

The Educational Problems of Turks Living in Europe

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Abstract

This study discusses education conditions of Turkish emigrant workers in Europe. The purpose is to determine the educational problems and help the Turks adapt to the education system of the country they live in. The research is a descriptive study. The current study uses qualitative research techniques to these issues based upon the opinions of these Turkish emigrants. In this research, convenience sampling was employed. A total of fifty workers participated in the semi-structured interviews. The content-analysis technique was used to analyze the data. The results of the research based on the problems may be summarized as follows: Categories of problems which these workers and their families have faced are school, language, discrimination, family, adaptation, culture and assimilation related. The results of the interviews with workers showed that the most important educational problems facing these workers and their families were educational discrimination, the inability to speak the native and foreign language efficiently, families not caring about their children' education accurately and the school failure of the worker's children.

Keywords

Turks, Europe, education, migration, Turkish workers.

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1. Introduction

The migration of labourers from Turkey to Europe has been one of the most important social issues in Turkey since the beginning of 1960s. Following the Second World War, the industrialised European countries attempted to supply labourers from some Mediterranean countries which were less developed. Italy was the first country to send labourers to these countries after the Second World War. Spain, Greece, Portugal, Tunisia, Morocco, Yugoslavia and Turkey followed Italy. Compared to other countries, Turkey was late to begin sending labourers. Exportation of Turkish labourers began in 1960s.

The Turkish-German Labourer Exchange Treaty was signed between Turkey and Federal Republic of Germany on the 31st October, 1961. The date when this treaty came into force is generally deemed as the beginning of the Turkish workers' mass migration to the Western and Northern European countries to work. After the treaty signed with Germany, Turkey signed bilateral labourer exchange treaties with Austria, Belgium and Holland in 1964; with France in 1966 and with Sweden in 1967 (Gitmez 1983: 18). Based on these treaties, many workers have migrated from Turkey to the Western and Northern European countries.

Migrations to Europe were expected to contribute to Turkey. According to some of these expectations, these migrations would make important contributions to Turkish economy, solve unemployment and the deficiency in foreign exchange, make contributions to build up a technical work force required for the development of Turkey (Gitmez 1983: 19), and the new skills acquired by the workers who might come back to Turkey would support the modernisation of the economy and the foundation of small and middle-sized industrial institutions significantly. Moreover, migrants' expectations of having a higher life standard, their search for a better employment opportunity, acquiring new skills, saving capital to start a business are some of the individual expectations from the workers' migrations. On the other hand, the Western European countries had their supply of cheap work force.

One of the basic features of the bilateral treaties between the Western European countries and Turkey was that labourers were accepted temporarily and they were expected to return to Turkey when the validity of the treaties ended. That is why workers were not permitted to bring their families with them. They were staying in dormitories. Although they were

far from their families, they primarily aimed to save enough money to be able to start an independent business posterior to their returning to their countries (Abadan-Unat 2002). At the beginning, the citizens of the labourer-importing countries thought that those people were 'guest workers' and they would return back to their homelands after a while. However, it turned out to be different from what they thought. Actually the workers had the purpose of returning to Turkey after working for a while. On one hand, employers did not want their employees to leave and the workers tended to extend the duration of their stay in those countries (Abadan-Unat 2002). Nevertheless, Turkey had political and economical problems at the time, and unemployment rates increased accordingly. On the other hand, the developing industry in the European countries still had a deficit in the work force. That is why workers were let free either to stay or to return to their countries (without being bound to any contract) (Şen 1990). The fact that the workers did not return to their countries was favourable for both parties in these circumstances.

The Family Reunification Law, which came into force first in Federal Germany in early March in 1974 parallel to the events in Europe and Turkey, made it possible for the Turkish migrant workers to take their families to the countries where they work (Uslu & Cassina 1999: 16). In this case, Turkish workers working abroad profited from family reunification regulations and the number of spouse and children coming from Turkey began to increase dramatically. But importing work force which was considered economically obligatory gained no more importance than being considered as only 'work force'. Millions of workers were imported into European work force market without making necessary vital infrastructure investments for the work force (housing etc.) and without planning the future (Gitmez 1983: 49). That is why migration of labourers gained a new dimension after the Turkish workers took their spouses and children to the countries where they work. In that case, it became an urgent obligation for the worker-importing countries to find a solution to the educational problems of children from different age groups immigrating to European countries.

