

## Immigrants into Citizens\*

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How do you become a British citizen? Apart from *finding* yourself one, as an accident of birth, you can *choose* to become one. British citizenship may come simply from being born in the United Kingdom. Beyond that, reflecting the British post-imperial and postcolonial situation, things become complex. There are numerous people around the world with various kinds of less than full British citizenship. There are, according to the British government Border and Immigration Agency website ([http:// www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk)): ‘British overseas territories citizens, British Overseas citizens, British subjects under the 1981 Act, British Nationals (Overseas) and British protected persons.’ Then there are the Falkland Islanders granted full British citizenship in the wake of the Falklands conflict by the British Nationality (Falkland Islands) Act 1983. Full British citizenship and the lesser shades of citizenship with their attendant rights, as this last event highlights, are the palpable result of intricate drawings of political maps of inclusion and exclusion with their own purposes. This article looks at that process, because it reveals much about British government assumptions about the community and the role of the citizen, which raises questions about how far these are appropriate assumptions for a country that aspires to be a democracy.

### **Choosing to become a British citizen**

The focus of this article is the British government publication, *Life in the United Kingdom: A*

*Journey to Citizenship*,<sup>1</sup> designed to help prospective citizens pass the test called *Life in the UK*.

The test is now part of the process of becoming a British citizen, which additionally requires

residence in the United Kingdom for five years and the submission of an application form with personal information about the applicant, including recent and present residence details, evidence of good character (including details of employment and tax office reference), and absence of criminal convictions and involvement in war crimes, genocide or acts of terrorism. A final section of the form is concerned with evidence of knowledge of English and of life in the United Kingdom. This must take the form of *either* confirmation that the applicant followed a course of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) that used approved citizenship materials, *or* letter confirming success in the *Life in the UK* test (Note that this was the position in December 2007. For the current situation, check the website at: <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/>).

### **The *Life in the United Kingdom* Test**

According to the British government guide *Naturalisation as a British Citizen* (subsequently referred to as the *Guide*) the rationale for the test is that:

We want people acquiring British citizenship to embrace positively the diversity of background, culture, and faiths that living in modern Britain involves. The Government is also concerned that those who become British citizens should play an active role, both economic and political, in our society, and have a sense of belonging to a wider community. Learning English is, for immigrants to the UK, the main priority for integration. Learning about life in the UK will enable you to understand your rights and duties as a British citizen.<sup>2</sup>

The knowledge of life in the United Kingdom requirement was introduced in November 2005.

The pass mark is ‘around 75%’ and there is no limit to the number of times someone can take the test. It must be taken online (some online training is offered) and comprises 24 multiple choice questions, which applicants are allowed 45 minutes to complete. (Information about the test can be found online at: <http://www.lifeintheuktest.gov.uk/>). The cost for applicants is £34. The multiple choice questions take four forms: choosing one correct answer from four options;

deciding whether a statement is true or false; choosing two correct answers from four options; and saying which of two statements is true. Until April 2007 these were based on Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the first (2004) edition of *Life in the United Kingdom* (subsequently referred to as LUK04), which cover the multicultural nature of British society and its form of government. However, a second edition of *Life in the United Kingdom* was published in March 2007 (subsequently referred to as LUK07) and it was determined that future tests would also include Chapters 5 and 6, covering knowledge and understanding of employment matters and everyday needs such as housing, money, health and education. Since July 2007, then, all applicants must answer 24 questions based on five chapters (2–6) rather than three (note that for a three-month period (April–June 2007), both editions were in use).

What does an examination of the official *Life in the United Kingdom* publication reveal about current government understanding of what it means to be a British citizen? For this purpose, rather than simply concentrating on the second edition now exclusively in use, it is instructive to look at both editions. In considering LUK04 and LUK07, I am not concerned here with the motivation of those writing the two editions. Historians may well profitably pursue that seam of interest. In whichever way these texts came about, whether the product of some particular motivation or in part by accident, my concern is with the picture each offers of the values prized in the United Kingdom, of its structure of government and of the kind of citizens that are welcome.

