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Educational Progress of Children of Turkish Descent in the Netherlands

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The educational position of children of first-generation Turkish parents is widely considered problematic both in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe. Together with children from the Maghreb, Turkish children occupy the lowest position on the educational ladder. This however masks the fact that in twenty years spectacular gains in education have been made. More than a quarter of Turkish youth now enter higher education. This article describes these gains and tries to explain how they came about. A crucial factor is the changing attitude towards education in the Turkish community. Education increasingly has a positive connotation. Equally important is the growing expertise and knowledge available within the community. In the close-knit Turkish community, educational resources find their way to more and more youngsters in the form of help and support by older siblings and community projects.

After Germany and France, the Netherlands hosts the biggest Turkish community in Europe with around 372,700 people with a Turkish background (CBS 2008: 33). The first Turkish labour migrants came to the Netherlands on their own initiative in the early 1960s. Many of them had worked briefly in Belgium or Germany before trying their luck further north or west. The continuing demand for low-skilled workers in the Dutch textile and metal industries triggered a process of chain migration by relatives and friends. In 1964, the Netherlands signed an official agreement on labour migration with Turkey. The peak of labour migration occurred between 1970 and 1974, after which officially organised migration was halted.

Dutch industry had needed low-skilled labour, and indeed the majority of these first-generation Turkish “guest workers” were recruited from the lowest socio-economic strata in their home countries. In the rural areas where most of them originated, virtually the only educational opportunities were at primary-school level (Coenen 2001). The majority of first-generation Turkish men had finished no more than primary school; most Turkish women had even less schooling or were illiterate (Crul 1994). After arriving in the Netherlands, most men worked for fifteen to twenty years in factories, shipyards or the cleaning industry, before the industrial restructuring of the 1980s put many of them out of jobs. Today some

80 per cent of the Turkish male population aged 50 or older are outside the Dutch labour market. The majority of families live from minimum incomes (Martens and Weijers 2000: 73), and many children grew up with fathers who were unemployed by the time they were entering secondary school (Crul and Doornik 2003). Children of Turkish labour migrants grew up in a very unfavourable situation. From the beginning they were considered one of the most disadvantaged groups in the Netherlands (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000). This reality also translated into their position in education. The general picture in many research reports since the late 1980s has been that they are overrepresented in the lowest school tracks, they have high drop-out rates and relatively few make it into higher education. This picture masks the fact that at the same time the educational position of children of Turkish descent showed a steady improvement. This development over time is the subject of this article. Instead of looking at the gap with regard to the native population, which is still large although declining, this article looks at the development of the educational position of youth of Turkish descent in the Netherlands over the last twenty years, thus introducing a whole new perspective. If we compare over time we see a spectacular improvement in their position in school. This also raises different questions. Rather than explaining their disadvantaged position compared with the children of native-born Dutch parents the article tries to explain the improvement in their educational position. Admittedly there is still a huge gap with children of native-born parents but, as the improvement in the position of Turkish youth is hardly commented on in the literature, we focus on that.

The change over time does not seem to be unique to the Netherlands. In other European countries similar processes are taking place. The rate of change may be different but there are considerable improvements in educational outcomes in all European countries where a large Turkish community is settled (Crul et al. 2009a).

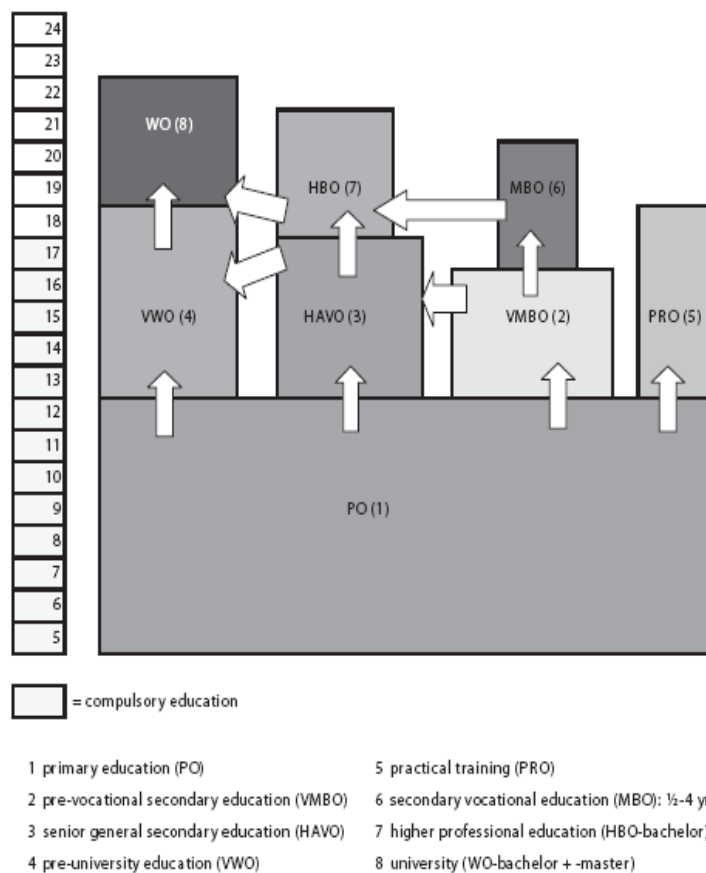
1. The education system in the Netherlands

