

# The historical background of tolerance education for blind learners in Cyprus

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**Abstract** Tolerance, in its broadest sense, can be understood as accepting all the differences in the society. Some people in society have limitations on certain parts of their bodies or their organs, which can lead to impairment on their physical functioning. Some of these people in society who have disabilities are those who have sight impairments. In order for blind people to be able to function in society in the same manner as other individuals it is possible that they can receive a private education in a similar manner to other people with disabilities. In Cyprus, the first school for the sight impaired was established under the British administration. The institution was opened in Nicosia in 1929 under the initiative of the wife of the Governor Ronald Storss as the St. Barnabas School for Blind Children, where Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots had the opportunity to be educated together. By the end of 1963, the Turkish Cypriot sight impaired children from various regions of the island were educated at St. Barnabas School for the Blind. At the school, English, Greek and Turkish teachers worked together. The main aim of the school was to educate the blind children and reintegrate them into the society. In the present study, information obtained from Blue Book and Cyprus Gazette has been supported by the information compiled from domestic and foreign publications as well as verbal sources. Consequently, it is understood that children in society who became blind for various reasons were educated at the St Barnabas School for Blind Children.

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## 1 Introduction

Tolerance is integral and essential to the realisation of human rights and the achievement of peace. In its most simple and fundamental form, tolerance is according others the rights to have their persons and identities respected (UNESCO 1994). Tolerance, in its broadest sense, can be understood as accepting all the differences in the society (Van Driel et al. 2016). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a disability is defined as “the lack or limitation of fulfilment of behaviours, abilities and functions expected from a person or body as a whole, either congenitally or later as a result of a deficiency or imbalance” (WHO 1980). However, in spite of the difficulties that people with disabilities face in life, special education institutions play an important role in determining the development, social and cultural position of people with disabilities and in terms of integrating them into society and their self-esteem. Through special education, it is possible for people with disabilities to find a place in society alongside other individuals. Special education is a form of education designed for people with disabilities who have certain physical, mental and social characteristics that differentiate them from the society (Kulaksizoglu 2007). In the history of human civilisation, it has been observed that those with special education requirements have received increased recognition throughout certain periods and have been subsequently integrated into society by enhancing their standards of living.

In primitive life, the acceptance of the individual in society was dependent on the individual’s own qualifications and self-maintenance. Individuals who could not be self-sufficient in terms of maintenance and protection were thought to incapable of benefiting the society (Aral and Gürsoy 2009). Therefore, it is known that in the early ages, blind people were exposed to negative life conditions by being excluded from society like other obstacles. In some ancient societies for example, children born with blindness were even killed (Yücel 2011). With the emergence of monotheistic religions, the concept of protecting people with disabilities in society and feeling compassion for them spread as people were motivated by the sense of earning rewards and seeking redemption for sinning. Particularly in the holy books, the widespread belief that God’s willingness to behave appropriately towards the sick, the disabled and the poor created tolerance for the people with disabilities in the society, this creating more compassion for those with disabilities among the religious faithful. Hence, religious institutions began to establish nursing homes for people with disabilities through the assistance of foundations and donations (Aral and Gürsoy 2009).

In the light of these thoughts, in 18th century Europe, schools with different branches were opened providing both theoretical and practical education. Subsequently, significant progress was made to overcome the obstacles faced by sight impaired and deaf-mute people (Gündüz 2014). Thus, the first school for the blind in Europe was opened in France in 1785. Valentin Haüy the founder of the school, designed braille letters for the blind to read. In 1830, Louis Braille of France made progress in the system of raised dots and developed his own alphabet based on the 6 points. In 1845–1847, Englishman William Moon introduced the Moon alphabet containing the principal characters of the Latin alphabet. This alphabet, which can be easily learned by sight impaired people, is often used in English-speaking countries. Special education schools in France and England were

followed by special education schools in Germany, Austria and Russia in time, and this educational system gained acceleration in throughout Europe (Aral and Gürsoy 2009; Yildirim 1997).

In the Ottoman Empire, people with disabilities were often treated with a sense of compassion. These people tried to earn their livelihoods with the assistance of their closest friends and family, by begging or singing at ceremonies such as festivities or weddings (Gündüz 2014; Yücel 2011). Education for people with disabilities in the Ottoman Empire began to be taken seriously in the late 19th century. Thus, the first school for people with disabilities was opened to provide education for the deaf-mute in 1889 and, a year later, a school for the blind was also established in the same school. At these schools, students were accepted without discrimination of religion, nationality and gender. At this school for the physically challenged, the students were given lessons in reading and writing in Turkish and French, including pronunciation for most commonly used words, as well Religion, Calligraphy, Math, Geography, Painting, Ethics and Gymnastics. In addition to these courses, they were also given music lessons at the school for the blind. However, because of the financial challenges and the state bureaucracy, the schools were forced to frequently change locations and were not able to continue to give education within an established disciplinary framework. In 1915, although a special education law concerning deaf, mute, and blind was proposed, it could not be implemented and the problems surrounding special education issue continued into the republic period. Towards the end of the 19th century schools were opened for the sight impaired in different regions of the Ottoman territory. These included the Urfa American School for the Blind, the Malatya School for the Blind, and the Beirut School for the Blind (Ergin et al. 1977; Günay and Görür 2013; Gündüz 2014; Yildirim 1997; Yücel 2011).

## 2 St. Barnabas school for blind children in Cyprus

It is thought that special education began in Cyprus when the island was under British administration. The first data about private education on the island can be found in records of the Blue Book in the British administration. In the related records, it was stated that in 1921, written materials for the blind were delivered the island by post. These resources were distributed to settlements throughout the country and delivered to the people who were in need. However, the information given about the books in the related sources is only about the weights and related taxes (Blue Book 1921). Records also show that in the following years, various books were brought to the island for the blind and given to those who required them (Blue Book 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928). Meanwhile, according to the data, in 1928, the number of the books brought to the island for the blind increased in comparison to the previous years. It is understood that the administrators on the island imported books every year for sight impaired people to improve their literacy, even though there was no school for blind people on the island at that time. Furthermore, it is revealed in the documents that such books continued to be imported after the sight-impaired school was opened (Blue Book 1919, 1930, 1931).

