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BME CHILDREN IN LONDON: EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

An evaluation of the education services of Day-Mer,
Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre

RESEARCH REPORT – DECEMBER 2011

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Day-Mer

Based in the London Borough of Hackney, Day-Mer was established in 1989 to work with and on behalf of Turkish and Kurdish people living and working in London, to help them solve their problems and promote their cultural, economic, social and democratic rights; to strengthen solidarity among themselves as well as local people; and to help their integration into the society. The organisation's work is centred on a view of integration that emphasises the creation of conditions for the migrant communities and the rest of the society to work and live together. Current Day-Mer services include a drop-in centre for the community, information, advice and awareness sessions, comprehensive education and youth services, health, education, human rights and pro-democracy campaigns, regular arts and culture activity and festivals, the work of its local groups, youth, arts & culture and women's commissions and its football federation. The organisation has a high level of engagement within the structures of the local authority as well as the local voluntary community sector by which the needs and issues of its target groups are communicated to the relevant strategic and policy structures. For further information: <http://daymer.org/>

1. INTRODUCTION

London's diversity is reflected in its school population: almost 65% of pupils in primary and secondary schools are of 'ethnic minority' background. Over the years, research has shown that migrant and BME children and families face a number of obstacles, including limited English language, lack of knowledge of the British education system, racism and social exclusion. One of the consequences is the significant difference in terms of school achievement among pupils of certain backgrounds. Groups long considered underachievers include in particular Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean, although more recent studies have also identified similar educational problems among Somali and Turkish-speaking pupils.

In this respect, the role played by community organisations - including supplementary classes, schools support and parental engagement programmes - is highly valued by both families and teachers. Despite limited systematic evidence, research suggests the impact of these organisations is highly significant and more should be done to encourage partnership work between mainstream schools and community groups.

In the last few years, however, community organisations have faced a number of new challenges, including a dramatic reduction of public funding available and major changes in educational policy, such as the closure of the 'Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant' programme and the introduction of new models of schools increasingly independent from local authority control. In this new scenario it is more important than ever to learn from the experiences of these organisations in order to identify good practices and address issues of sustainability. This can inform policy makers and practitioners in ensuring that children from all ethnic backgrounds receive the educational support they need.

In Spring 2011 - building on previous research conducted at Middlesex University¹ - Day-Mer and the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) came together to work on a research project on the educational needs of Turkish and Kurdish families in North London. The project focuses on Day-Mer's experience to evaluate the effectiveness of its services, but is also builds on this case study to discuss more broadly the role of community organisations in providing educational support.

About the research project

The key aims of this small scale research project were:

- to investigate the educational needs of children and families from the Turkish and Kurdish communities in London;

¹ See e.g. D'Angelo & Ryan (2011), Ryan, D'Angelo, Sales (2010); Sales et al. (2008)

- to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of Day-Mer’s educational services including: supplementary classes, ‘role models’ project, and ‘developing parental involvement’ project;
- to identify good practice, challenges and sustainability strategies;
- to contribute to the discussion on the role of community organisations in providing education services, supporting the integration of minority ethnic children and fostering community cohesion.

Research took place between May and August 2011 and included:

- interviews and a focus group with a total of 32 parents using Day-Mer’s services (these took place in Turkish language);
- 10 additional interviews with Day-Mer members of staff, schools staff, funders, local policy makers;
- a review of Day-Mer records of users and service delivery procedures;
- a review of existing statistics and other secondary data on BME children in school, with a particular focus on Turkish-speaking pupils in North London.

A preliminary summary report - focusing on the views of parents and presenting a number of initial findings – was presented and discussed at a dedicated community event organised by Day-Mer in November 2011. The feedback received from the community and other local stakeholder was integrated into this report.

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2. THE EDUCATION OF BME CHILDREN: INTERNATIONAL DEBATES AND POLICY CHALLENGES

School achievement represents a key indicator of the degree of equality and opportunities for social mobility (Ricucci, 2008). Even more importantly, schools are widely recognised as a key site of socialisation and identity-formation for all children (Adams and Kirova, 2006). However, as international research has consistently indicated, migrant and minority ethnic families often face a number of obstacles, including limited language skills, inability to navigate the system and discrimination (D'Angelo and Ryan, 2011). Thus, in most 'developed' countries, pupils with migrant backgrounds are characterised by rates of academic achievement significantly lower than average (OECD 2010; Heath et al., 2009; Ferrer et al., 2008; Schleicher, 2006). This gap is exacerbated by the impact of socio-economic disadvantage, which especially affects ethnic minorities (Barnard & Turner 2011; Whitty 2004).

According to some authors, this represents a clear symptom of the inadequacy of current education policies. In recent year, most European Union countries have introduced a number of specific measures (Luciak, 2006), in particular trying to limit the concentration of migrant pupils in schools, providing language support and introducing other intercultural and 'compensatory' strategies (Nusche, 2009). However, these new policies have lacked coordination between national regional and local levels, and their impact has been unequal (OECD, 2010). Although many teachers and educationalist are aware of how ethnic diversity can benefit the school environment - for example helping to promote cultural and language diversity (Ryan, D'Angelo and Sales 2010) - the inability to effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities of ethnic diversity within the education systems has been often interpreted in terms of 'Institutional Racism' (Warren, 2007). Specifically, school segregation processes (see Karsten, 2009) appear as the forefront of an exclusionary trend based on contradictory practices of 'integration' (Gitlin, 2003), which reinforce identity assumptions - constructing migrant pupils exclusively in terms of cultural and ethnic attributes (Valenzuela, 1999) - and hide the structural socio-economic inequalities that better explain their condition (Hart, 2008). Schools procedures and organizational cultures are still largely based on 'ideal' typologies of pupils, families and academic skills traditionally associated with white, middle-class groups (Archer, 2005; de Carvalho, 2001; Lareau, 1987). This leads to negative expectations and practices - such as ability grouping - that justify the location of ethnic minorities to the margins of school (Gitlin, 2003).

In this respect, recent 'neo-liberal' reforms on the provision of public services - and of education in particular - are quite controversial. By transferring responsibilities from the state to individuals, all equally constructed as 'consumers', they often fail to recognize the needs and structural disadvantages of specific social and ethnic groups, thus strengthening institutional racism (Whitty, 2004; Vincent, 1996). On the other hand, education research has also emphasized how successful ethnic minority students, especially those living in poor families, critically depend on the development of social networks and support among peers, teachers, families and communities to develop self-esteem and academic-oriented attitudes (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Furthermore, it is the ability to 'straddle' between cultures, rather than the assimilation to mainstream culture,

which better explains the success among some students (Carter, 2006; Flores-González, 1999; Gibson, 1988).

There is significant evidence about the positive impact of specific forms of involvement of parents from ethnic minority groups in the development of the academic and linguistic skills of pupils (Ladky & Peterson, 2010; Poomerantz et al., 2007; Boethel, 2003). Migrant parents often have high expectation and interest in education (Carrasco et al., 2009; Sales et al., 2008), however these can be frustrated by inadequate communication.

In addition, there is an increasing recognition of the need to act beyond school-centred approaches to include families as well as broader communities. This is not a new issue: in 1996 the US Department of Education commissioned a study to analyse educational equality. The so called 'Coleman Report' (1966) highlighted the limited impact of school resources on pupils' attainment and emphasised the importance of family 'assets': socioeconomic status, relationships with school, shared values and trust with members of the community and professionals.

In particular, in recent years there has been a renewed interest in the role that ethnic community organizations can play in delivering 'complementary' education (Warren et al., 2011; Schutz, 2006; Anyon, 2005; Lytra & Martin 2010). Traditionally, these organizations have been central in maintaining and promoting mother tongues among ethnic minority pupils, which is of critical importance to improve linguistic skills as well as identity and social development (Barradas, 2010). Moreover, they play a fundamental role in shaping the attitudes of both pupils and parents through community based supplementary schools (Zhou & Kim, 2006; Mirza & Reay, 2000) or more generally through networks of social relation such as religious or civic organizations (Pamies, 2006; Tille, 2004; Williams et al., 2002). The enhancement of parental participation in 'community life' can often be transferred into effective involvement in schools thus improving pupil's academic achievement (Murray, 2011). Ethnic minority organizations also provide 'effective' social resources to overcome institutional barriers in the form of specialized advice services about school processes or high education entrance procedures (Dwyer & Modood, 2006; Fennema, 2004).

In many cases, however, there are some specific issues that have prevented from the creation of true partnerships between ethnic community organizations and mainstream education services. In particular, some authors have highlighted the contradiction between the autonomist and collective orientation which is characteristic of community organizations and the tokenistic vision of participation in traditional top-down policies (Vincent, 1996; Dickson et al., 2004). Furthermore, whilst recent policy developments have started to recognize the value of mother tongue languages and support its improvement through school-community collaboration (Sneddon, 2010; Barradas, 2010; Conteh, 2010), the existing stereotypes and negative vision of supplementary schools and teachers from mainstream schools show how assimilationist views and racist assumptions are still embedded in educational policies (Sneddon, 2011; Maylor et al., 2010; Conteh, 2010).

In all developed countries there are several examples (Luciak, 2006; Nusche, 2009) of innovative school-level initiatives focusing on language support, the development of 'intercultural' perspectives in teaching and learning practices and the enhancement of parental and community

involvement (the case study presented in this report being one among a multitude just in London). However, previous experiences indicate the difficulties of implementing reforms and spreading 'good practice' at national level just through the efforts of particular individuals working in exceptional circumstances (Whitty, 2004)



3. BME PUPILS AND EDUCATION POLICIES IN THE UK

3.1. Increasing diversity in the general and school population

Migration flows towards the UK have been relatively stable in the last decade, with estimated long-term net-migration fluctuating between 140,000 and 180,000 a year (Ryan et al. 2010). On the other hand, migration has been characterised by increasing diversity in terms of countries of origin, cultures, languages and socio-economic profiles (Sales and D'Angelo 2008). The opening of China's borders in the 1990s, the EU enlargement in 2004 and the increase in secondary migration of new EU citizens of refugee origin are just some of the factors which – together with the long established UK ethnic communities - contributed to Britain's so called 'Super-Diversity' (Vertovec 2007), a state where 'everybody is everywhere' (Sneddon, 2011) and where some metropolitan areas no longer have one 'ethnic majority' (Warren, 2007).

According to the most recent statistics, almost 12% of those living in the UK were born abroad. In particular, the top-5 largest groups include those born in India, Poland, Pakistan, Republic of Ireland and Germany, whilst Turkish-born, with about 72,000 residents, are the 27th largest group (see table 1).

Table 1 - UK Residents by Country of Birth (2010)

#		thousands	%
	UK born	54,215	88.36%
	Non-UK born	7,139	11.64%
1	India	693	1.13%
2	Poland	532	0.87%
3	Pakistan	431	0.70%
4	Republic of Ireland	405	0.66%
5	Germany	296	0.48%
6	South Africa	236	0.38%
7	Bangladesh	220	0.36%
8	United States of America	200	0.33%
9	Nigeria	151	0.25%
10	Kenya	128	0.21%
27	Turkey	72	0.12%
	Others	3,775	6.15%
	All people	61,354	100.00%

Source: Annual Population Survey, January to December 2010

Overall, the proportion of 'ethnic minority' residents (including both foreign born and second and third generations), which at the time of 2001 Census was around 8%, have risen to an estimated 10% in 2009 and has been projected to reach 20% by 2051 (Wohland et al. 2010). In

London, in particular, almost a third of the resident population in 2009 was ‘non-White’, in particular 10.5% were Black or Black British, 6.5% were Indian and 4.3% Pakistani or Bangladeshi (table 2). This traditional ‘ethnic categories’, however, do not capture the variety of groups mentioned above.

