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**To cite this article:** Elif Keskiner (2016): Student employment among descendants of Turkish migrants in Amsterdam and Strasbourg, Journal of Education and Work, DOI: [10.1080/13639080.2016.1167844](https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2016.1167844)

**To link to this article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2016.1167844>



Published online: 08 Apr 2016.



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# Student employment among descendants of Turkish migrants in Amsterdam and Strasbourg

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## ABSTRACT

This article compares and contrasts the nature of student employment experience in Amsterdam and Strasbourg among descendants of Turkish migrants. The analysis relies on in-depth qualitative interviews revealing the experience of student employment and the impact of working while studying on the educational careers and future labour market transitions. The comparative design of the study uncovered the role of distinct institutional structures in education systems and labour markets, which proved more strenuous for combining work and study in Strasbourg compared to Amsterdam. Parental support and high educational aspirations of the students turned out crucial to counterbalance the potential negative impact of working on students' school careers, while working in their area of study facilitated beneficial consequences for students' future labour market careers. The article highlights the interaction between institutional structures and social class background as well as gender dynamics.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 10 April 2015  
Accepted 25 February 2016

## KEYWORDS

Student employment;  
education; descendants of  
migrants; gender

## Introduction

Among the education and work studies, student employment has become a subject matter of investigation concomitant to the increasing numbers combining work with study in developed countries. Student jobs are mostly undertaken for financial reasons, such as to pay for tuition costs or to sustain a consumer lifestyle, but also to gain credentials for future labour market opportunities (Brooks 2006). Various studies focus on the impact of employment on students' education and work careers. On the one hand, studies argue that depending on the type of job, working conditions or hours of employment, working while studying can have negative implications for students' educational careers, through falling grades or even dropping out of school entirely (Marsh and Kleitman 2005). Yet these negative effects can be offset by prior educational aspirations (McCoy and Smyth 2007) and higher socio-economic background (McNeal 2011). On the other hand, proponents of student employment suggest that part-time jobs familiarise young people with the workplace and allow for building occupational skills and investing in their future careers (Carr, Wright, and Brody 1996; McKechnie, Lavalette, and Hobbs 2000). Furthermore, in a comparative study Wolbers (2003) illustrated that some institutional structures create a more favourable environment for student employment compared to others. This article aims to contribute to the discussion by comparing how students experienced student employment in two settings, which are characterised by distinct institutional structures. Furthermore, the article scrutinises how the absence or presence of parental resources and individual aspirations mediate the student employment experience across distinct institutional settings.

To identify the impact of institutional structures, this article studies student employment practices in the Netherlands and France, focusing on the experiences of descendants of Turkish migrants in two cities, Amsterdam and Strasbourg. The Dutch and French education systems provide an intriguing comparison. Dutch education system is more vocationally oriented, encouraging internships, compared to the French system. Previous studies already illustrated that in occupationally oriented education systems student employment is more common (Wolbers 2003). Another institutional aspect is the labour market context. Neoliberal reforms in the Dutch labour market lead to the formation of ample flexible jobs that are taken up by students (van der Meer and Wielers 2001; Wolbers 2003) compared to France where neoliberal policies did not have the identical impact (Jamet 2006). Hence, education systems and labour markets go hand in hand in creating distinct student employment conditions and the article addresses how these distinct institutional conditions shape the student employment experience differently. Regarding the focus on descendants of Turkish migrants, previous research underlined that ethnic minorities and young people from the lower strata are in a more vulnerable position as a result of student employment compared to middle-class youth (McNeal 2011). Concentrating on students with Turkish migrant parents of comparable and 'vulnerable' backgrounds illuminates how young people from the lower strata of society, whose parents lack certain resources compared to majority population (Crul, Schneider, and Lelie 2012), participate in student employment across distinct institutional settings.

Furthermore the paper uncovers how parental support, resources and aspirations are shaped by the social class background as well as gendered norms in the ethnic community. Even though most parents in the study were low educated migrants, they developed distinct values and resources, which lead to the formation of social class nuances within the ethnic community. Furthermore, gendered norms in the ethnic community created more pressure for young men to start working earlier than women which influenced their decisions for student employment. The findings illustrate how institutional structures with meagre opportunities render parental support crucial in counterbalancing the negative influences of student employment on schooling. This finding emphasises the interaction between (macro) institutional structures and social class background as well as gender dynamics. All in all, the article shows the significance of student employment in the social trajectories of individuals for reproducing or overcoming the disadvantages stemming from one's social background.

The article first outlines the institutional structures pertaining to student employment trends in Amsterdam and Strasbourg followed by a theoretical discussion on role of parental social background and an introduction of the specific case of descendants of Turkish migrants. Then, the empirical findings are presented in three sections.

