THE INTEGRATION OF SECOND GENERATION TURKS AND MOROCCANS: RESEARCH RESULTS IN ANTWERP AND BRUSSELS

Author(s): Veronique Vandzande, Fenella Fleischmann, Gülseli Baysu, Marc Swyngedouw and Karen Phalet

1. Abstract

In the scope of the European research project TIES (‘The Integration of the European Second generation’) 1,751 young adults between 18 and 35 years of age from Antwerp and Brussels (19 communities) took part in extensive, personal interviews about diversity and equal opportunities. The study was carried out by order of the Ministries of Education and Work and of Equal Opportunities, the Brussels Capital Region and the City of Antwerp, The Fund for Scientific Research FWO Flanders, and in cooperation with European partners for the European Science Foundation (ESF) and the Marie-Curie grant scheme.

The study particularly compared the second generation Belgian born Antwerp and Brussels citizens of Turkish and Moroccan descent with fellow citizens of Belgian origin. Random samples of Turkish and Moroccan Belgians from Antwerp and Brussels were matched with native peers from the same city quarters as reference groups.

The study provides an multifaceted image of the persistent inequality of opportunities and the increased diversity in the second generation, compared to the first generation. The second generation finds their way to higher education and to higher occupations; a larger group attains a vocational diploma and finds paid employment; and a considerable minority of discouraged young people leaves school without graduating and/or drops out while searching for a job. This broad spectrum demands a diversified target group policy that pays attention to the differences in educational and labour market routes, experiences and outcomes, among others with respect to origin, gender and place of residence.

On the other hand, it was established that despite the internal diversity, the large majority of young adults in the study - which took place in ethnically diverse and often deprived neighbourhoods - have first-hand experience with obstacles during their school and professional career, such as grade retention and unemployment. In the end, this path of obstacles translates into broadly shared personal experiences of unequal opportunities and discrimination ('unfair or hostile treatment') at school, in the search for work, and on the work floor. Discrimination is experienced not only by disillusioned members of the second generation who leave school prematurely or end up in long-term unemployment; it also lives - and sometimes in an even stronger sense - among Turkish and Moroccan Belgian youngsters with higher diplomas.

Key words: Second generation, integration, education opportunities, labour market, discrimination

2. Objectives

The second generation study forms part of broader European research ("The Integration of the European Second generation" TIES) into the opportunities, experiences and outcomes of second generation Turks and Moroccans in several European cities and of native control groups in the same neighbourhoods. The second generation was born here and grew up as Antwerp or Brussels citizens 'with the addition of the Turkish or Moroccan culture'.

In recent years, the public debate and news reports about diversity and integration have increasingly shifted towards the culture and identity of immigrant minorities as an obstacle for fully-fledged social participation. This study challenges such a one-sided view of culture and substantiates a social-scientific approach based on the combination of (un)equal opportunities and personal choices.

The study aimed specifically at showing how social inequality of opportunities comes into being as a result of a sequence of either missed or taken opportunities. Not only do vulnerable groups miss opportunities more often than others, they are also less frequently given -or likely to take- a second chance. Our attention focuses on the retrospective experiences and choices in the careers as they are experienced by the young adults themselves and on critical barriers as well as leverage in their urban, school and work environment. Which path did they follow at school, at work or while searching for work? How do they experience their opportunities at school or at work, or their social contacts in town? And which choices do they make from their cultural minority position, both within and outside their families?
Clarification of key concepts

This research forms an indispensable addition to available administrative and census data (Neels & Stoop, 2000; Phalet, 2007; Phalet, Deboosere & Bastiaensen, 2007) and to earlier conducted minority surveys from the 1990s (see Lesthaeghe, 2000; Swyngedouw, Phalet & Deschouwer, 1999). Unlike existing research conducted among schools and that monitors groups of young people (Duquet, Glorieux et al., 2006; Lacante, Almaci et al., 2006), the TIES study covers quasi-complete school careers and related labour market outcomes for specific target groups.

For Belgium, the main added value of the TIES data is (1) the broad coverage of the second generation regardless of nationality at birth; (2) a detailed reconstruction of the course of and critical transitions in education and employment careers; (3) extensive additional questions about personal experiences of diversity and discrimination in school, in the search for work and on the work floor; and (4) the possibility of international comparisons with careers and experiences of the second generation in other European cities.