One of the pillars of the Dutch education system is the freedom to choose a school according to one's own preferences, be they religious or ideological. All schools in the Netherlands, including those that are religious, are state-funded. Children are officially expected to enter primary school when they turn 4 years old. Primary school consists of eight grades, so children usually leave at age 12. At the end of primary school, all children must take a national examination that is crucial for their further school career in secondary school. On the basis of their test result and the recommendation made by their teacher, they will be assigned to follow a specific track in the secondary-school system.

Figure 1 summarises the current education system in the Netherlands and provides an overview of the many ways to navigate it. Pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) is the lowest stream of secondary education, where children with the lowest recommendation from primary school are placed. Most children continue to study after they have gained their secondary-school diplomas. The children with a

VMBO diploma usually go on to middle vocational education (MBO). This could mean a one-, two-, three- or four-year course (either full time or part time). The one- and two-year MBO tracks have an important component of two- to three-day weekly apprenticeships. Pupils with a HAVO diploma can go on to higher vocational education, while pupils with a VWO diploma usually go on to university.

Figure 1: The education system in the Netherlands



Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2007).

A unique characteristic of the Dutch school system is that pupils can easily move from one stream to the other, as Figure 1 shows. In principle, a pupil could start at the bottom and move up, step by step, to the highest stream (taking the “long route” through the education system). Although it will take between one and three years longer for such a student to reach the highest stream than for those in the pre-university VWO stream, many children of immigrants have moved up the educational ladder in this way (Crul et al. 2009b).

2. Development in the educational position of Turkish youth in the Netherlands (1988–2007)

An impressive amount of research is carried out in the Netherlands to assess and explain the socio-economic status of migrants and their children. The public authorities promote these research efforts directly and indirectly. Several periodic surveys have been conducted to gather data for developing and evaluating government policies. The most important survey that assesses migrant educational status is the Social Position and Use of Facilities by Ethnic Minorities Survey (SPVA), conducted nationwide every three to four years since 1988.¹ These data enable us to assess the socio-economic status of the four largest migrant groups in the Netherlands.² This provides a unique opportunity for an overview of development over a period of twenty years.

The only restriction for giving a complete overview is that publications reporting the results of the different surveys sometimes use different age categories or education indicators. This is partly related to the fact that in 1988, for example, children of Turkish descent were still young. So in 1988 the information is only available for those children still in school. In that year, 71 per cent of the 15–24 age group were found in primary school or the lowest level of secondary education (VMBO) (Veenman 1999: 50). That is, almost three-quarters of the children of Turkish descent in 1988 were at the very bottom of the educational pyramid. With this score they, together with children of Moroccan labour migrants (86 per cent), occupied by far the worst educational position in the Netherlands. Only 22 per cent of children of Dutch descent were found in this category in 1988.

Table 1: Highest level of diploma obtained by pupils of Turkish descent aged 5–24 (%)

	1998	2002	2006
Only primary-school diploma	25	16	14
VMBO diploma	35	30	32
MBO diploma or higher	40	54	54

Sources: SPVA (1998), figures from annual report on minorities (Tesser et al. 1999: 66, 67); SPVA (2002), figures from annual report on minorities (Dagevos et al. 2003: 42); SCP, figures from annual report on integration (Dagevos and Gijsberts 2007: 76).

