



The Dutch Naturalisation Exam

The reasons for its introduction and
its effects



Content of presentation

- Research questions
- Comparison Integration Interview and Naturalisation exam
- Political Debates
- Statistical Analysis
- Outcome Interviews
- International Comparison
- Dutch Integration Act 2007



Research questions

- In which way has the language and integration requirement evolved?

Analysis political debates

- What are the intended and unintended effects of the DNA '03

Analysis of statistics and interviews

- How can the exam be seen in relation to language and integration requirements in other European countries?

International comparison



The language and integration requirement: old vs new practices

Integration Interview

- Oral examination, 10% also reading and writing (Heijs 1988)
- Knowledge of language and social contacts with Dutch nationals
- All municipalities
- Free of charge
- Duration: 15 minutes
- Conversation on common and daily affairs
- All applicants for naturalisation were interviewed, flexible treatment of elderly, illiterates, persons with limited education and women

Naturalisation Exam

- Oral and written examination, partially by computer
- Speaking, understanding, reading and writing (part II); knowledge of the Dutch polity and society (part I)
- 9 Local Educational Centres (ROCs)
- Costs: €260 (€92 part I, €168 part II)
- Duration: 4 hours
- Content test is secret; no possibilities of preparation
- Possibilities of exemption for applicants with certain diplomas and applicants with mental or medical impediments



The language and integration requirement: old vs new practices

Integration Interview

- Oral examination, 10% also reading and writing (Heijs 1988)
- Knowledge of language and social contacts with Dutch nationals
- All municipalities
- Free of charge
- Duration: 15 minutes
- Conversation on common and daily affairs
- All applicants for naturalisation were interviewed, flexible treatment of elderly, illiterates, persons with limited education and women

Naturalisation Exam

- Oral and written examination, partially by computer
- Speaking, understanding, reading and writing (part II); knowledge of the Dutch polity and society (part I)
- 9 Local Educational Centres (ROCs)
- Costs: €260 (€92 part I, €168 part II)
- Duration: 4 hours
- Content test is secret; no possibilities of preparation
- Possibilities of exemption for applicants with certain diplomas and applicants with mental or medical impediments



The language and integration requirement: old vs new practices

Integration Interview

- Oral examination, 10% also reading and writing (Heijs 1988)
- Knowledge of language and social contacts with Dutch nationals
- All municipalities
- Free of charge
- Duration: 15 minutes
- Conversation on common and daily affairs
- All applicants for naturalisation were interviewed, flexible treatment of elderly, illiterates, persons with limited education and women

Naturalisation Exam

- Oral and written examination, partially by computer
- Speaking, understanding, reading and writing (part II); knowledge of the Dutch polity and society (part I)
- 9 Local Educational Centres (ROCs)
- Costs: €260 (€92 part I, €168 part II)
- Duration: 4 hours
- Content test is secret; no possibilities of preparation
- Possibilities of exemption for applicants with certain diplomas and applicants with mental or medical impediments



The language and integration requirement: old vs new practices

Integration Interview

- Oral examination, 10% also reading and writing (Heijs 1988)
- Knowledge of language and social contacts with Dutch nationals
- All municipalities
- Free of charge
- Duration: 15 minutes
- Conversation on common and daily affairs
- All applicants for naturalisation were interviewed, flexible treatment of elderly, illiterates, persons with limited education and women

Naturalisation Exam

- Oral and written examination, partially by computer
- Speaking, understanding, reading and writing (part II); knowledge of the Dutch polity and society (part I)
- 9 Local Educational Centres (ROCs)
- Costs: €260 (€92 part I, €168 part II)
- Duration: 4 hours
- Content test is secret; no possibilities of preparation
- Possibilities of exemption for applicants with certain diplomas and applicants with mental or medical impediments



The language and integration requirement: old vs new practices

Integration Interview

- Oral examination, 10% also reading and writing (Heijs 1988)
- Knowledge of language and social contacts with Dutch nationals
- All municipalities
- Free of charge
- Duration: 15 minutes
- Conversation on common and daily affairs
- All applicants for naturalisation were interviewed, flexible treatment of elderly, illiterates, persons with limited education and women

Naturalisation Exam

- Oral and written examination, partially by computer
- Speaking, understanding, reading and writing (part II); knowledge of the Dutch polity and society (part I)
- 9 Local Educational Centres (ROCs)
- Costs: €260 (€92 part I, €168 part II)
- Duration: 4 hours
- Content test is secret; no possibilities of preparation
- Possibilities of exemption for applicants with certain diplomas and applicants with mental or medical impediments



The language and integration requirement: old vs new practices

Integration Interview

- Oral examination, 10% also reading and writing (Heijs 1988)
- Knowledge of language and social contacts with Dutch nationals
- All municipalities
- Free of charge
- Duration: 15 minutes
- Conversation on common and daily affairs
- All applicants for naturalisation were interviewed, flexible treatment of elderly, illiterates, persons with limited education and women

Naturalisation Exam

- Oral and written examination, partially by computer
- Speaking, understanding, reading and writing (part II); knowledge of the Dutch polity and society (part I)
- 9 Local Educational Centres (ROCs)
- Costs: €260 (€92 part I, €168 part II)
- Duration: 4 hours
- Content test is secret; no possibilities of preparation
- Possibilities of exemption for applicants with certain diplomas and applicants with mental or medical impediments



