

School, youngsters, parents and neighborhood: partners in the creation of an optimal school career. The case of youngsters with an immigrant background in the second grade of secondary education in Flanders (Antwerp, Ghent, Genk) with a special focus on Moroccan, Turkish, Polish and Chinese youngsters.

Working paper 2 – Description research populations

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1. Introduction

The current working paper depicts the four ethnic minority communities this research project focuses on: the Chinese, the Moroccan, the Polish and the Turkish community. For each of them we give an overview of their overall migration history towards and their socio-economic situation and educational situation in Belgium, and in Flanders in particular.

For this description we rely primarily upon existing data. Yet, it is clear from the start that there are tremendous differences between the four communities concerning these data. Research on ethnic minorities in Flanders focused mainly on individuals from Turkish and Moroccan origin. For these communities we can depict quite detailed overviews even with respect to their overall educational situation, whereas for the Polish and Chinese communities these data are absent. Nevertheless, this overview gives a general idea of the similarities and differences between our four target communities and their overall current situation in Belgium and Flanders.

At the same time one can ask oneself when a person with an immigrant background stops being an immigrant or “allochtoon” and becomes an “autochtoon”. “Allochtoon” (person with an immigrant background) and “autochtoon” (non-immigrant) are typical terms used in Belgium and the Netherlands. The definition and by consequence the construction of ethnic groups is a complex process and this will only become even more difficult in the future.

Yet as the data in this working paper show different categories of pupils show quite differing school performance results. Social inequality and social reproduction are important characteristics of the educational systems in Belgium (for there are different educational systems in Flanders and Wallonia). The performance gap between high achievers and low achievers is dramatically large and seems to be strongly related to the socio-economic background of the pupils and their parents.

A recent analysis of the results of PISA 2003 and 2006, demonstrated clearly that nowhere else in the industrialized world such a gap in performance is found between immigrant children and non-immigrant children. The scores obtained by immigrant children are among the lowest in the ‘rich’ part of the world. There are no significant differences in performance between immigrant children in Flanders and Wallonia, immigrant children have comparable poor results all over Belgium (KBS, 2009b).¹ Some revealing figures: in Flanders 9% of the non-immigrant children are below the minimum level of competence for mathematics, while this is true for 35% of second generation pupils and 35% of newcomers. Almost 12% of the autochthonous pupils,

¹ In this study no distinction has been made between different nationalities, countries of origin or cultural and ethnic background. Only the following categories were used:

- Autochthonous pupil: born in or outside of Belgium with at least one parent born in Belgium ;
- Second generation pupil: born in Belgium with both parents born outside of Belgium;
- First generation pupil of newcomer: born outside of Belgium with both parents born outside of Belgium.

The second and first generation pupils together form the group of immigrant pupils.

44% of the second generation immigrant pupils and 40% of the newcomers have serious difficulty with reading (KBS. 2009b).²

Usually (a combination of) three factors are put forward as explaining best the school careers of pupils: the socio-economic position of the family, language spoken at home and type of schooling (general, technical, professional). However the language spoken at home and the socio-economic position of the family, can only partially explain the differences between non-immigrant and immigrant pupils, thus other factors are still at play (KBS, 2009b).

One of the main objectives of this research project is to thoroughly and critically examine the distinctive features of the Flemish educational system as well as the explanations for the differences in academic performance and success so far being put forward. Our focus remains on four ethnic communities – the Chinese, Moroccan, Polish and Turkish community. Necessary for this is a good broad and in-depth description of these communities, as this working paper intends to provide.

² Note that the percentage of newcomers with learning difficulties in Flanders is somewhat biased, because it includes pupils from the neighboring country The Netherlands (who have Dutch as their mother tongue).

2. The Chinese community in Flanders

2.1 Introduction

The first Chinese immigrants arrived in Belgium already at the end of the 19th century, but still the Chinese community remains 'invisible' to some extent within Belgian social and educational research. In comparison to other immigrant groups and especially with regard to the second generation, Chinese are underresearched. According to Pang there are various reasons why they have remained at the periphery in official and unofficial discourse (Pang, 2003). First as a group they are relatively small in comparison with other minorities in Belgium. Second, most Chinese people from the first generation are small and independent entrepreneurs and in this way not competing for jobs in the formal market. Third, unlike many other minority groups Chinese live very dispersed and in this way they do not form a 'visible community' that resides in specific and delineated neighborhoods.

In the next chapter we will shed some light on the migration history of the Chinese migrants. The available data however on the demographic, socio-economic and educational profile of Chinese migrants in Flanders are very limited. Most information is extracted from secondary documents and preliminary fieldwork.

2.2 Migration history

Before WO2

Chinese migration to Belgium started at the end of the 19th century and consisted of different waves of people who emigrated from various places of origin and for different reasons. Before the Second World War mainly seamen, contract workers, street peddlers and students found their way to our country (Liu Huang, 2008).

Thousands of cheap Chinese labourers were recruited by Dutch and British ship companies. In this way many Chinese seamen travelled into different European port cities like Antwerp, where some decided to stay instead of keeping up the harsh work on the ships. They were called 'jumped ship migrants' (Centrum voor Gelijke Kansen en voor Racismebestrijding, 2005). Since Canton was the first Chinese port open to international trade, the first settlers in the city of Antwerp were Cantonese. As a result the Cantonese language is still the lingua franca in Antwerp's Chinatown.

The Chinese street peddlers were mostly countrymen from Qingtian origin who travelled to Europe in order to sell their typical Qingtian stone sculptures. These street peddlers arrived in Belgium in 1908 and most of them did not own legal residence permits. But as their sculptures gained international reputation, the Chinese embassy in Belgium managed to grant them legal residence.

In 1860 several important conventions were signed between China and various colonial European countries as the Netherlands and Britain, which allowed these countries to freely recruit Chinese people for reasons of work. In general, these contract workers were either recruited legally or smuggled into the colonies of Great Britain, Portugal, Spain and France. Also during the First World War many Chinese were recruited by the Allies to serve as soldiers. Although after the war most of the Chinese soldiers were sent back to China, many of them were able to find jobs, stayed on an illegal basis or fled to other European countries, like Belgium.

A fourth group among the first Chinese settlers consisted of students who were for pragmatic reasons sent to Europe in order to learn about Western technology, international law,

manufacturing, etc. But also Europe had its own reasons to encourage Chinese to study abroad. It was considered strategically interesting to use education to assimilate Chinese students who would become future elites and supporters and back-ups as they would become elites or high technocrats in China (Liu Huang, 2008). Three academic institutions joined the proposed project, i.e. the National Ghent University, Université Nationale de Liège, and the Ecole Royale Militaire. The Chinese students in Belgium before WO2 who could not get support from the Chinese government were either linked with the socialists or the Catholic church. Especially the catholic church appeared to be an active recruiter of Chinese students.

After WO2

After WO2 chain migration (refugees and new migrants) originating from mainland China became the main source of Chinese immigrants in Belgium. The traditional Chinese patriarchal kinship system with its extended families was used to give remote kin and fellow villagers the opportunity to emigrate to Europe. According to the field observations of Liu Huang (Liu Huang, 2008) also the Cantonese from Hong Kong in the 50s, 60s and even 70s, then the Qingtianians in the 80s and the Fujian people in the 90s, benefited from chain migration. One Cantonese-speaking informant even claimed that his uncle had recruited more than one hundred of fellow villagers to come to Belgium.

A majority of Chinese arrived during the guest worker migration regime, from the 1950s until the 1970s, although they found their way to Europe on their own initiative, unlike the Moroccans or Turks who were actively recruited by the Belgian government (Pang, 2007). Also this group can be identified as Cantonese originating from the Crown colony of Hong Kong. The migration from mainland China ran dry after 1949 as a consequence of the foundation of the People's Republic of China (Centrum voor Gelijke Kansen en voor Racismebestrijding, 2005).

Starting from the 1980s until today another migration flow can be identified with Chinese migrants coming from different parts of mainland China such as Shanghai, Northern China and Fujian. This new flow needs to be analysed in the light of important political, economical, social and cultural developments in China itself (Centrum voor Gelijke Kansen en voor Racismebestrijding, 2005). The policy of modernization in 1978, the open Chinese emigration policy of 1985 and the famous student revolt at Tienan'men in 1989, all had significant effects in the 1990s and brought about a pattern of chain migration (Liu Huang, 2008). Equally through the channels of study, marriage and business investments, more Chinese found their way to the Belgian society.

