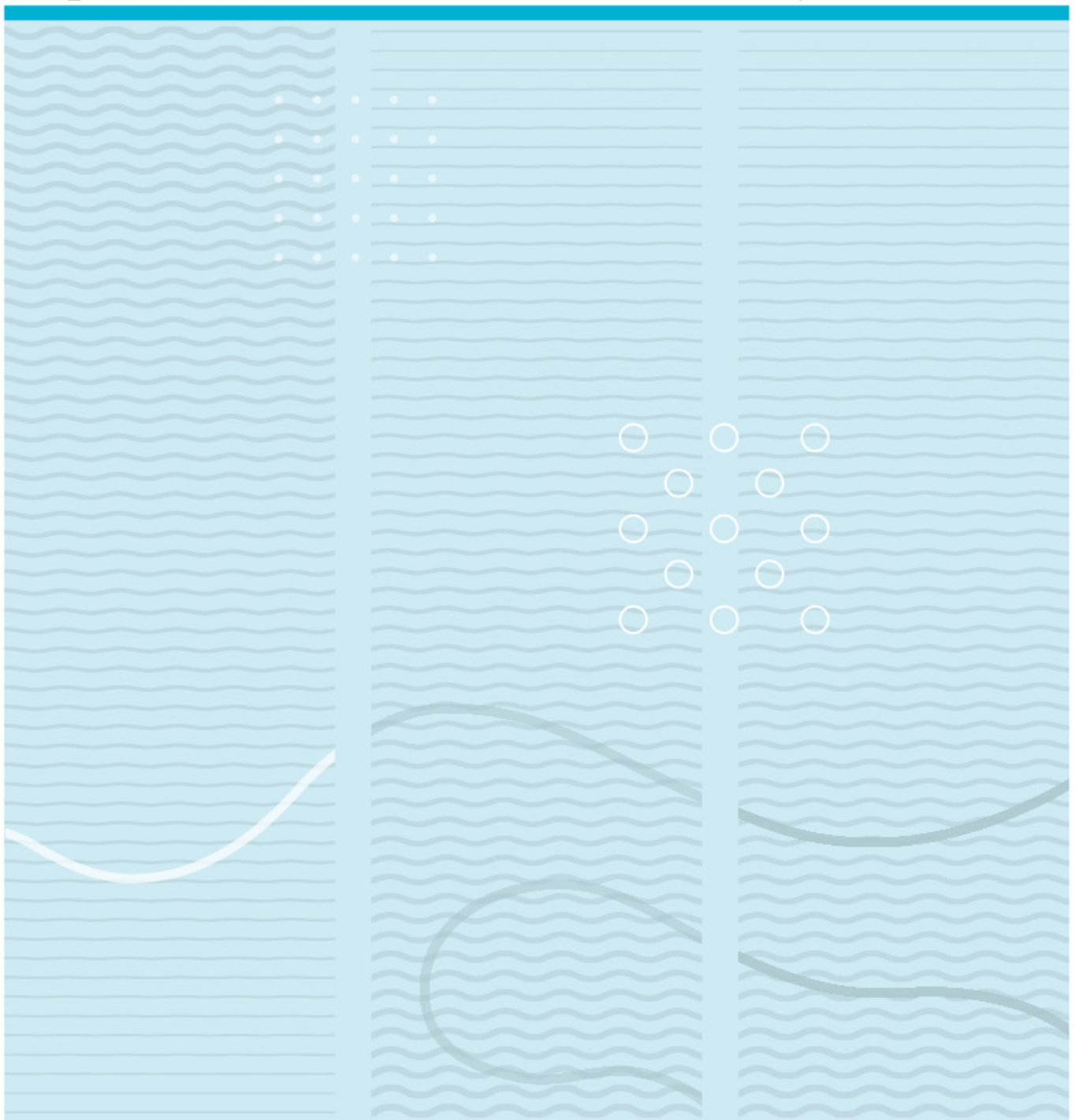


Jamila Jalloh

***“Coming to Norway as a refugee can be misinterpreted as a bad thing”* Exploring the Individual Educational Experiences of African Youth in Norway.**



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This thesis is worth 45 study points

Abstract

There is a lot of research written about unaccompanied minors in Norway, but this thesis is concerned with the individual educational experiences of African unaccompanied minors. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the experiences of African unaccompanied minors regarding access to education opportunities in Norway. Based on a review of literature on unaccompanied minors, by using four theories: multiculturalism, representation, stereotypes, and education, a qualitative study was conducted with five participants originally from the Eastern part of Africa. A thematic analysis was used and themes like individual education experiences, integration, challenges, and the best interest of the child are presented. This research shows that when unaccompanied minors do not know what they want to do for further education, they are usually pushed towards vocational education by their teachers and school advisors. However, some young people saw this as degrading and used it as a motivation to get the qualification to attain higher education at the university level. While language is one of the keys to integration into Norwegian society, it is also one of the biggest challenges that affect these young people's educational aspirations and how well they settle in Norwegian society.

Key words: African unaccompanied minors, education, integration, educational experiences, degrading.

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Abbreviation explanation

CRC:	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EU:	European Union
IMDi:	The Directorate for integration and Diversity
NAFO:	National Center for Multicultural Education
NOAS:	Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers
NSD:	The Norwegian Center for Research Data
OHCHR:	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PTSD:	Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
SDG:	Sustainable Development Goal
SSB:	Statistics Norway
UDI:	The Norwegian Directorate of immigration
Udir:	The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training
UM:	Unaccompanied Minor/s
UN:	United Nations
URM:	Unaccompanied Refugee Minor/s
VET:	Vocational Education and Training

1 Introduction

This thesis is concerned about the experiences of African unaccompanied minors in Norway regarding access to education opportunities. There is a lot of literature about unaccompanied minors (UMs) in Norway. Although African unaccompanied minors are included in some of the literature, more research should be conducted on this group. I chose African UMs because usually Africa is portrayed as poor people, drought, street kids, and how Africa needs help and yet some of the images are by the people who have never been to Africa at all (Biney, 1997). I want to show and enlighten that there is more to African people than what is portrayed in the media. A lot of African unaccompanied minors come to Norway with resources that add value to the Norwegian society. Using a total of five interviews with African youth with a refugee background, the purpose of this research project is to explore the individual experiences of African unaccompanied minors in Norway regarding education opportunities. Normally, unaccompanied minors who are unsure of what further education to take, tend to be pushed towards vocational education. In this thesis, I show that pushing a specific group of people towards certain careers is degrading in ways that limit them from pursuing career paths of their own choices. Language is one of the reasons why these young people are pushed towards certain careers because of their Norwegian skills. I show that African unaccompanied minors should be received as individuals and attended to as human beings rather than being judged by their physical appearance and skin color during career guidance, in classrooms, and at workplaces. Each of these individuals has individual experiences, goals, and aspirations, therefore their uniqueness should be recognized and respected rather than being used against them.

1.1 Contextual Background

Norway is home to people who come from more than 200 countries, it is estimated that 16 percent of the population in Norway have an immigrant background either born to immigrant parents or immigrants themselves (Statistics Norway (SSB), 2022, Ministry of Justice, 2016, p.8). It is estimated about 12 percent of immigrants in Norway come from Africa (Piedu, 2017, p.1). As of 2021, it is estimated that 53,947 immigrants live in Norway and 4,001 are originally from Africa, which is approximately 7 percent of the immigrant population in Norway. 4.5 percent of the Norwegian population are persons with a refugee background (SSB, 2022). In

the recent report of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), Norway is estimated to receive an average of 60,000 asylum seekers from the Ukraine crisis. As of April 2022, UDI has reported 13,521 asylum seekers from Ukraine. 1,5 percent of the refugees are unaccompanied minors (UDI, 2022).