### ***The features of Dutch and French institutional structures***

In the Netherlands, student employment refers to a job that takes place during the course of schooling for a minimum of 12 h per week. The Netherlands has experienced a notable increase in student participation in the labour market since the 1990s. By 2006, 80% of Dutch students reported having a regular job of at least 12 h per week, with 60% of them working more than 12 h (Riele and Siermann 2007). Rather than a direct policy goal, the growth of student employment was a side effect of the neoliberal policies and a sign of increased labour market flexibility (van der Meer and Wielers 2001), augmenting the number of temporary contracts and part-time employees (Delsen and Poutsma 2005). Accordingly, students were deemed among the most eligible groups for jobs with flexible hours, temporary contracts and low wages (van der Meer and Wielers 2001). Hence as a crucial institutional structure, the Dutch labour market provides abundance of student job opportunities. This condition applies to Amsterdam, where most students work in the retail sector as sales assistants, shelf stockers and cashiers in supermarkets, and in catering as waiters and bartenders as well as delivering newspapers, cleaning and babysitting.

Next to the labour market structure, the way education system is organised is another vital feature of the Dutch institutional structure encouraging the student employment practice in the Netherlands. The strongly vocationally oriented Dutch education system requires considerable periods of internships

(institutional forms of work–study combination) both in post-secondary vocational training and in tertiary education (Wolbers 2003). As the empirical data below also confirm, the widespread practice of internships feeds into student job opportunities for young people in their study area. For example, students after finishing their internships, continue working in the same workplace with student jobs. Such experiences have the potential to serve young people's future labour market careers. Hence, the labour market structure and the education system in the Netherlands create conditions that allow flexible work and study combinations and also provide opportunities to work in the area of one's studies.

The French institutional structure suggests almost a contrast to the Dutch one. Despite increasing levels of student employment to 75% (Dominique, Calmand, and Hallier 2007), France emerges more as a classic case where part-time student employment occurs mostly in the form of summer or holiday jobs. Unlike the Netherlands, regular employment during study is less common, reported as 17% (Dominique, Calmand, and Hallier 2007). Government reforms aiming to promote flexibility in the labour market led to an increase in temporary contracts (Jamet 2006), yet not augmenting the student jobs in France the way it did in the Netherlands. Hence, the labour market in France provides meagre opportunities for student employment (Bérail 2007). This was also the case in Strasbourg, where classical student jobs were newspaper distribution, babysitting or working in the family business are common. Owing to the economic structure in Strasbourg, where the manufacturing industry still functioned, low skilled jobs are also available in factories and in construction sights, yet these posts are hard to combine with studies.

Compared to the Netherlands, the French system places less emphasis on occupational orientation, requiring only meagre internship periods both in post-secondary education and in tertiary education (Müller and Gangl 2003). In France, occupational skills are still gained at the workplace, through on-the-job-training, rather than via internships (Powell et al. 2009). As an exception, a dual study programme in vocational tertiary education (*BTS en Alternance*) was introduced where students attend school two days and work three days a week for an employer who finances their training costs. These students have much easier time finding jobs when they graduate, often staying with the same employer (Bidart and Pellissier 2002). Yet, this practice remains limited compared to the Netherlands, especially among descendants of migrants, who had difficulty accessing these selective programmes (Steichen 2013). As a result, both the labour market conditions and the education system in France make it harder for young people to combine their studies with working and provide meagre opportunities to work in the area of one's studies.

### ***Role of social background of the parents: social class and gendered norms in the ethnic community***

Previous studies have illustrated that educational aspirations (McCoy and Smyth 2007) and parental background (McNeal 2011) are significant factors in mediating the impact of student employment on school and labour market careers. In the US context, McNeal (2011) showed parents with higher socio-economic status can offset the damage caused by employment through providing an 'additional safety net'. In France, children of managers were found to be more likely to access student employment in their study areas, leading to smooth labour market transitions (Bédoué and Giret 2004). In the Netherlands, Wolber's (2008) study on the effect of student employment on schooling showed the combined effect of prior school performance, educational aspirations and socio-economic background in controlling away the negative effect of part-time employment on self-reported school achievement. Hence, most quantitative studies underlined the significance of social class background of the parents in shaping the student employment practices. Using qualitative methods, this study tries to decipher the effect of social class by focusing on different forms of resources and support mechanisms provided by the parents. Savage, Warde, and Devine (2005) showed that such an approach helps identify the effect of social class and how it is enacted by individuals on a daily basis by drawing on different forms of assets and resources. Following Savage, Warde, and Devine (2005) this study distinguished the social class nuances within the Turkish migrant community, who share similar lower educational background but developed different forms of capital over their stay in the receiving countries. Next to

social class, student employment also surfaces as a gendered activity marked by gender inequalities both in terms of the nature of jobs and the working conditions (Lucas 1997). The comparison provided here concentrates on how gendered norms and values in the Turkish community shape young people's motivations to work while studying.

