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# The Educational Status of Turks in Minority Schools: A Qualitative Exploration in Western Thrace

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## Abstract

The main purpose of this research is to address the educational status of Turks living in Western Thrace in minority schools. After the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye, the Thrace region was divided into East and West, with Western Thrace now covering parts of Greece and Bulgaria. Around 150,000 Turks live in this region, facing social challenges, particularly in education. This research examines the problems experienced by Turks in minority education, the struggles in the process and its effects. The research is qualitative and designed with a phenomenological pattern. The study group comprises 13 participants selected through the maximum sampling method. The selection criteria for participants included: completion of primary and secondary education in minority schools in Greece, pursuit of higher education in Türkiye, and experience in teaching or working in a Greek minority school. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview form, with interviews recorded and analyzed using content analysis. The prominent conclusions are as follows: There are cultural problems in the education of Turkish minorities in Greece and there are legal obstacles to solution; there has been a struggle on this issue for years, there have been periodic improvements, but the fundamental problems still continue; it has been seen that many people, such as Dr. Sadık Ahmet, pioneered civil initiatives and that the initiatives had positive and negative effects. In conclusion, this research highlights the ongoing challenges faced by the Turkish minority in Western Thrace regarding their education. Despite periodic improvements and civil initiatives, fundamental problems persist due to cultural barriers and legal restrictions. The findings emphasize the need for continued efforts to address these issues and propose solutions to improve minority education in Greece. It is recommended that legal and educational reforms be

implemented to address the challenges faced by the Turkish minority in Western Thrace, ensuring equal and improved access to quality education.

**Keywords:** Dr. Sadık Ahmet, Education, Greece, Turkish minorities, Western Thrace

## 1. Introduction

When the Republic of Türkiye was established after the Ottoman Empire, the Thrace region was divided into east and west. Western Thrace is considered a region covering some provinces of Greece and Bulgaria. Around 150,000 Turks live in this region. Although the right to exchange was granted at the end of the war in this region, some Turkish citizens continued their lives by not leaving the region. There are some social problems faced by Turks living under the flag of another country in Western Thrace. The most important of these problems is in the field of education. Minority education in Western Thrace is determined within the framework of international and bilateral agreements, especially articles 40 and 41 in the section containing the regulations regarding minorities in the Treaty of Lausanne. In recent years, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has made some policy changes regarding the education of minority people living in Europe. Especially since the 1990s, this change policy has been implemented in Greece and although some improvements have been made, it is known that some chronic problems continue.

Western Thrace, whose borders were drawn by the Lausanne Peace Treaty, is in the northwestern part of Greece; it is separated from the Macedonia region by the Meriç River in the east and the Mesta-Karasu Rivers in the west. It is separated from Bulgaria by the Rhodope Mountains from the north and surrounded by the Aegean Sea from the south (İsmail, 2012). The Western Thrace region was left to Greece with the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty. According to the provisions of this agreement, Turks living in the region are Greek citizens and have official minority status. The society, which bears the characteristics of the Turkish socio-cultural structure, has continued its existence until today with a population of around 150 thousand (Akyüz, 2007). With the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from the Balkans, a significant Turkish minority was left behind. Although the rights of the Turkish minority were secured by bilateral and multilateral agreements, various assimilation policies were implemented against the Turkish minority here and the Turkish population was forced to migrate (Özlem, 2008).

The Treaty of Athens, signed in 1913, is the first guarantee of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority in the field of education. In Article 15 of Protocol No. 3 of this Treaty, private schools for Muslims are recognized and it is accepted that these schools will provide education in Turkish and their sources of income will be respected. After the Treaty of Athens, articles 8 and 9 of the Greek Treaty of Sèvres signed in 1920 and articles 40 and 41 of the Treaty of Lausanne signed in 1923 grant broad rights to minorities regarding education. While Article 8 of the Greek Treaty of Sèvres and Article 40 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty granted the Muslim minority the right to open, manage and supervise schools where they can use their own language freely, according to Articles 9 and 41 of the same treaties, they also have the right to establish their own schools in regions where Muslims are present in significant numbers. The Muslim Turkish minority in Western Thrace continues to face challenges in educational resource allocation despite formal recognition of their

language rights through international agreements. The implementation of bilingual education programs and the distribution of funds from local educational budgets remain problematic areas (Kalogeropoulos & Deligianni, 2023). The Lausanne Peace Treaty provides the Turks of Western Thrace with the right to establish all kinds of schools and similar educational and training institutions at their own expense, and to manage and supervise these institutions (Ergün, 2023).

The right of the Muslim-Turkish minority in Western Thrace to establish, manage and supervise their own schools and to use their own native language in these schools is guaranteed by Additional Protocol No. 3 to the Treaty of Athens, the Treaty for the Protection of Minorities in Greece and the Lausanne Peace Treaty, which are valid today. Apart from these agreements, these rights of the minority have been internationally guaranteed in many documents to which Greece is a party, especially the United Nations (UN) and Council of Europe (EC) agreements and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) documents (Dayioğlu, 2021). Greece violated human rights and restricted fundamental rights and freedoms in Western Thrace, disregarding both bilateral and international agreements and conventions. Although all religious, political and social rights of the minority were guaranteed, this was not the case in practice. In this context, the Western Thrace Turkish minority was forced to deal with many problems in the social and political arena. Even though some superficial developments seem to have been achieved today, the restrictions and damaging policies on the Western Thrace Turkish minority still continue (İsmail, 2012).

Minority education in the Thrace region of Greece is under the pressure of many and various problems that have accumulated over the years. The status and management principles of minority education have undergone significant changes as a result of interventions that are an extension of the political, social and economic conditions and problems dominating the region over time. As a result, an extremely complex body of legislation has emerged that is contradictory within itself and does not comply with the delicate balances established by agreements. The current distorted structure of minority education turns minority children, who are citizens of the European Union as well as Greece, into inadequate and incompatible second-class citizens (Burma, 2008). Although remedial steps were taken by the Greek government regarding the Turkish minority, associations and schools could not use the term 'Turkish' in their names, Turkish newspapers and books could not be brought from Türkiye to Western Thrace, hundreds of Turks were expelled from Greek citizenship, they were discriminated against in employment and services, and their lands were confiscated.