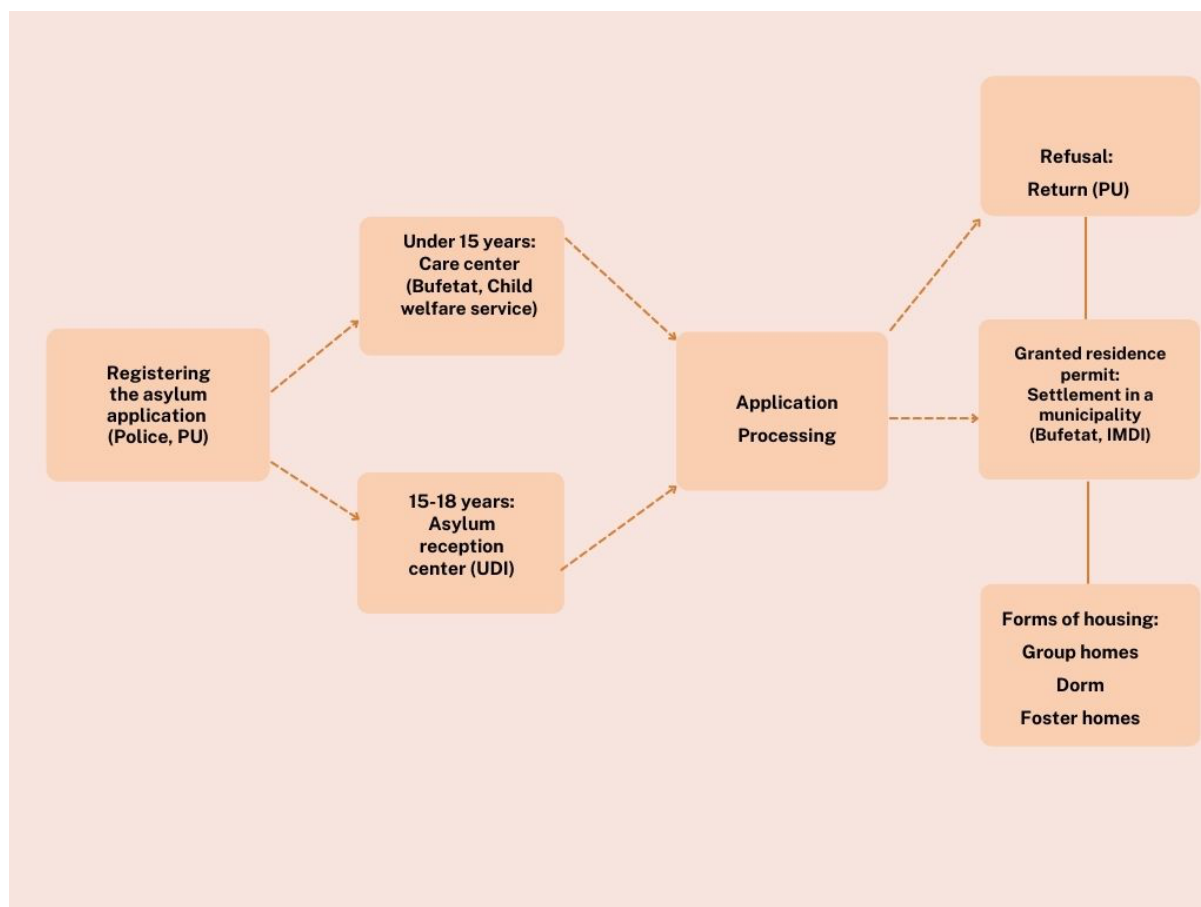
The highest numbers of unaccompanied minors entering Europe were registered between 2012 and 2015. In the autumn of 2015, the migration picture in Norway changed. Since about 11–12,000 asylum seekers came to Norway during those years, 31,145 asylum seekers were registered in 2015, most within a few months in the autumn. While in 2013 and 2014, 1,070 and 1,204 unaccompanied minors registered as asylum seekers in Norway, respectively. In 2015 a total of 5,297 unaccompanied minor asylum seekers came to the country (Ministry of Justice, 2016, P.8). The UN High commissioner for refugees reported that at the end of 2014 there were 56 million refugees and internally displaced persons in the world. These numbers affected Europe to a greater extent than before hence why in 2015 Europe experiences a historically high number of refugees and migrants (ibid). The most popular groups are children from Eritrea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Irak and Syria (Ministry of Justice, 2016, Lynnebakke & Pastoor, 2020, Pastoor, 2015, Oppedal, Ramberg & Røymsamb, 2020, Marguerite, Ottemöller, Katsi, Hollekim & Tesfazghi, 2020, Valenta 2019, Menjivar & Perreira, 2019, Kvestad, Randal, Sayyad, Lehmann & Bøe, 2021). There are many reasons why children arrive in the receiving society unaccompanied, some of which are, political war, religion, or being an anchor child. The journey to safety is different for everyone some pathways are safe while others are risky. Some young people do lose their families on the journey hence arriving unaccompanied (Pastoor, 2015 & 2017, Menjivar & Perreira, 2019, Marguerite et al. 2020).

The process of seeking asylum in Norway is that, when you arrive to Norway, one goes to the Police and states their reason for seeking protection (asylum) in Norway. After stating your reason for seeking asylum, you are placed in a reception center. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors, they are placed in different reception centers according to their age. These reception centers are usually separated from those of adult and family asylum seekers. Unaccompanied minors (UMs) aged 15 years and above are often placed in special reception centers for children whereas UMs aged 15 years and below are often under the care of the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth, and Family Affairs (Bufdir) (Bufetat) (Oppedal et al. 2020).

However, there is a debate on whether the separation of care for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers aged 15 and below and those between the age of 15-18 is discrimination. This is because unaccompanied asylum seekers aged 15 and above are taken in different care than UMs that are aged 15 and below. In 2021, the ministry of justice sent a proposal to the parliament (82 L proposition). The proposal was to legislate the Directorate of Immigration's responsibility for unaccompanied minors living in asylum centers. The 82 L proposition was suggesting that children aged 15 and above should be taken into care by the UDI, but this proposition got a lot of critics since there is a certain form of discrimination in treating the two groups differently, and yet they are all children under the age of 18 (Ministry of Justice, 2021). According to the UN convention on the rights of the child (OHCHR) (1990), a child is anyone under the age of 18 therefore, all UMs under the age of 18 should get the same care. The separation of care for the two groups also leads to the question of whether the best interest of the child is considered while these measures are taken. According to article 3.1 of the convention of the right of the child: "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration" (OHCHR, 1990). This means that any decision made concerning the child should be made in the best interest of the child.

The asylum process in Norway ideally takes three months, but it can take a longer time, it could take years depending on the crisis happening in the world and how many asylum cases Norway is receiving at the time of the application. However, after being granted a residence permit, unaccompanied refugee minors are then placed in the Norwegian municipalities where they can start a new life and a fresh start in the receiving society. Some get their apartments, others stay in group homes, and those 15 years and below go to foster care. It is in these municipalities that they start going to school and also learn the Norwegian language and social studies (Oppedal et al. 2020).

Figure 1. The asylum process for unaccompanied minors in Norway (Ministry of Justice, 2016).



The Norwegian integration laws, policies, and measures are organized so that more newly arrived immigrants be integrated into the Norwegian society at an early stage and become financially independent. The integration law shall contribute to immigrants gaining good Norwegian skills, knowledge of Norwegian society, formal qualifications, and a lasting connection to working life (Integration law, 2020). This is because the Norwegian welfare model is dependent on high labor force participation, therefore it is crucial for newly arrived immigrants with a refugee background to quickly get work and not be left out of the working life so that they become dependent on cash benefits (Ministry of justice, 2016, p.7). Norway introduced the introduction program; the program helps with fulfilling the integration law goals. The municipalities are therefore responsible for setting up new arrivals with the introduction program to learn the Norwegian language and social studies (Directorate for integration and Diversity (IMDi), 2022). Therefore, UMs are required to attend an introduction

program before they go for further education, the program is to help them learn the Norwegian language and get qualifications for further education in Norway.

The education system in Norway consists of a ten-year compulsory school that encompasses of two main stages, primary school (grades 1-7) and secondary school (grades 8-10). Generally, the upper secondary education can last up to three years, although vocation study programs involving apprenticeship lasts up to four years (Pastoor, 2015, p.246, National center for Multicultural Education (NAFO), 2022, The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Udir), 2021). The primary and lower secondary school covers education for children aged 6 to 15 years (grade 1 to 10). Higher education is based on general admission, normally completed secondary education. The main structure is a 3+2+3 model: three years bachelor's degree, two years master's degree, and three years doctoral program (ibid).

On the other hand, the Norwegian vocational education and training (VET) is part of the formal upper secondary education system. From the school year 2020/21, upper secondary VET in Norway covers 10 education programs that lead to more than 180 different trade or journeyman's certificates (Udir, 2021). The vocational courses lead to vocational competence like a plumber's certificate and the general courses lead to a general certificate of secondary education that qualifies the students for further education at a college or a university (Håvard & Støren, 2006, p.340). Children residing in Norway for more than three months have a right and obligation to attend primary and lower secondary school, therefore unaccompanied minors between the ages 6-16 attend school as Norwegian children (The education act, 1998 § 2, Oslo Kommune, 2022). When an UM over the age of 16 obtains a resident permit, he/she has a right to further education, however, the students above the compulsory school age who have not completed Norwegian compulsory schooling or its equivalent, need to follow a compulsory school program equivalent of lower secondary school. The program usually takes 1-3 years depending on one's ability to learn (NAFO, 2022, Pastoor, 2015).

According to NAFO (2022) newly arrived students are a diverse group with different experiences and school backgrounds, the only thing they have in common is that they have recently started learning Norwegian. However, regardless of the background, arrangements must be made for newly arrived young people to receive an educational offer that safeguards their individual needs and rights. There are various education offers for newly arrived young people. The students' rights and offer given to the individual depend on the student's age and

background and there is a great collaboration between the municipality and county municipality to provide the best educational offer to these young people. Therefore, Schools that admit newly arrived students must organize the training based on the individual student's rights, needs, and obligations. They must create routines for how planning should take place and who carries it out. The schools should ensure that they have the necessary competence to take care of the needs of newly arrived pupils including teachers with competence in Norwegian as a second language/ second language acquisition and bilingual teachers. Must facilitate a good collaboration between contact teacher and subject teacher. The teacher in special Norwegian and bilingual teacher if they have it (ibid).

1.2 Research question and Purpose of research

While education is one of the keys to integration into a new society, it also benefits one's social status, especially for refugees. With education, immigrants can easily get into the labor market, learn the language and be part of the society as Norwegian citizens.

Research question: What are the experiences of African unaccompanied minors regarding access to education opportunities in Norway?

By using a total of five interviews with African youth with a refugee background, the purpose of this research project is to explore the individual experiences of African unaccompanied minors in Norway regarding education opportunities. I explore whether the experiences of African unaccompanied minors are different from other groups or whether all unaccompanied minors experience the same despite their skin color and physical appearance.

1.3 Definitions

To understand the context of my thesis, I would like to highlight and define some terms that are key terms to this research project.

A Child: According to article 1 of the convention on the rights of the child, a child is defined in the UN convention as a person under the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child majority is attained earlier (OHCHR, 1990). I refer to this definition in this thesis, every time I mention children/a child that means any person under the age of eighteen.

