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Maurice Crul ^a

^a Sociology , Free University of Amsterdam and Erasmus University , Rotterdam

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Snakes and Ladders in Educational Systems: Access to Higher Education for Second-Generation Turks in Europe

Maurice Crul

Based on the first international standardised survey on the second generation in Europe, I compare the school trajectories of youth from the same origin group (parents born in Turkey), with the same starting position (born in Europe) and the same socio-economic status (parents with only modest educational credentials) in six European countries. The differences between countries are substantial. The opportunity to enter higher education is seven times greater in the highest-performing country than in the lowest. These differences can be explained by the institutional arrangements in education in interaction with the available family resources. The article highlights the importance of the oft-neglected national school context.

Keywords: Turkish Second Generation; School Success; School System; Higher Education; European Comparison

Introduction

In this article I compare the school trajectories of young adults from the same origin group—those whose parents were born in Turkey but who were, themselves, born in Europe (the second generation)—across the six European countries of Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Austria. I concentrate on second-generation Turkish youngsters whose parents only had low levels of schooling, in order to make the comparison across countries fair.

There are large differences in school outcomes for the Turkish second generation in the six countries, particularly for those attending higher education—the main focus of this article. I define higher education as studies which lead to a BA or an MA qualification. Higher education outcomes are relatively easy to compare across

Maurice Crul is Professor of Sociology at the Free University of Amsterdam and Erasmus University in Rotterdam. Correspondence to: Prof. M. Crul, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Burgemeester Oudlaan 50, Rotterdam 3062, PA, The Netherlands. E-mail: crul@fsw.eur.nl

countries (in contrast to, for instance, different upper- or post-secondary education levels). I focus on this *absolute* measure of success (higher education) as well as on the gap with students of native parentage (whose parents have similar low-level educational credentials). Both are important to assess and explain. A higher education qualification usually opens up the opportunity to establish a middle- or upper-class position in society. Big differences in higher education attendance will thus have a real effect on how the Turkish second generation will develop in each country. But school success can only be fully judged relative to the performance of the majority group.

The literature on the children of immigrants and inequality in education is vast and rapidly expanding. Many studies have documented the considerable gaps between the children of immigrants and students of native parentage. Most researchers explain these gaps in terms of class or ethnic differences (Brinbaum and Cebolla-Boado 2007; Crul and Doomernik 2003; Heath and Brinbaum 2007; Heath *et al.* 2008; Heckmann *et al.* 2001; Herzog-Punzenberger 2003; Moldenhawer *et al.* 2009; Neels 2000; Penn and Lambert 2009; Phalet *et al.* 2007; Simon 2003; Worbs 2003). In this article I move beyond classical explanations of ethnic and parental background by comparing school trajectories and outcomes for the same ethnic group across countries. Cross-country studies that compare the school outcomes of the children of immigrants are still scarce. In a number of studies comparisons between countries have been made based on national datasets. As the authors of these studies acknowledge, the comparisons suffer from several shortcomings due to differences in the timing of the surveys and in the ethnic, class and age composition of groups, and to important differences in the indicators and concepts used in the surveys (Crul and Holdaway 2009; Crul and Schneider 2009; Crul and Vermeulen 2006; Heath and Brinbaum 2007). International projects like PISA and TIMSS do make it possible to compare broad categories of immigrant students across countries using the same test instruments but the numbers are usually too small to compare specific ethnic groups across countries. Some of these studies, however, did identify important school-system differences for the children of immigrants—the most prominent being the OECD (2006) study *Where Immigrant Students Succeed*.

With this article I hope to contribute to this important emerging field of comparative educational studies aimed at immigrant schoolchildren. I sketch a first, still largely descriptive, picture of how school trajectories differ for the Turkish second generation across the six countries, based on the European TIES dataset that was especially created for this purpose. The TIES survey was carried out by survey bureaus under the supervision of the eight TIES partner research institutes.¹

Theoretical Framework: Comparative Integration Context Theory

I explain the differences in school trajectories and outcomes for the Turkish second generation between the six countries and the comparison group of native parentage by making use of *comparative integration context theory* (Crul and Schneider 2010;

Crul *et al.* 2012a). This theory is specifically designed for international comparative work. Crul and Schneider argue that integration outcomes across countries are primarily shaped and pre-structured by the specific national institutional context (such as the type of citizenship regime or institutional arrangement in education and the labour market). More precisely, they argue that the outcomes across countries are the result of the interaction between these institutional arrangements and the agency of individuals and groups, who either go along with or challenge established rules and 'habits' in a given societal sub-setting like school or the workplace.

