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Development of Political Identities of Estonian and Russian Students in Estonia: Integration, Isolation or Conflict?

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Abstract

This paper analyzes national and educational ideologies and policies, and their effects on national relations and identities in Estonia. It distinguishes between democratic and authoritarian ideologies and practices. Estonian national policy, ideology and civic education pay lip-services to the European ideals, ignoring the dominance of authoritarian relations and attitudes in practice. The Estonian integration strategy and civic education do not support integration of democratic Estonians and Russians on the basis of common democratic and human values. The authoritarian Estonian national ideology succumbs to the more aggressive authoritarian ideology of the Russian Federation. Conflicts may be provoked between authoritarian national groups. Democratic national ideology and civic education may avoid conflicts, overcome ethnic isolation and increase the national integration.

Introduction

The European program Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) does not distinguish between democratic and authoritarian national identities. Its theoretical framework remains ambiguous and needs development (Naval, Print and Veldhuis 2002: 124). It defines main dimensions, core concepts, basic values, attitudes and skills, and avoids contradictions between democratic ideals and authoritarian practices both in schools and societies.

In transitional countries, the distinction is even more important than in other EU countries. In the former Soviet block, the Communist oligarchy subordinated law and state organizations to its group interests (Agenda 2000). The influence of this system was even deeper. People from other countries do not understand it fully. People in this system have difficulties to explain what has happened. Democracy education should address the problems. If it fails, then the Communist authoritarianism may be just replaced by a new authoritarianism: the Capitalist one. The difficulty is that the Communist regime used Marxist ideals in order to hide its elitist and terrorist essence. It used the ideals to subordinate human rights and democracy to its totalitarian control. The totalitarian regime and its assimilation policies turned many people authoritarian and nationalist. They took advantage from the authoritarian and chauvinist people and used them against the democratic people and other nations. Typical authoritarian people are loyal and obedient to their strong national leaders and aggressive against "the others" (Adorno et al. 1950).

In Estonia (and in Latvia), fifty years of the Soviet assimilation policy has turned Estonians (and in Latvia, Latvians) in some regions into national minorities. Russia has

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never recognized either the Soviet occupation or the Russian assimilation policies. Russia's national policy takes advantages from the Russian majorities in these regions and tries to turn them authoritarian Russian nationalists. Contemporary Russia promotes very authoritarian policies. Authoritarian Russians identify themselves with the Russian Federation and its leader (Stone et al. 1993). Most people have supported the former President Vladimir Putin and his party. The role of xenophobia is still very significant. They hate "others" – immigrants, people from Caucasus, China and Islamic countries, former Soviet republics, democrats, liberals, homosexuals etc. This is revealed in public opinion polls by Levada Centre in Moscow.

This authoritarian Russian identity is very close to the authoritarian Soviet identity in the former Soviet Union as they both deny human rights and democratic values. It differs from that in the EU based on human rights and democratic values.

Still, recognition of democratic ideals is insufficient, if it is not complemented with criticism to authoritarian practices. In economic systems, the hierarchical organizations dominate. In political systems, there are problems with oligarchic tendencies in representative democracies. The democracy education should diminish the role of oligarchic tendencies (Gutman 1999). There are some studies on identity formation in Estonia (Kirch 1997, Lensment, Ahmet 2008, Vihalemm, Masso 2003), but these studies do not distinguish between democratic and authoritarian national identities. Ignorance of the gaps between ideals and realities, theories and practices actually strengthens the status quo, the authoritarian practices.

The paper will analyze relations between democratic and authoritarian ideas and attitudes in Estonian political ideologies and civic education. Did the ideology, public administration, civic education and citizenship policies change principally in Estonia in the last years? The paper refers to some former studies and demonstrates that they have remained very authoritarian. In Russian schools in Estonia, Russian students are influenced by Estonian authoritarian citizenship education and by Russia's authoritarian ideology.

If Russian students follow democratic ideals, they will be easily integrated with democratic Estonians. If Russian students focus on their cultural identities and ignore the Estonian language and culture, they will remain isolated from democratic processes. If Russian students actively follow Russia's authoritarian ideas, they may be involved in conflicts with authoritarian Estonians.

The paper will demonstrate that Estonian politicians and civic education system do not support democratic civic education. They mostly support authoritarian ideology and cultural integration. The Russian Federation and many chauvinist organizations promote the authoritarian Russian identities and isolation of Russians from Estonian culture. They resist to both democratic identities and cultural integration of Russians in Estonia.