Workers' temporary migration at the beginning became permanent family settlement automatically after the workers brought their family to where they lived. Because it was thought that foreign workers would stay for a short period of time and return to their countries, a policy of encouraging the return to homelands was followed while taking precautions about the

education of foreign children according to the ‘rotation’ principle accepted throughout the country. It was enough for the children of workers to attend the classes. However, contrary to the expectations, the foreigners stayed longer and the number of them increased continually. The problems and difficulties confronted in the social adaptation and the education of the foreign workers’ children urged the authorized offices of both worker importing countries and exporting ones to consider the matter more seriously and improve the precautions. In this respect, some arrangements were made such as preparatory classes, classes taught in the mother tongue and in the language of the country lived in, intensified courses, additional course hours, assigning mother tongue teachers etc. in order to improve the equal opportunities of the foreign workers’ children.

All of these attempts could not solve the educational problems of the Turkish workers’ children effectively. As it was better understood that foreign workers would not return to their countries sooner than it was expected, the other preparatory classes and national classes began to be discussed and criticised more and more. However schools, whose main function is to prepare individuals for the environment they live in, could not perform that function because they followed an unequal model of education against foreign students. Thus, a debate started about whether this policy against foreigners was appropriate or not.

Until 1960s, the policy followed against foreigners was to assimilate them by force. The multicultural movement beginning later discredited the assimilation theory and caused it to collapse. When it was understood that people cannot abandon their own cultural characteristics and differences, adopting multicultural policies was considered in order to achieve at least a well-adjusted and productive unity. The main idea is that individuals having suppressed cultural values cannot be productive in business life. The consistency of the thought that ‘individuals existing along with their own cultural values without any problem are always more productive no matter where they live’ caused multiculturalism to spread quickly and caused the assimilation theory to collapse (Yalçın 2004: 4, 5, 94). The main purpose of multicultural discourses is creating a well-adjusted and productive society by accepting and tolerating differences.

The understanding of a ‘multinational and multicultural society’, dominant in Europe, caused changes also in the education policy directed to foreign children. For example, both instructing the foreign children to be a well-

adjusted individual to the society, and preserving and improving their linguistic and cultural identities in a multicultural society were the purposes adopted by the new policy which was put into force in mid-80s in Germany. In connection with that new development, 'national classes', 'bilingual classes' and 'preparatory classes', which had been applied peculiarly for foreign children since the beginning of the workforce migration, were considered discriminatory, abstractive models of education and encouraging them to return to their homeland, and they were abolished. In spite of those models, a model of education was adopted according to which foreign children were directly registered into German classes and they were educated in usual programmes along with German students and which includes 'Mother Tongue Classes' in addition to obligatory classes. The children of the Turkish workers working in Europe go to school in the countries where they live. At the same time they take Turkish Language and Culture classes with the purpose of keeping the ties with Turkey tight and reinforcing them. The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Turkey assigns teachers to teach Turkish classes. Similarly, the countries where Turkish people live can supply those teachers. There are Turkish teachers in Germany, Holland, Sweden and France (Pekin 1990: 60).

Western Europe imported nearly 1 million Turkish workers into its workforce market in a period of 13 years until the end of 1973 (Gitmez 1983). The migration of labourers from Turkey to the Western Europe continually increased until 1970s. Labourer-importation was slowed down after the economic recession caused by the oil crisis in 1973, and it was stopped completely after the 1980s (Aile ve Sosyal Arařtırmalar Genel M¼d¼rl¼đ¼ Yayınları 2007). In this period, while some of the workers chose to stay in the countries where they work, some of them decided to return to Turkey for good.

Tezcan (1989) summarizes the factors that affected the returning of the Turkish workers and their families back to Turkey as increasing unemployment and inflation in Germany in 1980, xenophobia in Germany, inefficiency of the school achievements of the Turkish students in Germany, and the additional payments promised by the German Government to the Turkish workers who decided to move back to Turkey.

Sađlam (1987) summarizes the important problems which the Turkish workers faced and which directly affected the social adaptation and education of school-age children in that way: 'Turkish workers' being temporary in the society which they live in affects the manner how they profit from

rights and opportunities as well as it affects their lives and behaviours. The Turkish workers who do not have equal rights with their German colleagues have low professional and social status and low life standards and no work guaranty. Turkish workers and their families who generally live together in bad settlements could not adapt to the German society whose language, religion, culture and custom are different and they could not establish the necessary connection in the daily life with the Germans. Xenophobia mostly aiming at the Turks causes their situations to become worse.

