Turkish-Speaking Communities in Britain: Migration for Education

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ABSTRACT

This article is concerned with the education of Turkish-speaking communities in Britain. It explores their migration patterns and educational aspirations. It looks at the social and economic activities which contribute to a dynamic micro-economy, exploring Turkish as the language of such economic activity. The article is also concerned with Turkish as a language undergoing change in its use, reflecting the changing nature of the communities in Britain.

The article looks in some detail at the education of Turkish-speaking children and the issue of underachievement. It critically evaluates the present situation, that, despite second- and third-generation Turkish speakers now being in the British school system, Turkish-speaking children remain at the bottom of the league table in most LEAs across the country. It looks at the factors contributing to this and analyses the performance data for Turkish-speaking children in a selection of LEAs in London.

Finally, the article explores possible ways forward, looking at state and community provision and critically evaluating present practices, while putting forward some suggestions for changes at both policy and practical levels.

Contrary to some common assumptions made about its homogeneous nature, the Turkish-speaking communities in Britain are made up of three distinct groups: Turkish Cypriots, the earliest settlers, were followed by mainland Turks, and these two groups were later joined by Turkish-speaking

Kurds from Turkey. Each group will be discussed in terms of migration and settlement patterns and of socio–economic profile.

There are varying estimates of the population of the Turkish-speaking communities in Britain. Earliest data appear to refer only to the 'Cypriot-born' population. Table 5.1 gives the number of Cypriots (Turkish and Greek speaking) residing by sex, in Britain between 1951 and 1991.

Oakley (1970) calculated a Cypriot population of 110,000 and Marko-poulou (1974) suggested 120,000. It is estimated that the figure had reached around 140,000 in 1977 (Constantinides, 1977). Triseliotis (1976) put the esti-mate as high as 160,000. The census data do not distinguish between Turkish and Greek Cypriots. It is estimated that the ratio of Turkish to Greek Cypriots in the population in the UK equated that of Cyprus, approximately 1 to 5. Reid et al. (1999) estimated that there were 7,000 Turkish speakers living in the London borough of Haringey alone. In 1986, the London representative of the then Turkish Federated State of Cyprus estimated that there were between 50,000 and 80,000 Turkish Cypriots in Britain. More recent sources estimate the mainland Turkish- and Cypriot-speaking population to be around 150,000 (Mehmet Ali, 1991; Reid, et al. 1999). The number of Kurdish settlers currently living in London is estimated to be around 15,000 (Warner, 1991).

The Turkish Cypriots

This group is the earliest of the three groups to settle in Britain. Because of the lack of separate data on Turkish Cypriot migration, and similarities between Turkish and Greek Cypriot outward movements from Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot migration will be analysed within Cypriot migration patterns.

Table 5.1
Cypriot–born population resident in Britain,
by sex, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991

	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
Total	10,208	41,898	73,295	84,327	78,031
Females	3,714	18,430	33,870	39,742	37,643
Males	6,494	23,468	39,425	44,585	40,338

Source: GRO (1964); OPCS (1974, 1983); Office for National Statistics (2003).

Although some Cypriots were settled in Britain during the end of the nineteenth century, the main bulk of Cypriot migration occurred during the period of the British rule, from 1878 to 1960 (Costantinides, 1977; George, 1960). Migration from Cyprus can be explained in three main stages (Alkan and Costantinides, 1982):

1. A small pre-First World War migration

The first immigrants from Cyprus were mostly young men, mainly of Greek origin, who came as British subjects when Cyprus was a Crown colony with a subsistence agricultural economy. They are thought to have been single men, students, seamen and merchants, who came to Britain for a better life (Constantinides, 1977). After the 1926 Depression the British government promoted an alluring image of the prosperity in England. In reality an applicant needed to have £30 for a deposit, the ability to speak some English, the certainty of work, and friends and relatives who could guarantee accommodation and support. With the arrival of an increasing number in the 1930s, an estimated 8,000 Cypriots were in full employment in the UK at the outbreak of the Second World War.

2. Post-war migration (1945–74)

The main migration from Cyprus started after the Second World War, increasing as the result of hostilities on the island during the 1950s and continuing until the early 1960s. Oakley's demographic data (1970, 1971) is the main source of analysis of immigration into Britain.

The main bulk of Cypriot migration did not start until well after Cyprus became a British colony. People who arrived during this period were mainly from rural parts of Cyprus. The migration was seen as a reaction to the rapid urbanization process on the island since the early 1950s. Constantinides (1977) found that most of the migrants from two Greek Cypriot villages were from landless families with small non-viable holdings, typically young men with only elementary school education, no formal training and often already married with a young family.

3. Post-1974 migration

There was further migration of refugees from Cyprus following the war between the communities. In July 1974, a short-lived coup, supported by the then ruling military junta of Greece, aimed at overwhelming the Makarios government and its policy for an independent Cyprus. Fighting broke out between rival Greek factions and then between Greek and Turks. To protect

the 120,000 strong Turkish minority, Turkish forces from the mainland inter-
vened. This was regarded by the Turks as in accordance with the tripartite
agreement made during the setting-up of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960.
To Greeks this was seen as an unjustified act of aggression. The intercom-
munal fighting and the subsequent population exchanges resulted in the
division of the island into the Turkish north and the Greek south. It is esti-
mated that around 10,000 to 12,000 refugees arrived in the UK as a result
of the war (DES, 1985; World University Service, 1977; Clough and
Quarmby, 1978).