Moreover, we know from social stratification literature how parental background is significant in (re) producing (dis)advantages for their children's educational and occupational careers (Lauder et al. 2006). What remains an important question is the significance of student employment in young people's social trajectories and whether it is a crucial activity in overcoming or reproducing disadvantages stemming from one's background. The paper not only inquires the significance of student employment in young people's lives but also looks into whether this significance varies across distinct institutional structures.

### ***Descendants of migrants from Turkey***

The descendants of Turkish migrants in this study are the first generation to be born and raised in the receiving countries. In Amsterdam, the Turkish population is 40,000 (O+S 2012). Most Turkish migrants had lower education attainment and arrived in the Netherlands via guest-worker migration to work in the assembly lines (Akgündüz 2008). With the disappearance of manufacturing industries, most migrant parents fell into reliance upon social security benefits, although some became entrepreneurs, resulting in income differentials within the group (Bocker 2000). Crul, Schneider, and Lelie (2012) showed that most descendants of Turkish migrants grew up in low-income households with low-educated parents who could provide meagre assistance for their studies. Regarding parental support; earlier studies underlined the gendered nature of parents' orientations towards education; less-educated Turkish migrant parents had a strong work orientation, pushing their boys quickly into labour market, while traditional values in the community steered girls into marriage (Lindo 2000). Recently, it has been noted that Turkish parents' attitudes towards education have transformed into having higher educational aspirations for their children (Coenen 2001; Crul 2009; Keskiner 2015), which is crucial to balance the negative influences of student employment.

In France, Strasbourg and the Alsace region have the highest density of Turkish migrant families, with a population of 30,000 (Morel-Chevillet 2005). The majority came to work in the manufacturing industries again via guest-worker migration and later were employed mostly in the construction industry (Danış and İrtiş 2008). As in the Netherlands, most had little education, and the majority of their descendants grew up in low-income households. In France, descendants of Turkish migrants are one of the worst-performing of all groups in education: in 2008, 27% of descendants of Turkish migrants aged 18–35 had left education without any diploma, compared to 9% of the general population (Brinbaum, Muguérou, and Primon 2010). Despite indications of the association between lower status student jobs and dropout rates (Pinto 2010), little is known about the connection between student employment and educational performance among descendants of Turkish migrant students. While in France, migrant parents were found to possess high levels of educational aspiration for their children (Brinbaum and Cebolla-Boado 2007), Turkish migrant parents in Strasbourg had lower aspirations compared to other groups (Keskiner 2013; Schnell et al. 2013).

A recent study by Keskiner (2015) highlighted the nuanced nature of social class composition among Turkish migrant parents in Amsterdam and Strasbourg. Some migrant parents arrived younger and acquired brief periods of vocational training. These parents were not able to acquire high status jobs still but they learned the language of the receiving country, were active in the labour market and developed higher aspirations for their children's education. Furthermore, some parents became successful as entrepreneurs and having more financial capital they were also more supportive of their children's schooling. Even though all parents had lower education background and did not access high status jobs; certain nuances regarding financial, language and cultural capital was reflected in their attitudes towards their children's schooling. The empirical data below shows how such resources became crucial for the work and study combination decisions of our respondents.

## Methodology and nature of student employment in Amsterdam and Strasbourg

Many studies on student employment are quantitative (Howieson et al. 2012; McCoy and Smyth 2007); only a few address the issue qualitatively (Brooks 2006; McKechnie, Lavalette, and Hobbs 2000). This article contributes to this discussion with a qualitative approach. Between May 2009 and June 2010, 50 descendants of Turkish migrants were interviewed in Amsterdam and Strasbourg using semi-structured biographical interviews. Respondents for qualitative interviews were randomly drawn from the participants of a survey conducted previously, yet the qualitative nature of the study does not claim any random representation of the descendants of migrants from Turkey in both settings. The respondents were between 20 and 30 years old and a gender balance was sought. The cities of Amsterdam and Strasbourg were selected both for exemplifying the national trends of student employment but also for hosting a considerable Turkish migrant community with comparable backgrounds. Both in Amsterdam and Strasbourg all the parents migrated from Turkey around the same time and from similar regions and had comparable lower educational levels and occupational statuses. Respondents were selected from both vocational and academic educational trajectories with a variety of activities. Half of the respondents were still in school during the initial interviews; the rest were out of school, either actively employed or inactive. One year later, the respondents were re-contacted to capture the developments in their careers and transitions, especially those who were about to finish their schooling during the first interview. Out of 50 respondents, 20 were re-interviewed to introduce a longitudinal perspective. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis followed the coding process prescribed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), which included an expansion from primary coding to retrieving more open codes and eventually developing new empirical categories using Atlas.ti software.