Under the British administration, the special education on the island was initiated by the formalised opening of the St. Barnabas School for the Blind. Sir Ronald Storrs criticized the fact that other superiors in the administration were not in regular social contact with Cypriots since 1926, when he started to serve as governor, and subsequently organized visits to many villages and towns with his wife (Gazioglu 2000; Morgan 2013).

Furthermore, Governor Storrs and his wife Louisa Lucy Storrs, were involved in a number of social assistance activities. For example, they established the “Cyprus Social Hygiene Council” to solve problems regarding the maltreatment of animals, the spread of venereal diseases and the welfare of apprentice children (Morgan 2013). Communities can thus support and mobilize for introducing tolerance education into schools because it is responsible, appropriate and necessary education (UNESCO 1994). The institution, under the chairmanship of Governor Storrs’ wife, organized various activities on the island and collected charity donations for those in need. On February 11, 1928, under the chairmanship of Lady Storrs and the participation of the Turkish Cypriot, Armenian, Greek societies and the Mayors, the first step was taken to open a school for the blind in Cyprus. The created board also calls the Cypriots to donate for the school to be established after they donate £500 for the school planned to be opened (St. Barnabas School for Blind Children Archive). They also occasionally placed advertisements in newspapers to encourage people to make donations. For example, awareness was raised in the community for a charity sale organized for blind children under the title of “*Lefkoşa A’ma Çocuklar Mektebi*” The advertisement was placed in the journal of *Hakikat* in May 1931.

#### Lefkoşa A’ma Çocuklar Mektebi

On Friday, May 29, 1931, there will be a charity sale from 4 pm to 6 pm at school. Entrance is 2 piaster There will be many beneficial and art materials to be sold. The concerned persons should come and purchase items (*Hakikat* 23 May 1931).

One of the most dangerous epidemic diseases on the island during that period was trachoma, which is a form of eye disease. It was found in all regions of the island, except the Kyrenia region. The disease can cause blindness if not treated appropriately. In the British administration, trachoma screening was conducted regularly in the schools and attempts were made to treat cases. Nonetheless, attempts to prevent the disease from affecting many people throughout the island were unsuccessful and sufferers consequently became blind. It is understood that children in each region of the island, except the Kyrenia region, lost their sight due to this disease. For example, in the period 1948–1949, 521 trachoma cases were detected on the island (*Cyprus Gazette* 1948–1949).

In 1929, the first and only school for the blind was opened on the island. St. Barnabas was a private school for blind children, which offered both boarding and coeducation. At the school, Greek Cypriots and Turks were educated together without cultural, racial and religious discrimination. Sight impaired children from across the island were brought to the school and integrated into the society. The Cypriot educational system greatly emphasised English under the British administration (Ozmatyatli and Ozkul 2013). While Greek students learned Greek and English, Turkish students learned Turkish and English as well as Greek at the school. As the majority of the students in the school were Greek Cypriots, holidays were adjusted accordingly. For this reason, the students could visit their homes only at Christmas, Easter and during the summer holidays. By the way, Turkish students were given special permission during religious holidays. In the early years when the school was first opened, the courses were provided in a building which was constructed in the early 20th century (N. Adil, personal communication, February 14, May 29 June 3, 2013). The school that was built in Nicosia in 1965 still continues to provide education with the name “St. Barnabas School for Blind Children”. In his memoirs, Sir Ronald Storrs (1937), stated that they *did their best with the Orthodox Church to raise funds for the school, and they did it in a generous way under his wife’s guidance.*

The governor stated that he encouraged this school opening project supported his wife as it improved the potential working conditions for sight impaired people and provided

them with the possibility of receiving an education. He also said that she constantly visited the sight impaired children in order to provide them with support (Storrs 1937). The Blue Book reports reveal that “School for Blind Children” was opened in 1929. The same document states that in 1929, the British Administration donated £60 to the school and made volunteer contributions with the municipality grant. In 1929, when the school was opened, there were only four students. For the purposes of educating blind children, Greek Braille, gymnastics, singing, violin, and covering and chair making courses were given at the school (Blue Book 1929).

In 1930, The Cyprus Gazette published an article about the school for the blind. In the related news;

Through the Blind Fund inaugurated by Lady Storrs it is hoped to make a real effort to teach the rising generation of the blind to be self-supporting citizens and, on these grounds, a small grant has been voted towards its work. A training centre for blind children is to be opened next week in Nicosia with present accommodation for fourteen children and facilities for extension. There are, however, at present only sufficient funds to support six children. Since the Appeal was launched two years ago, nearly £800 have been collected from outside the Colony: £127 have been raised by local entertainments and £750 from Cyprus subscriptions (including the Church) mostly from Nicosia and Limassol. I know I shall not be appealing in vain to the sympathy of honourable gentlemen in bespeaking their practical generosity for the proper foundation of this institution (Cyprus Gazette 1930).

As can be understood from this article, although the school had been opened for a year, it had not reached its full capacity. For the needs of the school, £800 was collected from the other British colonies, £877 from inside the island, with a total of £1677 in donations. Also, due to the high number of Greek Cypriot students at the school, donations were made regularly by the Orthodox Church. It is also believed that Governor Storrs initiated such mobilization to further strengthen the relationship between the British colonial administration and the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot people in Cyprus.

The name of the school in the 1930's Blue Book records continued as the “School for Blind Children”. Also, in the same document, it can be seen that the number of students at the school increased by one. Besides the £100 donation made by the British Colonial Administration in that year, it seems that contributions were also made by the Municipality, the Greek Education Board and other volunteers (Blue Book 1930). When the records of the 1930's Blue Book and Cyprus Gazette are compared, there is consistency in terms of donations and assistance, and inconsistency in terms of the number of students. According to the Cyprus Gazette the school was said to have six students in 1930, while in the Blue Book, the number of students was claimed to be five. Another inconsistency between the two documents is the weight limitations of the written texts used for the blind which were brought by the postal service to the island (Blue Book 1930; Cyprus Gazette 1930). Meanwhile, the only Turkish Cypriot student at the school in the related year was Mehmet Ali Vasfi Tatliyay, born in 1920 (or possibly 1922), who had an important place in Turkish Cypriot music history. Mehmet Ali, at a young age (probably 9–10 years) was enrolled at the school for the blind. Tatliyay also received his first violin lessons from the Greek teachers at the school (Altan et al. 1996; An 2005).

