



University of Luton
Education that works

**The Education of Portuguese Children in Britain:
Insights from Research and Practice in England and
Overseas**

Editors

Guida de Abreu

Tony Cline

Hannah Lambert

Department of Psychology

University of Luton

May, 2003

Chapter 1

Academic achievement of Portuguese children in British schools

Guida de Abreu, Teresa Silva & Hannah Lambert

Summary

In this chapter Guida de Abreu, Teresa Silva and Hannah Lambert

- Describe the origins and the background of their research with Portuguese children in British Schools;
- Describe how they obtained data from schools and Local Education Authorities and how the current system of ethnic classification affected the gathering of information;
- Present key findings of the survey conducted between Jan 2000 and Dec 2000, which collated and interpreted quantitative information about the performance of Portuguese children in public examinations from the areas of London, the South Coast of England and Jersey.

Their findings from this first stage of fieldwork confirmed the concerns that originated the project. That is, when compared to the overall achievement of other children in the same schools, a high proportion of Portuguese children perform below the target level expected for their age. Preliminary explanations for this performance based on teachers' perspectives and students' experiences are explored in the third part of the chapter. They conclude with an outline of the research strategy they adopted for the second stage of the project which consisted of qualitative case studies.

1.1 Background

The need for the investigation

The origins of this research lie in a request from Prof. Dr. Paulo Abrantes, *Director Geral da Educação Básica de Portugal*¹. Though it is difficult to be precise about exact numbers of Portuguese people living in Great Britain, it is estimated that there are more than 100,000 people. The Department of Basic Education supports the

community by offering courses in Portuguese language and culture. According to information from the Coordinator of the Teaching of Portuguese in the UKⁱⁱ, Maria Amélia Estrela, in 1999 about 2000 children were enrolled in after-school Portuguese classes. This support is concentrated in the areas of London and the South of England (with 35 teachers) and Jersey (5 teachers)ⁱⁱⁱ.

During 1999, in his capacity as Director General, Prof. Dr. Paulo Abrantes visited several schools in London and Jersey. During these visits he became aware of the need to obtain more systematic information about the education of migrant Portuguese children in Britain. He noted the hard conditions of the lives of these migrants and hence raised concerns about their education and future opportunities in society. These anxieties were shared by Maria Amélia Estrela, who had anecdotal evidence that the ways of life and patterns of work of Portuguese families impact on their children's education. The reports of small-scale research projects, which were supported by the Co-ordination of the Teaching of Portuguese in England, also mentioned serious problems that can interfere with the success of the children in the British system of education. In their view without more systematic information it would be very difficult to determine the severity of the problem and to start thinking in terms of concrete intervention initiatives. This was their main reason for establishing a protocol of collaboration with the Department of Psychology of the University of Luton to conduct research into the schooling of Portuguese children in the United Kingdom and the Channel Islands.

The protocol of collaboration and the proposed research

A protocol of collaboration between the Department of Education and the University of Luton was signed in June 2000, with the following aims:

- To conduct research on the education and development of children of Portuguese origin in the UK.
- To encourage dialogue and the sharing of information between professionals and institutions involved with the education of children of Portuguese origin in the UK.

- To provide information and analysis that will form a basis for discussion on the development of new policies on educational programmes aimed at supporting migrant Portuguese children.

Three projects, which are listed below, have been developed under this protocol.

- Project 1 - *Survey of the performance of Portuguese children in UK schools (January to December 2000)*. Aimed at collating and interpreting information about the performance of Portuguese children in school tests and how these compare with the overall school results and national averages.
- Project 2 - *Literature review of studies of education of Portuguese children in the UK and other overseas countries (2000-2001)*. Aimed at reviewing information about recent and current research that has a bearing on issues relating to the education of migrant Portuguese children.
- Project 3 - *Case studies exploring the experiences of Portuguese children in the UK schools taking into account the children's, families' and teachers' perspectives (2001-2002)*. Aimed at providing an in-depth understanding of patterns of experience and ways in which these could be related to the children's school performance.

Project 1 has been conducted during the year 2000 and a summary of the key findings is presented in the second part of this chapter. For Project 2 the research group has obtained additional support from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for a Working Conference held in 2001. This publication is a product of this conference. It offers an initial contribution to relevant literature that is currently scattered and inaccessible. Project three is ongoing and some initial findings will be reported in chapters 4-5.

The invisibility of the Portuguese children

The British government has been actively promoting "equality of opportunity and high standards for all" (Secretary of State, DfEE, 1997, p.3) in education. Gillborn and Mirza (2000) suggest that official documents recognise that "inequality of educational attainment is a key factor placing young people at risk of isolation, non-participation

and social exclusion later in life" (p.7). Key reports have been addressing the inequality of achievement between social groups (e.g. Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). However, the use of official ethnic codes recommended by the DfES appears to prevent any analysis of the situation of Portuguese children (Cline et al., 2002).

Until recently the published surveys of performance in UK schools by ethnicity tended to categorise children in terms of White, Asian and African-Caribbean. However, data from specific Asian ethnic groups suggest that these very large categories are misleading. For instance, it is now known that among the Asian groups Indians tend to do quite well in schools, while Bangladeshi and Pakistani children under perform (Gillborn & Gipps, 2000; Ofsted, 1999). Following the same reasoning there might also be specific trends within White groups, but this is not possible to clarify while all the White Europeans are put together in the same category. Portuguese children can indeed be counted in two categories depending upon whether they classify themselves as "White" or "Other Ethnic". Recently the DfES has recognised the difficulties with the existing classifications and revised the categorisation. However, it seems unlikely that this will have any impact on the statistics related to Portuguese children. In the proposed final key list as circulated to LEAs in March 2002 (DfES, website, 14 May 2002) the official category for Portuguese children is 'any other white background'. As sub-categories the local education authorities can chose to categorise them in terms of country of origin (e.g. Portugal) or as white European. Thus, it seems that the difficulties we experienced in this project will continue for some time.