In Amsterdam almost all respondents, both male and female, had regular employment during their schooling. 'Regular employment' refers to situations in which students worked during the course of their schooling regularly for *at least one period*. 'Irregular Employment' refers to cases in which students worked solely in irregular jobs during summer breaks or holidays or for short intervals during vacations, but never regularly for a longer period during their course of studies (Table 1).

The most popular areas of employment among respondents in Amsterdam were the retail sector – mostly in supermarkets, but also as sales assistants – and the airline industry, cleaning airplanes or working in the baggage section. The respondents were flexible with their schedules and working hours ranged from 12 to 24 plus per week. Some participants had worked for the same employer for more than 2 years. There was also a notable gender division; airport jobs, which are physically demanding but easily accessible and well paid, were mostly taken by males. Female respondents mostly worked in supermarkets or in other stores as sales assistants. Respondents in Amsterdam mostly used social contacts to find jobs, in addition to employment agencies and online advertisements.

As shown in Table 1, in contrast to Amsterdam, not all students in Strasbourg were active in the labour market and fewer so on a regular basis. Many student jobs took place during summer or school vacations. Gender divisions were also evident in Strasbourg, where the construction sector, as a Turkish ethnic niche, provided low-skilled jobs to male descendants of migrants. In Strasbourg, those regularly employed had to work during the weekends. Hardly any respondent worked in the same place for more than one year, although some returned to the same summer job every year. Similar to Amsterdam, respondents relied on social contacts and job agencies to find jobs. Both in Amsterdam and Strasbourg majority of the students worked in low-status jobs. In Amsterdam, we see that both vocational and

**Table 1.** Student employment histories of respondents.

	Amsterdam			Strasbourg		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Regular student employment	13	11	25	5	4	9
Irregular student employment	0	0	0	7	3	10
No work–study combination	0	1	1	1	5	6
Total	13	12	25	12	12	25

academic track students worked in low-status jobs and in jobs in the area of their studies. In France, while short-term low status jobs (i.e. Mcjobs) were taken up students from all education backgrounds, the route to jobs in the area of one's studies or internships were tied to one's educational track. The student who could locate such relevant jobs were mostly from *BTS en alternance*.

The first and second empirical sections below show the experience of working in low-status jobs first in the absence and then in the presence of parental support and individual aspirations. Only a minority of the students in both settings managed to work in the area of their studies, hence in more skilled employment. The third empirical section discusses the conditions leading to such student jobs and their consequences on the careers of young people.

## Findings: the experience of working while studying in Amsterdam vs. Strasbourg

### *In the absence of parental support and/or strong educational aspirations*

The empirical findings show that in the absence of parental support and/or strong educational aspirations; the institutional conditions in Amsterdam still allow students to work while staying in school. Previous studies established that long working hours could be detrimental to study (McCoy and Smyth 2007). However, the institutional arrangements that provided numerous student jobs and flexible study hours in Amsterdam allowed respondents to pursue student jobs with long working hours while studying. This was true for both post-secondary vocational and tertiary education students. İlkay (20), a final-year student in post-secondary vocational training (MBO) studying commerce, was working in a phone store during the first interview. He started working at the age of 16 as a sales assistant in an electrical store for two years, then worked in the airport for six months cleaning planes. Recently, he had moved to the phone store for better working conditions since airport cleaning job proved too strenuous. When asked about his student job:

**İlkay:** My dad is a baker. My mum sometimes [works] as a cleaner. Now I get study aid, but after tuition, health insurance and the phone bill, nothing is left. So I have to work... It's expensive you know...

**Interviewer:** Do you have difficulty with your classes because of working?

**İlkay:** Not really.... I work for 15 to 20 h a week. Then I go to school three days a week. But not more than 4 h. Normally it's 25 to 26 h but I only go to the most important ones (classes). If there's a test, then I go to the last class before the test, then I do it. It's not so difficult. Sometimes I cheat in exams. I mean I take care of it, you should just know how to do it. I will get my diploma in the end.

**Interviewer:** What do your parents say?

**İlkay:** They say do what you want... They don't intervene in my decisions you know...

By the second interview two years later, İlkay had received his post-secondary diploma and had been attending tertiary vocational education for a year, studying marketing and commerce, while he worked part-time with an energy company selling energy packages. İlkay had an instrumental approach towards education, he acknowledged the importance of acquiring diplomas for his future so he wanted to study as much as possible. His interview showed that his parents did not hold strong educational aspirations and left it to İlkay to take his educational decisions. Parents like İlkay's, who lacked the financial resources and the strong educational aspirations were present in both settings. They could be classified as rather neutral towards their children's educational goals; they neither discourage nor encourage.