Table 5.2 gives the number of entries from Cyprus between the years
1975 and 1991. (There are no census data available after 1991 for migration
from Cyprus.) The war in 1974 played a significant part in creating the
largest number of entries into the UK. Most of the refugees who had lost
their homes hoped to build a new life in the UK. The majority were Greek
Cypriots, but they also included those who had returned to Cyprus to retire
and who had then lost everything, and had to start afresh. Some of these
'refugees', who were never officially recognized as such, stayed only a short
while and then returned home, sometimes under threats of deportation due
to ad hoc government policies (Gordon, 1983). But some 2,000 to 3,000
visitors and British-passport holders remained to start a new life (Anthias,
1983).

The figures under 'British citizenships' represent the number of Cypriot
people who have retained their British nationality, either through the 1960
Constitution or, later, through working in British bases as official employees
of the British government. These people performed various duties, such as
auxiliary police or semi-skilled/skilled jobs, such as barbers, bakers, painters,
plumbers, and so on, inside the bases. The figures may also represent the chil-
dren of these people, who later obtained British nationality through their
parents. The data in Table 5.2 does not give any information about the
proportion of Turkish/Greek Cypriots in the total numbers of migrants.
There are no accurate records of migration from 1991 to the present, but
unofficial records support the view that Turkish Cypriot migration has
increased from Cyprus, due to economic hardship, not just to Britain but
also to other countries in Europe and to North America, as well as to
Australia. It is estimated that the number of Turkish Cypriots in England
alone is equal to the remaining Turkish Cypriot population in Cyprus,
which is around 60,000.

Table 5.2
Migration of persons born in Cyprus between 1975 and 1991

Years	All citizenships	British citizenships
1975	1096	655
1976	1498	775
1977	738	365
1978	707	483
1979	497	–
1980	607	–
1981	204	–
1982	198	184
1983	1123	–
1984	82	82
1985	1261	75
1986	3101	2591
1987	1705	1527
1988	2357	90
1989	2447	–
1990	–	–
1991	2052	1544
Total	**19674**	**8371**
Grand total	**28045**	

Source: *International Passenger Survey*, OPCS (1995)

The settlement patterns in the UK

There is a small number of Turkish communities scattered around the UK, for example in Manchester, Edinburgh and the Midlands, but the majority live in or around London. The initial Cypriot communities were established around the London districts of Camden, Finsbury Park, Angel, Islington, Stoke Newington, Deptford and Camberwell. Turkish Cypriots have now moved to Haringey, Enfield and other outer London boroughs.

The Turkish Cypriot community is very much a part of the London way of life. As well as kebab shops and supermarkets, bakers, boutiques, video shops, insurance agencies, dry cleaners, cafés and restaurants, there are very successful large businesses in import and export and the clothing industry. Green Lanes in north London is known as the *Capitol* by most (Turkish and Greek) Cypriots. Whereas most first-generation Turkish speakers are

employed in the ethnic economy, the second and third generations are increasingly moving outside these traditional niches (Mehmet Ali, 1991). The younger generation of Turkish Cypriots have moved away from the traditional industries to pursue their careers in other areas. Some Cypriots have left the clothing industry, which they themselves had taken over from Asians and Jews. These jobs have been taken by the recent arrivals from Turkey. Similar patterns are also observed in ownership of the grocery shops. It would perhaps be accurate to point out that, despite these developments, the majority of the communities remaining in the clothing industry work as machinists, pressers, overlockers and finishers. In addition to these, there are students from Cyprus and Turkey studying for degrees and higher degrees. As a result of the economic difficulties in Cyprus, the number of Turkish Cypriot students at British universities has gone down considerably over the past decade. It is expected, however, that with the new political development resulting from the accession of Cyprus into the European Union in May 2004 these numbers are to rise. This is related to the changing status of students from 'overseas' to 'home' categories. With the prospect of entry into the EU many Turkish Cypriots obtained Cypriot passports, to which they felt they were entitled. It must be noted, however, that these changes may not be reflected immediately in an actual increase in the number of Turkish Cypriots attending British universities, as the period for which a student may qualify for the home student category, according to EU law, is three years.

Mainland Turks

Turkish mainland migration to Britain was an extension of migration to Europe, which was on a wider scale and had already been taking place since the early 1950s. The expanding European economy during the economic boom years of the 1950s and 1960s needed a workforce from other countries. It was Germany – West Germany until 1990 – which took the first *legal workers* from Turkey (Issa, 1987).

