech author on the migration issue, Dusan Drbohlav, argues: ‘...estimates that there are more than 100,000 transit migrants at any one time in the Czech territory are not unrealistic’ [1998: 211].

The total number of foreigners in the CR (as of 28 February, 2007) was 333,742 – 191,006 foreigners with a long-term residence permit and 142,736 foreigners with a permanent residence permit. The most numerous nationalities were: Ukrainians (106,655), Slovaks (60,016), Vietnamese (42,336), Russians (19,437), Poles (19,270), Germans (11,146), Moldavians (6,546), Bulgarians (4,680), Chinese (4,277), and Americans (4,470).

Immigration policy

Nowadays the Czech Republic belongs to the countries, where the amount of aliens increases rapidly. But after the ‘velvet revolution’ its internal law in nationality has been focused primarily on the recovery of nationality by former nationals, or after the partition of Czechoslovakia it has been focused on the issue of state succession and nationality. New legal adjustments should reflect the new historical reality that the CR has become an immigrant country. Therefore it is faced with the problem of multiple nationalities. Though some European countries such as the United Kingdom and France accept dual nationality the Czech internal law (as well as German and Austrian) does not share this principle (a few exceptions are strictly defined). [Martin Hailbronner 2002]

In the world where the streams of migration become trans-national the idea of nationality as ‘the legal bond between a person and exceptionally one State’ clashes with the real possibility of full representation and participation in the life of host country. According

to H. Arendt citizenship/nationality is a right to have rights, because in the modern world there is no space for anyone to enjoy one's civic and human rights beyond the state.

International migration and asylum is included in the sphere of competence of The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the CR which has established The Bureau of Migration and Asylum Policy. The legal status of foreigners in the CR is based on Act No. 323/1999, on the residence of foreigners in the territory of the CR. The law states that a foreigner has the right to stay temporarily (on a visa) or permanently (with a permanent residence permit).

The acquisition of Czech nationality is governed by Act No. 40/1993, on the acquisition and loss of Czech nationality and the subsequent amendments. A foreigner can acquire Czech nationality as amended by Act No. 40/1993 by birth. (1. But birth within the CR does not automatically confer citizenship. 2. Persons under 17 years old, found in the CR, shall acquire Czech citizenship, if such person does not have citizenship of another country. 3. Child born in the territory of the CR to stateless parents, one of whom has permanent residency in the CR) adoption, affiliation, finding in Czech territory, declaration (only for former citizens of Czechoslovakia) and naturalisation. A foreigner can be naturalised if the following conditions are fulfilled: he/she has held a permanent residence permit for at least five years, previous nationality is lost (not required in the case of refugees or people with no nationality), the applicant has had a clean criminal record for five years and can prove a knowledge of the Czech language. Some of conditions can be waived in special given cases by a decision-making body. The limitation of the Czech legal system lies in its simplification of the naturalisation process for second and third generation immigrants (the law is based on *ius sanguinis*, slow implementation of *ius soli*, longer naturalisation period than in the Western EU countries) as well as in cases of double nationality where the applicant must apply for an exception.

In the opinion of Andrea Barsova [Barsova in *Pravni* 2003: 37 - 47] the CR should prevent the problem of immigrants of second and third generation. What is the core of the problem of second and third generation immigrants? This problem concerns adults and children born into the families of immigrants. They usually lose any (direct or indirect) contact with the native country of their parents, feel themselves to be members of host country, but they are not accepted as its citizens/nationals. It causes not only to them personally, but also to the rest of society. Democratic societies are based on the principle of equal opportunities for all their members to participate in their life. Inequality threatens their cohesion and calls into question the right to a nationality as one of the basic human rights. The General Declaration of Human Rights, Article 15 sets 'everyone has the right to a nationality', 'no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his or her nationality, or be denied to change it'.

The problem of second and third generation immigrants is a typical problem for the states of so called German model of citizenship, based on the principle of *ius sanguinis*. In the countries where citizenship is based on the principle of *ius soli* (the USA, the European countries such as the United Kingdom, Portugal, Ireland) there is no such kind of problem, because each child born in the territory of the state, including the immigrant's child, gains/possess citizenship by his/her birth (they are nationals by birth).

In France the problem of third generation immigrants is solved by so called double *ius soli*: a child born in the territory of France becomes its citizen if one of his/her parents was born in the French territory as well. In the CR even a child-alien born on its territory is not guaranteed permanent residence.

