4. EDUCATION

The CBPs emphasise the importance of education to integration. The education system provides individuals with the skills and qualifications for participation in the labour market and is a key driver of social mobility. It also plays a formative role in the socialisation of young people in the unspoken rules and values of society and is the first public institution that young Muslims have contact with. The ways in which schools respond to and respect the needs of Muslims are therefore likely to shape their feelings of acceptance in and belonging to wider society. Schools also contribute to integration by providing opportunities for interaction between pupils, parents and teachers of different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

This section looks at the key issues that have emerged in relation to education. Evidence-based policy requires information and data. This section begins by looking at efforts and challenges in data collection in the field of education.

4.1 Data Collection

Across the 11 cities covered in this study, data in education rarely refer to students' religious identities or affiliations. The differing categories used in education statistics, ranging from nationality to ethnicity, migration background and language spoken at home, facilitate the identification of pupils from minority or migration backgrounds, which in turn provides a very imperfect indication of the experiences and performances of some Muslim groups. However, the use of differing categories and definitions limits the potential for cross-national comparative analysis.[144]

Robust data are needed for the development of evidence-based policies. In several cities, initiatives are being developed to improve data-collection methods. Leicester aims to have better targeted education interventions for improving achievement through the collection of detailed data on young people in its schools, using a central database called Datanet that enables closer examination of issues at school, local and city levels that can be disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and the number of children entitled to free school meals.[145] The creation of a database that would track the educational careers of migrant students was also included in the joint action plan for improving the education of migrants agreed by French ministers in 2007. Existing data collection methods that developed at a time when migrants were arriving for the first time in large numbers in many states need to be reconsidered in light of the realities and experiences of the second generation. This process is already taking place in some cities. In Antwerp, data were previously collected on the basis of the language spoken at home. There is now

[144] See European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Migrants, Minorities and Education. Documenting Discrimination and Integration in 15 Member States of the European Union,* EUMC, Luxembourg, 2004 (hereafter, EUMC, *Migrants, Minorities and Education*).

[145] The Datanet website is accessible at https://datanet.leicester.gov.uk/aboutdatanet.html (accessed November 2009).

recognition that for many second-generation children of migrants the languages spoken vary by context, listener and content. The Netherlands Equal Educational Opportunities Decree now asks whether a pupil speaks Dutch with their mother, father or siblings. If the pupil answers no to any two of these, then he or she is registered as having a minority background. In England some local education authorities use "extended ethnic codes", that is, more detailed categories than those in the 2001 census, to allow for a further breakdown of educational performance data at the local level. In the Pakistani category, distinctions are made between Kashmiri and Mirpuri Pakistanis. Using the extended ethnic categories of black Somali, black Ghanaian and black Nigerian to break down the data in the "black African" ethnic category, it was revealed that in the black African group, the achievement of black Somali pupils is significantly worse than other black African students, while that of black Nigerian and black Ghanaian students was above the average for black Africans.[146]

Data on educational performance

The lack of data on religion means that a detailed picture of the educational performance of Muslims in different European states or cities is not possible. In educational research, migration status and the lower economic, social and cultural capital that comes with migration to a new society are seen as relevant to explaining differences in educational performance. There is, therefore, a significant body of research on the experiences of migrants and their children. Since a majority of young Muslims in the 11 cities have a migration background, these studies provide some indication of the position and experiences of significant parts of the Muslim populations in western Europe.

The general picture that emerges from much of the research suggests that pupils from minority backgrounds perform poorly in schools. There is an over-representation of migrant children in lower-level vocational education streams and under-representation in higher-level academic courses which provide opportunities for pursuing tertiary education at university. Migrant children are often also more likely than the general population to leave school with no qualifications.[147] There are, however, indications that after social class and other variables are taken into account, gaps in the attainment of performance of some pupils are found to be reduced. In the UK, for example, when results are differentiated between pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM) (an indicator of poverty), the results show that Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils do

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[146] Department for Education and Skills (DfES), *Ethnicity and Education: the evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils aged 5-16*, London: DfES, 2006, available at: http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm?projectid=14955&resultspage=1 (accessed November 2009).

