

Immigrants Access to the French Labour Market

The labour market participation of immigrants in the receiving countries has been of great interest among researchers in various disciplines and national contexts for the past decades, especially in North America and more recently in Western Europe (for e.g. Borjas, Freeman (eds), 1992; Piché, Renaud, Gingras, 2002; Meurs, Pailhé, Simon, 2006; etc.). This economic participation of immigrants has been often seen as an essential dimension of the more general process of their integration in the host society, which accounts for the usual comparison between immigrants and natives, and also for the focus on the labour market only in the receiving country.

In France, the conducted studies, both cross-sectional (for e.g. Thave, 2000; Borrel, Boëldieu, 2001; Tavan, 2005; Meurs, Pailhé, Simon, 2006) and longitudinal (Dayan, Echardour, Glaude, 1997; Tavan, 2006), revealed differences between immigrants and natives on the French labour market regarding the employment/unemployment status, the occupational class, along with variations in the promotion chances. Furthermore, the results reckoned national origin as being the main indicator for predicting variation within the immigrant communities. The resulted data was derived mainly from cross-sectional surveys (census or other studies), due to limited available longitudinal records for France area.

Consisting with the above findings, a longitudinal analyse is proposed to study of a specific moment in the individual employment histories, namely the labour market access in France. To begin with, the research was designed to purposely compare the time the individuals, immigrants and natives, spend in getting their first job in France. The targeted variable consists of the amount of time the subjects spent in searching for a job after the end of their schooling years (for the natives and immigrants having finished their schooling in France) or after their arrival in France (for the immigrants having finished their schooling before migration). Subsequently, to uncover the heterogeneity among immigrants regarding their labour market participation in France, several indicators are to be examined, which regards their life course positions at the time of migration, the conditions of migration, along with the occupational transitions between the departure country and France.

In compliance with the existing data for the French context, the projected study was designed to firstly address the differences in labour market participation as appear between

immigrants and natives. In spite of an apparent distinction between immigrants and natives at the beginning of their economic insertion period in France – based on individual characteristics like educational attainment, age/generation, family situation, or economic context – the influence of these factors is variable. More to the point, the labour market attainment in France has been proven to be concurrently “gendered” and “ethnic” in respect that, on the whole, the immigrants devote more time in ascending to the French labour market than the non immigrants. This segment of population display significant gender specificities, as it has been found that the immigrant women ascend much less and more slowly than the immigrant men.

Secondly, the hypothesis argues against the results according to which the national origin is the most differential factor among immigrants. The present approach does not consider national origin to encompass the heterogeneity observed among the immigrant population regarding their economic insertion in France, but regards the position of individuals in their life course at the moment of immigration in France as being a better pointer for this differentiation. Thus, when arriving in France, immigrants have different human capital and different demographic characteristics. They also may have a previous occupational experience, in another country. Besides, after migration until the time of becoming “employable”, some migrants are about to make investments that complement their skills, in particular schooling in France. All these elements can accelerate the insertion in the French labour market, sometimes to such extent that surpasses the occupational insertion rhythm of the non immigrants. On the other hand, family situation before acceding to the French labour market (being much more in couple and having more often children) may postpone or even withdraw immigrants from the labour market, especially for women. Knowledge of the French language, being in a mixed couple, age at arrival and length of stay in France are other elements to consider when explaining the differentiation in occupational attainment of immigrants in France. Overall, the study considers factors like the position in the life course along with occupational transitions when migrating and the individual situations by the time of “employability” in France, as better characterize the immigrants access to the French labour market.

To test the above mentioned hypothesis, the study resorts on data produced in the “Histoire de vie” survey, carried out by INSEE (Institut National de la Statistique et des

Études Économiques) in 2003. The survey's sample consisted of 8403 individuals, of whom 1147 are immigrants (born in a foreign country, having foreign parents). No prior national origin or generation selection was done. Nevertheless, the coordinators of this survey assessed that the immigrant sample was representative for the whole immigrant population living in France as observed at the 1999 Census. More important, this is one of the rare surveys in France that allowed recounting the individual family, residential or occupational complete histories, in a retrospective manner, especially for the immigrant population.

Two statistical tools are going to be used to measure the time until the first job in France. The first one refers to the measurement of the survivor functions in the state of non employment using the life-table or actuarial method (a non parametric method). This specific method is utilized with the purpose of observing when (after how many years) and how many (cumulative percentage) individuals ascend to the French labour market based on all individual characteristics mentioned above. The second tool, known as the accelerated failure time model (a parametric model), would assist in explaining the differentiation among individuals in duration before finding a job regarding the individual characteristics. These two methods (the first one descriptive, the second one explanatory) should allow us to test our hypothesis.

References

- Borjas, G. J. & Freeman, R. B. (1992). *Immigration and the Work Force*, The University of Chicago press, Chicago and London.
- Borrel C. & Boeldieu J. (2001). De plus en plus de femmes immigrées sur le marché du travail. *Insee Première*, 791,
- Dayan J. L., Echardour A. & Glaude M. (1997). Le parcours professionnel des immigrés en France : une analyse longitudinale. In Rallu J., L., Courbage, Y. & Piche, V. (Eds.), *Old and New Minorities/Anciennes et nouvelles minorités*, John Libbey Eurotexte – INED, Paris, 113-146.
- Meurs, D., Pailhé, A. & Simon P. (2006). Persistances des inégalités entre générations liées à l'immigration : l'accès à l'emploi des immigrés et de leurs descendants en France. *Population*, revue de l'Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques, 61(5-6), 763-801.
- Piche, V., Renaud, J. & Gingras, L. (2002). L'insertion économique des nouveaux immigrants dans le marché du travail à Montréal : une approche longitudinale. *Population*, revue de l'Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques, 57(1), 63-89.
- Tavan, C. (2005). Les immigrés en France : une situation qui évolue. *Insee Première*, 1042.
- Tavan, C. (2006). Migration et trajectoires professionnelles, une approche longitudinale. *Economie et statistique*, 393-394, 81-99.
- Thave, S. (2000). L'emploi des immigrés en 1999. *Insee Première*, 717.