3. Methods and data

1,751 young adults aged 18 to 35 in Antwerp and Brussels (19 municipalities) took part in extensive personal interviews about diversity and equal opportunities. More specifically, the study compared the second generation of Belgian born Antwerp and Brussels citizens of Turkish and Moroccan descent with fellow citizens of Belgian origin. Random samples of Turkish and Moroccan citizens from Antwerp and Brussels were matched with native peers from the same city quarters as reference groups. Fieldwork in Antwerp took place in the spring and autumn of 2007; after some delay the Brussels fieldwork started in the autumn of 2007 and ran through the spring of 2008. The study reached a total of 358 Turkish, 312 Moroccan and 303 native Belgians in Antwerp (N=973; 18% was not reached; 21% refused to participate), and 250 Turkish, 257 Moroccan and 271 native Belgians in Brussels (N=778; non-response could be calculated).

Methodological explanation

The interviewers used a standardised international questionnaire adapted to the Belgian context, which in addition to background characteristics, asked about careers, experiences and outcomes in education and on the labour market. Computer-aided interview methods allowed for adapted questions to sub-groups of respondents with different careers.

The study has a number of limitations. For specific subgroups (e.g. at university or self-employed) the number of respondents was relatively small and if the total number of observations was less than 15, they were not included in the interpretation. The study also met with selective non-response and the data was consequently re-weighted for population distributions of gender and age and place of residence. As a result, on the one hand, the study concentrates on relative differences that provide a picture of the internal diversity within the second generation, e.g. between men and women en between Antwerp and Brussels. On the other hand it focuses on the where and when of inequality of opportunities in the course of educational and professional careers. This information must offer starting points for a proactive policy with respect to specifically vulnerable target groups.

4. Findings

4.1 Educational opportunities

4.1.1 Final qualifications

It is a well-known fact that second generation Turks and Moroccans attain lower qualifications than their native peers from a similar social background. At the same time there are considerable differences between more and less successful subgroups, with Moroccan girls in Brussels clearly taking the lead and Turkish girls from Antwerp finishing last. The second generation is also highly over-represented among early school leavers, where Moroccan girls from Brussels show the lowest amount of drop-out, and the Turks lead the drop-out figures in both cities. Different educational outcomes at the end of the educational path are the result of an accumulation of unequal opportunities that occur during the school career.

4.1.2 Participation in education

One remarkable finding is that when compared for school starting age and school leaving age, minority pupils did not seem to spend very much less time at school than native pupils; however, they did seem to derive less benefit from each additional year at school than native pupils.

4.1.3 Educational choices and outcomes

In general, the second generation has a smaller chance of success at school than comparable native citizens. In comparison with their native peers, minority boys, but girls too, are more likely to repeat one or more grades, although in general, at least half of all the young people - and boys more often than girls - with similar backgrounds will repeat at least one grade. Furthermore, the second generation is over-represented in less promising educational programmes. For instance: Turkish boys in Antwerp are almost three times more likely to enter into special education
than their native control group. And the number of B-recommendations handed out to minority pupils in Antwerp at the start of the secondary education programme, is two to three times higher than for their native peers. Whilst B recommendations in Brussels are, overall, exceptional, both cities show a clear over-representation of the second generation in vocational secondary education (BSO). This might partly explain both groups’ higher drop-out numbers and lower percentage of pupils progressing to a higher education.

Another interesting finding is that within vocational education, minority pupils often select study areas with less promising perspectives in the labour market. Minority boys often end up in construction and car mechanics, minority girls in the personal care sector. Irrespective of their immigrant or native background, girls more often than boys choose study areas such as ‘office’ or ‘people care’, subjects that offer fewer opportunities in the labour market.

Despite apparently having overcome the preceding hurdles in their school careers, the highly select group of second generation higher education students shows a considerably higher percentage of delay and drop-out than their native peers. The very small number of Turkish boys who start a higher education are an exception to the rule: they show a higher number of graduates, who also usually finish within a shorter amount of time. Within higher education, minority students opt for shorter specialisation programmes and they are far less likely to choose a university programme than the native control group.

Another noticeable perception is that minority students seem more likely to suit their choice of higher education to the opportunities in the labour market than their peer native students. For instance: more often than native students do they clearly avoid popular subjects with uncertain labour market perspectives such as communication sciences in favour of exact sciences such as IT or engineering. This rational choice mainly applies to minority girls in higher education, who, quite opposite to minority girls in vocational education, and more so than native female students, are overrepresented in more promising educational subjects such as business administration, medicine or pharmaceutics.