Table 2 - Population 16+ by Ethnicity (2009)

	UK		London	
	thousands	%	thousands	%
White	44,611.0	90.4%	4,114.3	66.8%
Mixed	357.7	0.7%	115.3	1.9%
Indian	1,040.3	2.1%	403.2	6.5%
Pakistani / Bangladeshi	913.5	1.9%	264.8	4.3%
Black or Black British	1,110.1	2.2%	646.3	10.5%
Other ethnic group	1,319.5	2.7%	617.8	10.0%
All people	49,352.1	100.0%	6,161.7	100.0%

Source: Annual Population Survey, October to September 2009

Britain’s increasing diversity is fully reflected in the **school population** - a scenario that poses a number of challenges as well as opportunities to the British educational system. A decade ago ‘minority ethnic’ pupils constituted a fifth of the schools population. However, by January 2011 over 1.5 million of the 6.5 million pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools were ‘BME’: 24% of the total (School Census). In London the proportion is even higher (66%) and varies significantly across the boroughs. In 2010, the local authority with the highest proportion of minority ethnic pupils in its primary schools is Newham (91.0%), followed by Brent (88.3%), Tower Hamlets (87.6%) and Hackney (85.4%). As for secondary schools, the top four local authorities are Newham (88.0%), Tower Hamlets (85.8%), Lambeth (82.5%) and Westminster (82.2%). The largest ethnic groups in London schools include Black (21%, of which almost two thirds are Black African) and Asians (19%, including Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi), but there is also a large number of ‘White other than British’ (10.5%), including Irish, Irish Travellers, Roma and other European groups.

The School Census also collects statistics in terms of ‘first language’, thus offering a better insight on the diversity of pupils. Overall, in 2011 there were 946,580 pupils in English primary and secondary schools whose first language is known or believed to be other than English: almost 15% of the total. In London alone, pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) are almost 400,000, 42% of the total. According to the latest detailed data available (2010), the main language groups in English schools included Urdu (96,610), Panjabi (86,030), Bengali (60,980) and Polish (40,700); whilst Turkish speaking were the 11th largest group, with almost 18,600 speakers (about 2% of EAL children overall).

The ethnic diversity of the UK population is also partially reflected among the teaching staff: in 2004 9% of teachers in England were from a minority ethnic background, in London this figure gets to 31% (source: DES 2005).

Table 3 - Primary and Secondary Schools, Minority Ethnic Pupils (2004-2011)

		England	London	Inner London	Outer London
2004	All pupils	6,736,700	907,300	300,500	606,700
	ME	1,137,300	499,300	221,200	278,000
	ME %	16.88%	55.03%	73.61%	45.82%
2007	All pupils	6,574,570	901,710	296,500	605,210
	ME	1,302,560	538,280	227,810	310,480
	ME %	19.81%	59.70%	76.83%	51.30%
2010	All pupils	6,479,050	939,180	313,470	625,710
	ME	1,518,990	605,380	247,580	357,790
	ME %	23.44%	64.46%	78.98%	57.18%
2011	All pupils	6,514,820	957,805	320,560	637,250
	ME	1,586,335	631,175	255,380	375,775
	ME %	24.35%	65.90%	79.67%	58.97%

Note: ME: Minority Ethnic Pupils.

Source: School Census 2004, 2007, 2010, 2011

Table 4 - Primary and Secondary Schools, Pupils by Ethnicity (2010)

	England		London	
	#	%	#	%
White	5,174,430	79.9%	418,980	44.6%
White British	4,896,460	75.6%	320,060	34.1%
Irish	21,930	0.3%	7,900	0.8%
Traveller Of Irish Heritage	3,930	0.1%	960	0.1%
Gypsy/ Roma	10,800	0.2%	1,280	0.1%
Any Other White Background	241,310	3.7%	88,800	9.5%
Mixed	253,670	3.9%	77,210	8.2%
Asian	569,140	8.8%	177,720	18.9%
Indian	162,440	2.5%	53,660	5.7%
Pakistani	228,050	3.5%	37,400	4.0%
Bangladeshi	94,520	1.5%	47,570	5.1%
Any Other Asian Background	84,130	1.3%	39,100	4.2%
Black	307,700	4.7%	196,890	21.0%
Caribbean	90,000	1.4%	59,150	6.3%
African	182,350	2.8%	117,270	12.5%
Any Other Black Background	35,350	0.5%	20,470	2.2%
Chinese	24,470	0.4%	6,800	0.7%
Any Other Ethnic Group	86,040	1.3%	47,850	5.1%
Classified	6,415,450	99.0%	925,440	98.5%
Unclassified	63,610	1.0%	13,740	1.5%
All pupils	6,479,050	100.0%	939,180	100.0%

Source: School Census 2010

Table 5 - Primary and Secondary Schools, Pupils by First Language (2004-2011)

		England	London	Inner London	Outer London
2004	All pupils	6,736,700	907,300	300,500	606,700
	EAL	678,500	307,600	144,500	163,200
	EAL %	10.10%	33.90%	48.10%	26.90%
2007	All pupils	6,574,570	901,710	296,500	605,210
	EAL	789,790	344,430	153,210	191,220
	EAL %	12.00%	38.20%	51.70%	31.60%
2010	All pupils	6,479,050	939,180	313,470	625,710
	EAL	896,230	381,360	162,470	218,880
	EAL %	13.80%	40.60%	51.80%	35.00%
2011	All pupils	6,514,820	957,805	320,560	637,250
	EAL	946,580	399,210	168,015	231,195
	EAL %	14.53%	41.68%	52.41%	36.28%

Note: EAL: Pupils whose first language is known or believed to be other than English.
Source: School Census 2004, 2007, 2010, 2011

**Table 6 - Primary and Secondary Schools in England (2010)
Main languages reported for those pupils whose first language is other than English**

	#	% of all pupils	% of EAL pupils
English	5,563,830	85.9	
Other than English	896,230	13.8	100.0
Urdu	96,610	1.5	10.8
Panjabi	86,030	1.3	9.6
Bengali	60,980	0.9	6.8
Polish	40,700	0.6	4.5
Gujarati	40,550	0.6	4.5
Somali	37,450	0.6	4.2
Arabic	28,040	0.4	3.1
Tamil	20,080	0.3	2.2
French	19,140	0.3	2.1
Portuguese	19,100	0.3	2.1
Turkish	18,570	0.3	2.1
Bengali (Sylheti)	17,450	0.3	1.9
Panjabi (Mirpuri)	14,790	0.3	1.7
Yoruba	14,660	0.3	1.6
Spanish	11,890	0.2	1.3
Others ¹	370,190	0.1	41.3
Unclassified	18,990	0.3	
All Pupils	6,479,050	100	

Source: School Census 2010 (as at January 2010)

Notes: 1. Others including those whose specific language is not provided

3.2. Underachievement and disadvantage among BME pupils

Both official statistics and independent research indicate significant gaps between the school achievement of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds throughout the UK. On the one hand, second and third generations have made significant progress in recent years (Modood, 2005). The effects of comprehensive schooling have meant that success in public examinations has improved in all groups and numbers entering higher education has risen over the past decade (Tomlinson, 2007). On the other hand there is a persistent gap between Asian, Black African and Indian pupils, who perform well or above average, and Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils who are consistently identified as underachiever (Modood, 2005; Archer, 2007; Gilborn, 2008). More recently Strand et al. (2010) have highlighted similar educational problems among Somali and Turkish-speaking pupils.

Latest statistics from the Department for Education (see table 7) highlight the significant differences in terms of school achievement amongst pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. In particular, they confirm that, whilst Indian, Chinese, and Irish pupils are more likely than other ethnic groups to gain five or more A*-C GCSEs, Roma and Travellers are amongst the lowest achieving. The achievement gap amongst Black and Pakistani pupils is still notable but has significantly narrowed in the last five years. Interestingly, ethnicity appears to have a much larger impact on achievement than migration background and mother tongue per se. As indicated in table 9, the achievement gap between EAL and other children is practically non-existent.

In addition, a recent report from the Department for Education and Skills (2005) indicated that Black Caribbean and other Black boys are also twice as likely to have been categorised as having behavioural, emotional or social difficulty than White British boys. Minority Ethnic Children are also more likely to live in low income households: 38% of minority ethnic households are of low income compared to 18% of 'white' households. The highest deprivation rates are amongst Pakistani/Bangladeshi, with 65% of low income households (Source: Family Resources Survey 2002/2003). On the other hand, a 2004 survey on Parental Involvement (Moon & Ivins 2004) showed that over half (53%) of parents and carers of minority ethnic children felt very involved with their children's education, a much greater proportion than the average (38%).

Table 7 - GCSE results by ethnicity (national)

England	Pupils gaining 5 A*-C, inc. English & Maths		Pupils gaining 5 A-C	
	2005/06	2009/10	2005/06	2009/10
White	44.4%	55.1%	57.6%	75.9%
White British	44.3%	55.3%	57.5%	76.0%
Irish	50.1%	64.0%	61.3%	79.8%
Traveller Of Irish Heritage	11.1%	22.0%	19.0%	36.6%
Gypsy/ Roma	3.9%	8.4%	10.4%	27.9%
Any Other White Background	46.8%	50.9%	60.1%	74.4%
Mixed	42.8%	55.0%	56.1%	76.5%
White And Black Caribbean	32.6%	45.5%	47.3%	71.4%
White And Black African	43.1%	55.9%	56.8%	76.5%
White And Asian	59.4%	65.8%	68.9%	82.1%
Any Other Mixed Background	45.2%	58.2%	58.7%	78.6%
Asian	46.1%	58.4%	61.0%	79.6%
Indian	59.1%	71.6%	71.7%	87.6%
Pakistani	34.6%	49.5%	51.4%	74.7%
Bangladeshi	39.0%	54.2%	56.7%	76.6%
Any Other Asian Background	51.6%	58.1%	64.6%	78.5%
Black	33.6%	49.3%	48.1%	74.4%
Caribbean	29.5%	43.9%	44.9%	71.0%
African	37.5%	53.3%	51.0%	76.9%
Any Other Black Background	31.2%	46.2%	47.1%	72.3%
Chinese	65.8%	75.5%	80.0%	90.3%
Any Other Ethnic Group	41.7%	51.8%	56.3%	75.6%
Classified	39.3%	52.7%	52.1%	72.9%
All pupils	44.0%	55.1%	57.3%	76.1%

Source: DfE, 2009/10

Table 8 - GCSE results by ethnicity

		White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Chinese	All Pupils
England	Pupils gaining 5 A*-C, inc. English & Maths	55%	55%	59%	50%	77%	55%
	Pupils gaining 5 A-C	76%	77%	80%	75%	91%	76%
London	Pupils gaining 5 A*-C, inc. English & Maths	57%	58%	66%	52%	82%	58%
	Pupils gaining 5 A-C	77%	77%	82%	75%	93%	78%
Hackney	Pupils gaining 5 A*-C, inc. English & Maths	57%	50%	59%	52%	x	55%
	Pupils gaining 5 A-C	72%	64%	72%	70%	x	71%

Source: DfE, 2009/10

Note: (x) Figures not given owing to insufficient numbers

Table 9 - GCSE results by First Language status

		All Pupils	English	EAL
England	Pupils gaining 5 A*-C, inc. English & Maths	55%	55%	54%
	Pupils gaining 5 A-C	76%	76%	78%
London	Pupils gaining 5 A*-C, inc. English & Maths	58%	58%	58%
	Pupils gaining 5 A-C	78%	77%	79%
Hackney	Pupils gaining 5 A*-C, inc. English & Maths	55%	57%	54%
	Pupils gaining 5 A-C	71%	71%	72%

Source: DfE, 2009/10

Note: English: Pupils whose first language is known or believed to be English.
EAL: Pupils whose first language is known or believed to be other than English.