Push and Pull Factors

Considering the motives for the various migration flows, we can see that for many Chinese migrants, migration was and is still seen as an important familial survival strategy (Centrum voor Gelijke Kansen en voor Racismebestrijding, 2005). As they cannot see a future in their homeland, many Chinese opt for migration. A lot of Chinese people lost confidence in the economical reforms their government enforced, because, although China has displayed a spectacular economic growth, only a limited part of the Chinese population can actually benefit from this new economic freedom. Besides this harrowing economical situation, also the so-called 'culture of emigration' plays a significant role in the emigration of many Chinese (Centrum voor Gelijke Kansen en voor Racismebestrijding, 2005). Within the centuries-old Chinese Diaspora migration has always stood for an appropriate way to enrich oneself and as a result gain more social standing. Moreover, the deprivation, sacrifice and risks inevitably linked with the migration process are considered a necessary burden. In general the Chinese migration flows reflect an explicit mobility orientation.

2.3 Socio-demographic profile

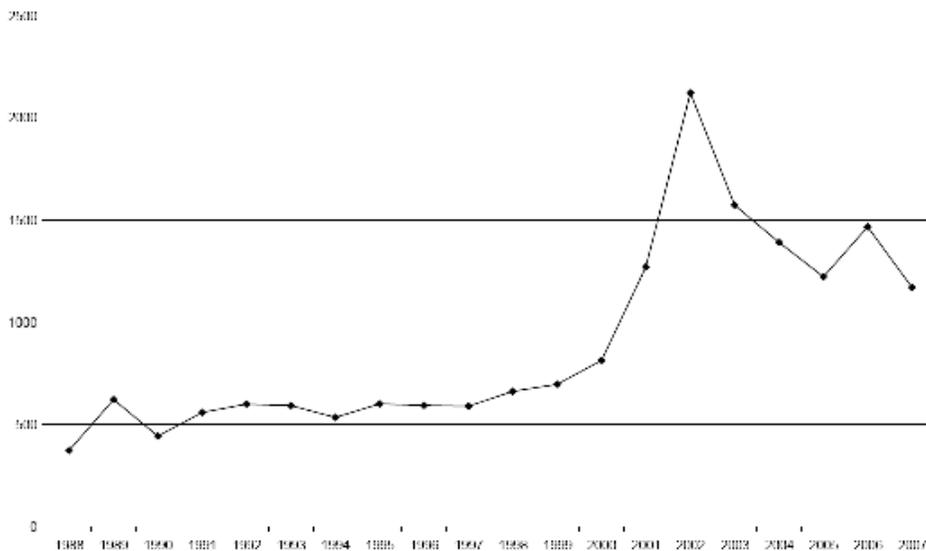
Demographic distribution and language

In Belgium there are no official statistical data on population groups of foreign origin, although the AD SEI³ and some public bodies are planning to set up statistics on this subject in order to create evaluation systems with regard to the situation of people of foreign origin on the labour market (Centrum voor Gelijke Kansen en voor Racismebestrijding, 2008).

Nowadays the most detailed information available is based on one specific variable, namely the nationality at birth.

The quantitative data on Chinese immigrants is thus quite limited as there is no official statistical information about the ethnic Chinese once they acquire the Belgian nationality or about the second generation Chinese who often acquire the Belgian nationality once they are born in Belgium. Moreover, the Chinese have different ethno-national identities and are therefore classified in respect of their claimed nationality.

Figuur 1. Evolution of the immigration of Chinese (R.P.), 1988-2007



Source: RR - Ad Sei (Centrum Voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en voor Racismebestrijding, 2008)

In Gent the Chinese community forms the 10th or 16th biggest ethnic minority, depending on whether the Chinese migrants still possess the Chinese nationality or already acquired the Belgian nationality. In the city of Antwerp, the estimated number of Chinese is 25.000 (Pang, Gazet van Antwerpen, 27 nov 2008) (Er wordt hier niet verwezen naar een bepaald onderzoek, dus verdere referentie niet mogelijk). Antwerp's Chinatown, that is situated in the north of the city, is the result of a spontaneous development proceeding from the Chinese community rather than the consequence of a restrictive Belgian migration policy (Pang, 2007). Many Chinese in Flanders go to Chinatown to shop, for leisure, to meet ethnic counterparts, for religious reasons, or to join the lively club life. Today in Chinatown you can

³ AS SEI stands for 'Algemene Directie Statistiek en Economische Informatie' (General Directory Statistics and Economical Information)

find various Chinese businesses, restaurants and associations with an economical, social or educational dimension. As a result, Antwerp's Chinatown is chiefly a commercial and social delineated domain for the Chinese in Flanders, and not a locus of residence.



Source: Pang, 2003

Cantonese is still the lingua franca in Antwerp, while Mandarin is between the Chinese in general the common language of communication other than the mother tongue which can be Cantonese, Qingtian, Minnan, Fujian or a local dialect (Liu Huang, 2008). As Liu Huang shows, the territorial origin of the Chinese migrants in Belgium is complicated, since many migrants' parents migrated earlier from mainland China to Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indo China.

Employment status

Most Chinese immigrants work in the restaurant business, a niche sector with a high accessibility that enabled them to become economically independent (Liu Huang, 2008). Although this can be seen as a means to plant their feet firmly into the receiving country, they are also one of the least known ethnic groups. It is nonetheless hard to ignore the existence of the Chinese in Flanders as the Chinese restaurants are localised in every big and small city. Except for Chinatown in Antwerp, most Chinese live very dispersed all over Flanders. In a period of 30 years they gained relatively financial welfare and this without extra economical impulses from the Belgian policy (Pang, 2007). As for the first generations of Moroccan and Turks, the first Chinese to arrive came originally from the countryside, nor did they speak the Dutch language and moreover they were very low educated. Though in contrast with the other aforementioned minority groups, the Chinese did not form a part of the general migration and integration policy in Belgium. Although they were also confronted with neglect, discrimination and arrears, the Chinese managed to improve their economical and social position by working very hard and living thrifty. The second generation is now imbedded in the Flemish society in different ways. Within traditional Chinese culture it is not done to ask publicly for help. Instead people rather search for solutions through interpersonal contact with other Chinese immigrants or Flemish acquaintances (Pang, 2007). Yet the relationships with members of the majority are kept to a minimum and are often based on instrumentalism. The Chinese are all the more embedded in the traditional regime of the Chinese family (Pang, 2003). Also the small restaurant businesses should be seen as a safe haven for their members without having to bother with potential discrimination and racism in the official labour market (Pang, 2003).

2.4 Preliminary data on the educational situation of Chinese pupils

Chinese parents' and pupils' perspectives on education

The following data are based on preliminary fieldwork conducted by Sarah Braeye. Until now she has carried out semi-structured interviews with ten Chinese second-generation youngsters (six girls and four boys) between fifteen and nineteen years old, and their parents. Eight of them followed general secondary education, one boy was in technical secondary education, another in vocational secondary education. All of them attended also Chinese language classes in the Chinese school of Antwerp or Gent. The interviews were carried out between May and September 2009. It must be noted though that the study has several methodological limitations. The size of the research group was small and included mostly low-educated Chinese immigrant parents and well-performing students. Therefore the results should not be generalized without being replicated with larger samples. Other sources of data (literature and long-term participant observation) as well as in-depth follow-up interviews have to strengthen the outcome of the study.

Chinese parents often emphasize the importance of both languages, Dutch and Chinese. They say they do not expect the Belgian schools to organise Chinese language classes, since they feel able to set up their own language schools. Also they 'do not want to interfere in schools' policies' and according to many parents 'the maintenance of the Chinese language should not inhibit the integration of their children in Dutch society'.

Eight out of ten Chinese parents feel they were 'forced' to work in the catering business, not only because they did not possess the appropriate diplomas or because of their poor knowledge of the Dutch language, but also for reasons of discrimination on the Belgian labour market. Although several Chinese parents interviewed said they did not experience discrimination, they did experience difficulties finding a job on the regular labour market, i.e. outside of the Chinese restaurant niche. Important though is that they do not pass on this message to their children. All parents believe that their children will have more possibilities with regards to job opportunities in the future as long as their children study hard enough and obtain the necessary diplomas. The Chinese pupils' testimonies equally reflected this positive message. Work ethic, studying hard and perseverance are believed to lead to fair job opportunities.