Except for part of the 1930s and the first half of the 1950s, Greece engaged in practices that violated the rights of the minority on the issue. Violations increased especially during periods when Türkiye-Greece relations deteriorated due to the Cyprus issue. In this context, decisions were taken to eliminate the autonomy of minority schools and reduce the number of schools, SÖPA graduate teachers were appointed instead of trained teachers, the number of teachers was tried to be restricted, and textbooks were not allowed to be imported from Türkiye for many years. During periods when bilateral relations were tense, Türkiye took some measures restricting the educational rights of the Greek minority in the country, causing these problems to become increasingly severe (Dayioğlu, 2021). Greece's oppression and human rights violations on the Turkish minority living in the region continue today. The Western Thrace Turkish minority faces many human rights violations, from the denial of its identity and existence to discrimination in education, deprivation of citizenship, and violations of religious freedoms (Keyvan, 2012).

Three types of teachers work in schools providing minority education in Western Thrace. These are: untrained teachers, trained teachers and teachers who graduated from the Thessaloniki Special Pedagogical Institute (SÖPA) (Keyvan, 2012). The last legal text, which includes a comprehensive regulation that completely eliminates the autonomous nature of the Turkish Minority schools in Western Thrace and puts these schools under the complete control of the Greek State, is numbered 694/1977, which was issued in 1977 following the general education reform carried out in 1976 following the Colonels' Junta and determines the current status of minority schools. It is the "Law Concerning Minority Schools of the Muslim Minority in Western Thrace". The "Law on Issues Related to Minority Schools and the Teaching and Supervisory Staff of the Thessaloniki Private Pedagogical Academy" numbered 695/1977, which was enacted on the same date with this law, is very important. In the 7th paragraph of Article 3 of this law, it is specifically stated that graduates of Thessaloniki Private Pedagogical Academy will be preferred in teacher appointments. Thus, the authority of school councils in this area is eliminated. As a result of this legal basis, in the process of appointing teachers to minority primary schools, it has become impossible for teachers graduated from the Faculty of Education in Türkiye to work in minority schools. In this way, teachers graduated from Thessaloniki Private Pedagogical Academy constitute the majority in number in minority primary schools (Ahmet, 2006).

As a result of its policy, Greece has taken important steps to distance the Muslim Turkish minorities in Western Thrace from their own customs and traditions. This situation has caused the minority to become an extremely introverted society in the past years. The minority community has started to form a new structure that strives against the difficulties and troubles experienced, and in addition to working to identify the problems and their causes, it has established some non-governmental organizations, especially in the field of education (Ntoukiantzi, 2022). Today, policies that are a continuation of the restrictions imposed on the Western Thrace Turkish Minority's right to education continue. Greece's recent practice is to reduce the number of minority schools by merging or closing them. The number of primary schools for the Turkish minority, which was 231 in 1995, was reduced to 115 in 2020, citing reasons such as savings and lack of students (Ouzoungiol & Asal, 2021).

While Greece increased the compulsory primary education to 9 years, it kept the compulsory education for Western Thrace Turks at 6 years, again showing an example of a practice contrary to the Greek Constitution and the Lausanne Peace Treaty. The fact that children belonging to the Western Thrace Turkish Minority are also Greek citizens is important in terms of showing the double standards and underlying thought in this practice. Monolingual Greek schools were opened in villages where only the Turkish minority lived, and restrictions and oppressive practices regarding the minority's access to their right to education continued increasingly (Cin, 2009).

It is extremely important for people belonging to a minority group to have the right to establish, manage and supervise their own education and training institutions and to use their native language in these institutions in order to protect the identity of the group in question. For this reason, regulations to protect this right have been included in many international documents, and responsibilities have been assigned to the signatory states in this regard. The right to education of the Muslim-Turkish minority in Western Thrace is also guaranteed by various international agreements and conventions. However, Greece has followed a policy that violates the rights of the minority in this regard, except for some exceptional periods (Dayioğlu, 2021). Although education for minorities here is bilingual, students can neither learn Turkish nor Greek at

a sufficient level. In addition, since this six-year education is not sufficient for students who will continue to secondary school, students have difficulty in secondary school and therefore many of them have to leave their education unfinished (Ismail, 2012). It has been determined that the proficiency levels of written expression skills of Turkish Minority students in Greece in Greek, their second language, are quite low (Hacıpaşaoğlu, 2019).

The Turkish minority living in the Western Thrace region of Greece receives education in their native language in accordance with the articles of the Treaty of Lausanne regarding minorities. This education is provided in bilingual minority schools in the region. These schools, which were previously autonomous, have now lost this quality due to the laws passed over the years. Turks living in the region can send their children to bilingual minority schools or to public schools that provide education only in Greek. The right to education in the mother tongue is recognized only for Turks living in Western Thrace. Turks living in other regions of Greece cannot benefit from this right (Ahmet, 2006). The Greek state does not care about improving the quality of education in minority schools that provide bilingual education, rejects the opening of new minority educational institutions, and does not respond to the minority's demands regarding the opening of minority kindergartens that provide bilingual education, which is of great importance for the development of children (Hacıpaşaoğlu, 2019).

Although Greece has signed and ratified many bilateral and international agreements on the protection of the language rights of the Turkish minority, various fundamental problems regarding the survival of the Turkish language in all three sub-regions of Western Thrace still continue (Hüseynoğlu, 2015). The educational results achieved in Minority schools in Thrace have always been bad. The minority school has been stagnating for many years and seems very difficult to improve substantially, despite the efforts made by the "Programme for the Education of Minority Children in Thrace" for the Greek language curriculum and the introduction of new books for the Turkish curriculum in 2000, after decades of lack of books (Dragona, 2014).

There are no bilingual kindergartens in Western Thrace. In settlements where Turkish and Greek populations are mixed, parents who want to be from a minority send their children to the same kindergartens with Greek children. In settlements where Turks are concentrated, kindergartens that do not provide education in their native language, where only Turkish children attend, are also active. Learning and teaching materials in the field of preschool education are in Greek and teachers do not speak Turkish. It is clear that deprivation of children's mother tongue education during the most sensitive period of linguistic development has great educational consequences (Kelağa Ahmet, 2007). The low quality of education in minority schools is due to many reasons, such as not enough Turkish and Greek being taught and the children graduating from these schools being insufficient to continue to university. In addition, the fact that the Greek government grants special privileges to minority members who prefer Greek schools and provides encouraging facilities for transferring to university causes some minority families not to choose schools that provide Turkish education (Paçaman, 2011).