The parents of Hakan, a vocational student with low-income parents in Amsterdam, preferred Hakan to work rather than study; hence had a more discouraging take on his educational endeavours. His mother never worked and his father, who grumbled frequently, 'How long are you planning on studying?' was on social welfare. Hakan was also working as a student since he was 16 and his student jobs provided a sense of 'financial independence' and confidence which helped him ignore his father's complaints, when making decisions to pursue his studies.

**Interviewer:** What is your next step?

**Hakan:** I don't want to leave school yet. I am planning to attend tertiary vocational education. Some say it's hard, but I want to try... I've looked into some websites and been to a few introduction days... But money is not an issue: if you work part-time, you make money.

After 2 years, Hakan was studying in tertiary vocational education still pursuing his job in the airport. The institutional arrangements in Amsterdam provided student employment opportunities that allowed students, who could not rely on parental assistance, to continue studying while working. The pro-work motivations of Ilkay and Hakan also reflects gendered dynamics in Turkish community (Lindo 2000) where male students felt more pressured to work either by their families or their social environment. Ilkay and Hakan overcome such demands by combining school with work. The male students in Strasbourg encountered similar pressures but their experiences present a stark contrast.

The labour market in Strasbourg provided much less job opportunities and the student jobs that were available were difficult to combine with school due to demanding study hours. Conditions were less flexible for both post-secondary vocational and tertiary education students. Under such labour market conditions and educational settings, the motivation to combine work and study was strictly contingent on students' financial needs: only those who felt financial pressure worked regularly. Limited student job opportunities and lack of occupational orientation in the education system discouraged students from working. Given these structural conditions, alongside educational aspirations, financial and emotional support from parents proved more crucial than in Amsterdam in offsetting the hazards of student employment.

Comparable to Ilkay's parents in Amsterdam, Mehmet's parents were financially not well off and they did not hold strong educational aspirations but they left Mehmet to make his decision regarding school and work. Hence, they played neither a discouraging nor an encouraging but rather remained neutral when he decided to leave school. Initially, a successful student who passed his vocational courses without difficulty despite working, on entering the lyceum, Mehmet had difficulty keeping up and was drawn instead towards working full-time;

**Mehmet:** In my first year of professional lyceum, my parents already had the supermarket business. I was going there to work every day after school to help them. But it was too much. I was fed up. I said either I should drop out of school or quit the job, but couldn't do both. Doing both, I was also unable to study properly. You could tell from my grades... I passed my classes but my grades weren't that good. My teachers said I should come the next year but I talked to my father and told him that I didn't want to continue with school.

**Interviewer:** How did he react?

**Mehmet:** Look, I had my trade; I had a profession and a BEP diploma. He only said, Do as you like, but don't come blame me.

Low-skilled, low-paid, dead-end jobs may impair young people's aspirations (Marsh and Kleitman 2005). Long working hours exacerbate this, as was also seen with Mehmet. His dropout decision did not lead to positive outcomes. Even though he had a 'trade' Mehmet fell into unskilled job market once he dropped out. At first he continued working in the family business but it soon closed down; then, he started conducting various menial jobs, from delivery to factory work.

The next case is Salim who is similar to Hakan in Amsterdam. Salim's low-income parents, who expected him to work rather than study, were unable to support him financially; hence, he felt obliged to work. He started working when he was 16, yet Salim was also motivated to study. After graduating from post-secondary vocational education (BEP) he was advised to pursue his studies and he continued until tertiary vocational education (BTS). Yet Salih was only able to find janitorial jobs or work in the construction sector, which were hard to combine with school:

**Salim:** I used to work during the holidays. I worked in construction and in factories. Working in factories was where the problem began because it was really difficult to combine with school. At first, I went to work at week-ends. Sometimes I would even work during two days of school. Then I would feel very tired. It became impossible after I attended BTS [tertiary vocational education] due to attendance. I had to work because my parents are both retired. My brothers and sisters already moved to their own homes. So as the only child at home, I didn't want to be a burden on my parents. I wanted to make my own money....

**Interviewer:** How so?



**Salim:** Because all my friends didn't study and already started working. They paid for their own driving licences. They had cars, but I didn't. I had also learnt a trade and I told myself I could also make money...