[147] EUMC, *Migrants, Minorities and Education* and F. Heckmann, "Education and the Integration of Migrants Challenges for European Education Systems Arising from Immigration and Strategies for the Successful Integration of Migrant Children in European Schools and Societies", NESSE Analytical Report 1 for Directorate General Education and Culture, 2008 (hereafter, Heckmann, "Education and the Integration of Migrants").

significantly better than their white British counterparts.[148] In the Netherlands, the gap in achievement between native Dutch and ethnic minorities is narrowing but persists; 20 per cent of ethnic Dutch enter the highest level of secondary school, compared with 9 per cent of minority-ethnic students. Research on the educational experience of second-generation Moroccan and Turkish young people in Amsterdam and Rotterdam suggests that the pattern may in fact be one of polarisation within ethnic groups: between those who are securing higher education qualifications and those who leave school without qualifications.[149] This pattern also appears to exist in the UK, where Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people are over-represented among those entering higher education and at the same time over-represented among those leaving school with no qualifications.[150]

4.2 Ethnicity and Religion as Social Capital

The differences in achievement between different ethnic-minority groups has led to the suggestion that, in the context of education, ethnicity is a form of social capital (that is, resources such as shared networks or cultural norms and values that arise from ethnic group membership which are used in the production of socio-economic advantages and disadvantages). Research in the United States suggests that the success of East Asian Americans rests in part on "a combination of strong shared norms and values about the importance of education, social mobility and social integration, strong parental and community enforcement of these norms and involvement in various ethnic institutions which bind families and individuals to an interlocking network of ethnic relations all combine to produce a form of ethnic social capital".[151] Professor Tariq Modood

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[148] Department for Education and Skills, *Ethnicity and education: the evidence on ethnic minority pupils*, London, DfES, 2005, available at http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/links_and_publications/EandE_RTP01_05/EandE_RTP01_05.pdf (accessed November 2009, hereafter DfES, *Ethnicity and Education 2005*).

[149] Maurice Crul and Liesbeth Heering (eds.) *The position of the Turkish and Moroccan Second Generation in Amsterdam and Rotterdam: the TIES study in the Netherlands,* IMISCOE Research, 2008.

[150] 14% of Bangladeshi 16 year olds in the UK are not in education, training or employment, the highest for any ethnic group and twice the level for Whites. See DfES, *Ethnicity and Education 2005*.

[151] C. Dwyer, T. Modood, S. Gurchathen, B. Shah, S. Thapar-Bojkert, "Ethnicity as social capital? Explaining the differential educational achievements of young British Pakistani men and women", paper presented at the 'Ethnicity, Mobility and Society' Leverhulme Programme Conference at University of Bristol, 16-17 March, 2006, p. 7, available at http://www.bristol.ac.uk/sociology/leverhulme/conference/conferencepapers/dwyer.pdf (accessed November 2009). See also L. Archer, B. and Francis, "Changing classes? Exploring the role of social class within the identities and achievement of British Chinese pupils", *Sociology*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2006, pp. 29–49 and T. Modood, "Capitals, ethnic identity and educational qualifications", *Cultural Trends* Vol. 13, 2004, pp. 87–105.

suggests that for some Muslims in the UK, religion also has a positive role in encouraging and supporting educational aspirations:

> [For] many young Asians, Islam is appealed to – both by girls and boys – as a source of educational aspirations and the motivation to improve oneself and lead a disciplined, responsible life. It is particularly used by girls to justify and negotiate educational and career opportunities with conservative parents, often of rural backgrounds with little knowledge of the scriptures; and by boys to distance themselves from the temptations of street youth culture, a primary obstacle to an academic pathway […] Islam in Britain is finely poised between a religion of a ghetto and a religion of social mobility – a kind of "Protestant ethic" – capable of sustaining the hope and discipline that the taking up of opportunities requires. For the latter trajectory to be actualized, mainstream Islam requires encouragement not demonization.[152]

4.3 Pre-school Education

A major pan-European longitudinal study of the intellectual, social and behavioural development of 3,000 young children aged between three and seven years has established the importance of early learning and pre-school education through attendance at playgroups and day nurseries for their subsequent educational outcomes. The study finds that "pre-school can play an important part in combating social exclusion and promoting inclusion by offering disadvantaged children, in particular, a better start to primary school".[153] Municipal authorities and national governments regard increasing participation in pre-school education as central to improving the educational attainment of low achieving groups including migrants. This is a key part of the integration strategy in several cities. In Belgium, Flanders provides financial incentives to kindergartens to encourage the enrolment of children from low-income and single-parent families. Despite these efforts, the data indicate that rates of participation in kindergarten are lower for children of Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds. In Rotterdam, the proportion of Turkish and Moroccan children entering pre-school programmes is higher than that of other migrant groups: approximately one-third of Turkish and Moroccan children attend the pre-school programmes.[154] The Berlin integration policy (*Integrationskonzept*) also places emphasis on early-years education and aims by 2011 to extend free kindergarten classes from year one. Pre-school education is also a key feature of the education stream of

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[152] T. Modood, "Ethnicity, Muslims and higher education entry in Britain", *Teaching in Higher Education* 11:2 2006, pp. 247–250 at 250.