Differences between European, Marxist and totalitarian ideologies

The European ideology relies on values of freedom, equality of rights and solidarity since the French revolution in 1789.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) did not deny these values and rights (Table 1). He argued that despite the formal equality of rights, workers and capitalists are not equal in capitalist societies. Private property of the means of production enables exploitation of workers by entrepreneurs. The capitalist class uses the state to oppress the class of workers. In the Communist Manifesto, written by him with Friedrich Engels in 1848, he proclaims that workers should take the power and abolish the private ownership on means of production. When the workers would become the majority, they could take the power via democratic elections in developed capitalist societies. Marx argues that for the abolishment of private property, a dictatorship is necessary.

In Russia, the percentage of farmers was 77 and that of workers 7 in the population of 1897. In 1917, the leader of the extremist workers' (Bolsheviks) party Vladimir Lenin (Uljanov) (1870-1924) declared that he and his party are not willing to wait until workers will become the dominant class in Russia. As the workers have the special historic mission to deliberate all mankind, so they have the right to take the power also in undemocratic ways, even via violence (Reed 1919, 1990, Haav, Ruutsoo 1990: 13).

The communist leaders took power in St. Petersburg in November 7, 1917. This was done in the name of the workers' councils (Soviets) in St. Petersburg. The newly elected Parliament did not support this take-over and the extremist communists sent them home. As the other workers' parties did not support them, the Lenin's social democratic (later Communist) party started to govern alone. In the following domestic war, Lenin supported the right of nations to independence. Finland and the Baltic states became independent. Still, the other new independent republics in Caucasus and Ukraine were occupied by the Red Army.

In the struggle for power between the Communist leaders, the most totalitarian Joseph Stalin (Dzugashvili) (1879-1953) succeeded and established his personal dictatorship until his death in 1953. This dictatorship relied on lies and violence, as Alexander Solzhenitsyn and many others have revealed it. It was a real Empire of Evil.

Later, the regime became less totalitarian. Still, the inequality of people, classes, parties and nations was proclaimed until the collapse of the Empire in 1991 (Table 1). The working class was considered as the main class. Only one political party was allowed. The human rights were considered as a capitalist idea. The national policy promoted ideas of the whole Soviet nation and the international language. These ideas enabled Russians and Russian language to dominate (Haav, Ruutsoo 1990).

Table 1: Transformations of the Marxist ideology

	Equality of people	Equality of classes	Equality of parties	Equality of nations
Marx	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lenin	No	Workers are superior	One right party	Yes
Stalin	No	No	No	No
Putin	Formally, yes	Formally, yes	Formally, yes	Russia's interests first

In the contemporary Russian Federation, there are regular free elections. There are many political parties, although now, one party dominates again in the Parliament. In the

national policy, Russia does not promote abstract ideals of freedom, equality and solidarity. They put the interests of a strong state first (Table 1).

Changes in the ideologies in Estonia

Zbigniew Brzezinski (1989) argues that totalitarian communism can not turn to full democracy at once. There will be many stages from Communist totalitarianism to Communist authoritarianism and then to capitalist authoritarianism and pluralist democracy.

In Estonia, the myth of a full turn to democracy after the first free elections (1992) is still influential. Actually, the transition is not seriously approached by Estonian scholars. There are often discussions: is the transition already over or not?

The problem is that the new leaders took advantage of the authoritarian structures and values. Actually, the new political elite emerged from the former political and administrative leaders, new national and business leaders. The public administration remained by and large the same.

Here are some examples that demonstrate the continuity of some authoritarian ideas.

In the Soviet period, the Communism was valued and the Capitalism disregarded. Now, the Capitalist system is valued and the former Soviet system blamed.

After Marx, capitalists exploit workers.

Now, the entrepreneurs argue that there is no exploitation of workers anywhere. In the mass media there is almost no criticism about the discrimination and exploitation of some employees by some employers and managers, although this is commonplace in practice. The civic textbooks should clarify the problems, but they do not this.

In representative democracy, there is a problem of oligarchic tendencies. Roberto Michels discovered the "iron law of oligarchy" in 1911. In Russia, the Communist oligarchy dominated about seventy years. Estonia was under the Communist oligarchy almost fifty years. The European Commission recommended to the post-totalitarian countries to conduct radical public administration reforms (Agenda 2000 in 1997). In Estonia, it did not really happen (Haav 2002). In Russia, the oligarchic tendencies are visible. In Estonia, they are rather hidden. It may be argued that there is a close collaboration between political, economical and educational (academic) elites. There is a roof organization of NGOs and it seems that this institution is also going to collaborate with the other elites.