There is not a great deal of information about migration patterns to England. The (mostly legal) worker population arrived during the 1970s, followed by their families during the late 1970s and 1980s. It is estimated that during this period there were 4,000 mainland Turks – only a fraction of the number of Turkish workers in Europe – working in the UK, usually in catering and clothing industries (Paine, 1974). Work permits had to be renewed every year. These workers were the parents and grandparents of the

second- and third-generation Turkish children in British schools today. They became residents in the UK after the period of five years' legal residence in Britain. Many still retain their Turkish nationality. This is mainly to protect their rights in Turkey, since according to Turkish law nationals who give up their citizenship lose a number of rights, for example the right to own land. There are currently moves within the Turkish National Assembly to change this legislation.

After the military coup in Turkey in 1980 a number of urban professionals (doctors, solicitors, teachers and academics) arrived in Britain. These were mainly graduates from Turkish universities, who were escaping persecution by the military government.

Settlements in Britain

Immigrants from Turkey settled mainly around Hackney, Islington, Haringey and Southwark, where they could easily find employment in the thriving Turkish Cypriot ethnic economy (Mehmet Ali, 1991). Now they have themselves become shop and factory owners. During the late 1980s some councils in and around London began to employ bilingual staff as part of their 'bilingual recruitment' policy. While this has provided opportunities for younger people, it must be noted that the proportion of the Turkish-speaking council employees in areas with large Turkish communities was considerably smaller than that of any other ethnic minority (Mehmet Ali, 1991).

Kurdish-speaking mainland Kurds

This is the most recently arrived group seeking political refuge from the Turkish authorities (1980–99). The main reason for coming to Britain was political as well as economic. The first wave of immigration started during the 1980s, following the military coup in Turkey.

There are nearly 14 million Kurds living in Turkey. The use of Kurdish is widespread and most Kurdish children, especially from rural areas of eastern Turkey, start school with Kurdish as their first language. The Turkish used amongst Kurds shows regional variations, as among monolingual Turkish speakers. Kurds also show distinct characteristics in spoken Turkish, deriving from their use of Kurdish as their first language. There are not many sources

on Kurdish language and its varieties but it is a language which has similar-
ities with Farsi (Iranian) and Arabic languages. Some of the vocabulary is
similar to that used in Turkish, which, despite many attempts by Atatürk and
others who followed him, has not managed to rid itself completely of vocabu-
lary of Arabic origin. In England, a major dilemma facing Kurdish children
in mainly Turkish-dominated supplementary schools is the lack of organiza-
tion for the teaching of Kurdish. This state of affairs puts Kurdish children at
a further disadvantage in trying to cope with learning two languages
(Turkish and English), difficult even without having to contrive to learn
Kurdish, their first language.

Intracommunal economic activities

Intracommunal economic activity in areas such as Hackney, Newington
Green, Haringey and Tottenham is particularly strong. Turkish-speaking
workers, especially new arrivals, feel more secure working for someone with
whom they can communicate in Turkish. On arrival, the first contact is
usually with fellow countryfolk. This makes their employment in such places
almost inevitable. These are relatively well-paid jobs and do not require any
intensive training in the acquisition of skills. The support system within the
group provides the newcomer with a relatively basic knowledge and skill
base on which he/she then builds fairly quickly. The relationship with the
factory owner is generally good, as this usually works to the mutual advan-
tage of both. There is an element of exploitation by the owner as, although
the pay is higher than in other industries, the worker's recent arrival is used
as the basis for not giving the worker the full wages to which he/she is en-
titled. Workers, on the other hand, although being aware of this, often prefer
a lower-paid initial job amongst fellow countryfolk to a better-paid one,
until they feel confident enough to move on to something better. In add-
ition to these there are many stores selling a variety of food products, mainly
imported from Turkey and Cyprus. These are mostly small family-run busi-
nesses, although there has been an increase in the number of Turkish
supermarket chains being established all over London in recent years. These
stores provide regular points of contact between the community members.
They are places of learning for many Turkish-speaking children, who either
accompany their parents to shops or watch their parents serve customers in
their families' shops. The children get exposed to economic-related talk as
their parents negotiate prices and debate the quality of various products in

the shops. The centre of such dynamic economic activity is the Turkish language with its variations. Before looking at the uses of Turkish with its variations in England, let us look at briefly at its uses in Turkey and Cyprus.

The Turkish language

The related languages referred to by linguists as the Turkic group are spoken by around 100 million people in the world, most of them living in an arc stretching from the Balkans through Soviet Central Asia to the borders of China. These languages share a very similar agglutinative structure (Stubbs, 1985: 67) and are, to some extent, mutually intelligible. About 50 million people speak a Turkish whose standard form is based on the speech of the educated elite of western Turkey. Until the break-up of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, Turkish was written using the Arabic script, and Persian and Arabic lexical content was also very high. However, as part of Atatürk's westernizing reforms in the 1920s, there was a switch to a modi-fied Roman alphabet for written Turkish, and moves were made to replace non-Turkish loan words with Turkic equivalents, a 'purification' process which appears to have been stepped up again (CILT, 1983).

