

File ID 100051  
Filename Summary

---

SOURCE (OR PART OF THE FOLLOWING SOURCE):

Type Dissertation  
Title De sleutel tot succes. Over hulp, keuzes en kansen in de schoolloopbanen van Turkse en Marokkaanse jongeren van de tweede generatie  
Author M. Crul  
Faculty Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences  
Year 2000  
Pages 189  
ISBN 9055891592

FULL BIBLIOGRAPHIC DETAILS:

<http://dare.uva.nl/record/97709>

---

*Copyright*

*It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use.*

---

## Summary

Many researchers have assessed the educational situation of ethnic Moroccan and Turkish young people in the Netherlands. Most have pointed to the large numbers of such pupils enrolled in the lowest educational streams and to their high truancy and dropout rates. The achievements of the second-generation youth that I have documented in the present study suggest a major reversal of this situation. A sizeable group of young people now do well in school. One quarter of the second-generation school-goers aged 15 to 24 are now enrolled in higher education or in senior general (HAVO) or pre-university (vwo) secondary school, types that give access to higher education. Success is no longer reserved for a negligible group. In comparison with their parents, who had little or no schooling, these young people have made an impressive leap forward within a single generation. Females are just as strongly represented in the high-achieving group as males, and their progress in comparison to the in-between generation has been the greatest of all. One step below these high achievers is a substantial intermediate group who are attending or have completed senior secondary vocational school (MBO), and could move on to higher education too. Contrasting with the success of these two groups are others who lag behind, terminating their education without a diploma or with no more than pre-vocational schooling (VBO).

When I began my research five years ago, the second generation of immigrant youth was far smaller than the in-between generation, and the primary focus in research was on the problems of the latter. Things have now changed. Second-generation children are now the largest group of immigrant children in primary school, and the oldest of the second generation are now winding up their studies and entering the job market. The future of immigrant youth will depend in large part on the educational attainments of these second-generation immigrants.

This study compares the high achievers to their unsuccessful and less successful counterparts. The approach I have taken has not been used previously to study the educational accomplishments of Turkish and Moroccan young people. The major premise of my approach is that school performance cannot be understood without taking the entire educational careers of the children into account. I therefore reconstructed in detail the school careers of 86 young people from primary school onwards. The diversity that was apparent in these careers was reducible into several typical educational routes. The points at which these routes diverged coincided with major selection points in the educational system. Selection points functioned like railway switches to determine the further course of a person's educational career. Educational routes and selection points could be identified on the basis of general survey data on the second generation.

The central focus of my interviews was on the course of events leading up to the major selection points. This enabled me not only to quantify the importance of the routes and selection points, but also to make a qualitative assessment of the underlying selection mechanisms. I was then able to pinpoint which educational routes were followed by which groups within the second generation, at which moments the selections took place, and how and why these were made. The idea behind the method was that detailed data on educational selection could give crucial insights into factors leading to success and failure. If, for example, a young Turkish woman opted for vocational training after completing general secondary school, even though her school achievements qualified her to move towards higher education, that was significant evidence for possible obstacles in her educational career. Conversely, if she chose a secondary school type that qualified her for higher education despite having received a mediocre recommendation from her primary school, that was a strong indication that she had auxiliary sources of support. Little or no systematic use has been made of such concrete information in qualitative research so far, and if so that was usually restricted to one specific point in the educational career of the respondents. This neglects key sources of evidence for success and failure factors. Linking together quantitative and qualitative data can help to overcome both the limited generalisability of qualitative data alone and the limited insights offered by quantitative research.

Because previous research on the educational attainment of Turkish and Moroccan young people has focused so strongly on their problems, little notice has been taken of the diversity within the two groups. By carefully comparing the educational careers of successful and non-successful young people, I was able to distinguish several different routes taken through the education system. These routes were widely divergent, and the explanations for success or failure along the way were correspondingly varied. Three routes could be identified for the high achievers. The majority did not receive recommendations at the end of primary school for an advanced type of secondary school. Some did gain admission to a higher stream during their first, transitional year of secondary school. A third group did not join the route to success until first completing one of the intermediate secondary school types (MAVO or MBO). This last group, the 'accumulators', did not diverge perceptibly from their less successful counterparts over the longest stretch of their educational careers.