Although the Chinese migrants working in restaurants are roughly considered as less educated before emigration, a majority has at least received a 9-year compulsory education in their homeland. Yet others only received elementary education or even less, mostly due to financial or political reasons. Only a minority of Chinese migrants received collage education or more. Most individuals with a college degree (or higher) migrated for educational reasons to Belgium and stayed when their school career ended. Most of the Chinese immigrants who emigrated at adult age for work or family reasons did not receive formal education from the host society. Exceptions are those who came as accompanying persons of students, professionals and diplomats (Liu Huang, 2008).

The school careers of Chinese pupils

In many Western countries Chinese students, even regardless of social class, were found to achieve very high academic results. Unfortunately in Belgium there exist no official data on the participation and attainment of Chinese pupils in the Flemish educational system, although it seems that the majority of Chinese students in Flanders is enrolled in general secondary education and performs relatively well, especially in comparison to other second

generation minority youth. What is stated underneath is based primarily on preliminary fieldwork and interviews with 10 Chinese pupils and their parents during the period May–November 2009.

The findings show that most Chinese pupils were doing well at school, although their parents could not offer much direct help with regards to the content of the school curriculum. This counts in particular for first generation immigrant parents. Of course from this we can not conclude that Chinese parents consider the education of their children unimportant. None of the students received the explicit message that studying was not important. The Chinese parental and stimulating approach with regards to the education of their children seemingly appears quite homogenous, although some variation was noticeable. From this research however I can not decide whether my findings are applicable for the whole Chinese minority group in Flanders. Taking into account the divergent socio-economic, cultural, educational and language backgrounds, the various regions of origin and migration dates, variations are likely to be more pronounced.

When we consider the parental strategies of Chinese parents, nearly all Chinese youngsters were able to give clear-cut examples of stimulating, encouraging and controlling parental attitudes and child-rearing practices. Parents would ask teachers for additional homework, purchase extra workbooks, even for their educationally well-performing children, out of belief that children can always learn something more and that practice leads to good grades. On the other hand Chinese parents also help their children to relax and enjoy. Moreover children never felt they were being ‘pushed’ or had to ‘deal with a large amount of pressure’. All of the Chinese students attributed the stimulation of their parents as an important reason for their educational success, alongside their own efforts and perseverance. Although seemingly all Chinese parents place high value on children’s academic performance, none of the students, nor the parents, made reference to possible inherent Chinese cultural values. Many studies on Chinese immigrants indicate that the Chinese educational achievement model, one that is relatively restrictive and protective of children, is rooted in the traditional culture and especially in the principles of Confucianism (Fang, 1998), but this was never mentioned by the Chinese parents interviewed. Of course this does not automatically make the scholarly statement untrue. It is well possible that the Confucian values and norms form part of the ‘habitus’, in the Bourdieuan sense, of many Chinese families and are thus nearly never directly expressed as such.

Chinese students referred various times to ‘the sacrifices made by their parents’ and this was always seen in relation to family-oriented values. Many Chinese students and parents believed it was typical for Chinese parents to be willing to make important sacrifices for their children’s education, as children are ‘the most important thing’ and ‘Chinese families are very close’. In contrast with Moroccan youngsters (Hermans, 1995), Chinese students mostly talked about maternal stimulation and encouragement, with their fathers being interested in their academic development, but keeping themselves more in the background. Contrary to their active parental engagements in the home-based learning activities, but similar to Moroccan parents (Hermans, 2002, 2006), Chinese parents are not involved much in the schools. Though they do seem to be more aware of the structure and functioning of the Belgian educational system. Three reasons were used by the parents to explain their low participation in schools: their lack of Dutch proficiency – this counts in particular for the Chinese fathers –, their long working hours and the respect for teacher’s authority.

Nonetheless Chinese parents place great emphasis on the studies of their children. Often the Belgian educational system is compared with Chinese educational policies. Whereas in China there exists ‘inconceivable competition’ and accordingly ‘strict discipline’ and ‘enormous pressure’ on children and students, Belgian educational system is conceived as ‘less competitive’ and ‘less difficult’. Some parents cheered Belgian education since it gives children the opportunity ‘to be still a child’, ‘the time to absorb the acquired knowledge’ and

for its use of adapted and ‘more attractive’ learning methods. All parents felt their children received a good or even a better education in Belgium, though some parents stressed the need for extra impulses with respect to content and learning methods. In general Chinese parents’ home literacy practices suggest many continuities with the Chinese home and mainstream schools. Also none of the parents felt they themselves or their children were treated differently by the schools’ teachers because of their Chinese identity and they stressed their willingness to adapt to Belgian school policies.

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3. The Moroccan community in Flanders

3.1 Introduction

In a number of recent studies, the demographic, socio-economic and educational situation of the Moroccan community in Belgium are described, analyzed and explained. Time and again, the unfavorable socio-economic and educational position of ‘Belgian-Moroccans’ is confirmed.

The definition of this community – equally true for other ethnic groups in Belgium – becomes more and more complex. Third (and even fourth) generations of children with Moroccan background are born and start to participate in the Belgian society. More and more children are born in mixed marriages or relationships.⁴ The studies mentioned in this chapter each use a definition of their own. When necessary, the specific definitions are mentioned.

3.2 Migration history

The migration history of the Moroccan community in Belgium is very similar to the migration history of the Turkish community. The migration of Moroccan nationals to Belgium increased after the 1964 agreement between Belgium and Morocco on the employment of Moroccans in predominantly the Belgian mining and metal industry. Due to the economic recession of the 1960’s and the economic crises of the early 1970’s, in 1974 the Belgian government restricted immigration and prohibited most forms of economic or labor migration (the so-called “migratiestop” or migration stop).

Since 1974, legal migration to Belgium is only possible on the grounds of asylum, family reunification or family formation, and labor migration due to a shortage of specific professions on the Belgian labor market. On two occasions, illegal or undocumented migrants could benefit from specific measures to obtain legal residence (the regularization campaigns of 2000 and 2009).

In 1961, there were 461 Moroccans (with only the Moroccan nationality) in Belgium. This number augmented to 106.822 in 2001. After 2001 their number began to decrease (81.279 in 2005 and 81.000 in 2006) as a result of the growing numbers of naturalization. In the 1980’s and 1990’s, successive changes of legislation have made the acquisition of Belgian citizenship easier. Many immigrants have applied for and obtained citizenship, in the case of Moroccan immigrants this also meant they could maintain their Moroccan nationality (KBS, 2009). On average, each year 8.750 Moroccan nationals obtain Belgian citizenship (FOD Economie).

Based on nationality at birth, in 2006 just about 250.000 people of Moroccan origin lived in Belgium. On 1st January 2008, 35.805 people of Moroccan origin lived in the city of Antwerp, 3.637 in Ghent and 3.025 in Genk (Vancluysen e.a., 2009).

⁴ One can ask when a person with an immigrant background stops being an immigrant or “allochtoon” and becomes an “autochtoon”. “Allochtoon” (person with an immigrant background) and “autochtoon” (non-immigrant) are typical terms used in Belgium and the Netherlands.

3.3 Socio-demographic profile

A study on Belgian-Moroccans, published in June 2009, provides a general overlook on the demographic and socio-economic situation of the Moroccan community in Belgium (KBS, 2009a). Interestingly, the study was conducted by Moroccan researchers from the university of Rabat. 400 persons living in Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia were interviewed on a wide variety of topics related to their socio-demographic profile and their attitude towards Belgium, Morocco and the European Union.

One of the most relevant findings of this study, is without a doubt the diversity and multiplicity of the Moroccan community in Belgium. More than 50% of the Belgian-Moroccans are born in Belgium. Characteristics of this community such a civil status, family composition and immigration history are changing. The traditional family model (husband and wife with a number of children) is making way for new family models (bachelorhood, cohabitation and multi-parent families) and the number of children per family is decreasing. As noted above, initial reasons for immigration, such as work and family reunification, are replaced by new immigration strategies often related to marriage (as a result of the stricter immigration laws in Belgium and more general in Europe).