These processes are in part simply the linguistic reflection of the move to a more narrowly nationalistic position after the end of the multilingual and multinational Ottoman period. They are also part of a process of linguistic democratization, an attempt to create a written standard language more easily accessible to less-educated people. The gap between the language of the sophisticated Istanbul elite and that of the Anatolian peasant farmers had become very considerable by the late Ottoman period. Atatürk's reforms went some way to closing that gap (Stubbs, 1985).

The Turkish Cypriot variety of Turkish is a derivative form of the Ottoman Turkish used by the 20,000 soldiers as well as skilled workers who were sent there to settle with their families after the island was conquered by the Ottomans in 1571 (Vancı, 1997). Historical events before and after the Ottoman conquest have affected the Cypriot Turkish presently used. The most visible influence is from Greek, as a consequence of the two commu-nities living side by side for centuries. A classical example is a well-known *mani* ballad which is made up of both languages:

> *ehtes, broktes, andibroktes*   (yesterday, the day before and the day before that
> *ben duvardan bakardım*   I was looking through the wall

ehela narto mesa	I wanted to come in but
ama anandan korkardım	I was afraid of your mum)
	Source: B. Azgın (1986), cited in Vancı (1997: 244).

As the result of the British rule from 1878 until 1960, the Cypriot vocabu-
lary has also been influenced by the English language. These are examples of
words taken from English and adopted into Turkish phonetical form:

İsviç (switch)
referi (referee)
of (off)
fayil (file)
celi (jelly)

There are also Arabic and Latin influences on the Cypriot vocabulary.
Cypriot Turkish differs from the standard Turkish language of the educated
elite in several ways. Some words used in Turkey have gone through trans-
formation and have different meanings in Cypriot vocabulary (see examples
below). The vowel accents on some words used in Turkey are shorter in the
Cypriot variety. Fundamental differences also exist in sentence construction
between the two varieties. Under the influence of English, Cypriot Turkish
has inverted construction patterns. In addition, the verb form also changes.
For example, note the changes in the word *gitmek* (to go) in the following
example:

Cypriot Turkish
Lazim gideyim yarin Lefkoşa'ya. (I will need to go to Nicosia tomorrow.)
I need to go tomorrow Nicosia.

Standard Turkish
Yarin Lefkoşa'ya gitmem lazim
Tomorrow Nicosia I need to go.

Other differences also occur in the structure of questions. Standard Turkish
always adds the suffix *–mi?* or *–mu?* at the end of a sentence to change it into
a question:

Çocuk okula gidiyor. (The child goes to school.)
Çocuk okula gidiyor mu? (Does the child go to school?)

Cypriot Turkish, showing a similar pattern to that of the Greek Cypriot variety, has no suffix at the end of the sentence but simply prolongs the last tone in the last vowel (last word) of the sentence.

'Does the child go to school?' has similar construction patterns in Greek and Turkish:

Greek Cypriot
Do moron scoleon digenni.
Do moron scoleon digenni? (The accent on the final syllable, -*nni*, turns it into a question).

Turkish Cypriot
Çocuk okula gider.
Çocuk okula gider? (The accent on the final syllable, -*er*, turns it into a question).

The two varieties of Turkish also differ in the use of expressions, which are sometimes puzzling to an Istanbul Turk. This is the result of some words losing their traditional meaning and being reused to mean something completely different, as shown in Table 5.3, where the phrase used to mean 'to serve' in standard Turkish is *ikram etmek*; while the phrase for 'to be married' is *evli olmak*.

There are also differences between written expressions that show similarities to those used in English. Table 5.4 shows some examples of this.

Table 5.3

Word	Standard Turkish meaning	Cypriot Turkish meaning
kurtarmak	'To save' (as in saving someone's life)	'To serve' (as in serving food)
tutmak	'To hold' (as in holding a pen)	'To be married' (to somebody)

Table 5.4

English	Standard Turkish	Cypriot Turkish
Post office	Postahane	Posta Dairesi
Travel agent	Seyahat Acentası	Seyahat Acenti

The uses of Turkish and its varieties in the UK

The only extensive source of evidence for patterns of language use in the Turkish-speaking communities is the Linguistic Minorities Project's (LMP, 1985) Adult Language Use Survey (ALUS) conducted in Haringey, although other studies have included pattern of language use (Taylor, 1988; Osman, 1986; Issa, forthcoming). The shift from Turkish to English becomes clear, for instance, when we consider respondents' estimates of their own language skills and those of their households as a whole. The inclusion of children results in an increased rate of reporting of English skills, reduced competence in Turkish and overall increase in the level of bilingualism (Mehmet Ali, 2001).

Unfortunately very little information is available for Turkish children's self-reports of language use. A small-scale survey conducted by Issa (1993) of language use in a group of primary school–children suggested a significant shift to English. All the children had a receptive competence in Turkish, and nearly all of them stated that they used the mother tongue in conversation, mostly with their parents and older members of their communities. The result also suggested that the children used English when they were talking amongst themselves. This in some way supports Mehmet Ali's findings (2001) reporting that 61 per cent of children in the company of their siblings spoke only or mostly English. She adds that the younger generation also exercise the prerogative of the young and speak in Turkish when they do not wish to be understood by English speakers and in English when they do not want to be understood by Turkish speakers (Mehmet Ali, 2001).