3.3. Education policy in the UK until 2010

Since the 1960s, educationalists and policy makers in the UK have been debating on how to approach increasing diversity in schools (Reynolds 2008). However, the education responses of British governments to these challenges have been characterized by strong contradictions and ambiguities. On the one hand there has been great concern about the potential negative impact of minority ethnic pupils on schools and other (white) pupils (Archer, 2007). On the other, there has been reluctance to make any specific reference to ethnicity until recent interventions (Tomlinson, 2007; Warren, 2007). Moreover issues of race and ethnicity have been largely acknowledged by education policy within the context of ‘under-achievement’ (Archer, 2007). It was only with the publication of the ‘Education for All’ (Swann, 1985) report that issues of race and racism were brought into the mainstream education policy arena, proposing that education had to be concerned not only with general increase in attainment but also with issues of race inequality. Additionally, the so called ‘Swann Report’ promoted a model of multicultural education which should balance the support for the cultures and lifestyles of all ethnic groups and the acceptance of values shared by society as a whole. Whilst the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 - with its emphasis on an homogeneous teaching programme - was seen by some as a step backward (Gilborn 1995), the 1999 Green Paper ‘Excellence for All Children’ marked a strong commitment towards ‘inclusive schools’ and the need to respond more fully to the diversity of pupil populations (Clarke et al 1999).

In 2000, intensive public debate on institutional racism following the inquiry into the murder of the black college-student Stephen Lawrence in 1993 facilitated the creation of the Race Relations Act (2000). The document shifted the attention from responding to the needs of ethnic minorities to promoting good relations between different groups (Robertson 2010) and established the duty of public services to pursue race equality. In this context ‘Ethnic Monitoring’ was established to collect and analyse specific data regarding people’s ethnic background and OfSTED (the official body for inspecting schools) was given the additional task to monitor Local Education Authorities (LEA) compliance with the new legislation (Gomolla, 2006).

Overall, during the New Labour’s government various specific initiatives and programs committed to social justice and equality in education were introduced, though embedded in broader ‘neo-liberal’ policies based on the continuation of Conservative beliefs in choice and competition in schooling (Tomlinson, 2007; Benn, 2011).

The continuity and reinforcement of the English as an Additional Language (EAL) program and its focus on placing English language learners in age-appropriate classes as soon as possible – rather than keeping students in separate groups – is considered one of the most important provisions for ethnic minority children (OECD, 2010) and has contributed to significantly improve academic results (Gomolla, 2006). Also, the introduction in 1999 of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG), provided Local Authorities with ‘ring-fenced’ financial resources to fund initiatives addressing the needs of BME children and in particular to narrow achievement gaps. The grant allowed the introduction of dedicated EMA practitioners both at school and local authority level, thus enabling better responses to individual and local needs (Gomolla, 2006).

Alongside, specific guidelines concerned with minority ethnic pupils (Tomlinson, 2007) and professional development programmes such as ‘Aiming high’ (2003) or ‘Raising the Achievement of Bilingual Learners’ (2005) have been introduced, raising awareness and confidence among teachers and promoting good practice (OCDE, 2010).

Finally, following international disturbances and the terrorist actions in 2001 and 2005 both in New York and London, ‘community cohesion’ became an important focus of legislation (Barradas, 2010; Tomlinson, 2007). Specifically, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 introduced a duty to all maintained schools in England to promote community cohesion and on Ofsted to report on the ways in which schools engage with this agenda (Robertson 2010). In this regard, the importance of diversity and cultural awareness in teaching, as well as the emphasis on outcomes, justified the development of guidelines such as the ‘Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review’ (2007) and the ‘Guidance on the Duty to Promote Community cohesion’ (2007). At the same time, the creation of the Full Extended School Programmes represented an important way to strengthen links between schools and community groups. This extended provision aimed to address social, health and other concerns of students and their families while at the same time highlighting education as the pathway to achievement, employment and inclusion. An evaluation of the initiative found that this approach positively affected pupils’ attainment and particularly those facing structural disadvantage (OCDE, 2010).

In many cases, these policies have represented a significant effort to address ethnic and racial education inequality and have created an emotionally supportive climate at local level. On the other hand, these often acted as small scale attempts in the context of more pervasive mechanisms reinforcing inequality. For example, the overwhelming attention directed to Special Language Provision (Gilborn, 1997) has generated the categorization of most migrant students as ‘EAL’, presenting the problem of differential ethnic attainment as a mere problem of English language acquisition (Warren, 2007). Also, the (mis)use of ‘model minorities’ – such as Chinese and Indian pupils – who show a good performance compared to other minority groups, has worked to undermine the importance of race, using an essentialist and homogenous approach which does not take into account the huge diversity within these groups (Barnard & Turner, 2011; Gillborn, 1997) and the specific structural position that Asian communities occupy in British society (Gilborn, 2008), also silencing the fact that Asians experience violent racial harassment from other pupils, sometimes more frequently than, for example, Caribbeans (Modood, 2005). Similarly, the ‘moral panics’ created by boys’ low achievement has directed attention away from race. Nonetheless, as Archer (2007) points out, the ‘problem boys’ are clearly classed and racialised as illustrated by the disproportionately overrepresented exclusions of Black boys.

Another of the limits of the current multicultural policy model is its delay in adapting to and engaging with the new level and kind of diversity (Vertovec 2007) described in the previous section. Most of the UK education policy and practice - from monitoring of achievement to provision of dedicated support - still relies on the traditional 16 ethnic categories², mainly based on colonial and post-colonial migration (Sales and D’Angelo, 2008). The concept of ‘Black and

² White-British, White-Irish, Any other White background, Mixed (White and Black Caribbean), Mixed (White and Black African), Mixed (White and Asian), Any other mixed background, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Any other Asian background, Black Caribbean, Black African, Any other Black background, Chinese, Any other ethnic group.

Asian Minority Ethnic' (BAME) means that, for example, 'White minority' groups such as Poles, Turks or Kurds are left out from both official statistics and policy, particularly at national level. All this fails to recognise that the extent and complexity of diversity in UK schools can also affect children's inclusion (D'Angelo & Ryan 2011).

In addition, the strengthening of the 'school choices' agenda – with increasing emphasis on league tables and competition and the differentiation of school typologies - has exacerbated the social segregation and hierarchy of schools and the systematic disadvantages experienced by large groups of learners with English as a second language (Regan, 2009; Archer, 2007; Tomlinson, 2007; Gomolla, 2006; Whitty, 2004). In 2000, in particular, continuing with the purpose of increasing the involvement of private enterprise in the public education system (Regan, 2009; Benn, 2011), 'academies' were introduced as a new form of semi-privatised schools through the combination of private sponsorship and direct resourcing from central government. This model is based on the belief that more resources, independence from Local Authority control and private management would necessarily create innovation and improvement. On the other hand, recent reports have indicated how attainment of black pupils in academics is often lower than usual and traditional rather than innovate practices have provoked increased exclusions of black and working class pupils (Gillborn, 2011).

3.4 Current trends from coalition government agenda

The actions and agendas on education that the Coalition Government has brought forward in its first year of activity have caused some concerns among researchers and practitioners of migrant education, in particular in relation to the severe cuts to the welfare state (due to the economic crisis) and, more specifically, to the White Paper on education and the Education Bill 2011 derived from that.

Based on a 'rhetoric of fairness and sharing the pain' rather than on a concern for equality and race awareness (Garside, 2010), the claim made by Prime Minister Cameron that multiculturalism has failed marked the return to traditional education practices and a renewed focus on improving attainment (Tomlinson, 2011). According to Richardson (2011), the White Paper shows little recognition of the 'practical expertise and theoretical understanding of EAL teaching developed over the last 40 years'. In this regard, the document reinforces stereotypes about ethnic minority's behaviour and teacher's 'authoritarianism' to fight against this (Tomlinson, 2011), forgetting that a key determinant of successful teaching is the kind of relationship a teacher establishes with pupils (Richardson, 2011). Furthermore, the emphasis on achievement, safety and teaching skills has put equality, emotional well-being and relationships with the community at the margins of the agenda (Garside, 2010).

A further concern emerges from the introduction of the so called 'pupil's premium' for disadvantaged children: the £2.5 billion announced need to be viewed against the 12% cuts in non-schools budget. Moreover, the £7.5 billion promised for educational settings with poorer pupils is not wholly new money, for it comes from the removal or cuts in more than seven programs, grants and tuitions – including the closure of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant

(Garside, 2010). In addition, some analysts have predicted that this new way of addressing extra resources based on 'Free School Meals' (FSM) pupils could overlook the fact that a significant ethnic minority poor families do not receive this aid. This could thus represent an unfair redistribution from ethnic minority pupils to other pupils.

The Coalition Government is also accelerating the removal of schools from local authorities' control – including a departure from the National Curriculum (NUT, 2010) – with the extension of Academies and the introduction of Free Schools (Tomlinson, 2011) whereby parents, teachers, charities and businesses are allowed to set up 'their own' school, publicly funded but outside local authority control. Gillborn (2011) suggests that the fast multiplication of Academies will provoke more inequality and more unfair funding to schools with less diverse pupils – for extra resources are based on the 'outstanding' results these schools have. Free School initiatives, adopting a similar legislation, could increase differentiation and division by faith among schools, as well as fuel privatization processes. All this without any discussion on how communities can benefit from 'disparate and unregulated provision' (Garside, 2010) in a context of general and important cuts in education services. The overall risk is a further weakening of equality and community cohesion (Tomlinson, 2011).

3.5 Supplementary schools in the UK

The role played by community organisations as providers of supplementary schools is highly valued by both families and teachers throughout the UK (Murray 2011). Usually taking place during evenings and weekends and often run by volunteer staff, these services include mother tongue classes, cultural activities such as arts and music, as well as national curriculum subjects.

Despite having attracted the interest of research and policy makers only relatively recently, this type of service has a long tradition across the whole of England, showing not only the impact of community organizations in the provision of education but also the initiative and valuable resources that communities traditionally seen as 'deprived' are able to mobilize.

