

## The French Third Republic: Popular Education, Conceptions of Citizenship and the Flemish Immigrants

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### ABSTRACT:

This article focuses on the influence of the educational policies of the French Third Republic and the conceptions of citizenship that were implied in the reshaping of primary education. Particular attention is paid to the way children, as future citizens, were being addressed and 'moulded' through the then popular education practices, against the background of a severe assimilationist language policy and a fierce battle against religious institutions. The article explores efforts to turn migrants into 'good' French citizens, giving special notice to the situation of the children of Belgian migrants. Despite the huge presence of Belgian — i.e. mainly Flemish<sup>1</sup> — immigrants in the industrial centres of Northern France, no special educational measures were taken to 'adapt' the Flemish, non-native speakers to their new situation. The authors explain the political and educational backgrounds to the reasons behind, and the consequences of this approach, which could be characterized as a kind of 'purposeful educational neglect'.

### RÉSUMÉ

Cet article traite de l'influence de la politique gouvernementale d'éducation en France sous la Troisième République et des notions de citoyenneté intégrées à la refonte de l'enseignement primaire. Les auteurs s'intéressent particulièrement au discours destiné aux enfants en tant que futurs citoyens et à la manière dont ils sont façonnés selon les pratiques éducatives en usage, dans le contexte d'une stricte politique d'assimilation linguistique et d'une guerre menée contre les institutions religieuses. L'article explore les efforts de transformation des immigrants en « bons » citoyens français, visant en particulier les enfants des migrants belges. Malgré une présence importante de migrants provenant de la Belgique — en majorité des Flamands — dans les centres industriels du nord de la France, aucune mesure n'est prise pour aider cette population non francophone à s'adapter. Les auteurs expliquent les contextes politique et scolaire de cette décision, les raisons sous-jacentes ainsi que les conséquences d'une approche que l'on pourrait qualifier de 'lacune pédagogique intentionnelle'.

From the French Revolution onwards, the French school system has been assigned the task of advancing the unity of the nation, in the light of the ideals voiced by Condorcet (1743–1794), as a member of the National Assembly, of *la promotion de tous*.<sup>2</sup> His belief in reason and the acquisition of knowledge as a remedy against social injustice and inequality constituted the foundation of his conception of an all-embracing, comprehensive, state-directed educational system. Ignorance was conceived to be a limitation of freedom, schooling to be an individual right. Educational institutions were entrusted with the task of bringing about the unity of the nation. As is the case with most revolutionary claims, the complexity and obstinacy—and at that time also the turbulence—of social and historical reality were too unyielding for these imagined ideals to materialize immediately. But under Napoleon's rule, at least one central revolutionary idea was being implemented: the organization and administration of schooling were being placed fully under the authority of the state.<sup>3</sup> In practice, however, this system fell short of achieving popular education for the masses as conceived by the revolutionaries. Later on, with the laws of Guizot (1833) and Falloux (1850), the monopoly of the state in educating the populace was weakened through the formal acknowledgement of the right of the Catholic Church to set up its own schools. The French had to await the arrival on the scene of Jules Ferry, with his famous and far-reaching laws of 1881 and 1882, for a radical breakthrough in popular education.<sup>4</sup> By making primary schooling compulsory, free and secular, he transformed the educational landscape of France, as the vigorous centralistic policies of the Third Republic forcefully reclaimed the power and educational influence of the state (also in view of the colonial expansion which emerged during the Third Republic).<sup>5</sup>

As a general and crucial background for the questions concerning the Flemish immigrants, we will focus in more detail on the influence of the general and educational policies of the Third Republic and the specific conceptions of citizenship that were implied in the reshaping of primary—or popular—education. We will concentrate on the way children—as future citizens—were being addressed<sup>6</sup> and 'moulded' through the then popular education practices, against the background of a severe assimilationist language policy and a fierce battle against religious institutions, eventually giving way to the separation of Church and State in 1905. Apparently, the rigour, fervour and ambition of the Republicans during the last decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century had far-reaching consequences for French society of the time and its conceptions of schooling, consequences that reverberate to today.

### **Schooling Society and Education of the Masses**

Despite the fact that in certain circles of the leading classes in several European countries, there was strong initial resistance to the Enlightenment idea of an educated populace—ignorance constituting the best guarantee for social stability<sup>7</sup>—by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century general compulsory schooling became more common.<sup>8</sup> Education was conceived to be one of the central means for the socialization of the

masses in light of the creation of nation states throughout Western Europe, often accompanying increasing urbanization. This shift of mentality and the generalization of schooling through compulsory education were also driven by economic and political motives, including the rivalry among the various countries and the craving for emancipation on the part of the labourers, indicating that educational change could not be construed simply as a straightforward top-down mechanism.<sup>9</sup> In Europe it was Prussia that led the way in the imposition of compulsory education. Most advanced European countries introduced universal compulsory schooling in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>10</sup> Although it is apparently the case that the majority of the children voluntarily attended school before the enactment of compulsion in most states, various conceptions of the 'Good Citizen'—transforming a potentially dissident population into civilians conforming to the established order framed by a national perspective—underlay the move towards the provision of mass, popular, and finally compulsory education.<sup>11</sup> According to Brian Simon, in reference to the ideas of Adam Smith,

[F]or the creation of a nation, the mass of individuals, concerned only with their own affairs, needed to be transformed into a cohesive force, conforming to national needs; and it is this which underlies the general movement to popular systems of education in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, Jurgen Herbst notes the roots of the public school revival in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, indicating that education had both *custodial* and *formative* functions, and he evokes the apprehension concerning the children of immigrants in this regard: "The very diversity of ethnic background, the absence or strangeness of religious traditions, the variety of languages and dialects spoken, and the apparent crudity of lifestyles prompted many residents of Western cities to demand that these newcomers and their children be converted to the ways of the established citizenry."<sup>13</sup> So although motivations for this undoubtedly multilayered social movement might have been diverse, mass, popular and finally compulsory schooling clearly had primarily a socialisation function, and related to this—with growing urbanization and the disruption of the traditional social habitus—a custodial function.<sup>14</sup> Against the background of this twofold concern, there emerged a wide consensus that all citizens should have access to at least a basic form of culture and knowledge, i.e. to popular education or schooling.<sup>15</sup>