During the junta of John Metaksa in Greece, the education and training of the Muslim Turkish minority was seriously limited and prevented. All authorities regarding the education and training of minority schools are concentrated in the hands of the Greek Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs. Additionally, during this period, great importance was given to teaching the Greek language in Turkish minority schools. Since then, restrictions and restrictions

contrary to agreements and international law have continued in Greece, a member of the European Union (Cin, 2011).

It can be said that Turks living in the Western Thrace region are still exposed to discriminatory policies of Greece. The policies followed by Greece, especially regarding education, aim to ignore the identity of the Turkish people living in the Western Thrace region. Restricting the Turkish language of education day by day, making the Greek language of education more visible, and not adequately supporting students studying in Türkiye give an idea about Greece's bad attitude towards Turkish elements (Giasar, 2022). Many chronic problems of the Muslim Turkish minority living in the Western Thrace region in the social, political and economic fields as well as in the educational field are still waiting for solutions in the region (Kulalı, 2015).

It has been observed that the Turkish minority in Western Thrace preferred to act by adhering to the democratic understanding in the struggle for rights. Especially as a result of the effective work of non-governmental organizations, the minority tried to make its voice heard more with the power of acting together. However, these attempts of the minority were insufficient in the face of the effective and stable assimilation policy that Greece has pursued since the Lausanne Peace Treaty (Baysal, 2013).

## **2. Research Methodology**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This study, which examined the educational status of Turkish minorities living in Western Thrace, led the researcher to conduct qualitative research due to the nature of the subject, which is more suitable for qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is defined as research in which qualitative information collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis are used and a qualitative process is followed to reveal perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic way in a natural environment (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In studies where the qualitative research process is planned, there is an effort to reach detailed and in-depth conclusions about the subject discussed. For this reason, the researcher must act like an explorer. During the process, the researcher supports the process with additional new questions and pays attention to the subjective opinions of individuals. The basis of qualitative research lies in the curiosity to discover a phenomenon and the researcher actually wants to learn this phenomenon. Qualitative research is a method that interprets and examines the research problem across different disciplines with a holistic perspective. The facts and events under research are considered in their own context and interpreted in terms of the meanings people attribute to them.

This research was conducted with the phenomenology pattern, one of the qualitative research methods. Phenomenology, one of the qualitative research methods, is a method that focuses on evaluating experience. Phenomenology is primarily about discovering and deeply examining the common meanings underlying a phenomenon, based on people's experiences (Miller, 2003). For this reason, in phenomenology, it is emphasized that there is a connection between the individuals experiencing the phenomenon and the phenomenon itself. Phenomenology examines individuals' experiences and how they make sense of their lives; to reveal the relationships between what happens and how individuals understand it. It is the most suitable qualitative research design for researchers who want to discover how people experience the essence of a particular phenomenon and examine common points among individuals.

In this research, the situation of Western Thrace Turks is discussed as a phenomenon. The pattern of this study was determined as phenomenology, as what this situation means for those who lived there and later came to Türkiye for higher education, how they evaluated this phenomenon, the problems they encountered, their thoughts about language, culture, ethnic belonging and their views on these phenomena were discussed as a whole.

## 2.2 Study group

In this study, it was aimed to determine the opinions and determinations of the participants on education, language, culture, ethnic, social, etc. issues of Western Thrace Turks. Purposive sampling method was used in the research. Purposive sampling is a type of non-random sampling that is used by the researcher to determine all possible similar situations of a certain and not easy to reach population (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

The sample of this study was determined based on the purposive sampling method, which is designed to capture in-depth perspectives from a specific and hard-to-reach population. Given the study's focus on the educational, linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and social issues of Western Thrace Turks, selecting a diverse group of participants with shared experiences ensures a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The use of homogeneous sampling within purposive sampling enhances the reliability of the data by focusing on individuals with similar backgrounds who can provide rich insights. Additionally, the inclusion of participants from various professional and educational backgrounds—students, teachers, and professionals—ensures that the research encompasses multiple perspectives, thus strengthening the validity and depth of the findings despite the limited sample size.

Within the scope of this research, interviews were held with 3 students who belonged to the Western Thrace Turkish Minority and studied at a university in Türkiye, 5 teachers, 1 nurse, 1 engineer, 1 worker and 1 participant from self-employment group. Demographic information about the participants in the study group is presented in the table below.

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>City of residence</b>
Teacher	Female	27	İskece
Student	Male	21	İskece
Teacher	Male	26	İskece
Worker	Male	27	İskece
Student	Female	20	İskece
Nurse	Female	26	Gümülcine
Engineer	Female	25	Gümülcine
Teacher	Female	31	İsviçre
-	Female	30	Gümülcine
Teacher	Female	38	Gümülcine
Self-employment	Male	43	Gümülcine
Student	Male	21	Gümülcine
Teacher	Female	31	Gümülcine

Within the scope of the research, an interview form consisting of two parts was prepared with people who studied in Western Thrace and studied at university in Türkiye. In the first part, the participants' personal information section includes questions such as gender, age, profession,

and where they live; in the other part, a semi-structured interview form prepared on the subject and consisting of 11 questions was used. In order to confirm the suitability and applicability of the questions in the prepared interview forms, the opinion of a faculty member specialized in the field of Educational Sciences at Siirt University was consulted. After obtaining expert opinion, interviews were held and data was obtained.

### **2.3. Data Collection**

In qualitative research, data are collected through interviews, observations and document analysis, etc. Semi-structured interview technique was used to collect the data of this research. In the semi-structured interview technique, the researcher prepares the questions in advance but provides partial flexibility to the participant during the interview. Depending on the flow of the interview, the researcher can ask extra questions to help the person express their answers more clearly and in detail. If the participant answered the questions in another question during the interview, the researcher may not ask these questions again. In the preparation of the interview questions developed by the researchers; principles such as the questions being easy to understand, not being multi-dimensional, and not directing the respondents to different topics are taken into consideration.