[153] K. Sylva, E. Melhuish, P. Sammons, I. Siraj-Blatchford, and B. Taggart, *Effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project: Final Report*, DfES, London, 2004, p. 29 (hereafter Sylva et al., *Effective provision of pre-school education*).

[154] J. Dagevos, M. Gijsberts (eds). *Jaarrapport Integratie 2007* (Annual Integration Report 2007), Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, The Hague, 2007, p. 103 (in Dutch).

Hamburg's integration strategy. A year before commencing primary school, a child's linguistic abilities are assessed in both German and their mother tongue. Where it is found that a child does not have the appropriate level of linguistic skills, they are required to attend special language-support classes delivered through day-care facilities. In addition to this, from the age of three all children have the right to five hours at a pre-school day-care facility (KITA) until they enter school. Since 2007 this provision has been available to children below three years of age. In Leicester, the local council has an early-years support team that aims to enhance language provision and training to help adults to support children better and also supports pre-school activities such as mother and toddler groups.

4.4 Selection and Testing

There is also growing research evidence that educational systems in which decisions about educational career paths are made at an early stage through a process of academic selection operate to the disadvantage of pupils from minority backgrounds. In the Netherlands, 60 per cent of native Dutch pupils study for the higher level HAVO[155] and VWO,[156] compared with 30 per cent of the pupils of non-western ethnic-minority groups.[157] Research undertaken by the TIES (Integration of the European Second Generation) project found that a significant proportion of second-generation Moroccan and Turkish young people who reached higher education did so despite failing to enter the higher-level HAVO courses at school.[158] Displaying persistence and resilience, these young people entered higher education through a longer route, going from the VMBO[159] to the MBO[160] before entering the HBO. This, the report suggests, indicates either that the educational system fails to recognise the talents of second-generation young people or that selection comes too early in their education careers.

The latter hypothesis is supported by evidence that achievement rates for migrant students appear to be better in educational systems with comprehensive schools.

155 HAVO (*'Hoger Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs*) is secondary-school education offering senior general education for five years.

156 VWO (*'Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs*)' is the university preparatory education stream. It is for six years.

157 See the website of the Amsterdam Department for Research and Statistics at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/feitenencijfers/ (accessed November 2009).

158 The TIES project is a collaborative and comparative research project on the descendants of immigrants from Turkey, ex-Yugoslavia and Morocco in eight European countries. See the website at http://www.tiesproject.eu

159 VMBO (*voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs* – preparatory middle-level vocational education) is a secondary-school educational stream which is pre-vocational in nature and lasts four years.

160 MBO – *middelbaar beroepsonderwijs – (middle level applied education)* – is an educational stream in high school orienting pupils towards vocational training.

Research in Germany, where comprehensive and selective schools are found across different Länder, has found that migrant students were more likely to obtain medium- or higher-level qualifications in the comprehensive system.[161] In the UK, where the vast majority of state schools are comprehensive, research has found a significant acceleration in the achievement of pupils from ethnic-minority groups towards the end of their time in secondary school. Wilson *et al.* look at the difference in exam results actually achieved at the age of 16 compared with what would have been achieved by the group if their performance at age 11 was replicated at 16:

> Taking students with Black African heritage, if they had remained in the same position in the test score distribution throughout secondary schooling, then as a group, 39% would have achieved at least 5 passes in the high-stakes age 16 exams. In fact, 48% achieved that level, a difference of nearly one quarter. For ethnic Bangladeshi students, the actual figure of 48% is a third higher than the predicted figure of 36%.[162]

It has also been found that the gain made by Bangladeshi pupils between Key Stage 3 (tests taken at age 13) and the results for their GCSE exams (usually taken at age 16) is particularly strong and equivalent to 10 GCSE points, which is "equivalent to changing five C grades all to A".[163] Heckmann's review of research on migrants and education concludes that "a strong case can be made for the effectiveness of comprehensive schools in raising educational opportunities for migrant students, and against (early) selection for differently demanding tracks with different curricula".[164] The OSI research finds that at the local level some cities are beginning to address this issue: for instance comprehensive-style schooling is being developed in Berlin.

4.5 Segregation

The interviews and focus groups revealed particular concern about the effect of the low expectations and aspirations of some teachers on shaping the educational paths pursued by pupils. The concentration of pupils from minority backgrounds has led to *de facto* segregation of schools in some cities. There is some evidence that the socio-economic

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[161] Heike Diefenbach, "Schulerfolg von ausländischen Kindern und Kindern mit Migrationshintergrund als Ergebnis individueller und institutioneller Faktoren" (School success of foreign children and children with a migration background as a result of individual and institutional factors), Bundesministerium für Bildung und Wissenschaft (Hg.), *Migrationshintergrund von Kindern und Jugendlichen: Wege zur Weiterentwicklung der amtlichen Statistik*, (Children and young people of minority background: pathways to the development official statistics), Bonn and Berlin, 2005, pp. 43–54, cited in Heckmann, "Education and the Integration of Migrants", p. 22.