LUK04 and LUK07 are similar in each having eight chapters with the same titles (though not in the same order), though in the chapter titles in LUK07 the words ‘United Kingdom’ replace ‘Britain’, so that, for instance, Chapter 4 changes from ‘How Britain is Governed’ to ‘How the United Kingdom is Governed’. Also, the 2007 edition has an extra final chapter

(Chapter 9), entitled 'Building Better Communities'. A close comparison of the two editions reveals that in the less than three years between their publication dates they present considerable differences in the official British view of citizenship. The weighting given to major values seems to have shifted and a different impression is given of the most important qualities citizens should have. Curiously, the perception of the size of the country has also changed. LUK04 sees Britain as 'a relatively small country' approximately 600 miles from north to south.<sup>3</sup> By 2007, however, measured across the country from north Scotland to Land's End in the southwest, Britain is 870 miles long and has become a 'medium-sized country'.<sup>4</sup>

Why was a radically new edition of *Life in the United Kingdom* required only some 18 months after the first applicants used it to take their tests? The main reason given was that it was felt that some of the English of the first edition was too difficult even for speakers of English at ESOL Entry Level 3 which was the standard required for the test. A second edition expressed in more simple English was needed. Thus where LUK04 talks of 'providing a safe haven',<sup>5</sup> LUK07 has 'offering safety'.<sup>6</sup> There were also corrections of fact to be made. Two examples: Charles II was recalled from exile not from France,<sup>7</sup> but from the Netherlands<sup>8</sup>; and 'Great Britain includes Northern Ireland'<sup>9</sup> is corrected to 'the United Kingdom consists today of four countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. ... The name "Britain" or "Great Britain" refers only to England, Scotland and Wales.'<sup>10</sup> As we shall see, however, the changes to the second edition were much more far-reaching.

### **Presentation and accessibility**

The changes start with the covers of the two A4 publications. LUK04 has a glossy blue cover with its title in eye-catching 15mm high white letters. Below the Home Office logo is the slogan 'Building a safe, just and tolerant society'. LUK07 is dark blue, its title 8mm high and with no

slogan beneath the logo. LUK04 is an invitingly easy to read document. Its first chapter, ‘The Making of the United Kingdom’—a brief 25-page history of the United Kingdom from the Roman Conquest to the present day—like the rest of the publication, is printed in large type, black on white. The same chapter in LUK07 covers only 19 pages because it is printed 4 columns to the page in a fine black type on a grey background. This makes it quite hard to read even in the brightest light.

LUK07 has a potentially useful new feature: a glossary of terms used in the publication. However, it is a matter of straining to see rather than simply reading because the word to be explained is in white on a grey background and the explanation in black on grey. LUK07’s second new and potentially useful feature is photographs—but without captions. Thus those who know Hadrian’s Wall may recognise a fragment of it with mist swirling around. Seeing a policeman carrying off a woman in smart Edwardian dress may be baffling unless you are familiar with the suffrage movement. An elderly man emerging from a fairly nondescript brick building may be equally puzzling unless you spot on the edge of the picture a barely decipherable sign saying ‘public library’.

A glossary that is hard to read and captionless illustrations seem to indicate a failure on the part of the writers of LUK07 to put themselves into the shoes of their readers. It is hard to understand why a book that purports to be a guide for people wishing to join a community should be relatively inaccessible in such obvious ways. In its presentation, LUK07 fails to treat others decently and at the same time loses an opportunity to model the kind of civic behaviour a democratic society would want to encourage in its citizens.