Comparative integration context theory unites two perspectives. From that of the integration context, it investigates the importance of national and local 'institutional arrangements' facilitating or hampering access and integration, and reproducing or reducing inequality at different stages of the school career (Crul and Schneider 2010: 1259). 'Failed integration' can thus be conceived of as an indicator of obstacles to, for instance, academic tracks in secondary school or higher education. Here the common academic perspective on 'integration' is inverted. The question is not why individuals fail to integrate but why national school institutions fail to be inclusive.

National school systems are generally studied through the lens of their differentiating effects on children from various ethnic groups and social classes. I also do this by looking at the gaps between children of ethnic origin and students of native parentage. However comparing different ethnic groups in the same local or national contexts mainly sets the focus on the characteristics of the immigrant groups. The most logical explanations to hand are culture and class, but they do not tell us the whole story. We also need to study school outcomes as part of the system's idiosyncrasy—which generally comes to the fore only in comparison across national school systems.

Our point of departure for comparing the effects of institutional arrangements in school is the distinction made by van der Werfhorst and Mijs (2010: 410) between *differentiation* and *standardisation* as the two most important aspects in which school systems differ. In this article I mostly concentrate on the first aspect: differentiation. Under this heading, van der Werfhorst and Mijs look at two aspects—(early) selection and tracking. A number of studies have documented the effect of early selection and tracking on educational inequalities, with most showing convincingly that they affect the children of lower-class background negatively (Ammermüller 2005; Bauern and Riphahn 2006; Breen and Jonsson 2005; Brunello and Checchi 2007; Horn 2009; van der Werfhorst and Mijs 2010). The effect of early selection and tracking on immigrant youth is much-less-well documented (Crul and Vermeulen 2006; Entorf and Lauk 2008; Heckmann *et al.* 2001; Penn and Lampert 2009; Shavit 1990). Entorf and Lauk (2008) and Shavit (1990) show that inequalities get magnified for ethnic minority groups.

In analysing the school trajectories in the TIES study, I identified four further factors that influence differentiation: *the starting age in school* (attending pre-school), *the number of school contact hours in primary school*, *the permeability of the school system* and *the way in which the transition to higher education is organised*. A number

of studies have already discussed the importance of not or only partly attending pre-school in the countries I study here (see, for instance, Crul and Doornik 2003; Herzog-Punzenberger 2003). I show that pre-school attendance is particularly important for the children of immigrants in school systems that have early tracking. The countries that have early selection (Germany and Austria) are also the countries with the fewest contact hours in primary school. The number of contact hours affects the amount of homework that needs to be done outside school and the level of support that is expected from the parents (Worbs 2003). The effects of the permeability of the school system have been little researched (however, for an overview see Crul *et al.* 2009). By the permeability of the school system I mean whether or not it is easy to switch from a vocational to an academic track in secondary school and *vice versa*. High permeability, on the one hand, leaves room for second chances, which the Turkish second generation in particular takes up, but it also leaves room for down-streaming, which also affects second-generation youth more strongly. Finally I look at how the transition to higher from upper-secondary education is organised. In some countries the transfer is virtually automatic but, in others, it involves a more conscious choice. In the latter case the Turkish second generation seems to progress less often into higher education.

The second important perspective in comparative integration context theory includes the agency of individuals and groups actively developing options, making choices and challenging given opportunities and structural configurations (Crul and Schneider 2010: 1260). In different contexts, the subjective and objective *options* of individuals to gain access and to claim participation depend on individual and group resources (i.e. economic, social and cultural capital). Different school characteristics at each stage of the school career interact with the available family resources, which leads to a variety of outcomes at important selection points in the school career. This includes, on the negative side, the difficulty of giving children practical help with homework in primary school or, on the positive side, the strong drive of some parents to push their children ahead through education (see also Kasinitz *et al.* 2008; Suárez-Orozco *et al.* 2008). To unravel the complex puzzle of school trajectories and outcomes, I analyse the opportunities which schools offer for second-generation Turkish pupils and students, and their demands in terms of parental involvement in school (which varies across countries).

Crul *et al.* (2012b) have analysed differences in school trajectories across countries based on the comparative integration context theory. They developed the theory further by arguing that it is important to look at how school trajectories (starting from pre-school) develop. They show that present or final school outcomes are often the accumulative results of complex underlying processes over a long period of time (between 15 and 20 years). The focus on school trajectories helps to uncover the most important selection processes in different phases of the school career. With the focus on the process, the generally sharper line between 'success' and 'failure' at the end point transforms into more fuzzy sequences. We can, for instance, identify intermediate stages of failure in a school career that nonetheless ends successfully

(or *vice versa*). Crul *et al.* (2012b) emphasise that, by looking at the development of school trajectories, we are able to directly link outcomes at important selection points to the interaction of specific institutional arrangements (like early selection or tracking) and agency (like the support of parents) before and around critical junctures.