Issa & William (2009) have described the process that leads to the setting up of complementary schools among these communities: this usually starts with the 'chain-migration' of people of the same ethnicity and region and the creation of localised ethnic clusters. When the community rises in number and experience, demands from parents appear and prompt activists and leaders to establish a school. Both the first Italian (1837), Ukrainian (1950s), Turkish (1959) schools and the more recent Bangladeshi and Vietnamese community schools (1970s) followed such pattern. Li Wei (2006) also differentiates between supplementary schools according to the community of interest and their main focus. Firstly - following the Plowden Report of 1967 about black underachievement and the Coard's report of 1971 about widespread diagnosis of black children as ESN (Educationally Sub-Normal) - concerns among African Caribbean parents resulted in the establishment of community schools aimed to teach mainstream curriculum as a response to the 'failure' of state education (Issa & William, 2009). Secondly, during the 1970s and 80s, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu community schools were created focusing on religion and language teaching. Similarly, other ethnic minorities have established supplementary schools offering teaching on 'heritage' and culture. Actually, the current trend sees the majority of supplementary schools

providing both language and cultural classes and teaching of the national curriculum, the latter often attracting more pupils than the former (Issa & William, 2009). On the other hand, attention to heritage language provision is claimed to be a crucial factor, both being a powerful way to maintain community identity (Francis et al, 2010) and enhancing pupils' multilingual skills and social development (Barradas, 2010).

A recent report commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (Maylor et al., 2010) estimates that no less than 3,000 supplementary schools are currently operating in Britain, with around 1,000 situated in London. These are usually located in disadvantaged inner city areas where an important density of ethnic minority groups exists. Characterised by sheer diversity in how they operate, 'supplementary schools' are commonly defined by three factors: they are organised by a voluntary ethnic community group; activities takes place outside the formal education provision; they provide additional education in the form of linguistic support in a community language, cultural heritage, religion or mainstream curriculum (Maylor et al., 2010). The funding that community organizations receive is also diverse, going from the involvement of Local Authorities to the support they sometimes receive from embassies. Government support for complementary provision began in the 70s after a European Economic Community declaration (77/486/EEC) supporting the maintenance of the mother tongue of migrant children. The creation of the National Resource Centre (NRC) for Supplementary Schools in London (2006) and the development of a Quality Framework programme signalled the recognition of quality marks for supplementary education (Murray, 2011). Recent national programs such as 'Every Language Matters' (2008) or 'Our Languages' (2008) have helped to establish closer links between community and mainstream schools, increasing the possibilities for collaboration and creating a framework where supplementary schools could represent an integrated extended resource (Sneddon, 2010), in coherence with the development of extended schools mentioned earlier .

The overwhelming positive impact reported by different studies and surveys (Maylor et al., 2010; Lytra & Martin, 2010; Evans, 2010; Francis et al., 2010; Issa & William, 2009; Bastiani, 2000; Mirza & Reay, 2000) points to different factors that mirror those proposed by recent literature on effective school practices for the education of BME pupils (Nusche, 2009). These include: the development of an inclusive and caring approach that gives room for participation; nurturing a sense of engagement and high expectations; recognising cultural and linguistic heritage; offering positive role models from teachers from the same ethnic background; attending the specific needs of pupils through the diversification of teaching methods; enhancing participation and confidence among parents (Ainscow, 2005; Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999).

However, as mentioned earlier, despite some examples of promising partnerships between statutory and supplementary schools, many of the latter still operate outside and disconnected from the mainstream (Maylor et al. 2010) - misrecognition and distrust are still widespread.

In particular, since supplementary schools have often been perceived as a response to the deficiencies and omissions in mainstream school provision (Lytra & Martin, 2010), some teachers may see the successful practices of community organisations as a threat to their professionalism (Vincent, 1996). Additionally, main assumptions embedded in school practices -

such as the construction of good pupils and parents; the subordinate position of mother tongue; the value of experiences in other cultures – are called into question by supplementary schools (Barradas, 2010; Conteh, 2010).

Finally, there is a widespread concern about the inadequate funding of supplementary schools which contrasts with the apparent interest and formal support from the Department of Education (Issa & William, 2009). At the same time, the dependence upon the state for fundraising and, in turn, the obligation to adopt the NRC Quality Framework, present a potential risk to independence (Barradas, 2010).

3.6. The broader role of BME community organisations

Due to the increasing interest among policy makers and practitioners on bilingual education, cultural ‘awareness’ and its impact in attainment, supplementary schools have become one of the most salient services provided by community organizations, thereby receiving all the attention in regulations and reports about their educational provision. However, supplementary schools represent only one of the ways in which community organizations work on education, with others including after school clubs, tutoring and mentoring activities and parental involvement (Bastiani, 2000).

Co-educators projects, in particular, aim to improve the performance of targeted underachieving pupils, usually from secondary schools, both providing help inside mainstream classrooms and during after-school’s time. One-to-one meetings are also used in order to address the complex problems that young ethnic minority children experience. Unlike supplementary schools, co-educators projects are always based on a partnership between schools, communities and sometimes third party agencies – e.g. LEAs or local charities – and use a wide range of approaches which include meetings with parents or home visits. Moreover, co-educator projects explicitly aim to fill the existing gap in relation to the lack of positive role models for young migrant children.

Another important resource provided by community organizations are the **parenting and parental involvement programs**. These consist in workshops and meetings to improve the knowledge of parents in issues such as school procedures, SAT and GCSE exams, transitions to secondary or higher education or ways to address conflicts with adolescents. These services sometimes involve the creation of a specific Parental Involvement Officer working in schools to improve the relationships between teachers and parents with special attention to communication barriers.

Though public financial support has been reduced drastically in recent years, the provision of **ESOL courses** remains another key provision, making it much easier for parents to have opportunities to learn English, which is repeatedly highlighted by parents and teachers as the most important barrier when addressing parental involvement in education. Furthermore, ESOL classes allow parents to improve their skills and thus access better employment and further education, with a beneficial impact on their children’s education and attainment.

In addition, cultural activities such as theatre courses for children, the creation of spaces for parents to play with them, homework clubs and a wide range of youth services are crucial in the creation of a nurturing environment and the improvement of cultural awareness and self-esteem.

To some extent supplementary schools – and their positive outcomes - are directly or indirectly related to all these other activities and programs. However, there is a surprising lack of research and analysis of how these services are generally used and deployed by community organizations, the way they relate to each other and the impact they have on BME pupils' school achievement and personal development.



4. A CASE STUDY: TURKISH AND KURDISH COMMUNITIES IN HACKNEY

4.1. Turkish and Kurdish people: migration and socio-economic profile

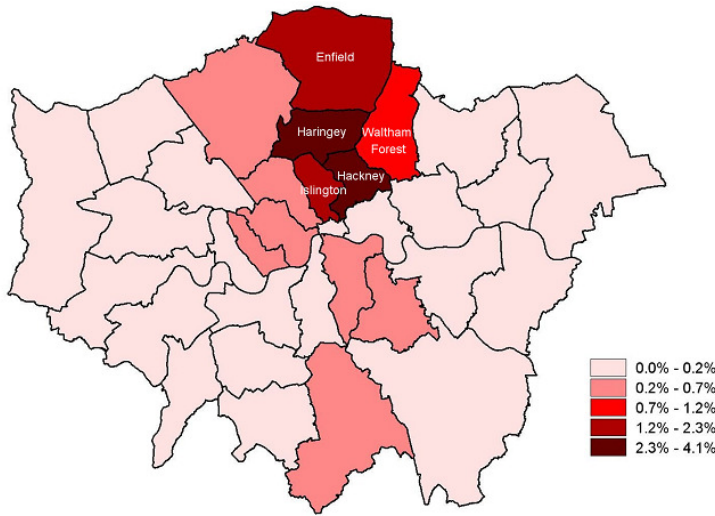
Turkish and Kurdish are among Britain's smallest ethnic minority communities (Strand et al., 2010). On the other hand, they are characterized by strong patterns of geographical concentration. 'Turkish-speakers' comprise three main groups: Cypriot Turks, mainland Turks and Kurds. Each of these groups has a different background and face different issues which are related to their diversity in cultural, social and historical terms (Enneli et al., 2005). Turkish Cypriot communities began to settle in the London area from the late 1940s with an increase following 1974; their children are now in the second and third generation. They came mostly from rural agricultural backgrounds, with little or no English and very little formal education. Migrants from Turkish mainland arrived largely between 1960s and 1980s following military coups in Turkey. The migration to Britain was part of a wider migration trend to Europe for both political and economic reasons. Finally, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Kurdish people from Turkey started to settle in London, mostly as refugees³.

It is difficult to estimate the size of this population accurately, since neither 'Turkish' nor 'Kurdish' are amongst the standard ethnic categories used in official survey. In the 2011 Census, however, several people used the 'other Ethnic group – please specify' option and in particular 47,149 stated on their forms to be of Turkish ethnicity, 13,556 to be 'Turkish Cypriots' and 12,162 to be 'Kurdish' (these would include Kurds from different countries). On the other hand, it is likely that most simply used options such as 'White Other' (Enneli et al. 2005). Various independent studies estimate the number of 'Turkish-speakers' in Britain between 300,000 and 400,000 (Strand et al., 2010; Issa et al., 2008; D'Angelo, 2008). In terms of country of birth, latest estimates (as seen previously on table 1) indicate about 72,000 Turkish-born residents in the UK, the majority of whom lives in London, especially concentrated in the north boroughs of Haringey, Hackney and Enfield⁴ (see figure 1).

³ The broader Kurdish Diaspora also includes people born in Iraq, Iran, Syria and other countries (D'Angelo 2008), although this study focuses primarily on Turkish-speakers from Turkey.

⁴ Specifically, in 2001 (Census data) there were 8,589 Turkish-born in Haringey (4% of the total population), 7,729 in Hackney (3.8%) and 6,176 in Enfield (2.3%); followed by Islington (3,123, 1.8%), Waltham Forest (1,728, 0.8%) and Barnet (1,1135, 0.4%).

Figure 1 – Percentage of people born in Turkey



Source: D’Angelo 2008 (Census 2001 data)

There is considerable evidence that these communities hit high on several indicators of social exclusion: high unemployment rates, poor housing, and limited English skills (Enneli 2005, D’Angelo 2008, Holgate et al. 2010). An analysis of Labour Force Survey data (Demireva 2011), also indicates that Turkish-born workers are significantly more-likely to have only primary or pre-primary education (see table 10) and much less likely to have a degree (although in this respect Turkish women have higher rates than men). On the other hand, as Enneli et al. (2005) suggest, the Turkish-speaking community is also one of the most ‘self-sufficient’ in London “with half a dozen local community-based newspapers, together with Turkish television channels and countless digital radio channels”, as well as a wide range of community centres and community-based services.