[162] D. Wilson, S. Burgess, and A. Briggs, "The dynamics of school attainment of England's ethnic minorities", CMPO Working Paper Series No. 05/130, University of Bristol, Bristol, 2005, at p. 22 (hereafter, Wilson *et al.*, "The dynamics of school attainment").

[163] Wilson *et al.*, "The dynamics of school attainment", p. 20.

[164] Heckmann, "Education and the Integration of Migrants", p. 3.

and immigrant composition of schools has a small but significant adverse effect on the grades of pupils.[165] This emerged as a concern among parents as well as education officials.

A desire for more ethnically mixed schools emerged consistently and strongly in the OSI focus group discussions involving parents across the different cities. Parents were anxious about the negative impact of segregation on their children's education and future prospects. They feared that schools where a majority of students were from minority groups receive less attention from public officials and provide inferior education. They believed mixed schools were needed to support integration. Many regretted the decision of white parents to withdraw their children from schools where there were too many pupils from minority backgrounds.

Finding ways to reverse the processes of segregation is difficult as *de facto* ethnic segregation in schools is often a consequence of a mixture of residential settlement patterns combined with the exercise of parental and school choice. Cities try to address this by a variety of mechanisms. For example, the Antwerp Decree on Equal Educational Opportunities (EEO) restricts the right of schools to refuse admission to a child. It also provides that where the share of EEO pupils (that is, pupils whose primary home language is not Dutch) exceeds the city average by 10 per cent, schools are able to refer pupils to another school. However, as the OSI report on Antwerp notes, schools have been creative in developing new indirect barriers to enrolment. Schools sometimes aim to persuade parents and pupils from minority backgrounds that the school is not appropriate for them, by saying that the curriculum is too difficult, that the school is not trained to provide the help and support needed for minority pupils or do not cater to the pupils' cultural and religious needs. Requiring pupils to buy expensive school uniforms or participate in expensive school trips are also methods used to dissuade pupils from minority and poorer backgrounds from applying to these schools. In the UK, the Education Inspection Act 2006 places a legal duty on schools to promote cohesion. In Leicester, in order to increase interaction between pupils of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, the Schools Linking Network develops links between schools where the students are from different ethnic and religious groups. This involves creating links, for example, between schools where the majority of students are Muslim with schools which have a majority of Hindu or Christian students.

4.6 Linguistic Competence

Linguistic competence is vital for educational success. Across all cities, supporting and encouraging learning the official language used in schools remains a key part of most policies aimed at improving the educational achievement of students with migration

[165] R. Szulkin, and J. O. Jonsson, "Ethnic segregation and educational outcomes in Swedish comprehensive schools: a multilevel analysis", Working Paper No. 2007:2, Sociology Department, Stockholm University, 2005.

backgrounds. In Germany there is a national programme, ForMig, that aims to provide specific literacy support for parents and children of migrant or minority backgrounds. Among the successful projects developed by this programme is the "Rucksackprojekt" in Berlin. Through this, primary schools and nurseries provide parents who do not speak German with information about a subject due to be taught in schools. The parents can use this information to teach their children about the subject in their mother tongue. Some of the parents become "parents' companions" (*Elternbegleiter*), which means that in addition to supporting their own children, they support other parents and help with the communication between parents and teachers. In France, language support is available in what are called initiation classes for pupils with limited French-language skills.

Research in the UK suggests that the acceleration in performance of students from minority backgrounds that is found in the final three years of the schooling up to the exams taken at 16 is in part due to an increased fluency in English that comes with more intensive use of the language. It is estimated that differences in language skills account for one-third of the improvement in attainment in the course of secondary schooling made by some ethnic groups.[166] The evidence suggests that bilingual pupils who do gain fluency in language outperform their monolingual peers.[167] A report by the Office for Standards in Education in the UK examining the achievement of Bangladeshi pupils places emphasis on the importance of increasing language fluency as a driver for overall improvements in educational attainment.[168]

4.7 Expectations and Aspirations

A recurring theme emerging from the OSI questionnaires and focus groups on educational experiences in several cities is the impact of teachers' expectations. Research shows that students respond to the expectations of their teachers and that such expectations can be mediated by factors such as ethnicity and race. Differing expectations manifest themselves in many subtle ways, from the kind and amount of feedback a student receives to the encouragement and opportunities for participation in

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[166] Wilson *et al.*, "The dynamics of school attainment".

[167] F. Demie and S. Strand "English language acquisition and educational attainment at the end of secondary school", *Educational Studies* 32(2), 2006, pp. 215–231.