The invisibility of children of Portuguese origin is not a new phenomenon. In the Swann (1985) report the committee of inquiry into the education of children from minority groups noted the absence of data from the white European groups. In chapter 12 dedicated to "The educational needs of children of Italian origin" it is noted that there has been a lack of attention to these groups. Quoting from Russel King it was pointed out that a main reason for this absence is that south Europeans constitute "invisible migrants". Making the case of Portuguese children "visible" is essential in order to understand the issues raised above. It is intended that this publication will contribute to the development of a more informed perspective on how public institutions can assist in supporting their development and education.

1.2 Survey of the performance of Portuguese children in schools in England and Channel Islands^{iv}

The aims

One of the outcomes of the educational reforms in England in the last decade has been the official publication of students' levels of achievement in national Statutory Attainment Tests (SATs) and in the national exams at the end of compulsory education (GCSE - General Certificate of Secondary Education). Encouraged by the knowledge that records of the school performance for each student would be available, our first project was set up to collate quantitative information on the performance of Portuguese children in schools in England and the Channel Islands in order:

- To identify whether they perform at the same level as their "native" peers;
- If there are differences in their performance to identify whether these vary according to the level of schooling and the child's place of birth (e.g. in Portugal or in England);
- To identify whether there are differences between schools in specific geographical locations (London, South Coast of England, and Jersey).

Obtaining information from schools and LEAs

The "Coordenação do Ensino do Português" in London and in Jersey was our first contact to help us to identify the schools and areas with a relatively high concentration of Portuguese students. Drawing on this information we visited schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Most of the schools and the LEAs we contacted were quite co-operative with the project, though there were also some that preferred not to collaborate. However, the ethnic categorisation adopted in the British system of education caused real difficulties.

Schools and LEAs tend to use the ethnic classification officially recommended by the DfES (Department for Education and Skills), which does not separate Portuguese-speaking children as an independent group. The categories used in the period covered by this project were White British, White European, White Other, Black Caribbean, Black African, Black Other, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Chinese, and Any Other Group. The most common category used for Portuguese students was White European,

but this also covers several other groups. In one single school we found Portuguese students in five categories: White European, White Other, Any Other Group, Black Other and Black African. If language and cultural heritage are key indicators of ethnicity, this classification seems to be problematic.

In practical terms to overcome the problem of the existing classifications, schools produced lists of Portuguese-speaking students. To ease the burden on schools already feeling overloaded with demands from within their own system, we accepted information in the format available in the school. Lack of standardisation, however, proved challenging in data collation. For instance, labelling of data sheets was not always clear. Also, some schools provided information only for the Portuguese sample, thus making comparisons with other students impossible.

The sample of students surveyed

Despite the difficulties mentioned above we still managed to obtain data from Portuguese students in the following areas:

- London: Two Inner London Local Education Authorities, both serving diverse multiethnic communities, one north and one south of the river. There were marked contrasts of prosperity and poverty within both authorities, but LEA1 included a higher proportion of socio-economically deprived districts in the South of London. Six London schools, four primary and two secondary schools, also participated in the project. Five of these schools were located in Inner London boroughs. One school was located in an Outer London borough. This covered areas where the Portuguese have settled in the sixties and seventies and also areas of very recent migration.
- South Coast of England: Three relatively large primary schools and one secondary school participated in the project. They were located in a large resort town with a significant proportion of Portuguese people working in the hotel and catering industry.

- Channel Island of Jersey: The Secretary for the States of Jersey Education provided the results on standard national tests for the year 2000. These combined with the register of children who have English as a second language (EAL) provided a very accurate database, which nevertheless may have excluded students who were already born in the Island and whose names were not included in the EAL register.

The concentration of Portuguese migrants in these areas is recognised by the Portuguese Consulate in London. As detailed in the following table, the total sample included data on school performance for 878 Portuguese students. This included students in all the four Key Stages of compulsory education (see Appendix 1 for a brief overview of the compulsory education system in Britain).

Table 1.1: Number of Portuguese students involved in the survey

Key Stage	London Schools	London LEAs		South Coast Schools	Jersey States of Education	Total
		LEA1	LEA2			
Key Stage 1	44	99	38	29	74	284
Key Stage 2	51	93	47	09	57	257
Key Stage 3	54	66	26	04	64	214
Key Stage 4 (GCSE)	10	36	28		49	123
TOTAL	159	294	139	42	244	878

Key findings

Do Portuguese children perform at the same level as other children in the same schools?

Initially our intention was to compare the performance of Portuguese children with "native" peers, that is, with children who were of UK-British origin, but it was not possible. This would require obtaining all the raw data and being able to identify at least three groups: Portuguese; "all the other migrant"; and UK -British. This was not possible in most cases. Thus, the comparisons were, in general, made between Portuguese children and "all the other" children in the same schools (this included both British and non-British children). These comparisons showed that:

- As a group, a high proportion of Portuguese-speaking students were achieving below the National Curriculum targets for their age.
- As a group, in some areas they were among the lowest achievers, even when a significant proportion of the rest of the school population came from homes where English was an additional language.