Young people: The use of the term young people in my research is influenced by the Norwegian context which is often used for people up to 25 years old. (The Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality, 2016, p.13).

Asylum seeker: The understanding of the term asylum seeker in this thesis is influenced by The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) definitions. According to UDI (2022), an asylum seeker is a person who has applied for protection (asylum) in Norway and is still waiting for a final decision. When an asylum seeker received a final answer to their application, they are no longer called asylum seekers. When they receive a positive answer, they are granted a residence permit as a refugee or on humanitarian grounds (ibid). As an asylum seeker, you are entitled to protection if you have a well-founded fear of persecution due to membership in a particular social group. An asylum seeker is an individual who is seeking international protection. “In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum-seeker is someone whose claim has not been finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee was initially an asylum-seeker” (UNHCR, 2005, p.441).

Special social group: Although I do not explicitly use the term special social group in this research, I would like to enlighten that a lot of African refugee migrants fall under this group especially refugees from crisis-free countries. A special social group is people who have a common characteristic beyond the danger of being persecuted. Examples are groups such as former victims of human trafficking, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people or intersex people, and vulnerable groups of women and children (UDI, 2022). Therefore, unaccompanied minors could constitute as a special group in Norway.

Refugee: I use the term refugee in this research to describe a person who meets the requirements for being granted protection (asylum) in Norway. One can receive a residence permit as a refugee in Norway if he or she has been persecuted for ethnicity, lineage, skin color, religion, nationality, member of a special social group, or political opinions. Or if on the way home is in real danger of being exposed to, the death penalty, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, and punishment (UDI, 2022). A refugee is also a person who meets the eligibility criteria under the applicable refugee definition as provided by international or regional instruments, under UNHCR’s mandate, and/or in national legislation (UNHCR, 2005, p.444).

Unaccompanied minor asylum seeker: To understand who African unaccompanied minors are, I use the term unaccompanied minor asylum seeker which is a person who is under the age of eighteen years who comes to Norway without parents or others with parental responsibility and applies for protection (asylum) in Norway (UDI, 2022).

Asylum reception center: This is an ordinary center where asylum seekers are moved after their asylum interview with the UDI. Asylum seekers stay in these reception centers while their applications are being processed (UDI, 2022). There are different reception centers in Norway for example unaccompanied minor asylum seekers under the age of 15 are sent to special care centers that are the responsibility of the Norwegian Children, Youth and Family Affairs Service (Bufetat). There are also transit reception centers, these are special transit reception centers for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers between the ages of 15 and 18. Integration reception centers are aimed at adults and families that have been granted residence permits or that most probably will be granted residence permits. And special unit reception centers are primarily intended for asylum seekers who suffer from mental problems but are not so ill as to need psychiatric treatment (ibid).

Education: This whole project is driven by the urge to explore the educational experiences of African unaccompanied minors in Norway. I see education as a key to gaining social status in any society, especially for refugees. Quality education is the fourth sustainable development goal of the United Nation. Education enables upward socioeconomic mobility and is a key to escaping poverty (United Nations, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4).

Vocational Education and Training: VET is part of the formal upper secondary education system. The upper secondary VET in Norway consists of 10 education programs that lead to more than 180 different trade or journeyman's certificates (Udir, 2021).

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters to explore the individual experiences of African unaccompanied minors in Norway regarding access to education opportunities. Chapter one provides an introductory context, it gives some statistics on the number of immigrants and refugees in Norway. This chapter briefly explains some of the key themes that are discussed in detail in the discussion chapter. Chapter one also consists of the research question and explains the purpose of this research project. Chapter two gives an insight into already written literature

about unaccompanied minors and it helps me to get the gap to fill in the ongoing discourse about unaccompanied refugee minors in Norway. Chapter three presents the theoretical framework of this project by discussing four main concepts: multiculturalism, representation, stereotypical images, and education. Chapter four provides knowledge on how I answered my research question, which methods I used, what limitations I faced, my positionality, how did I conduct the interviews and how did I code and analyze my data. Chapter five provides the main part of this thesis, which is the discussion and analysis. I combined the findings; therefore, the discussion and analysis are provided as one chapter-chapter 5. Therefore, this chapter provides a thematic analysis of themes I found while coding. Chapter six is the last chapter of this thesis which provides concluding thoughts on my findings and a few suggested further research studies in the field of social sciences.

2 Literature Review

The literature used in this literature review is not more than twenty years old. Such literature was collected to find UMs experiences in Norway and internationally in recent years. While research about UMs is vast, I organized the literature in this research by using the most discussed themes; asylum process in Norway, Educational aspirations, integration, challenges faced by unaccompanied minors, and coping strategies used by UMs while navigating the host society. I used these five themes because they give a better explanation for UMs experiences from the time they arrive at the host country until when they create independent lives. The main purpose of this research is to explore the individual experiences of African UMs regarding access to education opportunities. The selected themes in the literature review, help me get a broad view concerning UMs experiences in Norway and the international context. While research about UMs is vast, little research was made specifically about the experiences of African unaccompanied minors. This is where I got my gap, although African UMs have been included in the previous research, they have not been a focus as a group of their own.

The search for the literature used in this thesis was conducted by using Oria (USN's database) and google scholar. I used search terms such as "refugee minors" "unaccompanied minors" "integration process" "role of education" "role of schools" "children" "challenges" "experiences" "integration policies" "migration policies" and "resettlement refugees" "Norway" "migrants" "education opportunities" "education rights" "individual rights"

“African unaccompanied minors” “African refugees”. Many authors have written about unaccompanied minors in Norway, but this thesis is concerned with exploring the individual education experiences of African unaccompanied minors regarding access to education opportunities in Norway.

Some researchers who write about unaccompanied minors are concerned with the psychosocial affect UMs experience while going to school (Oppedal et al. 2020, Pastoor, 2015, Pastoor, 2013), others with refugees’ educational aspirations (Pastoor, 2015, Johannesen & Appoh, 2020, Fangen & Lynnebakke, 2014, Pastoor, 2017, Lynnebakke & Pastoor, 2020, Bloch & Hirsch, 2017). A lot of research is also carried out concerning the integration process for unaccompanied minors (Brook & Ottemöller, 2020, Menjivar & Perreira, 2019, Pastoor, 2017, Marguerite et al. 2020), and coping strategies unaccompanied minors use to navigate their new life in resettlement countries (Fangen & Lynnebakke, 2014, Marguerite et al. 2020, Pastoor 2017, Lynnebakke & Pastoor, 2020, Brook & Ottemöller, 2020). While research on UM is extensive, the groups researched tend to be repeated. Most researchers conduct interviews on UMs from the following countries: Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia, and Syria, and depending on what crisis is happening the majority changes over time, some years had Afghan unaccompanied minors as the majority while in other years Eritrea, Syria, and Somalia (Lynnebakke & Pastoor, 2020, Pastoor, 2015, Oppedal et al. 2020, Marguerite et al. 2020, Valenta 2019, Menjivar & Perreira, 2019, Kvestad et al. 2021). The massive literature about UMs shows the relevance of conducting research on this specific group. However, in this thesis, I will pay more attention to East African UM to answer my research question. The Eastern part of Africa consists of countries like (Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, Uganda, South Sudan, Rwanda, and Burundi). Throughout the thesis, I will explore whether the educational experiences of African unaccompanied minors are different from other UMs in Norway.

2.1 The Asylum Process in Norway

Most authors who discuss the experiences of URM in Norway, also discuss the asylum process for unaccompanied minors in Norway (Oppedal et al. 2020; Pastoor, 2015; Johannesen & Appoh, 2020; Brook & Ottemöller, 2020). Oppedal, Ramberg & Røymsamb, (2020) argue that

the asylum process plays a great role in the integration of UMs in Norway. Therefore, asylum-seeking children who have moved around a lot during the resettlement process adapt differently than young refugees who are placed in a home setting (foster care or group homes) and are stable regarding education, mental health, and how well they relate with the Norwegian society (Pastoor, 2017). Further, an UM who gets a residence approval within three months of residence in Norway and an UM who has waited for years for a positive answer, settle differently in the receiving society. Uncertainty of whether one is going to be deported or not affects the young refugees in different ways, less concentration at school, less social interactions, and poor mental health (Oppedal et al. 2020). It is important to understand the asylum process of UMs since this gives an insight into the early experiences of these young people in the host country. The difference in care and application approval affects one's ability to settle well in the host society, and concentrate in class and this may also affect their educational aspirations.

Pastoor's and Oppedal et al.'s arguments are valid in the discourse of UMs because the care young refugees receive in a group home and foster care is different from one who is taking care of themselves, making big decisions alone, and so on. This is because UMs aged 15 and below are under the care of Bufetat while UMs aged 15 and above are under the care of UDI (Oppedal et al. 2020). Additionally, living in fear of whether one is going to receive a positive answer for their application can also prevent one from settling well in the host country because of fear of the unknown. Jakobsen, DeMott, Larsen & Heir (2017) discuss the mental health of UMs during the asylum-seeking process. The authors state that UMs reported high levels of psychological distress on arrival and symptom levels stayed relatively constant over time. This means that whatever experience the young people may have on arrival to the host country, this still affects them in the long run. With a sample of adolescent girls in low-income families, Adam (2004) conducted research on parental, residential stability, and children's adjustments. The author argued that in everyone's own lives family circumstances are not fixed, people move, get new jobs, separate or even lose their parents. However, children's homes or family lives have always been considered a primary environmental context influencing their cognitive, social, emotional, behavioral, and physical development (ibid, p.210). Therefore, residential moves and separations from parent figures are both highly disruptive events in children's lives and both are relatively easily counted. The author also argues that sociological and epidemiological research on residential mobility has shown that a high rate of residential moves predicts social-emotional, behavioral, and educational problems (ibid, p.211). Residential

mobility and stability are important in this study to understand the experiences of these young people and show how their experiences are diverse. The ones who live alone after being granted a residence permit versus those that are placed in different settings like foster homes and group homes.