[168] Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), *Achievement of Bangladeshi heritage pupils*, HMI 513, London, HMSO, 2004, available at: http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/content/download/1465/10377/file /Achievement%20of%20Bangladeshi%20heritage%20pupils%20(PDF%20format).pdf (accessed November 2009, hereafter, Ofsted, *Achievement of Bangladeshi heritage pupils*).

class.[169] Instances of teachers devaluing a pupil's aspirations resonate years later: "I had a schoolmate in year two. The teacher looks at his hands, he knew that his father was a bricklayer. Yeah, you have bricklayer's hands!"[170] Participants in Hamburg cited instances where the teacher's poor assessment of a pupil's ability was proved incorrect after being challenged by parents. In Berlin, over half the OSI focus group participants reported severe examples of discouragement. In one example, a female participant in a focus group recalled her niece, who wanted to improve on her grade three in German, being told by the teacher not to worry as this was a good grade for a Turkish girl. A Muslim teacher participating in a focus group in Marseille gave an example of how low expectations of pupils from her colleagues led them to mock her attempt at raising aspirations: "We were working on *Dead Poets Society*. Colleagues told me: You'd better show them *Rambo*. It's more their culture. I told them: it's not up to them. We must be ambitious for them. It's too easy to judge them ... I cannot accept that a child leaves school without being able to read and write. The school system should recover its ambition." Interviews with other stakeholders and focus group participants in Marseille revealed how individuals had to struggle at various moments of their education careers against unfavourable assignments imposed by the schools. Few took short cuts to arrive where they are. One has a quite unique trajectory: feeling his teachers' negative judgement of him, especially one maths teacher, he left the school without a diploma and developed a career outside institutions, ending up as an MP's assistant 10 years later. Many others felt that they had to struggle against the unconscious desire of teachers to keep them in their place.

An education official in Leicester cited the importance of high aspirations and leadership in raising standards in schools: "It is about complacency and leadership. I can show you data of similar children in schools in Leicester that are doing well. I think what undermines Leicester is a poverty of aspiration: you have to have aspiration as a city and ambition as a city, you have to encourage aspiration in communities and aspiration in individuals." The official argued that leadership and higher aspiration for the city were in part responsible for its improved educational achievements in recent years.

As mentioned earlier, low expectations can be critical in selective systems when decisions are made about the educational path a pupil should pursue. In the

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[169] See Heckmann, "Education and the Integration of Migrants", p. 21. See also: J. E. Farley, *Majority – Minority Relations*, 5th edition, Upper Saddle River, Pearson Prentice Hall, Schofield, 2005 (hereafter, Farley, *Majority-Minority Relations*); Janet Ward, "Migration Background, Minority – Group Membership and Academic Achievement. Research Evidence from Social, Educational and Developmental Psychology", *AKI Research Review* 5, 2006; and Peter A. J. Stevens, "Researching Race/Ethnicity and Educational Inequality in English Secondary Schools: A Critical Review of the Research Literature Between 1980 and 2005", *Review of Educational Research* Vol.77, No 2, 2006, pp. 147–185.

[170] OSI Focus Group, Marseille.

Netherlands, the recommendations made by teachers before the CITO[171] test was taken (compared with pupils' achievement in the test) shows that unlike "native" pupils, the advice to non-native children is more likely to be to pursue lower level qualifications than their actual test score implies. In France, 39 per cent of parents of pupils of North African background challenged the teachers' recommendations for the schooling appropriate for their children.[172]

4.8 Discrimination

Discrimination by teachers emerged as an important issue in several cities. There were examples of teachers ridiculing Islam, laughing about religious obligations such as fasting and being unable to cope with culturally diverse classrooms. In the OSI survey, 6 per cent of Muslim respondents reported experiencing religious discrimination from school in the previous 12 months.

Table 60. Location of religious discrimination – school (H8)

	Muslim	Non-Muslim	Total
A local school	6.4%	1.4%	
Total count	70	15	85

Source: Open Society Institute data

However, once controlled for country of birth and gender it is found that a higher proportion of European-born Muslim male respondents (10 per cent) reported discrimination in schools, compared with Muslim women or Muslim respondents born abroad.[173]

In Germany, the largest number of complaints received by the anti-discrimination association, the ADNB, (Anti Discrimination Network Berlin) concern education. In the Berlin OSI focus group, almost all participants reported a culture of low aspirations and discouragement by teachers grounded in assumptions and stereotypes about students based on their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. One OSI focus group participant in Antwerp recalled an incident which led his son Osama to come "running home in tears". The young boy was told by his schoolteacher that he would "feel humiliated" if he had the name Osama.

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[171] CITO (*Cititoets*): A test administered by a vast majority of Dutch elementary schools (ages 4-12) determining what kind of secondary education pupils will follow. The level of education to be undertaken is also determined by teachers' recommendations of pupils' ability.