However, attachment to Morocco remains very strong. More than 85% is married to someone of Moroccan origin. Moreover, 75% of the Moroccan young men and women marry a person from Morocco.⁵ Other research focusing on the total population of Moroccan individuals in Belgium indicate 65% marries a partner from Morocco (Lodewyckx, et al, 2006). Mixed marriages are very rare, less than 10% are married to a person of Belgian origin. 60% of the Belgian-Moroccans own a house or apartment in Morocco, but only 30% are the proprietor of a house or apartment in Belgium. And almost 50% visit their country of origin on a yearly basis.

Another striking characteristic of the Moroccan community in Belgium is their (extremely) low socio-economical and socio-professional situation. The majority of the population between 18 and 64 years occupies an unfavorable or uncertain position on the labor market: only 32% has stable employment, another 5% has temporarily employment and 26% does not participate in the labor market.⁶ During the interviews, conducted for this study, discrimination in the workplace was mentioned repeatedly as one of the most important causes of this unfavorable situation.

Between the regions of Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia some differences can be noted, but the overall picture remains the same.⁷ More important differences exist between the participation of men and women in the labor market: 41% of the men has stable employment, but only 21% of the women; unemployment is relatively

⁵ This is also true for the Turkish youth.

⁶ Another 17% are students, 14% housewives, 5% have an independent occupation and 1% is retired.

⁷ E. g. Stable employment is highest in Brussels (35%), followed by Flanders (30%) and Wallonia (26%). Unemployment is highest in Wallonia (31%), followed by Brussels (26,5%) and Flanders (23%).

comparable (27% of the men and 24% of the women); but almost one third of the women stay at home (are housewives).

Besides the labor market situation, another indicator of the socio-economic situation is monthly income. Again, the figures are evident: 20% has a monthly income of less than 1.000 euro; 37% has an income between 1.001 and 1.500 euro, 27,5% between 1.501 and 2000 euro, and 21,4% earns more than 2.001 euro a month. In this case the differences between the three regions are more pronounced: In Flanders only 8,6% is situated in the lowest category of income, whereas 24% in Brussels and 33% in Wallonia. In Brussels 18,6% has a monthly income of more than 2.001 euro; 15,5% in Flanders but only 7% in Wallonia. More than half of the Belgian-Moroccan population is situated beneath the poverty line (53%). Most of the poor Belgian-Moroccans live in Wallonia, the least in Flanders and Brussels is situated in the middle.

Flanders was one of the eight European countries participating in the TIES-study (The Integration of European Second Generation). The results for Flanders were published in 2009 (Vandezande e.a., 2009). More than 1.700 young people between 17 and 25 years from Turkish, Moroccan and Belgian origin⁸ living in Antwerp and Brussels were interviewed on equal opportunities and diversity related to the labor market. Some of the most important findings will be mentioned here.

Second generation youth of Turkish or Moroccan origin are underrepresented in high skilled professions and overrepresented in low and unskilled labor. This is especially true for Turkish and Moroccan men in Antwerp and Turkish and Moroccan men and women in Brussels. Accessing higher labor market positions depends very much on the level of education a person has obtained. The disproportionate representation on the labor market can be partially explained by the lower levels of education generally obtained by these specific groups. But taken into account the levels of education, Turkish and Moroccan youth remain underrepresented in high skilled jobs. Compared to their Belgian counterparts, they are unable to benefit in the same way from higher levels of education in obtaining better labor market positions. This is even more so for Turkish and Moroccan women. As is indicated above, groups with unstable and uncertain labor market positions are also situated in the lower categories of monthly income.

Turkish and Moroccan youth enter the labor market for the first time more often by obtaining less attractive jobs. More frequently than Belgian school leavers, they start out in low or unskilled jobs with limited duration contracts. Indications are found that Turkish and Moroccan men more rapidly accept unattractive and unstable jobs to avoid long-lasting unemployment. The workplace of Turkish and Moroccan employees is more ethnically diverse than the workplace of Belgian employees. Although most of the former agree that employers try to improve cooperation and understanding between different ethnic groups, experiences of unequal opportunity and unequal treatment in the labor market are reported in a general way.

⁸ In this study the following definitions are being used (all respondents are between 17 and 25 years old):

- Turkish youth are born in Belgium with at least one parent born in Turkey;
- Moroccan youth are born in Belgium with at least one parent born in Morocco;
- Belgian youth are born in Belgium with both parents born in Belgium.

Discrimination is experienced both while looking for employment and in the workplace. The majority of the respondents – Turkish, Moroccan and Belgian – indicate that it is much harder for Turkish and Moroccan jobseekers to find employment even in case of equal levels of education.

3.4 The overall educational situation of Moroccan pupils in Belgium/Flanders⁹

The facts and figures below demonstrate the specific situation of immigrant children and children with a Moroccan origin.

School population

During the school year 2008-2009, a total of 461.629 pupils participated in secondary education in Flanders, 24.512 pupils (or 5,3%) had a non-Belgian nationality and 1.950 had the Moroccan nationality, being 0,4% of the total population in secondary education and 8% of the population with a non-Belgian nationality (Onderwijs Vlaanderen, 2009).

Data on population characteristics in Flemish education are collected and published by the Flemish Ministry of Education. Only data regarding nationality are being collected. Pupils with an immigrant background with the Belgian nationality (mostly second and third generation) are not traceable in these figures.

Kindergarten and primary education

Comparing the school career of immigrant and non-immigrant children, shows that already at the start of their school career immigrant children are confronted with a delay, which will increase throughout their school career.

In Belgium, compulsory education starts at the age of 6, children can attend kindergarten from the age of 2,5. Attending kindergarten or preschool is not obligatory but indeed highly recommended. Not all children participate in the same way: while 16% of the Flemish children of 2,5 and 3 do not attend kindergarten, this is true for 36% of the children from North-African countries. A delayed start in kindergarten (older than 2,5 – 3) often leads to an educational deficit at the age of 6 and thus at the start of primary school (Hirtt N, e.a., 2007).¹⁰

In normal circumstances (without delay), children start primary education at the age of 6. Research shows that more than 6% of immigrant children start primary education with already a delay of (at least) 1 year. This is true for 12,5% of boys and 11% of girls from North-African countries.¹¹ Only 1,5 non-immigrant children start primary education later than the age of 6 (Duquet, e.a., 2006).

⁹ The description of the educational situation of the Moroccan community will be mostly limited to their participation in the Flemish educational system.

¹⁰ It has to be said other studies show little difference in kindergarten participation, e.g. Vandezande e.a., 2009).

¹¹ In this research no specific distinction has been made for children of Moroccan origin, they are a part of the category children from North-African countries.

Secondary education

At the start of secondary education, normally at the age of 12, almost 30% of immigrant children has at least 1 year of delay while this is the case for only 11% of Flemish children. North-African boys have the most delay at the start of secondary education: 34% enters at the age of 13 and 12% is older than 13 (at least 2 years behind). The figures concerning North-African girls are also very high: 30% enters secondary education at the age of 13 and 12,5% is older than 13 (Duquet, e.a., 2006). Immigrant children do not only start secondary education at a later age, they also enter more often directly in the so-called B-track leading to professional education.¹² Almost 90% of the Flemish children enter secondary education in the A-track, leading to general and technical education. 25% of the North-African boys and even 40% of the girls enter immediately in the B-track and by doing so limiting to a large extent their academic possibilities (Duquet, e.a., 2006).

In general, repeating a year occurs very often in Flemish education: 25% of the girls and 40% of the boys repeat one or more years during secondary education. But again, the figures concerning immigrant children are significantly higher: 50% of all immigrant boys and 35% of the girls repeat at least one year. For North-African children, the figures even rise to 55% of the boys and 42% of the girls (Duquet, e.a., 2006).

Another very interesting comparison concerns the participation in the different tracks in secondary education. The Flemish educational system has – predominantly – three tracks: ASO (general education); TSO and KSO (technical and art educations) and BSO (professional education). Immigrant children are overrepresented in the (so perceived) lowest tracks. To illustrate this in the most ordered way, a table is drawn up.