Literature about the living conditions of UMs is also commonly discussed among authors who write about UMs in Norway. Most authors discuss that once the UMs arrive in Norway, they have a right to claim asylum on a humanitarian basis, religious prosecutions, etc. The UMs then register at the nearest police station and state their reason for seeking asylum. It usually takes 1-2 days before they are assigned to a certain reception center (Oppedal et al. 2020, Valenta, 2019). The authors also specify that there are specific centers made for UMs, these centers are separate from those of adults and families centers. Although there are different centers made for UMs aged 15 and above, the difference in the care affects these young people. For a child under the age of 18 living alone can be scary and lonely. The first years in the host society are so critical to these young people's lives. For many UMs they say that after receiving a residence permit is when they start living a secure life, they start seeing a better future for themselves after all the hardships they have gone through (Oppedal et al. 2020). While researching UMs it is important to understand their background, where they come from, past experiences, the journey before, the move, and the arrival to the host country experiences. Being aware of UMs asylum-seeking process experiences helps to give an insight into how these young people understand and relate to their host societies and how well their experiences help them to settle and integrate into the new society.

2.2 Educational aspirations

Pastoor discusses the psychosocial transitions among unaccompanied young refugees upon resettlement in Norway and how it affects their educational aspirations (Pastoor, 2015, Pastoor 2013). The author explores the role of schools to UMs and what challenges they face while resettling in Norway. By using the theoretical framework of social-cultural and ecological theory, the author conducted an ethnography case study in five schools with a participation of 40 young refugees, 25 staff involved in their schooling, 14 teachers, 8 school counselors, and 3 heads of department (Pastoor, 2015). The author analyzed schools as an arena for

socialization, integration, and salutogenic arena. She argues that schools play an important role in the integration of UMs and that teachers should be more present in these children's lives. The author enlightens the teacher-student relationship for UMs since the teachers are the adults these young people get to meet in their everyday life. To a certain extent, the young people are so dependent on their teachers in the receiving society (Pastoor 2013, Pastoor, 2015). Further, the author discusses that young refugee students come to their resettlement countries with a lot of baggage and that going to school may be a problem for some because of lack of concentration problems and lack of sense of belonging sleeping problems, but for some, it is part of well-being being able to go to school as the Norwegian children (Pastoor, 2015).

The author also notes that there is a high rate of dropouts among language minority students usually because of mental issues, unmotivated and language being so hard to master (Pastoor, 2013). The teachers and school advisors play a great role in UMs lives and educational aspirations. While these young people face a lot of challenges while trying to integrate into the new society and also get an education, it is important to note that these young people's mental health affects their educational experiences in the receiving society. Jensen, Fjermestad, Granly & Wilhelmsen (2015) with a sample of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children aged 10-16 years originally from Africa and Asia, the authors discuss the prevalence of stressful life events and mental health problems including posttraumatic stress reactions with a sample of unaccompanied asylum seekers ages 16 years and below. The authors reported that younger children are more dependent upon adults for protection and care. Jensen, Skar, Andersson & Birkeland (2019) also narrate that these children are subjected not only to increased risk of mental health problems because of separation from caregivers in their home countries, but also to high risk for trauma exposure during their flight because they lack protection. This is the reason why teachers and frontliners working with these children need to be aware of these situations and offer the best care they deserve.

Pastoor (2017) also conducted qualitative research on UMs under the FUS project 2010-2015, where she interviewed 40 refugee students between the age of 16-23, 25 school staff, and 40 social workers from the Child Welfare Services in Norway. The author used social-cultural theory and an ecological approach, she explored the experiences of UMs (those who live in group homes and those who get to live on their own) after receiving a residence permit in Norway. The author's findings were that some UMs saw it as a dream to live on their own while others found it scary and lonely. The author further navigates the situation of social inclusion

and concluded that students who lived in residential group homes got help with homework and always got advice from the social workers to get a part-time job, or to enroll in an after-school activity so that they can build up their CV and get time to interact with the Norwegian citizens (Pastoor, 2017). The author also noted that for many UMs this was a way to practice the Norwegian language and socialize with local people. However, language is one of the challenges most unaccompanied minors face, most of them reported that they learn more Norwegian when they practice outside the school setting like in the shops, free time activities, volunteering services, and part-time jobs. The care one gets while having adults to take care of them and those that live on their own is different. Young people living in group homes get help with homework and advice on how well they can integrate into Norwegian society this type of care is different from young people living on their own since they are forced to grow up and provide for themselves on top of making important decisions alone.

Bloch & Hirsch (2017) explore the experiences of education from the perspectives of UK-born adults, and children of refugees. They researched second-generation people from a refugee background who have spent some or most of their childhood in London. The authors demonstrated how refugee backgrounds intersect with education both within the family and in school communities and how the pre and post-migration experiences of parents affect their attitudes and aspirations for their children's education. The authors discussed how different the second generations experience education in the UK. While some children had taken over their parents' ambitions that may have been disrupted by the war and political issues which could not enable the parents to finish school, the authors also showed that parents were involved in their children's educational life. Some parents made sure that they take their children to the best schools in the areas where they live (Bloch & Hirsch, 2017). Most of the UMs do not have their parents or guardians in the receiving society hence why they arrive at the host societies unaccompanied. Some have lost their parents during war or some of them have fled their home countries because of their parents. Healy (2018) discusses how girls from the northern states of Nigeria are denied a right to education, so when these young people run away from their families, it may be difficult for them to know what educational aspirations they should have since they have always been prepared for marriage and house chores. However when such a group of minors arrive to Norway, their education aspirations that were a dream come to reality where they can choose to become anything in the world other than just being prepared for marriage.

2.3 Integration

Literature about the integration of UMs varies, with a collection of data between 2012 and 2013, Johannesen & Appoh (2020) managed to interview eight families with an East African and West African backgrounds. It is important to note that this is one of the few pieces of literature I found that was conducted on people from African migrants and East African people. Although the Eastern part of Africa and Western part of Africa have different cultural norms, values, and religious perspectives, the research conducted on these families showed that they had the same experiences regarding integration. The authors used Bosswich and Heckman's (2007) dimensions of structural, cultural, interactive, and identificational integration. The authors concluded that workplaces, religious places, and the introduction program play as an arena of integration for African families. The authors' findings were broad, they discussed the families' experiences with housing in Norway, some parents, and their children's educational aspirations (Johannesen & Appoh, 2020). By using the social navigation theoretical framework by Vigh, 2019, Marguerite et al. (2020) discusses the intergenerational perspectives on refugee children and youth's adaptation to life in Norway by exploring the social networks and educational spaces. The authors agree that schools play an important role in the resettlement process of young refugees.

For most young refugees, the teachers are the first people they approach when they have a problem or need help with decision-making (Marguerite et al. 2020). Social networks, inclusion are important aspects of the integration of unaccompanied minors into a new society. Therefore, educational arenas are so vital for UMs because, for many young people, schools are places they get their friends and hope for a life for a better future. For UMs who come from countries where education is only meant for the boy child, this allows them to dream big beyond being housewives and taking care of a home (Okoli, 2007). The teacher's and school's role in the young people's lives are key to how well they integrate. Teachers have to be open and competent to work with children with refugee backgrounds because they come with a lot of baggage, are diverse, and may need more help than just school work. However, the young people's educational experiences also affect how well they settle in the receiving society, helping them to get jobs, work experiences, and a social status hence being part of the society at large.

An example of children who may come from countries where education is only meant for the boy child is Nigeria with the conflict of Boko Haram. Boko Haram simply translated from Hausa to English means “Western education is forbidden” (Healy, 2018). The group aims to create a pure Islamic state governed by Islamic laws, primarily in the northern areas of Nigeria. Nevertheless, in Nigeria, there is gender role stereotyping among patriarchal ethnic groups that seem to put women at serious educational disadvantages when compared with men. There is a widespread misperception that women’s education is believed to end in the kitchen and their duties are to bear and rear children for their husbands and to take care of them at home (Okoli, 2007, p.37-38). When children with this background arrive in Norway, it may be difficult for them to catch up with the concept that education is available for them and that they can study whatever they wish to. They may face challenges while choosing what career path they should take since their whole life they were not thinking of getting an education. Students with this background and mentality may need more help to be guided through what is best for their future and life in Norway. However, many young people with a refugee background use education arenas to get friends and connections while navigating Norwegian society (Marguerite et al. 2020).

Menjívar & Perreira (2019) discusses the situation of UMs from the global south to Europe and the United States. The authors explore the experiences of UMs using Ko and Perreira 2010’s three phases of migration before, during, and after migration. The authors indicated that most of the participants were teenage boys between the ages of 14-17. Their research aimed to show and shed light on what resources and experiences unaccompanied migrants arrive with by enlightening the challenges these young migrants face upon arrival and the challenges they face while navigating the receiving society. To understand the definition of UMs we must understand their situation, reasons for migration, and the journey itself (Menjívar & Perreira, 2019). When we understand the experiences of UMs prior to arrival and on arrival in the receiving society, we get a better understanding of certain situations and this enables everyone working with these young people to be aware of the challenges they face, the resources they arrive with and be able to provide the best services to these young people.