The language and integration requirement: old vs new practices

Integration Interview

- Oral examination, 10% also reading and writing (Heijs 1988)
- Knowledge of language and social contacts with Dutch nationals
- All municipalities
- Free of charge
- Duration: 15 minutes
- Manual for the application of 1985 Act contained general guideline; room for interpretation by civil servant
- All applicants for naturalisation were interviewed, flexible treatment of elderly, illiterates, persons with limited education and women

Naturalisation Exam

- Oral and written examination, partially by computer
- Speaking, understanding, reading and writing (part II); knowledge of the Dutch polity and society (part I)
- 9 Local Educational Centres (ROCs)
- Costs: €260 (€92 part I, €168 part II)
- Duration: 4 hours
- Content test is secret; no possibilities of preparation
- Possibilities of exemption for applicants with certain diplomas and applicants with mental or medical impediments



Exemption

- On the basis of diploma

Only high school diploma's or higher; Surinamese and Belgian diploma's no exemption

- On the basis of mental or physical impediment or illiteracy

No possibility of mastering Dutch language level A2 in 5 years to come

Illiterate in Dutch and own language; attempted to have learned Dutch; feasibility research



Political debates

- 1993: proposal to amend DNA '85
- Christian Democrats proponents of heavier language and integration requirement
- 1998: Newcomers Integration Act
- Conservative Liberals and small Christian Parties support Christian Democrats
- Liberal Democrats agree with 'reading abilities'
- No influence of populist right-wing political party
- Since introduction exam MPs plead for raise of level



Political debates

- 1993: proposal to amend DNA '85
- Christian Democrats proponents of heavier language and integration requirement
- 1998: Newcomers Integration Act
- Conservative Liberals and small Christian Parties support Christian Democrats
- Liberal Democrats agree with 'reading abilities'
- No influence of populist right-wing political party
- Since introduction exam MPs plead for raise of level



Political debates

- 1993: proposal to amend DNA '85
- Christian Democrats proponents of heavier language and integration requirement
- 1998: Newcomers Integration Act
- Conservative Liberals and small Christian Parties support Christian Democrats
- Liberal Democrats agree with 'reading abilities'
- No influence of populist right-wing political party
- Since introduction exam MPs plead for raise of level



Political debates

- 1993: proposal to amend DNA '85
- Christian Democrats proponents of heavier language and integration requirement
- 1998: Newcomers Integration Act
- Conservative Liberals and small Christian Parties support Christian Democrats
- Liberal Democrats agree with 'reading abilities'
- No influence of populist right-wing political party
- Since introduction exam MPs plead for raise of level



Political debates

- 1993: proposal to amend DNA '85
- Christian Democrats proponents of heavier language and integration requirement
- 1998: Newcomers Integration Act
- Conservative Liberals and small Christian Parties support Christian Democrats
- Liberal Democrats agree with 'reading abilities'
- No influence of populist right-wing political party
- Since introduction exam MPs plead for raise of level



Political debates

- 1993: proposal to amend DNA '85
- Christian Democrats proponents of heavier language and integration requirement
- 1998: Newcomers Integration Act
- Conservative Liberals and small Christian Parties support Christian Democrats
- Liberal Democrats agree with 'reading abilities'
- No influence of populist right-wing political party
- Since introduction exam MPs plead for raise of level



Political debates

- 1993: proposal to amend DNA '85
- Christian Democrats proponents of heavier language and integration requirement
- 1998: Newcomers Integration Act
- Conservative Liberals and small Christian Parties support Christian Democrats
- Liberal Democrats agree with 'reading abilities'
- No influence of populist right-wing political party
- Since introduction exam MPs plead for raise of level



Statistical Consequences of DNA '03

- 2004: 70% less applications compared to 2002
- 2006: 50% less applications compared to 2002
- 25% of applicants has taken the exam
- 46% passes exam



Effects of the exam: interviews

- Goals of the exam:
 - Uniformity → equality
 - Greater ability to manage oneself in society → better integration

Interviews

- Persons charged with executing the test
- Immigrants



Problem Categories

- Immigrants with little or no education, elderly, women
 - level, high fees, secret content and the absence of possibilities of preparation they do not take part in test
- Well integrated immigrants that do not have the right diploma's
 - Feelings of frustration and injustice

- ● ● | Less inequality?

- Everyone is subjected to the same exam, unless exemption
- But: new inequality:
 - Level
 - Costs
 - Test works as a mechanism of exclusion
 - Limited exemption grounds



Better integration?

- Goal not achieved for the two problem categories:
 - Immigrants for whom exam is important barrier
 - Immigrants for whom exam is redundant requirement
- Questionable content of exam



International Comparison

- Standardised citizenship tests in Austria, Denmark, Germany and UK
- Higher level of language proficiency in Denmark and Germany
- Dutch barriers not found elsewhere
 - Secret content
 - No possibilities for preparation
 - High costs
 - Waiting period



Integration exam

- Integration exam replaces naturalisation exam since 1 April 2007
 - More exemption grounds
 - Level remains the same
 - High fees
- effects of the naturalisation exam hardly influenced integration exam



Conclusions

- Goals exam not achieved
- Content exam and effects not subject of debate
- Practical barriers not put up in other countries
- Possibly level citizenship test will be adapted
 - 'Realisation of a system of rising terms and levels' (Memorandum 'readjustment of the system of integration' April 2004)