In 1930, the Cyprus Social Hygiene Council presented films from the Red Cross to raise awareness of blindness, defective vision and other issues. Additionally, a pamphlet providing information on venereal diseases, trachoma and ophthalmia was prepared by the

same organization to be distributed to the upper classes of secondary schools (Cyprus Gazette 1930).

In 1931, the number of students at the school increased to 12. Contributions made to the school's curriculum and to the school were similar to those of previous years (Blue Book 1931). In the education reports of 1930–1931 and 1931–1932 regarding the school for blind children, the school provided education to 12 students in Nicosia under the name “*St. Barnabas Home for the Blind*” and the management of the school was transferred to the board of overseers. The school was supported by volunteer donations, as had been the case in previous years. There is also information that an inspector was brought to the school from England in 1931. Various information is also given in the report related to the curriculum of the St. Barnabas School for the Blind. It is stated that students were taught arithmetic, carpet making, basket making, knitting and music education at the school, in addition to Greek and English Braille (Blue Book 1933; Cyprus report of education 1930–1931 and 1931–1932). Teaching students Braille only in Greek and English at the school reveals that the Turkish students were also educated in Greek or English in that period.

According to the previous information gathered from the 1932 Cyprus Gazette, it was stated that the school was opened with the name “*St. Barnabas School for the Blind*”. British Deputy Assistant H. Henniker Heaton defined the foundation of school in the following manner, “*The British Administration endorses the establishment of the Saint Barnabas School for Blind Children in Nicosia, according to the powers laid down by the 1925 and 1932 laws*” (Cyprus Gazette 1932). In the Blue Book records of 1932, it is seen that the name of the school was changed to the “*St. Barnabas School for Blind Children*”. The same document states that the number of students at the school was 13 in 1932. It is also identified that in that year, handicraft lessons were added to the courses provided by the school, which differed from previous years (Blue Book 1932). As can be understood from the documents, the school was founded in 1929 with the name “*School for Blind Children*” and in 1932, the name was changed to the St. Barnabas School for Blind Children. This change of name is thought to be due to the influence of the Orthodox Church on the Christian Education Board, which provided support to the school.

When the information about the educational report of 1932–1933 under the title of “*Blind Children*” is analysed, it is understood that the information did not change from the previous year (Cyprus report of education 1932–1933, 1934). In the 1933 Blue Book entries, the enrolment at the “*St. Barnabas School for Blind Children*” seems to have increased by one student. The school was also supported by the help of the British Government, the Christian Education Board, the Orthodox Church, the Municipality and volunteers. The school's curriculum for the relevant year continued unchanged from previous years (Blue Book 1934).

In the educational report of 1933–1934, unlike the previous years, there is information showing that the school was moved to a more suitable location in Nicosia. In the report, the necessity for a permanent building for the school and the negative effects on the education if this were not implemented were mentioned. It also explained how many children were studying at the school and that the curriculum remained unchanged in that year. In the meantime, a British inspector dispatched from England in 1931 was given a Greek Cypriot assistance (Cyprus report of education 1932–1933, 1935). It is also seen in the Blue Book records that in 1934, the number of students at the school did not change and remained at 14. Additionally, the institutions by which the school was financially supported and the curriculum of the school did not change (Blue Book 1934). As can be seen in the 1934 Blue Book records, as in the previous years, it was stated that tax exemptions would be

applied to educational materials brought from abroad for sight impaired people (Blue Book 1934; Cyprus Gazette 1934).

Between 1935 and 1940, the Municipality of Paphos (Baf) donated £5 to the school annually (Cyprus Gazette 1935, 1936, 1937, 1939, 1940). In 1940, the Municipality of Paphos donated £5 in addition to the Municipality of Morphou (Güzelyurt) (Cyprus Gazette 1940). In 1935, the number of students at the school was again 14, the same as the previous year (Cyprus Gazette 1935, 1936). There were no changes to the institutions and curriculum of the school (Blue Book 1935). It was stated that also in 1936 and 1937, tax exemptions were applied to educational materials for the blinds brought from abroad, but this situation is contradicted by other records as in previous periods (Cyprus Gazette 1936).

In 1936 and 1937, the number of students at school increased to 16 (Cyprus Gazette 1936, 1937). One of the students who received education at the school in the related year was a 16-year-old Turkish student named Derviş Hüseyin alias Derviş Ali (Dervis Hüseyin File, St. Barnabas School for Blind Children Archive). In 1938, the number of students at the school increased to 17 (Blue Book 1936). When the British education report of 1942–1945 is examined, it is seen that sight impaired people were included under a separate title. As mentioned by Sleight, it is written that, due to the effects of World War II, it was impossible to construct a new building for the blind because of the increase in prices of construction materials. It is also stated that the numbers of students in the relevant years increased dramatically (Sleight 1947). In the report, it is mentioned that at the school of crafting and apprenticeship, various boots were produced for the needs of blind children. In this way, the requirements of blind children in terms of appropriate footwear were fulfilled by the apprentice children.

In the 1946 Blue Book entries, it is seen that the number of students studying at the school decreased to 12. It can also be understood that there was an increase in the number of books for the blind, based on the taxes on the educational materials brought from other countries. Again, in the reports, it is seen that the school continued to receive donations from the institutions and the curriculum of the school remained unaltered (Blue Book 1946).

Sleight (1955), in the education report for the years 1949–1950, identified that the St. Barnabas School for Blind Children was the only school for the sight impaired in the special education area of the island during that period. Additionally, it is stated that the number of students reached 17 and increased to its full capacity in the 1949–1950 academic year. In the meantime, it is stated in this report that various job opportunities were offered for the first time to the students who graduated from of the school.

On 24th October 1950, the title “St. Barnabas School for the Blind” was given a place in the Hürsöz newspaper. In the relevant period, Mrs. Greenland, the headmistress of the school, gave an explanation to the journalists about the daily lives, lessons, fun and food of the blind students at the school. In her explanation, she said that the school was founded in 1929 by a philanthropic Briton, and during the relevant period, the education was continued with the aid of the government. It is said that in the mentioned period, 17 visually handicapped children were educated at the school. At the boarding school, older adults and two orphan girls stayed in another building. It is expressed that there was no Turkish students studying in the related period. It is stated that a music course was given to the students by a teacher named Andrea Kostantinu. On Thursdays, are various games were organized in the school. Scouting was one of the lessons given at the school and was also mentioned in the newspaper. The article goes on to say,

The lessons at the school are given in accordance with the Braille system. However, first, the students learn to read and write by means of holes in the thick paper with nails over other perforated tools, followed by the specially made nails in order (with letters in order). Written texts are easily read by the students haptically. The lessons are not all about writing. Specially prepared story books in English and Greek are read by the students haptically. Besides, the knitting's for chairs, small or big baskets made by the students attract attention. Children at the age of 12 and 13 can play accordion, violin, and piano very well. Yesterday, the journalists who visited the St. Barnabas School for the Blind also listened to a concert! It is said that after Andress Yannaros and Stavros Bereskevas played a song with accordion, another student named Christakis Luka played some music with violin.