Table 10 - Educational classification by country of origin

Country of origin	Pre-primary/Primary		Lower secondary		Upper secondary		Tertiary		Total
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
UK-born Whites	14.96	18.83	29.73	40.87	32.15	20.81	23.16	19.49	100.0
Old migrants	19.67	23.03	30.39	36.94	20.84	16.93	29.10	23.10	100.0
Irish	14.00	16.45	18.00	17.76	25.00	19.08	43.00	46.71	100.0
Old Commonwealth	3.32	4.13	58.99	61.73	13.29	7.45	24.40	26.69	100.0
New Commonwealth	15.70	21.28	50.19	50.91	12.43	10.35	21.68	17.46	100.0
EU15	7.84	8.03	54.06	55.03	13.39	11.16	24.71	25.77	100.0
EU10	21.21	14.03	56.15	68.11	11.76	6.95	10.87	10.91	100.0
Eastern Europe	15.20	11.39	61.07	64.32	10.67	8.38	13.07	15.97	100.0
Turkey	40.51	46.38	49.29	41.45	5.95	5.80	4.25	6.38	100.0
US	4.32	7.01	64.42	61.82	9.84	6.36	21.42	24.81	100.0
Middle East	21.80	15.79	52.18	50.81	8.31	13.97	17.71	19.43	100.0
H.K., China & Japan	5.63	7.67	71.83	66.56	5.63	6.44	16.90	19.33	100.0
Other	21.35	24.81	53.71	52.79	8.96	8.18	15.97	14.22	100.0
All new migrants	15.21	17.32	53.28	54.30	11.45	9.48	20.07	18.90	100.0

Source: Demireva, 2011 (Data from Labour Force Survey 1998-2005)

Recent research – both academic and community-led – has especially focused on the problems faced by younger generations. In particular, a report by Day-Mer on ‘The needs and issues of Hackney’s Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot Young People’ (Greiff et al. 2011) found that they often face considerable financial challenges, with very high rates on unemployment both among parents and children. The young people who were employed mostly found work in ‘niche’ sectors such as restaurants and catering, reporting very little opportunities to access other occupations. Young workers also complained about very long hours and low wages, which forced them to live at home with their parents. This lack of success in the labour market was largely related to negative experiences and expectations on education, with a negative view on the future overall. Many complained about lack of resources and opportunities for development within their schools, as well as frequent instances of bullying and racism.

This echoes the large body of evidence on the lack of educational success among Turkish and Kurdish pupils. Already in 2001, Aydin (2001) lamented how high levels of underachievement had been well-known – and not addressed – for several decades. This was partly the result of low expectations among teachers, the invisibility of Turkish-speaking communities in educational policies and poor school-home-community relations. Again, in 2005, Enneli et al. (2005) reported “a bleak picture of the young people’s experience of schooling”, marked not just by underachievement but also by high rates of truancy and exclusion, especially among boys.

4.2. The London Borough of Hackney: population and education

The London Borough of Hackney is extremely diverse in terms of its population. According to the latest estimates (see table 11), almost 50% of the residents are from ‘minority ethnic’ background with, as seen above, one of the largest concentrations of Turkish and Kurdish communities in Britain. The 2004 Hackney Household Survey revealed that Turkish was spoken in 5.5% of the households, the most widespread language after English (see table 12).

Table 11 - Ethnicity (updated to 2009)

Ethnicity	Hackney	London	England
White: British	51.1%	59.5%	82.8%
White: Irish	2.2%	2.2%	1.1%
White: Other White	9.4%	8.0%	3.6%
Mixed: White & Black Caribbean	1.4%	1.0%	0.6%
Mixed: White & Black African	0.8%	0.5%	0.2%
Mixed: White & Asian	0.9%	1.0%	0.6%
Mixed: Other Mixed	1.1%	1.0%	0.5%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	4.7%	6.2%	2.7%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	1.8%	2.8%	1.9%
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	3.0%	2.2%	0.7%
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	1.5%	2.0%	0.7%
Black or Black British: Black Caribbean	7.1%	4.0%	1.2%
Black or Black British: Black African	9.2%	5.3%	1.5%
Black or Black British: Other Black	1.9%	0.8%	0.2%
Chinese	2.3%	1.8%	0.8%
Other Ethnic Group	1.7%	1.7%	0.8%

Source: ONS Mid Year Estimates, 2009

Table 12 - Languages spoken

Language	Percentage of Households
Turkish	5.5
Yiddish	5.2
French	2.2
Gujerati	1.8
Bengali	1.6
Yoruba	1.3
Spanish	1.0
Punjabi	1.0

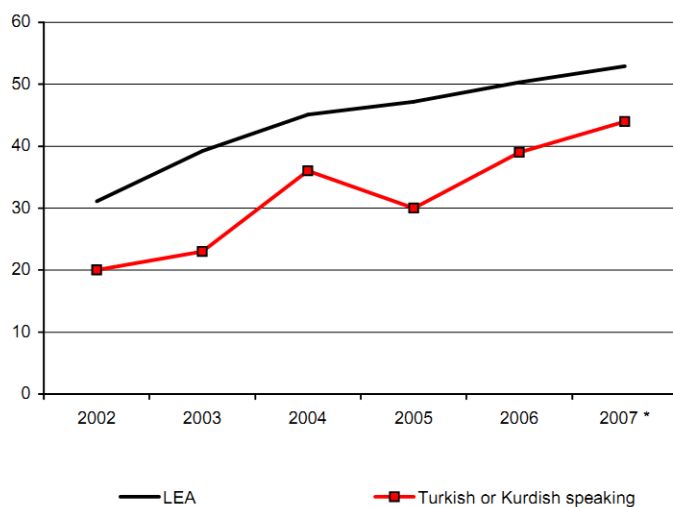
Source: Hackney Household Survey 2004. Households with another or main language other than English. Languages spoken by 1% or more of households shown.

As indicated in the latest 'Poverty Profile' report (MacInnes et al. 2011) Hackney is also one of the most deprived areas in the capital and, in 2007, its 'average deprivation score' rank it as the second most deprived Local Authority in England (following Liverpool) and the first in London. The last few years, however, have seen a relative improvement and in 2009, though still being the most deprived in London, Hackney's gap with Barking and Dagenham – the second in rank – had almost entirely disappeared.

In terms of education performance, in the late 1990s Hackney regularly made the headlines as one of the worst performing Local Education Authorities. In 2002, only 31% of the students achieved 5 or more GCSEs. Within this negative context, the borough was also characterized by wider than average negative gaps among ethnic minority pupils, and particularly among Afro-Caribbean and Turkish-speaking ones. A recent study by Issa et al. (2008) showed in particular the significant gap between Turkish or Kurdish speaking in relation to the Local Authority average (see figure 2). Across all Key Stages, this gap was most marked in English, and least evident in Mathematics – indicating specific issues in terms of language proficiency.

Also, as discussed in a 2003 Cabinet meeting (Hackney Council, 2003) the educational problems faced by the Turkish speaking community in Hackney affected not just boys, but girls as well. Indeed, in some areas of attainment the difference between Turkish girls and Hackney girls as a whole was greater than that between Turkish boys and Hackney boys as a whole. For example, at Key Stage 2, the gap between Turkish girls' scores and Hackney girls' scores in English was 24%, compared to 12% for the boys.

Figure 2 – Hackney - Key Stage 4: percentage of pupils achieving 5 GCSE (A*-C)



Source: Issa et al., 2008

Since the election of the Labour government in 1997, Hackney Council and the Department of Education appeared to be “on a collision course” (BBC 1999a), as inspections repeatedly failed to find the improvements required. On the same year, OfSTED published a report concluding that the Local Education Authority was failing to meet several of its statutory responsibilities. Again, in 1999 an Audit Commission report showed that Hackney suffered the most severe decline in GCSE performance, with a 4% drop on the previous year. Primary schools results were also well below the national average.

For this and other reasons – and strong of new legislation – the Government decided to ‘step in’ and in 1999 Hackney became the first education authority to have its powers taken away: a contract for privatized education services was awarded to ‘Nord Anglia Education’ (BBC 1999b). In 2002 - also amidst concerns about public education being delivered by a fully private organization – the contract was not renewed and Hackney entered into a ten-year agreement with an especially established independent body: the ‘Learning Trust’, the first non-for-profit company to run educational services for an entire borough.

The following years saw a significant improvement in education outcomes. In particular, the proportion of students achieving 5 of more GCSE at A*-C increased to 50% in 2005/06 and reached 73.6% in 2010/2011, with a significant reduction of the gap with the national average (see table 13). Also, there has been a significant reduction in the achievement gap between ‘poor’ children (i.e. recipients of Free School Meals) and the others as well as between Ethnic groups.

Table 13 - GCSE Results (updated to 2010/11)

	Hackney (2005/06)	England 2005/06	Hackney (2009/10)	England (2009/10)	Hackney (2010/11)	England (2010/11)
Pupils gaining 5 A*-C, inc. English & Maths	36.7%	45.6%	55.3%	53.5%	56.5%	58.3%
Pupils gaining 5 A-C	50.9%	59.0%	71.1%	75.4%	73.6%	78.8%

Source: DfE, 2010/11 (provisional)

However, major changes in funding and education policy are now looming both at national and local level. The contract with the Learning Trust formally came to an end in July 2011 and the Council is expected to gradually resume control of education – although the exact terms have not been made public yet. At the same time, Hackney has been at the forefront of the ‘Academies revolution’ and it is expected that an increasing number of Academies and Free Schools will be set up in the near future. The impact of all this on schools performance and pupils achievement is hard to predict.



5. DAY-MER AND ITS EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Day-Mer was established in November 1989 to work with and on behalf of Turkish and Kurdish people in London, to enable them to address their needs and promote their rights. Day-Mer's vision is to empower the community "as an organised entity, aware of its problems, needs and social and democratic rights as well as emphasising through all its work the need for a harmonious interaction between the Turkish and Kurdish community and the rest of the society in UK". Based in Hackney, but serving a broader community across North London, Day-Mer currently provides a range of services including a drop-in centre, information, advice and awareness sessions, comprehensive education and youth services, health, education, human rights and pro-democracy campaigns, regular arts and culture activity and festivals, youth, arts & culture and women's commissions and its football federation. The organisation has a high level of engagement within the structures of the local authority as well as the local voluntary community sector by which the needs and issues of its target groups are communicated to the relevant strategic and policy bodies.

One of the priority areas for Day-Mer since its establishment has been the development of services and activities to raise the educational standards amongst the people it serves. While the organisation has a view of the need to provide specific educational services for different sections of the community, such as women and adult learners, in the recent past, both because of the urgency of the educational needs of school attending members of the community as well as the related stream of funding targeting the raising of educational attainment, Day-Mer's education services concentrated in 4 major areas:

- **Educational Underachievement (Role Models Service also known as Co-educators Project).** The project was funded by The Learning Trust and ran from 2002 to 2010 in primary and secondary schools in Hackney. Co-educators provided inside and outside classroom support to over 100 target students each academic year as well as to countless other students and parents. The project aimed to improve the performance of Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriots children and provide a gateway to information and training for parents.
- **Parenting (Developing Parental Involvement Project).** A Team Hackney initiative commissioned through The Learning Trust, the project ran from 2007 to 2011 in 4 primary and 2 secondary schools with the objective to develop greater involvement from parents and improve the relationships between schools, parents and children, with positive impact on the educational achievement of these pupils. Around 300 parents benefited from the project, which included drop-in surgeries, workshops, socialising opportunities and outreach services. This project was delivered in partnership with an African-Caribbean organisation, Claudia Jones Organisation, which represents the other group in the borough with the lowest levels of pupils achievement.