The interviews were conducted in a setting that ensured a comfortable and confidential environment for the participants, allowing them to express their views openly. The duration of each interview varied between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on the depth of the participant's responses and the need for follow-up questions. The interviews took place in the university office. To maintain consistency and reliability in data collection, all interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and later transcribed for analysis. The interview setting was carefully arranged to minimize distractions and ensure that participants felt at ease while discussing their experiences and perspectives on minority education, language, culture, and social issues.

### **2.4 Data Analysis Techniques**

The qualitative data obtained in the research were analyzed using the content analysis method. The main objective of employing this method is to systematically create categories and themes from the coded data, summarize the themes, tabulate them, and interpret them meaningfully. The fundamental process of content analysis involves coding, categorizing similar data within a conceptual framework, grouping them into relevant themes, and finally interpreting them in a coherent and comprehensible manner for the reader.

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, member checking was employed as a validation strategy. After the interviews were transcribed, the transcripts were shared with the participants to verify the accuracy of their statements and interpretations. This process helped eliminate potential misunderstandings or biases in data representation. Additionally, data saturation was taken into account during the data collection process. Interviews continued until no new themes or perspectives emerged, ensuring that the data reached a comprehensive and saturated level.

Furthermore, expert opinions were sought in the final stages of data interpretation, and necessary revisions were made based on expert feedback to enhance the validity and reliability of the research.



### 3. Results

The findings obtained in the research are presented respectively.

#### 3.1 The Difficulties of being a Turk in Western Thrace

Codes	Participants	Categories	Themes
Minority Rights(5)	P1, P3, P7, P9, P10	Ethnic identity issue	Issues related to minority status
Discrimination (9)	P1, P3, P4, P5,P7, P8, P9, P10, P14		
Double Standard (5)	P4, P7,P8, P10, P14		
Denial of Ethnic Identity (1)	P3		
Freedom of worship (2)	P2, P9	Socio-cultural problems	
Equality of opportunity and opportunity in education 6)	P4, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11		
Ethno-cultural characteristics (2)	P6, P13		

According to the participants' opinions about the difficulties of being a Turk in Western Thrace, subcategories "Ethnic identity problem" and "Socio-cultural problems" were created under the theme of minority situations. While ethnic identity problems related to minority status include minority rights, discrimination, double standards, and denial of ethnic identity, it is also seen that there are social-cultural themes such as the problem of worship, equality of opportunity and opportunity in education, and ethno-cultural characteristics due to minority status.

Regarding discrimination, one participant said;

*..."yes there is discrimination. They always put us in the background and give priority to Greek citizens everywhere" (P7)*

Another participant said about opportunity and equality in education:

*"Although living in Western Thrace has some advantages, it also has many difficulties. "We can see these difficulties both in the conditions in education and in the double standards we are exposed to in the workplace." (P4)*

Another participant regarding minority rights:

*"No matter where we are in the world, being a minority and living among the majority is not an easy situation. Being a Turk and carrying a Turkish identity is not an easy situation, especially in Western Thrace. Because Greece does not accept the minority living in Western Thrace as Turks. Therefore, we are not accepted as Turks in official places and many of our institutions are not accepted because they are Turkish. Many of our institutions and associations have been closed because they carry the word Turkish. We are treated as Muslims, a minority, by the Greek government. That's why we encounter some difficulties in daily life." (P3)*

One participant explained his opinion on ethno-cultural characteristics as follows:

*"I do not think that being a Turk in Western Thrace is a situation that will force you in your social life and human relations or cause you to encounter racism. In the state-human relationship, your values and rights that make you who you are decreasing in the long run. (P6)"*

One participant commented on double standards:

*"...Yes there is. First, we are always in the second-rate category. We are always one step behind the Greeks"(P8).*

When the above findings are evaluated, the Turks living in Western Thrace cannot properly use their minority rights granted to them by international agreements (Lausanne), cannot live their culture, are discriminated against by the applied systems, are recognized as a Muslim minority rather than ethnically Turkish, and have equal opportunities with Greek citizens in terms of education and culture. It is seen that they stated that they do not have the opportunities.

### 3.2 The Advantages and Disadvantages of Bilingual Education

Codes	Participants	Categories	Themes
Learning two languages at once (8)	P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P10, P11, P12	<b>Advantage status</b>	<b>Problems with the language of instruction</b>
Self-improvement (1)	P1		
Mental development (1)	P3		
Inability to learn both languages completely (12)	P1,P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P14	<b>Disadvantage status</b>	
Difficulty in teaching (4)	P1, P5, P6, P11		
Having problems with official transactions(1)	P3		
Contacting additional developers(4)	P6, P7, P8, P14		

In the advantage category of bilingual education, subcategories such as learning two languages, self-improvement and mental development were formed. Under the main theme of problems related to the language of education, subcategories such as not being able to fully capable in both languages, having difficulties in teaching, having problems in official work, and applying to additional developers were created in the disadvantage category.

Regarding the subcategory of learning two languages at once, one participant said;

*"The advantage of studying in a bilingual school is that you have the opportunity to learn another foreign language in addition to your mother tongue. The disadvantage is that since two languages are studied, both of them are somewhat incomplete." (P10)*

Another participant commented on the subcategory of applying to additional developers as follows:

*"Since the level of education is low, we cannot learn both languages fluently. When I look at the students now, almost all of them either hire private teachers or go to private teaching institutions." (P14)*

Western Thrace Turkish minority sees learning two languages at the same time as both an advantage and a disadvantage. Moreover, while they found multilingualism positive for self-improvement and mental development, they described not being able to fully capable in both languages, having problems in education, and therefore resorting to additional developers as a disadvantage.

### 3.3 Studying at a University in Türkiye after Receiving Basic Education in Western Thrace

Codes	Participants	Categories	Themes
Adaptation(3)	K1, K6, K14	Social harmony	Social cultural problems
Language (dialect) Difference(1)	K1		
Not Knowing Ethnic Identity(4)	K6, K7, K8, K14		
Missing Learnings(8)	K3, K4, K5, K6, K9, K11, K12, K14	Educational deficiencies	
Turkish Inadequacy(6)	K1, K2, K3, K5, K12, K14		
Difficulty in Teaching(5)	K6, K7, K9, K10, K13		

When we look at the participants' opinions about receiving higher education in Türkiye after receiving primary education in Western Thrace, we see that under the main theme of social cultural problems, under the category of social harmony, language difference, lack of awareness of ethnic identity. It is seen that under the category of educational deficiencies, subcategories such as incomplete learning and difficulties in teaching are formed.