### **The visibility of tolerance**

*The Guide*, as we have seen, talks of people positively embracing diversity, but in the gap between the two publications, tolerance as a value has been lost to view. As we have seen, the slogan ‘Building a safe, just and tolerant society’ has gone from the Home Office logo on the cover. The sub-section of Chapter 3 headed ‘Religion and Tolerance’ in LUK04 becomes in LUK07 simply ‘Religion’ and the sentence ‘Although Britain is historically a Christian society, people are usually very tolerant towards the faiths of others and those who have no faith’<sup>11</sup> is omitted from LUK07. There is factual material about the size of different faith communities, but no mention of tolerance.

There are also omissions of what might be regarded as indirect references to tolerance. LUK04, in its account of the House of Lords, which mentions that senior bishops are automatically members, points out that Life Peers include not only members of the various Christian denominations, but also other faiths—Jewish, Moslem, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist as well as non-believers.<sup>12</sup> (Life Peers, as distinct from hereditary peers, are working peers appointed for their own lifetime to the second chamber often for their specialist knowledge.) LUK07 does not mention the multi-faith character of the House of Lords.

LUK04 suggests that most people find it easy to get on well with their neighbours by following a few simple rules like keeping noise to a reasonable level, respecting boundaries and exchanging friendly greetings.<sup>13</sup> LUK07 concentrates on what to do about *problems* with neighbours.<sup>14</sup> In a new final chapter called ‘Building Better Communities’, returning to the neighbour theme, it says everyone should try to be a good neighbour and offers a few dos and don’ts like ‘make sure you know what days you can put out your rubbish for it to be collected’.<sup>15</sup> This is a shift we shall see in other places from a welcoming attitude in LUK04 to a you-will-need-to-toe-the-line-if-you-live-here approach in LUK07.

The invisibility of tolerance in LUK07 gives the impression that the United Kingdom is a place where tolerance is not a value particularly highlighted, as LUK04 suggested it was. As far as one can judge, prospective citizens will not be expected to be committed deeply to this value. At best, they need to toe the line and hope others do too.

### **Getting a clear picture of the structure of the British government**

Probably the most significant difference between LUK04 and LUK07 comes in Chapter 4: ‘How Britain is Governed’ in LUK04 and ‘How the United Kingdom is Governed’ in LUK07. The differences between the two publications often involve only relatively slight changes or omissions, but they are cumulatively critical because an account of government is obviously of the first importance for someone seeking membership of a political community. The effect of them is that LUK07 offers a less clear and explicit picture of the political system to would-be citizens. In a short article it is not possible to give a comprehensive account of the slight shifts and omissions, but in this section I offer a selection of some of them. They support the claim that LUK04 and LUK07 offer different pictures of the community and the citizen. The larger significance of this is explored in the following section.

The lack of clarity in LUK07 is signaled in the first paragraph of Chapter 4. This lists the range of institutions (monarchy, parliament, civil service, etc.) that govern the United Kingdom as a constitutional democracy. It concludes with the remark, with no explanatory gloss, that some would argue that the media and pressure groups should be seen as part of the Constitution. This is confusing to say the least and becomes more so when we see below what LUK07 has to say about pressure groups.

LUK04 and LUK07 both set out the role of the constitutional monarch, but LUK04 is much more explicit about the character of this limited and ceremonial role. For instance,

LUK07 says that the Queen has the ceremonial role of opening Parliament each year and ‘makes a speech that summarises the government’s policies for the year ahead’.<sup>16</sup> A similar passage in LUK04 goes on to make it clear that ‘these are entirely the views of the Prime Minister and cabinet’ (LUK04, p61).<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, LUK07 gives a brief account of the ‘first past the post’ electoral system in just over six lines,<sup>18</sup> whereas LUK04, in ten of its longer lines,<sup>19</sup> explains the significance of this system for constituencies, the formation of a government based on seats gained by parties rather than votes cast, and the main reason why the main political parties prefer this system to a proportional representation system. It is a fuller explanation that gives the reader some intellectual grasp of the process and its wider implications.