The TIES Survey Data

In this article I compare the school trajectories of Turkish second-generation young adolescents in six European countries, making use of the international standardised TIES survey. In each of the six countries, the respondents were interviewed in two large cities—the capital city and the city with the largest Turkish population. Note that, when I refer to ‘countries’, I actually refer to the population in these two cities. Between April 2006 and December 2008, country-specific surveys were implemented in eight countries, leading to 6,145 successful interviews with second-generation respondents (one or two parent(s) born in either Turkey, Morocco or the former Yugoslavia) and 3,626 respondents of native parentage (both parents born in the survey country), totalling 9,771 respondents. The country teams used different sampling techniques to target the second generation in the 15 cities. Where possible (Sweden and the Netherlands) we used information from the city register on the place of birth of the respondent and the parents. However, this was not possible or was only partly possible in Belgium, France, Germany, Austria and Switzerland, where the country teams used a combination of name recognition, register information and screening to tease out the second-generation (see Crul *et al.* 2012a). Our sampling methods made it possible to include naturalised second-generation youth in all countries. The respondents, aged between 18 and 35 years old and all born in Europe, were interviewed face-to-face. The respondents answered the same questionnaire in all eight countries. In this article I only focus on the Turkish second generation; because they reside in seven out of the eight survey countries, they are the most interesting group to compare.

To make the comparison across countries fairer I only look at second-generation Turkish youth with parents who went to lower-secondary school for a few years only (see Table 1). The parents’ educational level usually explains a big part of their offsprings’ school outcomes. In the case of the Turkish parents, the educational level overall is very low. Almost half of the parents went only to primary school. The second-largest group of parents completed a few years of lower-secondary education. We observe the largest discrepancies in the outcomes of second-generation Turkish youth between those who have parents with only primary school or a few years of lower-secondary education on the one hand, and those whose parents have upper-secondary and tertiary education on the other. Between half and two-thirds of our Turkish second-generation respondents have parents with low or very low educational credentials.² The subsample for the Turkish second generation, of whom both parents have only low educational credentials, is between half and two-thirds of the

Table 1. Turkish second-generation whose parents only possess low educational qualifications

Country	%	N	Total N	Missing cases
Austria	60	263	440	18
Belgium	60	320	531	54
France	71	335	471	29
Germany	83	323	391	112
Sweden	38	89	234	16
The Netherlands	63	316	500	0
Total	64	1,646	2,567	246

Source: TIES survey 2007–08.

total sample of Turkish-origin respondents. Even though these numbers are substantial, those of respondents in higher education (the main focus of this article) can be still be small (see Table 2), which limits the type of analysis we can do. I have therefore chosen to restrict myself to treating school trajectories largely descriptively and weighing influencing factors on school outcomes only through simple regression analysis.

The respondents of native descent whose parents have modest educational credentials only form a small minority—less than 15 per cent—within their sample. This is a serious limitation of the TIES survey, because it hampers a proper comparison between the second-generation groups in the survey and the respondents of native parentage. I therefore use the results of the sample of native parentage only as a rough indicator for the relative success of the Turkish second generation in each country and am very cautious about making strong claims based on this comparison.

In the TIES survey we asked respondents retrospectively about their school trajectories. This gave us the opportunity, as is emphasised in comparative integration context theory, to look at the process of school integration over time.

Table 2. Comparative educational levels of Turkish second-generation and respondents of native origin whose parents only possess low educational qualifications (%)

Country	Turkish second generation			Respondents of native parentage		
	In higher education	Not in higher education	N	In higher education	Not in higher education	N
Austria	15	85	263	13	87	48
Belgium	18	82	320	30	70	46
France	37	63	335	50	50	32
Germany	5	95	323	5	95	89
Sweden	32	68	89	50	50	30
The Netherlands	27	73	316	39	61	129

Source: TIES survey 2007–08.

Table 3. Turkish second-generation and native-origin respondents following academic tracks in secondary education and whose parents only possess low educational qualifications (%)

Country	Turkish second generation			Respondents of native parentage		
	Following academic track	Not following academic track	N	Following academic track	Not following academic track	N
Austria	18	82	263	23	77	48
Belgium	50	50	320	70	30	46
France	46	54	335	69	31	32
Germany	12	88	323	17	83	89
Sweden	51	49	89	56	44	30
The Netherlands	23	77	316	37	63	129

Source: TIES survey 2007–08.

The TIES survey provides information about all the steps, starting with pre-school. I use this unique information to show in more detail where the school trajectories of second-generation Turkish youth start to differ across countries, and in particular how students are selected at two crucial points in the educational system—in secondary school and the transition to higher education.