Most young people leave their home countries country without documentation, therefore most young migrants who enter the US undocumented travel by land through Mexico, and those who travel to the EU cross the Mediterranean Sea by boat which most of them do not make it alive. Menjívar & Perreira (2019) reported that the young people who enter Europe are mostly from

the Middle East and Africa. Fleeing their home countries to safety is a dangerous journey especially for the girls and women who end up becoming victims of sexual violence before they reach their resettlement country. Therefore, the authors discuss the difference between the US and EU regarding unaccompanied minors whereby UMs in the US are treated with human trafficking victims measures while in the EU it varies from country to country (ibid). UMs in Norway are handled according to the asylum procedure for children under the age of 18 years.

2.4 Challenges faced by unaccompanied minors

One of the biggest challenges unaccompanied minors face in Norway is the language. Brook & Ottemöller (2020) use narrative interviews with 6 girls using the resilience and acculturation theory. This is one of the few studies that was conducted on URM girls since most of the research concentrates on UM boys. The authors argue that while language is one of the biggest challenges faced by UMs, most young people consider language as the most important key to Norwegian society, at work, school, in social networks, and in integration in general. The authors claimed that most young girls reported being treated differently when they did not speak the Norwegian language well. Some even described seeing a change in how Norwegians treated them when they could speak the language. Some young girls had been mistreated by the teachers because of the language barrier and most of them reported having been motivated to make friends and learn the language faster because of the bad experiences. The authors also discussed that most young people mentioned the need for a social network, and this was strengthened when one knows the language. Having friends in Norway strengthens the young people's well-being and some get help from friends to perform better at school (Brook & Ottemöller, 2020). Language enables communication and with language barriers, young people may have it difficult to relate to their Norwegian friends. However, language is also one of the factors that make URMs use educational opportunities like vocational training rather than going to university because of the fear of how difficult it will be to follow the teaching in the Norwegian language.

Since UMs arrive at the host society with a lot of baggage, mental health is one of the challenges faced by these young people (Pastoor, 2015, Oppedal et al. 2020, Jensen et al. 2019, Jensen et al. 2015, Jakobsen et al. 2017). With a sample of 895 unaccompanied young refugees

who originated from 31 different countries, Oppedal et al. (2020) found out that a lot of young refugees have mental health problems. The authors discussed depression among unaccompanied minors in Norway. The authors claim that the longer the refugees have stayed in the resettlement country the less the mental health problems, and the lesser time the more mental health problems. This is because of the different uncertainties that these young people find while they are in a process of seeking asylum in Norway after fleeing the traumas from their countries of origin (Oppedal et al. 2020). Jensen et al. (2019) also argue that with their research on UMs there was little change regarding mental health issues in the period of two years after arrival, however, the levels of depression had decreased in a period of five years. As Valenta (2019) also discussed in her paper about UMs that with all the coping strategies UMs use on a temporary residence permit in Norway, they still experience a lot of mental health problems because they are in fear of being deported and their future is uncertain. While mental health among UMs in Norway may be under-studied, it is important to note that these young people need a follow-up on mental health issues from when they arrive and during their first years in the receiving society. Mental health issues can cause these young people to drop out of school, get less concentration, and so on.

With a sample of three Norwegian upper secondary schools using semi-structured interviews, Lynnebakke & Pastoor (2020) used the educational resilience and educational aspiration theory to discuss what influences young refugees' high educational aspirations in Norway. The authors argue that some Norwegian studies found that UMs vocational aspirations can be influenced by aims of economic independence of supporting a family in difficult situations abroad, some for income so that they can afford to reunite with their families in Norway (Lynnebakke & Pastoor, 2020, p.4). Since these young people come with different baggage, education can be challenging and cause a perception of the teachers thinking that the students just want to go through and be done with no big aspirations. In Berg's (2019) master thesis, she explores how school advisors direct some students on a different career path than others. She based her research on comparing the experiences of students from the Eastern part of Oslo and the Western part of Oslo. Career guidance is important for unaccompanied refugee minors, especially those that do not know what career path they should take. However, there is some sort of discrimination from the teachers and school advisors who they may be directing most immigrants to take vocational education. This may have these young people in a difficult place and makes it difficult for them to attend high education at universities or high schools.

The Eastern part of Oslo is known for most immigrants who reside there, therefore Berg's findings were that the students from eastern Oslo are advised to take vocational training with apprenticeship while students from the western part tend to be advised to go for higher education at university level (Berg, 2019).

Parents, teachers, and school advisors play a great role in helping the students to choose further education. However, a child with uneducated parents may seem to have no interest in going to school than a student who has parents with higher education (Eccles, 2005). UMs arrive at the host society with no parents or any legal caregiver therefore the teachers, school advisors, and contact persons play as the parent figure regarding choosing career opportunities. Means there is a relationship between the teachers and students develops since the students get to interact with their teachers on an everyday basis. Berg (2019) also argues that school advisors tend to advise according to one's performance in school, if one's grades are not above a certain grade, they are most likely to be given the option of vocational training with an apprenticeship. This means that sometimes the teachers' intentions may come out of a caring heart, but regardless of the intentions, directing certain students in a specific direction may be considered some sort of degradation. However, Lynnebakke & Pastoor (2020) claim that the refugee experience may influence aspirations and the meaning of education in different ways like being motivated to make the flight worthwhile or due to altruism that is fueled by conditions in the country of origin. Making the flight worthwhile in a way of getting the best out of the opportunities these young people receive, education, employment, etc. or it can be covered with sadness and fear hence not willing to make a change in their new life in the host society.

2.5 Coping Strategies

While UMs face a lot of challenges in the resettlement country, they also use a variety of coping strategies to make sure that they settle well in the new society and a lot of research has been conducted about this topic. (Fangen & Lynnebakke, 2014, Marguerite et al. 2020, Pastoor 2017, Lynnebakke & Pastoor, 2020, Brook & Ottemöller, 2020). Valenta (2019) also discusses the experiences of UMs caused by temporary residences and fear to be deported. The author discusses some of the coping strategies unaccompanied minors use while they are in an uncertain situation in Norway. Most of the participants were from Afghanistan with 33 boys,

6 girls, 1 care center, 3 reception centers, and 28 social workers in the asylum reception center. The author divided the types of unaccompanied minors into four groups 1. The relieved and optimistic youth (this is an UM who has received a decision on permanent protection in Norway and is waiting to be a resident in a municipality). 2. The anxious but hopeful youth (this is UMs with a short time in the system who are waiting for an answer, their legal status is unclear). 3. The insecure and scared youth (UMs who have a temporary permit that lasts until they are 18 years old and who have appealed the decision). 4. The despairing youth long-awaited (UMs who are approaching /have passed 18 years). They have been finally rejected and risk being deported. The author discusses some of the coping strategies groups 3 and 4 use while waiting in Norway which is adjusting by learning and changing, adopting a positive outlook, suppressing emotions, seeking distraction, distracting, acting independently, and maintaining community (Valenta, 2019). In many situations UMs use coping strategies to navigate the new society, these strategies help them to go through the everyday life challenges, and for some they use them to achieve their goals, see a new life in the host country and try to leave back the traumas they carried with them from their home countries.

Another study conducted by Fangen & Lynnebakke (2014) “Navigating ethnic stigmatization in the Educational setting: coping strategies of young immigrants and descendants of immigrants in Norway”. The authors used a sample of 250 interviews, and they discuss the three coping strategies minority background youth use with stigmatization at schools in the Norwegian society (Avoiding strategy, working hard, and confronting). The authors reported that some young people had to avoid certain conversations with their Norwegian peers at school when someone asked where they came from with an interest of not knowing them personally, but just wanting to know if some things they say about a particular origin of people is true. These types of conversations feel like interviews and not interactive conversations hence making one feel like one do not belong in a certain society. However, by avoiding these conversations, the young people are also avoiding certain feelings that may come with the conversation. The authors also stated that minority background students find themselves using the working hard strategy. Brook & Ottemöller (2020) discuss how UMs were mistreated by their teacher, some UMs working hard is caused by their hard work not being recognized by their teachers or because they look at their background and aim for careers that would not be difficult for a minority background person to get employed (Fangen & Lynnebakke, 2014). When one is in a situation where the person you put the most trust in doesn’t believe in you, you must change strategy. As noted above that the teachers and UMs have a relationship that

makes the teachers the first adults these young people run to for help. However, if they are in situations where the teachers do not believe in them, they tend to work hard to prove that they can do better in school and in life than what is expected of them. The coping strategies mentioned above help these young people to tackle the challenges they face while navigating the host society.

As mentioned above, the literature about unaccompanied minors is vast, it revolves around “the asylum process” “Mental health of unaccompanied minors” “integration process” “Education system and the right to education” and “coping strategies”. While there is already research done on the role of schools and education in the integration of unaccompanied minors, my research will contribute more to the available research and also fill the gap of including an African voice in the research conducted on unaccompanied minors in Norway. Therefore, the purpose of this research project is to explore the individual education experiences of African unaccompanied minors regarding access to education opportunities in Norway. I do expand on some of the themes discussed in the literature review further in my analysis and discussion chapter: chapter 5. Since this thesis is concerned with the experiences of African unaccompanied minors, I expand on themes like the asylum process in Norway to get a bigger picture of the asylum-seeking process in Norway and to see how unaccompanied minors relate to the process. The teacher/student relationship is an important aspect of this research and as reported by earlier researchers, it is worth mentioning that the teachers and school advisors play a great role in career choices of these young people. Lastly, I expand on themes like language as one of the important keys to the integration into the Norwegian society, but also one of the biggest challenges that unaccompanied minors face while integrating into the Norwegian society.