According to the European Convention on Nationality, the European countries should create and facilitate conditions for the acquisition of citizenship, but a state is not obligated to accept specific measures. The CR signed the Convention in 1999, but there is a discrepancy between statements of the Convention and Czech internal law, e.g. according to the Convention, 'Each State Party shall provide in its internal law for the possibility of naturalisation of persons lawfully and habitually resident on its territory. In establishing the conditions for naturalisation, it shall not provide for a period of residence exceeding ten years before the lodging of an application [Article 6, paragraph 3]. Till 2006 the demand of current Czech law was 15 years (10 years of long-term stays and 5 years of permanent residence in its territory). [Barsova in *Pravni* 2003] The European average is about five years, e.g. Belgium has reduced the length of the period from five to three years.

The Principles of the Conception on the Integration of Immigrants in the Territory of the Czech Republic, (7.07.1999) and The Conception on the Integration of Immigrants in the Territory of the Czech Republic (11.12.2000) have been accepted by the CR. They are the result of collaboration of European and internal institutions and experts; they summarise world, European and internal experience corresponding with the Czech reality and legislation.

The main goal of the mentioned documents is the integration of foreigners. Integration is defined as a mutual process resulting in the unification of the settled population (including minorities) and immigrants. Integration is a complex process running in economical, societal, and cultural spheres and composed with the issue of political and legislative status of immigrants. The system of measures accepted by the Principles and by the Conception is sustentation of societal cohesion and in the long-term perspective it is an increase in the measure of political participation of the whole population in the life of society.

Being a complex process the integration is based on the collaboration of different agents. Each year the Home Office puts out to public tender a supporting programme for the integration of foreigners. One of the strands of the programme is oriented on the monitoring of foreign communities and on the evaluation of systematic supporting measures, and of strategies for implementing integration policies [look at www.avcr.cz].

The Ministry of Education is an important agent of integration process. The educational system of each country is closely connected with its cultural traditions, and its political and social situation. As for the CR, we would like to analyse the situation of adult education of foreigners in the context of the current educational system. As a democratic state, the CR guarantees equal rights and freedom not only to its citizens but also to its non-citizens (e.g. liberty, freedom of speech, thought and faith, etc.). At the same time the sharing of common democratic values, etc. is expected.

In the 2004/2005 academic year 38,438 foreigners studied at the different types of schools. The total number of pupils and students is 2,156,055 (including Czech citizens), i.e. only 1.8% of them are foreigners.

The highest percentages of foreign students study at the universities. Since academic year 2001/02 their number at Czech universities has almost tripled. They take Bachelors and Masters education programmes full-time and account for 7.2% of all university students. Understandably, the number of students depends on the number of new enrollees (enrolled for the first time) in individual years. Foreign students make up 9.3% of all new enrollees to universities. Of the total number of university graduates, 4.4% are foreigners. Most foreigners attend universities in Prague and Brno, they are mostly students from the Slovak Republic. After the year 2000 an increase was recorded for the numbers of students coming from the countries of succession of the former Soviet Union (Russian Federation, the Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, etc.). Rather a large amount of students come from Vietnam, the United Kingdom, Poland, and Germany [CSO 2006]. The high number of foreign university students is closely connected with the Czech legislation in education. In the sphere of education foreigners possess the same rights and obligations as the Czech Citizens do. Their education is guaranteed by the Bill of (human) Rights and Freedoms. The education is free of charge at the state primary and secondary schools. Even at the state high schools and universities studies are free of charge if learners are taught in Czech (including non-citizens).

At the same time the children of asylum seekers (till 15 years old) are the only group of aliens for whom classes of Czech language are guaranteed by internal law. In all other cases the gaining of Czech language competences is a private affair of pupil, student or any kind of learner (regardless of age).

As has already been mentioned, one of the conditions for the acquisition of nationality is the knowledge of the language of the host country. Despite a tendency to liberalise the demand for the length of residence the importance of language continues to be high. One should be possessed of the official language as a condition of successful integration into major society. Communication is an important point of success on an economic and labour market level. Economic exclusion is the key underlying factor, which helps to explain social, cultural and political exclusion. Immigrants face the problem of communication and they should be helped with services of adult education.

The acquisition of language competence bears upon the educational system of each country. Czech educational institutions are not required to provide extra classes of Czech language for learners/trainees whose level of Czech is not enough to cope with curriculum. Educational institutions usually apply for grants funded by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Home Office or by European funds and institutions to offer educational programs to foreigners (as a supportive means of their integration). The next important agents of supportive activities are non-profit and non-governmental institutions.