[172] OSI, *At Home in Europe: Muslims in Paris,* forthcoming (hereafter, OSI, *At Home in Europe: Muslims in Paris*).

[173] See Table 61. in Annex 2 for breakdown of data.

There are some indications that the situation is improving. In general, discrimination was attributed more to older teachers who were not used to the multicultural diversity found in these cities. Younger focus-group participants, those who had recently left school, were more positive about their experiences than older participants. There was, nevertheless, support for increased training for teachers in managing and teaching in multicultural schools. Germany, for example, provides intercultural education as part of teacher training, but this is optional and therefore rarely taken up.

4.9 Valuing and Respecting Identities

The extent to which schools and the education system value a person's sense of self and identity can affect their self-confidence and attitude towards education.[174] The ways in which schools respond to the religious, ethnic and linguistic aspects of a young person's identity is important. There are examples across the 11 cities of schools seeking to develop and work with the cultural heritage of their students. In several colleges in Marseille, there are special bilingual streams which allow students to learn Arabic in parallel with another modern language like English. In Leicester, education officials see bilingualism as an asset; they value students' ability to understand and pick up more than one language as something positive.

Acknowledgement of and respect for religious identities remains controversial across the cities, especially in states where public institutions are expected to retain a separation between religion and the state. What constitutes the right amount of accommodation is mediated by notions of neutrality and the extent to which there is recognition that many existing educational practices are of course shaped by dominant Christian cultural norms. In the OSI survey, a majority of both Muslim and non-Muslim respondents said that schools were doing the right amount to respect different religious customs.

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[174] Farley, *Majority – Minority Relations.*

Table 62. Do schools respect different religious customs? (G4)

		Muslim	Non-Muslim	Total
Too much		2.9%	7.7%	5.3%
About right		48.9%	49.7%	49.3%
Too little		31.9%	15.2%	23.6%
Don't know		16.3%	27.4%	21.8%
Total	**Per cent**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
	Count	**1110**	**1088**	**2198**

Source: Open Society Institute data

Non-Muslim respondents were more likely to say schools were doing "too much", while Muslims were more likely say that schools were doing "too little". In Berlin, for example, practices such as allowing Muslim students time off for religious holidays were approved by those who felt that the schools were respecting the religious needs of pupils but criticised by those who thought the schools were doing too much. In Marseille, the director of a Centre-south *lycée*, aware of the tradition of *laïcité*, argued for schools to develop an "open *laïcité*": He argues:

> state schools [...] have much to do to come back to the values they previously had, the struggle for an open *laïcité*, which allows that pupils live together while respecting their faith. With Islam, religious matters have come back in the debate very strongly, due to the Islamic presence – I am talking of France globally. Now, our schools are sterilised at all levels. It is a kind of free-of-cost standardisation.[175]

In some Catholic schools in the Centre-North of Marseille, 80–90 per cent of pupils are from Muslim families, mainly of North African and more recently of Comorian origin. Parents find that these state-funded Catholic schools provide a good model of maintaining *laïcité* while respecting the faith and religion of students and parents. They may hold talks on religions and religious signs are visible in parts of the school. Some heads even send Eid cards to Muslim parents. The Institute for Science and Theology of Religions (ISTR) also provides training sessions on Islam to volunteers and a university diploma was planned to open in autumn 2009. One of the Roman Catholic

[175] Yves Rollin, director of a lycée, at the debate organised by the Second Chance School on "Religion in the North district", Marseilles, 23 April 2009. Mr. Rollin is also one of the leaders of a French union of school directors, "Education et devenir".

colleges has opened a bilingual Arabic-English first form (16 pupils were enrolled in 2008–2009).

An English teacher and NGO activist of Algerian descent says that he feels bitter at the way the "affair of the veil" was managed in 2003. He perceives it as a citizen anxious not to burden the future:

> I found it was a very aggressive period towards Muslims: a time when racists could find an excuse to have it their own way. It was a time to categorise: the good ones (SOS Racisme), the bad ones (the wild guys). I took part in many debates. I'll outline the case of a young child whose mother has been excluded from school: what will these girls convey to their children? They will have nothing positive to say about France. Resentment will flow from them to their children. It is very clear to me that there will be consequences for those for whom it was traumatic. It is devastating for those who could not maintain a distance.[176]

In some cities, greater recognition of religious and cultural identities extends to the content of the education curriculum. In Berlin, an integration official argued for greater recognition of the contribution of migrants and Muslim communities as well as Islam to German and European society. In the UK, in Leicester, the local council has partnered with the Schools Development Support Agency (SDSA) to help produce material that is specific to Islam and Muslims. The SDSA supports the development of the Curriculum Reflecting the Experiences of African Caribbean and Muslim Pupils (CREAM), a project that looks at the extent and quality of materials reflecting the experiences of Muslim and African Caribbean pupils that could be used by mainstream schools in the national curriculum. The Comenius Lyceum in Slotervaart, Amsterdam, teaches Arabic as an optional subject.