Both publications deal with another aspect of the party system: the Whips. According to LUK04, the Chief Whip ‘will negotiate with the Speaker [of the House of Commons] over the timetable and order of business’.<sup>20</sup> In LUK07, the Chief Whip ‘arranges the schedule of proceedings in the House of Commons with the Speaker’.<sup>21</sup> A small change, but one which makes the process more opaque than it need be. It is hard to imagine the change is in the interests of simpler English expression in LUK07.

LUK04 is explicit about the constitutional role of ‘Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition’, emphasising that it is funded by the Treasury and has a guaranteed amount of parliamentary time to debate matters of its own choice.<sup>22</sup> LUK07 talks about the Opposition as the second largest party in parliament and its role in pointing out the government’s failures and weaknesses, but with no mention of its democratically significant constitutional status.<sup>23</sup> LUK04 comments that people often distinguish between ‘pressure groups’ and ‘lobby groups’, pointing out that the latter term is applied to the voice of commercial, financial, industrial, trade or professional organisations and not to voluntary bodies of ordinary citizens.<sup>24</sup> Under the heading ‘Pressure and



Lobby Groups’, LUK07 does not distinguish the two and refers to the Confederation of British Industry, the Consumers’ Association and Greenpeace all as ‘pressure groups’.<sup>25</sup>

Both editions set out the responsibilities of local government. LUK04 gives an explanation of the ‘mandatory services’ (education, housing, social services, passenger transport, fire service, rubbish collection, planning, environmental health, libraries) local authorities are required by central government to provide and explains that citizens can take them to court if they do not provide them.<sup>26</sup> LUK07 uses the term ‘mandatory services’, but does not explain what this means<sup>27</sup>—nor is it in the glossary. LUK04 mentions that the government is exploring how some local services might be delivered by community groups. Some see this, it says, as diminishing the powers of local government but others see it as a way of involving ordinary citizens in the way their area is run. This comment, although not strictly necessary to the account, reflects the way, noticeable in other places, that LUK04 suggests that the typical citizen is someone who is community-minded and keen to participate. LUK07 gives the impression that the typical citizen is an obedient rule-follower.

Both editions deal with the United Kingdom’s position in the European Union broadly covering the same points. Once again, however, LUK04 is clearer and more explicit. It is partly a matter of presentation. LUK04 has brief separate paragraphs setting out the roles of the Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the European Parliament,<sup>28</sup> while LUK07 compresses the information into two dense paragraphs.<sup>29</sup> Yet it is clear that applicants are expected to be familiar with these distinctions as potential test items since they are included in the highlighted box headed ‘Check that you understand’.<sup>30</sup> LUK04 is also more specific on the status of European law in relation to the national legal systems of member countries explaining the difference between ‘regulations’ (specific rules with the automatic force of law) and

‘directives’ (general requirements to be introduced within a set time, but with how they are implemented being left to the individual Member States) and pointing out that Regulations override national legislation.<sup>31</sup> LUK07 says that:

European laws, called directives, regulations or framework decisions, have made a lot of difference to people’s rights in the UK, particularly at work. For example, there are EU directives about the procedures for making people redundant, and regulations that limit the number of hours people can be made to work.<sup>32</sup>

Without a further gloss, ‘directives, regulations and framework decisions’ sound like alternative expressions with no differences between the terms worth commenting upon.

### **A dynamic system or a grid to fit in to?**

There is a pervasive and subtle difference between LUK04 and LUK07. The former suggests a dynamic society in which everything is not as good as it could be but in which it is possible to change things and welcomes active citizens prepared to take civic initiatives. The latter tends to give the impression that the obedient rule-follower should be the norm.