4.2 Chances in the labour market

Again, the study perceived an accumulation of unequal opportunities, both with respect to origin and gender, in labour participation, occupational attainment, income and professional mobility or chances of promotion. It is important to note that inequalities in the labour market come on top of unequal educational opportunities and that consequently, the second generation generally does indeed get a reward for their educational investment, but to a considerably lesser degree than their native peers who made a comparable educational effort. Where the labour market, other than education, often shows bigger differences according to gender than according to origin, the TIES research provides exceptional retrospective insight into the accumulation of the often small differences in the odds ratios in the course of the professional career.

4.2.1 Labour market participation

Unequal chances of paid employment may result in unemployment (including the so-called ‘discouraged unemployed’) or economic inactivity. The interpretation of unemployment figures must therefore take into account a differential ‘self-selection’ of the economically active population: minority women, in particular, stay at home more often, and particularly Moroccans in Brussels spend more years studying than other youths. The latter particularly causes the overrepresentation of Turks from Brussels among the unemployed, which raises the question of ‘hidden unemployment’ among Moroccans with a long study history and no graduation certificate. In Antwerp a larger percentage of both Turkish and Moroccan women are inactive, and on top, they show a much higher degree of unemployment. In all, the risk of unemployment is much higher in Brussels than in Antwerp. And youths in Antwerp make more use of public or private employment agencies than those in Brussels.

4.2.2 Transition from school to work

In both cities, but with Brussels in the lead, all youths with a similar less advantaged social background experience difficulties in the transition process from school to work. In Antwerp, one in three school leavers remains unemployed for at least one year; in Brussels it is one in two. Both cities show a relative overrepresentation of Turkish women and Moroccan women and men among unemployed school leavers. Turkish men form the exception - they accept jobs more quickly than all the other groups. Another remarkable point is that compared to native citizens and women, long-term unemployment before their first job is less frequent among minority men. They are, on the other hand, more likely to suffer long-term unemployment in the course of their subsequent career. These indications of a more vulnerable labour market position for minorities, led the researchers to take a closer look at the different type of jobs that young people end up in.

4.2.3 Occupational attainment

As we know, the second generation is highly underrepresented in high-level occupations and shows a strong overrepresentation in semi-skilled and unskilled labour. The latter is particularly striking in Antwerp where demand for low-skilled manual labour is higher than in Brussels. The same differences as in current occupational attainment can be found as early as the first job after leaving school, although in both cities an upwards mobility between the first and the current job can be noted for both Turkish and native Belgians, but not for Moroccans.
Although differences in occupational attainment correspond with the generally lower educational level of immigrant minorities, even the higher educated individuals from the second generation have less access to higher occupations (such as professional and managerial jobs) than their native peers. That is also true for women, by the way, and regardless of their origin, despite the fact that on average, they reach higher educational levels than men.

Other remarkable facts are the overrepresentation of Antwerp minority women in routine service jobs like sales, and the well-known overrepresentation of Turkish men in small businesses and among the self-employed in both cities. A point of concern is furthermore that contrary to Brussels, minority groups in Antwerp are offered very limited access to jobs in the public sector. And Brussels further shows an overrepresentation of minority men in the smallest companies, as opposed to their overrepresentation in large industrial enterprises in Antwerp.

Last but not least, a close look at the quality of the first and current jobs shows that particularly in Antwerp, minorities are much more likely to work below their educational level than native citizens. In Brussels, this is also true for a relatively large part of native citizens with a comparable social background.

4.3 Diversity and discrimination

Asked about how they see their chances of getting work, Turkish, and especially Moroccan Belgians, are very much less optimistic than native citizens. In their search for work, the large majority of particularly minority men experience unequal treatment. Two thirds of the Turkish and more than three quarters of Moroccan men reported one or more personal experiences of discrimination while looking for work. Of those with a job, a majority also experienced discrimination at work, mostly from colleagues and customers, and to a lesser extent also from foremen and management.

Broadly shared experiences of discrimination in the labour market involve objective inequality in the labour market between minorities and natives. It appears that both in terms of access to paid employment and transfer to higher positions, Belgium - and Flanders to a greater extent than Wallonia - is among the European countries with highest discrimination rates as regards ethnic origin (after equality for relevant characteristics such as qualifications, age and place of residence). In this context, Moroccans - and particularly Moroccan men - report considerably more discriminatory treatment than Turkish men. Furthermore, higher educated minority members report as much or more discrimination in the labour market than lower-skilled people, which could be an indication of a ‘glass ceiling’ or, on the other hand, of more fighting spirit against unequal treatment.