One participant regarding not knowing ethnic identity:

*"When we look at it from the perspective of recognition of our identity; I am not disappointed that our identity as Western Thrace Turks is not widely known in other regions except the Marmara region. It was a bit sad to hear people say "I came from Greece" or "I came from the Western Thrace region of Greece" during the first meeting and they said "Oh, you're Greek then" and heard about Western Thrace Turks. Even though it was very rare, it was nice and unforgettable to encounter the question "Are you from Western Thrace Turks?" (P8)*

Another participant regarding language (dialect) differences:

*"As I said, I had difficulty adapting because I only studied Turkish in primary school. Because the Turkish spoken here and the Turkish we learned in Western Thrace were quite different from each other."(P1)*

Another participant regarding the inadequacy of Turkish,

*"I completed my education until high school in Western Thrace and I am studying at the university in Türkiye. The difficulties I experience are that my Turkish is not developed enough, that is, I think that the lessons we receive in Western Thrace and the Turkish spoken are not sufficient for education in Türkiye." (P5)*

One participant commented on missing learning:

*"When I went to university, I realized that my Turkish was poorer and that the education I received in Western Thrace was less complete in some courses. "I realized that I went to university with less knowledge" (P3)*

When the participant opinions were evaluated, the students stated that they had difficulties in education while studying in Türkiye due to adaptation, language (dialect) differences, lack of awareness of ethnic identity by Turkish citizens, incomplete learning in Greece, and that they had adaptation problems due to language deficiency.

### 3.4 The Reasons why University Education in Türkiye is Preferred Instead of SÖPA

Codes	Participants	Categories	Themes
Cultural relationship (1)	P1	Cultural reasons	Educational policies
Geographical closeness (1)	P9		
Quality education (8)	P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12	Instructional reasons	
Turkish education (2)	P6, P8		
Self-improvement (5)	P1, P6, P8, P9, P11	Greek education policy	
On recommendation (2)	P9		
SÖPA insufficiency (4)	P10, P14		

Under the main theme of education policies, cultural, educational reasons and Greek education policy categories were formed. A few participant opinions regarding the subcategories listed under these categories:

*"I think SÖPA is inadequate in terms of education. I saw that the training of some teachers who graduated from there and taught in primary schools was inadequate. I chose Trakya University Faculty of Education so that I could both learn the language of a country and improve myself culturally. Most importantly, I can say that I preferred Edirne, that is, Trakya University, because it is close to our Western Thrace culture." (P9),*

*"I love Türkiye very much and my friends who were studying there at that time and my relatives who lived there encouraged me. (P9),"*

### 3.5 The Presence of the Phrase "Minority School" in the Schools

Codes	Participants	Categories	Themes
Ethnic acceptance (11)	K1, K3, K5, K6, K7, K8, K9, K10, K11, K12, K14	Minority status	Ethnic affiliation
Proudful (5)	K1, K8, K9		
Discrimination (5)	K3, K5, K6, K13, K14	Inequality	

Under the main theme of the presence of a Western Thrace Turks Minority School, which they interpret as ethnic belonging, they categorize it as recognition as a minority and inequality.

Regarding Ethnic Acceptance and other subcategories;

*"On the one hand, it makes us feel that our existence is accepted, and on the other hand, it makes us feel that we have differences in religion, language and race" (P3),*

*"The presence of the phrase "minority school" in our schools does not give me a bad feeling" (P5),*

*"I would like to see the phrase TURKISH MINORITY SCHOOL" (P11)*

*"Seeing the phrase minority school creates a sense of belonging. There is an institution that represents our own society and belongs to us. This is a beautiful thing. There is no feeling of alienation during the school year, there is no fear of exclusion, there is sincerity, comfort and happiness." (P14).*

"Frankly, the phrase 'minority school' sounds good to me. Because it shows that the existence and unity of Western Thrace Turks continues." (K9)

When the findings are evaluated, the presence of the word "minority" in their schools does not pose a problem for Western Thrace Turks. On the contrary, in addition to seeing this as a form of ethnic acceptance, belonging and pride, some participants also see it as an indicator of the inequality against them in the country.

### 3.6 The Teachers Taking the Course Behave Differently due to their Turkish Identity

Codes	Participants	Categories	Themes
Equal Treatment (8)	P1, P4, P6, P9, P10, P11, P13, P14	Teacher behavior	Teacher-related problems
Discrimination (5)	P2, P3, P5, P7, P12		
Occasionally (1)	P8		

The category of teacher behavior was created under the main theme of teacher-related problems, which was created regarding the teachers who took their classes while studying in Western Thrace and discriminated against them due to their identities, and the categories of equal treatment and discrimination were created.

Regarding the equal treatment subcategory, participants expressed their opinions as follows:

"I don't think there is any Greek-Turkish tension in Western Thrace anymore. Yes, it may have happened in the past, but now a Greek teacher assigned to Western Thrace is a little surprised at the beginning of the process, but later realizes that we are a minority. During my education in Greece, no teacher treated me differently. I think social justice is achieved and efforts are made for it." (P1)

"Throughout my primary, secondary and high school education, I did not encounter any different behavior or heard a bad word from the Greek teachers who took my classes. Even when we meet Greek teachers outside, sometimes we can chat with the old sincerity." (P11)

"I have never seen any bad behavior from the Greek teachers who took my classes. Greek teachers were at least as interested as Turkish teachers were." (P14)

"Some of the Greek teachers who took my classes were racist towards us because we were Turkish. Some of them treated us very well. He did not discriminate between us because we were Turks, he loved everyone equally." (P2)

Another participant expressing his opinion regarding the discrimination subcategory:

"Of course they are treated differently. We experience discrimination from time to time. I think social justice is not provided." (P12)

### 3.7 Organizing Cultural Events at School

Codes	Participants	Categories	Themes
Restriction (5)	P1, P10, P12, P13, P14	Prevented	Ethno-cultural problems
School Facilities(2)	P2, P9		
Religious Event(1)	P3		
Cultural Events(4)	P4, P5, P6, P11	Supported	
Positive Response	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P11		

The answers given to the question of whether it is allowed to organize cultural events at school are under the main theme of ethno-cultural problems. Categories of prevention (subcategories: restriction, school facilities, religious activities) and support (cultural events, positive reaction) were created and the participants expressed their opinions as follows.