Characteristically, LUK04 discusses institutions as evolving from their historical context. The account of the Northern Ireland Assembly, for instance, begins in 1922 with the establishment of the Northern Ireland parliament and then, following the violence and terrorism, mentions the negotiated ceasefire and the arrival at a power-sharing agreement.<sup>33</sup> The civil service in the United Kingdom is given the same historical treatment, which brings out its neutrality and professionalism.<sup>34</sup> In both cases, LUK07 simply gives a brief account of the current institution. LUK04 gives the impression of a living, evolving system, while LUK07 presents a static, if not rigid, structure.

In places, LUK04 talks about what are seen as problems to be tackled. Declining participation in parliamentary elections, particularly by young people, for instance, is mentioned as a trend which government and political parties are seeking to reverse.<sup>35</sup> There is no mention of this in LUK07. With the judiciary, too, LUK04 describes the system, then goes on to suggest that some people feel that the process for choosing judges should be more transparent and that judges should be more representative of the public. Women and ethnic minorities are under-represented. LUK07 has nothing about the way judges are chosen or anything about the need for reform.

As these examples indicate, LUK04 presents the political community as a dynamic, ongoing system—very much a democratic system—which can be changed by its citizens in many cases. LUK07 presents a system to be fitted into and thus, perhaps inadvertently, fails to emphasise the essentially democratic character of the society the would-be citizen is hoping to join.

### **Joining a community**

The *Guide* expressed the aspirations that those seeking British citizenship should positively embrace the diversity of life in modern Britain, play an active role, both economic and political, in society, and have a sense of belonging to a wider community.<sup>36</sup> Obvious and worthwhile aspirations and ones you would expect to be reflected in the framing of the *Life in the United Kingdom* document. Indeed they are in LUK04, but not to the same degree in LUK07.

Again it is a matter of offering a few examples to try and convey the general difference in tone between the two documents. For instance, in the section headed ‘Leisure’, in Chapter 5: ‘Everyday Needs’, LUK04 mentions the large network of public footpaths in the United Kingdom that ‘give access to some of the most beautiful countryside in Britain’. It goes on to explain that these are usually marked with signposts, but that an Ordnance Survey Map (scale

1:25,000) is an accurate guide. These are available in bookshops and tourist information centres, but can also be borrowed free of charge from libraries.<sup>37</sup> All LUK07 has to say about footpaths is: ‘The UK has a large network of public footpaths in the countryside.’<sup>38</sup>

In similar vein, LUK04 and LUK07 both mention the possibilities that exist for adult education. LUK04 details with specific examples indicating the wide range of courses available (karate, arts and crafts, car maintenance, foreign languages, etc.), their relatively low cost, the time of the year they usually start, and how to find out about them.<sup>39</sup> LUK07 is less specific about the courses (mentioning only sports, learning a musical instrument or a new language) and beyond that says that details are available from the local library, college or adult education centre.<sup>40</sup> In their respective chapters on ‘Sources of Help and Information’, both deal with public libraries. LUK04 supplies the reader with plenty of information about the whole business of using a public library, making requests for books, whom to approach for information and so on.<sup>41</sup> LUK07 provides the minimum of information.<sup>42</sup> Both mention that to borrow material from a public library, rather than simply consult it there, it is necessary to become a member, but LUK04 stresses how easy this is.<sup>43</sup> Both editions have information about the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), but LUK04 by supplying more detailed information about the number of CAB offices there are in the United Kingdom and stating that ‘millions of people use the service each year’ makes it seem more user-friendly and available. It also mentions that the service is largely staffed by trained volunteers and indicates that the service welcomes volunteers.<sup>44</sup> This reinforces the message, which both editions aspire to give, that those seeking British citizenship are encouraged to play an active role in society. LUK07 has no mention that the service welcomes volunteers.

