

Turkey Visit - March 2015

I found it very interesting visiting the school in Gueshir, Turkey. The school has been solely set up for primary school aged children, who have left their country of birth under difficult circumstances. Essentially a refugee school. The circumstances are usually related to war in their country of birth. The children were from Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kurdish children. From the facial features of the children it was evident they were from many diverse and different countries and cultures.

The computers at the school were quite basic and I'm not sure there is a computer in every class room. All the teachers (I think about 7 or 8), 2 caretakers and a couple of assistance were also in this presentation. Hence all the children were playing outside or in the corridors, since no classes were running and our visit was a 'big' event for them and the whole school!

With typical Eastern hospitality a couple of children came in with Turkish delight and Turkish biscuits, also they produced some rose water for us to wash our hands with.

The teacher gave a talk about the school and discussed the difficulties they have with regards the different languages the children arrive with. I think the teachers teach the basic Turkish curriculum. Which is the Turkish language, maths and social studies for primary school children. The Turkish language is one of their priorities to help the children communicate more effectively with each other and with the teachers. Since the children are from so many different countries, they have many different mother tongues. Which adds another level of difficulty for the teachers trying to teach other subject such as maths etc. The many languages are Arabic, Farsi, Armenian and Kurdish language. However there are at least 5 different languages. But the teachers have some basic Farsi and Arabic and also they encourage the children to speak there own mother tongue by singing their own national songs. This was demonstrated to us when we walked around the classrooms and the children sang some songs to us. Entertaining and also heart warming to see that the teachers

go to so much effort to ensure that the children remember their own language and culture.

The teachers know this to be a difficult situation; the children and their families do not necessarily stay in the neighbouring town for many years. Typically no longer than four years. So schooling for some families does not appear to be a priority. The teachers lamented that the school was used as a child minder service for the families who sent the children to school when taking care of the children became too much for them at home. The children are delivered to the school via a school bus, provided by the Turkish government. The schoolchildren are also provided with clothes, shoes, trainers and books etc, by the Turkish government.

By providing new computers to this school (both for the teachers and children) the teachers feel that the children would attend the school more regularly and the teachers would have better facilities to teach the children. The school does need funding to improve it in others ways too, such as to have proper central heating. Currently a hot stove central heating system runs through the school. Very hot and a health and safety hazard as there is no barrier around the central heating system and children could quite easily touch it or fall onto it. We did not see if they have a canteen facility here, so do not know who provided the children with meals or whether they bought their own. Because of the refugee status of the school a lot of help is provided by the Turkish government.

Back in the UK, computing skills at a young age are encouraged. Speaking to teacher friends, some primary school children in the UK are encouraged to blog, learning to make simple games and writing programmes, and do animation also. This is being rolled out to other schools in the UK.

Regardless if the refugee children stay to complete their education in Turkey or in other countries, the computing skills they could learn while they are in Turkey will be invaluable to them and will be a life skill.

Having picked up my own computing skills 'on the job' rather than attending a computing course it has made me realise how important it is having these skills, as

today's society runs on having these skills and being able to use the internet for banking, booking hotels and flights and paying bills, communicating via social media or Skyping etc, and more importantly not being afraid to access such websites and access information this way. It has made me realise that I should not take these skills for granted, nor be blase about my skills. More importantly it has also made me realise that there is always more for me to learn. The technology era we currently live is constantly moving forward and becoming even more advanced!!

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