Towards a new framework for civic education

Democracy education should enable to distinguish between authoritarian (totalitarian) and democratic ideologies and practices. It should rely on relevant social theories. In 2000, Veronika Kalmus, Rein Ruutsoo and others distinguished between active learning for democracy and indoctrination of certain attitudes and values (Kalmus 2000: 29-33, Ruutsoo 2000: 70-79, Puolimatka 1995). Contemporary social theory focuses on main

social dichotomies, relations between individuals and society, social actors and structures, micro and macro levels, subjective and objective factors (Giddens 1984, Layder 1994). This defines the border of an individual's freedom in society. In contemporary educational science, the idea of schools as learning communities has become more popular. There is an ambition to diminish the social distances between learners, teachers and leaders.

In school practice, the main teaching model is still that of knowledge delivery. Relations between students, teachers and administrators are still too hierarchical, especially in Estonia and some other post-socialist countries (Haav 2005b). The concepts of individuals, organizations and society are often considered as isolated (Haav 2007a). This enables ideological manipulation and hinders improvement in education. If social studies would be based on contemporary ideas, the situation could start to improve at schools and in the whole education system. In this respect, the role of democracy education is very essential.

In most countries, the relevance of civic, social and economics syllabi and textbooks to contemporary social and pedagogical sciences and respective practices is a challenge. Many scholars have promoted new teaching methods (Ross, E. 2001, Ross, A. 2002 etc.).

In Estonia, some progress has taken place in the design and development of up-to-date theories and models for social, economic and political practices in Estonia and Europe. They were promoted also to the CiCe Conference in Ljubljana in 2005 (Haav 2005a).

The proposals rely on main sociological and pedagogical dichotomies like individual and society, social actors and structures. They are linked to new institutional organization theory, multiple stakeholders' theory, new public and educational management (Vigoda-Gadot and Cohen 2004). They focus on main social actors and their relations in main social fields (economy, politics and education). The numbers of actors and their relations are very limited. The relations are described by the complete system of models of decision making (autocracy, democracy and partnership). These concepts are also linked to actors' values (individual freedom and prosperity or social justice and solidarity) and social outcomes (effectiveness, justice, discrimination, exploitation). These concepts foster a critical and deliberative education, as they define the limits of individual freedom and opportunities to enhance it according to one's social position in a social hierarchy.

The new approach relies on holistic concepts of learning, teaching and leading at schools. It is integrated with school practices, including students' democratic experiences at their schools and classrooms (Kalmus 2000, Print et al. 2002, Ruutsoo 2000, Puolimatka 1995). As a result, students' knowledge, attitudes, values and social skills and experiences become also integrated. I myself promote the new approach in my teaching of Estonian, Finnish, Russian, Latvian and other students at the International University Audentes and University of Tartu. Still, these achievements have been implemented neither in the design of new civic syllabi nor textbooks. The latter are arenas for political struggle between some professional and business groups. I also

proposed these ideas to the Centre for curriculum design at the National Examination Centre in 2007.

The main civic textbooks

Since 1996, many civic textbooks have been published in Estonia. There was a competition between some authors. In 2006, Minister for Education accepted the book by Anu Toots and Katrin Olenko (2005) as relevant to the civic syllabus. Anu Toots (University of Tallinn) has been one of the main collectors of Estonian civic textbooks. She has published books for both lower (1997 and 2003) and higher secondary schools (1999 and 2005). The books have also been translated into Russian and schools with Russian language of instruction use them in Estonia. Her books have been criticized for inadequate social theoretical basis, theory-practice isolation, state bias, hidden authoritarian values and attitudes (Kalmus 2000, 2002, 2003, Kalmus and Vihalemm 2000, Haav 2004, 2007a, 2008, Rais 2008, Ruutsoo 2000). As in many other countries (Naval et al. 2002, Eurydice 2005), the Estonian civic textbooks mostly describe main political institutions. The institutions are isolated from their social contexts. There is nothing about transition from communist totalitarianism to democracy. They ignore the students' democratic experiences at their schools (EURYDICE 2005, Toots et al. 2006, Torney-Purta et al. 2001). These texts unable any critical approach to democracy and they contribute to formation of the authoritarian citizenship (Haav 2008a).