In the last few years the Ministry of Education as an important agent of integration has put out public tenders in such strands concerning our issue:

- Supporting programme for education in the native languages of minorities and multicultural education,
- Programme for supporting activities in integration of foreigners in the territory of the Czech Republic.

The predominant number of projects in the second strand are focused on the Czech language for foreigners (including all age groups). The next group of projects is aimed: (1) to develop intercultural competences for common coexistence in society based on principles of mutual respect and tolerance and (2) to combat discrimination, racism and xenophobia. The situation of multicultural education reflects the situation of multicultural quality of Czech society. It is at the beginning stage of its development.

The integration is a process taking place at a regional level. The quality of relationship between local inhabitants and foreigners is the key factor of integration therefore local authorities offer supporting programmes of integration as well. While at the republic level the strategy of integration is focused on the group interests of immigrant communities, at the regional level individual needs of persons may be accepted.

Integration programme and help

Since 2004, the responsibility of co-ordination of integration issues has been taken over by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and consequently, a new Committee was established to work on fulfilling the aims of the *Strategy on integration of Foreigners in the Czech Republic*. Ministries have traditionally devoted significant attention to projects that support the integration of foreigners [Drbohlav; Janska & Horakova 2005]. Projects that are approved are implemented mainly by non-profit organisations (NPOs) and non-government organisations (NGOs) in areas where direct influence of state administration bodies and self-governing bodies cannot be applied. Projects are usually focused upon, in particular,

‘...improving the provisions of information to foreigners as well as citizens (including the provisions of assistance for their communication with authorities), supporting education, language skills and other qualifications of foreigners, promoting the placement of foreigners in the labour market, developing the cultural and religious life of foreigners, developing the further education of foreigners and civil servants in the field of integration of foreigners, developing relationships between foreigners and their communities and citizens, establishing and promoting activities of non-government non-profit making organisations and associations of foreigners, building and developing activities of community and multicultural centres, and supporting preventative measures that fight intolerance, racism and discrimination against foreigners’ [MVCR 2004: 108-109].

In 2007 thirteen projects focused on the integration of foreigners (all age groups) have been approved by the Ministry. The injection needed to fund these projects is about 1,200,000 Czech crowns.

The projects aimed at helping with integration (educational support included) are: *MOST pro lidska prava* (meaning a BRIDGE for human rights), *Counselling Centre for Integration* (CCI) and *Counselling and Information Centre for Young Migrants* (CICYM).

'*MOST pro lidska prava*' is a civil association (established in 1998) that had realised the integration programme for foreigners (under the same name) in the Pardubický region (Eastern Bohemia) between 2002 - 2005. The association, now seated in Pardubice, serves newcomers from distant parts of the CR. '*MOST pro lidska prava*' has built up its *Information and training centre* with judicial and social consultancy, and organisation of integration courses. The latest grant-based project of the MOST aims to optimise the system of foreigners' integration.

'*Counselling Centre for Integration*' has found its target group among asylum holders. At the present time, CCI registers approximately 750 clients – recognised refugees (people with asylum), and 100 clients who have already obtained Czech citizenship. Other foreigners are interested in participating in the activities of the Community Centres. Therefore CCI has spread its target group to foreigners with residence permits longer than 90 days. Each Community Multicultural Centre of CCI is visited by 150 - 200 foreigners every week.

'*Counselling and Information Centre for Young Migrants*' has been founded by the META association (*Association for Opportunities of Young Migrants*). The principal aim of the META association is to support the self-development of young migrants, mostly in the field of education, which the association considers to be one of the conditions necessary for their successful integration. The Centre of META runs a Czech language course. The course is free of charge and is realised by the Counselling Centre for Refugees (PPU). In collaboration with external research, the inquiry of educational needs of young migrants was studied in the last few months. The organisation realises the importance of education in the integration process.

Higher Education Courses

A two year long course '**Intercultural education**' was offered by the non-profit institution '*Člověk v tísni*' in the VARIANTY project (the institution is connected with Czech Television). It was funded by program PHARE and EQUAL EU). The target groups of the project were the educators of universities and high schools. A few hundreds of them participated in 2000-2001. It was focused on gaining communicative and cooperative competences, but the civic issue was also an important part.