Just like Hakan's father in Amsterdam, Salim's father was asking him, 'How long are you planning on studying?' and had a discouraging attitude towards his will to study. Caught between his parents' expectations and his own aspirations to study, Salim dropped out and continued working in the same factory full-time. Two years later in our second interview, Salim was working as a technician in another factory, but he regretted his decision: 'I regret it. I wish I had finished my BTS (tertiary vocational education). It is very difficult to find a decent job without a BTS diploma these days.'

All four students compared above, started their education in the vocational track and tried to continue into tertiary vocational training. While İlkey in Amsterdam and Mehmet in Strasbourg had parents who could be classified as neutral towards their educational aspirations, Hakan in Amsterdam and Salim in Strasbourg had discouraging parents. Yet either having neutral or discouraging parents; students who could not rely on support of parents or lacked strong educational aspirations had distinct experiences in Strasbourg compared to Amsterdam; while those in Amsterdam were able to stay in school acquiring their degrees, those in Strasbourg had difficulty managing both activities and left school altogether. The experience of these four male students underline similar gendered motivations to work in Strasbourg and Amsterdam; in both settings male respondents more often expressed being pressured to work than female respondents did and in Strasbourg these male students ended up leaving schools without a diploma and entering the labour market.

### ***In the presence of parental support and strong educational aspirations***

This section illustrates how the presence of parental support and strong educational aspirations mediate the negative influence of working on studying, as has been exemplified by previous studies (Wolbers 2008). In Amsterdam, Ayben also had an intensive student employment 'career' since she was 16. She was an academic track student in tertiary vocational education at the time of the first interview. Ayben's father was a driving instructor and her mother did not work.

**Ayben:** First I worked in a store. When I was 16 I think I worked for two years there; during that period I found my other job. I always had two jobs at a time. I couldn't get enough money, that's what my mother says. My closet is always full.

**Interviewer:** How many hours per week would you work?

**Ayben:** I became greedy for money; I worked a lot, from 15 to 20 h per week I'd say. First in a retail store and also in the phone company. There were times I was working every single day. I had quite a good salary at the end of the month.

**Interviewer:** How did this influence your studies?

**Ayben:** It didn't, I never had difficulty with my studies.

Ayben was able to undertake intensive hours of work without harming her studies. However during the second interview, when she was in the last year of her training in vocational tertiary education Ayben had decided to take a break from working:

**Ayben:** I don't work right now. Why risk it? This year is critical. I should get very good grades and do a good internship so that I can get my diploma. I have my savings anyway but my dad told me not to worry about money. They're happy to pay all my costs.

Despite flexible institutional structures that allowed Ayben to work part-time throughout her studies, as her course work intensified in the last year, Ayben feared that working could harm her studies and stopped working. Two factors were crucial in her decision; her strong educational aspirations and her parents' assistance. While Ayben's parents did not have a high socio-economic background, they emotionally and financially supported her in achieving her educational goals.

In Strasbourg Deniz had to work regularly while studying because of her family's financial difficulties. Deniz's father was a painter on construction sites. Her mother did not work, so despite supporting a

household of five, her father took extra hours to pay for Deniz's private lessons to catch up in school. Yet Deniz felt guilty and wanted to work in her spare time:

**Deniz:** I worked in factory jobs and cleaning jobs – maybe six or seven positions like that over the course of my studies.... It was hard. Don't get me wrong, I did all those jobs willingly; in the end, I made money and I'm grateful. I never looked down on them: they taught me a lot. These jobs made me more dedicated to my studies – even today, they remind me how lucky I am to have my current job.

Despite strenuous work and study conditions, high educational aspirations and the parental support created a shield that motivated Deniz to stay on track. Even though she had low-income parents, their emotional and financial support were crucial unlike we see in the cases of Salim and Mehmet in Strasbourg. Deniz worked hard to continue into tertiary vocational education (BTS). By the second interview Deniz had successfully finished her studies and started working as a notary clerk.

Ayben's and Deniz's cases display that parental support in the form of emotional and financial assistance were crucial to reconcile the negative effect of working when needed. Both Ayben and Deniz did not state being pressured to work by their families or friends, nevertheless they were still motivated to earn an income. At the same time both Ayben and Deniz were ambitious students and they also worked, but they were able to put their employment on hold relying on their parents in order to concentrate on their studies. For these students, the differences in institutional structures in Amsterdam and Strasbourg were evident in their discourses on student employment experience. While Ayben talked about her working experience positively, like most of the respondents in Amsterdam, for Deniz working while studying was a negative experience that she still tried to learn from and was cautious about (with the help of her parents) not to harm her studies. In the next section, we compare the respondents who both received parental support but also tried to work in an area of study that would benefit their future labour market transitions.