Consequently, education and schooling were seen as a vital constituent of the ideological state apparatus, in the context of which the centralist administration of France served as an outstanding example. Whereas in the old *estates society model* of the Christian world where non-voluntaristic intermediary bodies between the individual and the centres of sovereignty in the last resort related to a divine source, in the newly emerging *modern model*, with a direct relationship between state and individual, the individual was, for the first time, genuinely conceived and defined as *citizen*.<sup>16</sup> The emergent conception of citizenship within the social entity was being defined through a very powerful ideology, akin to the traditional religious mythology,

whereby the rational and rationalizing myth of education and schooling was posited as the sole instrument of socialization of this new, transformed locus of sovereignty. Such an educational system operated in essence as a ritual instrument for the construction of the individualized citizen, i.e. of this molecule of the modern nation state, rather than as a conduit of particular skills for some or other economic function.<sup>17</sup> In the context of the French polity of the Third Republic, the *école laïque* was the cornerstone of its political legitimacy,<sup>18</sup> essentially related to a 'constitutive outside' formed by all kinds of dangers that could threaten its stability or its legitimizing principles. With the setback of the Franco-Prussian war freshly in mind, Jules Ferry combined explicit *national* motives with an outspoken secular ideology and particular *social-economic* motives, in order to confront everything that threatened the republican legitimacy and the spiritual unity of the nation.<sup>19</sup> Universal suffrage was in need of pedagogical guidance. In what follows we will explore aspects of the background of the republican project and its educational manifestations.

### **Social Upheaval, the Grand German Example and the Emergence of Anticlericalism**

Il faut faire disparaître le mal, cause de tous les maux, l'ignorance d'où sortent alternativement le despotisme et la démagogie [...] Oui, on peut établir preuves en main que c'est l'infériorité de notre éducation qui nous a conduits aux revers. Nous avons été battus par des adversaires qui ont mis de leur côté la prévoyance, la discipline et la science: ce qui prouve, derrière ce mal, que même dans le conflits de la force matérielle, c'est l'intelligence qui reste maîtresse.<sup>20</sup>

— Léon Gambetta, 26 June 1871

The transition year 1870–1871 resonated as a terrible year in the French historical consciousness.<sup>21</sup> The defeat of the Second Empire and the Prussian occupation had dethroned many long-cherished ideals. Apparently, the French *élan* did not in all circumstances provide sufficient compensation for technical inferiority. There was much intellectual discord as to the precise cause of the humiliation of France, but there was general agreement that the Empire was the chief culprit with regard to the evil that had taken place.<sup>22</sup> Unmistakably, one of the most striking and pronounced political facts was the ever-growing conflict between the Republicans and the Catholics, with rising radicalization and extremism in education discourse especially towards the end of the 1970s.<sup>23</sup> The steadfast inflexibility of both Rome and France made any common agreement or settlement impossible.

There was the important and near unanimous conviction among the French elite that the triumph of Prussia had everything to do with the superiority of the former's renowned universities and schools. In addition, the French realized that the German officers were far better trained, if only because of their superior ability to read maps properly and their ability to speak and understand French. Immediately, the question

emerged as to how the superiority in knowledge of the victors had come about, leading the French press to compare the respective educational systems of France and Germany. This comparison brought to light, among other things, that the schoolteachers of Alsace-Lorraine had received better training than their French colleagues and that, in addition, the German system was free of charge. A growing number of people began to support the view that if the French wanted to demonstrate that their schooling system was capable of achieving the same successes, it had to undertake equally radical reforms.<sup>24</sup>

The French admiration for German schooling covered all levels of the educational system and would lead to a far-ranging influence in didactics and pedagogical methods, albeit mediated via Belgium and Switzerland, applied in a more practical vein, and adapted to the French context.<sup>25</sup> Victor Duruy<sup>26</sup> and others had previously praised German superiority in education, and the political defeat of 1870 revived arguments in favour of the German system. The belief that national zeal could and should be fuelled through education was an underlying principle in virtually all proposals for reform during the following decades. Accordingly, the Republicans immediately came up with educational reform plans to counterbalance the weaknesses that were revealed during the recent debacle. Jules Ferry, not yet minister, strongly emphasized that the work of the Revolution of 1789 could never be completed if the last of inequalities—that of the right to knowledge—was not removed. Consequently, from 1871 on, one of the central themes of the republican campaign was the secular struggle against ignorance, as befitted the grandeur of the French nation.

Léon Gambetta, Minister of the Interior and of Foreign affairs in the period 1870–1871 and reform-minded prime minister of France from 1881–1882, insisted that schooling should be public and secular, and not be entrusted to the clergy, which had very little affinity with modern society.<sup>27</sup> Schooling should inculcate the minds of future citizens with the conviction that the French nation was superior in the field of legislation, civilization and republican institutions. In keeping with the prevailing social values, the unity of the various classes had to be pursued, and all conflicts potentially threatening to national unity had to be eliminated or precluded. Since Catholicism—or religious unity, for that matter—was no longer a general feature of French society, a new moral unity had to be forged, by means of a uniform school system, teaching civil morality in accordance with the principles of natural reason. The overall aim was to instill conduct deeply imbued with a strong devotion to the nation and a readiness to take up one's civic responsibilities. The appeal of the educational reformers and the values they advocated were favourably received by a growing audience and fell on fertile ground especially among the schoolteachers, who reacted with enthusiasm to Gambetta's call and declared, as it were, nationalism as a secular religion while perceiving themselves as apostles of this national mission.<sup>28</sup>

The educational impact of the political defeat was felt most thoroughly at the level of primary education, this being the most appropriate field for the transformation of mass consciousness. At the same time, one of the prime influences of the German example and its observed superiority was the growing importance of scientific research, particularly the way in which the study of history was being harnessed

to foster historical awareness.<sup>29</sup> As a consequence, the aim became to ‘apply’ the German model to the French universities. Nevertheless, after many French students had stayed in Germany to study at its universities, their appreciation of the educational system there diminished. This happened, in part, because the shock effect of the debacle with Prussia began to wane and the quality of French higher education started to improve. When the dispute of the 1870s between the Republicans and the Catholics about the competence of the latter to confer academic grades was eventually settled by the law of 18 March 1880, formally prohibiting Catholic universities from conferring grades any longer, the way was paved for the most significant educational reforms of the Third Republic, during the ministry of Jules Ferry. Indeed, towards the mid 1870s religious thinking had already become considerably discredited among the French intelligentsia. Science, with its strict rational methods, was held to provide the key to all problems that humanity encountered. To this end, theological dogma had to be renounced.