Table 1. Participation in secondary education by track, ethnicity and gender (%)

Year Ed.	Sec.	Boys			Girls		
		Flemish	Immigrant	N.- African	Flemish	Immigrant	N.- African
3 rd	ASO	48	40	20	56	45	24
3 rd	TSO/KSO	33	27,5	39	26	22	17
3 rd	BSO	19	32,5	41	18	33	58
	<i>N</i>	3782	602	85	3654	647	127
6 th	ASO	44	39	25	50	46	30
6 th	TSO/KSO	36	31	28	30	25	21
6 th	BSO	20	30	47	20	29	48
	<i>N</i>	3274	445	57	3417	514	80

(Duquet, e.a., 2006)

Entrance at a later age, entering immediately in the B-track, higher (overrepresented) participation in professional education, higher incidence of repeating: these are all indications of the problematic school career of immigrant children and lead inevitable

¹² As mentioned before, the early tracking system is considered one of the most important causes of social inequality of the educational system.

to a problematic level of qualification at the end of secondary education: 45,5% of the North-African boys leave secondary education without any qualification and 40% of the North-African girls. A second table is added, to show a full comparison of the levels of qualification.

Table 2. Level of qualification at the end of secondary education by ethnicity and gender (%)

Gender	Qualification¹³	Flemish	Immigrant	North-African
Boys	No qualification	13	30	45,5
	Low qualification	6	8	8
	High qualification	81	62	46,5
<i>N</i>		<i>3881</i>	<i>642</i>	<i>99</i>
Girls	No qualification	7	25	41
	Low qualification	3	5	3
	High qualification	90	70	56
<i>N</i>		<i>3728</i>	<i>695</i>	<i>130</i>

(Duquet, e.a., 2006)

Higher education

Considering the above, it cannot be surprising that the participation of immigrants in higher education is very low (although recent studies show a yearly increase of students with an immigrant background).

Some final facts and figures. More than half of the Flemish boys and more than two third of the girls participate in higher education after finishing secondary education. This can only be said of 40% of the immigrant boys and 47% of the girls. Looking specifically at the North-African youth, the participation levels drop to 21% for the boys and 32% for the girls.¹⁴

Even if we take into account the lower levels of qualification at the end of secondary education, youth with an immigrant background who successfully finished secondary education, remain underrepresented in higher education. Only 46% of North-African boys and 56% of North-African girls with a secondary education degree participate in higher education, in contrast to 70% of the Flemish boys and 80% of the Flemish girls.

¹³ In general, a pupil is considered highly qualified when finished secondary education in one of the three tracks (ASO, TSO/KSO, BSO). Low qualification refers to the part-time vocational education. A pupil is not qualified if he has not reached the end of secondary education (full-time or part-time).

¹⁴ These are levels of participation, without indication of success in higher education.

School segregation

One last important issue is the issue of school segregation. Although school segregation does not explain differences in performance between autochthonous and immigrant pupils, it is an important factor in the reproduction of inequality. There is a strikingly strong school composition effect in Belgium and evidence is found that socio-economically disfavoured groups suffer most from school segregation (KBS, 2009b). Other explanations are found in specific characteristics of the educational system in Flanders, such as the early tracking system and the so-called ‘waterfall system’.¹⁵ Especially related to pupils with an immigrant background, more and more emphasis is being put on Dutch language deficiency.¹⁶

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¹⁵ See Working Paper 1 – Conceptualization and theoretical framework, p. 33.

¹⁶ See Working Paper 1 – Conceptualization and theoretical framework, p. 39 – 40.

4. The Polish community in Flanders

4.1 Introduction

It is important to study the emigration movements of the Polish people from Poland to Belgium in order to understand the Polish community living in Belgium and the education level of Polish youngsters in Belgium. In pursuing this objective we will describe first of all the Polish migration history. In the second part the profile of the Polish migrants living in Belgium will be shown by linking them to their region of origin in Poland, by giving socio-demographic facts, by examining different migration types, by studying the high number of marriages with Belgians, the networks and the values within the Polish community. Finally the research will handle the education level of Polish youth.

4.2 Migration history

The emigration from Poland to the rest of the world took place at some important moments in European history: the two world wars, the communism period in Central- and East- Europe, the transit period to a capitalistic economy and the expansion of the European Union (Paspalanova, 2006).

Kuzma (2003) distinguishes three stages in the Polish emigration to Belgium: a lot of Polish migrants came to Belgium during the interbellum, right after the Second World War, but the emigration stopped till the fall of the Berlin Wall. After the fall of this wall Polish people restarted to emigrate to Belgium. Below, we will explain these migration movements in detail.

During the interbellum and the Second World War

After 1918 Poles started to emigrate more frequently and in bigger numbers to Belgium. In 1920 there were 5329 Polish people in Belgium. This number kept increasing during the years after (Claes, 1962:70). In 1930 a lot of Polish migrants came to Belgium with the intention to work in the mines. The biggest Polish emigration took place then. The migration started to decrease with the beginning of unemployment in Belgium. The labour union demanded to fire first the foreign labourers. When the crisis took an end in 1937, Polish labourers were recruited again. In 1938 there were 61 809 Polish migrants in Belgium (Claes, 1962:72).

Already in the years 1920 to 1930, some typical jobs were offered to the Polish migrants: domestic, manual and construction work (Goddeeris, 2005: 22-25). The most attractive countries for Poles to emigrate were the United States, Germany and France. Among all the immigrants in Belgium, the Polish migrants were the fourth important ethnical group beside the Dutch, the French and the Italians (Wolny, 2008: 17).

After WWII

The migration during the period after the Second World War consisted especially of prisoners, other prisoners of war coming from the concentration camps and representatives of the Polish nobility. Among these emigrants, there were a lot of 'displaced persons' (people who lost their homes and possessions because of the war). At the same time the communist government in Warsaw tried to get back the 'Polonia', who stayed in the West, to Poland and to impede the emigration. The Cold War and the construction of the Iron Curtain in Berlin resulted in the end of the frequent Polish emigration to Belgium (Wolny, 2008: 18).

In 1968 some anti-Semitic incidents in Poland forced hundreds of Polish Jews to immigrate to Belgium. Despite the official migration prohibition a wave of 'tourist' migrants settled in Belgium at the end of the seventies in order to obtain foreign currencies for Poland. According to an analytical report of the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism (2006) this migration movement was probably the basis for the labour migration that took place later in Poland. The experiences of these emigrants and the social networks they built in Belgium enriched and stimulated the family members and friends back in Poland (Wolny, 2008, 18-19).

During the eighties a new migration flow was visible after the oppression of Solidarnosc, a subterranean movement that became a political mass movement. Between 1980 and 1989 2039 Polish refugees came to Belgium (Okolski, 2002 in Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, 2006:15)

Fall of the Wall

When the Berlin Wall fell, the opportunity to go back to Poland was created for the Polish migrants (Morocvasic, 2006:2).

From the nineties on a lot of Poles came to Belgium for work. The biggest number of Poles coming to Belgium was in 1991 when the visa requirement was eliminated. A Polish passport allowed a stay of maximum three months, but without the right to work. The consequence of this restriction was that the Polish migrants started to work illegally (Wolny, 2008:19). We estimate that there were 30.000 to 50.000 Polish workers in Belgium at the end of the nineties. It is believed that about half of them worked in Brussels (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2005: 676).

At the end of the nineties other Western-European countries became attractive for Polish migrants so that their migration to the USA and Canada decreased (Okolski, 2000b in Paspalanova, 2006: 72).

In May 2004 Poland entered the European Union. Like all the other European countries, Belgium did not right away open its labour market to Polish citizens. Belgium opted to integrate the Polish migrants into the Belgian labour market by transition measures spread over seven years (Galent, Goddeeris & Niedzwiedzki, 2009: 41). Since May 2009 the labour market has been opened completely for the Poles.

As long as the political and economical situation in Poland is stable, Paspalanova (2006: 79-80) predicts no big changes in the migration behaviour of the Polish migrants. The outflow will be approximately the same or decrease, and commute migration will continue to exist as long as there is no income equality between the Western-European countries and Poland. The insertion of Poland into the European Union will perhaps eliminate this income disproportion so that the emigration from Poland will stop.

4.3 Socio-demographic profile

The region of origin

Researchers have demonstrated the specific relationship between the migration countries and the region of origin in Poland. It is confirmed that Polish people immigrate to those European countries where they have family relations (Okolski & Stola, 1999 in Paspalanova, 2006: 72).