### ***In the presence of parental support: Student Employment as an 'investment' for future work careers***

Previous studies highlighted the positive future consequences of working in the area of one's studies. Kasinitz et al. (2008) showed that working while studying helped descendants of migrants in USA develop resources that aided their transition from school to work. In the Netherlands Ballafkih et al. (2008) emphasised the significance of student jobs in the area of one's studies for network building. However, both students of lower socio-economic strata and descendants of migrants have less access to such opportunities.

Next to low-status jobs, some of the students were able to work in the area of their studies. First of all, the institutional structures in Amsterdam provided more of such opportunities compared to Strasbourg. In Amsterdam, respondents accessed such opportunities via their previous internship experiences, job agencies or their own initiative. These students did rely on parental resources in the form of financial assistance and/or emotional support but their parents did not help them find these jobs or did not provide social network. In contrast in Strasbourg students had to mobilise the social capital and networks of their parents next to financial and emotional support, since these opportunities proved harder to access.

In Amsterdam, Meral, a second-year tertiary vocational student studying Business & Economics in Amsterdam, reported that her parents covered all of her expenses and she had never worked in a menial job, instead seeking work in her field of study:

**Meral:** My parents were always fully supportive of my education, paying all my costs so I never had to work in a supermarket or something. Job experience is important but these jobs are useless, I wouldn't put them in my CV. When you are looking for a job, what matters are qualifications, self-confidence, but also work experience. I think work experience is the most important. [Employers] still expect you to conduct a part-time job alongside your studies.... If you have that experience, you receive priority [in the hiring process]. In order to minimise the risks of unemployment, I'm trying to fill my CV with experience at good companies via internships and student employment. For example, in my second year, even though it was very difficult, I still worked, because I thought that in this way I could find an internship a lot more easily the next year. Then I found a position at Price Waterhouse Coopers.

**Interviewer:** How?

**Meral:** Through a job agency.... There was a vacancy ... I called them and they invited me... But then it was 4 days a week for 4 h, which was not so nice because I wanted only 1 day. Yet I accepted it.

During our second interview, Meral was in her final year conducting her internship at Deloitte where, she believed, she gained entry thanks to her student job at PWC. In her case, the student employment experience helped her accessing a good internship. For Meral, as a self-described 'second-generation girl wearing a headscarf', these experiences were vital to improve her future chances in the labour market. Considering the debates on discrimination that the headscarf-wearing women suffer in the Dutch and French labour markets (Hargreaves 2007; Vasta 2007), Meral's experience was crucial both for building her experience and confidence for her future career.

The labour market in Amsterdam also provided student jobs to post-secondary vocational training students in the area of their studies. Nevin, who found her scholarship grant too meagre, wanted to combine study with employment. Her parents were fully supportive of her educational endeavours but had financial difficulties. First, she started working at a retail store;

**Nevin:** My parents want me to study, you know but it is not easy so I wanted to gain some money. I started working in a store, but I hated that job, didn't see the point. So I wanted to work in a job that I like. Then I approached the company where I had done my internship and since then I started working in the administration department of the company for four days a week. The drawback is that my school is prolonged. I will eventually finish anyway but this way I have a good job experience and an income. Other part-time jobs are useless, I wouldn't even put them on my CV.

Two years later, in the second interview, Nevin had recently acquired her degree and was employed in another company. In Amsterdam, the internship-friendly educational system and the availability of flexible student jobs in the area of one studies; enabled students to start developing credentials for the labour market and build their CVs via student employment. Wolbers (2003) illustrated that in countries like the Netherlands where there is strong occupational orientation, the environment was more favourable for student employment. The experiences of Nevin and Meral show how internship and student employment experiences reinforced each other providing connections. Lacking social capital for their jobs in the family, these opportunities proved crucial for the future labour market integration of the respondents.

In contrast, due to the lesser emphasis on work experience during education, in France such opportunities are much less common (Powell et al. 2009). The most popular way to combine work and study is the *BTS en alternance*, known to smoothen school to work transition (Bidart and Pellissier 2002), but it is hard to access. Hence such student employment possibilities were only possible as dual programmes in institutions. Eray looked for a company to conduct dual training for two years after receiving his high school diploma (*bac general*). His parents were supportive of his educational endeavours, had sent him to a private school hoping he would attend higher education. Here it is important to emphasise that not all Turkish parents pressured their sons to work as Eray's case shows. Those who had means tried to support their sons' schooling. Nevertheless, Eray perceived university or regular tertiary vocational education as long-lasting goals with no guarantee; he also wanted to gain financial independence rapidly while studying in tertiary vocational education;

**Eray:** I am not sure what you can do with a university diploma or a BTS diploma with no job experience. You won't find a job anyway... That's why I wanted to do *BTS en Alternance* where I could make money and gain work experience so I tried for two years (to enter *BTS en alternance*). I think I've made over 100 applications. One time I thought I got so close but the employer changed his mind. Then I completely gave up on the idea and started working full-time in a retail store. Now I hope I become a store manager.