Ten years later, in 1998, this picture had already changed considerably (see Table 1). In 1998, a majority is still found in the lowest streams of education (only primary-school diploma or VMBO diploma) but the percentage has dropped by

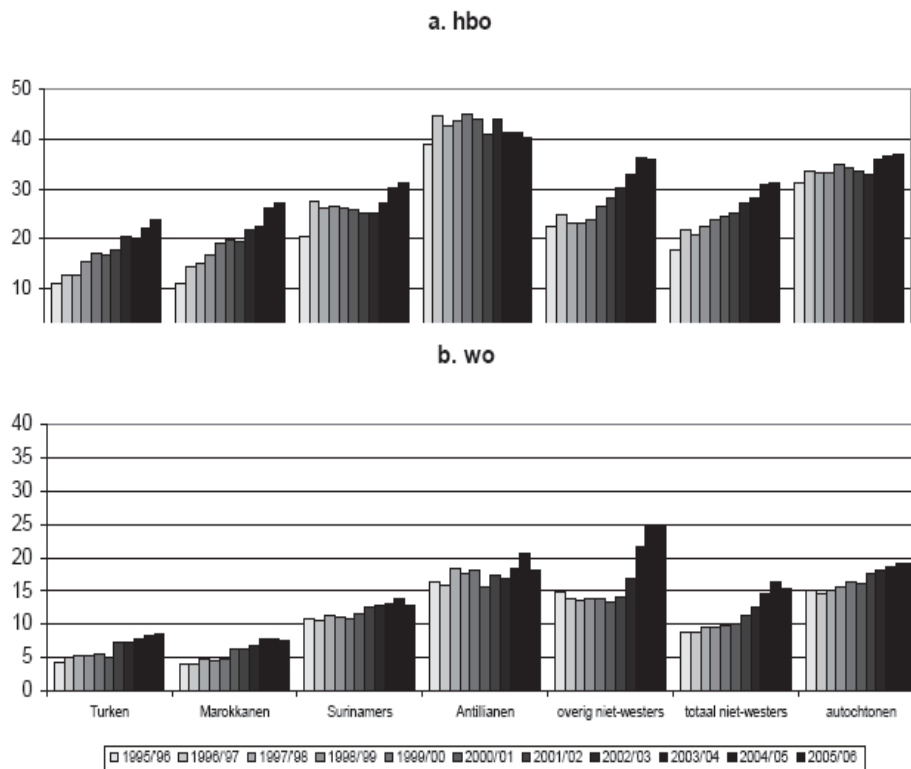
¹ The SPVA survey is broadly representative of the ethnic minority population in the Netherlands (see Roelandt et al. 1992: 202).

² The categorisation of ethnic groups corresponds to the definition used by the Netherlands Interior Ministry. Ethnic origin is determined on the basis of the place of birth of one or both parents. The definition thus also includes second-generation offspring with one immigrant parent.

about 10 per cent to 60 per cent. Compared with 1988, twice as many Turkish students in 1998 continued their studies in middle vocational education after finishing lower vocational education.

After another four years, in 2002, the picture has again changed significantly. The group that left school without a secondary-school diploma (the primary-school level group) was reduced by 9 per cent. The group which has achieved a middle or higher level of school education (54 per cent of the total) now forms the majority. In the same period, children of Dutch descent hardly moved up in the percentages in the MBO+ category (Tesser et al. 1999: 66, 67; Dagevos et al. 2003: 42; Dagevos and Gijsberts 2007: 76).

Figure 2: Students in higher vocational education (HBO) and university (WO) aged 18–20 (1995/96 to 2005/06)



Key: Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, Antilleans, other non-Western, total non-Western, autochthonous

Source: CBS (statline), SCP, from annual report on integration (Dagevos and Gijsberts 2007: Supplement p. 5).