We also asked about the support from parents and siblings which respondents received. However, the method for measuring this support retrospectively could potentially bias our result because of our respondents' selective memories. When we compare outcomes for the two groups across countries we see the same kind of ranking of country outcomes from low to high levels of support, giving us confidence that the retrospective recollection of support by our respondents follows a country pattern that reflects the different support needs of school systems. Still it begs caution in the interpretation of our findings.

Table 4. Percentage Turkish second-generation whose parents only possess low educational qualifications—years between start of education and tracking

Country	Mean age on entering (early childhood) education	Age at track selection	Years of education before selection
Austria	4.9	10	5.1
Belgium	3.0	14	11.0
France	3.1	15	11.9
Germany	4.2	10–12	5.8/7.8
Sweden	3.1	15	11.9
The Netherlands	4.0	12	8.0

Note: In Berlin, children are selected two years later than in Frankfurt; hence the age-range differences in the German data.

Source: TIES survey 2007–08.

The Higher Education Outcomes of the Turkish Second Generation Compared

I concentrate here on the successful group (those who are pursuing higher education or who already have a higher-education qualification). As the survey group is aged 18 to 35 years old, a substantial number are still in some sort of education. I include those who are still studying because I am primarily interested in their school trajectories and the influence of resources on their pathway to higher education. However, I have not accounted for nor analysed the effects of drop-out from higher education. Since the respondents all have parents with only low educational credentials, there is clear evidence of intergenerational mobility (something which is often missed with cross-sectional data) in the Netherlands, Sweden and France.

In the countries with the best results, between one quarter and one third of the second generation can be found in higher education. In Germany, however, fewer than one in 20 second-generation Turks makes it. If I compare the results with respondents of native parentage (with similar low educational credentials), we obtain the same ranking. High percentages of respondents of native parentage in higher education can be found in France and Sweden; the lowest outcomes are in Germany and Austria, with those for Belgium and the Netherlands in between. This suggests that similar national selection mechanisms operate for both groups. In Germany and Austria, the Turkish second generation do slightly better than respondents of native parentage, suggesting that the educational background of the parents, rather than ethnicity, plays a major role in these two countries. The gap with the group of native parentage is the largest in those countries where most second-generation Turkish respondents go on to higher education. Here ethnic origin seems to play an additional role. In the next sections I look at where and how differences between countries occur. Where the numbers among the respondents of native parentage allow, I also compare the outcomes between the two groups.

Institutional Arrangements around the Point of First Selection

In all countries, the most important first selection point is that into academic tracks, as distinct from selection into middle and vocational tracks in secondary education. In most countries, the timing of the selection is at the beginning of secondary school. Exceptions are France and Belgium, which select only after lower-secondary school. In Sweden, selection takes place at the end of *Grundskola* (primary school), which includes the lower part of secondary school. I look at the best-positioned group, prepared to continue into higher education—those following academic tracks. In Germany this is the *Gymnasium* track, in Austria the *AHS-Unterstufe*, in France the *Lycée Général* or *Technologique*, in Belgium, *ASO* or *TSO* and, in the Netherlands, *HAVO* or *VWO*. Although *Gymnasium* in Sweden is officially undifferentiated and all *Gymnasium* programmes potentially give access to higher education, I distinguish between programmes with a vocational and those with an academic orientation—a distinction which indeed proves relevant for their future career.

In France, Belgium and Sweden, about half of the Turkish second generation is selected into an academic track in secondary school. In Germany and Austria, not even one in five enter into *Gymnasium*. The case of the Netherlands is in between. In all countries (far) fewer Turkish second-generation youngsters reached an academic track compared to the native-origin group. I look at three types of institutional arrangement to explain the differences across countries and in relation to the group of native parentage: starting age of schooling, number of contact hours and age at which selection takes place.

Starting Age of Schooling

Our Turkish second-generation respondents in France and Belgium were the youngest to go to school: almost 90 per cent went to pre-school at age two or three. Pre-school, although optional in these two countries, is an integral part of the school system. The mean age for entering (pre-)school for second-generation Turks in Stockholm is three. However, Sweden is the country with the widest range: some children went to *Barne* (pre-school) at a very early age, while others stayed home until the beginning of compulsory schooling at age seven. In the German-speaking countries (Germany and Austria) the average starting age is much later (between the ages of four and five).³ The main reason for the higher average age is that many children did not attend kindergarten. In the Netherlands the average starting age is four. The starting age in each country is mostly dependent on national policies based on belief systems about what is considered a 'good age' to enter pre-school. In Belgium and France, pre-school attendance is common among all groups and has an almost compulsory character. In the other countries going to pre-school is much less common and, as a result, the variation between and within groups is bigger. In Germany and Austria this results in many second-generation youngsters not going to pre-school. These variations in starting age mean that second-generation Turkish respondents began their educational careers in very different ways. In France, they began to learn French in an educational environment at the age of two or three—on average, two years earlier than in German-speaking countries. Many first-generation Turkish parents in Germany and Austria were responsible for helping their children to learn German as a second language because their children did not go to pre-school.