As concerns workplace diversity, Brussels shows better results than Antwerp in both the public and private sector. In both cities, immigrants were more frequently found to work in companies with large numbers of minority workers than comparable native workers. This would suggest that in addition to schools and neighbourhoods, the workplace is also highly segregated along ethnic lines. In both cities, Turks, more often than Moroccans, tend to work in semi-homogeneous Turkish organisations or companies.

5. Conclusions and policy implications

5.1 Educational opportunities

The data shows that the second generation Turks and Moroccans, compared to native pupils from the same neighbourhoods with a comparable social background, are more likely to lose out in terms of education and are offered or take fewer second chances. Taking account of social backgrounds, in a European context the Belgian education system shows a high degree of ethnic discrimination. Not only are minority and native pupils offered different opportunities at the start of their secondary education (B recommendations are more frequently extended to immigrants), the differences between their school careers increase as the education progresses. Pupils of Turkish and Moroccan origin run a much higher risk of dropping out of school than native pupils, not in the least because they are more likely to end up in special education (BSO). They are also offered fewer opportunities to transfer to higher education programmes.

The concentration of minority pupils in BSO is the result of a ‘dual waterfall effect’. First of all, many minority children are being sent to BSO at the early age of 11 years after a ‘B’ recommendation at the start of secondary school (the first waterfall). Secondly, even minority pupils with an ‘A’ recommendation, but who started their secondary school career in a ‘generalist’ direction, each year-end still run a higher risk of ending up in BSO than native pupils (the second waterfall). This double waterfall effect cannot be fully explained as resulting from the social background of minority families or earlier incurred delays in individual school careers.

Ethnic inequality is at least partly (re)produced at school and much of it can therefore be dealt with within the school boundaries as well. In this context, the curriculum of future teachers should focus even more on education in a multicultural environment and on teaching socially weaker groups. Systematic attention for dealing with diversity in professional actions should be a standard component of the training and traineeships of teachers and school psychologists. Furthermore, it is recommended to conduct a targeted policy aiming at more adequate study orientation of immigrant students, taking account of their specific linguistic and cultural backgrounds and tailored to
their learning potential at school. Following the Dutch example, this could include systematic screening of diagnostic instruments frequently used by Pupil Guidance Centres (CLBs). The introduction of a 'culture-fair test' quality label for tests that meet impartiality criteria could prove useful in this respect.

A second recommendation involves further development of broad monitoring systems to enable early detection of language and learning problems (as early as kindergarten), and further improvement of support systems for teachers that would allow them to respond to learning problems and refer them effectively if necessary. Implementation of these measures may never lead to stigmatisation of the groups involved (as is sometimes the case at present).

With respect to BSO it is advisable to improve the quality of a number of programmes for everyone. Without seeking to totally limit vocational education to preparation for the labour market, more synchronisation of BSO with the actual labour market is essential. Minority girls in particular are highly concentrated in vocational programmes that offer limited chances of a job compared to other programmes. In order to monitor and, where necessary, improve vocational education, programmes without clear added value for the labour market should be shut down or reformed. The system further requires clear and honest communication to pupils and parents about (the absence of) professional perspectives. At present, too many misconceptions exist in this respect. Existing unemployment figures for each graduation programme that are currently prepared by the employment services, are a useful source of information and should be shared with a broader public.

5.2 Labour market and discrimination

The large majority (80%) of both native and minority respondents in Antwerp and Brussels agree that ethnic and religious minorities frequently suffer discrimination in Belgium. Personal experiences of discrimination while searching for work and at the workplace, both by colleagues and customers, but also at school, by peers and teachers, are a broadly shared complaint. The main grounds for discrimination commonly reported are origin, skin colour and religion (the latter mainly for women).

Concluding, public perception presents an image of widespread and broadly recognised unequal treatment of immigrants on the basis of their origin, skin colour or religion. We found broad support for a pro-active anti-discriminatory policy in both cities. Generally speaking, it can be stated that the Equal Treatment Act and the set-up of discrimination reporting centres are both highly necessary and that the required resources must be provided to ensure optimal implementation of the Act and adequate operation of the reporting centres. New and persistent initiatives are more than welcome. The database of experts (www.expertendatabank.be) is a successful example in this respect.

It seems advisable to offer the Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism (and, optionally, competent organisations such as VDAB, FOREM (Community and regional office of Employment and Vocational Education) and ACTIRIS (the Brussels Regional Service for Employment)) the legal option to detect acts of discrimination by conducting practical tests targeted at specific companies, namely those that are suspected of discriminatory practices during recruitment. From a legal point of view these practical tests should be allowed as evidence for the defence as well as for the prosecution.

Full reference of study report(s) and or paper(s) and other key publications of the study summarised here