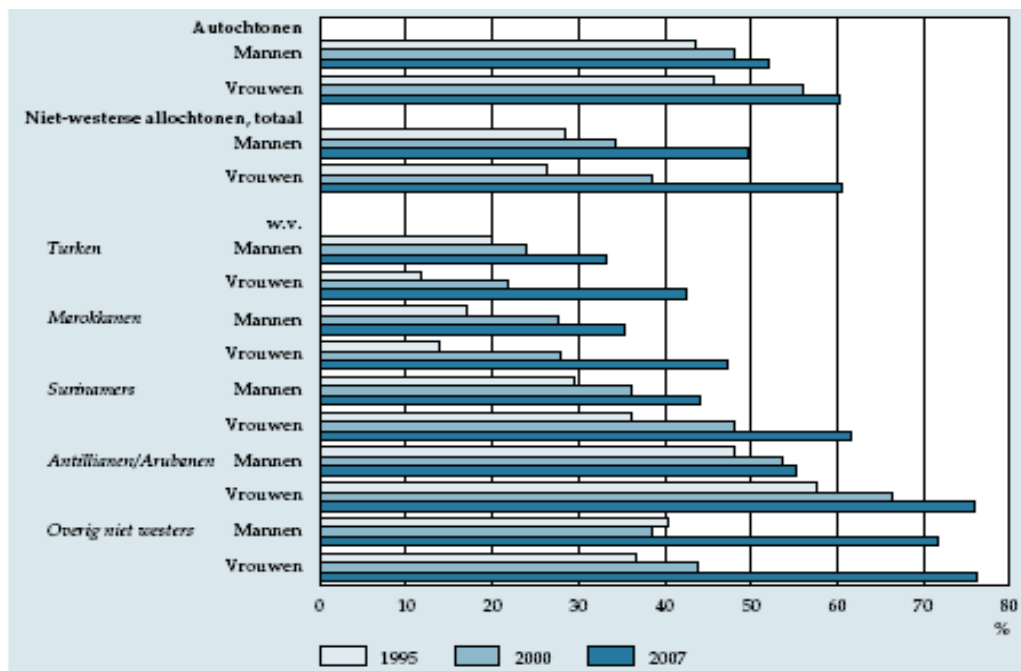
The category MBO+ is a rather diverse one. In 1998 it consisted mostly of students in middle vocational education (MBO). The recent TIES survey that targeted second-generation youth of Turkish and Moroccan descent in Amsterdam and Rotterdam from 2007 shows that the group in higher vocational education (HBO)

is as large as that in MBO now (de Valk and Crul 2008).³ This is also evident if we look at the participation of students of Turkish descent in HBO. In ten years, from 1995 to 2005 their numbers have doubled from 11 per cent to 24 per cent, as shown in Figure 2.

At the same time, there is a rise in participation in higher education among students of Dutch descent. The rise for those of Dutch descent is similar (about 5 per cent) in university (WO) participation to that for those of Turkish descent. However, in tertiary higher vocational education (HBO) the participation of students of Turkish descent has more than doubled from 11 per cent to 24 per cent whereas for Dutch students the increase has been less dramatic, from 31 per cent to 38 per cent.

For the first time, in 2007, young women of Turkish descent are also better represented than young men in higher education (see Figure 3). This development brings the Turks into alignment with participation patterns for the Dutch and other major ethnic groups.

Figure 3: Students in higher education aged 18–20 (1995, 2000 and 2007)



Key: Autochthonous; Non-Western autochthonous, total; Turks; Moroccans; Surinamese; Antilleans/Arubans; other non-Western. Each group is divided into men and women.

Source: CBS (2008).

³ The acronym TIES stands for the The Integration of the European Second Generation project. The TIES survey is conducted in eight countries among second generation youth of Turkish, Moroccan and ex-Yugoslavian descent and a comparison group in the same age category (18–35). In the Dutch part of the TIES survey, 500 second-generation Turks and 500 second-generation Moroccans were interviewed in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The respondents were sampled through the population register (Crul and Heering 2008).

The overall development that becomes clear from all the tables and figures is that whereas in 1988 many pupils of Turkish descent did not even finish the lowest level of secondary education, by the 1990s many more finished lower vocational education and entered middle vocational education. However many dropped out at that level after a few years (Crul 2000). Now, more and more students are finishing middle vocational education with a larger group then going on to higher vocational education. The first representatives of those with higher vocational education diplomas are now entering the labour market (de Valk and Crul 2008).

Turkish girls have particularly improved their levels of educational attainment over twenty years. In 1988 three-quarters of Turkish girls left school without a secondary-school diploma, far more than Turkish boys. In the most recent cohorts the situation has been reversed. The girls are now surpassing the boys, with more Turkish girls than boys in middle vocational education or higher.

Other indicators of educational attainment show similar improvements. In the last year of primary school all the children take a national test, the so-called CITO test, which is used to allocate students to further education. Table 2 shows how the gap has narrowed between 1994 and 2004. If we compare the Turkish children with those of Dutch descent whose parents had a low level of vocational education, the gap of 6 points is reduced to 2 points. Also the gap between the Turkish students and those of Dutch descent with parents who have a diploma at the middle or higher level is reduced from 14 points to 9 points. As a result more and more Turkish youngsters now directly enter the academic rather than the vocational track in secondary school (CBS 2008).

The development of the educational position of youngsters of Turkish descent to a large extent parallels the change of generations. Many of the pupils in 1988 were immigrants themselves. These children usually arrived at primary-school age. They had to change schools, learn a new language and adjust to very different teaching methods. This of course drastically reduced their chances in school.