In the newspaper, it was also mentioned that the journalists were shown the bedrooms where the students resided. Because there was a limited number of rooms at the school, it is stated that the students' beds were very close to each other. This situation was also reported to be particularly difficult for sight impaired children. The report also states that two of the graduates of the school were working in the Dianellos Vergopullos factory and two others were working in the Board Office. Finally, in the news, the needs of students in terms of nightwear, outfits and blankets were emphasised and the people of Cyprus were invited to make donations to the school (Hürsöz 24 October 1950).

As mentioned by Sleight, in 1950–1951, the number of students at the school was 15 in the relevant year. In the reports analysed, this is the first instance where information about the gender of the students was revealed. It is stated that 3 of the 15 students at the school were female. This information reveals that the number of students at the school decreased compared to the report from the previous year (Sleight 1953). Additionally, Behçet (1969) confirms the relevant report, stating that only male students were educated at the school until 1950 (Behçet 1969). Despite this information, girls attended the St. Barnabas School for Blind Children for the first time in 1946–1947 (P. E. Karpasiti, personal communication, July 17, 2017; St. Barnabas School for Blind Children Archive). Since the 1950–1951 term, the St. Barnabas School for Blind Children had begun to provide dormitory services to the students.

It is stated that the students stayed at neighbouring houses adjacent to the school building and came to the school for education. It can be said that the school building was inadequate for boarding education in the light of this information. It is also understood that the school could continue its educational activities as a result of the private and state support (Sleight 1952).

In the education report of 1951–1952, the number of blind students increased by 5 over the previous year and the school reached a maximum population of 20 at this time. Furthermore, in a variation from the reports examined until this point, information about the age groups of the students at the school was given for the first time. It is stated that the age range of the students was 6–17, where 5 of them were girls and 15 of them were boys. In this report, it is also stated that the graduated students were given new job opportunities (Sleight 1953). In 1952–1953, the number of students at St. Barnabas School decreased by 5–15, where 11 of these students were male and 4 were female (Sleight 1954). Again, under the heading “*Handicapped Children*” in the report, with the help of the Rotary Club, details are given about a school manager who was dispatched to England to receive training related to the education of visually and hearing-impaired children. After the administrator receive the relevant training, he prepared a report on a comprehensive study of children under 16 in Cyprus with sight and hearing impairment. As a result of this



report, it is stated that 26 of children who were educated at the school had completely lost their eyesight and 31 children had partial sight impairment. A total of 18 of the students mentioned in the reports said that they were the students of St. Barnabas School for Blind Children (Sleight 1954).

In his book “Education in Cyprus” which was published in 1952, Weir states that the education at St. Barnabas School for Blind Children was excellent. It is stated that approximately 30 students studied at the school and they not only learned not only to read and write well, but also learned various handicrafts. It is indicated that the majority of the financial support the school received was given by the government. In addition, a male scout troop was established at the school, and in the relevant years, there were also two female students attending the school. It is claimed that many of the students dropped out of the school without completing their education (Weir 1952). Meanwhile, the information Weir gave was different from the information obtained from the British academic reports. The most significant difference is seen in the number of students who studied at the school.

In the 1953–1954 academic report, St. Barnabas School was evaluated under the name of “Handicapped Children”. According to the Sleight report, a new building was constructed for St. Barnabas School in 1954, although the students did not move to this new building until 1955. According to the information given in the Cyprus Gazette in 1956, the blind school allocated approximately £7000 from their 1955 annual budget, for the construction of the new building. In addition, the report stated that the number of students at the school decreased by two compared to the previous year. The other remarkable information in the report is that, unlike the reports evaluated up to now, there is information alluding to the fact that the students in the school were both Greek and Turkish. Another point that draws attention in the report is that 30 students who graduated from the school worked in various companies and institutions. According to the information Behçet (1969), gives, graduates of the school for the blind were provided job opportunities through Welfare Office. It is also mentioned in the report that the Chief Scout Lord Rowallan visited St. Barnabas School in the relevant year (Behçet 1969; Cap 168; Cyprus Gazette 1956; Rowallan 1976). In the relevant year, the two Turkish students at the school were Nevzat Adil and Dogan Ali (Adil 2013; D. A. Karagil, personal communication, July 1, 2017).

In the Cyprus Gazette records, it is understood that the students of the “St. Barnabas School received free healthcare in 1956 (Cyprus Gazette 1956). In the British educational report of 1956–1957, the name of the school was stated as “Aya Varvara School for the Blind”, which differed from the other reports. The name of the school was written differently in the report because it had moved to a new region (Tudhobe 1957). As Karpasiti (2017) says, the name Aya Varvara was used by both the Greeks and the Turks from time to time when referring to the school. When the contents of the report are examined, it is learned that from July 1, 1957, the control and responsibility of the Aya Varvara School for the Blind was taken from the board of trustees and transferred to the English Ministry of Education. Thus, the training staff of six persons consisting of one deputy and five assistant teachers who worked in the school also transferred to the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Later in the report, the school was described as a place that provides a comfortable home and conveniences to the 24 students. There is also information showing that the school was moved to a new building outside the city walls of Nicosia in the previous summer (Cyprus Gazette 1957; Tudhobe 1957). Adil (2013) states that, until the completion of the new building in Nicosia in 1956–1957, the school temporarily moved to a seaside building in the Karakum village close to Kyrenia. The two large rooms were used as bedrooms and classrooms for girls and boys at the school. In addition, the veranda of the

school was used for lessons. However, the school was not a suitable building for the blind in terms of toilets as well as other purposes. The seaside location of the school allowed students to go the sea to swim by walking. The building was used at that time for students who needed special education. It is estimated that there were 17 students attending the school, of which two were Turkish. In this period, a British student named Mary also attended the school. On the other hand, Personal communication, 2017 stated that during the years he attended the school, the school was located on the Nicosia-Limassol road. The new building, which is still used today, was officially opened in November 1965 (Mavroua 1995).