In countries where there is considerable variation in pre-school attendance (Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden) I analyse the effect this has on streaming into academic tracks. In both Germany and Austria, I find a significant (** $p < 0.05$) positive effect of pre-school attendance on academic-track selection in secondary school. For respondents with native-born parents (with low educational credentials) I found no effect, showing that pre-school attendance in the two countries is especially important for the children of immigrant descent.

In Sweden and the Netherlands I found no significant effect (although in both cases fewer children attend an academic track if they do not go to pre-school). The

differences in Sweden are smallest. In France the variation in pre-school attendance is too small to make a proper comparison.

Age of Selection and School Contact Hours

Another relevant aspect of the first selection is how many years have passed between entering educational facilities and the selection into different school tracks. This is significant not only for the sake of exposure to the majority language, but also for the increased opportunity to acquire the skills (starting from a disadvantaged position) necessary for selection into an academic track.

Although I cannot prove the effect of age of selection from the data to hand, the outcomes do clearly point in a certain direction. If we take the mean age at which our respondents entered school and the formal selection age in each country, the percentage of children of Turkish descent who make it into an academic situation increases with the number years of education before any selection is made.

The situation seems least favourable in Austria and Germany, with a period of on average between five and seven years of common education prior to selection. Compulsory schooling in these two countries begins only at age six, so that considerable numbers of children have been in an educational institution for only four years before the most important decision on their future school careers is made. This is already quite short but, combined with the fact that the majority of schools in German-speaking countries only offer half-day programmes, further limits the contact hours between teachers and children. The compressed time framework (late start, relatively few contact hours and early selection) makes the opportunity for second-generation Turkish children in Germany and Austria to enter *Gymnasium* very small. Their counterparts in the Netherlands, located precisely in the middle range of years in education before selection, also rank in the middle with regard to the percentage having pursued the academic track. At the other end of the spectrum, in countries with an early start *and* a late selection (France, Sweden and Belgium), about half of the second-generation Turkish respondents followed the academic track. If we compare the Swedish case on the one hand (with large differences in the starting age) and Germany and Austria on the other, it seems that it is the combination with early selection that makes not attending pre-school a significant factor for the Turkish second generation.

Early selection in Germany and Austria seems to be a similar barrier for respondents of native parents (with low educational credentials) as for the children of Turkish descent, reflecting a general inequality of the school system (Kristen and Dollmann 2010). Not attending pre-school, however, makes the barrier for the Turkish second generation even higher. The Swedish system (which has the least differentiation of all the six school systems) is the only one which, up to upper-secondary school, operates equally for the Turkish second generation and for students of native parentage.

Table 5. Percentage Turkish second generation in an academic track whose parents only possess low educational qualifications and who have rarely, or never, helped with or controlled time spent on homework

	NL	DE	SE	FR	AT	BE
Controlled time on homework	21.3	5.9	67.4	40.3	10.1	57.0
Helped with homework	24.2	10.2	58.5	48.2	13.5	n.a.

Source: TIES survey 2007–08.

The Interaction between Institutional Arrangements and Family Resources

The TIES survey asked a number of questions about parental and sibling involvement in school. It asked about parents helping with and controlling the time spent on homework, and talked about school and meeting with teachers. Additionally two questions were asked about the help given by older siblings. Independently from each other, I tested these six different aspects of parent and sibling school involvement to see how they influenced academic track access as the dependent variable. I tested whether outcomes were significant based on a three-answer scale: very often/often; sometimes; or rarely/never (see Table 5).

Only a very small group of Turkish parents was actually able to help with homework in a practical way. Therefore, only in Austria do we see a small significant positive effect of practical help with homework ($*p < 0.1$) on tracking; in all other countries, the effect is not significant. Because of their own low level of education and second-language difficulties, most parents apparently were unable to give support that really made a difference. The result of this is, however, quite different between the countries. In Germany, only one in ten of the pupils whose parents were unable to help with homework went to *Gymnasium*. In Belgium and France, more than half of those similarly lacking parental support made it onto an academic track.

Controlling the time spent on homework—something parents could do without much content comprehension—seems to have been a more effective strategy. This is a highly significant factor in Austria ($***p < 0.01$), Germany ($***p < 0.01$) and France ($***p < 0.01$). In Germany, the likelihood of second-generation Turkish children entering an academic track dropped to almost zero (only 6 per cent) when parents did not control time spent on homework. By contrast, about a quarter of the children of parents who did exercise control made it into *Gymnasium*. In Austria, the same applies to almost a third, even though this percentage is still much lower than in most other countries.