Table 2: Scores on the national CITO test by ethnic group (1994–2004)

	Turkish	Moroccan	Surinamese	Antillean	Dutch-low	Dutch-middle and high
1994/95	524.1	525.1	527.1	526.8	531.9	538.0
1996/97	525.2	526.4	527.4	525.6	531.2	537.4
1998/99	526.9	526.9	529.2	525.6	530.6	536.9
2000/01	527.3	527.4	529.8	524.8	530.5	537.3
2002/03	527.3	528.3	528.3	524.7	530.6	537.3
2004/05	527.0	527.7	527.9	524.5	528.9	536.2

Source: ITS/SCO/NWO (Prima '94/'96/'98/'00/'02/'04) SCP, from annual report on integration (Dagevos and Gijssberts 2007, Supplement p. 4).

The second generation, born in the Netherlands, do not face these obstacles which can hinder access to secondary school and higher education. Some, whose parents had little or no primary education, have made a spectacular intergenerational jump by entering higher education.

If we look at the extent of intergenerational mobility we can see that there is a considerable correlation between the educational level of the parents of Dutch descent and their children (Table 3), less so in the case of children whose parents are of Turkish and Moroccan descent. In the case of second-generation Moroccans the correlation is not even significant. Despite many of the first-generation parents having hardly had any schooling, their children have still been able to move up.

Table 3: Correlation between education level of parents and that of their children – Pearson correlation coefficients (2006)

	Turkish	Moroccan	Surinamese	Dutch
Children (second generation)	0.19	0.12 (n.s.)	0.36	0.42

Source: SCP (CIM'06) weighted.

The first-generation parents were unable to help their children practically in school and often, because of the language barrier, were unable to communicate with teachers. Yet, as Section 3 shows, a change in the way the Turkish community viewed education has been important in explaining the recent gains in educational attainment.

3. The attitude towards education in the Turkish community during the 1980s and early 1990s

In the 1980s the attitude of Turkish parents towards education is often described in the literature as ambivalent. Marlene de Vries (1988) in her book *Ogen in je rug* (Eyes in Your Back) elaborates especially on the lack of support parents gave to girls. She carried out her research during 1984–85. Although education is not the main theme of her book, it is clear that strong social control of girls in the Turkish community frustrated the educational opportunities for a considerable number. Parents were generally mistrustful about their daughters going to school where they could interact with boys without supervision. Parents feared gossip about their daughter's potential "misbehaviour". A lot of parents also did not see the need for their daughters to study. Especially in the case of the girls of the so-called "in-between" generation,⁴ most parents did not attach much value to education. These girls were supposed to marry young and become housewives. Another consideration was that parents could reap better short-term payoffs from an early marriage, especially with a family member from Turkey, if their daughter did not

⁴ The term "in-between generation" refers to people who have come to the receiving country after the starting age of schooling but before they have completed their schooling.

extend her educational career. A marriage could bring benefits in terms of both the extended family income (the income of the young couple adds to the family household) and the family's status in the community back home, as close relatives were able to send their sons to the Netherlands for marriage. Parents regularly evaded compulsory education (de Vries 1988: 70, 73). It was not uncommon for girls to receive a marriage proposal (often when on holiday in Turkey) at the age of 15 or 16, so some of the girls were already engaged when preparing for exams. Under these circumstances, the incentive to stay in school and finish their studies diminished. More importantly, parents often did not seem to care if this was the case.

According to a study by Coenen (2001) the attitude of the parents towards the children of the in-between generation can be accounted for by their own childhood and education.

During the period in which the parents had the same age as their school-going children do now, the daughters were helping with household chores and working on their hope chest. They were called *evkiz*, which literally means house girl. A description we can still find in the Turkish passport under "profession". Their main activity consisted of "waiting" (a term literally used before, and still today in Turkish rural areas) for a suitable potential husband. Sons worked in the fields and were allowed to celebrate their youth more than daughters. For them the term *delikan* was used, which means "crazy blood". Military service and the wedding just before or after that meant for them the start of an adult life with responsibilities (Coenen 2001: 59–60).

The parents of the children of the in-between generation applied a mixture of the old-fashioned way of thinking about goals in upbringing in a Turkish rural context and the new opportunities offered by Dutch education, relating to the life the children would lead when returning to the original country of the parents. For the daughters little changed in their own minds as in the Netherlands they above all else got the message that they should become a good spouse and a good housewife. Liesbeth Coenen describes how for the boys the parents often also had a clear idea relating to their return to Turkey.