Therefore, political divisions that had characterized France since 1870 implied that public educational reforms were entwined in the conflict with the Church, and included different views about the role of the state.<sup>30</sup> Between 1808 and 1880, most Catholics, apart from a few extremists, had acknowledged the supervisory role of the state in educational affairs. The fact that the state had set up its own institutions was never contested, on condition that private education could enjoy the same privileges. At the same time, until then, in non-Catholic milieus, with the exception of some anti-religious extremists, theoretical principles were not held to be absolute and the system of independent private schools, which developed alongside the state system, was accepted. With the republican electoral victory of 1879, however, the claim of state omnipotence in education was strongly asserted.

By the end of the 1870s, reproaches heaped upon the Church were increasing. Even more than the fact that the congregations arrogated so much state money, it was the exceptionally dominant influence of the Catholics in (public) education that stirred the growing resentment. Therefore, the neutrality that was supposed to characterize secular state schools in practice often proved to be very relative, especially in secondary education. But in spite of religious supremacy in education, secular ideas and convictions gradually became more widespread among large sections of the population. This mental ‘laicisation’ (i.e. secularization), in conjunction with the new political situation, the unbridled increase of religious congregations, and the problems in education, created a social climate that ultimately turned out to be a fertile breeding ground for the emerging republican struggle. Yet, the nation still required someone who could personify this struggle in the domain of education and schooling, and this figure appeared in the form of Jules Ferry, a vigorous champion of democracy and social equality.

According to Compère,<sup>31</sup> the French historiography of education generally has mythologized and emphasized the progressive and democratic educational contribution of Ferry. It is only with the works of historians such as Willem Frijhoff<sup>32</sup> and Maurice Crubellier<sup>33</sup> that a more cultural historical approach towards the process of schooling in the Third Republic has emerged.<sup>34</sup> In relation to the work of Crubellier,

Compère states: “Avec l’essai de Maurice Crubellier, il s’agit d’une histoire culturelle, c’est-à-dire qu’au delà des programmes et des règles internes, le livre cherche à expliciter le projet global qui le commande et les moyens mobilisés pour y parvenir. Cette école de Jules Ferry, conçue pour produire des citoyens dignes de la République, était animée par une volonté quasi totalitaire de forger l’homme nouveau, rationaliste et patriote, à l’image des pères fondateurs du régime qui ne s’est — heureusement — pas intégralement imposée.”<sup>35</sup>

### **Jules Ferry, ‘L’obligation, La Gratuité et La Laïcité’, and Popular Education**

In fact, the policy of Jules Ferry, the intellectual father and emblematic symbol of the educational laws from the early 1880s, should be conceived as anticlerical rather than antireligious. As a positivist, he assumed that after some time religion would fade away as a matter of course, and his attitude was in a way pragmatic (and empirical) rather than solely rooted in a radical ideology.<sup>36</sup> At a certain stage he even supported Cardinal Lavignerie in setting up religious schools in the North African colonies.<sup>37</sup> After all, the republican leaders that had broken the *détente* between Church and State, dating back to the Guizot law of 1833, were not vehement haters of religion, but were returning to the tradition of the members of parliament of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, whose main objective was to restrict the Catholic influence on French public life as much as possible. The Republicans associated Catholic schools with the reactionary Right, which was obviously not in keeping with how they conceived of the ideal schooling of the future leaders of society.

Because the republican elite initially did not represent the general population, and since the majority of the French still perceived themselves in one way or another as Catholics, the moderate Republicans initially restricted themselves to indirect attacks on the congregations and their schools. At the same time, the Republicans concentrated on ‘strengthening’ the universities by trying to exclude individuals who did not subscribe to their secular views, in order to allow them to become genuine state institutions. Only after the Dreyfus affair, from 1894 onwards, did the more radical version of republicanism come into full prominence.<sup>38</sup>

In any case, the elections of 14 October 1877, that preceded the appointment of Jules Ferry as Minister of Education in February 1879, heralded a period of reform that would last for about three decades. The election victory of the Republicans and their majority in Chamber and Senate led to the general acceptance of the urgent project to reorganize the laicized society. Among the initiatives deemed necessary to achieve this end, education and schooling emerged as the most vital ones.<sup>39</sup> It was here that the seeds were sown for all the great reforms on the educational and academic landscape that would follow, and in which Jules Ferry would play a major role.

In a way, the efforts of Jules Ferry for primary education can be considered as the crowning of almost a century of efforts to provide minimal schooling for every French citizen. The two most memorable laws implemented by Jules Ferry were the law of 16 June 1881, making primary education free of charge, and that of 28 March 1882, which deemed all public education secular, and simultaneously

made schooling compulsory for all children from the age of 6 up to the age of 13.<sup>40</sup> The decision to make primary or popular education free, with a law that in fact had been preceded by a long build-up, was based on Ferry's philosophy that the government had the absolute duty to provide primary education for every child in France, so that primary education was conceived as a principal right. This right, though, could not be claimed with regard to secondary education, on the grounds that only those pupils who were deemed capable were entitled to it, and ultimately able to use their schooling to harness their talents in service of society. Article 1 of the law of 1882 also made instruction in history and geography compulsory, both of central importance for national and civic instruction. Other obligatory curricular elements concerned notions of law and economy, agriculture, industry and manual labour, drawing, music and gymnastics—and for boys also military training. With the disappearance of religion from the curriculum, the right of the clergy to supervise primary education institutions ended. An important creed of Jules Ferry was the conviction that science and democracy went hand in hand, and that the spread of knowledge and insight through education would enable people to become rational and responsible citizens.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, Ferry's laws corresponded with the growing general appreciation for education and schooling, as the population became aware of the necessity and value of literacy. Nevertheless, the laws of Jules Ferry implied more of a qualitative than a quantitative change in education, and were in a way a kind of formal crystallization of societal processes that had been going on for some time.<sup>42</sup> In addition, making popular education free of charge was less innovative than it appeared, given the fact that religious congregations had always offered free primary education (though they accepted donations); this reform, arguably, could be interpreted as a strategic move to check Catholic schools rather than as a noble effort to universalize schooling.

Later in the 1880s, two other laws would complete primary education reform, one of which was the law of October 1886 from René Goblet, a successor of Jules Ferry. This law clearly demarcated the distinction between private and public education, gave further shape to the laicization of public education personnel, tackled some problems concerning inspection, and sharpened training conditions for the opening of an *école maternelle*. It prescribed that only laymen were allowed to teach in public education, and demanded a state *brevet* as a condition to teach. Eventually, it would be the law of 1886 that dealt the biggest blow to the congregations. Male clergymen were replaced systematically within five years, religious females as soon as practical circumstances made it possible. The law of 19 July 1889 turned all schoolteachers officially into civil servants—a logical consequence of a development that increasingly conceived of education as a national service.