These comparisons took as a basis, the target standards of achievement defined in the National Curriculum. Of course this does not mean that all the children "underachieve", but that the proportion of the group achieving the targets tends to be below local or national averages. Indeed the data described in the various Sections below shows that this picture is quite complex.

Are there any differences in the Portuguese children's performance between schools in specific geographical locations (London, South Coast of England, and Jersey)?

A comparison of overall findings indicated that the Portuguese children were achieving below average in all three of the areas researched, that is, London, South Coast and Jersey (excluding one LEA in London where at Key Stage 1, 7 years of age, the group achieved above the average for the area). There was significant variation in the proportions of students achieving below average in the different areas. For instance, the following bar charts compared the performance of Portuguese children in London taking account of three sets of data. The first set referred to the "current sample", that was data collected directly from schools and analysed by the research team. This combines data for three cohorts, that is years 1998, 1999 and 2000. This is far from ideal, but we were constrained to work with the information schools were able to pass to us. The second set [LEA1] and the third set [LEA2] referred to data analysed by the Local Education Authorities for the year 1999. Finally, the overall performance in England was based on official data published by the Department for Education and Skills for 1999. For details of the number of students in each group see Table 1.1 above.

In both English language and mathematics there was a gap between the proportion of Portuguese children achieving particular levels and the proportion achieving those levels across England as a whole. It was notable, however, that the gap was wider for

LEA1. In fact in LEA2 in Key Stage One the Portuguese group achieved above the national average. Only further monitoring can establish whether this deviation from the pattern reflects a long term change in the performance of the group in this area.