Most of the high achievers, then, did not enter the pivotal period in their success until some time during their secondary or vocational training school. This is an important insight, because it means the explanation for their success must be sought in these periods. What emerged from the interviews was that nearly all the high achievers received some kind of help and support. The bulk of this came from within their own communities, notably from older siblings and from peers. Key persons in the young people's own networks gave them advice, practical assistance and guidance, and motivated them to persevere in their education. This was a surprising finding, because the importance of help from the immigrant communities themselves had not been previously recognised – quite the contrary, in fact, for most studies have hammered away at the lack of support provided by these environments.

A smaller group of high achievers did receive high recommendations at the end of primary school and moved on to HAVO or VWO directly after their transitional year.

Most of these later proceeded to enter higher education without delay. They can quite rightly be called success stories. Their starting point was rather exceptional, though, for they had attended primary schools with few or no other Moroccan or Turkish pupils. Not only did this greatly strengthen their proficiency in Dutch, but it also helped them develop the social skills they needed to function in a Dutch school environment. For this group, the first eight years of school were the most decisive.

Research on the networks of young people from families with a low socioeconomic status can be crucial for explaining how they achieve upward social mobility. Their hidden capital lies in such networks.

Intermediate achievers were found on the educational routes leading to senior vocational school (MBO) via either junior general secondary school (MAVO) or pre-vocational school (VBO). The MBO was their final diploma. I discovered that most such young people had lacked the help and support enjoyed by the high achievers. Some had experienced both success and failure factors. Many young women in this intermediate group – Turkish ones far more than Moroccans – had run into interference from their environment about continuing their studies. They mostly had parents who were strongly oriented to their own community and who feared the 'Dutchification' of their daughters. Young men who did not get past the MBO had usually experienced delays at some earlier point in their school careers. Some had problems comparable to those of their counterparts who dropped out of school early.

Early school-leavers were readily distinguishable in most cases from other children. Most had attended primary schools with high percentages of Moroccan and Turkish pupils, and most had received low to very low recommendations after primary school. In the early 1980s, primary schools in the older working-class districts of Dutch cities experienced a large inflow of Turkish and Moroccan pupils. Adapting to their new ethnic make-up caused the schools many organisational problems that affected the quality of education for several years. Contacts between school and the Moroccan or Turkish parents were often difficult. The pupils' low recommendations at the end of primary school greatly limited their choice of secondary schools. Many pupils effectively had access only to schools restricted to pre-vocational education. The wave of Moroccan and Turkish pupils thus entered the VBO, and within it the lowest-rated types such as mechanics for boys and textiles and care work for girls. Since these sections were simultaneously receiving many newly arrived immigrant children who had their own specific problems, the resulting school climate was little conducive to school performance. Many of the boys attending such schools had behavioural problems, and truancy and dropout rates were high. This problem behaviour got some boys deeper and deeper into trouble outside school, too, and they ultimately became marginalised. The dropout rates for girls in such schools were even higher, again particularly in the textile and care work sections. This was mainly attributable to household duties, planned marriages or a lack of support and encouragement to continue their education, and seldom to behavioural problems.

### Turkish youth of the second generation

Among the ethnic Turkish youth, the dividing line between successful students and those who abandoned their education prematurely coincided largely with the gender divide. Those quitting school with no diploma were predominantly girls, and those continuing their education were mainly boys. Interestingly, it was the girls who had had the more advantageous starting position. Within the entire sample of Moroccan and Turkish second-generation young people, Turkish girls were the least likely to have finished primary school late, and they were more likely than Turkish boys to attend MAVO rather than VBO secondary schools. In the 15 to 24 age group, however, far fewer Turkish girls continued their education in the higher school types, and far more left school without a diploma. It should be noted that the young women without diplomas did belong to the oldest cohort of the second generation, and that it was rare for those in the following cohorts to quit school without a diploma. Clearly the girls in the older cohort were plagued by problems similar to those of the in-between generation.