***Life in the UK as preparation for the citizenship test***

How do LUK04 and LUK07 compare as good preparation tools for the test? On the strict criterion of preparation for the test, and leaving to one side problems of accessibility and legibility and looking only at content, LUK07 is probably better than LUK04 because it ‘teaches to the test’. As we have seen, it keeps information to the minimum and has checkboxes headed ‘Check That You Understand’ at the end of each chapter to focus the reader’s attention on likely test topics. So LUK07 as a tool for getting an applicant through the test appears the more efficient document, but what does that say about British society? It seems to imply that this is a society prepared to replace a more detailed, expansive and welcoming document (LUK04) with one that more effectively enables prospective citizens to pass an online test. One gets the impression that it is a society that wants citizens first and foremost who can efficiently tick boxes.

***Does the citizenship test fulfil its own aims?***

What about the test itself? Does it meet its own stated aims? Its rationale, we should recall, is that people acquiring British citizenship should ‘embrace positively’ the diversity of modern Britain and play ‘an active role, both economic and political’ in it.<sup>45</sup> There is, however, no way such a test can provide evidence that a person has a positive attitude to diversity and living in a diverse society. It can only test what the applicant *knows about* the diversity of British society. The relevant checkboxes underscore this when they suggest applicants check that they understand, for instance, ‘what the largest ethnic minorities in the UK are’, ‘where most ethnic minority people live’, ‘what percentage of the British population ‘are Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, Buddhist’.<sup>46</sup> To labour the point, these are all factual matters. An applicant may get all the relevant questions on these matters correct, but what his or her attitudes to these facts are

remains unrevealed. Does the applicant positively enjoy living in such a society, does she tolerate it, or ideally would she prefer a more homogeneous society? Responses to this test cannot answer those questions. As to playing an active economic and political role in society, the employment details and tax office response required on the application form give some evidence that the applicant is active economically. As far as evidence of interest or involvement in political activity is concerned, the test can offer evidence of political knowledge, but not candidates' attitude to involvement. Once again, the tests can test knowledge, but not attitudes.

### **The test and democratic virtues**

It would be wrong to give the impression that the publications and the test suggest that knowledge alone is relevant. The *Guide* and *Life in the United Kingdom* suggest that there is more to democratic citizenship than simply having knowledge, whether items of information or sophisticated bodies of knowledge. What they suggest, LUK04 as we have seen more than LUK07, is that democratic citizens need to be certain sorts of people—fair, tolerant, decent, willing to share burdens with fellow citizens. Work in political philosophy and philosophy of education on the virtues citizens need<sup>47</sup> supports this view, suggesting that if citizens lack the appropriate democratic attitudes even the most sophisticated democratic institutions and arrangements can fail to function adequately or, at worst, become corrupt. Good citizens need to be certain sorts of people. They need to be decent, helpful, willing on occasion to go the extra mile, have the courage to be whistle-blowers, tolerant of neighbours with different religious beliefs or none. As George Eliot saw, 'the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs'.<sup>48</sup> A multiple choice test of facts is not going to reveal the faithful day-to-day living of a democratic life. Yet

this, rather than the fact that fellow citizens know where the prime minister's residence is or the exact form of the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales,<sup>49</sup> is what determines the quality of life in a democratic community.

Given the importance of dispositions patterned into democratic practices, the temptation is to ask: well then, how can we devise a test which will tell us whether a person has these? If we accept that they cannot be tested by multiple choice questions, what other tests can be used to find out if would-be citizens have such dispositions? Furthermore, how can we be sure that they are 'the real thing' rather than a simulacrum? What about the would-be citizen who poses as a decent, law-biding, tolerant person, but is not? What test will reliably identify such a person?