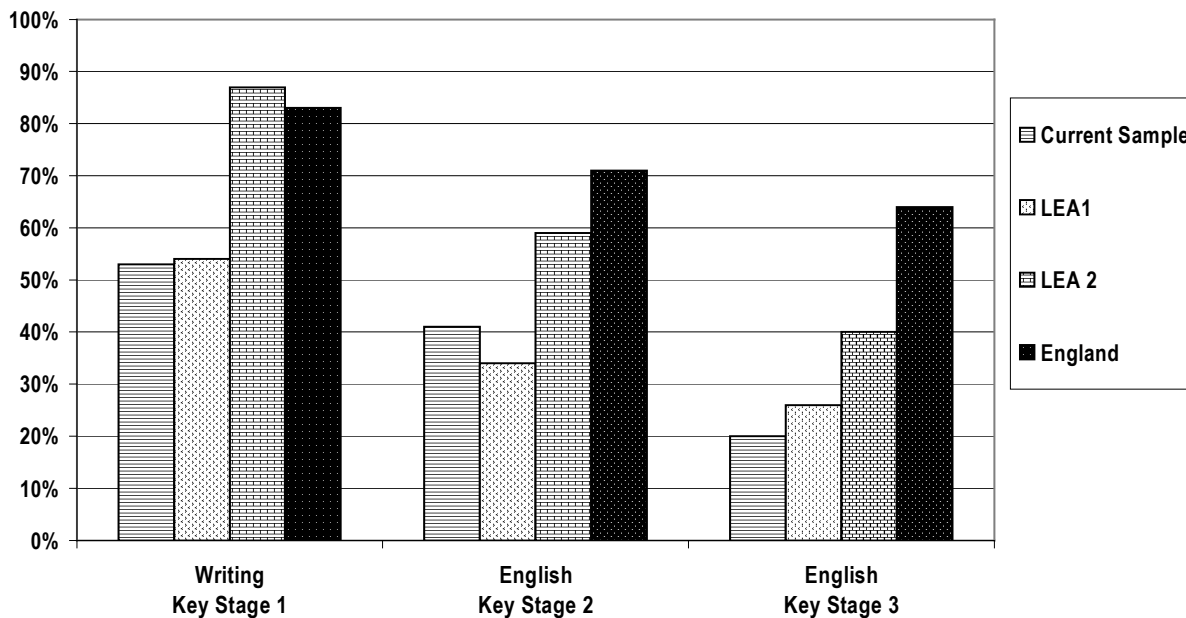


Fig. 1 Performance of Portuguese children in English SATS - London

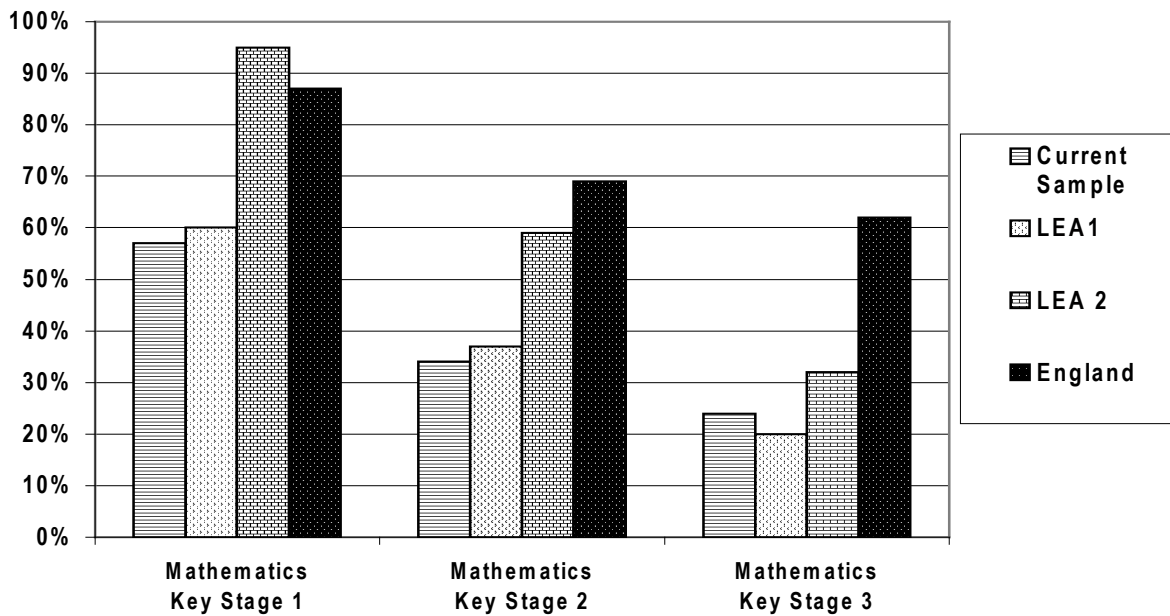


Fig. 2 Performance of Portuguese children in Mathematics SATS - London

In Jersey Portuguese-speakers formed the largest group of children who come from homes where English is not the first language. Their performance in standard examinations at Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 (GCSE) was below the overall results for all the other children in Jersey schools. This pattern of performance was similar to our findings in England. When compared with the results in the London LEAs, Jersey performance was in between LEA1 and LEA2. The data from Jersey also enabled a more refined analysis of the Portuguese students' GCSE results. A detailed analysis of passes with grades A* to C in subjects that more than ten Portuguese students had taken, suggested that the overall results for the group might have been affected by their grades in some of the core curriculum subjects. Portuguese students achieved very good results in languages and social sciences (e.g. Spanish, Portuguese, French, Religion, Art-Design, Geography), but achieved less good results in mathematics and science.

The sample of data for the South Coast was very small: 29 students from three schools at Key Stage 1, 9 students from two schools at Key Stage 2 and 4 students at Key Stage 3. The size of the sample reflects our difficulties in collecting information in the area. Firstly, despite the growing number of Portuguese students in this area, the Local Education Authority did not have any separated information about them. Secondly, some of the schools we approached also did not have the information and declined our invitation to collaborate in the project. Though the size of the sample examined was rather small, it seems that the pattern of performance observed in London LEA1 was repeated. At Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Portuguese-speaking students achieved well below the target for their ages and other children in the same schools. It was not possible to draw any conclusions for Key Stage 3 as there was data available only for four children.

A comparison of the performance of Portuguese students between schools suggested an even more complex picture. In London, it was apparent that there were variations between schools even when they were located in the same LEA. In Jersey, variations of performance between schools were difficult to explore due to the wide distribution. It was apparent, however, that some schools had a high concentration of Portuguese students. In Jersey, the analysis of the results of schools with more than 10 Portuguese

students sitting exams, on average, showed lower achievement when compared with schools with a smaller number of Portuguese students.

The reasons for variations between areas and between schools were not clear. One can speculate that in some London areas of traditional migration, perhaps the Portuguese community was more settled. This may explain part of the variation between London LEA1 and LEA2. But, then we have to ask why Jersey is an area of recent migration and the students performed better than in LEA1. Moreover a common factor affecting London LEA1, South Coast and Jersey was that all have a high proportion of migrants from Madeira. Another common factor between Jersey and the South Coast was that migrants in these areas tend to be involved in the catering and hotel industries. As migrants they shared a common geographical and occupational background. Why was there therefore a higher proportion of students achieving at target level in Jersey? We can speculate that the differences in achievement may arise because of differences in practices, such as the support Portuguese students receive from schools, LEAs and other programmes.

A distinct characteristic of Jersey was related to the links between the Co-ordination of the Portuguese teaching and the Local Education Authority. While in London the service has operated mainly as an after-school programme (there are exceptions to this), in Jersey the Portuguese classes are integrated into the English school. This integration started about eight years ago and required the Portuguese teachers to organise their practices into two main lines: (i) supporting the integration of Portuguese students in the local schools; (ii) teaching and promotion of Portuguese language and culture. The local co-ordinator is the first person that all Portuguese children will go to when they first arrive in Jersey and want to start school. He conducts assessments and shares the results with the local schools. When a Portuguese student who has recently arrived starts school, one of the Portuguese teachers will try to teach them some basic English and give them a level of support/tuition that will help him/her both in and out of school. With close joint monitoring by the school and the Portuguese teacher bilingual support is provided to the students till they reach basic level of communication. Details of this programme need to be further investigated. In the same vein, reasons for variations between schools in the same areas were not clear and need to be investigated in the next stage of the project.

Were there any variations in performance according to level of schooling?

Studies with other ethnic groups in England show that some children perform at or above the targets for their age when they start school and then decline over time. The inverse pattern applies to other groups. In this project we found that in the London areas, there was not a clear relationship between achievement and level of schooling. In the data collected from schools and LEA1, the gap was wider at Key Stage 1. But, this finding was reversed in information provided by LEA2 where indeed the children at Key Stage 1 performed above the average. For Jersey, the difference between the percentage of Portuguese and other children achieving at the target level for their ages was lower at Key Stage 1. The gap widens from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 and then seems to keep stable up to GCSE level. We do not feel able to draw any firm conclusions from these data. Further and systematic monitoring of the performance of the Portuguese group over a period of years is required in our view.