In many of the cities, schools retain autonomy and discretion in deciding how to respond to the needs of Muslim pupils. In focus groups, however, Muslim parents suggest that the absence of a general policy or minimum standards on accommodation of religious practices makes it harder for them to make decisions about which school to choose for their children. It also increases the potential for segregation, as some Muslim parents are more likely to choose the schools that are more accommodating. In Amsterdam, the mayor of Slotervaart district linked the lack of accommodation of the needs of Muslim pupils by schools with the increased support for Islamic schools.

Whether female students and teachers should be permitted to wear the *hijab*[177] remains the centre of controversy in several cities. In Berlin, half of non-Muslim OSI respondents who wanted schools to show greater respect for religion criticised the ban

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[176] OSI stakeholder interview, Marseille.

[177] *Hijab* is the Arabic word for a headscarf worn by Muslim women concealing the hair and neck and usually covers the face.

on teachers wearing a headscarf as a sign of exclusion and stereotyping. The majority of Muslim OSI respondents in Berlin felt that the needs of Muslim pupils were not respected: "In secondary school, we had a teacher who was extremely xenophobic. He treated the girls with headscarves especially badly and told them, they should dress like Germans and adapt." A Muslim mother in Rotterdam recalled how her daughter "had to change four schools because of her scarf. Wherever we went, the teachers said, 'We accept it, but the principal doesn't want it.'"

The OSI research finds a wide range of practice on how to deal with religious holidays. Some schools allow pupils the day off, others celebrate these as part of the school community. In Marseille, being absent from school for the religious festival at the end of Ramadan is seen as legitimate. Furthermore, some schools in Marseille, in acknowledgement of pupils who are fasting, repay lunch charges to families where the children are not eating their lunch during the month. Other issues concerning the accommodation of religious and cultural needs that were raised during focus group discussions include provision of *halal* food and the organisation of swimming classes. In Leicester, the Islam and Education Network, a group of Muslim and non-Muslim education professionals, has produced a booklet providing advice and guidance to schools and colleges on how to engage with Muslim communities and address issues such as physical education, music, drama, art, Ramadan, dress, visiting places of worship and prayer.

The teaching of Islam is also an area where cities are looking at a variety of different approaches. In the Netherlands, there is an official curriculum on Islam that is available for schools to use if they wish to do so. The materials are adapted to the needs of different primary-school years and cover topics such as the life of Mohammed and religious customs and practices. In Antwerp, public schools are required by law to provide a religious course on Islam although this does not extend to Catholic schools, which educate around 65 per cent of schoolchildren in Belgium.

Having a teaching staff that is more diverse and thus better reflects the diversity of the local population can also support students' confidence and identity by providing positive role models that they relate to. Research suggests that the complete absence of minority teachers harms the self-image and self-esteem of minority pupils. The need for more teachers of minority backgrounds was identified as an important priority in several focus groups and in interviews with education officials. Teachers who share the background of pupils can provide an important bridge for understanding between schools, pupils and schools. However, the interviews also suggested that in some instances such teachers have to be careful navigating these different relationships. In Marseille a teacher was accused of *communautarisme*[178] by his colleagues because he had welcomed in the computer class pupils who were waiting outside at lunchtime

[178] *"Communautarisme"* is a French term to describe self-segregation of communities based on religious, ethnic or other identities.

during Ramadan: "because I was the 'Arab teacher' who took the Arab pupils with him during the month of Ramadan".

4.10 The Role of Parents

After a comprehensive review of the research evidence on the impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupils' achievement and adjustment, Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) conclude that their "most important finding" is on the impact of "parental involvement in the form of 'at-home good parenting' on children's achievement and adjustment, which remains significant, even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation".[179] This is consistent with findings from the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) longitudinal study, which suggests that having a quality at-home learning environment is more important than socio-economic background factors: "what parents do is more important than who they are".[180] Other forms of support, such as school contact, while important, do not have the same level of impact as "at-home good parenting". In fact, for primary-school pupils, differences in parental support at home have a greater impact on their ability than variation in the quality of schools. Furthermore, "the scale of the impact is evident across all social classes and all ethnic groups". They find that levels of parental involvement differ by social class, poverty and health and also by the extent to which parents feel confident in fulfilling this role.[181]