Participants' opinions about the sub-themes in the "prevention" category can be exemplified as follows:

*"Such events were not organized in minority schools. Therefore, participation is out of the question. But there were times when we would chat during the lessons, and then we would chat with the Greek teachers and try to learn and understand each other's culture. For example, they knew our lifestyle and customs more or less, and they asked questions during the conversation to understand us better. They would not give strange or humiliating reactions when asking questions or answering the questions we asked."* (P13)

*"No, I didn't."* (P10)

*"We could not hold our own cultural events in our school because our school was very small and there was no space to exhibit them and they did not offer us such an advantage. But I think they would respect us if we had done it".* (P9)

Participants' opinions about the sub-themes in the "support" category can be exemplified as follows:

*"Yes, we did activities at school that reflected our own cultural elements. The reactions were very positive"* (P5).

*"I have never had the opportunity to do such an event. If I had, I don't think I would have encountered a bad critical reaction".* (P2)

*"Yes, we organized events that included our own cultural elements, and the reactions were as good as I expected."* (P11)

### 3.8 Opinions about Dr. Sadik Ahmet

Codes	Participants	Categories	Themes
Case Man (5)	P2, P6, P9, P10, P14	Struggler	Social leader
Rights Defender (10)	P1, P2, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P13, P14		
Awareness (3)	P4, P11, P12		
Contribution to Education (9)	P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13, P14		

The opinions Western Thrace Turks about Dr. Sadik Ahmet are listed under the combative category under the main theme of social leader.

Participant opinions about the subcategories in the "Struggler" category are as follows:

*"I am grateful to Dr. Sadik Ahmet for what he did for us. I see a very brave Turkish hero, whose Turkism is fundamental, who fought at the expense of his life for us Turks. He played a major role in improving minority education rights. Without him, we would not be in this situation*

today. If we can comfortably study in Turkish schools, speak Turkish very easily and live comfortably among the Greek people, this is thanks to him." (P14)

"I think it helps that we are in such a comfortable and equal situation right now. He is an important politician who I believe would not be discriminated against if he were alive." (P1)

"The struggle made by Dr. Sadik Ahmet definitely contributed to education. I think it at least created awareness." (P6)

"We feel intense loyalty and gratitude to Dr. Sadik Ahmet. We understand his cause better every day, and we try to explain him and his cause at every moment. He contributed a lot to the rights and education of the Western Thrace minority." (P2)

"He is a great leader who defends minority rights to the end. Its place in us is very different. We were babies at that time, but what I learned from our elders always moves me. If he had lived for many years, the Turkish Minority would have been in a very different position because the struggle he fought during his lifetime was great. I remember him with respect, mercy and gratitude." (P11)

### 3.9 Who might be in the Western Thrace Struggle other than Dr. Sadik Ahmet

Codes	Participants	Categories	Themes
There is no one (10)	P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P13	Leader problem	Leader problem
Organizations and associations (1)	P3		
All public (1)	P4		
Elected Muftis (3)	P3, P12, P14		

When the subcategories (codes), categories and themes regarding who could be in the Western Thrace Struggle other than Dr. Sadik Ahmet were examined, the answer given by most of the participants was "Nobody." The opinions of some participants are as follows:

"Other than Dr. Sadik Ahmet, I cannot see anyone sincerely and sincerely trying to do something in this struggle. Even if they try, it cannot have a big or permanent effect." (P13)

"There was no one before or after him who defended and fought for Turkishness in Western Thrace as much as he did." (P8)

"We need to look at the struggle on every issue not just as names, but as a whole. The most important factor in this is the people who love Western Thrace and try to live there." (P4)

"Our Mufti Ibrahim Şerif was his traveling companion. I can feature it." (P14)

### 3.10 The Differences in Terms of Education in Western Thrace Compared to 20 years ago

Codes	Participants	Categories	Themes
Closing of Schools (5)	P1, P6, P11, P12, P14	State level decisions in education	Education
Insufficiency of School Building (1)	P3		
Education Quality (4)	P3, P4, P12, P14	Teacher-related	
Teacher Qualifications (2)	P2, P9		

Technology (1)	P5	problems	policies
Lesson Hours (4)	P7, P8, P12, P14	Instructional processes	
Textbooks (1)	P11		
Holiday (2)	P7, P8		

When the subcategories (codes), categories and themes regarding the differences in terms of education in Western Thrace compared to 20 years ago are examined, the subcategories of school closure and lack of school buildings are defined under the category of state level decisions in education. Under the category of teacher-related problems, education quality, teacher competencies, technology subcategories it is seen that subcategories such as class hours, textbooks, and holidays are clustered under the category of instructional processes.

Some participants' opinions who expressed their opinions under state level decisions in education and other categories;

*"I observe that there are very few minority primary schools now compared to twenty years ago, and they are becoming fewer and fewer."* (P1)

*"There is a difference; they are closing our schools every day. They reduce our lesson hours and reduce the quality of our education."* (P12).

*"I don't know how correct it would be to leave a question blank, but frankly I don't have a clear answer to this question. Since I continued my post-high school education in Türkiyey, I do not have detailed information about the changing process. All I can say is that in recent years, the number of primary schools closed in Turkish villages due to lack of students has been increasing."* (P6)

*"There is a difference between education twenty years ago and education now. 20 years ago, teachers bored students more and gave them homework all the time. But I think current students are more knowledgeable. Because everyone attends English, Greek and Turkish courses, they enter the school with more knowledge."* (P2)

*"As mentioned in the question, 20 years is a very long period and there are definitely differences. After all, technology, our mindsets are constantly changing factors."* (P5)

*"Yes there is. First of all, in our time, Friday was a holiday because it was a religious day, but now classes are taught on Fridays and Sunday is a holiday. At first, the children were left unattended during Friday prayer time, but now they insist on their lessons. Greek teachers coming to classes late."* (P7)

*"I think the level of education is still low. I see that the minority Turkish and Greek books we read 20 years ago are almost the same and no progress or change has been made. "Our schools are being closed one by one. There is a serious decrease between the number of schools 20 years ago and the number of schools now."* (P14)

#### 4. Discussion

Western Thrace is a geography shaped by the coming together of different cultural interactions and conflicts throughout history and left to Greece with the Lausanne Peace Treaty. This region has been identified as an important settlement of the Turkish minority. However,



minority members have encountered various difficulties while living their lives in these lands. Among these difficulties, the educational rights of minority members stand out.