It turned out that fathers used to have clearly defined wishes regarding the profession of their sons of the in-between generation, usually to become car mechanics. The prevalent idea was that sons with this profession could do useful work maintaining tractors in the improved peasant existence. Apart from that, they would be able to make a living fixing the Turkish cars that often broke down on their yearly exodus from the Netherlands to Turkey. But also the opening of a garage in the regional village was popular as a professional perspective (Coenen 2001, 110).

Turkish boys were also supposed to marry at a young age, although they were on average older than the girls. After marriage, they often left school or college to provide income for their new families (Alders et al. 2001: 47). In particular, youths with school difficulties or behavioural problems were pushed by their parents to get

married and find a job instead. Liesbeth Coenen (2001) has termed such attitudes of the parents towards their children “cultural carryovers” of the home country. Read (2004: 57) uses the term “patriarchal connectivity” to describe the phenomenon whereby women and men are socialised to see themselves primarily as part of a larger kinship structure that privileges male authority and dominance over female educational and professional achievements.

Lindo (1996) describes, ten years after the work of de Vries, the situation in the Turkish community more or less in the same terms. He discusses the negative influence of social control on the educational careers of the youngsters. He also emphasises the influence of (regional or village) networks, whose members are oriented mainly towards their own community and have little contact with the native Dutch. Lindo shows how, through social control, the norms and values belonging to these networks were strictly maintained and deviant behaviour was sanctioned.

4. Different choices and better chances in education

As described above, the school outcomes for Turkish pupils in the 1980s and early 1990s showed many Turkish pupils leaving school early. Reaching the age at which compulsory schooling stops often marked the end of their education. Lower vocational and lower general secondary school were often seen as the end of education. Only a few used the possibility offered by the Dutch education system to take the long route and climb step-by-step up the educational ladder. During the second half of the 1990s this gradually changed. The substantial increase of Turkish students in middle vocational education shows that Turkish youth were starting to study longer. The increase in the number of students in middle vocational training mirrors the decrease in the obstacles that previously blocked the continuation of their education. At the same time their educational space still seems to be limited, as obstacles are now raised in a later phase of their studies. Girls with the ability to go on to higher vocational education often opt for middle vocational education, because their parents do not want them to extend their studies for too long (Crul 2000: 135–38). Here we can actually see a gradual change in the way of thinking: from a position in which education was not considered important to a position where obstacles are raised only to a limited extent.

Coenen (2001) describes the change of attitude among the parents in her study as the idea of returning to the country of origin faded. For the future of their children parents now had to orientate definitively towards Dutch society. This attitudinal change practically coincided with the appearance of the second generation in secondary education. Other studies also confirm this change in attitude towards education (Crul 2000; Yerden 2001) The younger girls in the family now more often got the opportunity to continue studying or experienced less opposition. The experiences of the children of the in-between generation play an important role in this. Many of these children had left school without any diploma or were trained only at the lowest level. They became unemployed or had to be satisfied with jobs

at the low end of the social ladder. The importance of education for social mobility in Dutch society consequently became painfully clear for both the parents and the in-between generation children. The experiences of the girls who married early, often to someone they barely knew, were frequently problematic. This has led to many matrimonial problems and an increasing number of divorces. These brought shame upon the family, a situation that the parents wanted to avoid in the first place. From this sort of experience both parents and children learned. Marriages are now taking place at a later age and parents increasingly give their children more freedom to choose their own partner (Yerden 2001).

The children of the in-between generation, because of their own experience, therefore often came to be strong advocates in their families for both the postponement of marriage and the importance of education (Crul 2000: 111–19). They often initiated changes in ways of thinking and behaviour towards education. The older in-between children had a big influence in the family, as their parents and younger siblings consulted them. This obviously did not always go without conflict. In their opinion, first-generation parents often lagged behind their in-between and second-generation children. Qualitative research showed how the successful Turkish younger daughters in the family are at the same time hindered by parental restrictions, whereas they receive support from elder brothers or sisters. Depending on the availability of support in their own environment, some youngsters found ways to carry through their wish to go on to higher education, even despite opposition from their parents (Crul 2000: 155–56).

The fact that more and more girls enter higher education in itself alters the attitude towards girls' studying. On the one hand the girls show that it is possible to study and be respectable at the same time and, on the other, younger girls in the community start to see in these role models that it is possible for a Turkish girl to go on to higher education.

From the 2007 TIES survey,⁵ Tables 4, 5 and 6 show how important parents and siblings were for success during secondary school among different age groups. The importance of both mothers and fathers is greatest among the younger age groups (Tables 4 and 5). Table 6 shows the importance of support from siblings.