The most thorough influence of Jules Ferry's measures lay in primary education, conceived as *l'enseignement populaire*, popular education aimed at all layers of society, i.e. education as a democratic lever.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, primary education reform could be considered as the mainstay on which all other reforms were built. Public primary education became a vital means of support for the state system, delivering the personnel that could instruct the French youth in the national republican ideology. And

although, as Paul Goalen has written,<sup>44</sup> the impact of such schooling can be difficult to assess and its results can be contradictory, it is clear that its influence was enormous, and the structure and content of primary education as established during the 1880s remained virtually unmodified until the Second World War. It was not until the beginning of the Fifth Republic that the curriculum underwent a substantial revision. The reason for this was quite simple. Popular education was being considered as a separate entity, reserved for the masses, not intended to lead to further study, but with the chief aim — during these seven years — of providing the pupils with the basic skills that sufficed to make it through the rest of their lives. As a consequence, it was long characterized by a very basically conceived ‘encyclopaedic’ or ‘drill-like’ mindset, showing little need to adapt itself to changing societal conditions.

### **State, Citizenship and the Presence of (Belgian/Flemish) Migrants**

In light of the traditional French difference between *jus sanguinis* (‘right of blood’) and *jus soli* (‘right of the soil’), the expansiveness of French citizenship vis-à-vis immigrants has strong roots in the *jus soli* approach, introduced for third-generation immigrants in 1851 and extended to cover second-generation immigrants in 1889.<sup>45</sup> The system of 1889 still remains in place today and had ideological and political grounds rather than demographic or military ones, clearly epitomized by the way citizenship was conceived of during the Third Republic.<sup>46</sup> In this context it not only makes sense to explain the consequences that Third Republic policies might have had for immigrants, Belgians or others, but also to turn the problem around and shed some light on dimensions that might clarify the relation between republican political ideology and certain elements of political resentment that speeded up and incited this ideology. According to Brubaker,<sup>47</sup> the crux of the problem was the politicized resentment in frontier departments, concerning the exemption of long-settled foreigners from military service. Obviously, the *département du Nord*, close to the border with Belgium and with a very strong presence of Belgian — again, mainly Flemish — settlers, was exemplary in this regard, not in the least as far as the industrial region of Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing was concerned. The impulse behind the extension of *jus soli*, according to Brubaker, was social resentment, not demographic or military concern, a resentment that intensified in the 1870s, as the military induction rate increased among French males, and especially in the 1880s, during which Republican doctrines of universal and equal military service gained ground. In other words, resentment of the privileged situation of established immigrants led to a more inclusive definition of citizenship. Quoting Brubaker: “The decisive extension of *jus soli* in 1889 can be explained only with reference to a distinctively state-centred and assimilationist understanding of nationhood, deeply rooted in political and cultural geography and powerfully reinforced in the 1880s by the Republican program of universal primary education and universal military service.”<sup>48</sup> Consequently, a state-centred and assimilationist idiom of nationhood, despite the incipient emergence of a more ethnocultural counteridiom, was reinforced and activated in a particular historical, institutional, and political context.

This idiom of nationhood then shaped perceptions and judgements about what was in the interest of the state. The establishment of universal conscription and free, compulsory and secular primary—or popular—education were crucial in the context of this particular sequence of institutional reform, in a period of republican ascendancy during which the citizenship law reform occurred. Thus the traditional idiom of nationhood—state-centred and assimilationist—was powerfully reinforced, in the light of which popular education was being considered as a vital transforming force.<sup>49</sup> The exclusion from citizenship and (accordingly) from military service of French second- and third-generation immigrants was perceived as anomalous and intolerable. It was in that light that turning them into Frenchmen came to be perceived as desirable and that their civic and military incorporation via naturalization was increasingly being advocated.

France's insistent policy of assimilation, particularly in educational matters, had considerable implications for the children of Flemish immigrants. Again, in the words of Brubaker: "[T]o permit French-born children of foreigners to claim French citizenship as a matter of right was to expand and strengthen the nation, not to dilute its ethnocultural substance."<sup>50</sup> The resentment mentioned with regard to the discrepancy between the duties of foreign versus 'native' men indicates that Flemish migrants played an important role in the realization of the new naturalization law. Since the Flemish constituted the majority of foreigners in France at the time, it was largely their exemption of military service which incited the social unease about the perceived injustice. At the same time, the ease with which foreigners were turned into Frenchmen as a consequence of this law shows the lack of emphasis on common descent as a criterion of French nationhood.<sup>51</sup> Besides, and by way of comparison, Brubaker contrasts the typical French conceptions of nationhood and citizenship (i.e. the institutional and territorial frame of the state, political unity preponderating over shared culture) with the traditional German pre-political idea of the nation ("conceived not as the bearer of universal political values, but as an organic, cultural, linguistic or racial community—as an irreducibly particular *Volksgemeinschaft*").<sup>52</sup> In this analysis, in the French idiom, nationhood is constituted by political unity and "is centrally *expressed* in the striving for cultural unity," emphasizing the French faith in the assimilatory workings of school and army, while in the German understanding, "nationhood is constituted by ethnocultural unity and expressed in political unity."<sup>53</sup> Obviously, the multi-hued vicissitudes of ever-shifting historical configurations do not allow for too much binary thinking or analytical essentialism, and certainly in the context of its colonial education policy, this characterization of the French republican idiom might be in need of some deconstruction.<sup>54</sup> Yet, as a general scheme Brubaker's distinction seems fairly relevant and cogent.

### **The Assimilationist Leitmotiv, Schooling and the Children of Flemish Immigrants**

The assimilationist leitmotiv has a long tradition in France. But the republican assimilationism of the 1880s was of a particular kind. It was no longer mere residence

or work in France that were held to be the central assimilating elements, but participation in the newly republicanized and nationalized institutions of school and army. By the end of the decade, *l'école obligatoire* was not only a principle but, to a large extent, a reality, subjecting foreign—and thus Flemish—as well as French children to its powerfully assimilationist regime. The transition to secular education had both a 'negative' and a 'positive' aspect. As indicated earlier, the general laicization of primary education not only implied the elimination of religious instruction from the classroom and members of religious orders from the ranks of schoolteachers, it also meant replacing religious with civic training and substituting the heavenly father and fatherland with the earthly state and fatherland. The laicization of education was crucially intertwined with a laicization of morals, and schooling was standardized throughout the national territory, from teacher-training in the normal schools to textbooks, such as the history and civics manuals of Ernest Lavisse.<sup>55</sup> The nation also was at the heart of the intellectual and moral curriculum of the schools, instruction in history and geography making the nation a central cognitive and moral category. In this context, school and army reinforced each other, whereby the traditional French belief in the assimilatory virtues of the territory and its institutions acquired a particular republican tinge through the aforementioned powerful and specifically republican confidence in the assimilatory virtues of school and army. If second-generation immigrants were already subjected to the assimilatory workings of the school, the extension of *jus soli* would, in addition, subject them to the assimilatory workings of the army—the army being conceived as the second school for patriotism. In the words of Annie Crépin, who has studied extensively the history of the French army, including the relation between military conscription and citizenship:

Le service, tel qu'il était conçu par les hommes de la III<sup>ème</sup> République, ne concourait pas seulement à renforcer un instrument de guerre, il était surtout un des fondements de l'unité nationale et le ciment de la citoyenneté, droit et devoir confondus. L'accomplissement du service était un des traits les plus saillants de la citoyenneté. En revanche, être citoyen—et, partant, accepter de cet état—c'était être ou achever d'être français.<sup>56</sup>

In a way, the well-established dominant style of thinking and talking about citizenship in relation to immigration, with its roots in the revolutionary period, crystallized during the 1880s, and has not since gone unchallenged.<sup>57</sup> Through the civic incorporation of long-settled foreigners, the legal transformation was construed to be accompanied by a social transformation. Immigrants, in this understanding, would be transformed socially into Frenchmen through the assimilatory workings of compulsory schooling and universal military service, and in this view could also be redefined legally as Frenchmen. The nation was central to the moral and civic indoctrination characterizing the republican schools, and the events of 1914 showed that the deliberate and strenuous cultivation of patriotism inherent in it turned out to be very successful indeed, since many descendants of Flemish and other immigrants vigorously defended the French flag during the First World War.<sup>58</sup>

In order to understand how swiftly the process of assimilation and the eagerness of the Flemish to become 'good' French citizens occurred, one could point to the power, comprehensiveness and universality with which Jules Ferry and the Republicans had established their educational regime. In addition, as indicated, military service, especially from 1889 onwards, was of crucial importance. From the perspective of Flemish immigrants, other, more pragmatic factors, also played a role. For the Flemish workers in the Northern frontier region — mainly employed in the factories of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing<sup>59</sup> — adopting a certain level of 'Frenchness' was to a large extent a matter of mere survival, with regard to both language skills and public image in the context of the workers' community.<sup>60</sup> As a consequence, economic and social necessities had far-reaching cultural and identificational implications, the intricate nuances of which are unfortunately hard to trace. While one could say that the first-generation Flemish immigrants still must have experienced strong ties with their homeland and therefore must have felt the need to maintain their culture of origin in one way or another, testimonies of descendants of Flemish immigrants show that for most of them their experience in Flanders was associated with misery, poverty, famine, child mortality, and so on.<sup>61</sup> These memories, in turn, encouraged them to leave their past behind and instead focus on their future, i.e. their future as French citizens.

For the children of the first generation of Flemish, who did not have this tangible experience in Flanders and who were raised in France and immersed in the French language and educational system from the beginning, the assimilation process ostensibly took place even faster. Also, the fact that these children went to French schools strengthened the integration of their parents.<sup>62</sup> In any case, the *francisation* of Flemish immigrants corresponded with a strong desire on the part of the Flemish to have a thorough command of the French language, often at the expense of maintaining their language of origin, especially from the second generation onwards.<sup>63</sup> This — rather vital — aspect of assimilation was strengthened by the general prohibition on the use of Flemish or patois in the classroom or in the playground, a law passed in 1866 by Victor Duruy, who was Minister of Education from 1863–1869 and a strong advocate of linguistic homogenization.<sup>64</sup> So the general and centralistic political attempts to language homogenisation were complemented by the general and largely pragmatically driven eagerness on the part of the Flemish to master the French language.

Accordingly, a central element encouraging a swift assimilation and integration of Flemish children in French schools concerned their eagerness to emulate their peers, making friends, and belong to the group. The challenge of having a different cultural background, owing to their parents' history as migrants, likely made them even more subject to the gaze of French children. To take the example of primary education in Roubaix,<sup>65</sup> which for decades was comprised of a majority of Belgian citizens, David, Guillemain and Waret, note: "Il y avait une véritable émulation à l'école, prévue de leur volonté d'intégration. L'école joue un grand rôle dans l'intégration, les enseignants ne faisaient pas de différence entre les élèves et les petits Flamands devaient s'accrocher. (Pas de classes d'adaptation...)"<sup>66</sup> A few pages further and in the same vein, they say: "[I]ls veulent à tout prix oublier leur langue, être au même niveau que les Français."<sup>67</sup>

The above quotations testify to the fact that no specific educational measures were taken with regard to the children of Flemish immigrants, and at the same time evoke both the children's and parents' eagerness to 'become French.' So the larger republican assimilationist framework and the corresponding national institutional and educational context, went hand in hand with a number of pragmatic and emotional motives caused by the peculiar social position of the Flemish immigrants and their children. In addition, it is significant that Flemish, patois (local dialect) or Picard<sup>68</sup> were excluded from schooling; in the light of total linguistic immersion in French, other language idioms were pedagogically neglected.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the combination of Ferry's compulsory education law of 1882 and the naturalization law of 1889, accelerated the pace of integration. The enthusiasm with which the descendants of Flemish immigrants fought for France during the First World War, can be conceived as an outcome of this acceleration process and its preceding measures, attesting to the success of the systematic republican ambition to instill patriotic values and civic morals.<sup>70</sup>

Obviously, 'the School of the Republic' had become one of the most essential institutions of nation-building and the principal site for the inculcation of republican values, thereby initiating a process of national unification to forge the identity of French republican citizens and immigrants alike. 'Interculturality' in education, or 'addressing the migrant as other' by paying heed to his/her particular cultural background was out of the question. This absence of the recognition of diversity relates to the conspicuous expansiveness or 'stretchability' of French citizenship. France might not be a classical country of immigration, but it certainly is a classical country, and according to Brubaker, perhaps *the* classical country, of assimilation,<sup>71</sup> to which the story of the second- and third-generation Flemish immigrants patently bears witness. The case of the French Third Republic, and the case of the Flemish immigrants, for that matter, show that it is not sufficient to consider citizenship solely in its functional context, in terms of its contribution to the opportunities of immigrants or the exclusionary capacities of the state. We must pay equal attention to the politico-cultural context,<sup>72</sup> and as a consequence to education and schooling as its prime embodiment.