Work in philosophy of education<sup>50</sup> suggests that no such test can exist. Does this mean that the attitudes of our fellow citizens are forever opaque to us? Not at all. Most people would be able to make reasonably accurate judgements about the civic attitudes of their neighbours, work colleagues or other people with whom they come into frequent and close contact. What it does mean is that not everything valuable in life can be tested by one-off formal test methods. For years it has been a commonplace that, say, questionnaires about honesty can only test what a person *says* about his or her attitudes on a particular day. They cannot affirm or deny that this person has the engrained disposition of honesty that in an ongoing way informs his or her particular actions and attitudes. This problem is recognised by Ofsted in its account of assessment of the statutory citizenship programmes in school. It is acknowledged that there is a small place for the assessment of knowledge and a larger one for assessing participation and responsible action, for which different methods are appropriate.<sup>51</sup> These might include the way a school student behaves in school, in groups, takes volunteering initiatives and so on. If the naturalisation process is thus to take seriously its aspiration that applicants for citizenship should

have the democratic virtues, to a greater or lesser degree, it would have to devise very different means from its present online test.

### **A question of fairness**

Tests, of whatever level of sophistication, raise questions of fairness. Citizens born in the United Kingdom do not take a test before enjoying the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Secondary school students are assessed as part of the citizenship course, but regardless of how they perform they are full citizens, gradually accruing the full measure of civic rights and responsibilities. Is it fair then to test would-be citizens? Should they be offered instead a similar citizenship programme to the one for schools, which actively encourages participation and interaction? This would at least be more appropriate for the dynamic participation and commitment to attitudes of toleration and community involvement that seem to be the aspiration behind the current tests.

Such courses might embody 'best practice' from school-level citizenship programmes, though shaped to the needs and interests of adults rather than school students. Rather than simply purveying information, they, like the school courses, might encourage discussion of political and social issues and provide opportunities for volunteering. The spirit would not be that of instruction from a rule book so that people learn efficiently how to fit in. Values after all can have different weightings and different forms of expression and exchanging views about the reasons behind others' practices can be enlightening. For example, it seems obvious to many people that 'first come, first served' is a good way of fairly distributing some scarce goods. To others from societies where greater emphasis is put on need, this may well seem a harsh, unfair practice. These courses can therefore be envisaged as a two-way street for an exchange of views about civic and social practices. *The New and the Old: The Report of the 'Life in the United*



*Kingdom*' Advisory Group<sup>52</sup> did recommend attendance at ten two-hour citizenship classes (i.e., participative discussions) before taking the box-ticking test. Apparently this was turned down on grounds of organisational difficulty, the need for speedy implementation of the new regulations and expense. Also the first annual report (2006) of the Home Office's independent Advisory Board on Naturalisation and Integration regretted the absence of classes (and resources) and suggested instead a certification that applicants had worked for a voluntary body in an English-speaking environment. These speculative suggestions should not be taken as hard and fast proposals for an alternative to the present arrangements, but rather an invitation to review the fairness issues raised by the current practice.

### **Conclusion**

A community's procedure for admitting new citizens reveals its values and attitudes. In the two publications, *Life in the United Kingdom* (2004, 2007), produced within less than three years of each other, attitudes to newcomers changed from the welcoming stance of 'you will be able to get on here' to 'if you join this community you will need to toe the line'. The publications raise the question: what exactly is expected of a British citizen? Should he or she aim to be an active participator in a dynamic process (LUK04) or adopt the rather more passive role of fitting in to a pre-established grid of rules and expectations (LUK07)? Both publications (though more emphatically LUK04) contained the reasonable aspiration that citizens need certain civic virtues to function in a democratic society. Unfortunately, the assumption that this could be measured by an online multiple choice test has led to a seemingly efficient (tick the boxes) solution completely inappropriate to the task. This gives the regrettable impression of a community that pays only lip service to democratic values. This is underlined further by the failure to treat

citizens seeking to join the community fairly in relation to citizens born and brought up in the country.

The British government has failed properly to understand the significance of what citizens need to know, the kind of civic virtues they need and how these different aspects of being a citizen might be acquired. It is also badly in error if it thinks that the citizenly virtues of decency, public-spiritedness, respect and concern for others and the like can be assessed by a multiple choice test. Or, alternatively, if it thinks that knowledge is all important and civic virtue of little or no importance. A society that aspires to be a democracy needs to think as carefully about its procedures for admitting new citizens as it does about other issues of democratic principle and practice.