The majority of Polish migrants in Belgium are originally from East-Poland. There they were living in rural regions and in the cities Bialystok and Siemiatycze. A smaller number of Poles comes from Little Poland (Malopolski), Slaskie and Dolnoslaskie (Wolny, 2008: 19; Paspalanova, 2006: 75, Galent, Goddeeris & Niedzwiedzki, 2009: 32).

Socio-demographical data

According to official data from 2005, Poles (18.026) take merely the tenth place amongst foreign immigrants in Belgium. Official data from the federal government (SPF Economie, PME, Classes moyennes et energie) from 1/1/2007 demonstrate that Antwerp counts 3443 Poles born in Poland and who have the Belgian or Polish nationality. Ghent numbers 630 Poles and in Genk there are 439 registered Poles.

This official data is incorrect, because they only give a view of the registered Poles. It is impossible to give exact numbers about the presence of the Polish community in Belgium, because passports have not been stamped since the adhesion of Poland to the European Union on May 2004. Moreover, after Poland entered the Schengen zone in December 2007, Poles did not need to show their passport and since 2009 the labour market is completely open to Polish workers. We may say with more certainty that the Polish community is the largest group compared to other immigrant groups from East- and Central Europe (Galent, Goddeeris Niedzwiedzki, 2009: 37-38).

The educational profile has changed with the times. In the eighties most refugees had a university degree. Conversely, the nineties were marked by an overrepresentation of lower educated illegal migrants (Paspalanova, 2006: 70-72). Poles staying in Belgium in a regular situation before 2004, had a high education level. They had been enticed by foreign countries as specialists and were employed with a work card B (Paspalanova, 2006 in Pauwels, Wets, Van den Eede, 2007: 30-31). Belgium has also attracted Polish university students (Galent, Goddeeris Niedzwiedzki, 2009: 39).

About 12% of Polish migrants are unemployed. This is 2% higher than the Belgians' unemployment level, but remarkably less than the average unemployment level of all foreign people (23%), which is high because of the employment situation of Moroccan and Turkish migrants (Pauwels, Wets, Van den Eede, 2007: 21).

Low educated Polish migrants are well represented in seasonal work, construction and building work and in the transport sector. Women do cleaning and domestic work, they work in catering, as hairdressers, as manicurists or pedicurists. Poles are well-known because of their work ethics. They work on average 50 to 60 hours a week. According to research from 2004, the majority has a monthly income between 1000€ and 1500€. One fourth earns between 1500€ and 2000€ and a minority earns less than 1000€. Only a small minority of Poles who migrated to Belgium to build up a professional career, have a monthly income above 2000€ net (Pauwels, Wets, Van den Eede, 2007: 39-40).

Research on Polish migrants in London shows that Polish migrants often see their social position as temporary, because the social position can change if they return to Poland or by social mobility in the UK. Due to this, there is a sharp contrast between a person's objective social position and their subjective perception of social class (Eade, Drinkwater & Garapich, 2007: 13-14).

Rodriguez also observes in her study on Eastern European, educated mothers, that these women position themselves beyond the effective class structures. She notices that this position helps the mothers and their children to achieve better than usually expected from migrants (Rodriguez, 2005: 30, 36-39).

It would be interesting to study how Polish migrants in Belgium experience and perceive their social position in society and what this means according to the school careers of their children.

Different types of migrants

The Polish community is marked by a lot of heterogeneity in the length of stay. Iglicka (2000: 68-73) distinguishes, in her research on the emigration movements from Poland before and after the fall of communism, different types of migrants according to the duration of the stay. In sequence from short term migration to long term migration, these different migrant types are: 1) the shuttle or pendular migrants (less than three months), 2) the short term migrants (between three months and one year), 3) long term migrants (at least one year) and 4) the stayers (they are no longer part of the family in Poland). Both before and after 1990, there have been more pendular migrants and stayers than short and long term migrants.

Researchers in the UK note that children's education is often a decisive factor in the decision to stay or to return, because parents avoid to interrupt their children's school career (Sales, Ryan, Rodriguez, e.a., 2008: 6). Furthermore Iglicka (2000: 70-71) notes that the migrant types differ in gender and age. While short term and pendular migration consist mostly of young men, women are most largely represented in the group of stayers. The age of the women differ widely. These women come to Belgium by marriage migration or they follow after a while their husbands who migrated first.

Mixed marriages

Generally we consider that the registered migration from Poland has a marked feminine character, because most Polish women migrate to Belgium by marriage migration (Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, 2006: 4). According to official statistics of 1995-2000 (NR-NIS), only 15% of Polish migrant women have a Polish husband. More than two third of Polish women (68%) who are married and are living in Belgium, have a Belgian husband living in a legal situation.¹⁷ The reverse situation is not happening: Polish men rarely marry Belgian women (Perrin & Rajabaly, 2003: 10-16; Heyse e.a., 2007). According to our research, we may expect that many children come from mixed marriages.

¹⁷ This pattern in marriage migration is a feature that occurs for all women from East- and Central-Europe, with the exception of the former Yugoslavia (Perrin & Rajabaly; 2003: 12).

Networks/organizations

The Polish community is well organized and self-supporting and is equipped with almost everything: Polish journals and magazines, shops, restaurants, security agencies, transport services, construction- and repair agencies, lawyers, doctors, healthcare, bookshops, import and export of second hand cars, etc. (Verleyen, 2003 in Paspalanova, 2006: 78; Kuzma, 2003). This allows Polish migrants in Belgium to live with a limited knowledge of the national languages and with limited or no contacts with autochthons. This may have implications on the school career of Polish children. Research about the performances of these children in school is indispensable to understand the impact of their migration.

Values and norms

The majority of Poles migrate because of economical reasons and have strong work ethics. They are traditional, attached to family values and they are Roman Catholic churchgoers (Galent, Goddeeris & Niedzwiedzki, 2009: 38). According to Bafekr (1999: 299), Polish migrants have material values, they are ambitious and they strive for success. They transmit these values to their children.

Research demonstrates (Sword, 1996) that Poles are very attached to education. The institution of the school has had a long tradition in Poland since the early Middle Ages until today. Even during the periods of partition and the reign of the communists, the ideal of education was regarded as being of prime importance (Bafekr, 1999: 297).

4.4 Educational situation and school careers

Until today almost no research has been done about the educational situation and the school careers of Polish youngsters living in Belgium. The only research in Belgium has been carried out by Bafekr (1999) and discusses the educational situation of children living in illegality in Brussels. This research is dated and does not discuss the school careers of children in a legal situation.

Because of a lack of information about this subject in Belgium, we base ourselves upon researches in the Netherlands and in the UK in the following text. In these countries as well, only a few researches have been carried out. These researches started with the assumption of an increasing inflow of Polish (and other East-European) pupils in schools because of the addition of Poland to the European Union in 2004 (Sales, Ryan, Rodriguez, e.a., 2008: 2; Jungbluth, 2008: 7). They focus on newcomer issues of East-European pupils in primary education (Sales, Ryan, Rodriguez, e.a., 2008: 2; Korf e.a., 2009: 48; Jungbluth, 2008: 7-8).

In the following text, we first give an overview of the educational population and secondly we describe the beginning and the further development of the school career. It is important to note that the researches accomplished in the UK and the Netherlands are not completely applicable to Belgium, because these countries differ in educational and migrant policies, Polish migrants differ from region of origin and educational profile¹⁸, etc.

¹⁸ On average, Polish migrants in the UK have a higher educational degree than Polish migrants in Belgium (Centre for equal opportunities and opposition to racism, 2006: 5).

Educational population

Secondary education in Flanders counts 292 boys (from a total of 11.262 boys) and 298 girls (from a total of 10.007 girls) with a Polish nationality. Sixteen boys and three girls with a Polish nationality are following special secondary education. Youngsters of the second generation, naturalized youngsters and youngsters coming from a mixed marriage (with one parent possessing the Belgian nationality), are not registered in these official databanks (Onderwijs Vlaanderen: 2008: 442).