3 Theoretical Framework

For the theoretical framework, I am using four concepts which are multiculturalism representation, stereotypical images, and education. With the multicultural theory, I refer to Modood’s understanding of multiculturalism which requires us to recognize and accommodate the politics of difference. I use Hall’s theory of representation because this shows how certain images may tend to mean something else hence being perceived differently by different people. The concept of stereotypical images come from what Hall and Young call the process of otherness, I explore what it means by otherness from both Hall and Young’s perspective.

Further, I describe a normative perspective from Freire's book "pedagogy of the oppressed" where he discusses what education should do and what it should not do by explaining two methods the banking method of education and the problem-posing method of education. "Theory is important to the social researcher because it provides a backcloth and rationale for the research that is being conducted. It also provides a framework within which social phenomena can be understood and the research findings can be interpreted" (Bryman, 2016, p.21).

3.1 Multiculturalism

In the political philosophy of multiculturalism, ideas are often associated with identity politics, the politics of difference, and politics of recognition. The focus is on how societies are either believed or should respond to cultural and religious differences. According to Taylor, the politics of difference is to emphasize the recognition of the unique and original identity of each individual and society which must be protected to avoid their homogenization of the identity into hegemonic societies (Taylor, 1994). Modood describes the politics of identity that as humans we need to be true to ourselves, our nature, heritage while seeking with others of the same kind public recognition for one's collectivity. The challenges of identity politics are greatest where others have their self-image challenges. That is where there is competition for different identities and or struggle for hegemony (Modood, 2007, p.2). A lot of African UMs come from collective societies, they are part of a group, and most decisions are made about the group. However, when they arrive in Norway the young people become part of another collectiveness as refugees or asylum seekers. They then own a new collective context and are suddenly responsible in the Norwegian society which is most known to be individualistic.

Multiculturalism recognizes that post-immigration exists in western societies in ways that both they and others, formally and informally, negatively and positively are aware that groups differentiating dimensions are central to their social constitution (Modood, 2007, p.36). "Multiculturalism refers to the struggle, the political mobilization but also the policy and institutional outcomes, to the forms of accommodation in which differences are not eliminated, are not washed away but to some extent recognized" (Modood, 2013, p.36). Murphy (2012, p.16) argues that a normative starting point for multiculturalism is the politics of recognition of difference or respect for identities that are important to people and as a rule, the politics of

recognition tends to place greater meaning on the importance of accommodating group-based identities in a multicultural society than on the need to preserve objective cultural differences.

Fraser (2000) also discusses recognition in the perspective of recognizing individuals rather than group-specific identity and those individuals should be given status as a full partner in social interactions. The author argues that recognition and redistribution go hand in hand, she expands on this matter via what she calls equal participation. For example, if UMs have arrived at the receiving society, it is one thing to recognize them as a vulnerable group and another thing to provide all the resources that allow them to participate equally in the society as citizens. Multiculturalism is about recognizing that human beings are in many ways the product of their unique cultural backgrounds, and the public policy in a multicultural society should seek to adjust the cultural beliefs and practices that add meaning and value to the lives of individuals. Multiculturalism focuses on groups on the level of identities, associations, and belonging, including diasporic connections, behaviour, culture religious practice, and political mobilization. Therefore, multiculturalism works in two ways of creating new forms of belonging. However, while dealing with multiculturalism, we refer a lot to integration and assimilation. Integration is a two-way process of adapting to the new society as well as the receiving society works hand in hand with the newcomers to live together with their religious, ethnic, racial, and cultural differences. However, multiculturalists also argue that integration is always misunderstood as assimilation. Assimilation means giving up on one's distinctive linguistic, social, or cultural characteristics and becoming indistinguishable from the majority population (Castles & Miller, 2014, p.266).

3.2 Representation

Hall discusses different perspectives towards the question of representation. He argues that meanings can only be shared through our common access to language. Therefore, language is central to meaning and has always been regarded as the key repository of cultural values and meanings. He also discusses how language constructs meaning and how it does sustain the dialogue between participants which enables them to build up a culture of shared understandings and so interpret the world in roughly the same way. And he thinks that language can do this because it operates as a representational system (Hall, 2013).

Hall defines representation as “using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent the world meaningfully to other people” (Hall, 2013, p.1). Without language, things may not get meaning to the world and people. Hall narrows representation to the prediction of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language therefore representation is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the real world of objects, people, or events or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people, and events (Hall, 2013, p.3). When a person has a concept of a tree in their mind, language helps to give a representation to that concept by finding the meaning through language. In chapter one of his book representation, he discusses how the concept of representation connects meaning and language to culture through three different approaches the reflective approach, intentional approach, and constructionist approach (Hall, 2013).

I find all the three approaches that Hall presents about representation interesting and worth explaining, however, the constructionist approach to representation makes more sense to my understanding of the meaning and how I tend to present meaning in this research project. The reflective approach argues that meaning lies in the object, person, idea, or event in the real world, and language functions as a mirror whereby it reflects meaning as it already exists in the world. If there is already meaning in the real world and language just reflects it, then everything will mean the same to different people, there would be no uniqueness in the world. The second approach (intentional approach)’s argument is that it is the author, the speaker who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language. However, this approach is criticized in the way that we would be communicating in private languages and wouldn’t be able to understand each other since each speaker will impose their meaning to different words. Hence this would make communication with one another difficult, we would have to learn new communication codes every time we spoke to a different person. The third approach is the constructionist approach which argues that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. The argument is that we construct meaning using representational systems, concepts, and signs (Hall, 2013, p.9-10).

The constructionist approach of representation makes more sense to my understanding because meaning cannot be fixed. Hall gives an example of the famous traffic lights where he explains that green does not mean go or that the red light means to stop. The two colors could mean different things hence why the word red is also written differently in different languages. According to the constructionist approach, colors, and the language of traffic work as

signifying or representational systems to the conceptual map of colors in our culture. Meaning the way colors are distinguished from one another and classified in our mental universe or the ways words and images are correlated with colors in our language which he calls the linguistic color codes (Hall, 2013, p.12). Unaccompanied Minors educational aspirations cannot be fixed. African UMs are a diverse group of people some have bigger dreams while others aim at securing economic independence therefore, they should be received as individuals rather than a group and everyone should be represented with their own aspirations.

Hall presents two systems of representation, mental representation, and signs as representation. Mental representation enables us to give meaning to the world by constructing a set of correspondences or a chain of equivalences between things, people, objects, events, abstract ideas, etc. and our conceptual maps whereas the second system of representation depends on constructing a set of correspondences between our conceptual map and a set of signs, arranged or organized into various languages which stand for or represent those concepts (Hall, 2013, p.5). Hall also debates that just as people who belong to the same culture must share a broadly similar conceptual map, so they must also share the same way of interpreting the signs of a language because this is the only way meanings can be effectively exchanged between them (ibid).

With signs and images, one can tell that a particular image belongs to the animals or is an object like a tree however many signs still carry meaning that must be interpreted, and to be interpreted we must have the two systems of representation. Therefore, the two systems of representation are important in the interpretation of meaning from signs. Hall mentions that cultural codes fix the relationship between concepts and signs, and this is how one can know that the letters T, R, E, E stand for a tree which is a plant in nature. He argues that if cultural code meaning is the result not of something fixed out there, but our social, cultural, and linguistic conventions, then meaning can never be finally fixed (Hall, 2013). In different societies the word refugee means something, the meaning may come with certain images such as homeless, poor, war, asylum seekers, etc., and according to what the concept means to a particular society that is how refugees can be received and perceived. Therefore, if a teacher or a school advisor has a certain image of African unaccompanied minors, how they are like, what they are supposed to achieve, or what they are supposed to aim for regarding education, according to the image one has in mind that is the advice they will pass into the young youth regarding choosing a career and further education. In most cases, UMs are misinterpreted and

their moving to Norway may be interpreted as a bad thing instead of good, and yet they come to the receiving society with a lot of resources that can help build the Norwegian society.

In Hall's book representation, he refers to two constructionists Foucault and Saussure. Saussure is a Swiss linguist who also agrees that the production of meaning depends on language whereby he defines language as "a system of signs, sounds, images, written words, paintings, photographs, etc." (Hall, 2013, p.16). Saussure analyses the sign into two further elements, he argued that the form of the actual word, image, photo, etc., and there was an idea or concept in your head with which this form was associated, and he calls this the signifier. The second element is the corresponding concept it triggered off in your head which he calls signified. Every time one hears or reads or sees the signifier for example the word red, it corresponds with the signified which is the concept of stop or danger. However, Saussure argues that both elements are required to produce meaning, but it is the relation between them fixed by our cultural and linguistic codes which sustain representation (Hall, 2013, p.16). However, on the other hand, Foucault uses representation differently and what concerns him the most is the production of Knowledge rather than just meaning through what he calls discourse rather than language. He worked in analyzing how human beings understand themselves in our culture and how our knowledge about the social, the embodied individual, and shared meanings come to be produced in different periods. Hall's understanding of representation plays an important role in this thesis to understand how African UM are represented in the Norwegian society. How the images in one's mind correspond with concepts like how teachers perceive and receive these young people in classrooms and during career guidance.

3.3 Stereotypical images

Hall discusses stereotyping with the question of otherness like how we represent people and places that are significantly different from us. He also presents four different approaches that answer the question of why difference matters (the linguistic, social, cultural, and psychic levels). The four different debates are important to mention because they draw analysis of racial representations discussed by Hall (2013). While Hall discusses the question of otherness through four different debates, Young explores the question of the other through what she calls cultural imperialism. Young's argument is that to experience cultural imperialism means to experience how the dominant meanings of society render the perspective of one's group

invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's group and mark it out as the other (Young, 2011).