Relatively high numbers of Turkish girls also abandoned school after getting a VBO diploma. The primary explanation was the educational climate in the pre-vocational schools. Especially the atmosphere in the textile and care work sections (which were previously known as domestic science school) adversely affected the pupils' performance. At home, many girls were pressured by their parents into traditional roles from an early age. Admittedly, girls with a VBO diploma had precious few options available for follow-up training. Early marriage might have seemed a good alternative to many, a way of gaining independence from their parents. Many had already received marriage proposals. Girls in a low school type were likely to marry at an earlier age than daughters of the same parents who were enrolled in a higher type. The latter wanted to postpone marriage as long as possible.

Another large group of Turkish girls did embark on careers in general secondary school, initially with success. The two most important factors in that success were help from teachers and help from older brothers and sisters. Some girls received intensive support and guidance from teachers. All had parents who had immigrated to the Netherlands at an early date and who had good relations with Dutch people. For girls who transferred to higher school types in the course of their secondary school careers, the help of older siblings was especially important.

Ultimately, many of these young women were not given the leeway to enter a more extended course of study. Further education for women remained a sensitive issue in many Turkish families. During the course of adolescence, their future role as married women increasingly competed with their school careers. Some girls who could have moved on to HAVO after their MAVO diploma stepped back to the vocational MBO instead. Others who had accumulated enough diplomas to move on to higher school types, and who obviously had the abilities to do so, left school instead after getting their MBO diploma. This largely explains the generally lower attainment levels amongst Turkish girls. Many of the girls who did continue their educations had to withstand parental resistance, and most Turkish girls had enjoyed little support in any event. Help from older brothers or sisters and from peers sometimes proved an effective lever against the parents' passive or active resistance.

It was rare for second-generation Turkish youths to leave school with no diploma at all. Although Turkish boys with serious behavioural problems were just as likely as their Moroccan counterparts to repeat a school year, their dropout rate was lower and most finished their diplomas in spite of the problems. A large proportion of Turkish youths did leave mainstream education after completing the lowest level of pre-vocational school. Though they did have a diploma, it was not of much value. Problem behaviour amongst Turkish youths generally stayed confined to the school. Unlike Moroccan youths, they were not often active out of doors and they exhibited less problem behaviour in groups. They were deterred from doing so by the high level of social control prevailing in the Turkish community. The contacts between their schools and their fathers were generally poor.

Although Turkish boys initially performed more poorly than their female counterparts, they ultimately outdistanced them by virtue of their lower dropout rate and their accumulation of diplomas. Accumulation of diplomas was a common phenomenon among Turkish youths. At the most they received passive parental support on this long educational pathway, and they had to rely most on their Turkish classmates. The peer group leaned heavily on one another, trading information and insights to make up for the support they lacked from their parents. A smaller group received help from older brothers and sisters. These two types of mutual support were particularly important for the youths who took long routes through the educational system.

The factors described above were all related in one way or another to the strong forces of social cohesion within the ethnic Turkish community. That cohesion had different effects on girls and boys. While deterring boys from leaving school without a diploma, it was a key factor in girls' failure. The early school-leaving rate among girls was closely associated with traditional notions of the role of women that were enforced by the social control in the Turkish community. At the same time, the forces of social cohesion instilled a strong sense of mutual commitment in Turkish youths in the educational system, which especially manifested itself in very practical ways such as reciprocal help and exchange of information. Both these aspects of social cohesion operated simultaneously within the Turkish community. It is even the case that high-achieving Turkish young women were hindered by the social pressure while simultaneously benefiting from the strong support of their Turkish classmates.

### **Moroccan youth of the second generation**

Educational gender differentiation among the ethnic Moroccan youth was very different from that among the Turkish, at least for the highest and lowest achievers. In the first place, females were less likely than males to leave school early. Their educational achievement seemed to unfold in reverse fashion to that of Turkish females. Although Moroccan girls were the most likely of all groups to finish primary school late, they had the highest probability of receiving a high recommendation at the end of primary school. Achievement levels amongst Moroccan schoolgirls were highly varied, also during secondary school. There were higher percentages of girls than boys in pre-vocational schools, but also in the HAVO and VWO school types, which give

access to higher education. This polarity persisted throughout the 15 to 24 age group, with high dropout rates contrasting with high rates of upward progression to the highest forms of education.