In the group of 14 to 16 years old youngsters of Polish origin, there is a certain heterogeneity in place of birth (Poland or Belgium), length of stay in Belgium and the parents' nationality. Some youngsters are born in Poland and others in Belgium. The group of youngsters coming originally from Poland includes youngsters who are staying for a long time in Belgium and consists also of newcomers. The parents may be both Polish or may come from a mixed marriage, composed of a non-Polish and a Polish parent. Most Polish parents are born in Poland, because the majority of the Poles migrated in the nineties to Belgium. In this research we aim to study all these different subgroups, but we focus on children of ethnic homogeneous marriages.

Beginning and further development of the school career

Newcomers

Children who just arrived in the host country need time to learn the language and to adapt to their new environment. Some pupils experience emotional and psychological problems. In some cases this may lead to refusing to learn the language and in the worst cases even to isolation. Children entering the UK at 7 years old often have an educational gap, because the Polish school system only starts at the age of 7 (Sales, Ryan, Rodriguez, e.a., 2008: 17-18). This is also the case in Belgium and in the Netherlands, because children start the primary school at the age of six.

Research in the UK shows that most newcomer parents do not prepare their migration to the new country. Very often their knowledge of the national language and of the school system in the host country is little. They do not know, for instance, that the primary school in most West-European countries starts at six years old. The consequence might be that some parents send their children one year too late to school. Another difference is that school attendance is less important in Poland than in Britain. Sometimes, Polish children have been off school for a long time during the school year, because they were visiting their family in Poland with their parents (Sales, Ryan, Rodriguez, e.a., 2008: 14-16).

Polish migrants in Belgium, the UK and the Netherlands end up in a multicultural society with a wide diversification in ethnicities, religions, cultures and nationalities. On the contrary, Polish national identity identifies with Catholicism and is built up round the myth of homogeneity that finds its roots in history. Contemporary Polish society consists of whites with a Polish ethnicity. Majuk (2007) notes this may signify that a lot of Polish children have little experience with other cultural and religious groups. This may lead to misunderstandings, culture shocks and xenophobic behaviour by parents and their children (Sales, Ryan, Rodriguez, e.a., 2008: 7, 18).

Newcomers arriving at the age of secondary education in Flanders without or just a little knowledge of the national language, have to follow a year in a class especially organized for

newcomers, the OKAN¹⁹ class. Once they finished the OKAN class, they follow regular secondary education. Research shows that pupils who finished the OKAN class experience a lot of difficulties in the transition to regular secondary education. A lot of ex-OKAN pupils are enrolled in professional secondary education, half-time professional secondary education and special secondary education (Steunpunt GOK, 2006: 70).

The specific newcomer problems of Polish children in Flanders have not been studied enough and need our attention.

Other target groups

We do not dispose of data about the beginning and the further development of school careers of Polish youngsters in secondary education who migrated in their early ages to Belgium, or about Polish youngsters born in Belgium. We may assume that they generally have a better start than newcomers, because they have more knowledge of the national language and culture. Further research is recommended to give an overview of the complex reality.

Positive image

Bafekr (1999: 297) argues that schools in Brussels have a positive attitude towards Polish parents because they are polite and they react to educational initiatives. More recent researches in the Netherlands and in the UK demonstrate similar conclusions. In general school staff seem to have a positive image of Polish parents and their children (Sales, Ryan, Rodriguez, e.a., 2008: 2; Korf e.a., 2009: 47-49). The questioned teachers often mention that the children listen and that the parents and their children are diligent (making homework, etc.) (Sales, Ryan, Rodriguez, e.a., 2008: 16, Rodriguez, 2005). The exploration on Eastern and Central European pupils in Dutch primary schools shows that on average these pupils are well integrated and that their learning achievements are reasonable or good. The respondents also judge the relationship with the parents as rather reasonable (Jungbluth, 2008: 17).

The Polish migrants we will study in our research have migrated from the nineties because of economical or social motives (marriage migration) to Belgium. Most of them are low educated and work in jobs with a lower status.

The most important assessment is that there is a lack in research on the school careers of Polish youngsters in Belgium. In general, schools seem to have a positive image of Polish parents and their children. Research in the Netherlands and in the UK focus mostly on Polish newcomers in primary education. The worst problems Polish children are experiencing are linked to their newcomer position. We miss information about Polish pupils in secondary education who have been in Belgium for a long time. Large and profound research is needed to study the school careers of Polish youngsters and the factors influencing these school careers.

¹⁹ OKAN is the abbreviation of 'Onthaalonderwijs Anderstalige Nieuwkomers'.

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5. The Turkish community in Flanders

5.1 Introduction

Many people with a Turkish background are living in Belgium. The first migrants arrived during the sixties in Belgium to work in the mining industry. In this chapter we describe how this migration took place in the past and how it unfolds itself in the present. We also give an overview of the current socio-demographic background of the Turkish community in Belgium, with a special focus on education. Several studies give an idea of the school careers of pupils of Turkish origin. This allows us to discuss the age at which these pupils enter the educational system, if they have to repeat a year and what training courses they follow.

5.2 The migration history of the Turkish community in Flanders

Before WWII

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Belgium was confronted with an economic bloom. Especially the mining industry had a shortage of workmen. A solution was to look abroad and hire foreign laborers to fill this gap. This was the start of a flow of migrants to Belgium.

In 1923 the amount of foreign miners was around ten percent. They were recruited primarily from Poland, Italy, Hungary, Morocco, Algeria and the Balkan. In 1927 fourteen percent of the miners had an Islamic background. In 1936 the immigration legislation became more rigid for the assignment of working permits. This amendment was adopted to protect these jobs for which enough autochthon workmen were available. Attracting foreign labourers was seen as a temporary measure to cope with this shortage of labourers. In 1937, 4,1% of the Belgian population consisted of migrants who mainly worked in the mining industry. In 1938, about 20 to 25% of the miners in Limburg and the Walloon provinces came from abroad (Aksöyek & Manço: 2000; Kaya & Kentel: 2007).

Between WWII and marriage migration flows in recent decennia

Between 1961 en 1976, a new wave of migrants came to Belgium. Among them were the first Turkish immigrants. In this period, employers could use two methods to hire foreign labourers. The first way was to issue a work permit in the country of origin. The second way was to grant this permit after migrants entered Belgium with a tourist visa.

At first, migration was mainly a manly affair. Only later on, the family reunification program made it possible for migrants to welcome their wife and children from abroad. Before 1967 this reunification was easily granted, but the economic recession of 1967 changed the political standpoint towards this development. As a consequence, it was no longer possible for people whom entered Belgium on a tourist visa to acquire a working permit. On the 19th of Juli 1974 any form of labour migration was prohibited by law (Aksöyek & Manço: 2000; Kaya & Kentel: 2007). The Law on Foreigners (LoF) (*Vreemdelingenwet*), issued in 1980, regulates the admittance, the stay, the settlement and the expulsion of citizens from abroad on Belgian soil upon today.

The importance of marriage migration

In the eighties, mainly Turkish and Moroccan migrants arrived in Belgium (Aksöyek & Manço: 2000; Kaya & Kentel: 2007). In the first years of the nineties, over 88.000 Turkish migrants were counted in Belgium. The majority of them lived in Flanders, one fourth lived in Brussels and the other fourth stayed in the Walloon Provinces (Aksöyek & Manço: 2000). In 2007, 3.180 men and women with a Turkish passport moved to Belgium (FOD Economics). Through time, this number dropped in statistical analysis because of the naturalization of these migrants. This fact makes it hard to estimate the exact number of people of Turkish origin living on Belgian soil. People with a double nationality are registered as Belgian. It is certain though, that there are more people with Turkish roots living in Belgium than statistic analysis uncovers. Some have estimated the presence of these *Turkish Belgians* around 200.000, of whom 93.282 people with the Belgian nationality (Kaya & Kentel: 2007). The official data, supplied by the government, estimate the number of people with the Turkish nationality in Belgium at 39.954 (FOD Economics).

5.3 Socio-demographic profile

An extensive study conducted among Moroccan and Turkish migrants of the second generation in eight European countries uncovered that 43.5% of the fathers (first generation) successfully finished primary school, 40.6% graduated from secondary school and 7.1% completed high school or university. In regards to the mothers, these percentages are respectively 54,1%, 36,8% and 2,5%. The level of education of fathers and mothers with Turkish roots is similar in other European countries, with exception of Sweden, where parents are clearly higher educated (Crul, e.a.: 2009).