Does it make a difference if the child was born in Portugal or in England?

The data gathered did not allow a comprehensive analysis of generational patterns. It is not common practice in the local schools to register the child's place of birth. However, data from Jersey suggested a relationship between the number of years since the child arrived in Britain and exam results: most children who achieved at the target level had completed nearly all their school education in the British system. For the group who achieved at or above the target level, there was a relationship between the duration of time since arriving in Britain and performance. The following trends emerged:

- At Key Stage 1, about three-quarters of the group of students who had been living in Britain for 2-4 years, achieved at or above target level.
- At Key Stage 2, the proportion of those achieving at target level also increased with years of stay, with the highest proportion for students between 5-8 years.
- At Key Stage 3, the trend was also visible with a high proportion of those achieving at target level having lived in Britain for more than 9 years.
- GCSE results were less clear. A particular difference between GCSE level and the other key stages, was that the number of years after which the former group collectively improved in performance, was relatively smaller. This might be

because the GCSE examinations covered subjects that were not as dependent upon an English language proficiency (e.g. foreign languages, such as Portuguese, French, Spanish and some of the arts subjects)

The number of years that the Portuguese students have been living in Britain should not be regarded as the only factor. A substantial number of children continued to underachieve after the “critical periods”.

Gender and performance

Though analysis of gender was not listed in our original objectives the following findings suggest that examining differences between the performance of Portuguese boys and girls is a relevant task for future research:

- At Key Stage 1, girls performed better in all subjects in London, the South Coast and Jersey,
- At Key Stage 2, girls performed better in London and Jersey in all subjects, excluding science in Jersey;
- At Key Stage 3, girls performed better in English and Science in London, and in English in Jersey. Boys showed relatively good achievement in Mathematics.
- Overall, the GCSE results in Jersey also indicated a higher performance in the girls.

1.3 Preliminary explanations

While conducting the survey the team also engaged in piloting methods of collecting qualitative data through interviewing a very small sample of teachers, field observations while collecting quantitative data in schools, and by asking the children in Portuguese lessons to write the stories of their lives. On the basis of this pilot qualitative work seeking the views of teachers and children in England, the following preliminary explanations for their school performance were put forward.

Teachers' perspectives on the Portuguese students' performance

This section explores reasons for the under-achievement of Portuguese children in the British system of education from the perspectives of the school educators. The

material presented was obtained from (i) researchers' diary notes from meetings in the schools that collaborated in the quantitative survey and, (ii) a small number of interviews with Portuguese teachers.

The perspective of British educators

In our visits to the schools, it became evident that Headteachers and Senior EAL Teachers had been giving some thought to the reasons why a high proportion of Portuguese perform below the level expected for their age.

A reason very often mentioned was the linguistic ability of the student. Thus, for instance, a low level of fluency in English was seen as a barrier to achievement. However, it appears there was some consensus that the students overcame the language barrier in the early stages of their stay in Britain. One Headteacher stressed that the language fluency seems to be affected by the concentration of children in the same school and classroom. In her opinion, they tend to get together with colleagues who speak their home language both in classrooms and in the playground and this slows the acquisition of English. Some teachers also mentioned identity issues, such as low-self esteem, “just want to be English”, and being unsure of where they want to live.

The factor, however, that seemed to be more crucial from the educators' perspective was the children's family life. On the positive side parents were described as hard-workers. Their long hours at work and early morning or night shifts were also acknowledged, and viewed as restricting their attendance at parents' evenings. The list of characteristics of parents that impact negatively on the school education of the children, as seen by the teachers, included:

- Lack of competence or confidence in English affecting their communication with the school and their integration with the local English community;
- Low expectations about future occupations for their children;
- Lack of concern for key aspects of the functioning of the school (e.g. unpunctuality, going abroad during school term);

- Unfamiliarity with the idea of home and school links and having the idea that formal education is solely the school's responsibility;
- Being originally from Madeira, and viewed as having a low socio-economic and schooling background;
- Low social and cultural status (gardeners, cleaners) and the deprived areas where they live may have a great impact on their children's low self-esteem.
- Being a single parent and lacking the support of the extended family that would be available in their home country.

Undoubtedly, the above list suggests problems in home school links between the Portuguese parents and the British schools. Poor relations between parents and the schools may prevent them from supporting their children's school education in ways that are conducive to success. It is urgent to extend this research to include the views of parents on the education system. It is necessary to distinguish between the behaviours of Portuguese parents that might be strongly rooted in their specific cultural representations of child development and schooling and other behaviours that might emerge from "misunderstandings" or "lack of information" of the functioning of the British system of education.

The perspective of three Portuguese teachers

The perspectives of Portuguese teachers were sought in interviews. They were conducted after school in a relaxed environment, the house of the researcher. The three teachers were very familiar with the project. They had attended the launch at the University of Luton in June 2000, they had also been supporting the researchers' access to their classes in order to collect information directly from the children. A semi-structured guide was developed to ensure that common issues were explored in all three interviews. Each of the interviewed teachers had taught in England for 3 - 4 years, but they had different institutional positions, and therefore could bring different views on their experiences with the students.