The course *Chapters of Multicultural tolerance* is running at three universities: Charles University of Prague, South Bohemian University of Ceske Budejovice and University of Ostrava. The course is a part of the project 'Education for multicultural tolerance and mass media literacy' funded by the Ministry of Education of the CZ. Four volumes of Proceedings have already been published including such issues as *Multiculturalism as contemporary or historical phenomena?*; *Twilight of multiculturalism in the Europe?*; *The EU as multicultural society*; *The state of world population in the 21st century*; *The Czech Republic and immigrants/asylum seekers*; *Cultural variety and (non)tolerant*

society; Diversity, human rights and participation on intercultural dialogue; Outdoor activities, civic upbringing and intercultural education, etc.

The course *Czech language, History and Civic Education* (textbook for primary school teachers and pupils) is offered by the J.E. Purkyne University in Usti nad Labem. The elaborated texts (including vocabulary) match to lingual competences of pupils-foreigners, improve their knowledge in History and civic education, and help to develop their communicative and societal competences. The materials of the project are used for the future teachers in mentioned subjects.

A big group of courses is focused on the Czech language for foreigners, or on The Czech life and institutions (including political system) for foreigners. They were originally projects in the frame of Developing Projects of the Ministry of Education supporting the developing of curriculum.

Conclusions

The education of adult foreigners (temporary, permanent immigrants and asylum holders) exists within the system of Czech citizens' education and, when unpaid, is held in Czech language (studying programmes in English or in other international languages are paid). In the logic of legislature, the education of foreigners *sui generis* does not exist; on the other hand anyone coming from abroad who is able (or becomes able) to communicate in Czech has the same equal rights (for education) as an ordinary citizen.

As the basic barrier in the integration process of immigration is understood to be a non-acquaintance with official language, the departments of Czech language at Czech universities, private language schools, and non-governmental and non-profit organisations (within granted projects) offer Czech language courses for foreigners. Even within the Czech language courses we can identify several frames of differences that may cause problems to the target group. According to immigrant respondents, the offer of Czech language courses in Prague is sufficient but in other regions is rather limited [Gabal 2004]. The insufficient length of the courses is another problem. The average length is 200 hours but the experiences e.g. from Sweden show that it should be double that. Czech as a synthetic language with seven cases and several tenses is considered hard to learn by foreigners, so it takes a longer time to get orientation in a basic grammar.

A great contribution in the integration process is made by non-governmental and non-profit organisations because their projects combine the language teaching with social orientation (information on Czech culture and society). There is a lack of such activities in the university sphere where major emphasis is put on teaching of multicultural education and intercultural communication (and the target group is the students in general).

In the field of education towards multicultural tolerance, where both the NGOs and universities play an important role, we can talk about more results in the form of projects and courses (or modules of courses), so the next generation is steadily being prepared for the increase in the multicultural character of Czech society. Nonetheless, the conception

of integration of foreigners employs the word 'education' rather rarely and vaguely (policy papers, research or governmental reports), and in practice it seems that the state expects an immigrant with full and finished education with a minimum of educational needs which is antagonistic to the principle of lifelong learning. On the other hand, words such as 'naturalisation, integration and labour market' are used frequently without concrete articulation of a clear link to the question of education. However, it is fair to argue that the state supports a civil (or a third) sector with grants, so NGOs and NPOs can realise its integration projects.

Recently, the question of the absence of differentiated language teaching of adult foreigners that would be vocationally oriented is not solved yet. The number of foreigners in a pedagogical practice who have experience with intercultural teaching is low. The courses of social orientation are still rather rare and they are mainly arranged by projects and non-governmental organisations. Even though lifelong learning is considered to be a paramount necessity of a present-day life and education is regarded as a means to combat and to break the vicious circle of exclusion, the networks of national and regional organisations in which values of 'participation' and 'empowerment' are noticeably mentioned and being fulfilled (NGOs, NPOs and their projects) have not been established yet. In our opinion as university educators, the integration of immigrants in the educational sphere must be supported by the potential of tertiary education (universities). Until these days, the potential is not employed completely.

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Thematically oriented internet links:

www.mvcr.cz

www.migraceonline.cz

www.czso.cz

www.cizinci.cz

www.domavCR.cz

<http://imigrace.mpsv.cz>

Counselling Centre for Integration, <http://www.p-p-i.cz/english/>

META association (and Counselling and Information Centre for Young Migrants),
<http://www.meta-os.cz>

Most pro lidská práva, <http://www.mostlp.org/>