I see a similar pattern when it comes to talking about school and meeting with teachers. Again, I find significant effects only in Austria (talking about school $***p < 0.01$; meeting the teacher $***p < 0.01$) and Germany (talking about school $*p < 0.1$; meeting the teacher $**p < 0.05$). Pupils whose parents were less active concerning school matters experienced seriously reduced opportunities in these two countries. The same applies to the effect of an older sibling talking with respondents about school or helping with homework, being again only significant in Austria

(talking about school $**p < 0.05$) and Germany (helping with homework $**p < 0.05$; talking about school $***p < 0.01$). In Austria, slightly more than a quarter of the children with a sibling who often talked with them about school entered an academic track. The number is less than 10 per cent for those children whose siblings rarely or never talked about school with them.

Sweden is an interesting contrasting case because, here, parental involvement negatively correlates with performance in school. It seems that Turkish parents more often controlled homework ($**p < 0.05$) and talked about school ($**p < 0.05$)—or felt the need to do so—when children did *not* perform well in school. The average or above-average student apparently did not need the exercise of such control to be prompted to follow an academic track.

The number of school contact hours seems to play a role in the intensity of support that is expected of parents. In the half-day school systems in Germany and Austria, parents are expected to give homework support to their children in the afternoon. In Sweden, homework is done mostly in afternoon classes within school. Institutional arrangements in school indirectly affect the relevance of family resources for school success. To show this graphically, I singled out children whose parents did not help with nor control homework. In Sweden, Belgium and France, this did not have an effect on the share of those going into academic tracks. In Germany, on the other hand, without this kind of family support it was almost impossible to enter an academic track. The Dutch and Austrian cases fall somewhere in between.

In the Swedish case, the lack of parental resources in Turkish families does not lead to a reduced entrance into academic programmes compared to respondents of native parentage (whose parents have similar low educational credentials). In France, Belgium and the Netherlands it does. Parents talking about school is the most significant factor encouraging respondents of native parentage to enter an academic track in all three countries. This variable proves to be a good proxy for parental involvement in school affairs for parents of native origin, though it does not appear to be a significant factor for Turkish parents. A detailed knowledge of the complex school system in France, Belgium and the Netherlands is very important for making decisions in relation to school trajectories. The orientation process in France, which regulates the tracking towards upper-secondary school, and the school advisory process at the end of primary school in the Netherlands, are crucial and usually call for intense parental guidance. The outcomes of the the orientation and the advisory processes determine future school career pathways. The hypothesis could be that Turkish parents (particularly when they talk a lot about school) do not possess the knowledge to navigate these advisory processes effectively.

Institutional Arrangements in the Transition to Higher Education, and Family/Individual Resources

Despite the fact that academic tracks generally aim to lead pupils directly into higher education, two relevant phenomena are to be observed here—pursuing an academic

track is no guarantee for actually entering higher education afterwards and, conversely, there are many students in higher education who did not come from an academic track.

The Permeability of the School System

My findings indicate clearly that a school system is permeable because it allows pupils both to stream up and to stream down. In Austria, the percentage of up-streamed second-generation respondents (whose parents are only minimally educated) is 53; for Belgium the figure is 31 per cent, Germany 25, France 11, the Netherlands 46 and Sweden 19 per cent.

In the Dutch case, we see a similar but less pronounced trend (34 per cent) for the students of native parentage with low-educated parents. In the Austrian case, the numbers are too small to make a reliable comparison with the group of native parentage, but the trend is the same as for the Turkish second generation.

The Dutch system is selective at the beginning of secondary school, dividing pupils into different tracks as early as age 12. But this early selection is somewhat mitigated by the many opportunities to stream up into academic tracks and higher education. Once on the alternative route, the mechanisms for second-generation Turks and those of native parentage are no longer that different—about three-quarters (of each group) take a route through middle vocational education (*MBO*), which is three years longer than the direct route; about one quarter enters through up-streaming during upper-secondary school (*HAVO*), which is only one year longer than the direct route.

Compared to children on the direct route, these students generally have parents with very low levels of education (often only primary school or no education at all). They live in more cramped houses, have less room in which to do their homework and are less likely to have older siblings already in tertiary education who could help them with school. The indirect route seems to be an alternative for persistent students from families with very low cultural and social capital.

The Austrian case is interesting as a contrast to the Dutch one because pupils who move up from the non-academic track do not experience the same delay as in the Dutch case (a three-year-longer route) in getting a diploma that gives them access to university. In Austria, at the end of lower-secondary education, the students coming from *Hauptschule* can directly switch to *AHS Oberstufe*, the upper-secondary academic track lasting four years, or can continue on to *BHS*, the upper-secondary vocational track lasting five years. Both provide a *Matura diplom* for university entrance.

