
**Conference: “Migration from Turkey” – 6th and 7th
June, 2003
Humboldt Universität Berlin, Institut für Sozialwissenschaften**

***On Thresholds and Barriers:
The Entry of Second Generation Turkish Migrants into the
Labour Market***

Norbert Gestring, Andrea Janßen, Ayça Polat

Universität Oldenburg
Institut für Soziologie
Arbeitsgruppe Stadtforschung
D-26111 Oldenburg
Germany
Fon: +49 441 798 2844
Email:
norbert.gestring@uni-oldenburg.de
a.janssen@uni-oldenburg.de
ayca.polat@uni-oldenburg.de

Introduction

In this presentation on the school to work transition our assumptions are based on an ongoing research project about Turkish migrants of the second generation. We are investigating the question which social and subjective factors influence the processes of integration and exclusion. The goal of this study is to find theoretical explanations of these processes. An empirical emphasis is on qualitative interviews with second-generation Turkish migrants at the age of 25 to 40. This is not, however, a study of youth, but we have considered the biographies of the respondents in the dimensions of work, housing and social networks. Therefore we can make statements on the phase of entrance into the labour market. Of the 55 interviewed, 32 have a 9-year secondary school education ("Hauptschulabschluss"), 18 have a 10-year school education ("Realschulabschluss") and five do not have any secondary school exam. Migrants with "Abitur", the equivalent of the British A-level, were not interviewed.

Vocational Training and Labour Market

In Germany vocational training is a core institution for the integration into the labour market. Whether or not, and how, the first threshold of the transition from school to vocational training and the second threshold of the transition from training to the regular labour market is overcome, are important milestones in the following career in the labour market.

Formal vocational training and educational certificates are considered "signals of individual productivity" (Solga 2002). Training is so important that people without training are considered a "deviant minority" (ibid.). The risk of unemployment is highest in this group. They have the worst chances and are increasingly at risk of becoming excluded from the labour market.

Professional qualifications determine the entrance into various labour market segments in Germany: According to Sengenberger (1976), the labour market can be divided into three segments: the specific, the company related and the unspecified, segment (cf. Blossfeld/Mayer 1988). The "specific segment" is determined by qualifications imparted by the system of dual vocational training. In the "company related segment" qualifications are required, though outside the company these qualifications are hardly applicable. Those who do not have any special qualifications comprise the "unspecified labour market". Characteristics of this precarious segment

of the labour market are lack of chances for promotion, high job insecurity and poor payment.

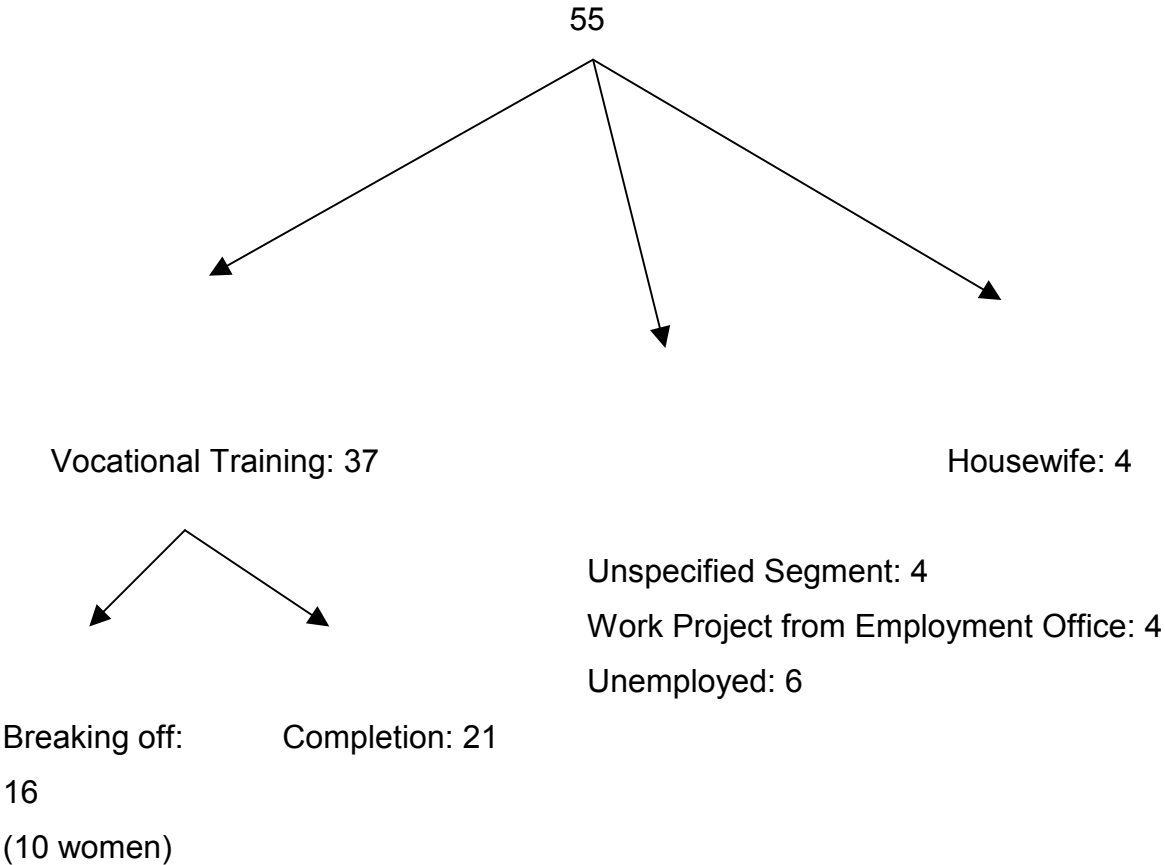
In Germany, migrants belong to the social group most heavily employed in the unspecified segment. Only one quarter of Turkish employees have vocational training (Woltering 1998: 28). At 22 percent, they have the highest unemployment rate of migrants in Germany (Beauftragte 2000). With regard to qualifications, the second generation has made progress in comparison with the first, but the difference to Germans remains high. The problem of overcoming both thresholds is a substantial reason for that. The results of our sample show this:

Results

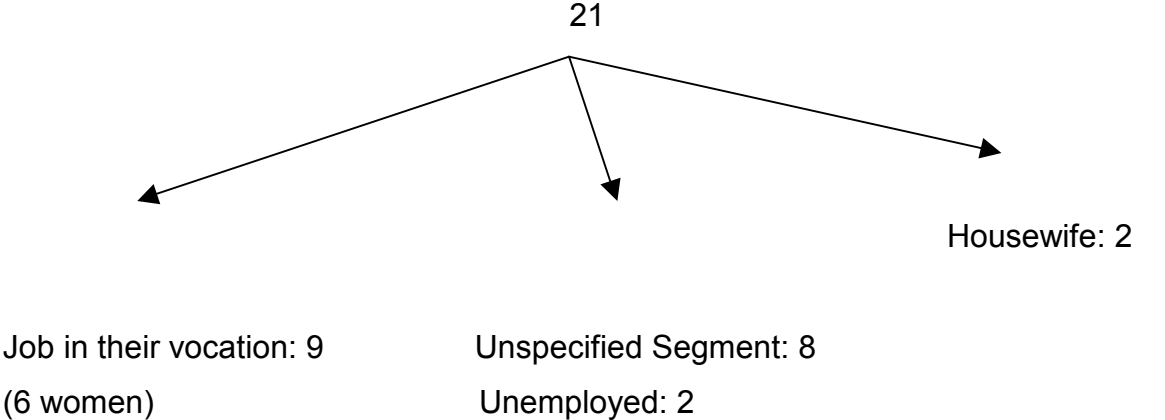
First Threshold (see Figure)

- Two-thirds of the respondents are initially successful on the first threshold and begin vocational training after school. The men predominantly in skilled trade and craftsmen professions such as mechanics, painters, plumbers or masons; the women in low-qualified service professions such as hairdressers, salespersons, seamstresses or instructors for children. The remaining one-third becomes unemployed after school, ends up in a temporary work project or becomes a housewife.
- Nearly half of all migrants who began vocational training, have dropped out. Two thirds of them end up in the unspecified labour market segment, the majority of drop-outs being women.
- Compared with results from representative studies (BIBB 2001, Beauftragte 2000) the portion of migrants beginning vocational training is above-average in our sample. On the other hand, the portion of those breaking off their training is likewise above-average. That is especially true for women. The distribution of occupations requiring training corresponds to the results of the representative studies.

First Threshold: After Completed Secondary School



Second Threshold: After Completed Vocational Training



Second Threshold

- Here, only those who have completed vocational training are considered. Nearly one-third has been successful on the second threshold and can work in the occupation. This predominantly deals with women who work as hairdressers, seamstresses or instructors for children. Only three of the eleven men with vocational training are able to initially work in their occupation after the completion of the training.
- Two-thirds end up in the unspecified segment after vocational training, become unemployed or become housewives. Because of that, the portion of migrants who are successful on the second threshold is lower than in the representative studies (BIBB 2001).

Both thresholds are great barriers for a lot of migrants; the majority fails. The lack of professional training has serious consequences for the further career in the labour market: The majority of the respondents were in the insecure, unspecified segment of the labour market at the time of the interview. Over half were employed temporarily or part-time, and one in six was unemployed.

How can these results be explained?

Explanations

Six explanations can be found for the success or failure of migrants at the first or second threshold.

First, restructuring of the labour market: The interviewed migrants began their career in the labour market at a point of time when a lack of available training places prevailed: the beginning to the mid- eighties (ANBA 1991). Such competition for places to train results in suppressive competition, where school graduates of the “Hauptschule” have very little chance. The overall opportunities of gaining a foothold in the labour market have become noticeably worse since the seventies. In the course of structural change in the labour market, the industrial jobs which male migrants are most interested in has been affected most heavily by cutbacks in work and training positions. Larger companies such as Volkswagen cannot offer security any longer to those migrants who joined the labour market as of the eighties and want to work in industrial labour. Migrants succeed in entering this segment – if at all – only by chance and with above-average performance.