In the report for the years 1957–1958, it is stated that the completion of the new school building made an important contribution to education for the blind. It is stated that the number of English, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot students was 23. For the first time in Cyprus, two pupils and one instructor from the school took the English Lower examination of the Cyprus Certificate of Education and passed at credit level. It is emphasized that, although the school's administrative staff had changed, the teaching staff was protected and that this staff was supervised and monitored by the British Colonial Administration. Finally, in the report, information about the administrative board is also given. According to this, as was the case for School of the Deaf, it is stated that a management mechanism consisting of one director and six directors acting as an advisory board was established (Lightbody 1959).

The 1958 Cyprus Gazette provides information about this board. According to an article from February 13, 1958, the members of the board of directors were William Clifford (president), Vanda Eudoxia, Maureen Lanitis, Lya Lellou Tseriotis, Eleonora Lushington, Kiamran (Kamuran) Aziz, Glafkos Clerides and Christos Meletiou (Cyprus Gazette 1958). On October 27, 1958, the chairman of the school was replaced by the governor with William Gammell Alexander (Cyprus Gazette 1958). In addition, Hatice Necati Münir was replaced with Kamuran Aziz, who resigned from the membership board of directors on 11 November 1958 (Cyprus Gazette 1958). When the school's board of directors is examined, it is understood that the president was British, the members were composed of five Greek Cypriots and one Turkish Cypriot. Kamuran Aziz and Glafkos Clerides, the two members of the six-person board of directors, are remarkable names in terms of the political and social history of Cyprus.

The leader of the island, Governor Foot, replaced William Gammell Alexander, who resigned from the head of board of directors on November 19, 1959 with Christos Meletiou (Cyprus Gazette 1959). However, on March 1, 1960, Glafkos Clerides and Nora Lushington resigned from the membership of board of directors and were replaced with Michalakos Triantafyllides and Dr. Chr. Christopoulos (Cyprus Gazette 1960).

### **3 Teachers giving lectures to the Turkish Cypriots at St. Barnabas school for blind children**

Since the opening of the St Barnabas School for the Blind, there had been various teachers of English, Greek and Turkish. The first teacher in the school was Eva Edmond Hanson. Three of the headteachers who worked at the school were Mary Knatchbull, Mrs. Greenland and Nikos M. Ierides. In 1940s Mary Knatchbull worked as a headmaster at school. Mrs. Greenland served as a deputy at the school between the years 1950–1959 (Hürsöz 1950; Karagil 2017; Z. Ozkaloglu, personal communication, June 22, 2017).

Nikos M. Ierides was appointed to the St Barnabas School for the Blind on 1 September 1959 (Cyprus Gazette 1959; Karagil 2017). At the end of 1963, when the Turkish students left the school, Mr. Ierides's their school reports indicate that he was working as the headmaster.

When new teachers were required at the school, advertisements were placed in various periodicals. One of these announcements was for a Turkish female teacher position, entitled "St Barnabas School for the Blind Administrative Board" on page 4 of the November 3, 1953 *İstiklal Journal*. The announcement remained in the newspaper until 9 November. The content of the announcement was as follows;

A petition is accepted for a female Turkish teacher who has been given the name above. The annual salary is 180 liras and, in addition to this, this will increase by 12 liras annually, to a maximum of 270 liras. Even unlicensed petitioners can be appointed with a lower salary until they are trained. Applicants must be between the ages of 20 and 30, they must be a secondary school graduate and know how to read and write good English. The successful candidate will give primary school lessons to the (blind) children and will fulfil the orders given by the school supervisor about jobs related to children's sanitary conditions. This position is boarded and teachers will always stay in the school. The applications should be completed by the applicants in their own handwriting.

The Secretary, Committee of Management St Barnabas School for the Blind c/o The Welfare Department P.O. Box 730 Nicosia" (*İstiklal*, 3 November 1953).

In other words, it is understood from the advertisement that the school sought a Turkish female teacher who would be resident at the school. Furthermore, it seems that the salary offered was satisfying for that time. Also, in the notice, the qualifications that were required to teach were given in detail. The fact that the school needed a Turkish teacher shows that Turkish students were educated at the school during that time. The names of Turkish teachers Bahire Hanim, Ayten Hanim, Zerrin Ozkaloglu, Selahhattin Bey, Ulgen Mustafa (Sami) Hamidi, Sadiye Kemal Yaşar, Orhan Seyfi Arı and Ozel Resat were found during the period 1953–1963 (Adil 2013; Hamidi personal communication, July 4, 2017; St. Barnabas School for blind Children Achieve). Personal communication, 2017 notes that teachers at the school attended special training courses after they started teaching in the school.

The Turkish students also took scouting lessons with other students at the school. They even attended the 1st Scout Festival held on April 11, 1960. Consequently, they had the opportunity to show what they had learned school during the activities they attended (Halkın Sesi, 11 April 1960). Turkish students were taken to the Selimiye Mosque for prayer on Fridays, along with the various lessons they learned from Turkish teachers. For the Turkish Cypriot students, books prepared in Turkish with the Turkish Braille alphabet were also purchased. Turkish students also took various courses given by Greek and Armenian teachers at the school. For example, Mathematics, Braille and Greek from Kostas, English from Miss Antigony and Mrs. Greenland, Music from the Armenian Teacher Iyakos, and Handicrafts lessons from the Greek Teacher Demetris. It should be noted that Kostas and Demetris were blind teachers who provided education in the school. In addition, Personal communication, 2013 stated that Kostas tried to correct the various mistakes the students made by applying corporal punishment. His method was to strike the children on the backs of their hands. However, Demetris always corrected the students' mistakes by talking to them. Moreover, the Turkish teachers, Demetris and Mrs.

Greenland, also corrected the mistakes of their students by giving them advice instead of punishing as Kostas did. Therefore, they were loved by the Turkish students and are still visited by them today (Personal communication, 2013; Personal communication, 2017; Personal communication, 2017).