Studies concerning the educational problems of children of Turkish labourers in Europe have gained an important place in the literature of educational research (s. Akıncı 2007; Arslan 2006; akır 2002; Dođan 1990; Gkgz 2007). Studies have showed that the most important problem of the Turkish workers is their children's education problem (Akıncı 2007; Sađlam 1987); the education conditions of the children of Turkish workers are problematic; they suffer from language incompetence (s. Abalı 1999; Sevin 2003; Trkođlu 1982), Turkish workers' children have a low success rate (s. Arslan 2006; Sevin 2003), they cannot profit from the education system sufficiently (Abadan-Unat 2002), Turkish students take more special education than the native students (Arslan 2006; Abadan-Unat 2002; Kayadibi 2007).

This study is about the educational conditions of the workers in Europe. The purpose is to determine the education problems and help the Turks adapt to the education system of the country they live in. Moreover, this study is supposed to contribute to understanding the education problems of the Turks living in Europe and expanding the scientific data about the subject. One of the reasons why the frequently studied education condition of the workers in Europe is researched is the fact that the topic is still important and popular although nearly a half century has elapsed over the migration. Another reason is to see the education condition of the workers in Europe from their points of view as nearly a half century has elapsed since their migration to Europe.

2. Method

2.1. Research Approach

The current study uses qualitative research techniques to examine the educational problems of Turkish workers living in Europe, based upon the opinions of these Turkish emigrants.

2.2. Study Group

In this research, convenience sampling was employed. In order to collect data for determining the educational problems of Turkish people living in Europe, Turkish workers who were doing their short term military service in Burdur were interviewed. A total of fifty soldiers voluntarily attended the interview: Nineteen of them working in Germany, seven of them working in France, six of them working in Switzerland, six of them working in Russia, four of them working in Belgium, three of them working in the Netherlands, three of them working in England, and two of them working in Sweden.

2.3. Semi-Structured Interview Technique

Semi-structured interview technique were used to collect data in this research and the question on interview form have been prepared in line with the research purpose after a review of literature. A semi-structured application form was prepared by the researcher. The interview form was applied on five soldiers before it was applied on sample group and according to the result obtained from this application, the form was given its final design. In order to identify which educational issues are encountered, one open-ended question was developed. The question is: What are the educational problems of Turks living in Europe? Interviews were conducted in January 2008.

2.4. Data Collection

The semi-structured interview were conducted with soldiers. The data was obtained from soldiers' written reports following the interviews. The aim of the research and how the study would be carried out were clearly stated on the semi-structured forms. In addition, it was emphasized that the identities of the participants would remain confidential. Interview sessions lasted from 10 to 20 minutes.

2.5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The content-analysis technique was used to analyze the data. The theme for describing the data was determined prior to data analysis. Theme earlier determined was educational problems. The responses to the open ended question was analyzed and categories were established for the question. When dividing the data into categories, the researcher identified such categories independently on four interview forms. Two months later, the researcher identified the theme independently, again on the same four

interview forms. Later, the categories was compared and found to be consistent. Categories determined during the data analysis were formed around the theme. The findings were reported first under theme, and then the categories that formed the theme were explained. To render these categories meaningful, frequencies were taken. Sample soldier categories were included as examples for the theme. The data was described under one theme: educational problems on the basis of one open-ended question (see Table 1). Following the determination of theme and categories in the data analysis proses, the findings were defined and interpreted. In addition, as qualitative research uses frequencies for ordering and giving themes and categories were expressed.

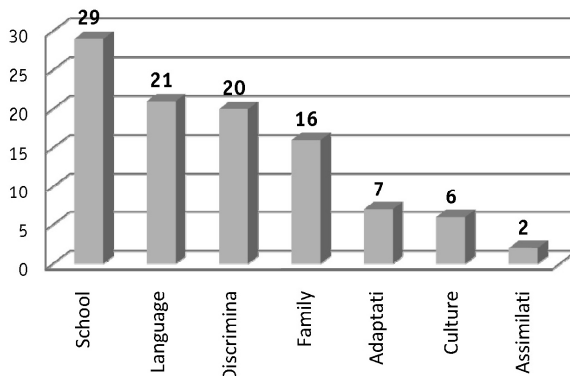
Table 1: Themes and Categories

Themes	Categories
Educational Problems	School
	Language
	Discrimination
	Family
	Adaptation
	Culture
	Assimilation