Joana^y worked for the Portuguese Department of Education. She taught Portuguese as after-school lessons in a Primary School. She had never worked within the English school context. Marta also worked for the Portuguese Department of Education. She taught Portuguese as a secondary language in the English curriculum. Thus, she had

experience of the English educational context together with the Portuguese context. Inês was a teacher in an English Infants School. Her point of view was based on the experience she had of the English educational context, as she had never worked for the Portuguese Department of Education here in the UK. Between the three, they taught a relatively high number of Portuguese students aged between 5 and 16 years.

The following table summarises these teachers' views in relation to: factors affecting the students' educational performance, the children's parents, and child-parent relationships.

Table 1.2: Summary of Portuguese teachers' views

Joana	Marta	Inês
Factors affecting the students' performance		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Fluency in English ◆ Need for attention and care due to feeling neglected by parents who work long hours ◆ Lack of social skills, because they do not show respect for things, for adults and for themselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Fluency in English ◆ Inappropriate behaviour linked to age, gender, school culture and family environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Parents level of formal education
Views on the children's parents		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Come from Madeira ◆ Have poor fluency in English ◆ All work long hours ◆ Some do not pay enough attention to their children ◆ Those who pay attention lack the skills to educate the children ◆ Some live in housing with poor conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Have a low standard of formal education ◆ Speak Portuguese or a mixture of Portuguese-English ◆ Great number come from broken families ◆ Low proficiency to educate their children ◆ Do not spend time with their children ◆ Do not care for their children's education or give more importance to their jobs ◆ Work long hours 	<p>The majority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Lack basic social skills ◆ Have a low standard of formal education ◆ Speak Portuguese because of lack of fluency in English ◆ Show low proficiency to educate their children ◆ Raising their economic status is a priority that for some takes over the education of their children

Child-parent relationship		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Some help the children with school work ◆ Some do not help because of lack of time or educational skills ◆ Some do not care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No relevant cultural dialogue between children and their parents ◆ Their cultural background do not allow conversations other than football or pop music ◆ Most do not give support because they do not have time ◆ Some do not care about the children's education ◆ Put emphasis on their jobs or economical status 	<p>Most do not establish relevant dialogues because they do not have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ time since they work long hours ◆ educational background ◆ fluency in English ◆ knowledge of the English educational context

As a whole the issues raised by the Portuguese teachers were similar to those referred by the British educators covering:

- The student's language proficiency was seen as a key factor in the child's school learning. However, in general, it was deemed a competence that they develop quite fast.
- Parents' circumstances were perceived as affecting the educational development of the children adversely. This included their material conditions of life and work (type of work, including the long hours and early morning and late night shifts, poor housing conditions) and their linguistic and cultural resources (fluency in English, level of schooling).
- Parents' attitudes and participation in the education of their children were also mentioned. They were frequently described as not being able to provide support at the required level or not showing enough care for their children.

These views were based on a small sample of interviews and it is necessary to expand the work in order:

- To establish whether the above teachers' views represent a more widely held perspective. For example, will these views change if we approach teachers in schools where the children are achieving at the target level?

- To obtain a view from the parents' perspective. For instance, do they share the teachers' view that they are not able to support their children at the level expected by the schools? If so, what explanation do they give for this?
- To attempt to find out whether there is a scientific basis for the belief that Portuguese parents have "low expectations" for the educational achievement of their children. If yes, to try to gain an understanding of reasons for this.

Portuguese students' perspectives:

In this first stage of the research we also tried to get some understanding of the Portuguese students' lives from their own perspective. One method used as a means of obtaining information on children's subjective experiences as migrants was asking them to write about their lives. Students attending after-school Portuguese classes in two of the London areas (Inner London LEA1 and Inner London LEA2), where the research was conducted, were asked to write about topics, such as:

- ◆ "My life" [A minha vida],
- ◆ "Who am I" [Quem sou eu],
- ◆ "About myself" [Sobre mim],
- ◆ "My autobiography" [A minha autobiografia].

About two thirds of the compositions were written as part of the Portuguese lessons and requested by the student's classroom teacher. One third were collected by the field researcher of this project (Teresa Silva). In all cases we sought the consent of the students, their parents and their teachers, who gave their permission for the children's writing to be used in the project. The data for this analysis came from 143 compositions. 81 male and 62 female Portuguese students wrote these. About one third came from students at primary school level aged 7-11 and the remaining two-thirds from secondary level students aged 12-16.

The analysis of children's writings indicated some of the complexity of their development, which reaches far beyond their achievements at school. It showed that as recent migrants (mostly first generation), they face conflicts linked to their past and current lives. Thus,

- On a personal level, they become aware of "disruptive" events that uprooted them from their birthplace; had to cope with separation from their family, friends, and familiar places;
- As students, they face stress in adjusting to life and schooling in Britain and may have been scared of sharing their negative experiences of adjustment with their parents. As recent migrants in a new country, they endured the difficult living conditions of their parents (poor housing, long hours of work), face the dangers of the big city (e.g. London) and missed the freedom of life in their communities back home;
- Some expressed a desire to achieve (to study and succeed in life) and a desire to return to Portugal. A focus upon this is a possible project for the future.

As illustrated in the following case study, most of the above themes were mentioned by Jose when he was asked to write about his life. He migrated to England at age 11. This autobiography was written when he was 16 years-old (year 11). He was a student in a secondary school in London. Key themes in his account include the impact of the migration process on the family's separation and reunion, schooling and cultural identity.