Table 6 shows the opposite effect: down-streaming.⁴ Down-streaming from an academic to a vocational track occurs the most often in Belgium (both among the Turkish second generation and among respondents of native parentage), followed by Austria and Germany. Pupils in Belgium are first selected into one of the two academic tracks (*ASO* and *TSO*) or the vocational track (*BSO*) during secondary

Table 6. Percentage Turkish second-generation and native-origin respondents (whose parents only possess low educational qualifications) down-streaming or not transferring to higher education

Country	Turkish second-generation respondents	Native-origin respondents
Austria	56	n.a.
Belgium	66	45
France	22	27
Germany	52	n.a.
Sweden	43	21
The Netherlands	26	27

Source: TIES survey 2007–08.

school. As we saw earlier, Belgium is the country where the most pupils of Turkish descent were selected into an academic track. However, it is also the country where down-streaming or dropping out of upper-secondary school altogether happens the most often. About one in five (19 per cent) of the students of Turkish descent is streamed down into a vocational track (*BSO*) or special education from *TSO* or *ASO* during upper-secondary school. Repeating a grade in secondary school turns out to be the strongest predictor of down-streaming. Of all the countries, Belgium is the one that makes students of Turkish descent repeat a class in secondary school the most often (slightly more than half compared to only one in ten in Sweden). Grade retention is a very common instrument for Belgian teachers to use when pupils do not conform to the educational norm. When pupils have to repeat a class they are often simultaneously advised to drop to a lower school track. This so-called ‘waterfall’ system is largely responsible for the downward trend (Van Praag *et al.* 2012).

Next to down-streaming, one in five of the students of Turkish descent who initially started in *ASO* or *TSO* drops out of upper-secondary school altogether. There is a partial overlap with down-streaming but most drop out while in *TSO* in upper-secondary school. Of all the students of Turkish descent who started in *TSO*, 22 per cent dropped out of upper-secondary school without a diploma compared to none of the students of native parentage.

Parental support is very important for children’s survival on the academic track. Those whose parents talk about school and meet with their teachers are twice as likely to continue into higher education.

Down-streaming is also a common phenomenon in Germany and Austria. There, however, the numbers in academic tracks are already small to begin with. In Sweden, down-streaming during secondary school is not an issue—the problems there occur during transition.

The Transition to Higher Education

The way the transition from upper-secondary school is organised also has an important impact on how many students reach tertiary education. In France and the

Netherlands, almost all students who receive an academic diploma from upper-secondary school continue into higher education. The caveat for the French case, however, is that higher-education institutions differ greatly in terms of the prestige attached to them, with second-generation youth more often ending up in the less-prestigious ones (Silberman *et al.* 2007).

Belgium and Sweden are outliers because of the large groups of students with an academic upper-secondary diploma who do not automatically transfer into higher education. While, in France and the Netherlands, the transition does not really involve a deliberate choice, in Belgium and Sweden it seems to. In Sweden, more than half of second-generation Turks in an academic *Gymnasium* programme do not continue directly on into higher education—about 30 per cent continue into a form of non-tertiary adult education. Although some still continue into higher education afterwards, the majority do not. In contrast, most students of native parentage do move from an academic programme directly into higher education. Theoretically it is also possible to enter higher education through a vocation-oriented *Gymnasium* programme, although only a small minority (14 per cent) of the Turkish second generation directly enters in this way, while those of native parentage use this route twice as often. These mechanisms together explain why, in the end, the outcomes for the two groups are so different.

We have already seen a similar case in Belgium, where many pupils were down-streamed or did not finish upper-secondary school. To this must be added many who *do* finish, but do not continue into higher education—only two-thirds (66 per cent) of the students of Turkish descent from the *TSO* or *ASO* tracks continue. Among the students of native descent (with parents with low educational credentials) the figure is 85 per cent. The down-streaming, the dropping out in upper-secondary school and the smaller transfer into tertiary education all explain the considerable difference between the percentage of pupils in academic tracks in the beginning of secondary school and the percentages in higher education.

Concluding Remarks

The pathways of successful students are very different. In Sweden and France, the group that makes it into tertiary education is much larger and more diverse. An early exposure to institutional learning and late selection make it possible for many 'above-average students' from disadvantaged backgrounds to reach higher education through a direct route without major delays. In the Netherlands, above-average students who are persistent enough also get the chance to enter higher education through a longer or alternative route. But, in Germany, even for the brightest children, it is nearly impossible to achieve entry into higher education if their parents are poorly educated. The German school system is so selective at all important transition points that virtually all children of little-educated Turkish parents are driven away from the academic track. This means that, in some countries, the second

generation is already quite visible in higher-education institutions while, in others, this group is still very small.