Similar conclusions were made in the study “Belgische Turken. Een brug of een breuk tussen Turkije en de Europese Unie?” (Belgian Turks. A bridge or a gap/break between Turkey and the European Union?). This study found that 34,3% of the Belgian Turks attended primary school, 23,8% graduated from secondary school, 13% successfully terminated higher education and 8,6% finished university (Kaya en Kentel: 2007).

About 26% of the foreign fathers – 60% of them with Turkish roots – is not working. Among them retired people, unemployed people, househusbands, people on career interruption and disabled people. 30% of the foreign allochthonous fathers – 28% with Turkish roots – is working as worker and 44% - of which 12% with Turkish roots – is working as employee, state official or is self-employed. The occupation of allochthonous mothers was not investigated in this inquiry (Duquet, e.a.: 2006; zie ook Kaya & Kentel: 2007).

The majority of the men and women from Turkish origin earns between €1.000 and €1.500 a month (26%) and a quarter between €1.501 and €2.000 a month (24%). 9% makes less than €1.000 a month, and around 17% makes between €2.001 and €3.000 a month. A majority of Belgian Turks thinks their situation improved, in comparison with the situation of their parents. (Kaya & Kentel: 2007).

5.4 School careers of Turkish origin youth

Pisa-research (2007) concluded that, after controlling for three important factors (socio-economic status, home speech and type of education), a difference in school results of autochthonous and allochthonous students remains pertinent. The school career of members of this last group is found to be less successful. One of the recommendations this enquiry makes is to closely take into account the national and ethnic background of these students as a cause of inequality. Yet these data do not allow for more specific identification of the different minority groups, only being part of a specific generation of migrants is taken into account. As a consequence, this huge amount of data is not usable for outlining the school careers of pupils with a Turkish background (Jacobs, Rea & Hanquinet: 2007).

We will therefore base our inquiry on the data provided by the government. As mentioned before, people with a double nationality are being registered as Belgian. As a consequence, the official databases will never contain information about, e.g. data on the second generation of migrants. In the study “Wit krijt schrijft beter” (Duquet, e.a.: 2006) (“White chalk writes better”), as well as in the study “Valkuilen en springplanken in het onderwijs” (Crul, e.a.: 2009) (“Pitfalls and steppingstones in the field of education”), the concept ‘allochtoon’ is constructed not only via nationality but also via the country of birth (of the respondent and of his/her grandmother) and via the language spoken at home. These studies will be used to describe the school careers of Turkish origin pupils.

School population

The field of general secondary education counted 438.315 members during the school year 2007 – 2008. 21.269 of them (5%) were pupils with a foreign nationality. The field of extraordinary secondary education counted 18.263 pupils, of which 1.543 (8,5%) with a foreign nationality. In the general secondary education, 490 boys on a total of 11.262 and 518 girls on a total of 10.007 have the Turkish nationality. For the extraordinary secondary education, these numbers are respectively 65 boys on a total of 981, and 50 girls on a total of 562 (Onderwijs Vlaanderen: 2008).

Start of a school career

By comparing the school careers of allochthonous pupils with these of autochthonous pupils, one may conclude that allochthonous students start their education with considerable arrears. This lost ground will never be taken back in the course of the school career. On the contrary, the gap between these two groups only widens (Duquet, e.a.: 2006).

This research also shows that 6,3% of the allochthonous boys (of which 9,7% from Turkish origin), and 8,2% of the allochthonous girls (of which 11,3% from Turkish origin) enter the primary education system after their 7th birthday. Of the autochthonous pupils, only 1,5% of the boys and 1,3% of the girls enters education after that age. The other pupils enter the school system at, or before, the age of 6 (Duquet, e.a.: 2006). A comparative European inquiry shows that the majority of the Turkish children of the second generation starts a school career at the age of 3 (68%) or even younger (19%). Merely 0,7% of this group entered school after the age of 7 (Crul, e.a.: 2009). This remarkable difference can presumably be explained by the fact that this last study only investigates the situation of youngsters belonging to the second generation.

The researchers conclude that about 52% of the girls with Turkish roots has to cope with school arrears, and starts secondary school by the age of 13 or older. 22% of the allochthonous girls – of which 50% of Turkish origin – enters secondary school via a B-track. After that year, they can decide to start in the first year of secondary education or attend a preparatory year leading to vocational training. The percentage of boys using the b-track is lower, with 19% of which 32% are of Turkish origin (Duquet, e.a.: 2006).

School arrears

It was stated earlier that different allochthonous youngsters are already trailing behind at the start of their school career, compared to their autochthonous peers. This arrears only aggravates during their school career.

In the following table is shown how many youngsters of Belgian and non-Belgian origin fell behind during a specific school year (Onderwijs Vlaanderen: 2008). A specification of these data by origin is not possible. One can only draw the general conclusion that the non-Belgian youngsters undergo a higher level of deceleration during their school career, compared to Belgian youngsters. In 6th grade 27,5 % of Belgian pupils fell behind. For foreign pupils, this number is considerably higher: 68%. Non-Belgian boys are more susceptible to this arrears (71%) than their female counterparts (64%).

Table 1: Percentages of school arrears in each grade of the secondary education system. Belgians and non-Belgians.(school year 2000-20001).

	Belgians			Non-Belgians		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
First	19,94%	14,92%	17,49%	60,22%	58,84%	59,55%
Second	24,74%	18,09%	21,51%	68,81%	60,96%	65,11%
Third	30,08%	20,89%	25,65%	73,51%	64,81%	69,35%
Fourth	35,84%	24,37%	30,22%	75,00%	69,58%	72,28%
Fifth	42,63%	28,93%	35,92%	76,43%	67,38%	71,84%
Sixth	42,65%	27,78%	35,13%	78,15%	67,02%	72,35%
Total	32,33%	22,41%	27,47%	71,21%	64,43%	67,88%

Source: Onderwijs Vlaanderen (2008)

As expected research shows that allochthonous boys more often repeat a grade than allochthonous girls. 69% of the autochthonous and 58% of the allochthonous youngsters never repeats a grade and 49% of allochthonous boys and 35% of allochthonous girls repeats (at least once) a grade. 42% of them are from Turkish origin, and 29% of them are girls. Regardless of their origin, boys repeat a grade more often than girls. This conclusion reappears in other inquiries: autochthonous boys (37,7%) repeat a grade more often than autochthonous girls (23,8%) (Duquet, e.a.: 2006; Onderwijs Vlaanderen: 2006).

Study orientation in the third study year.

In the third study year of secondary education, about 33% of the allochthonous boys – 50% of them of Turkish origin – follows a vocational training. This is the same for autochthonous girls, but the percentage of pupils of Turkish origin is considerably higher: 70%. (Duquet, e.a. 2006). About 40% of the allochthonous boys, of which 21% with Turkish roots, follows the ASO-trajectory. 45% of the allochthonous girls are also being educated in this school system.

The number of allochthonous youngsters in KSO/TSO-trajectory is 28%, of which 28% of Turkish origin. This percentage is a bit lower for the allochthonous girls: 25%, of which 26 % with Turkish roots.

In the comparative European study, the same conclusions concerning second generation Turkish youngsters are made. About 30% of them are in the ASO-system, 20% in the TSO-trajectory and 40% in BSO. There are 9,3% drop-outs. The rest of the research population follows an exceptional education trajectory (Crul, e.a.: 2009).

People are moving from Turkey to Belgium since the sixties. As estimated around 200.000 people of Turkish origin are currently residing on Belgian soil. The available data on their school careers and socio-economic situation are not very rosy. About 40% of the fathers and 37% of the mothers of Turkish origin finished secondary education. The majority – 44% of the fathers and 54% of the mothers – only finished primary school. The unemployment rate of the allochthonous population is 26%. 60% of them is of Turkish origin. Except for a minority group, Belgian Turks make less then €2.000 a month. 35% of them makes less then €1.501.

We found contradictions in the literature about the entry of Turkish children in the education system. In the research at hand we will clarify this discrepancy. The school arrears and the repetition of one or more school years is higher for non-Belgians compared to Belgians. A specification on children of Turkish origin is not available.

It is of the utmost importance to reveal what factors disrupt the school careers of these youngsters. Only by doing that, it will be possible to reduce the differences between the more successful school careers of autochthonous youngsters and these of allochthonous youngsters.

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