Table 1.4: Jose's case study

Case study: Jose's memories of his migration trajectory from Portugal to England <i>(headings in italic-bold were introduced by the authors of this chapter)</i>
<p><i>THE SEPARATION</i></p> <p><i>Nostalgic memories of friends in Portugal</i> I was born in Portugal on 8th May 1984 in a village near Oporto, where I lived for four years. Even so, I have a lot of memories. Despite being only four, I have memories. I remember that my father let me work as a heaper in the same place where he worked at that time. I remember my close friends, especially a girl called Joanna. They say we were always together and rarely apart from each other.</p> <p><i>The financial difficulties and the beginning of the family's emigration: the separation from the father</i> But then one of my father's cousins, who was working in the UK decided to help my father. He told him that if he wanted to come to the UK, it would be a great opportunity. The conditions were not great but at that time my father and my mother were building a house and the money was not enough. My father decided to accept the proposal but there was a problem: at the beginning my father had to come alone, at</p>

least for one year. And he came and my mother and I, being four at that time, stayed in Portugal.

Moving in with the Grandmother: the separation from the mother

Some weeks later my mother decided to leave our house and we went to my Grandmother's. Her house was far from the town. It was in a village, where around one thousand people lived. And there we went. It was a bit difficult at the beginning but in the end I got used to it and one year passed by. When I was five my father said it was time my mother and me joined him. However I was a grown up boy then and it was going to be a bit difficult for me. My Grandmother understood and decided to make a proposal to my parents: she would keep me by her side until my parents sorted themselves out. My mother came to the UK and I stayed in Portugal.

Growing up missing his parents

As I was a little boy the first two years were not very difficult. I went to the primary school and this took my parents out of my head. But when I was seven I started feel that it was a bit difficult. I was a grown up boy then and felt my parents were not near me. Despite my Grandmother being absolutely marvellous, I missed them and so the time went by.

THE REUNION: AT WHAT COST?

Emigrating to England: "What else could I do I was only an 11 year-old child?"

When I was 11 I received a telephone call from my parents. I can remember it was Sunday. They told me they were going to bring me to the UK. Instead of being glad, I felt demoralized because that was not exactly what I wanted. I did not want to go to the UK. I wanted them to come to Portugal. I have completed my time at primary school and had been at the secondary school for three months, where I had already established my reputation, something that is not easy in a secondary school in Portugal. But what could I do? I was only 11. I was a child. I had to come. It was extremely hard to say good-bye to all my friends but I knew I had to do what I had to do: to go away to the UK.

Starting school without speaking English: crying when his parents were out of sight

The first days in the UK were not bad. They looked like holidays to me because I was waiting for a place in a school. But I was asked to start in September. And that was when the problems started. I was started to attend the English school without being able to speak a word of English. And as you can imagine, it was horrible. Some days I arrived home and cried; but I never let my parents see me crying. I did not want to make them feel guilty for what was happening to me. I knew I was going to learn the language and that I was quickly going to defend myself like the other boys. And that was what happened. Within more or less seven or eight months in school I was doing much more than enough.

Learning the language and regaining control of the self

And the days, which seemed to me like as an eternity, passed by much quicker. I got to know friends, boys and girls, some of them Portuguese. And within those two years, it was as if a little boy, who came from Portugal, had turned into a man. I learned how to defend myself from those...How can I call them? Those bastards, who sometimes upset people in the street. And within one year, the UK did not seem so bad [...].

CULTURAL IDENTITY: BELONGING AND THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DIFFERENCE***Cultural Identity: "I see Portugal as my home and my people"***

But even so, whenever I am asked if I prefer UK to Portugal, I must say I prefer Portugal. I look at Portugal as my own house, my people. I had great times there and therefore I love the country where I was born. And as I experienced the secondary school in Portugal, I always looked at the British education in a different way. I think it is different from the Portuguese one. And because of this, the British school was always more difficult for me.

It is nevertheless important to stress that the above analysis was based on students who agreed to share their writing with us. There were some who refused to do so. Some simply refused to take part in this task at all. Others showed blockages and did not seem to manage to put anything on their piece of paper, which was returned blank. In expanding the research, we would like to reach these students. Our hope is that they may be willing to talk about things that they did not feel able to write about.

1.4 Some conclusions and outline of the second stage of the project

Adding the preliminary views from teachers and students to the findings on their school performance it can be concluded that as a group Portuguese students might be disadvantaged in several ways:

- ◆ Very often against their will, they have been uprooted from their birthplace;
- ◆ Making them invisible in the educational statistics does not contribute to active development of intervention programmes to address their special needs as students who come from a linguistic and cultural background distinct from that of their schools.

It is reasonable to predict that low performance in basic education will impact on their life span development and prevent access to equal participation (inclusion) in future education and professional careers.

To sum up, we believe that the data presented offer sufficient evidence that there was a problem with the educational achievement of the Portuguese children, but there has been very little discussion of the possible reasons underlying the phenomenon. In the follow up to the survey a series of qualitative case studies were designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the patterns of the Portuguese students' experiences and

ways in which these could be related to their school performance. Unlike the first project survey, the second stage of the research was theoretically driven investigation. By this we mean that having established the existence of the problem, our search for explanations was informed by contemporary socio-cultural psychological approaches.

Both cultural continuities and cultural discontinuities between the school culture and the home culture of Portuguese students were investigated from the perspectives of:

- ◆ teachers (including British and Portuguese teachers),
- ◆ parents, and
- ◆ students.

In addition to collecting data from the various key groups, our methodology was informed by a view of learning as a process that involves both cognition and identity development.