The civic education process

The civic teachers are different. Most of them have obtained their education as history teachers in the Soviet period. At the Russian schools in Estonia, many civic teachers are wives of the former Soviet Army officers. The teachers have received on-the-job training, but usually this did not include contemporary social theory. Most of teachers of history and civics do not have any systematic understanding of society and democracy. They mainly deliver the textbook materials. More than half of students discuss with their teachers international problems and less than half – also national political affairs (Toots et al. 2006: 62). Still, some of them understand political processes critically and develop also their students' social critical thinking. Anu Toots (2008) also criticizes the isolation of the civic studies and students' democratic experiences, and a lack of value education at schools. Learning civic textbooks improves knowledge, but has no effect on their attitudes and behaviour (Toots et al. 2006).

The national examinations (Valdmaa 2008) mainly check factual knowledge and some intellectual skills. They do not evaluate achievement of the idealist civic goals.

Since 2008, schools with Russian language of instruction should start teaching democracy in Estonian. It is hard to believe that this would facilitate national integration, as the textbooks are hard to read even for Estonians and they promote mainly hidden authoritarian values and attitudes. Estonian students appreciate neo-liberal values of individual well being and prosperity more than those of social justice and solidarity (Lauristin et al. 2004). It may be argued that the Estonian civic education and school system take part in this (Haav 2005b).

Does the new integration strategy promote democratic knowledge, attitudes, values and skills in Estonian and Russian schools in Estonia?

As a result of Soviet assimilation policy, the number of Estonians (about one million) did not increase, but their percentage decreased from 88% (1934) to 62% (1990). Russian was declared the international language and everybody had to speak it. In the schools with Russian language of instruction, learning of the Estonian was not obligatory, but most schools still studied it. In 1986, 13 % of Non-Estonians communicated in Estonian fluently, 27 % in average, 24 % understood it to some extent and 36 % did not understand it at all (Haav, Ruutsoo 1990: 125). The Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs argues that only 14 % of Non-Estonians communicated in Estonian in 1989 (www.rahvastikuminister.ee).

Most non-Estonians followed the official national ideology and considered themselves as Soviet people. Most Estonians had clear national identities in 1986 (Table 2, after Haav and Ruutsoo 1990: 128).

Table 2: National identities of Estonians and Russians in Estonia in 1986 (in %)

	Estonians	Russians
Estonia	90	8
Russia	0	14
Soviet people	10	78

In total, the Russians' dominant attitudes towards Estonians could be classified as follows (ibidem: 131).

Open and integrated Russians – 28 %.

Ignorant attitudes - 37 %.

Discriminative attitudes (Soviet people are more important than Estonians) – 35 %.

The percentage of Russians with hostile attitudes towards Non-Russians was 7.

It is important to remember that none of the Russian delegates at the Estonia's Supreme Soviet voted against the declaration of Estonia's independence on August 20, 1991.

In years 1990-1996, the percentage of Russians with positive attitudes to Estonians and Estonian citizenship increased from 17 to 55. That of negative attitudes decreased a little – from 9 to 5 (Kirch 1997: 145).

In 2000, Estonian Government adopted the first Program for Integration of Non-Estonian people for years 2000-2007 (RIP 2000). This program promoted mostly learning of Estonian language, increase of the number and percentage of Estonian citizens and loyalty to the Republic of Estonia. It did not focus on common democratic values.

According to Monitoring of Integration 2005, 44% of Non-Estonians actively communicate in Estonian. Estonian does not understand at all 16% of Russians in Tallinn and 62 % in Narva (in this city, Estonians are in minority). The Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs argues that 22% of 15- to 74-year-old Non-Estonians considered their language skills to be good, 25% regarded it as average, 29% poor and 24% could speak Estonian not at all in 2005 (RIP 2008). Half (47 %) of Non-Estonians

have Estonian citizenship, 23% that of Russian Federation, 28 % were stateless and 2% - other.

An integration of Estonians and Russians would be most likely on the basis of common European values. This idea is accepted also in the new Integration Strategy for years 2008-2013. International University Audentes proposed to monitor and study development of democratic knowledge, values, attitudes and skills at some schools with Estonian and Russian language of instruction (Haav 2007b). Unfortunately, the final version of the Strategy ignores all these proposals (RIP 2008).