- **Transition Services.** Funded by Hackney CVS, this programme ran until May 2011 and provided support to parents and children in the process of moving from primary to secondary schools. Activities include supplementary sessions, workshops for parents about the educational system and the curriculum, family learning workshops, a homework club, one-to-one advice and advocacy.
- **Supplementary Schools.** Day-Mer's Supplementary School project began in 2004 and was funded by the Learning Trust until March 2011. Through sessions delivered both at Day-Mer and in local schools, it aims to support primary and secondary school pupils especially with their Literacy, Numeracy, Maths, Science, and English lessons as well as their SATs and GCSE exams. The project involves around 75 pupils each year: some of these are referred by their local schools, thanks to the existing working relationships with Day-Mer.

As mentioned above, most of these educational services have been delivered with the support and in partnership with the Learning Trust. This was part of a larger funding programme involving 12 BME community organisations, recruited through an open tender. The initiative was informed by the Learning Trust's recognition of the need to involve communities in the education of BME children as well as to provide them with positive role models. One of the requirements was that 'community educators' had to hold a UK teaching qualification.

The programme, resourced through an 'Area Base Grant', has come to an end in 2010, due to recent lack of funding. Moreover, as explained by representative from the Learning Trust, this was always meant to be a one-off initiative. The main aim was to build the capacity and expertise of the community organisations involved so that in the future they could be commissioned directly by schools or successfully bid for other funding opportunities.



6. THE VIEWS OF PARENTS⁵

The core of this research project was a survey of some of the parents who used and benefited from Day-Mer’s educational services. Some key characteristics of those who completed the questionnaire are presented in the table below – this gives a good indication of the profile of Day-Mer’s users. All the participants recruited were women - with the exception of one couple – mostly in their 30s or 40s. They were all born in Turkey but 18 out of 20 now have British citizenship and more than half of them live in the London Borough of Hackney. Most (16/20) live with their spouse or partner, although there were a few mothers living alone with their children. In terms of educational background, among 20 respondents, 10 have primary education and 9 secondary or vocational, whilst nobody has a higher education degree. As ‘first language’ these parents spoke either Turkish (10) or the Kurdish dialect Kurmanji (10) and the vast majority (18) declared to have only basic or no knowledge of English.

Table 14 - Characteristics of participants (parents)

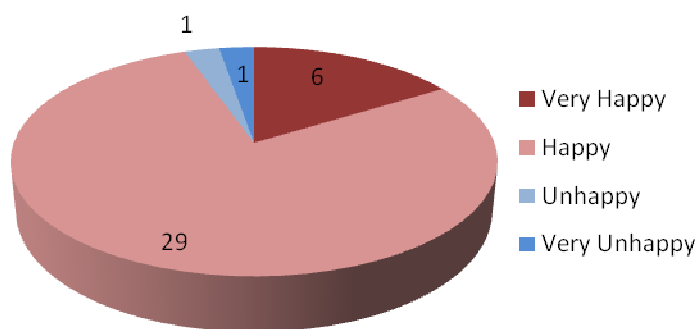
Age group		No. of years in UK		Borough of residence	
20-29	2	0-9	6	Hackney	12
30-39	8	10-14	3	Islington	5
40-49	8	15-19	5	Haringey	3
50+	2	20+	6		
First language		Level of English		Educational level	
Turkish	10	None	2	None	1
Kurmanji	10	Basic	16	Primary	10
Sorani	0	Good	1	Secondary	4
English	0	Fluent	1	Vocational	5
Main activity		Number of children		Gender of children	
Student	2	One	3	Female	17
Housewife	17	Two	12	Male	25
Employed	1	Three	4		
		Four	1		

⁵ All the quotes in this section are those of the parents.

6.1. Parents' views about schools and education in Britain

Most parents who completed the questionnaire expressed their overall satisfaction about the schools attended by their children. The majority of respondents also seems to have a positive view about the British education system as a whole.

Figure 3 - "Are you happy with the school your children go to?"



Note: Parents could express a different view for each of their children. The figures shown are the sum of all respondents' children.

Within this quite positive picture, however, they also identified some areas of concern. The specific issues more often mentioned in the questionnaires include:

- Lack of extracurricular activities (4);
- Need for additional support (6);
- Too little homework (4).

However, it was only when given the chance to talk about schooling and education more in-depth - through the interviews and focus groups - that parents raised some of the most pressing issues in all their complexity.

In general terms, several parents compared the British education system with that in Turkey, complaining about issues such as the 'streaming' of children by ability and the fact that pupils progress according to age.

"In Turkey (...) at the end of the year you would either fail and stay in the same class or you would pass, and you could say 'my child is successful' or 'my child is unsuccessful' (...) but here you don't have anything like that. If your child is unsuccessful you can't even intervene because you have no English".

Some complained about a quality of teaching and a school system which overall do not "push" pupils enough.

“My son is doing well, but I want him to study more, I want him to be better; but [the teacher] says: this is the procedure, there is nothing I can do, if you want you can do extra work with him at home”.

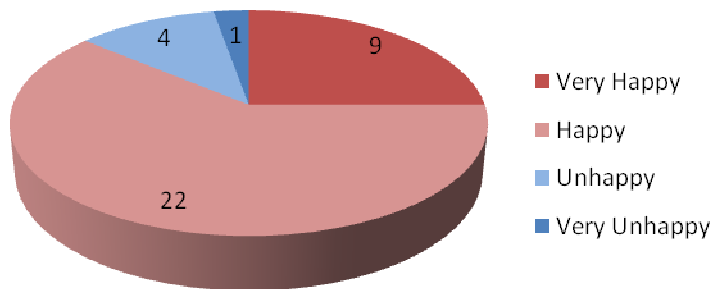
On the other hand, most parents seem to recognise teachers “try their best” and some acknowledged that some of their concerns are due at least in part to a lack of understanding of how the British education system works. A few parents thought this system is actually better than in Turkey, particularly in terms of material resources.

“The system is very good, I mean in terms of finance it is good, particularly when you compare it with the Turkish system, you don’t have to worry about buying pens, buying books etc.”

6.2. Parents’ concerns about their children

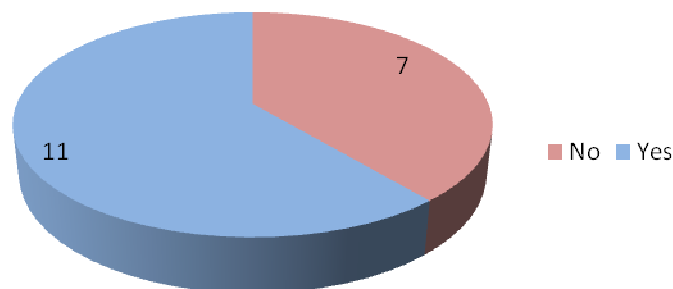
When referring specifically to their children’s achievement, most parents declared to be happy or very happy (see figure 4), at the same time, however, more than half expressed some reason for concern (figure 5).

Figure 4 - “Overall, are you happy about your children educational achievement?”



Note: Parents could express a different view for each of their children. The figures shown are the sum of all respondents' children.

Figure 5 - “Is there anything that concerns you about your child(ren)'s educational achievement?”



The main “problems faced at school” reported by parents in the questionnaires include:

- Language (9);
- Settling in / integration (2);
- Underachievement (2) ;
- Difficulties in socialising (3).

Unsurprisingly, language is the most widely mentioned issue also in the interviews. Although most children were born in the UK, several started school with very little English. According to parents, most pupils manage to overcome the language barrier relatively quickly, often thanks to the dedicated support of the school. However, they also thought that schools sometimes put Turkish-speaking children in a ‘language box’ and then overlook other important issues, such as underachievement and Special Educational Needs.

“Schools always thinks because English is the second language perhaps that is why the child is struggling, then they don’t look into it any further”

For a wide range of reasons, some children “feel very isolated” and do not want to go to school, particularly when they first start. For most, this improves with time, but a few parents report significant behavioural problems both among their children and their peers. On the other hand, according to parents, quiet children who “don’t cause a problem” often do not receive the support they might need.

“If the child is quite, doesn’t say anything, doesn’t cause a problem, the teacher tells you your children is doing well at school”

Lack of adequate academic and behavioural support is a recurrent issue in parents’ interviews. Even more so is a complain about specific support for Turkish-speaking and other BME children, which is often not available when needed or available just on a temporary basis, with short-term initiatives and high turn-over of dedicated staff. In particular, parents value very highly the presence of Turkish-speaking staff within the schools, both among ‘regular’ staff and coming from Third Sector organisations. Loosing such individuals often represents a sudden shock for both parents and children.

“In my son’s school, we had a Turkish helper who was originally sent there by Day-Mer, she was made redundant last year, so the Turkish parents are lost now, they have lost the connection in the school”.

More generally, in the last few years parents have experienced a significant reduction of dedicated support for ethnic minority children, including language support, Turkish speaking teaching assistants and parental classes.

"In some schools they take away services which were previously in place, they take away your rights, opportunities"

"We do raise our concerns, but they always give us the same answers: we don't have enough financial resources to provide these services"

6.3. Parents' relationship with schools and children

The interviews and focus group were also revealing of several issues faced by participants in their role of parents. Many complained about lack of communication with the schools, reporting to get too little information and not being able to talk to teachers about their children's situation. For many, the main problem is limited proficiency (or confidence) in the English language, which can be very demoralising.

"When [my children] had first started school, I hardly had any knowledge [of English] as well, I was very afraid that I would be asked questions at the school".

Although some parents have managed to improve their English over the years, for some attending EAL courses has proved difficult both in terms of time and money. In this respect, the lack of interpreters in some schools has been identified as a key issue.

"[In meeting for parents] there is no interpreter present, and when there is no interpreter, you go once, you go twice, and you say 'I don't understand so why should I go?'"

Other parents reported deeper communication problems and a feeling of "not being listened to" which goes beyond the language issue. Some felt their concerns and complains were often overlooked and a few even reported being treated with contempt, which was interpreted as stereotyping if not plain racism. Issues like these vary of course from parent to parent and from school to school, and in some other cases parents were quite keen to identify good practice of communication when in place.

"[In our school] if you have any concern about your child, especially for Turkish parents, Turkish Cypriot parents, they arrange a special day during the week (...) parents raise their concerns (...) they make requests, so things are done".

In a few occasions parents even reported to have been able to influence important decision within the school, especially when working together with other parents, both Turkish-speaking and from other backgrounds (for example in a school parents did a petition to oppose the closure of a crèche).

On the other hand, for those parents who have limited English, this is not just a problem to communicate with the school, but also something that makes them feel unable to adequately support their children, for example with homework.

“No matter how much I try, I can’t really help them at home because my English is not very good, and my husband works so he comes home late in the evening, most of the time he is very tired...”

Beyond the specific issues related to schooling, the main concern of most parents seems to be the general social environment their children are growing in and the consequences this could have on their values, behaviour and future.

“I see the youth here and I get concerned, the way they are so free to do what they want; this worries me a lot, the way they try to liberate themselves from their parents and live on their own worries me a bit, but obviously I am wary of this and to the best of my ability I try to avoid this with discipline and I try to teach them, I try to explain that our traditions are different to English people, and at the moment they are listening...”

Most parents think their children need positive role models, and some are afraid they themselves are not seen as one.

“ [Our son]sometimes tells us that we have done nothing with our lives and that he doesn’t want to end up like us, so he wants to work as soon as possible and earn money. Perhaps that’s one of the reasons for not being able to convince him about the life prospects education brings, because we can’t be an example for him”.