The uses of Turkish and its varieties have undergone changes in the UK by absorbing English vocabulary in its everyday use and creating a distinct *Londralı* (Londoner) Turkish. A study confirmed the use of singleton nouns borrowed from English, which appear naturally during vernacular speech patterns (Adalar, 1997). These borrowings are specific to various working environments and can easily be detected in the language of economic interaction:

> *Isterim iki tane* overlock*'cu*. (I need two overlockers.)
> *Koyun tek tek* bundle*'ları*. (Put the bundles in ones).
> *Ben* finisher*'ciyim*. (I am a finisher.)

The examples given above show a typical Cypriot (from Cyprus) speech pattern. It is mainly used as a spoken variety. The first two sentences are typical of such examples, as the use of the verb *isterim* (I want) and *koyun* (put

it) at the beginning of the sentence relates to the structural similarities between Cypriot Turkish and English. Some evidence also suggests other similarities to nouns from English (Adalar, 1997). This relates to Cypriot Turkish undergoing natural changes as a result of being in a host country.

> *Yarın* shopping'*e gideceğim*. (I will go shopping
> tomorrow.)
> *Bugün* off'*um*. (I am off today).
>
> <div align="right">(Mehmet Ali, 1991)</div>

It is not yet clear how much the mainland (spoken) Turkish has adapted the *Londralı* Turkish patterns. This is an area for further investigation.

The established norms in the language of interaction, the *Londralı* Turkish at the workplace and elsewhere, enable the linguistically distinct communities to function within a mutually accepted standardized form. This may not be interpreted simply as serving a communicative purpose (as the languages are not really functionally dissimilar) but may be perceived as the language of meaningful interaction. It represents, in some ways, unique experiences of the workplace. It also serves the function of unifying people of varying experiences from different countries of origin. More importantly, it symbolizes to some extent – especially to the generation born in this country – the experiences of being a Turkish-speaking Briton. It has a unifying function as a new language of the Turkish-speaking communities in Britain.

The dynamism of the whole process is enhanced by the close cultural activities between these groups. Turkish wedding parties are very frequent occasions in London, to which as much as five hundred guests may be invited. There are Turkish newspapers and magazines published to serve as sources of relevant news for these communities. Although the newspapers fulfil the function of sharing community-based news, they do not appear to reach all sections of the communities, particularly not the younger generation, who appear to find it challenging to read standard Turkish. Even the Cypriot Turkish which is mainly used in the *mizah*, the comic section of the newspapers, is difficult to decode because it is not taught in supplementary schools and essentially remains a spoken language. The debate surrounding the use of Cypriot Turkish to support Cypriot-speaking children's literacy development is an interesting one and continues to dominate discussions in supplementary schools.

Educational provision for the communities

Provision for the communities can be put under two broad headings: state and community provision. I will begin by discussing state provision in relation to underachievement, a key issue affecting the education of Turkish-speaking pupils in the UK. I will explore this from three main perspectives: the government (that is, central Government agencies, such as DfES), LEAs and schools. First, I will begin by reviewing the findings on the levels of achievement of the Turkish-speaking communities (TSC), and will discuss key aspects relating to these. This will help focus on the policies and practices of the 'three agents' on the education of the TSC, as mentioned above. Finally, I will focus on the communities, discussing the key issues affecting education of Turkish-speaking (TS) children. I will do this with particular references to language use at home and the attitudes of parents, as well as to the supplementary education provision supported by the communities themselves.

History of failure

The low levels of achievement of the TS children in the education system first emerged during a comparative study conducted in 1968 (ILEA, 1969). The subsequent data and reports over thirty years show a continuous trend of underachievement. Table 5.5 illustrates this clearly.

Table 5.5
English and Maths Key Stage results 2003 for Turkish-, Turkish Cypriot- and Kurdish-speaking children in two London LEAs (Enfield and Haringey)

ENFIELD

English results for Turkish and Turkish Cypriot pupils (average point score – percentage)

	KS1 % L2 and above (all subjects inclusive R+W+Maths)	KS2 % L4 and above	KS3 % L5 and above	KS4 % 5 or more GCSEs
Turkish	12.7	23.0	29.5	21.1
Turkish Cypriot	13.8	25.9	31.6	44.3
LEA	14.8	26.9	33.4	49.3

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Maths results for Turkish and Turkish Cypriot pupils (average point score – percentage)

	KS1 % L2+ (all subjects inclusive R+W+Maths)	KS2 % L4+	KS3 % L5+
Turkish	12.7	46.3	48.1
Turkish Cypriot	13.8	67.5	62.5
LEA	14.8	71.7	67.4

Note: Enfield does not collect data for Kurdish children as an ethnic group.