By contrast, Selin's low-educated father was a successful entrepreneur with extended network contacts; he helped her find a company where she could combine work and study for two years:

**Selin:** I wanted to get used to working at a job and also thought maybe if they like my performance they would hire me later. Also to get a small salary. Well I did not have to (work), we never had financial difficulties, my dad was always supportive. But you know we like travelling as a family and I wanted to be less of a financial burden for my own personal expenses. But this is not the major reason: one needs to have experience to find a job, today they

demand a lot of professional experience...*BTS en Alternance* is not easy (to access) but my father knows a lot of people you know, so he helped me arrange an employer. I really like it now.

Two years later, Selin made a smooth transition into the labour market by staying with the same company. In Strasbourg, the institutional structures were limited in providing opportunities also for student employment in the area of one's studies compared to Amsterdam. Similar to other cases who had done *BTS en Alternance*, Selin relied on the resources in her family and their social networks to access these combinations, while Eray whose parents supported his education but couldn't provide social networks to find an employer, failed in his endeavour. Yet similar to Amsterdam, once achieved such experiences led to smooth labour market transitions.

## Conclusion

This article compared the experience of combining work and study among a group of young people with comparable backgrounds: descendants of migrants from Turkey in two different institutional settings; Amsterdam and Strasbourg.

The comparison of institutional structures highlighted the conditions under which student part-time employment can become detrimental to educational outcomes. Qualitative interviews revealed that the widespread practice of student employment in Amsterdam flourished under flexible work and study arrangements. The labour market in Amsterdam provided numerous student jobs and the education system provided room for work and study combination. This was true for both low-skilled student jobs and part-time employment in the area of one's studies. In contrast, in Strasbourg student jobs were mostly low-skilled and difficult to combine with education compared to Amsterdam and the opportunities for student employment in the area of one's studies were limited. As a result, respondents in Strasbourg had much greater difficulty combining work and study due to the absence of institutional structures creating flexible student employment, hence putting their studies at risk in the case of regular student employment.

Previous literature highlighted that having parents with higher socio-economic status shielded young people from the detrimental effects of student employment (McNeal 2011; Wolbers 2008). Current study illustrated that despite having lower educational background migrant parents displayed minor social class differences and that some parents that provided financial resources and emotional support could also create a buffer zone against the risks of student employment. Yet the institutional structures, namely the labour market opportunities and occupational orientation in education systems, became crucial especially in the absence of such parental support pointing at the interaction between institutional structures and parental social background. In Strasbourg, students who lacked parental assistance and felt obliged to work found themselves in strenuous positions leading to their dropout. Yet in Amsterdam, the institutional structures created opportunities that helped students to stay in school, despite lack of parental support, by working part-time.

Studying descendants of Turkish migrants underlines the difficulties that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds face. In the absence of sufficient scholarship opportunities or state support, students are doomed to seek employment, which can put them in a vulnerable position, as was the case in Strasbourg. The interviews also highlight that in both settings male descendants of Turkish migrants expressed feeling more pressured to work to gain economic independence and worked in more laborious jobs. The female respondents more often reported receiving support from their parents when they wanted to prioritise study over work or when seeking employment in their area of studies. Future studies should focus further on how gender roles shape the student employment experiences of young people. Moreover, the experiences of students in Strasbourg and Amsterdam proved the significance of student employment in individual social trajectories. On the one hand those who left school due to student employment ended up working in unskilled jobs reproducing the lower socio-economic status of their parents. On the other hand, students who were able to access jobs in the area of their studies and internships, with the help of their parents and/or thanks to the institutional structures, experienced smoother transitions into the labour market and were upwardly mobile.

This article did not aim to promote student employment as a favourable activity during education but rather wanted to underline pressures that students from less favourable background face, dragging them to work while studying. In that sense certain institutional structures could create conditions that help students stay aboard in school while earning an income and even gaining credentials for their future careers. Yet the crucial role of parental support also shows the importance parental social background in turning the student employment into an advantage or offsetting its risks. Increasing level of student employment demands more in-depth research to reveal its influence on social reproduction mechanisms. By focusing on young people from various social classes, future studies need to answer whether student employment simply socialises students from lower socio-economic background into lower status jobs during school and those from higher socio-economic background into higher status positions, leading to reproduction of social class status or whether certain structures may provide opportunities for lower class students to build resources through student employment that compensate for their lack of resources at home.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Maurice Crul, Zeynep Kasli and Zeynep Yanasmayan and the reviewers of *Journal of Education and Work* for their helpful comments on the previous drafts of this article.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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