The first approach of Hall's argument is from linguistics which argues that difference matters because it is essential to meaning, without it meaning could not exist just like the way we get the meaning of a father from the opposite of other family members like mother, daughter, and son and so the same way we know that meaning of black when we identify white as its opposite (Hall, 2013, p.234). The second explanation also comes from the theories of language, but it is different from Saussure's understanding of meaning and language. The argument here is that we need difference because we can only construct meaning through a dialogue with the other. Hall also discusses Bakhtin's argument that meaning is established through dialogue, "Everything we say, and mean is modified by the interaction and interplay with another person. Meaning arises through the difference between the participants in any dialogue therefore the other is essential to mean" (Hall, 2013, p.235-236). The disadvantage of this is that meaning cannot be fixed and that one group can never be completely in charge of meaning. What means to be British or Norwegian will be hanging since dialogue has to decide hence making it difficult to understand what it means to be British or Norwegian (ibid).

The third argument is the anthropological explanation which argues that culture depends on giving things meaning by assigning them to different positions within a classificatory system therefore the marking of difference is the basis of that symbolic order that we call culture. This means that social groups impose meaning on their world by ordering and organizing things into classificatory systems, therefore we must establish a clear difference between things to classify them (Hall, 2013, p.236). The fourth argument is psychoanalytic and relates to the role of difference in our psychic life. The argument here is that the other is fundamental to the constitution of the self, to us as subjects, and to sexual identity (Hall, 2013, p.237). This brings me to Young's understanding of otherness through what she calls cultural imperialism. "Cultural imperialism involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture and its establishment as the norm" (Young, 2011, p.58-p.59). Young's understanding of cultural imperialism makes the dimension of universalizing the only/normative way of being/living. Meaning if any other group's experiences and culture are different from the dominant group, then those norms will be stereotyped.

Therefore, the dominant cultural products of the society, that is, those most widely disseminated, express the experience, values, goals, and achievements of these groups. Often without noticing they do so, the dominant groups project their own experiences as representative of humanity as such. Cultural products also express the dominant group's perspective on and interpretation of events and elements in the society including other groups in the society in so far as they attain cultural status at all. "The culturally dominated undergo a paradoxical oppression, in that they are both marked out by stereotypes and at the same time rendered invisible. As remarkable, deviant beings, the culturally imperialized are stamped with an essence. The stereotypes confine them to a nature that is often attached in some way to their bodies, and which thus cannot easily be denied. These stereotypes so permeate the society that they are not noticed as contestable" (Young, 2011, p.59). Stereotypes are beliefs about groups, in a more generalized definition, the stereotype is the tendency to attribute generalized and simplified characteristics to groups of people in form of verbal labels and to act towards the members of those groups in terms of those labels (Vinacke, 1949, p.265 qtd in Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). On the other hand, Hall presented the popular representations of racial differences between black and white people and Africans during slavery were known as subordinate and lazy and that their nature was profitable to their masters (Hall, 2013).

Further Hall discusses the term naturalization which is a representational strategy designed to fix differences and thus secure them forever. The differences between black and white people are cultural and they are open to modification and change (Hall, 2013, p.245). The popular representations of racial differences were during slavery and "these tended to cluster around two main themes, the subordinate status and innate laziness of blacks naturally born to and fitted only for, servitude but at the same time stubbornly unwilling to labor in ways appropriate to their nature and profitable for their masters. The second was their innate 'primitivism', simplicity, and lack of culture. which made them genetically incapable of 'civilized' refinements. Whites took inordinate amusement from the slaves' efforts to imitate the manners and customs of so-called 'civilized' white folks. Slaves often deliberately parodied their masters' behavior by their exaggerated imitations. laughing at white folks behind their backs and 'sending them up' The practice- called signifying- is now recognized as a well-established part of the black vernacular literary tradition"(Hall, 2013, p.244). We see that in history black people were known only to be slaves and it was of the natural order of things that white men should sit and slaves should stand, that white women rode, and slave men ran after them with an umbrella. Hall argues that black's primitivism (culture) and blackness (nature) became

interchangeable. This was their true nature, and they could not escape it and he compare this to the representation of women with their biology as their destiny. But who decides the nature of black people, their blackness? Uptin (2021) discusses the everyday prejudice young people experience in Austria and how they find themselves being treated differently because of their physical appearances. She examines how African youth find living in a post multicultural Austria. Uptin's research on the experiences of African youth is significant to my research since I am going to explore the experiences of African youth in Norway regarding access to education opportunities.

However, Hall discusses that the concept of stereotyped means is reduced to a few essentials which are represented and fixed by nature (Hall, 2013, p.257). Stereotyping of blacks in popular representation was so common that cartoonists, illustrators, and caricaturists strokes the pen. Black people were reduced to the signifiers of their physical difference, thick lips, fuzzy hair, broad face, nose, and so on (Hall, 2013, p.249). Hall explains stereotypes in different ways firstly, stereotypes get hold of the few simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped, and widely recognized characteristics about a person, reduce everything about the person to those traits, exaggerate and simplify them and fix them without change or development to eternity (stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes difference). Secondly stereotyping deploys a strategy of splitting, it divides the normal and the acceptable from the abnormal and the unacceptable. It then excludes or expels everything which does not fit. The third is that stereotyping tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power and this is what Foucault called a power/knowledge sort of game (Hall, 2013, p-258-259). "Stereotypes are as much as what is imagined in fantasy as to what is perceived as real, and what is visually produced by the practices of representation" (ibid, p.263). Stereotypes are just beliefs about a group, some of the beliefs may be true because of nature but cannot be fixed because of differences. The physical features of one black person cannot categorize the whole group with such features because people are different and as humans, we should respect people's differences.

People who live under cultural imperialism find themselves defined from the outside, positioned, and placed, by a network of dominant meanings they experience as arising from elsewhere, from those with whom they do not identify and who do not identify with them. Consequently, the dominant culture's stereotyped and interiorized images of the group must be internalized by group members at least to the extent that they are forced to react to the behavior of others influenced by those images (Young, 2011 p.59-60). Further, Young argues that

usually the group that is defined by the dominant culture as different, as a stereotyped other is usually different from the dominant group because the status of otherness creates specific experiences not shared by the dominant group and because culturally oppressed groups also are often socially segregated and occupy specific positions in the social division of labor (Young, 2011).

Cultural imperialism involves the paradox of experiencing oneself as invisible while one is marked out as different. The invisibility comes about when dominant groups fail to recognize the perspective embodied in their cultural expressions as a perspective, these dominant cultural expressions often simply have little place for the experience of another group, at most only mentioning or referring to them in stereotyped or marginalized ways. This then is the injustice of cultural imperialism that the oppressed group's own experience and interpretation of social life find a little expression that touches the dominant culture while that same culture imposes on the oppressed group its experience and interpretation of social life (Young, 2011, P.60).

3.4 Education

Freire uses a normative perspective on education, he shows what education should do and not do by explaining the banking method of education and the problem-posing method of education. Freire describes the banking method of education as a concept of education whereby education becomes an act of depositing in which students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. "Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat" (Freire, 1996, p. 72). Freire argues that the banking concept of education does not allow the students to develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of the world. Therefore, the more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them (Freire, 1996, p.73). Hence the capacity of the banking education to minimize or annul the student's creative power and stimulate their credulity serves the interests of the oppressors who care neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed (ibid).

Freire introduces another concept that he calls liberating education, this consists of acts of cognition, not transfers of information. It is, therefore, "a learning situation in which the cognizable object (far from being the end of the cognitive act) intermediates the cognitive actors, teacher on the other hand and students on the other" (Freire, 1996, p.79). The author

continues and discusses the method of problem-Posing education which is different from banking education, and it can fulfill its function as the practice of freedom through dialogue. Here the teacher of the students and the students of the teacher cease to exist, and a new term emerges teacher-student with student-teachers. Thus, the teacher is no longer merely the one who teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students who in turn while being taught also teach. They all become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow (Freire, 1996, p.80). In the problem-posing method, the students are no longer passive listeners, they are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. This the teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration as the students express their own, so the role of the teacher/educator is to create together with the students (Freire, 1996, p.81).

In chapter three of Freire's book "Pedagogy of the oppressed", he emphasizes understanding the concept of dialogue not only as a word but as the word with more than just an instrument that makes dialogue possible hence recommending that we must seek its constitutive element (Freire, 1996, p. 87). The author finds two dimensions in the word dialogue, reflection, and action (ibid). "Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, to name the world. Hence dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them" (Freire, 1996, p.88). With the two dimensions of dialogue (reflection and action), dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's depositing ideas in another nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be consumed by the discussants. Nor yet is it a hostile, polemical argument between those who are committed neither to the naming of the world, nor to the search for truth, but rather to the imposition of their truth (Freire, 1996, p.89). Freire argues that dialogue cannot exist unless the dialogue engages in critical thinking. "Without dialogue, there is no communication and without communication, there can be no true education. Education which can resolve the contradiction between teacher and students takes place in a situation which both address their act of cognition to the object by which they are mediated" (Freire, 1996, p.92-93). With dialogue the learning process becomes easier, the teacher gets to know what his/her students are thinking and engage them in the discussion where he/she may also get new perspectives on how he/she understands things.

4 Methodology

In this thesis, I set out to answer the research question: What are the experiences of African unaccompanied minors regarding access to education opportunities in Norway?