3. Results

Content analysis of the responses of Turkish workers working in Europe to the open-ended question about the educational problems of the Turks reveals a number of educational problems. Categories of educational problems can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Categories of Educational Problems



As can be seen in Figure 1, the most frequently mentioned educational problem was school related ($f=29$). Other educational problems were related to language ($f=21$), discrimination ($f=20$), family ($f=16$), adaptation ($f=7$), culture ($f=6$) and assimilation ($f=2$).

Content analysis of the responses of Turkish workers working in Europe to the open-ended question about educational problems of these workers revealed a number of school problems related with educational problems. Items of school related educational problems can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: School Related Educational Problems

Items	f
The failure of the worker's children	5
The universities charge high tuition fees from foreigner	4
Turkish schools' being religious (charity and congregation) schools	4
The differences of the educational system	3
The lack of school support for the family	3
Not attending to a Turkish school	2
Crowded classes	2
Students work and study at the same time	1
As the religion schools make the religion lessons compulsory, there is no chance of choosing school	1
Turkish teachers' teaching only religious courses instead of teaching Turkish culture in general	1
Turkish schools' being high cost-effective	1
The educational attache's being indifferent to the schools in other cities apart from his own ones	1
Creating such an image that Turkey is supporting the charity schools	1
Total	29

The most frequently mentioned school problem with educational problems (see Table 2) was the failure of the worker's children ($f=5$). In addition, some of other school problems related with educational problems were the universities charge high tuition fees from foreigner ($f=4$), Turkish schools' being religious schools ($f=4$), the differences of the educational system ($f=3$) and the lack of school support for the family ($f=3$). Some of the statements made by workers are as follows:

“Not being given the right to be educated in mother tongue; the variety of educational system; Turks living in particular districts and in those places schools' being inadequate.”

Content analysis revealed a number of language problems related with educational problems. Items of language related educational problems can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: *Language Problems related with Educational Problems*

Items	f
The insufficiency of the Turkish education	8
The inability to speak the foreign language efficiently	7
The inability to speak Turkish efficiently	6
Total	21

As can be seen in Table 3, the most frequently mentioned language problem related with educational problems was the insufficiency of the Turkish education ($f=8$). Other language problems related with educational problems were the inability to speak the foreign language efficiently ($f=7$) and the inability to speak Turkish efficiently ($f=6$). Some of the statements made by workers are as follows:

“My child had not got any opportunity of taking Turkish lessons in his/her school; in the Netherland our children take Turkish lessons from Turkish teachers by giving them some money; in France, there isn’t any school which offers courses in Turkish.”

Content analysis reveal a number of discrimination problems related with educational problems. Items of discrimination related educational problems can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: *Discrimination Problems related with Educational Problems*

Items	f
Educational discrimination	12
Racial discrimination	3
General discrimination	3
Religious discrimination	1
Seen as foreigner in Germany and seen German in Turkey	1
Total	20

As can be seen in Table 4, the most frequently mentioned discrimination problems related with educational problem was educational discrimination ($f=12$). Other discrimination problems were racial discrimination ($f=3$) and general discrimination ($f=3$). Some of the statements made by workers on these issues are as follows:

“Immigrant children’s living in gettos and treating the students coming from these districts with prejudice; students coming from different

language and culture are kept away from German students; foreigners usually go to the same school, in some schools even Turkish is forbidden, although we were born in abroad, we are always seen as foreigner; teachers put pressure on Turkish and foreign students to make them go to the substandard schools, even though we get good marks they are directed to an occupation or primary schools; although we are as Turks work hard, get into higher positions, or even get the right of citizenship we are still seen as foreigners.”

Content analysis revealed a number of family related educational problems as well. Family related educational problems are listed in Table 5.