Overall we can discern that the attitude towards education in the Turkish community has changed over time. Yerden (2001: 17) even states that education has become a new status symbol in the Turkish community: "Girls who are studying nowadays have a special status within the family and the Turkish community; learned people are considered 'to know all' and possess more knowledge about everything." Section 5 elaborates on how this changed attitude translates into everyday practice.

⁵ The Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) in The Hague and the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES) of the University of Amsterdam have been responsible for TIES data collection in the Netherlands.

Table 4: Second-generation Turkish youth (18–35): mother’s importance for school success (%)

Age groups	Not imp. at all	Not imp.	A bit imp.	Imp.	Very imp.	Not applicable	Total
18–19	2	7	16	32	44	0	100
20–24	5	4	15	32	42	2	100
25–29	7	8	12	31	40	3	100
30–35	13	13	17	25	30	1	100

Source: TIES survey 2007.

Table 5: Second-generation Turkish youth (18–35): father’s importance for school success (%)

Age groups	Not imp. at all	Not imp.	A bit imp.	Imp.	Very imp.	Not applicable	Total
18–19	5	12	16	28	33	5	100
20–24	6	10	18	28	31	7	100
25–29	8	11	14	30	32	5	100
30–35	13	13	17	32	22	3	100

Source: TIES survey 2007.

Table 6: Second-generation Turkish youth (18–35): siblings’ importance for school success (%)

Age groups	Not imp. at all	Not imp.	A bit imp.	Imp.	Very imp.	Not applicable	Total
18–19	3	5	24	32	34	3	100
20–24	4	14	19	28	30	6	100
25–29	9	12	21	38	15	5	100
30–35	12	12	24	32	16	4	100

Source: TIES survey 2007.

5. The growth of support networks

Various research shows that successful Turkish youth (those attending the academic tracks in school) themselves attribute their success to their own abilities and persistence. They claim to have had no help whatsoever and to have reached higher education on their own (cf. Ledoux 1996; van der Veen 2001). They have made their own choices and followed their own path. In general people do tend to attribute their success to their own efforts and failure either to others or to specific circumstances. Some scepticism therefore seems appropriate. If asked about the practical course of events preceding important moments of decision in their school careers, successful students often report that they received incidental or regular help from people from within their own circles (Crul 2000). Usually the parents were important in giving emotional support. Most first-generation parents with

limited education could not give practical help or advise their children on their studies. In most cases it is other people in their surroundings that help practically, such as older siblings, uncles or aunts and cousins; people that in terms of generation are between the parents and the children. The support consists of advice, practical help and contact with teachers. Sometimes the help, although only incidental, can still have extensive consequences; for example when an older sibling advises enrolment in a comprehensive school rather than a vocational school. In a comprehensive school the younger sibling can still move up the educational ladder, while in the vocational school his or her career is more or less determined. Moreover, vocational schools have high drop-out rates because of the problematic school climate. Advice to avoid vocational schools can have a major effect on a future school career. Even if a given pupil had no further help whatsoever, this does not alter the significance of this single piece of advice for their entire school career.

Siblings can often also give some practical help with homework, especially in the first classes of secondary school. Sometimes they replace parents in meetings with teachers or they contact a teacher because their younger siblings have problems with a certain subject at school. They often partly or fully take over the role of educational support from the parents (see also Coenen 2001). Most of the older in-between generation siblings have not reached a high level in education themselves. They want their younger siblings to have the chances they themselves did not. They often say that they do not want their siblings to make the same mistakes as they did.

The essence of the success of this guidance from within the student's own circle lies in the fact that the support is from people who can project themselves into the situation of the children at both home and school. The majority know the school system from first-hand experience. They attended school only in the Netherlands, or at least had part of their school education there, and therefore are aware of the many hindrances and obstacles in the Dutch system. It is also important that they usually give guidance for a lengthy period. A teacher can sometimes play a crucial role in facilitating achievements in a certain subject or class, but the next year the pupil may have a different teacher or may have dropped the subject. People from their own network, on the other hand, already support the youngsters in primary school, are often involved intensively in providing advice on the choice of secondary school, and keep up their support and guidance after these transitions. They are especially important at times when things are not running so smoothly in school, or when the motivation for school is dropping, and can motivate and help the pupil through difficult times. They also sometimes intervene when a pupil is at risk of repeating a class as they are better informed than parents about whom to turn to and how to arrange such things as extra lessons or tutoring. Older siblings sometimes also mediate in the case of problems with parents or school (Crul 2000: 105–28).