Turkish Cypriot Zerrin Ozkaloglu worked as an assistant teacher at the school between 1956 and 1958. When Mrs. Zerrin began working at the school she was taught how to use the Braille alphabet. After learning the Braille alphabet, she stated that she also taught this alphabet to the students. When Mrs. Zerrin was an assistant teacher, she stated that there were 12 students in the school, 2 of which were Turkish, 2 were English and the rest were Greek. She stated that the Turkish students in the school were Nevzat and Dogan during that time. Because of Mrs. Greenland, who was the principal of the school, British customs were practiced at the school. Mrs. Zerrin left her job at the school when social conflicts began. Before this Mrs. Zerrin, Mrs. Ayten and then Mrs. Ulgen worked at the school (Ozkaloglu 2017).

There is a difference between the number of students Mrs. Zerrin gave and the number students given in the official reports. Mrs. Ulgen - whose name was given by Mrs. Zerrin, has her name on report cards issued for Turkish students who attended the school between 1959 and 1963. Mrs. Ulgen was written as U. Sami in the first years and U. Sami in subsequent years. Mrs. Ulgen (Ulgen Mustafa Hamidi), born in 1941, began teaching at the St. Barnabas School for the Blind in 1959 and served until December 21, 1963. Mrs. Ulgen took her position at the school for visual impairment at the request of the Turkish Ministry of Education. However, Mrs. Ulgen did not have any training related to special education as the other Turkish teachers working at school. Mrs. Ulgen gives details on her teaching experience at the school:

After I entered the school, I learned the Braille alphabet in a very short time by myself. In September 1959, when I started to study, I was the only Turkish teacher in my school. There were two Turkish students at the school. They were Nevzat Adil and Dogan Ali. When I went to the school, I found them in the class of the Greek students. After I came to school, Hulusi Menteş, the chief inspector of Primary Schools in the Turkish Ministry of Education, came to check me. The inspector and the Greek Cypriot principle of the school. Mr. Ierides was very surprised that I learned to read Braille alphabet in a very short time. I gave all the lessons to Turkish students. I gave scouting lessons to all the students at school because I was trained in scouting. In the first years, there was no Turkish book for Turkish students at school. I wrote a letter to the School for the Blind in Ankara. They sent books to our school. I stayed in the boarding school. I went home every 15 days.

After she started teaching at the school, Mrs. Ulgen travelled around the villages and persuaded the sight impaired children to come to the school so that they could be educated. As Mrs. Ulgen says, there were approximately 50 students at the school when she started her employment. When the school started, there were two Turkish students at the school. Later on, based on the attempts of Mrs. Ulgen, the number of Turkish students increased at the school. Mrs. Ulgen points out that she organized football using a special ball for the children, as well as various activities in the school. At the beginning of the year, Mrs. Ulgen received a £35 salary from the Turkish Ministry of Education. After the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus the salary was £55. On 21 December 1963, she stated that she left the school together with the Turkish students after the outbreak of violence. Turkish Cypriot students then went to Ankara and completed their education at the blind school (Hamidi 2017). In the meantime, before leaving the school, all the students

attending the school received a medical examination from Michaelson in September 14, 1963, (St. Barnabas School for Blind Children Archive).

#### 4 Situation of Turkish Cypriots in school

The St Barnabas School for the Blind, opened in 1929, also educated Turkish Cypriots during various periods. Table 1 gives a list of the identities of the Turkish Cypriots who were educated in the school for the blind.

When Table 1 is examined, it can be seen that Turkish Cypriot girls and boys from various regions of the island studied at St. Barnabas School, which was the only school on the island for the blind. When the table is examined, it is understood that Mehmet Ali Tatlıyay was the first student in the school. Additionally, Hamidi (2017) and Karagil (2017) stated that one of the first graduates of the school was a Turkish student named Ramadan from Malya village of Limassol. He graduated from school before Nevzat and Dogan and worked as a telephone operator. The other one was Behic Halil who was one eye blind. Behic Halil, who was mentioned in the table, applied to come to the school when he was 17 years old and working as a porter on a lorry in his village. Despite having an application in the school records, it is not clear whether his application was actually accepted (Behic Halil File, St. Barnabas School for Blind Children Archive). The other student that was mentioned in the table is Derviş Hüseyin (alias Dervis Ali). On August 21, 1934, the blind school reported that they would accept students via an advertisement. Consequently, on August 25, 1934, Derviş Hüseyin's brother İsmail Hüseyin wrote a letter to the school to

**Table 1** Turkish students studying at St Barnabas School for the Blind

Date of birth	Date of arrival at school	Age at arrival	Name-surname	Gender	Settlement	Departure date
1920	1929–1930	9–10	Mehmet Ali Vasfi Tatlıyay	Male	Aya Yorgi -Paphos	
1921	2.03.1937	16	Derviş Hüseyin (alias Derviş Ali)	Male	Saint Theodoros Larnaca	24.05.1937
1935	1952	17	Behiç Halil	Male	Goufes (Çamlıca)-Famagusta	
07.08.1947	1953	6	Nevzat Adil	Male	Evdim-Limassol	21.12.1963
28.10.1946	November 1953	7	Cemal Dogan Ali Karagil	Male	Avgalida-Famagusta	21.12.1963
17.04.1943	1953	10	Hasan Mustafa	Male	Pergama Larnaca	1953
15.04.1946	1953	7	Salih Yılmaz Mustafa	Male	Pergama Larnaca	1953
17.07.1944	1959	15	Cemaliye Hüseyin Sisik	Female	Aya Kebir Nicosia	21.12.1963
30.10.1949	2.11.1959	10	Selma Niyazi	Female	Lapetos, Famagusta	21.12.1963
27.06.1955	15.11.1961	7	Özkan Kâşif Yıkıcı	Male	Ayios Theodoras Tillirias (Bozdağ)	21.12.1963
1955	1962	7	Mehmet Kasım	Male	Nicosia	21.12.1963
1955	1962	7	Fikri Lisani Dedeler	Male	Aksilu- Paphos	21.12.1963

seek Hüseyin's acceptance. Derviş joined the school in March 1937 and left the school on May 24, 1937 to return to his village. Subsequently, in 1940, his request to come back was accepted by the school administration, although he did not come to the school. Derviş Hüseyin from Ayios Theodoros village of Larnaca sent a request to the school to work as a labourer in February 2, 1945, (Derviş Hüseyin File, St. Barnabas School for Blind Children Archive). Nevzat Adil and Dogan Ali stated that during the school period, they maintained good relationships with Greek Cypriots like Christos and his brother Panayotis from the Episcopy region, and also Kokos, Kriakos, Andrikkos, Andros (who had only one arm), and Ariadne, one of the female students (Adil 2013).