Table 5: *Family Related Educational Problems*

Items	f
Families do not care about their children’ education accurately	6
Parents’ lack of knowledge	4
Parents’ inability of getting in touch with school	3
Parents’ not spending money on education	1
Social problems of parent	1
Lack of successful models for children	1
Total	16

As can be seen in Table 5, the most frequently mentioned family related educational problem was that families do not care about their children’ education accurately (f=6). Other issues related with this category were parents’ lack of knowledge (f=4) and their inability of getting in touch with school (f=3). Some of the statements made by workers are as follows:

“Turkish families could not take care of their children’s education because of their low level of education; school-family relationship cannot be made because of families’ not being able to speak the language of that country; Turkish parents don’t take part in school activities; there is lack of knowledge about school and lessons in the first Turkish generation; there isn’t any institution that can acknowledge families when they face with a problem about school.”

Content analysis revealed that adaptation problems related with educational problems were the maladaptation of Turks to the foreign country (f=4) and Turks’ living conservatively (f=3). Some of the statements made by workers are as follows:

“Turks living abroad have a homogeneous and isolated type of structure; child’s having adaptation problem alienates him/her from the society.”

It was found that cultural problems were cultural differences ($f=4$) and not being sure about their identity ($f=2$). Some of the statements made by workers are as follows:

“In abroad national culture and identities are being damaged; cultural conflict happens; and also cultural differences happen.”

Only one worker mentioned assimilation problem. This is culture assimilation and language assimilation ($f=2$).

4. Discussions and Conclusion

This paper examined the educational problems of Turkish workers working in the European countries of Germany, France, Switzerland, Russia, Belgium, the Netherland, England and Sweden focusing on the opinion of the workers. The results of workers' interviews show the most important educational problems facing these workers and their families are school, language, discrimination and family related. According to the interviews made with the workers, other educational problems workers face are adaptation, culture and assimilation related.

Concerning problems of school, the most important problem workers face is the failure of the worker's children, particularly in their education. Moreover, the results of the interviews with the workers show that universities charge high tuition fees from foreienger, Turkish schools' being religious (charity and congregation) schools, the differences of the educational system, the lack of school support for the family are among the important problems concerning the school. Also the problems related with school present features of a problem that workers specified in all countries interviewed –except Sweden. The findings presented in this research that children of Turkish workers being unsuccessful is common to the literature and also pointed by researchers (Arslan 2006; Kayadibi 2007; Sađlam 1987; Turan 1992). There may be several reasons for the failure of Turkish students at school. One of the reasons of failure may be families' not concerning their children's education correctly. Arslan (2006) relates this failure to the difficult conditions of Turkish students, absence of equal opportunities in these students' education, and also to the inadequacy in the language of the country they live. Akıncı (2007) also indicates that Turkish students do not participate in studies, which are made for assistance for the homework after course, in case of coincidence with Turkish and culture courses. As Kayadibi (2007) pointed, the rate of Turkish students' attending special education because of their failure is higher than natives.

The most important language problems worker stated was the insufficiency of the Turkish education. Moreover, the results of the interviews with the workers showed that the other important problems related to language are the inability to speak the foreign language and Turkish efficiently. Also the problems in relation to language are the problems that workers indicated in all the countries interviewed except the ones from England and Sweden. The findings presented in this research that Turks' feeling of inadequacy of both native and foreign languages is parallel to literature and also pointed by researchers (Arslan 2006; Baytekin 1991; akır 2002; Martin 1991; Pilancı 2009). Moreover, Kayadibi (2007) indicates that language incompetency is the most significant education problem, and that Turkish and Turkish culture courses not being involved in the program. Also, the lack of compulsory attendance hinder students to benefit from this course effectively.

However, the results indicated that the most important problem of discrimination facing workers is educational discrimination. Moreover, the results of the interviews with the workers showed that racial discrimination and general discrimination are crucial problems pertinent to discrimination. This finding is also emphasized with the ideas of İyidirli that foreigners are alienated (1990: 79) and with the ideas of Yalçın (2004: 173) that foreigners are exposed to professional discrimination. Conrad (2002) and Yalçın (2004: 173) also highlighted that unemployment is higher among Turks. In addition to this, educational discrimination problem is a common problem for all the workers in each all countries interviewed-except Sweden and the Netherland.

Concerning family related problems the most important problem workers suggest is that families do not care about their children's education accurately. Moreover, concerning family problems the results of the interviews with the workers show that other important problems are parents' lack of knowledge and their inability of getting in touch with school. The results of the interviews with workers showed that the family problems are common problems of all the workers from all countries interviewed- except the Netherland, England and Sweden.