Second, discrimination: Discrimination in the labour market can occur as an entrance barrier to vocational training or the labour market itself, or as restriction of career development, for example, by dismissal. The “*Federal Institute for Vocational Training*” (“Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung”) emphasises that there is still prejudice against the vocational training of young migrants (Beauftragte 2000). Compared with second generation migrants from other countries of recruitment, the second generation Turkish migrants – with similar qualifications – have the worst chance of becoming an employee and being promoted (Kalter/Granato 2001). These findings coincide with our interview results with migrants and gatekeepers: Turkish migrants are third choice for some employers. Even with identical qualifications, they are given a worse chance than Germans, migrants from other countries in the European Union and ethnic German immigrants from Eastern Europe. For some employers Turkish men have a macho mentality and an unsatisfactory work ethic, which would have a negative effect on work processes in the business. Women with headscarves are reluctantly employed or not at all. Most of the female migrants wearing headscarves put their failed attempt at finding a training position or place of employment down to the fact that they were wearing their headscarf.

Third, family: Many of the respondents based their failure in school and vocational training on the lack of support and interest from their family. Moreover, the restrictive influence of the family was shown:

- through *financial obligations* towards the parents, for instance, in cases of illness or death of the father; the child takes over the function of breadwinner in the family and cannot afford vocational training any longer,
- secondly, through *parent’s orientation to return home*; often the children are expected to earn as much money as possible and as quickly as possible, in order to support their parent’s investments in Turkey,
- thirdly, through an *early*, in part forced *marriage*; the obligation to earn the family’s income often makes it impossible to complete vocational training. An early marriage often has more serious consequences for women than men, because quite early in the marriage the birth of the first child occurs and at that point they have to give up training or employment.

The fourth explanation is social network: The majority of the migrants interviewed only have a small, socially and ethnically homogeneous network. There are few contacts to gatekeepers of the labour market or bridge persons, who could be helpful

in the job search. Migrants with successful careers often got their respective jobs through advice and tips from friends and acquaintances.

Fifth, chance orientation: In looking for work, chance orientation is predominant. Most employment situations occur purely by chance and not as the result of target-oriented action. One takes what is offered at the moment. On the one hand this temporary and opportunistic orientation is functional: as the group we examined has little chance in the German labour market, commitment to a definite, occupational goal can be counter-productive. On the other hand, chance orientation generally increases the risk of exclusion, as to orient oneself on short-term opportunities and quick earnings is, in the long run, dysfunctional for a career.

Sixth, traditional roles: For both men and women, an understanding of roles is predominant, where the man provides for material needs and the woman for the household and children. Almost all of the housewives and mothers in our sample identified with their role. Should a conflict arise between the demands of work and those of the family, the role of mother and housewife takes precedence. They have a low orientation concerning the labour market and believe their husbands have the main responsibility in providing for the family. Therefore, women pursue part-time employment.

To conclude, along with these explanations, restrictions are described, against which Turkish migrants have to battle. For low-qualified Turkish migrants, the conditions of finding a decent job are extremely difficult. For those who have managed to achieve a career of integration despite these restrictions, chance and character play a major role.

References:

- ANBA – Amtliche Nachrichten der Bundesanstalt für Arbeit 1991: Arbeitsstatistik 1990, Sondernummer 39. Nürnberg: Bundesanstalt für Arbeit
- Beauftragte 2000: Daten und Fakten zur Ausländersituation. Bonn: Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für die Belange der Ausländer
- BIBB 2001: BIBB/EMNID-Untersuchung, hrsg. Vom Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, Bonn: www.forum-bildung.de/bib/material/bibb.pdf
- Blossfeld, Hans-Peter & Karl Ulrich Mayer 1988: Arbeitsmarktsegmentation in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Eine empirische Überprüfung von Segmentierungstheorien aus der Perspektive des Lebenslaufs. In: Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie 40, 2, 262-284
- Kalter, Frank & Nadia Granato Nadia 2001: Die Persistenz ethnischer Ungleichheit auf dem deutschen Arbeitsmarkt. In: Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie 53, 3, 497-520
- Solga, Heike 2002: Ausbildungslosigkeit als soziales Stigma in Bildungsgesellschaften. Ein soziologischer Erklärungsbeitrag für die wachsenden Arbeitsmarktprobleme von gering qualifizierten Personen. In: Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie 54, 3, 476-505
- Woltering, Michael 1998: Strukturen und Probleme der Arbeitsmarktintegration von Zuwanderern in Deutschland und in den Niederlanden. In: IMIS-Beiträge, H. 9 Mobilität und Kooperation auf grenzüberschreitenden Arbeitsmärkten: Deutschland - Niederlande, 15-35