As illustrated in Jose's life story the development of the "cultural identity" of a migrant student involves specific issues. Language fluency, for instance, cannot be viewed merely in terms of cognitive competence. When the students wrote their life stories describing their experiences, these involved identity issues, such as not feeling accepted in the new school because of the language barrier.

In order to gain insights into these complex factors the team developed a series of research tools for collecting information from schools, students, parents and teachers¹ (Abreu, Silva, & Lambert, April, 2001). These included questionnaires, guidelines to request the students to write about their life stories and schedules for episodic interviews (specific format of in-depth interviews which requires concrete examples instead of abstract or generalised statements). Initially the materials were prepared in the Portuguese language, targeting Portuguese students, parents and teachers. The second field researcher (Hannah Lambert) then constructed the materials in the English language. This work involved more than mechanical translation. For example, the interview schedule prepared in Portuguese to interview a Portuguese teacher was adapted for use with an English teacher in terms of cultural references as well as

language. Findings from the first stage of the project (Abreu, Silva, & Lambert, 2001) were used in order to prepare interview schedules, questionnaires and instructions for students' writings. Hence, for instance, from the perspectives of students, parents and teachers, the situation of the student as a migrant, the student's experiences in the English school and parents' expectations and involvement with schooling were explored. Overall, our data collection approach incorporated three means of attaining "triangulation": (a) using many data sources across time, space and persons; (b) using different investigators; and (c) using multiple methods.

The following criteria were used when inviting schools to collaborate in our study as a "case study school":

- ◆ Area (e.g. South Coast, London and Jersey);
- ◆ Record of achievement for the Portuguese students (Schools with good record of achievement versus low); and
- ◆ Level of schooling (Primary versus secondary).

In each participating school we aimed to interview:

- ◆ At least one English teacher that gives support to the Portuguese students;
- ◆ If available, a Portuguese teacher that supports the children;
- ◆ A sample of children that are achieving well and some that are not (maximum of 4); and
- ◆ The children's parents.

Field research involved a bilingual and bicultural approach. Fieldwork with the parents and interviews with the students in Portuguese was conducted by Teresa Silva. Hannah Lambert conducted the interviews with the English teachers, head teachers and other school staff involved with Portuguese students. She also conducted interviews or other tasks with the students in English.

¹ Abreu, Silva, Lambert (April, 2001) *Portuguese students in British schools: England and the Channel Islands - Research Guidelines and Tools*. Department of Psychology, University of Luton.

This qualitative research is ongoing and some preliminary information is analysed in chapters 4 and 5.

References

- Abreu, G. de, Silva, T. & Lambert, H. (2001). *Portuguese children in British Schools: England and the Channel Islands*. Report of the First Stage of the Project. Department of Psychology, University of Luton.
- Cline, T., Abreu, G., Fihosy, C., Gray, H., Lambert, H., & Neale, J. (2002). *Minority Ethnic Pupils in Mainly White Schools*. London: DfES - Department for Education and Skills.
- DfEE. (1997). *Excellence in Schools*. London: Department for Education and Employment.
- Gillborn, D., & Gipps, C. (1996). *Recent Research on the Achievements of Ethnic Minority Pupils*. London: HMSO.
- Gillborn, D., & Mirza, H. S. (2000). *Educational Inequality: Mapping Race, Class and Gender - A Synthesis OF Research Evidence*. London: Ofsted - Office for Standards in Education.
- Swan, L. (1985). *Education for All. The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups*. London: HMES.

Appendix 1: A brief overview of the compulsory education system in Britain

Reforms in the education system in England and Wales in recent years involved the introduction of a compulsory National Curriculum^{vi} (Education Reform Act, 1988). The Curriculum is organised in four Key Stages related to the students' ages.

Key Stage	Students' ages	Year Groups
Key Stage 1	5-7	1-2 (Infant / Primary school)
Key Stage 2	7-11	3-6 (Junior/ Primary school)
Key Stage 3	11-14	7-9 (Secondary school)
Key Stage 4	14-16	10-11(Secondary school)

The National Curriculum defines the compulsory subjects of the curriculum. Programmes of study set out the content for teaching and the expected standard of students' performance in each subject. Students are expected to achieve the following levels:

- Level 2 - by the end of Key Stage 1 (7 year-olds)
- Level 4 - by the end of Key Stage 2 (11 year-olds)
- Level 5 or 6 - by the end of Key Stage 3 (14 year-olds)

The attainment of the set targets is monitored by results in national tests ("SATS" at the end of Key Stages 1-3 and GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4). These tests are required at the end of each Key Stage. The exams have now been in place for some Key Stages for some years (since 1996). Records of performance of each student are kept by schools and also collated by LEAs (Local Education Authorities).

Notes:

ⁱ Dr. Abrantes retired from this post on July 2002, while this research project was still ongoing.

ⁱⁱ Maria Amélia Estrela was the London Co-ordinator when this project started. She retired from this post on November 2001.

ⁱⁱⁱ Maria Amélia Estrela provides a detailed description of this programme in her chapter in this volume.

^{iv} For a detailed analysis of the findings presented in this section see Abreu, Silva and Lambert (2001). *Portuguese children in British Schools: England and the Channel Islands*. Report of the first stage of the project. Department of Psychology, University of Luton.

^v Real names were changed to conceal the teacher's identity.

^{vi} Though it is not a legal requirement this curriculum is followed in the Channel Islands.