# **Education for Democratic Citizenship**

The Unmaking of Citizenship Education for Adult Immigration in Canada Authors: Reva Joshee & Tracey M. Derwing

# PART I – BACKGROUND INFORMTAION

#### **<u>Citizenship Education as defined in the article:</u>**

In 1985, a task force within the Secretary of State redefined citizenship education to include the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes about "rights and freedoms, equality of access, full participation, ethnic and racial diversity, cultural and regional diversity, two official languages, constitutional monarchy, a federal system [of government] and national symbols" (Government of Canada, 1985, p.19)

#### What kind of Citizen are you?

Joel Westheimer outlines three visions of the "good" citizen:

#### 1. Personally Responsible Citizen

Description - acts responsibly in their community Social Action – contributes food to a food drive

#### 2. Participatory Citizen

Description - active member of a community organization Social Action – helps to organize a food drive

#### 3. Social Justice Oriented Citizen

Description - critically assesses social, political, and economic structures Social Action – explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes

#### Part II – THE ARTICLE

#### Focus of the study

- To trace the history of citizenship education for immigrants in English Canada from 1947 to 1998.
- With particular attention to the lack of interest in citizenship education for adult immigrants.

The article suggests that policies in immigration, multiculturalism and naturalization have been major contributors to the present socio-political climate in Canada.

- *Immigration policy* determines the nature of the education levels, skills, and other demographic characteristics of newcomers.
- *Multiculturalism policy* has civic participation as one of its control goals.
- *Naturalization* (citizenship acquisition policy) includes the mandate to provide information for citizenship applicants.



## Importance of Citizenship Education

- Develops wide and active citizen participation
- Promotes purposeful citizens
- Enables informed citizenship
- Facilitates the process of settlement and acculturation thereby granting immigrants the opportunity to pursue a quality of life they desire and participate in their new home.

#### **Educational Implications**

- The only real citizenship education occurs in academics. What is happening in the immigrant programs is more on how to fill out forms and how to get through the application process.
- The nature of the test encouraged rote memorization.
- Regional emphases were no longer feasible because a national test cannot incorporate regional diversity.
- There was an increase in formal evaluation as most programs introduced mock exams at the end of the course.
- It was difficult for participants to see the value in open-ended discussions about citizenship when they knew they were only required to write a multiple-choice test.
- The LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) classes, which was meant to help newcomers become oriented to Canadian way of life, became more of instruction in 'Survival English'
- Due to the diversity and multicultural nature of the classes, it became necessary to incorporate cultural diversity into the curriculum.



## **Immigrants Expectations of Citizenship**

- Dedication to the improvement of the country.
- Knowledge about the economy of the country.
- **Canadian** Knowledge about multiculturalism.
  - Knowledge about the geography and political structure of the country.

## PART III – CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

## Public School Curricula

- Three strands to the Ontario ESL/ELD program: Knowledge about Canada, Canadian Citizenship, and Canadian Diversity.
- Knowledge about Canada progresses from simple, surface knowledge (geography, peoples, and holidays) to complex knowledge (international relations and engagement, trade).
- Canadian Citizenship progresses from simple school rules of acceptance and behaviour to complex ideas of understanding Canadian law and how it protects people.
- Canadian Diversity immediately identifies sometimes persecuted groups (visible minorities, LGBTQ people, and persons with intellectual or physical disabilities) as part of the Canadian family, and progresses toward advocating for them.

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Westheimer, J. (2008). *What kind of citizen? Democratic dialogues in education*. Canada, 48(3), 6. 6-10. retrieved from <u>www.cea-ace.ca/sites/default/files/EdCan-2008-v48-n3-Westheimer.pdf</u>