Nevzat Adil was one of the Turkish Cypriot students studying in the 1950's at the St Barnabas School for the Blind. Nevzat Adil was born in 1947 in Evdim Limassol and lost his sight as a result of a disease that broke out in his eyes at the age of two. When Nevzat Adil reached primary school age, he was probably 6 years old in 1953, and his education began at the St Barnabas School for the Blind based on the recommendation of the teacher in his village. He was educated until the end of December 1963. Turkish Cypriots could not attend the school in South Nicosia because of the events of December 21, 1963. It is understood from the documents that some sight impaired children who had the opportunity, continued to attend the school for blind people in Ankara. One of these students, Nevzat Adil, took his first airplane flight on November 7, 1964 and went to Ankara. He continued his education at the Visually-Impaired Secondary school in Ankara and graduated from that institution in June 1965. For his high school education, he enrolled at Robert College on 3 September 1965. Later on, he went on to the US Perkins Vision Disabled School and graduated from there on June 3, 1969. Upon his graduation, he returned to Istanbul and started higher education in the Department of English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Basic Sciences at Boğaziçi University. Nevzat Adil completed his education there in 1973 and returned to Cyprus. He initially taught private English lessons in the classroom he had established in his village and then joined the Turkish News Agency where he worked as an English translator for 25 years and subsequently retired (<https://vimeo.com/18889343>).

Nevzat Adil, meanwhile, when studying at Robert College in Istanbul on June 25, 1966, wrote an English letter to the St Barnabas School for the Blind. In the letter, Nevzat Adil stated that he had graduated from the school of blindness in Ankara in the previous year (1965) and that he would continue at Robert College in Istanbul as a result of the scholarship awarded for his higher education. In the mentioned period, he reported that he graduated from the English Preparatory School with a superior degree. He also asked the school administrators if they could provide Mrs. Greenland's address in the UK as he wished to visit her while visiting the country on vacation. He also stated that he wanted to correspond with students and teachers who spoke English at the school. As the letter suggests, Nevzat Adil had a desire to maintain contact with the teachers and students at the school because he was a former student at the St Barnabas School for the Blind in Cyprus (Adil's File, St. Barnabas School for Blind Children Archive). A few months after Nevzat Adil started his studies Dogan Ali came to the school and the two Turkish Cypriots were educated together at the school until 1963 (Personal communication, 2013; Personal communication, 2017).

The other Turkish Cypriot who was educated over an extended period at St Barnabas School for the Blind was Cemal Dogan Ali Karagil, who was born in 1946 in Avgolida. According to the archive records of the Saint Barnabas School, Dogan Ali from the village of Avgolida of Famagusta lost his sight due to trachoma at the age of 2. Dogan Ali partially regained the ability to see as a result of subsequent treatment. When he was 7 years old,

Dogan Ali enrolled at St. Barnabas and studied there for 10 years. Personal communication (2017) says that Nevzat Adil was the only Turk who studied with him during the school years. In 1963, he graduated from the school at the age of 17. Dogan Ali graduated successfully from secondary school according to his graduation paper (Dogan Ali File, St. Barnabas School for Blind Children Archive). In 1966, Dogan Ali wanted to continue his education in Turkey, like other sight impaired Turkish Cypriots, but he was not admitted to the school because he was older than 18. In 1976, they founded the “*Altı nokta Görmezler Derneği*” with their school friend Nevzat Adil, and they conducted various activities until the 1990s. Dogan Ali started to work as a central operator at Famagusta State Hospital in April 1978 and retired from there on 1 October 2002 (Personal communication, 2017).

Until 1959, the only Turkish Cypriot students at the school were Nevzat Adil and Dogan Ali. In the meantime, several months after the Turkish teachers came to the school, two brothers Hasan Mustafa and Yılmaz Salih Mustafa with visual disabilities came to the school, but they could not adapt and subsequently departed. One of the brothers had partial vision (Personal communication, 2013). After an extensive search on the island, the children with visual disabilities were taken to the school, including some female students. Cemaliye Hüseyin Sisik from Aya Kebir (Dilekaya), who was found during this screening process across the whole island in 1959, attended the school at the age of 15. Cemaliye Hüseyin lost her sight as a result of an accident at the age of 8 when she was in elementary school. Besides losing her sight, she also had a hearing problem. Until 1963, she was educated at the School for the Blind. Afterwards, she went to Ankara and received education at the school for the blind there. In 1971, she was educated at the rehabilitation centre in Istanbul for 3 months. Later, she returned to Cyprus and continued her life on the island (C. H. Sisik, personal communication, July 7, 2017).

Another girl who started the school after the searches in 1959 was Selma Niyazi from Lapetos (Yeni Bogazici). Selma Niyazi, who was blind from birth, started to study at this school at the age of 12. She represented the school by singing at events organized inside and outside the school because she had a beautiful voice (Personal communication, 2017; Selma Niyazi File, St. Barnabas School for Blind Children Archive). Fikri Lisani Dedeler, who was born in 1955 in Aksilu village of Paphos, left school at the end of 1963 and continued his education at the school for the blind in Ankara (K. Dedeler, personal communication, July 8, 2017). In the 1961–1962 academic year, one of the students at the school was a Turkish student named Ozkan Kasif Yıkıcı. In 1970, Ozkan went to school for the blind in Ankara. After he graduated from the school for the blind, he went to Gazi High School Ankara. Subsequently, he started higher education in the Department of Social Development at Hacettepe University in 1976. Ozkan Kasif completed his education there in 1980. (O. K. Yıkıcı, personal communication, July 17, 2017; Ozkan Kasif File, St. Barnabas School for Blind Children Archive).