In this paper, through an international comparison, I have described in some detail the effect of institutional arrangements in school (pre-school starting age; school contact hours; selection age in secondary school; permeability between tracks; transition to higher education). Each country has a different mix of institutional arrangements. The most favourable context for the Turkish second generation is one where children start early in pre-school, selection only takes place at age 15 and tracking does not block their chances to move into higher education. In this school context, a lack of family resources is no hindrance, *per se*—prime examples are France and Sweden.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, I find a school context that is very unfavourable for Turkish second-generation students. Children often did not go to pre-school, had a limited number of contact hours in primary school and were selected early into tracks that left almost no room for up-streaming. The combination of these institutional arrangements makes family resources even more relevant—there is a strong interaction with the degree of support parents can give, the most dramatic example being in Germany.

In the permeable school context, students of Turkish descent who persist can move up the educational ladder. Typical here is that the alternative route through the vocational column opens up possibilities for children with low social and cultural capital to move into higher education. The relevant example is the Netherlands. But a permeable school context can also lead to down-streaming from an academic into a vocational track—as in Belgium.

The reconstruction of school trajectories shows that the challenges faced by second-generation Turks are very different across countries. Influential institutional factors can loosely be brought together under the heading of ‘preparing practices’. In early-childhood education and care facilities, second-generation youth have the opportunity to learn the language of instruction (assuming that it is not spoken at home) to the extent that they will be comfortable and capable enough to learn using it in primary school. Late selection gives second-generation youth extra time to prepare for high-stakes testing. Up-streaming in upper-secondary school provides an extra opportunity to move up the educational ladder after the first selection point. Another main difference is the availability of an alternative route through the non-academic column, which gives pupils a second opportunity to pass high-stakes testing at a later stage (when the students are prepared well enough to succeed).

In general, we see that the specific characteristics of the school systems are magnified for the second generation in contrast to the group of native parentage. Not attending pre-school does not hinder children of native parentage in Germany or Austria but it does affect the chances of the Turkish second generation there. If early selection blocks the entrance into higher education for working-class children of native descent, the children of immigrants are affected to an even greater extent. Or, if down-streaming is an important characteristic of the school system (as in Belgium),

this proves to be an even stronger mechanism for the Turkish second generation. The same is true for school-system characteristics like up-streaming or the 'long route'. They work equally well, if not better (as is shown in the Netherlands), for the second generation as for the group of native parentage. I coin this the *multiplier effect*.

Different school systems demand different levels of parental involvement. Some types of support are easier than others for parents with low levels of education. In primary school in Germany and Austria, parents are expected to provide practical support and to control the time children spend on homework. Should the children not attend pre-school, the parents are also responsible for their offsprings' German-language proficiency. This results in an unhappy marriage between a lack of family resources and the demands of the school system. Yet, more 'egalitarian' systems exist that require the parents to intervene only when children show more-severe learning and behavioural problems. The Swedish system, especially, shows how the average pupil can succeed without much parental involvement.

The points at which important decisions must be made in the three different school contexts prove important here, too. Decisions at an early age are much more influenced by parents, while later decisions are much more frequently made by the student. In the most unfavourable school context, choices must be made early, for instance, with regard to pre-school attendance and continuation after compulsory school. In the more open school systems, these decisions only need to be made by age 18 or older, when the students' own motivations and goals gain more currency.

My emphasis on the whole school career has made me aware that the challenges for second-generation Turks come at different stages in their educational career. The percentage of them in higher education in Austria and Belgium is almost the same (see Table 2). However, I showed that the way in which school careers developed in these two contexts could hardly be more different. In the Austrian case, the relatively low performances compared to other countries are the result of low participation in pre-school and early selection after primary school. In Belgium it is the result of so many second-generation Turkish youth down-streaming or dropping out in upper-secondary school or not continuing into tertiary education. This only becomes visible if we reconstruct school trajectories in detail.

Notes

- [1] The TIES survey was carried out by survey bureaus under the supervision of the eight TIES partner research institutes: the Institute for Social and Political Opinion Research [ISPO], University of Leuven, Belgium; the National Institute for Demographic Studies [INED], Paris, France; the Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies [SFM], University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland; the Centre for Research in International Migration and Ethnic Relations [CEIFO], University of Stockholm, Sweden; the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies [IMIS], University of Osnabrück, Germany; the Institute for European Integration Research [EIF], Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria; the National Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute [NIDI], the Hague, the Netherlands; and the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies [IMES], Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

- [2] Mostly recruited for unskilled labour in the 1960s and 1970s, the parents frequently entered the host countries as guestworkers from rural areas. They had overwhelmingly been educated in their home villages, where schooling was rudimentary.
- [3] The school starting age of our sample of 18–35-year-olds reflects the situation in kindergarten and primary school in the 1980s.
- [4] Excluded from the analysis are respondents who are still in school and who previously followed an academic track in secondary school but are not yet in tertiary education.

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