This study's findings align with prior research emphasizing that the Turkish minority in Western Thrace experiences systemic limitations in education, particularly regarding the right to native language instruction and school autonomy (Ahmet, 2006; Dayioglu, 2021; Hacipasaoglu, 2019). Similar to previous findings, participants in this study describe discriminatory policies, such as the reduction of minority schools (Ouzoungiol & Asal, 2021), and the appointment of underqualified teachers (Ahmet, 2006; Keyvan, 2012). The Turkish minority in Western Thrace has faced Greece's assimilation policies and human rights violations, despite the rights provided by the Lausanne Peace Treaty and other international agreements (Özlem, 2008; Dayioğlu, 2021; İsmail, 2012; Burma, 2008; Keyvan, 2012). In particular, ongoing restrictions and oppressive policies on the minority's right to receive education in their native language attract attention. Practices such as the dual education system and the closing or merging of minority schools lead to the violation of the Turkish minority's right to education (Ntoukiantzi, 2022; Ouzoungiol & Asal, 2021; Cin, 2009; Hacıpaşaoğlu, 2019). The results of this research reveal that the Western Thrace Turkish minority considers learning two languages at the same time as both an advantage and a disadvantage. While minority members find multilingualism positive in terms of improving themselves and increasing their mental abilities, they also consider problems such as not being able to fully master both languages, experiencing difficulties in the education process and therefore having to receive additional support as disadvantages. In this context, it is emphasized that the implementation of more inclusive policies and practices is crucial for the effective protection and advancement of the minority's right to education.

Greece's policies limiting the right to education of the Western Thrace Turkish minority are contrary to international documents and agreements. Minorities have the right to receive education in their native language in order to preserve their own identity and culture. However, Greece's violation of this right prevents the integration and development of the minority (Ahmet, 2006; Keyvan, 2012; İsmail, 2012; Dayioğlu, 2021). The students participating in this research stated that they experienced difficulties in education in Greece due to reasons such as the adaptation process, language (dialect) differences, and the lack of awareness of their ethnic identities by Turkish citizens while studying in Türkiye. It was also clearly stated that they had adaptation problems due to language deficiency. This situation reveals the impact of the obstacles, language barriers and cultural differences that minority members face in the education process. In this context, Greece holds a responsibility to safeguard and promote the minority's right to education, as the fulfillment of these rights is essential for fostering social integration and advancing the cultural development of the minority community.

Additionally, Timmerman & Dijkstra (2021) emphasize that minority students in multilingual settings often experience identity confusion due to linguistic displacement. González & Andrade (2020) highlight the importance of culturally responsive teaching to mitigate academic exclusion in minority groups. Similarly, Krzyżanowska & Wodak (2021) analyze discursive exclusion in minority education systems, showing how state language policies indirectly marginalize ethnic groups. Moreover, Majidi (2021) points out that language proficiency gaps are a significant barrier for ethnic minorities entering national universities, which resonates with the difficulties faced by participants in this study. In another study, Pulinx et al. (2020) found that bilingual learners in

minority settings often depend on informal educational support due to inadequate institutional help.

Yılmaz & Bektaş (2022) argue that effective bilingual pedagogy depends on teacher competence and institutional commitment, an area also problematized by the participants. Sahin & Aksoy (2021) emphasize the importance of integrating intercultural curricula in educational policy frameworks for minority groups. Furthermore, research by Karatas & Koca (2023) demonstrates that identity affirmation in minority schools increases student motivation and reduces dropout rates. Kleyn & García (2020) discuss translanguaging practices as critical to empowering minority learners in restrictive systems. Finally, Holliday (2021) underlines the global relevance of safeguarding linguistic human rights in diverse societies, which supports the need for better protection of Turkish minority education in Greece.

Challenges regarding minority education are not limited to education; at the same time, various obstacles are encountered in social, political and economic fields (Ntoukiantzi, 2022; Ouzoungiol & Asal, 2021; Hacıpaşaoğlu, 2019; Hüseyinoğlu, 2015; Baysal, 2013; Giasar, 2022; Kulalı, 2015). This situation makes the struggle of the minority to maintain its identity and existence even more difficult. According to the results of this research, Turks living in Western Thrace cannot fully exercise their minority rights recognized by international agreements, have difficulty in living their culture, and are exposed to discrimination. This minority is generally recognized as a Muslim minority rather than their ethnic identity, and they do not have equal educational and cultural opportunities with Greek citizens. Moreover, according to the research findings, the presence of the word "minority" in schools does not pose a problem for Western Thrace Turks. Instead, some participants perceive this as a symbol of ethnic recognition, fostering a sense of belonging and pride. However, it is also noted that the term is viewed by some as a reflection of the inequalities they experience within the country.

Despite the problems it faces, the Western Thrace Turkish Minority is trying to seek its rights through democratic methods. According to the research results, especially it is emphasized that Dr. Sadık Ahmet's struggle has an important and symbolic place in improving the minority situation of Western Thrace Turks and increasing their awareness. Dr. Sadık Ahmet's efforts have had a significant impact in terms of defending the rights of the minority and strengthening their social consciousness. However, according to the research results, it is also stated that, apart from Dr. Sadık Ahmet, there are no prominent names leading similar struggles recently. This situation points to a significant gap in the defense of minority rights and the development of minority awareness, as the lack of such leading figures can hinder the strengthening of the minority struggle and make it difficult to advance minority goals.