The idea that France can be conceived as the classical country of assimilation in many ways still resonates today. While immigration history in France has developed into a legitimate field of academic inquiry since the 1980s in the wake of the increased interest in socio-political history in the human sciences,<sup>73</sup> this has not yet translated into a legitimate place in primary or secondary school curricula and/or within history classes. In this way, the curricular or educational neglect of immigration as a relevant and central element in French national cultural, social and political history directly or indirectly contributes to the sustained sentiment of illegitimacy experienced by a whole array of immigrant and minority groups within France.<sup>74</sup> The broad and explicit concern by primary schoolteachers about the education and integration of migrants, more or less from the 1970s onwards, was mainly related to the reception of North African immigrant families (predominantly from Algeria) and their children.<sup>75</sup> Accordingly, in the following decades, immigration as a 'theme' in school almost solely imposed itself in response to momentary problems involving

pupils in the classroom, their families and their social/spatial replacements. To the extent than one can speak of a dimension of ‘interculturality’ in educational contexts during this period, this did not amount to much more than ‘tolerating foreigners or children of another culture in class’.<sup>76</sup> As a consequence, immigration has never been dealt with as a proper subject of historical study in relation to France’s social and political history. In fact, this approach once more affirms French national history as it had always been,<sup>77</sup> a history (teaching) in which immigration for most of the time has been notably absent, while actually immigration forms a vital, intrinsic and constitutive part of French national history and culture, and as a consequence cannot be understood as some external or peripheral aspect of it.<sup>78</sup>

## Notes

- 1 About 88 per cent of the Belgian immigrants were of Flemish origin.
- 2 Condorcet’s thinking was in marked contrast with that of his compatriot Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836), whose post-revolutionary educational philosophy invoked a natural and necessary distinction between a *classe savante* and a *classe ouvrière*, elevating a de facto class opposition into an immutable norm. See e.g.: M. Depaepe, F. Simon and A. Van Gorp, eds., *Paradoxen van pedagogisering. Handboek pedagogische historiografie* (Leuven: Acco, 2005), 61–62.
- 3 For a clear example of the stereotypical way in which, within comparative education, the centralistic and state-organized educational system of France, determined by ‘the weight of history’ and exemplified by the reforms of the 1880s, has been portrayed, see: H. Avenarius and T. M. Liket, “Systems of Public Administration: Problems of School Legislation and Management,” in *Problems and Prospects in European Education*, ed. E. S. Swing, J. Schriever and F. Orivel (Westport, Connecticut/London: Praeger, 2000), 23–44. “The principles of the educational system were inspired by the French Revolution of 1789 and reformulated in laws enacted between 1881 and 1889.” (29).
- 4 P. Dubois, “Figures de l’école juste et politique scolaire dans les années fondatrices de la Troisième République,” *Revue française de pédagogie*, no. 159 (avril-mai-juin 2007): 13–21.
- 5 See: A. Chabchoub, “La politique scolaire de la France en Afrique du Nord,” *The Colonial Experience in Education. Historical Issues and Perspectives. Paedagogica Historica, Supplementary Series, Vol. 1*, ed. A. Nóvoa, M. Depaepe and E. V. Johanningmeier (Ghent : C.S.H.P., 1995) : 153–168 : “La politique coloniale française en Afrique du Nord s’est caractérisée, sous la 3<sup>ème</sup> République, par deux aspects spécifiques : — un interventionnisme qui justifie le centralisme séculaire qui accompagne toute action politique française (153) (...) — un intérêt pour le culturel et l’idéologique. (...) Nous émettons l’hypothèse que les deux intérêts ne sont pas distincts et qu’ils sont au service l’un de l’autre. Plus précisément c’est l’institution scolaire qui — en diffusant la langue et la culture françaises — sert la colonisation agricole et économique du pays.” (154).
- 6 See the concept of ‘addressivity’ of Mikhail Bakhtin. In the same vein, we should not forget that identities are as much *ascribed* (intersubjectively, by institutions, by the receiving society, etc.) as they are *formed* (e.g. from the perspective of migrants as actors).
- 7 See e.g. the statement of Baron Murillo, one of the ministers of the Spanish Queen Isabella, exemplifying the attitude of the governing classes towards the provision of education for the working classes in Spain in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, cited by Gerald Brenan in *The Spanish Labyrinth*: “You want me to authorise a school at which 600

- working men are to attend? Not in my time. Here we don't want men who think, but oxen to work." G. Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 56.
- 8 B. Simon, "Schooling Society: the care of an elite for the masses in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries," *Pedagogisch Tijdschrift* 12, no. 4 (1987): 204.
- 9 Simon, *Ibid.*, 204.
- 10 Switzerland in 1874, England in 1880, France in 1882, the Netherlands in 1901, Belgium in 1914, Finland in 1921, etc.
- 11 Simon, *op. cit.*, 206.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 207.
- 13 J. Herbst, "Towards Compulsory Education: The School Revival Movement in the United States," in *Introduction, Development and Extension of Compulsory Education*. Conference Papers for the 8th Session of the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (Parma, Italy, September 3-6, 1986). Volume I., ed. G. Genovesi, cited in B. Simon, "Schooling Society: the care of an elite for the masses in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries," *Pedagogisch Tijdschrift* 12, no. 4 (1987): 207.
- 14 Simon, *op. cit.*, 208.
- 15 Among capitalist employers, however, consensus about the desirability of mass (compulsory) education was less unequivocal, as they were sometimes more in favour of the preservation of child labour than of the introduction of compulsory schooling. Especially in times of urgent economic need for 'employees', they considered it pointless to wait until pupils finished the entire primary education cycle. See: J. Tyssens, "Staat en burgerschap," in *Paradoxen van pedagogisering. Handboek pedagogische historiografie*, ed. M. Depaepe, F. Simon and A. Van Gorp (Leuven: Acco, 2005), 146.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 148.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 148-149.
- 18 J. Tyssens, "Onderwijsconflict en -pacificatie vanuit een comparatief perspectief: België, Nederland, Frankrijk," in *Het schoolpact van 1958. Ontstaan, grondlijnen en toepassing van een Belgisch compromis*, ed. E. Witte, J. De Groof and J. Tyssens (Brussel: Garant/VUBPress, 1999), 54-55.
- 19 J. Tyssens, "Staat en burgerschap," in *Paradoxen van pedagogisering. Handboek pedagogische historiografie*, ed. M. Depaepe, F. Simon and A. Van Gorp (Leuven: Acco, 2005), 153-154.
- 20 Léon Gambetta, *Discours prononcé à Bordeaux le 26 juin 1871* (Paris: Lachaud, 1871).
- 21 In fact, the war of 1870 marked a fundamental shift in the history of national identities, not only in France, but everywhere in Europe. It is from this moment onwards that the nation-state acquires the shape we are familiar with today. See: G. Noiriel, *À quoi sert "l'identité nationale"* (Marseille: Agone, 2007), 22-23.
- 22 J. N. Moody, *French Education since Napoleon* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1978), 87.
- 23 F. Démier, *La France du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (1814-1914)* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 289-322.
- 24 P. Chevalier, B. Groperrin, and J. Maillet, *L'Enseignement français de la Révolution à nos jours* (Paris: Mouton, 1968), 113.
- 25 P. Sarremejane, "Didacticisme et méthode didactique en France : la rationalité de la méthode et l'influence allemande, au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Paedagogica Historica* 37, no. 3 (2001) : 607-628.
- 26 French Minister of Education from 1863 until 1869 and one of the central inspirers of Jules Ferry, seen by some as the greatest French Minister of Education of the nineteenth century. See e.g.: D. W. Brogan, *Development of Modern France (1870-1939)* (London: Harper & Brothers, 1944), 144; and: A. Dansette, *Religious History of Modern France* (New York: Herder, 1961), 290.