Moroccan girls seemed to have derived the greatest benefit from attending predominantly ethnic Dutch primary schools and from the strong orientation to Dutch society of the early Moroccan immigrants. Besides getting higher primary school recommendations than other groups, they received the most help from ethnic Dutch teachers in secondary school. Many also reported help from older brothers and sisters. Since Moroccan families are larger than Turkish ones, the chance of having older siblings and thus receiving practical help from them is logically greater. Many male high achievers also reported help and guidance from older siblings.

A large majority of Moroccan girls who left school at an early age did so without a diploma. Unlike Turkish girls, though, very few quit school once they got past their pre-vocational diploma. Most dropouts were again in the textile and care work sections of the vbo and belonged to the oldest age cohort. The usual reason was marriage. As in the Turkish subsample, girls in the younger age cohorts were much less likely to leave school without a diploma.

Many studies have highlighted the alarming predicament of a large segment of the Moroccan male youth. Moroccan youths indeed had the highest school dropout rate, and they were invariably labelled as the most problematic group in the educational system. They were more likely than Turkish youths to leave school without a diploma. They also exhibited more problem behaviour in groups. Some left mainstream education at a very early age because they were unmanageable. The problem behaviour of Moroccan youths was always linked to truancy, and most truancy occurred in groups. The prevailing attitude was markedly anti-school, and many got involved in petty crime. Such youths were allowed a good deal of freedom by their parents, who often seemed to do little to control their sons outside the home. As in the case of the Turkish problem youth, contacts between parents and school were poor, often as a result of unpleasant experiences with teachers in the past.

Girls and young women in the Moroccan community escaped to a greater degree from the traditional role of women than those in the Turkish community. They apparently had more room to deviate from group norms, or rather, group norms were less clearly evident. This stemmed in part from the migration history of the Moroccan parents, who had generally arrived earlier than the Turkish parents. Early arrivals are more strongly oriented to Dutch society. The Moroccan community is also less tightly knit than the Turkish community, and is structured more around individual families. The success of the Moroccan high achievers was mainly attributable to support from older siblings. One concomitant of the lack of a tightly knit community was a weaker degree of social control, which meant that problem street behaviour was less likely to be corrected than in the Turkish community. Here again, two seemingly antithetical characteristics of the community operated simultaneously – some youths who were clearly delinquent were diligently helping their younger brothers and sisters with school.

Whereas for Turkish youths the strong sense of community cohesion manifested itself both in intense social control and in strong mutual support, the inadequate

supervision and guidance of the Moroccan parents was accompanied by a strong feeling of solidarity between siblings. In both cases the anomaly was linked to generation differences. The differences between the parents and the second-generation youth could partly be seen in their different attitudes towards education and their different capacities for providing support. Parents had little knowledge or experience when it came to education, and the value they attached to it might well be subordinated to other choices they made for their children or for the family. For example, they might send their children for an extended stay in the old country or arrange an early marriage for them. Peers had more knowledge and experience of education and were more aware of its importance. They were oriented to a future in the Netherlands and they made decisions based on that orientation. Obligations that the parents felt towards relatives or people from their region of origin were less strongly felt by the youth.

A sizeable proportion of the second-generation Turkish and Moroccan young people are successful in their education. They have made great strides in relation to their parents' starting position. Certainly it remains to be seen whether they can cash in on their school success by finding good jobs. Research has shown that higher educational attainment opens more doors for ethnic Turkish and Moroccan people on the labour market. The high-achieving youth will form the first elite of any size in their own communities. They are already taking on positions of leadership in cultural, religious and political organisations. My study shows that the network in which high achievers function is a crucial precondition for their success. Knowledge and experience will continue to grow within the immigrant communities as more and more young people complete higher education.