To address the challenges faced by the Western Thrace Turkish minority in education, a multifaceted approach is required, involving legal, educational, and social reforms. First, Greece should align its minority education policies with international human rights standards and fulfill its obligations under the Treaty of Lausanne and other international agreements. This includes removing restrictive policies on minority schools, ensuring adequate funding, and allowing for greater autonomy in curriculum development to support bilingual education effectively. Second, initiatives to train and recruit more bilingual teachers from the minority community should be prioritized to enhance language proficiency and educational outcomes. Third, collaboration between Türkiye, Greece, and international organizations such as the EU and the OSCE can facilitate dialogue and policy improvements, ensuring that minority education is treated as a

fundamental right rather than a political issue. Fourth, civil society organizations and minority advocacy groups should strengthen their efforts to raise awareness of the issue both domestically and internationally. Finally, creating leadership programs and supporting new minority leaders can help sustain the struggle for rights and ensure continued progress in minority education and cultural preservation. By implementing these measures, a more inclusive and equitable education system can be established, fostering both minority integration and cultural identity preservation.

However, this research further elaborates on the psychological and identity-related impacts of these educational policies, echoing the work of Dragona (2014) and Giasar (2022), who emphasize that insufficient bilingual education leads to linguistic insecurity and reduced academic self-confidence. Additionally, participants' perceptions of cultural alienation and language inadequacy during their transition to higher education in Turkey resonate with similar accounts by Ntoukiantzi (2022) and Huseyinoglu (2015), who note the role of education in minority identity maintenance and transformation. Compared to earlier work that often presents a legal or structural analysis (Ergun, 2023; Burma, 2008), this study offers a micro-level, human-centered perspective. It documents how individuals interpret their educational journey, negotiate their ethnic identity, and assess their language competencies. In doing so, the study expands the scope of minority education research beyond institutional critique to include phenomenological lived experience (Miller, 2003).

Furthermore, this study supports the argument by Widodo & Karimah (2023) that embedding cultural values into education enhances social cohesion. Participants' desire to see the term "Turkish" acknowledged in minority school names reflects the need for educational representation and respect, reinforcing the cultural-symbolic role of minority schools (Susanti & Taufiqurrohman, 2021). Additionally, the research corroborates findings by Arifianto & Santo (2020) and Chandra & Faisal (2022), who emphasize that educational policy must be locally responsive and culturally inclusive. While formal treaties offer protections, grassroots experiences show a gap between rights on paper and lived realities, a point highlighted by Rizki & Suryaningsih (2021).

This research also mirrors observations from Jansen and Kara (2021), who explored the effects of mother-tongue instruction policies on student identity in minority settings. Similarly, the disconnection between national identity narratives and minority self-perceptions aligns with Rahman & Tamo (2022). Findings on school closures and linguistic inequalities are in line with Kalogeropoulos & Deligianni (2023), who documented educational marginalization among Muslim minorities in Europe. Other studies, such as Lee & Park (2021), reveal similar linguistic obstacles and dropout rates among minority students in dual-language systems.

Evidence from Islam & Yilmaz (2022) indicates that language-based exclusion leads to reduced civic participation among minorities, supporting this study's findings about weakened social engagement. Furthermore, Aydin & Kaya (2020) stress that the absence of ethnic recognition in educational policy deepens intergenerational trauma—also reported by several of this study's participants. Bano & Ahmed (2021) also emphasize the impact of teacher bias in shaping student self-worth, aligning with reports from participants about discriminatory behavior in classrooms. In addition, Kılıç & Demirtaş (2020) argue that cultural distance between home and school inhibits educational success among ethnic minorities, echoing the experiences of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace. The finding that bilingual students seek private support

parallels those of Nahar & Chowdhury (2021), who found reliance on shadow education among linguistically marginalized learners.

## **5. Conclusion**

As a result, it can be said that the changes made in the last 20 years are not sufficient and the right to education of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace is seriously threatened due to Greece's assimilation policies and human rights violations. It seems that the efforts of the minority against Greece's assimilation policies are not effective. The international community needs to pay more attention to the rights violations and difficulties experienced by the Western Thrace Turkish minority and put pressure on this issue. It is vital that the international community acts more effectively to protect the rights of the minority and secure its existence. In this context, the compliance of Greece's policies towards the minority with international human rights standards must be strictly monitored and, if necessary, sanctions must be imposed. It is of critical importance for the international community to show greater sensitivity to this issue in terms of protecting the rights of the minority and supporting their fight against assimilation policies.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the under-explored phenomenological narratives of Turkish minority students from Western Thrace who transitioned to the Turkish higher education system. It uniquely captures how these individuals navigate identity challenges, bilingual learning limitations, and social adaptation processes. Rather than a legal or statistical review, this study foregrounds personal experiences, offering depth to the understanding of minority education from the bottom up. Its method of combining ethnographic insights with a socio-linguistic focus provides a fresh lens in a field often dominated by legalistic discourse.

## **6. Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study have several important implications for policymakers, educators, civil society organizations, and international institutions. The research highlights the urgent need for Greece to revise its minority education policies to align with international human rights frameworks, particularly the Treaty of Lausanne, and to ensure that minority schools operate with autonomy, adequate resources, and bilingual teaching opportunities. The study underscores the importance of enhancing teacher training programs that focus on bilingual and multicultural education, which could help address the linguistic challenges faced by minority students and improve their academic outcomes. The research calls for leadership development programs within the minority community to nurture new leaders who can continue the legacy of figures like Dr. Sadik Ahmet and strengthen the collective struggle for minority rights.

## **7. Limitations of the Study**

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research is based on a qualitative methodology, which provides in-depth insights but may limit generalizability to the entire Western Thrace Turkish minority population. The findings reflect the perspectives of 13 participants, and while the purposive sampling method ensures rich data, a larger and more diverse sample could provide a broader understanding of the issue. Second, the study relies on self-reported data obtained through semi-structured interviews, which may be influenced by participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and potential biases. Third, the study focuses primarily on the educational challenges faced by the minority, while broader socio-political and

economic factors impacting their overall situation are only briefly discussed. Fourth, external constraints such as the sensitivity of the topic and political dynamics in Greece may have influenced participants' willingness to fully disclose their experiences. Lastly, the study was conducted at a specific point in time, meaning that policy changes or new developments in minority education may alter the relevance of some findings in the future. Despite these limitations, the research provides valuable insights into the ongoing educational struggles of the Western Thrace Turkish minority and serves as a foundation for further studies on this issue.

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