- 27 “Si le succès républicain ne peut s’expliquer uniquement par le « génie » de Gambetta, il n’en reste pas moins vrai que son sens politique a joué un rôle décisif dans une bataille qui restait très difficile à mener. Dans un courant républicain encore très divisé, des modérés aux radicaux, il a su définir une ligne générale et s’imposer avec une équipe de fidèles à la tête de l’Union républicaine, puis de l’ensemble du « parti républicain. » Démier, op. cit., 311.
- 28 C. Nicolet, *L’idée républicaine en France (1789–1924). Essai d’histoire critique* (Paris : Gallimard, 1994), 187-248.
- 29 For the important role that Ernest Lavisse played in the formation of national sentiment through the instruction of history at school, see: A. Bruter, “Enseignement de la représentation et représentation de l’enseignement : Lavisse et la pédagogie de l’histoire,” *Histoire de l’éducation*, no. 65 (janvier 1995) : 27-50.
- 30 “La situation de l’Eglise de France à partir de 1870 suscite, elle, une opposition permanente.” Chevalier, Groperrin, and Maillet, op. cit., 114.
- 31 M.-M. Compère, *L’histoire de l’éducation en Europe : essai comparatif sur la façon dont elle s’est écrite* (Bern etc./Paris : Peter Lang/INRP, 1995).
- 32 W. Frijhoff, ed., *L’offre d’école/The supply of schooling. Eléments pour une étude comparée des politiques éducatives au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle/Contributions to a comparative study of educational policies in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century* (Paris : Publications de la Sorbonne/INRP, 1983).
- 33 M. Crubellier, *L’école républicaine, 1870–1940. Esquisse d’une histoire culturelle* (Paris : Éditions Christian, 1993).
- 34 The centenary of the Ferry laws in France has occasioned all kinds of commemorative publications, most of which sketched an outspokenly positive image of ‘the progress towards democracy’ they entailed. For an overview, see: M. Crubellier, “Où en est l’histoire de l’école primaire?,” *Histoire de l’éducation*, no. 14 (avril 1982) : 1-23.
- 35 M.-M. Compère, *L’histoire de l’éducation en Europe : essai comparatif sur la façon dont elle s’est écrite* (Bern etc./Paris : Peter Lang/INRP, 1995), 243.
- 36 See also: A. Prost : “Et la sagesse de Ferry fut précisément de refuser le débat dans le domaine des idées, pour le résoudre dans celui des faits.” Alain Prost, *Histoire de l’enseignement en France 1800–1967* (Paris : Librairie Armand Colin, 1968), 201.
- 37 See also: R. Heremans, *Mission et écoles. L’éducation dans les missions des Pères Blancs en Afrique centrale avant 1914. Objectifs et Réalisations* (PhD diss., K.U.Leuven, 1978).
- 38 F. Démier, op. cit., 379-386.
- 39 *Ibid*, 332.
- 40 It might be mentioned in passing that in addition to the three famous laws concerning ‘l’obligation, la gratuité et la laïcité’, during the Third Republic important laws have also been enacted for improving the material conditions of primary schools, among others instigated by Paul Bert. See : F. Mayeur, *Histoire Générale de l’Enseignement et de l’Éducation en France. Tome III : de la Révolution à l’École républicaine (1789–1930)* (Paris : Nouvelle Librairie de France, 1981), 532.
- 41 “De la science, la démocratie peut et doit attendre la diffusion des lumières indispensables à la formation de véritables citoyens adaptés au milieu et à l’époque, capables de se conduire selon les lois de la raison, ainsi qu’un idéal collectif conforme au sens général de l’évolution humaine, aux exigences du progrès. L’enseignement qui, en dernière analyse, ne fait pas autre chose que de diffuser la science est donc en même temps le premier devoir et la meilleure garantie de la démocratie.” Jules Ferry, cited in : M. Reclus, *Jules Ferry, 1832–1893* (Paris : Flammarion, 1947), 172.
- 42 Cf. R. Grew and P. J. Harrigan, *School, State and Society. The Growth of Elementary Schooling in Nineteenth-Century France. A Quantitative Analysis* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991). See also: Chevalier, Groperrin and Maillet, op. cit., 237; Alain Prost, *Histoire de l’enseignement en France 1800–1967* (Paris : Librairie Armand Colin, 1968), 28-29.