Open Estonian Foundation (OEF) and the review of citizenship education in Estonia

In April 2007 the Minister for Internal Affairs asked the OEF to review citizenship education in Estonia. At the OEF is also the Baltic-American Partnership Program (BAPP, www.bapp.ee). Maris Puurmann (Jogeva), the co-ordinator of the citizenship education program at OEF and BAPP, compiled the general review (Jogeva, Talur 2008), Mare Rais, former chief specialist in civic studies at the National Examination Centre, reviewed the civic education at schools (Rais 2008). Ret Velma reviewed problems of democratic knowledge in NGOs and consultancies, Piret Talur – in mass media, Jon Endor – in everyday life. Anu Toots and I presented discussion papers about problems in democracy education for the Forum on Citizenship Education on May 14, 2008 (Haav 2008b, Toots 2008).

Mall Hellam, the OEF's Director, reviewed problems in citizenship education to members of the Parliament on December 11, 2007 (Hellam 2007). Her review is rather critical. The teaching of civic is mostly a delivery of facts and knowledge. It is isolated from students' experiences at schools and also from the development of democracy in society. It has but a minimal effect on development of active citizens. The challenge is to guarantee a theoretically and methodically up-to-date civic education. A national action plan is necessary. All stakeholders should co-operate. The OEF has celebrated the Year of European Democratic Citizenship Education in 2005, supported activities of many NGOs, designed a citizenship web site (www.bapp.ee/kodanikuharidus), etc. Maris Jogeva and Piret Talur (2008) outline the ideas in more detail.

In sum, although the papers by Hellam, Jogeva, Talur, Rais and Toots challenge the out-of-date civic education, they do not address it in details. They do not distinguish between democratic and autocratic civic education. They avoid any social criticism. They propose to introduce the up-to-date civic theories and to design new learning materials, but they ignore all former critical approaches to civic syllabi, textbooks and teaching (Kalmus 2000, 2002, 2003, Kalmus and Vihalemm 2000, Ruutsoo 2000, Haav 2004, 2005a, 2007a, 2008a).

I myself criticized the academic silence in democracy education in the last five years (Haav 2008b). Civic teachers and their educators, national examinations and textbook compilers have ignored the former critical actors and their papers. They have been reluctant to discuss the social theoretical and educational foundations of the civic education system.

Conclusions

In Estonia, as in many other post-totalitarian countries, the role of autocratic structures and values is still significant. The contemporary civic education could change the situation, but this has not happen yet. The education system is still hierarchical and delivers and checks mainly factual knowledge. The civic syllabus follows the European ideals (EDC), but it is very eclectic. The textbooks provide students with detailed information about main political institutions, but avoid complex and controversial issues. Their social theoretical framework is arbitrary and hard to follow even for Estonians. The arbitrary concepts are irrelevant for understanding of both the totalitarian past and the authoritarian present. They are also isolated from the students' democratic practices at schools. Even the main author of the textbooks confesses it, but she is reluctant to accept other ideas. Despite a long-lasting criticism, the main civic textbooks do not distinguish between democratic and autocratic values, attitudes and structures. They approach complex and controversial issues as one-dimensional. They do not criticize any possible abuse of power by authorities. The same do most of civic teachers, national examinations and teacher educators. As a result, the civic education system promotes rather authoritarian than democratic national identities. In this situation, the influence of Russian authoritarian ideology is even increasing among Russian students in Estonia. One should ask why should Russian students prefer the Estonian authoritarian identity to the Russian one? The authoritarian Estonians and authoritarian Russians remain isolated from each other.

Estonians and Russians could be more easily integrated on the basis of common democratic European values. Neither the Estonian educational nor the integration policies promote relevant democratic knowledge and values. They only pay lip-services to these ideas. They also reject the proposals to study the processes at some Estonian and Russian schools in Estonia and develop adequate theoretical and methodical materials for that.

Development of democratic knowledge, attitudes and values is possible as result of some individual initiatives at some Estonian and Russian schools and organizations.

Now, it seems that also the Open Estonian Foundation and many NGO's are going to support the authoritarian civic education system. Although they criticize the existing out-of-date and ineffective system, they do not have any serious willingness to accept the former criticism and support more adequate theoretical system and study materials.

In sum, development of democratic national identities does not seem a concern for the Estonian Government. The Government supports mainly language courses and policies for equal opportunities for everybody: democrats, autocrats, nationalists and chauvinists. In this situation, danger for national conflicts will remain.

Both European Union and Estonia should distinguish between democratic and authoritarian political identities. They should promote the former and isolate and fight against the latter.

The democratic national identity is the missing, but necessary concept that enables to overcome the ethnic isolation and to increase also the European integration.

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