Discussion in OSI focus groups and with education stakeholders indicates that parents who are migrants, because of their limited experience of any education or schooling combined with lack of familiarity with the educational system and difficulties with the language, feel intimidated in meetings with school officials. This lack of familiarity and confidence is sometimes misinterpreted by schools: "Fathers and mothers are barely speaking German, because they are working hard and therefore have no time to develop themselves. They don't come to such gatherings. The teacher then gets the impression that they are not at all interested in school."[182] Schools are viewed by parents without the skills and experiences needed to negotiate them as spaces of vulnerability and insecurity which present risks of discrimination.[183] Schools can be proactive in addressing parents' apprehensions and fears. In Berlin, parents' cafes

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179 C. Desforges, and A. Abouchaar, *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment: A Literature Review,* DfES Research Report 433, Department for Education and Skills, London, 2003 (hereafter, Desforges & Abouchaar, *The Impact of Parental Involvement*).

180 Sylva *et al., Effective provision of pre-school education.*

181 Desforges & Abouchaar, *The Impact of Parental Involvement.*

182 OSI focus group participant, Berlin.

183 See G. Crozier, and J. Davies, "Hard to Reach parents or hard to reach schools? A discussion of home school relations with particular reference to Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents", *British Education Research Journal* Vol. 33, No. 3, 2007, pp. 295–313.

(*Elterncafes*) have been created to provide a less formal atmosphere where parents and teachers can meet to get to know each other better. In the UK, the Office for Standards in Education has found that "effective work by schools, pursued with persistence and ingenuity, often over a long period, created a growing sense of partnership, based on better understanding between school, families and local communities". It identified examples of good practice in supporting parents to overcome these barriers. It noted, in particular, the role of bilingual home–school liaison officers and bilingual staff visiting homes and running family learning programmes in schools and local communities:

> The project utilises laptop computers to support women from Pakistan and Bangladesh and their families – plus some of the fathers – who need, essentially, to learn English. The laptops are available for use in parents' rooms in schools, and participants are encouraged to tell their own stories, including researching their families. It is planned to use the finished books with children and to make available the opportunity for participants to progress to other local provision as their children move from primary to secondary school, or from secondary school to college. This initiative has had an encouraging start.[184]

Other initiatives noted in the report include setting up City Learning Centres that create spaces in which pupils can do their after-school homework with access to resources not available at home.

Outreach initiatives are not just needed for parents but also for some young people. In Amsterdam, the education and social services have developed an innovative outreach programme for young pupils considered to be at risk of falling out of the education system. Under this programme so called "8 to 8" coaches provide advice, support and direction to pupils from 8 am to 8 pm. The pilot involved 144 young people, including 100 of Moroccan background, and cost around €7,000 per pupil per year. The outcome from the pilot suggests that those involved got better control of their lives and their futures. Other initiatives include weekend academies that provide homework supervision, social skills training and leisure activities for young people. Campus New West is involved with developing career aspirations through work placements, mentoring and coaches. Educational mentoring is also provided by the White Tulip Foundation, which was set up by young university students from ethnic minorities.

Structural changes are being made to the educational system in Rotterdam to address the problem of the high dropout rate in schools. New "neighbourhood schools "are being introduced aimed at young people under the age of 23 with no qualifications. The schools are to provide extensive care and support, including the development of social skills and work experience. The pilot for this is running from 2009 to 2011. They are also developing "top schools", which will allow progression for those who do not make it to the highest level of a school but are likely to be able to do well academically over time.

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[184] Ofsted, *Achievement of Bangladeshi heritage pupils,* pp. 21–22.

4.11 Key Findings

The educational achievement of minorities is mixed. In some countries, once socio-economic background is taken into account, minorities do well. There are indications that for some Muslims, religion plays an important role in supporting and encouraging education. Parental support, particularly in the early years, is also a strong predictor of future educational achievement. School systems with early selection appear to disadvantage pupils from ethnic-minority groups as they are tested and selected too early in their educational careers. Across all cities, there is increasing recognition of the importance of pre-school education in ensuring that pupils from minority and other disadvantaged backgrounds do not start formal schooling at a disadvantage. Projects are being initiated that find ways to combine support for young children with programmes that encourage parental involvement in learning.

A desire for more ethnically mixed schools emerged consistently and strongly in the focus group discussions involving parents across the different cities. Parents were anxious about the adverse impact of segregation on their children's education and prospects. The challenge of policymakers is to find ways to overcome segregation, as this is often a consequence of a mixture of residential settlement patterns combined with the exercise of parental and school choice.

Some pupils continue to suffer racism and prejudice at schools and are confronted by low expectations from teachers. Teachers need appropriate training and support to ensure that they can be effective in the increasingly ethnically and religiously diverse classrooms. At the local level, many schools are responding positively to the needs of Muslim pupils and are finding imaginative ways to work positively with their cultural heritage.