HARINGEY

English results for Kurdish, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot pupils (average point score – percentage)

	KS1 % L2+ Read/Writ.	KS2 % L4+	KS3 % L5+	KS4 % 5 or more GCSEs
Kurdish	53/55	32	27	13
Turkish	50/53	43	35	21
Turkish Cypriot	56/53	47	40	14
LEA	76/77	67	56	36

Maths results for Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot pupils (average point score – percentage)

	KS1 % L2+	KS2 % L4+	KS3 % L5+
Kurdish	72	43	38
Turkish	74	51	37
Turkish Cypriot	59	47	40
LEA	85	67	52

Source: Enfield Education Department, 2004.

The Select Committee Report (House of Commons Select Committee on Immigration and Race Relations, 1968) and subsequent reports (ILEA, 1969, 1972, 1977; Little, 1975; Mabey, 1981) highlight the fact that Turkish Cypriots consistently had the lowest mean score in reading performance in

comparative studies. It also emerged that, as a group, their performance had deteriorated by the end of their schooling. Similar findings were reported in maths and other curricular areas.

Townsend and Britten (1972), who also gave evidence to the Select Committee in 1968, in their extensive study of 230 schools in the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) looked at aspects of school life including language teaching, assessment of ability, home–school cooperation and staffing. Their report concluded that home–school relations appeared to be one of the most unsatisfactory areas of life in multicultural schools.

One of the earliest studies by a Turkish-speaking professional was carried out during the same period. Berk (1972) looked at issues relating to the needs of Turkish-speaking communities in Haringey. I will refer to his findings relating to the attitudes of parents and young TS pupils when I look at the schools and the communities later. Berk noted that there were high GCE failure rates amongst TS pupils.

A wider comparative study (Yule et al., 1975) was also one of the earliest to highlight the lowest mean scores in reading for Turkish-speaking pupils. It observed that the poor reading scores of TS pupils are both striking and worthy of investigation. It is interesting to note that in line with other studies (Macdonald, 1975; ILEA, 1981b) this particular study was set up to research the underachievement of West Indian pupils. It ended up highlighting the Turkish Cypriot children as a group which showed an underachievement level lower than that of the West Indians (Reid et al., 1999).

Successive governments responded by initiating their own research into the needs of the ethnic minority communities. Similar findings of failure have been expressed by first the Rampton Report (1981) and then by the Swann Report (DES, 1985). The latter was the first major report to include children from the Cypriot communities, and Turkish Cypriot educators gave evidence to the Committee. The report referred to earlier studies (Yule et al., 1975; ILEA, 1981) expressing concern about the low reading attainments of Cypriot children. It added: 'In the majority of schools we visited with Cypriot pupils there was a feeling that these pupils (Cypriot) were under-achieving and the Turkish Cypriots were often singled out as giving particular cause for concern' (DES, 1985: 687). The last decade has seen an increase of research into the underachievement of young people in minority ethnic communities (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Modood and Ackland, 1998; OFSTED, 1999). However, the latest OFSTED reports focusing on Bangladeshi, African-Caribbean, Pakistani and Gypsy

Traveller children, taking the 1991 census as the basis for selection of communities, fail to include TS children. Similarly, the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities, undertaken in 1994, which interviewed 5,000 people from African–Caribbean, Indian, African–Asian, Pakistan, Bangladeshi, Chinese and White communities excludes TSC (Modood et al., 1997).

While there may be evidence to suggest that the attainment levels of minority ethnic pupils as a whole are improving (OFSTED, 1999) there are differences between minority groups (Gillborn, 1998). The general improvement is not happening for TS young pupils at a level which makes any impact, and limited evidence suggests the opposite (Mehmet Ali, 1997), as the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) points out: 'Taking measures to raise overall standards, the overall standards achieved by these ethnic minority groups that OFSTED has shown to be underachieving may remain unaffected or affected to lesser degree than standards of other groups' (Klein, 1997: 6).

Major studies continued to note the educational underachievement of TSC. The striking evidence of this pattern was also reaffirmed by a series of small-scale research projects carried out by TS professionals. These could be seen partly as an attempt by the communities to address the growing need for educational research in the absence of government initiatives, as well as putting forward a case for the role of the first language in the medium of bilingual instruction. A study by Osman (1986) looked at code-switching and borrowing and the language choice in different settings. Her work gave insights into Cypriot speech-patterns. Another study, by Issa (1987), looked at the education of Turkish-speaking children in a multicultural environment. He focused on the role of the mother tongue in instruction and achievement, analysing projects in Europe and Britain. He concluded that there is little recognition of the coexistence of the two languages in the education of bilingual children. Ugur (1990) focused on speakers from Turkey and added that the levels of underachievement of this group were affected by living and working conditions. In another study, Dedezade (1994) looked at the GCSE examination results of TS young people in maths and English in seven secondary schools in North and East London, as well as the views of seventy parents and twenty young people at school. He concluded that TS young people performed worse than non-Turkish speakers but that the discrepancy in maths was not as great as in English.