The results of the interviews with the workers show that the problems of adaptation workers state is the maladaptation of Turks to the foreign country and Turks' living conservatively, that this problem is also pointed at in other studies. For example, the results of the studies of Kadiođlu

(1990: 83) indicated that Turkish workers lived with people from their own nationality, their relatives and their spouses in this environment. Spouses did not contact with natives unless they are obliged to. Thus, an introverted Turkish society developed in these countries. Also only the workers living in Germany and France pointed adaptation problems.

The results of the interviews with the workers showed that although not as critical, cultural differences and not being sure about their identity are the problems put forward concerning culture. Besides, the least important problem workers suggested was assimilation.

According to the results of the study, a number of suggestions can be considered. First, in order to prevent discrimination against Turkish students, both the European nations in which these students reside as well as their native nation of Turkey should offer bilingual education. Learning the native language as well as another language will allow the Turkish students to be more successful and better able to understand the culture in which they are now living.

On the other hand, families of Turkish student need to play a more active role in the support of their children's education. To accomplish this, however, training for the parents would be necessary so that they could support and enhance their child's motivation to learn and ability to be successful. Many researches suggest the positive correlation between parent support of their children and student achievement.

Since education problems require the use of theoretic frame and concepts of various disciplines in many different fields (language, culture, social adaptation, family, success at school, regulations, discrimination, assimilation, policy), the investigation of these problems in an interdisciplinary study may contribute to the multidimensional comprehension of the matter.

There are two limitations of this research. First, this study was limited to Turkish workers in eight European nations. Similar studies could be conducted on all of European countries to support the literature in this area. Another limitation is convenience sampling which is one of purposeful sampling techniques and nonprobabilistic sampling. The reliability and generalizability of the research results in which this sampling method is used is less than the results of the research in which probabilistic sampling method is used.

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Avrupa'da Yaşayan Türklerin Eğitim Sorunları

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Özet

Bu araştırma, Avrupa'da çalışan göçmen Türk işçilerinin eğitim durumlarını araştırmaktadır. Araştırmanın amacı, Avrupa'da yaşayan Türklerin eğitim problemlerini belirlemek ve böylece yaşadıkları ülkenin eğitim sistemine uyumlarına katkıda bulunmaktır. Çalışma betimsel bir araştırmadır. Çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca araştırmada katılımcılar, amaçlı örnekleme türlerinden uygun örnekleme tekniğiyle belirlenmiştir. Araştırmada Avrupa'nın sekiz farklı ülkesinde çalışmakta olan elli işçi ile yüz yüze görüşme yapılmıştır. Görüşme sonucu toplanan veriler ise içerik analizi ile analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda, Türk işçilerin ve ailelerinin yaşadığı eğitim sorunlarının, okul, dil, ayrımcılık, aile, uyum, kültür ve asimilasyon kategorilerinde toplandığı görülmüştür. Bu kategorilere paralel olmak üzere, Türklerin yaşadığı en önemli eğitim sorunları ise eğitimsel ayrımcılık, Türkçeyi ve yaşanan ülkenin dilini etkili bir şekilde kullanamama, ailelerin çocuklarının eğitimiyle doğru şekilde ilgilenmemesi ve Türk çocuklarının okul başarısının düşük olmasıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Türkler, Avrupa, eğitim, göç, Türk işçileri.

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Проблемы образования турков, проживающих в Европе

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Аннотация

В данном исследовании рассматриваются вопросы образования турецких рабочих, мигрировавших в Европу. Цель работы состоит в определении проблем образования и таким образом, помощи туркам в процессе адаптации к системе образования в проживающей стране. Работа представляет собой описательное исследование. В работе использовались методы качественного исследования. Кроме того, участники исследования определены методом выборочного отбора необходимых кандидатов. В процессе исследования были проведены встречи с пятьюдесятью рабочими из восьми различных стран Европы. Собранные в результате встреч материалы были проанализированы методом контент-анализа. В результате образовательные проблемы турецких рабочих и их семей сосредоточены по таким категориям, как школа, язык, дискриминация, семья, гармония, культура и ассимиляция. Параллельно с этим, наиболее важной проблемой образования турков является образовательная дискриминация, недостаточно эффективное владение турецким языком и языком проживающей страны, недостаточная забота семьи о воспитании и образовании, низкая успеваемость турецких детей в школе.

Ключевые слова

турки, проживающие в Европе, проблемы образования.

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