The Turkish students at St. Barnabas initially received the same education as the Greek and British students. The education was given in Greek and English until the Turkish Cypriot teachers came to the school. Adil (2013) states that when Turkish teachers started to work at school, Turkish students braille skills improved. Books written in Turkish with the Braille alphabet were brought from Ankara with the contributions of Turkish teachers. Hence, Turkish Cypriot students had the opportunity to read books written in Turkish as opposed to Greek and English. St. Barnabas School for the Blind also maintains the school reports of the Turkish students in its archives. The school reports belonging to Turkish students were prepared in Turkish. When the report cards related to Turkish student who was educated at the age of 13 at the age of 1959–1960 in the course of the course are examined, information about the training he received can be found. The lessons given to

the students in the related register are Religion, Braille, Turkish, Arithmetic, History, Geography, Nature Garden work, Hand work, Home administration, Music, Body education, Drama poetry and English. The lowest grade the student received was in English. In addition, it is thought that a Turkish girl student attended the school because of the home administration course. It is understood that the name of the teacher was U. (Ulgen) Mustafa, based on the signature on the report. As can be understood from the school report, the Turkish students at the school were educated by Turkish teachers. When the report card of a Turkish Cypriot who was still in the 4th class at the age of 14 in the year of 1959–1960 is examined, it is understood that the courses were the same, except the house administration as in the above example. This situation implies that the student mentioned was male. It is interesting to note that the lowest grade in the school report was for the Turkish lesson Reports, St. Barnabas School for Blind Children Archive.

It is seen in 1959–1960, the courses taken by another Turkish student who was being educated in the first grade, were not different from the students in the other classes. The student received her lowest grade from the Music and Drama poetry course. The highest grade appears to be from the Home administration course. Based on a comment written beneath the teacher's signature, it also reveals that this was actually a female student. It is also understood from this that the name of the teacher was U. (Ulgen) Mustafa. In the 1962–1963 school year, for a Turkish student who was studying in the 6th grade of primary school who was registered as being 19 years old, the names of the lessons were the same and only the Gymnastics lesson was written instead of Braille and Physical Education. The lowest grades of the student in the lecture were in Music and Gymnastics. It is quite remarkable that the student was 19 years old. It is understood that the student was the oldest student among the Turkish students who were educated in the school according to the relevant documents (Reports, St. Barnabas School for Blind Children Archive).

The sight impaired students could have psychological problems in some periods due their unique circumstances. In these cases, school administrators were able to understand the conditions by admitting them to hospital for examination. Dr Salih Ramadan, a physician from the Nicosia Mental (Neurological and Mental Illnesses) Hospital, issued a report on the mental health of a 15-year-old sight impaired student on May 26, 1961. As a result of the examination, Dr. Ramadan stated that the student he examined between 23 and 25 May was very quiet but he was cooperative and did not have any abnormal mental symptoms. Ramadan emphasized that the child was complaining from emotional instability, which caused anxiety and anti-social behaviour, based on the information he received from the headmaster. If these symptoms could be observed in the family's past, these behaviours could be explained and forgiven, and the child was not required to leave the school. According to Dr Ramadan, the teachers should behave in a way that earns the child respect by treating the mistaken behaviour of the child in a tolerant and understanding manner and thus accepting them as a normal person. He also expressed his thoughts with these words, "Being understanding and tolerant towards the child will be the most effective way to deal with other strict punishments on them". It is also strong evidence indicating that the child wants to change because he says he regrets what he has done, and he/she would want "beating" or desired to "commit suicide" is the same behaviour was repeated. Therefore, the managers and teachers were required to act appropriately towards the children. As a result, the doctor stated that the removal of children from school would lead them to be alienated from the society and was therefore not recommended. As can be understood from this report, the school management also provided psychological support for students with mental health problems (Mental report, St. Barnabas School for Blind Children Archive).



After the start of the social conflicts on December 21, 1963, the Turkish Cypriots no longer attended the St. Barnabas School for the Blind in the southern part of Nicosia. Today, there are about 100 students who attend the school on a part-time and full-time basis. There are also approximately 30 full-time and part-time teachers who work at the school. The School is turning from a special school into a Resource and Rehabilitation Centre, having the main responsibility for the provision of education, services and information to individuals of all ages all over Cyprus. Also, in the 2016–2017 school year, there were several Turkish students receiving education at the school on a part-time and full-time basis. However, since there are no Turkish teachers at the school, Turkish students are educated in the Greek and English languages (Personal communication, 2017; Paschali 2011).

## 5 Conclusion

As a result of the research, it was found there were two special education schools under British colonial rule in Cyprus. One of them was the St. Barnabas School for the Blind and the other was the School for the Deaf. It can be understood that the reason that St. Barnabas School for Blind Children was opened was an attempt to develop the relations between the British Colonial administration and the Cypriots. The school is known to have survived as a result of the donations made by the British colonial administration. According to the Blue Book records, the school was established in 1929 with the name “School for Blind Children” and in 1932, it was changed to the “St. Barnabas School for Blind Children”. The reports also contain information about the lessons given at the school for the sight impaired. In tolerance education, Greek students were taught Greek, English and given knowledge about Christianity besides other lessons, while Turkish students were taught Turkish, English, Greek and Islamic religious rules.

The number of students at the school increased steadily from its inception, and there was only a decrease in the number of the students in the 1950–1951 academic year. Information about the gender and the age of the students at the school were noted for the first time in the report from 1950 to 1951. There are documents in school archives showing that females were accepted into the school from 1946 to 1947 onwards. The age of the students at the school usually ranged from 7 to 17. It is also understood from the sources that the graduates of the school provided various job opportunities to the students. Since 1953, with the increasing number of Turkish students studying at the school, Turkish teachers began to be employed. Unfortunately, this situation continued until the breakdown in societal relations between Turkish and Greek Cypriots at the end of 1963.

The schools in Cyprus have been separated into three groups, namely the Greek system of education, the Turkish system of education and Secondary education services after the transfer of the island from the British to the Greeks and Turks. Therefore, the St. Barnabas School for Blind Children and the School for the Deaf were taken under the protection of coeducational schools. Today, the St. Barnabas School for Blind Children continues to provide education to the sight impaired in South Nicosia depending on the ministry of education and two Turkish Cypriots are currently studying at this school due to the fact that there is no educational institution for blind people in Northern Cyprus. Because there are no Turkish teachers in the school these children are not educated in their mother tongue. This situation besides making learning more difficult for children and also prevent them from recognizing their own culture. On the other hand, by this study we also aimed to have

an awareness for providing life-saving services for people with visual impairment in Northern Cyprus. So that, in Northern Cyprus people with visual impairment can also get education in modern institutions and gathered in the society as in the past.

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