Dedezade's study also demonstrates the attitudes of TS parents towards the education of their children. His study reports 70 per cent of parents attending parents' evenings and a similar percentage having involvement in

their children's homework. Those unable to help gave ignorance of English and of the subject matter as their reasons. The parents had high expectations of their children, 70 per cent wanting their children to stay on at school and 33 per cent wanting both their sons and daughters to go to university. About one-third of the parents were not satisfied with the quality of education their children received at school, in line with findings in other minority communities. They gave as reasons racism, low standards, lack of equal opportunities, and lack of support for their children as TS young people and for their culture. Dedezade's findings on exclusion and missed school-days also confirmed other data suggesting that exclusion amongst TC young people was very low.

Berk's study (1972) on Turkish Cypriot youth (referred to earlier) found that TS pupils were discontented and frustrated in many ways. He also found that parental aspirations were somehow different for their daughters then for their sons. According to his findings, while 34 per cent supported university education for their sons, only 9 per cent wished this for their daughters. However, it must be noted that later studies suggest otherwise (Townsend and Britten, 1972; Taylor, 1988; Mehmet Ali, 2001, all confirm the high expectations of parents for the education of their children).

One of the most extensive studies on the education of the TSC was more recent research undertaken at the Institute of Education, University of London (Reid et al., 1999). The work aimed to look at the needs of the Turkish Cypriot children in British schools. It provides interviews carried out with teachers, young people, parents, LEA and community representatives, and professionals on a wide range of issues relating to the education of the Turkish Cypriot communities. The report highlighted the high expectations of parents and positive feedback given by teachers working with TS pupils. In the interviews carried out with headteachers and teachers in schools there appeared to be a consistency of approach to issues relating to the education of TS pupils. Teachers saw the achievement of bilingualism as a positive factor in children's development, but they were less clear as to how far this could be used in the classroom. Similarly, teachers felt that children's development in Turkish should be encouraged, but again there were no specific proposals as to how this could be done. Teachers also felt that there needed to be more improvements in home–school relations and that more information should be provided to teachers on Turkish-speaking children's religion and culture.

The interviews carried out with TS young people revealed that, apart from a few examples of positive encouragement by teachers, general feelings and expectations were negative. One TS student describes her experience:

> One thing I do remember I told them I wanted to be a psychiatrist and I remember two teachers, this was when I was 16, just coming up to my GCSE, said 'I won't bother, you'll never make it. Too much competition, you'll never make it'. My confidence went ... took a nose-dive. I said forget it, I'm not studying. I started going out. It really affected me.

> (Reid et al., 1999: 40)

The young pupils interviewed also described their experiences with bilingual Turkish teachers (teachers who came either from Turkey or Cyprus, employed by the embassies, as well as graduates from Turkey/Cyprus who were employed as Turkish-language teachers in schools) on the whole as negative.

On the other hand, parents felt that, in relation to the achievement of their children, schools had to take the initiative. Thus they felt it was important that parents helped with homework but it was up to the school to persuade them of this and give advice as to how best this could be done. The parents felt that more use of Turkish in the schools was a potentially valuable support for achievement. Many teachers also felt that if their schools took the initiative in supporting bilingualism in the home this would have a value.

So far I have explored the issue of underachievement as viewed by various institutions, from almost 'incidental' discoveries by LEAs and government-led research activities to small-scale projects by TS professionals. These reflected the views of parents, teachers and Turkish-speaking professionals. Overall, these findings gave more credibility to the idea that there was a real issue with regard to TS pupils' underachievement. The next obvious question was how to go about addressing this issue. There is an ongoing debate surrounding this point, which reflects the differing views of the government institutions on one hand and the communities on the other. I shall start by exploring this point first. I shall then focus on the TSC, showing that the communities have yet to reach a consensus within themselves on the implementation of proposed programmes to tackle underachievement. How do they see a way round this? The debate centres on the supplementary schools. Having evolved through preservation of cultural identity and language over fifty years, these institutions are at the centre of heated debates surrounding their more complex role in tackling underachievement. First, I am going to explore the debate between the government institutions, the so-called 'mainstream', and the 'communities'.

What is the area of contention between the two sectors? How does this affect thinking on provision? In order to understand the government position on the issue we need to look briefly at present provision for minorities

in the context of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) which has replaced the Section 11 Grant administered by the Home Office from 1966–99. The shift of responsibility to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) was significant, in that the main features of the grant become associated with maintaining 'standards'. The key focus of the EMAG was to become the achievement of minority ethnic pupils and subsequent interpretation became associated with accession to standard English. This was clearly a significant shift from previous government positions on multiculturalism and multilingualism (Bullock Report, 1975) where language development across the curriculum was seen as the key to success for all children. It was also a rather definite description of 'language'. The success of a pupil was to be measured in terms of the pupil's use of standard English and thus a new definition of 'achievement' was put forward. In this new framework, while the child's first language was acknowledged in its potential role in learning the second, in the reality of the classroom there was very little guidance and time to implement it. The focus for the schools under the EMAG became much more prescribed. There were clear directives for the schools as how the grant was to be used. The LEAs were given the responsibility to monitor the use of the grant. The emphasis was on underachievement and equal opportunities: 'The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant will be allocated to schools on the basis of need in order to help provide equality of opportunity for all minority ethnic groups, particularly those at risk of underachieving' (DfES, 1999). In schools, the government's drive for standards and achievement was centred around two major initiatives: the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. As with all children, the levels of achievement for minority ethnic pupils were monitored and assessed in relation to the level descriptors set out in the Literacy Framework. This meant pupils were assessed and monitored in relation to their use and knowledge of Standard English. To some children who came from various language backgrounds, this was problematic, as the language support practices during the pre-EMAG era were not readily available. EMAG's brief was also English-language support, but this was support to facilitate access into the mainstream curriculum, not language education in its broader sense. The standards were to be rigorously monitored by a government agency, OFSTED, which meant that even the LEAs with most successful language-education policies before EMAG were compelled to respond to the demands of the 'new' government initiatives.