- 43 As said before, mass schooling was seen by the republican state as a key vehicle of political legitimation.
- 44 As cited in: I. Grosvenor, "‘There is no place like home’: education and the making of national identity," *History of Education* 28, no. 3 (1999): 247.
- 45 Sociologically understood, and following Noiriel, a second-generation immigrant is one whose socialization occurs predominantly in the country of immigration. In this understanding, it is socialization, not birth, in the country of destination that is sociologically crucial (Noiriel, *Le creuset français*, 213). One could, however, also adopt a stricter definition of second-generation, including only persons born in the country of immigration. Brubaker, for example, uses this definition for convenience, since the administrative ease of recording place of birth has given it a much greater weight in citizenship law than place of socialization. By second-generation immigrant, then, he means a person born in the country of immigration; by third-generation immigrant, one born in the country of immigration at least one of whose parents were also born there (R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, 207).
- 46 R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 85.
- 47 *Ibid.*
- 48 *Ibid.*, 85-86.
- 49 This is but one of the many instances at which, in a broader perspective, the fact could be evoked that there is no natural identity (or idiom of nationhood, for that matter) capable of imposing itself on man by the very nature of things. It is, however, beyond the scope of this article to theoretically dwell in any depth on the relationship between the enunciative practices of education and schooling and the production of imagined communities (cf. B. Anderson), identities, or subjectivities (cf. e.g. G. Deleuze).
- 50 R. Brubaker, op. cit., 91.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 97.
- 52 R. Brubaker, 'Immigration, Citizenship, and the Nation-State in France and Germany: A Comparative Historical Analysis', *International Sociology* 5 (1990): 386.
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 Cf. N. Bancel, P. Blanchard, and F. Vergès, *La République coloniale* (Paris : Albin Michel, 2003; Alice L. Conklin, "Le colonialisme : un déparage de l'idéal éducatif ?," *Communications*, no. 72 (2002) : 159-174.
- 55 A. Bruter, "Enseignement de la représentation et représentation de l'enseignement : Lavis et la pédagogie de l'histoire," *Histoire de l'éducation*, no. 65 (janvier 1995) : 27-50.
- 56 Annie Crépin, *Histoire de la conscription* (Paris : Gallimard, 2009), 277. For a more elaborate analysis of the relation between military conscription and citizenship, see also: Annie Crépin, *La conscription en débat ou le triple apprentissage de la nation, de la citoyenneté, de la République (1798–1889)* (Arras : Artois Presses Université, 1998).
- 57 Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 111.
- 58 "Une cohésion nationale extrêmement forte était nécessaire à la France pour que fût gagnée la dure guerre de 1914 : elle a été pour une large part l'œuvre de ces instituteurs que se situent dans la tradition de Michelet et de Jules Ferry." G. Duveau, cited in : F. Mayeur, *Histoire Générale de l'Enseignement et de l'Éducation en France. Tome III : de la Révolution à l'École républicaine* (Paris : Nouvelle Librairie de France, 1981), 559.
- 59 For the specific role of the Flemish and their institutional impact in relation to socialist cooperatives in the industrial North, see: P. Couton, "Ethnic Institutions Reconsidered: The Case of Flemish Workers in 19<sup>th</sup> Century France," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 16, No. 1 (March 2003): 80-110. See also: C. Strikwerda, "France and the Belgian Immigration of the Nineteenth Century," in *The Politics of Immigrant Workers. Labor*

- Activism and Migration in the World Economy since 1830*, ed. C. Guerin-Gonzales and C. Strikwerda (New York/London: Holmes & Meier, 1993), 101-130.
- 60 With regard to language practices and strategies, we might mention the complex and context-determined variation and interplay between Flemish, Picard and French language usage. It is beyond the scope of this paper and our empirical limitations to chart these language differences and nuances according to their use in factories, in the street or at home on the one hand, and between different generations or age groups on the other. For the moment it might suffice to bear in mind a general evolution from Flemish as the main spoken language over to a more plurilinguistic situation, gradually evolving to a growing predominance of French.
- 61 See e.g. an interview held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2008 with Pierre Leman in Villeneuve D'Ascq, Lille.
- 62 C. Petillon, "Roubaix, een Belgische 'kolonie'," in *Belgische Emigranten*, ed. A. Morelli (Berchem : EPO, 1999), 73.
- 63 M. David, A. Guillemin and P. Waret, *L'intégration des Belges à Roubaix (1880–1914)*. 1995, 38 (Unpublished report deposited at the Médiathèque de Roubaix).
- 64 J. Ravier, "L'imposition du français dans le département du Nord de la Monarchie de Juillet au Second Empire," *Histoire de l'éducation*, no. 77 (janvier 1998) : 34.
- 65 For a good description of primary education in Roubaix during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see: J. Ravier, "L'enseignement primaire à Roubaix au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue du Nord*, Tome LXXIV, no. 294 (janvier-mars 1992) : 73-97.
- 66 M. David, op. cit., 57.
- 67 *Ibid*, 59.
- 68 Many Flemish immigrants ended up learning French via the use of Picard, a regional idiom used by most factory workers.
- 69 As stated by Jacques Landrecies : "[...] pas question de s'appuyer sur cet idiome pour la moindre exploitation pédagogique. Ici se conjuguent sans doute ignorance complète et surdité délibérée. Comme il est de règle en France, l'apprentissage se fait par immersion totale du nouvel arrivé dans le bain linguistique." See : J. Landrecies, "Une configuration inédite : la triangulaire français-flamand-picard à Roubaix au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Langage et Société* 97 (2001) : 54.
- 70 Probably we do not have to reiterate once more the strong interwovenness of the way in which popular education and military service reciprocally reinforced the achievement of this aim. "There is no doubt that boys were taught to admire soldierly virtues, to accept their patriotic 'duties' and to look forward to the day when they would don the uniform." B. Jenkins, *Nationalism in France: Class and Nation since 1789* (London: Routledge, 1990), 85.
- 71 R. Brubaker, op. cit., 184.
- 72 Cf. Brubaker.
- 73 See, for example: Gérard Noiriel, *Le creuset français* (Paris : Seuil, 1988); Yves Lequin, *La Mosaïque France* (Paris : Larousse, 1988); Janine Ponty, *Polonais méconnus. Histoire des travailleurs immigrés en France dans l'entre-deux guerres* (Paris : Publications de la Sorbonne, 1988); Pierre Milza and Marianne Amar, *L'immigration en France au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris : Armand Colin, 1990) ; Abdelmalek Sayad, *La double absence : des illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré* (Paris : Seuil, 1999).
- 74 See the work of Benoit Falaize and his collaborators Olivier Absalon, Nathalie Héraud and Pascal Mériaux, cf. Benoit Falaize, *Enseigner l'histoire de l'immigration à l'école* (Paris: Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration/Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique, 2008).
- 75 Falaize, op. cit., 46.

- 76 This can be related to what Rogers Brubaker calls the *differentialist turn*, characterizing in particular the last three decennia of twentieth century France. See: Rogers Brubaker, "The return of assimilation? Changing perspectives on immigration and its sequels in France, Germany, and the United States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, No. 4 (July 2001): 535.
- 77 Falaize, op. cit., 50.
- 78 It was in fact Gérard Noiriel (with his famous book *Le creuset Français*, appearing for the first time in 1988) who paved the way for the history of immigration as a legitimate field of scientific investigation in France, denouncing the idea that immigration should be something external to French social, political and cultural history.