At this point, this article links with classical and modern discussions of immigration, the rights of foreigners, refugees, stateless persons<sup>53</sup> and the appropriate attitude of just states to those beyond their borders. What are appropriate naturalisation procedures for a democratic community? Can a nation-state that aspires to be a democracy set whatever entry conditions it chooses for would-be citizens? How far can it model itself in this regard on an exclusive golf club that makes its own rules? In the interests of democratic values, institutions within democratic societies have been legally compelled to widen access to women, minority groups and so on. Is an international body needed to monitor the immigration rules of nation-states?

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship*, London, The Stationery Office, 2004; Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship*, 2nd edn, London, The Stationery Office, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> *Naturalisation as a British Citizen: A Guide for Applicants*, p. 7. Available as a pdf at: <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/>.

<sup>3</sup> LUK04, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> LUK07, p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> LUK04, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> LUK07, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> LUK04, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> LUK07, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> LUK04, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> LUK07, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> LUK04, p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> LUK04, p. 63.

<sup>13</sup> LUK04, p. 84.

<sup>14</sup> LUK07, p. 59.

<sup>15</sup> LUK07, p. 107.

<sup>16</sup> LUK07, p. 44.

<sup>17</sup> LUK04, p. 61.

<sup>18</sup> LUK07, p. 44.

<sup>19</sup> LUK04, p. 63.

<sup>20</sup> LUK04, p. 62.

<sup>21</sup> LUK07, p. 44.

<sup>22</sup> LUK04, pp. 58–9.

<sup>23</sup> LUK07, p. 46.

<sup>24</sup> LUK04, p. 64.

<sup>25</sup> LUK07, p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> LUK04, pp. 66–7.

<sup>27</sup> LUK07, p. 48.

<sup>28</sup> LUK04, pp. 70–1.

<sup>29</sup> LUK07, pp. 52–3.

<sup>30</sup> LUK07, p. 53.

<sup>31</sup> LUK04, pp. 71–2.

<sup>32</sup> LUK07, p. 53.

<sup>33</sup> LUK04, pp. 68–9.

<sup>34</sup> LUK04, pp. 65–6.

<sup>35</sup> LUK04, p. 74.

<sup>36</sup> *Guide*, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> LUK04, p. 100.

<sup>38</sup> LUK07, p. 70.

<sup>39</sup> LUK04, p. 100.

<sup>40</sup> LUK07, p. 68.

<sup>41</sup> LUK04, pp. 121–2.

<sup>42</sup> LUK07, p. 102.

<sup>43</sup> LUK04, p. 121.

<sup>44</sup> LUK04, pp. 122–3.

<sup>45</sup> *Guide*, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> LUK07, pp. 38, 39.

<sup>47</sup> Eamonn Callan, *Creating Citizens: Political Education and Liberal Democracy*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997; Ricahrd Dagger, *Civic Virtues: Rights, Citizenship and Republican Liberalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997; Patricia White, *Civic Virtues and Public*

*Schooling: Educating Citizens for a Democratic Society*, New York, Teachers College Press, 1996.

<sup>48</sup> George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1965 [1871–2], p. 896.

<sup>49</sup> LUK07, p. 51, checkbox.

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Davis, *The Limits of Educational Assessment*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1998; Andrew Davis, *Educational Assessment: A Critique of Current Policy*, London, Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, 1999.

<sup>51</sup> Ofsted, *Towards Consensus? Citizenship in Secondary Schools*, 2006, p. 40. Available online at: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

<sup>52</sup> Available as pdf at: <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/>.

<sup>53</sup> Immanuel Kant, 'Perpetual peace', in Hans Reiss, ed., *Kant's Political Writings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977 [1795]; Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2001; John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2002; Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004; Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism, with commentaries by Jeremy Waldrom, Bonnie Honig, Will Kymlicka*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006.