The points above are made to explain how such an apparent rift on the education of the minorities came about between the government and the

Turkish-speaking communities. In fact, a closer look at the issue makes it clearer. On one hand the government and its institutions were implementing education policies based on the 'single unifying' notion of English language. On the other, the communities with over fifty years of experience in educating their own children were putting forward proposals for recognizing the powerful role of the first language in their children's education. However, it is fair to say that there are examples where the government had taken the initiative to offer Turkish as a 'modern language' in the secondary curriculum but this rather narrow approach, as I argue here, falls short of its more complex role in the child's overall linguistic development.

The apparent government shift was perceived as rather significant by some sections of the communities. For them it was almost going back to the 1960s, when assimilationist strategies were being implemented by the government. For others, this was seen as a way to turn inward to look at the existing provision within the communities to 'see to one's own needs'. To this group, which included a number of Turkish-speaking professionals, a way forward was seen as extending the existing functions of the supplementary schools: educating children in the medium of Turkish. This was perceived as adopting the content and teaching approaches of the mainstream curriculum, while maintaining the existing provision for the preservation of the Turkish cultural identity and language. To some, this was a real threat to the traditional role of Turkish supplementary schools and was seen as overly political. To others, this was the only way to tackle underachievement. The intercommunal debate is still with us today.

The Community provision: Turkish supplementary schools.

The first Turkish supplementary schools were opened by the Cyprus Turkish Association in 1959 to promote mother-tongue teaching and preservation of Turkish culture (Memdouh, 1981). According to statistical information obtained from the Consortium of Turkish Supplementary Schools in 2003, there are around thirteen that function fairly independently. The schools are scattered all over London. They are funded either by community organizations or jointly with the LEAs. The Turkish and Republic of Northern Cyprus governments support the schools by sending a team of teachers every year. Apart from a few exceptions, the majority of these schools are set up to serve the specific aspirations of the communities: teaching aspects of Turkish culture and standard Turkish is seen as the key to all aspects of

learning. The current debate around TS pupils' underachievement relates to the new role assigned to supplementary schools. It centres around two main areas: the expansion of the content, and the approaches to teaching.

Although there are qualified mainstream teachers currently working in supplementary schools, the majority of teachers are trained either in Cyprus or Turkey. This presents some problems in terms of approaches to teaching for TC pupils who attend mainstream schools in the UK. The syllabus and teaching materials are mostly imported from Turkey or Cyprus. These present some difficulties for TS pupils, as they do not always reflect the experiences of children born in this country. It is argued that both these points have training implications for supplementary school teachers.

One of the other areas of debate relates to the type of Turkish to be taught within the schools. There are major efforts from some sections of the community to try to preserve the old Turkish cultural values. Teaching children the 'correct' form of Turkish – mainly standard Turkish – is seen as the key to success in this approach. This is criticized by some educators on the grounds that it does not relate to children's experiences of everyday life in England. For children of Cypriot origin, this appears to present a particular problem, namely that of identity (Mehmet Ali, 1984).

These issues are hotly debated by the professionals within the communities. The most recently assembled Consortium of Turkish Supplementary Schools was formed mainly to debate these issues and tackle Turkish-speaking pupil underachievement.

Conclusions and the ways forward

I have tried to discuss a very complex issue relating to the education of the TS communities. I have also tried to show that there are no ready-made answers to this problem. In discussing the present roles of the so-called agents in this process, namely the government, LEAs, schools and the communities, I have tried to highlight the incoherence between them. In this article I tried to show that the way forward can be achieved only through a closer collaboration between them. While the communities are debating these issues rigorously, the mainstream needs to put effective procedures in place to support them. The communities cannot tackle these issues alone. They need the expertise of the LEAs and the schools in order to achieve their goals. There is sufficient expertise within the supplementary sector to assist in this process. There are teachers as well as administrators

who have expertise in both worlds and who can take the lead in assisting the mainstream in this process.

In view of the vastness of this debate, I am aware that this article merely touches on the more fundamental issue of academic achievement. How can bilingual Turkish/English children learn in the classroom environment? Are there teaching strategies that utilize children's cultural experiences to maximize learning? As shown in more recent studies (Issa, 2002), there are more positive outcomes for pupils in lessons planned with consideration for children's knowledge and experience as part of their dynamic economic and social activities. Such studies clearly recognize the potential of children's bilingualism.

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