In the Turkish community, knowledge about the Dutch education system has been growing through years of experience. As more youngsters enrol in higher education, the quality of this knowledge increases. Ever more Turkish youngsters in primary or secondary school have family members in higher education. They can ask them for advice or practical help. The small group of highly educated youth in the community plays an especially important role in passing on knowledge, giving support and being a role model. Help and support prove to be more effective as the person giving it is more highly educated (Crul and Pasztor 2007). Siblings who have attended primary and secondary school in the Netherlands and are now in higher education know all the education pathways and their hindrances and obstacles. Moreover, the success of older siblings sets an important example.

The mechanisms through which older siblings provide help and support are also to be found in the increasingly numerous mentor projects established by Turks in the Netherlands. About fifteen years ago the first student mentor project was organised by higher education students of Turkish descent (Crul and Akdeniz 1997), in which Turkish students in higher education gave help and support to pupils of Turkish descent in secondary school. Now a range of Turkish organisations have set up mentor projects, homework classes, weekend schools and examination training. In the city of Amsterdam the Turkish organisation De Witte Tulp (The White Tulip) reaches about 700 pupils with their activities, which are listed on their website (<http://www.stichtingwittetulp.nl/>). Most tutors and mentors are of Turkish origin themselves and as successful higher education students they act as a role model for younger children. With a total of about 5,000 students of Turkish descent in higher education, this group has become a potent resource for the community. One of the first national Turkish student organisations, Cosmicus, has recently shifted its focus of attention to found the first secondary school for academically gifted pupils. The Cosmicus schools aim to educate world citizens and cater for an ethnically diverse student population, although the majority of pupils are still of Turkish descent. The schools' pedagogical principles are close to the Montessori school concept and they are part of the Montessori group. The fact that the Turkish community has a tight and well-organised social network starts to pay off in educational terms.

6. Conclusion

Changing views on the importance of education, together with increasing knowledge and experience of education are, together with the rise of the second generation, important factors in explaining the increasing levels of educational attainment in the Turkish community. To theoretically position these changes it is interesting to look at the debate on the so-called "new second generation" that is taking place in the United States. In that debate on migrant groups the question is being posed how groups who have a low socio-economic starting point find a way to rise from the ranks. The rapid success of Asian second-generation youth, whose parents are often poorly educated, particularly requires an explanation. The dominant notion that assimilation leads to success, which formed the explanation

for the success of Russian Jews and South European migrants, does not apply to the Asian groups. The closeness of the various Asian communities is striking and youngsters are brought up with the norms and values of their own ethnic group. The success of the Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese second generation even surpasses that of the most successful migrant groups from earlier migration waves to the United States. One explanation of their success focuses on the strong social cohesion of the group (Kasinitz et al. 2008; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Zhou 1997). The argument runs that strong group ties prevent Asian youth becoming involved with marginalised youth from other groups in school or in the neighbourhood. Moreover, through the strong social cohesion within the group it is possible to rapidly exchange information on education, the quality of schools and the best way to access schools (Kasinitz et al. 2008). Also the parents strongly wish for their children to be high achievers in education (Vermeulen 2001). More than parents from other ethnic groups, these parents are willing to invest in education and their expectations of education are high.

The Turkish community in the Netherlands is also characterised by strong cohesion. The progress in the educational position of Turkish youth is however much less. Unlike the American Asian case, the Turkish network was at first indifferent, if not unfavourably disposed towards education. In the case of the in-between generation, the strong social cohesion of the network, combined with the negative messages on education in general, actually resulted in frustrating educational attainment. The second generation, however, increasingly takes advantage of multiple community support networks. The content of the messages on education has changed over a relatively short period. This happened as the first generation adapted to a changing context, and as the in-between generation was a daily reminder to family members of the limitations imposed by the lack of a good education. In addition, the second generation grew up under completely different circumstances and developed a different view of education. As Vermeulen (2001) states in his essay *Culture and Inequality* the normative content of the network is of great importance. This insight is crucial in explaining progress in the educational attainment of Turkish youth in the Netherlands. By expressing the appropriate message the network can develop an enormous force, a force that enables fast upward mobility because the accumulated knowledge, experience, guidance and support exceeds that of one's own parents. Also, those parents who belong to the in-between generation show how the change in thinking about education continues within the Turkish community. They not only think quite differently about it, but they implement this thinking into educational support.

The case study of the Turkish community shows how important are viewpoints about education in a community. The role of the emerging education elite in the Netherlands Turkish community has been essential in altering the initial unproductive viewpoints on education. Projects set up by students from within the Turkish community have been of key importance in conveying a different educational message to parents of the first generation, showing that improvements

in educational results only come about if community members are actively involved in the process of change.

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