Confronted with all these difficulties, some parents do not know where to look for help – and in a few cases fear to be judged by other parents, especially from within the community.

“I can’t talk about my concerns about my son’s education with other parents because they judge you or they aren’t aware of the education system and how well their children are doing. Even if their children are underachieving they just say ‘my children are doing well’. I don’t mind raising my concerns with English or foreign friends as they don’t judge me like the people from my community would.”

6.4. Day-Mer: its educational services and broader role

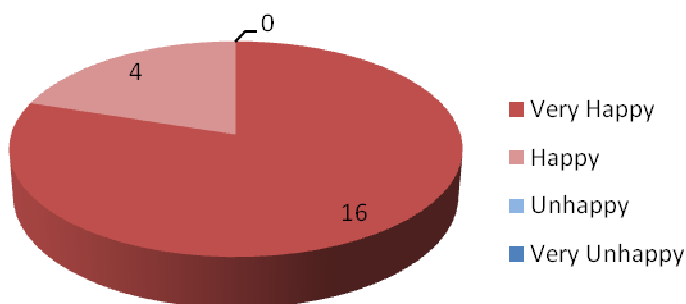
All participants were recruited on the basis of being users of one or more of Day-Mer education services. In fact, several families used more than one service and many parents used services beyond the educational ones.

Table 15 - Services used by parents

Day-Mer educational services		Other Day-Mer Services	
Supplementary School	17	Advice Centre	10
Role models Service	2	Emotional support	1
Parental Involvement	7	Social and cultural activities	3
Transition Services	2	Music lessons	3
Other	8		

All parents were 'happy' or 'very happy' about Day-Mer work and most did not have any particular suggestion about additional services or changes to the current ones (with the exception of one parent who wanted longer supplementary classes).

Figure 6 - "Overall, are you happy about Day-Mer's education services?"



The main reasons behind this high level of satisfaction - as mentioned in the questionnaires - include:

- Children's education improved (2);
- Educational support (7);
- Parents relationship with children improved (1);
- Keeping parents informed (2);
- Children became more confident and expressive (1).

Overall, Day-Mer support appears to have had a significant and positive impact on children's achievement.

"Because his maths was very poor, and (...) because we speak two languages, his English was poor too, but coming here was really good for [my son], his Maths was 4C and now it's 5A, and I am very happy with this"

"The [children] become confident"; "They get better at communicating"; "They make new connections"

Although most parents do not necessarily blame the school for their children's underachievement, they also see Day-Mer as an invaluable resource to help with their problems.

"It's not the school's fault (...) I can't really help my children with their homework (...) this place at least gives them the extra support that I can't give them".

In addition, in several cases Day-Mer staff helped parents resolving bureaucratic issues with the schools and advocating for better support when necessary.

“There was a child with SEN but the teacher said it was just language issues and wouldn’t give the child adequate support (...) thankfully we went to Day-Mer and we got this statement, what would I have done if I hadn’t gone there, but obtaining this statement was such a struggle”.

Some parents benefited in terms of improving their parental skills and many also valued the help their received to understand the school system or, for example, to choose a school.

““I did [benefit from parental courses] (...) I used to shout at my children, I couldn’t speak to them like a friend, and my son is here now, he can say it himself or say ‘no mum’; if I do something wrong I can turn and say sorry straight after, and when something happens, I can now sit down and talk to my child and share things and be a friend to my child. The parenting course played an important role here, I benefited a lot from it”

Day-Mer is perceived as a ‘safe’ environment, where children can feel themselves, relax, make new connections and improve their confidence and expectations about their future. In particular, it is seen as an opportunity for children to get role models, both among staff and other children.

“The children feel safe here, they are with their own community”

“If we are here today is because of this kind of organisations and we are grateful (...) when we see organisations such as this one you get strength, you get courage, for example, my son is studying at South Bank (...) he came here, he came to Day-Mer, he opened his eyes, he learned to fight, to live, he learned about what he can do”.

“If these places close down, what will can we do? We have nothing to give our children. They spend their spare time here, if it wasn’t for this place, what will happen? The child will go outdoors, go to the park, will be influenced by bad friends and this will be the start of a genocide, this is my concern as a mother. I mean I can see the children around (...) children from different ethnic minorities play in the flats, they play in the streets, and whether you like it or not the children make friends and no matter how successful the child is, the child will be influenced, you know ‘my friend doesn’t study, he goes around doing nothing, why shouldn’t I?’ ”

Some parents even referred to Day-Mer as a place where some kind of ‘village’ atmosphere is re-created.

““It is very important for me, at least I can say ‘I have a place’, you know there is a traditional saying ‘there is a village somewhere far away and that is our village’ but our village is right here”

The interviews with parents revealed that Day-Mer’s impact goes beyond the sum of each individual service provided. It is seen as good for children’s achievement and behaviour but also good for parents to socialise, improve knowledge and skills and build their own confidence in their ability to help their children and their community as a whole.

“I know that studying is important, I know that the more support they get the better it is, if we sit at home, our lives are very boring, at least we can go home, eat, and come here, even if it is for two hours, the extra two hour lesson is good for both her academic achievement and for her to socialise, this is really important, that is learning and socialising at the same time. When the child is in the lesson, I can sit with my friends and have a chat with them, I can spend time with my friends and know that my child is in class learning.”

“Well I mean we have a common concern, we are all concerned about our children’s future. We live in a place like London, where there are gang fights, heroin, other things, I think Day-Mer is very good in tackling these issues, but we need to be involved in this process too, we need to grow and develop with our children”.



7. THE VIEWS OF PRACTITIONERS AND LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS⁶

7.1 The issues faced by pupils and parents

The views expressed by teachers and education practitioners in relation to the needs of Turkish and Kurdish pupils largely echoed those of the parents. Although school achievement was often presented as the main priority – and as a key factor in life chances – this appears to be strictly linked to broader social, cultural and emotional issues, rather than being determined by academic skills and ability. As one school educator pointed out, ethnicity is not a determinant of achievement ‘per se’.

“We’ve got Turkish and Kurdish children among the best achievers and among the worst achievers – it depends on individuals and on the families”.

Moreover, although until a few years ago language proficiency was a major problem, most Turkish and Kurdish children - having being born or brought up in the UK - now arrive to school with good English. Nonetheless, as one of the co-educators pointed out:

“Some of the [pupils], even if they spoke good English, felt they didn’t belong – to the schools or to the wider social environment”.

Several pupils had various behavioural problems, in most cases due to ‘cultural clashes’, i.e. being caught between their parents’ culture, peers’ pressures and demands from the school. This was made somehow even more challenging by an extremely diverse school environment. As one teacher observed:

“We have more than 90% of BME pupils and over 40 languages spoken. There isn’t such a thing as a minority or a majority anymore”.

Communication with the family was also problematic and some of the examples reported from the co-educators refer in particular to the tensions between children and their fathers.

“In this girl’s family they just wouldn’t talk to each other – and she wouldn’t talk to her father at all”.

As hinted in some of the parents’ quotes – and confirmed by community practitioners – fathers were often absent figures, particularly in relation to education. Interaction between parents, teachers and children, as discussed before, was also complicated by the fact that many parents could not communicate effectively in English. On the other hand, as one representative from Hackney CVS (Council for Voluntary Service) noted, the circumstances of each family – and

⁶ The quotes in this section are referred to in terms of the organisation each respondent belongs (in some cases with an indication of the role). The project involved several respondents from each organisation.

therefore the ability to engage with education – are affected by a number of socio-economic factors, particularly in the current climate of increasing economic uncertainty and welfare cuts.

Furthermore, according to several practitioners, some parents and children did not perceive schools as supportive environments or ones where their culture was really valued. One of the co-educators felt that some Turkish-speaking children had been simply ‘left behind because’ they were not progressing and had language issue that the teachers were not able to tackle; on the other hand, another teacher recalls:

“Some children didn’t want to speak in Turkish [in the school] – they felt shame. The priority of the school is to teach English”

Some educators also admitted that in a few instances practices to deal with behavioural issues were counterproductive and in particular that parents were only involved when it was too late.

“In some schools parents are not included at all, they don’t have parents’ evenings and parents are only called when their child is going to be disciplined”. (Learning Trust)

7.2 The impact of Day-Mer’s educational services

All the practitioners and stakeholder we interviewed – including representative from Hackney Council and the Learning Trust - expressed an overwhelmingly positive view of the impact of Day-Mer’s services⁷. First of all, as confirmed by the Council, schools involved in the programme reported a significant increase in children’s achievement. More importantly, all agreed that progress happened on different levels and thanks to the interaction of different services and activities – with cultural and social development sustaining academic performance and vice-versa.

In this respect, the case of the **Supplementary Schools** is particularly revealing. After school teaching was focusing exclusively on core curriculum subjects, such as English and Maths, with classes taking place in the English language. In fact, some of Day-Mer’s teachers were keen to emphasise the ‘professionalism’ involved and the fact that in practice “students from any ethnic and linguistic background could have joined and benefited”. On the other hand, most agreed that children positive engagement with the supplementary schools was due to the fact that these took place in a ‘Turkish-speaking environment’ which was perceived as relaxed and friendly both by children and parents. Though learning in English, children were less insecure about their language skills since they knew they could always ask the teacher to clarify in Turkish if necessary.

As for the **‘Developing Parental Involvement’** project, staff from the Learning Trust expressed enthusiastic views:

⁷ Already in 2008, Day-Mer’s Co-Educators and Parental Involvement projects were two of the six examples of good practice identified in the report for the Mayor’s of London’s Office on “Young people’s educational attainment in London’s Turkish, Turkish Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot Communities” (Issa et al. 2008).

“They did some fantastic work – really innovative and creative approaches to working with parents”

Some of the officers encouraged schools to have all the materials and letters translated into Turkish and one carried out “the mammoth task” of translating parts of the national curriculum. However, as a supervisor from the Learning Trust pointed out, for some parents translating materials into Turkish was not enough.

“For some [parents] literacy was an issue, so they still couldn’t access these materials – so being able to talk to someone in their mother tongue was really useful”

Thanks to this bilingual staff, parents and school teachers could liaise more effectively. Their contribution, however, was not important just for ‘linguistic’ reasons, but also for cultural ones.

“Just like the pupils need to see themselves reflected in the curriculum (...) parents need to see themselves reflected in the services they are taking part – and actually feel that people know where you’re coming from” (Learning Trust)

Because they did know the community, parental involvement officers were able to challenge schools in terms of how they did things, but also to stimulate and challenge parents more than a practitioner from a different background could do. Overall, thanks to this project, some parents interacted with the school environment for the very first time.

“We saw parents we had never seen before – coming to the school and being relaxed”

“We had this event where Turkish and Kurdish parents cooked and brought traditional food, and we also had several cultural days”. (school EMA coordinator)

Above all, by the end of the programme parents grew in confidence.

“Some [parents] would e.g. go to the deputy head teacher and say ‘we need this’ – and at the beginning of the programme they wouldn’t have been able to”. (Learning Trust)

The **Co-Educators** project was also complementary to this process, providing a further link between mainstream teachers, children and parents. In addition to group classes on curriculum and other school issues, the project was characterised by fortnightly one-to-one mentoring sessions, these often focused on a broad range of social, emotional, and behavioural problems. When necessary, Co-Educators would bring parents in or contact dedicated support officers from the school or the Learning Trust, thus acting as a buffer and mobilising resources.

For many children, however, the real benefit of the project was to have the opportunity to interact with a ‘role model’ from the same background. As one of the co-educators recalled:

“Children realised I had been through very similar experiences. I came here from Turkey when I was very young, speaking little English, knowing nobody and not understanding how things work here. So they would ask me ‘how did you manage this?’, ‘how did you deal with that’(...) and I would show them that one can succeed”.

7.3 Building effective partnerships between schools, families and communities

In the words of one of the Learning Trust representatives, this overall programme of community-based educational services has been very successful in building partnerships between schools, families and communities and particularly into “getting schools think community”. On the other hand, and particularly on the initial stages, there are often tensions between some schools and “organisations coming from outside”. In this specific case, the risk was that schools would perceive the whole programme as a ‘top-down’ intervention.

“There were certain criteria to identify the schools to be involved in the programme, such as high proportion of Afro-Caribbean and Turkish and Kurdish students as well as high levels of underachievement (...) So you can imagine what it was like going into some schools and explaining why they had been selected!” (Learning Trust)

This relates to a more general problem affecting the relationships between community organisations and mainstream schools. To some education practitioners, supplementary schools are “a reminder of their own failure”. Nonetheless, community educators involved in this project showed great commitment and resilience.

“I said to [the community officers]: you’ve got to be resilient, because we’ll get some schools or parents saying ‘I don’t need this or I don’t want this support from you’.” (Learning Trust)

In most cases Day-Mer officers managed to win over both families and teachers and to establish personal and professional relationships which have gone beyond the scope and duration of the programme. In a few occasions the schools’ members of staff were so impressed by community educators that these were offered a job after the end of the project.

“The quality and impact of community educators would of course vary as anything else – but we’ve been lucky to have two really good co-educators, one in particular was the most impressive we ever had. We wanted her to become a full member of staff, though unfortunately she couldn’t [because of personal circumstances]”. (school EMA coordinator)

As highlighted by the Learning Trust, the most successful partnerships took place where there was mutual respect and recognition of each other role, i.e. when:

“co-educators are actually treated and respected as co-educators – and they are not seen as ‘ancillary staff’, someone you abrogate your responsibility to. It’s about getting this balance right and make people appreciate this is a real partnership”.

7.4 The challenges of evidence based evaluation

Both the Learning Trust and the Council emphasised the importance of monitoring the activities of community based service providers and assess their impact, in order to identify good practice and, above all, to build a body of evidence to be used by mainstream practitioners to make

informed decisions about future funding of similar activities. Indeed, Day-Mer's members of staff were required to use a large number of forms and spreadsheets for internal evaluation; they also received visits from the Learning Trust staff as well as feedback reports from the schools they worked with.

However, the main role of the borough-level board monitoring this projects – and involving both the Learning Trust and Hackney Council – was to ensure the successful delivery of agreed activities (e.g. a certain number of sessions per month, a certain number of students involved), rather than evaluate academic outcomes; the latter being, as emphasised by London Council, “the schools’ responsibility”. At the end of the process, no overall evaluation report was produced neither in relation to Day-Mer nor on the funding programme as a whole. In a sense, our study ended up contributing to fill this gap, although with limited time and resources and not having been able to follow these projects throughout their life.

As mentioned above, all the informants we approached as part of the study expressed overwhelmingly positive views about the impact of Day-Mer's work, but nobody was able or willing to discuss this success in terms of ‘hard data’. For example, it was not possible to obtain comprehensive records of individual pupils’ achievement to compare between those who benefited from community-led services and the others.

To an extent, this is due to objective and practical issues of data analysis (including confidentiality), and to the complexity of teaching and educational processes. In particular – though acknowledging that community-based services are extremely beneficial to the children and families involved - it is difficult to evaluate to what extent progress was due to these services alone or to their combination with other interventions from the schools – and in what proportion.

“Even if you got all the possible data, I don’t know what you will find from the analysis because there are so many factors” (Hackney Council)

“[Impact] is difficult to quantify because obviously these children get input from so many different teachers and when you are in a support role you cannot claim that ‘you’ made the difference – you obviously did your best but you’re working with so many different people. So you make a contribution but that contribution can never be quantified really accurately.” (school EMA coordinator)

On the other hand, some community-based practitioners felt that part of this reluctance to evaluate services in terms of measurable outcomes was also due to lack of trust and confidence – i.e. the concern that identifying factors and actors contributing to BME pupils achievement could also lead to blame others (e.g. school teachers) for their shortcomings.

7.5 The role of community organisations and the way forward

For all those involved, this programme of activities has been an opportunity to explore and discuss the role of community organisations in the education of BME children. Interestingly, a representative of the Local Authority suggested that “Ideally, the work that organisations like

Day-Mer do will eventually become unnecessary” - meaning that in the long term all the educational needs of every child should be catered for by schools. Unsurprisingly not all community practitioners shared this view. On the other hand it was also suggested that BME organisations will always play an irreplaceable role in bringing together schools and communities.

“They act as an ‘interface’ to understand different communities and as an ‘an early warning’ system when problems arise”. (Hackney Council)

Even more importantly, many practitioners recognised that one of the main reasons for the success of community-based education is the way in which education is seen as a process which involves every aspect of children’s and community life.

“Neither schools nor communities can survive without each other (...) there is a danger in not seeing the child as a whole and only see the children when they come through the school’s gate and forget them when they get out” (Learning Trust)

“The voluntary sector has been traditionally adopting a holistic approach to service provision, now the public sector is recognising the importance of such approach – there are lessons to be learned”. (Hackney CVS)

Indeed, the vision behind this particular programme was to create learning and development opportunities. For schools, it was a matter of being in a better position to decide whether and how to engage with the community sector. According to representatives of Hackney Council, one of the lessons learned is the difficulty of commissioning services ‘from above’, in this sense confirming that “schools are better placed to make decisions”.

“We’re not saying: because this school is doing well you’ve got to adopt the same practice (...) you may learn from some principles but you shouldn’t replicate necessary”

For the organisations, on the other hand, the challenge was to build their own capacity and expertise in order to be able to get services commissioned directly by the schools.

“Through this process a lot of organisations – and especially Day-Mer – got tremendous credibility at every single stage” (Learning Trust)

“That was part of the agreement: ‘We will support you, we will build your capacity, because (...) we want to leave you in a position to say to any other funder: these are our own methodologies for showing that the child started at point A and reached point C and this is the evidence”. (Learning Trust)

Specifically in relation to Day-Mer, local policy makers praised the organisation for being “very pragmatic” and able to adapt to the changing policy environment “without compromising their view”. On the other hand, Day-Mer’s coordinator acknowledged that most of their educational services had been developed in response to a specific call and the voluntary sector as a whole should now reflect on how this experience can be taken forward.

“I should ask - would have we developed this services in this way without being commissioned?”

It is quite a relevant question: for the time being the replicability and sustainability of these community-based projects are highly uncertain. Despite widespread appreciation, none of the schools have so far offered funding to extend this services in total or in part. Some expressed their favour in principle, but also blamed reductions and uncertainty about funding. In the beginning of the 2011/12 school year, only the Supplementary School service was continuing, supported by small fees paid by the parents themselves.

More generally, as we've seen before, many parents have experienced a significant reduction of dedicated support for ethnic minority children. According to the Council, however, this should be seen in the context of improved school achievement overall. Furthermore, some local policy makers stressed that it should now be the parents' responsibility to “move to the forefront” and ask the schools for reassurances that they will get the services they need. However this principle of schools accountability – emphasised by the current national policy agenda - appears difficult to implement for those very parents who needed the support of community-led services in order to communicate with the school. Tellingly, a former EMA coordinator described how in his school, after the end of the co-educators and parental involvement projects, some of the parents went ‘off the radar’ again. At the same time, it must be noted, this sets a challenge in terms of strategies to promote real and sustainable capacity building and avoid long-term dependence from services.

The Council and the Learning Trust have also reaffirmed their commitment to the voluntary community sector and their willingness to support organisations in future applications for external funding. However, it is a fact that the educational services environment is now characterised by increasing competition and scarce resources. Moreover, the issue of the Learning Trust's ‘heritage’ is still unresolved. At Local Authority level, it has been decided that good progress was made in the last decade and the Council is now ready to embed it – although through a gradual and still to be defined process. The original plan was to incorporate all the Learning Trust's staff into the Council's structure; however, because of the effects of the Government's Spending Review it is likely there will be a reduction of personnel. Other effects of national policy and funding changes are also becoming visible. For example in most schools EMA practitioners and dedicated support have disappeared or have been subsumed into broader ‘Special Educational Needs’ services - with the risk to reinforce the construction of BME children as a ‘deficit group’ rather than addressing their specific needs and value their potential.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This research study confirms that community based educational services such as those provided by Day-Mer are very effective in supporting the academic achievement of BME children. Even more importantly, they can play a fundamental role in boosting self-confidence and enhancing identity formation.

Our findings also highlight the key role that community organisations can play for parents, enabling them to participate more actively in their children's education. On the one hand, they are a site of socialisation, networking and up-skilling within the community; on the other they encourage parents to engage with mainstream schools, learning how to communicate and make their voice heard, but also learning to better understand the British education system.

In this sense, this type of community-based services also represents a model to 'open up' schools to the community and increase the attention to cultural diversity, affecting the day-to-day school activities. Day-Mer's work, in particular, emerged as a very successful example of partnership between mainstream schools, community organisations and families. For all parties involved, this was an invaluable opportunity to exchange views, knowledge and practices, as well as 'blurring' the boundaries between formal and community-based education.

All this challenges an all too common idea that complementary education services exist just to 'fill the gaps' of mainstream schools and, in this sense, are a sign of their failure. On the contrary, as highlighted by several parents, it is not a matter of 'blaming' somebody for the underachievement of some children, but rather of recognising the irreplaceable added value of a synergic cooperation between schools and communities in enhancing the learning experience of children from all backgrounds.

The majority of Day-Mer's educational services researched in this study were funded by the Learning Trust as part of a larger, one-off programme aiming to build the capacity and credibility of a number of local BME organisations and enable them to subsequently offer 'consultancy' services directly to the schools and families.

To an extent this approach was based on pragmatism: although informants from Hackney Council emphasised their commitment to the voluntary sector, they also acknowledge that funding is now increasingly limited. On the other hand, this model seems to hide a deeper policy model: one where the onus and responsibility of specific service provision for BME children is not within the Local Authorities or the schools, but on the local communities and community organisations in particular.

Finally, this research case study provides a further example of the difficulties of collecting, analysing and discussing 'hard' evidence about the impact of education interventions, particularly community-led services for BME children. Nonetheless it would be advisable to ensure that

future programmes like that described in this report include systematic processes of both internal and external evaluation and that results are then made publicly available.

Only this approach would enable informed decisions at the level of funding and service commissioning. Once again, this should not be undermined by fears that identifying the merits of community services necessarily means to recognise a deficit in the mainstream provisions, but should be based on the recognition that education is most effective when based on active partnerships and an holistic approach involving children, parents and the wider community.



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