To answer my research question, I conducted a qualitative research method and collected data using semi-structured interviews which lasted between half an hour to forty-five minutes. The young people who participated in this research project arrived in Norway as unaccompanied minors but were above the age of eighteen by the time I conducted the interviews. A total of five participants from the Eastern part of Africa were interviewed to answer my research question. I intended to recruit participants from other parts of Africa, but due to my social network, I ended up with only East African young people. Although I only had five participants, it is important to note that from conversations I have had with a few unaccompanied refugee minors and African immigrant youth who of confidential reasons did not take part in this research, the experiences of African youth are the same no matter where they come from because of their physical appearance and skin colour. Without mentioning which part of Africa whether East, West, North, or South, these young people are always first identified as African immigrants. I choose African UMs because a lot of research is conducted about UMs in Norway, but little is written about African children. I wanted to add an African voice to the ongoing research about unaccompanied minors in Norway, especially regarding their individual education experiences.

4.1 Participant recruiting

I used my social network to recruit the participants for this research project, I posted a flier on my social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn) that I was looking for participants for my research project and I made it clear that to participant one had to have arrived in Norway as an unaccompanied minor, originally from the continent of Africa, has or is still going through the education system in Norway and was 18years and above. I recruited participants who were above the age of 18 because I did not want to go through getting consent from guardians or gatekeepers.

Getting Participants was not as easy as I had expected it would be. This thesis has limited time therefore I was on the clock to recruit participants, interview them, and analyze the data. Most people I contacted misunderstood the purpose of my research hence rejecting to participate. I

had to explain to many potential participants that my research was only concerned about their educational experiences in Norway and not their journey or status. I got feedback like “I do not want to reopen my case” meaning their file cases in UDI. From the recruiting process, I experienced and saw how unaccompanied minors are a vulnerable group even after years of settling in the host country. Therefore, researchers need to be mindful and respectful of unaccompanied minors’ experiences. As a researcher, one should be aware of the migration process, and this acquires a sensitive approach. It was a long process of getting the participants as I contacted them more than once before the interviews. The first time was to get a confirmation that they were willing to participate in the research project. I had to keep in touch with the participants by sending update messages. In this thesis, I used the snowballing sampling method whereby some of the participants provided me with more contacts of people I could interview and who would be a good fit for the research project. A few people who had worked with unaccompanied minors earlier in their professions also reached out and provided contacts to potential participants, these were people like previous contact persons or translators. With the snowballing approach, the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others (Bryman, 2016, p.202).

4.2 Data gathering

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data for this project. The interviews lasted between half an hour to forty-five minutes. Semi-structured interviews mean that I structured a few questions to ask the participants as a guideline, but as the interviews went on, I had to ask follow-up questions to understand their point of view better and get a clear understanding of what they tended to explain. The semi-structured interviews helped me to have a natural conversation with the participants whereby it was easy to guide them through the different topics and themes we talked about. Semi-structured interviews refer to a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview scheduled but can vary the sequence of questions, the questions in a semi-structured interview are general from that of the structured interview schedule and the interviewer has the opportunity to ask further questions in response to what is seen as significant replies (Bryman, 2016). I also used Weiss’s (1994) “learning from Strangers” to get ideas on how to conduct interviews as an inexperienced interviewer. This book helped me prepare for the interviews and avoid mistakes that inexperienced researchers make.

I used Nettskjema to protect the data I gathered by using the Diktafon app, this helped me store the recordings in a safe place where only me and my supervisor had access to the data. All interviews were conducted online due to the corona restrictions in Norway at the time. Therefore, the interviews were conducted via Zoom, which is an online meeting platform. I had video chats with all the participants which made it easier to see their facial expressions and body language. However, because of using an online platform, I faced issues like pausing in between the interviews due to poor internet connections, but I ensured to restart the interviews where we had stopped though the stopping and starting again interrupted the flow of some of the interviews.

4.3 Ethical considerations and Limitations

This research project was approved by the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD), and I followed the ethical considerations given by NSD. As I mentioned above, I noticed that participants in this research were vulnerable people, this made participation in this project voluntary. Therefore, if any participant wanted to drop out of the research that was okay with no questions asked. I received oral consent from four of the participants and one participant gave both oral and a signed consent letter. I had hoped to conduct the interviews face to face with the participants, but due to corona restrictions during the time, I had to conduct them online. I conducted some of the interviews in my living room space and others at my local library. While the interviews were conducted it was only me in the rooms, hence creating a safe space for the participants to be open and comfortable. Even if I had not planned online interviews, it turned out to be convenient for me since the participants resided in different parts of Norway which would have made it difficult and costly for me to travel to all these places.

While recruiting participants I faced the challenge of potential participants misunderstanding the purpose of the research project. Therefore, I had to explain repeatedly that the project is only concerned with one's educational experiences in Norway and nothing more than that. I had planned to recruit 12 participants (with unaccompanied minor backgrounds) and about five school advisors or teachers so that I get a teacher's or school advisor's perspective. I reached out to a few schools but did not get a response hence why I ended up dropping that part of my thesis. I would have done a text analysis for that part, however, I had limited time to finish the

project. Therefore, A total of eight participants had agreed to take part in this research project, however, three declined from participating due to sickness and other unknown reasons. Among the eight participants, there were only two boys which I found challenging to get in contact with male participants. This could be because I was a female researcher or for other reasons. For some of the interviews, I had more than one recording due to poor internet connections. This made the interviews not flow well however I tried to get the information that I needed from each participant.

4.4 Coding and Analysis

A thematic analysis was used in this thesis whereby codes that appeared while transcribing the interviews were used. The main themes from the transcribe were individual education experiences, the best interest of the child, stereotypes, integration, and challenges faced by unaccompanied minors. On the other hand, some aspects came up in this thesis after coding and analyzing my data. These aspects are the teacher/student relationship and the question of blackness. I wish to have gone deep into these topics while I conducted the interviews, but due to limited time, I could not call the participants for a second interview. The themes were created according to the interviews, repeated words, and some repeated statements by all the participants.

The names of the participants are coded, these are not their real names, and this is because of the anonymity of the participants. I transcribed the data in this thesis manually by listening to each audio and writing word to word however, in one of the interviews I had to translate it from Norwegian to English by myself. Transcribing a recording that was about 30 minutes took around two to three hours.

Table 1. Coding information from the interviews.

Name	Age on arrival	Gender	Living conditions	Highest level of education in Norway	Length of stay in Norway	Education level on arrival to Norway
Sheila	15	Female	Foster home	Uncompleted vocational training/ has one year of university	9 years	Between 9 th and 10 th grade Norwegian level
Amira	17	Female	Own housing	Last year at master's degree	9 years	High school
Mark	16	Male	Group home	Vocational training with apprenticeship	8 years	10 th grade Norwegian level
Shanita	16	Female	Group home	Bachelor's Degree	9years	9/10 th grade Norwegian level
Frida	16	Female	Group home	Last year at university	9 years	High school

A total of five participants were interviewed in this research project four of the participants were female and one male. All participants were currently between the age of 23 and 26 years, most of them had lived in Norway for 8-9 years. The participants were between the age of 15-17 by their arrival to Norway and all five of the participants had attended school in their home countries which was equivalent to at least 8-10th grade of the Norwegian education system. Two of the participants were currently in their last year of university, one at a bachelor level and the other at a master's level in Norway. One participant was a school dropout who dropped out of school because of a lack of an opportunity to find an apprenticeship spot, the other participant had finished the theoretical part of the vocational training and was just left with two years of apprenticeship before she could attain her fagbrev which is the certificate one gets after finishing vocational training in Norway. Only one of the participants had completed

higher education and was in her professional career by the time I conducted the interviews. However, all participants were attending higher education or had been attending higher education in Norway. All participants were originally from the Eastern part of Africa though they identified themselves as Afro Norwegians. For them this meant that they do not forget where they came from, they still carry some values from their home countries, but at the same time, the Norwegian culture has influenced a lot of their adult life hence identifying themselves as afro Norwegians. One of the participants had foster parents, three lived in a group home and one was living on her own after being granted a resident permit. As shown in table 2, the participants have resided in Norway for about 8-9 years, their experiences are diverse however I have included academic sources from the recent years to the discussion chapter.

4.5 Positionality

In this research, I consider myself both an insider and an outsider. As a young African immigrant in Norway, I could be regarded as an insider with the people I conducted interviews with. But since I did not have refugee status on arrival to Norway, I have never attended an introduction program, etc. then I consider myself an outsider. However, I have gone through almost the same experiences as the participants to integrate into Norwegian society. Coming from a collective society, I have found it difficult to relate to the western individualistic type of society. As a young African immigrant, I have experienced the struggle to master the Norwegian language to get a better life and blend in the society. I relate with the education system in Norway and compare it with my home country as I have attained all my higher education in Norway etc. I related more with the young people's experiences hence making me more of an insider than an outsider. However, this research was conducted with transparency and no biased intentions.

5 Findings: Analysis and Discussion

A thematic analysis was used in this thesis therefore, four themes were recognized while coding the interviews: Individual education experiences, Stereotypical images, integration, and challenges faced by unaccompanied minors. I discuss these themes to explore the individual experiences of the young people that participated in this research project drawing on theoretical

perspectives and previous studies presented above. However, a few different aspects were brought up in this research that I didn't expect, one of which is the relationship between the teachers and the students whereby the young people only have the teachers as the people they can depend on hence the teachers having the young people's identity in a way. Young people are dependent on their teachers regarding choosing further education. Although the same teachers can be the ones who degrade these young people. Another aspect was the question of blackness whether these young people experience certain things because of their skin color.

5.1 Individual Educational experiences in Norway

The data about the individual educational experiences is the most essential part of this thesis since I explore African young people's experiences in Norway regarding access to education opportunities. In this section, I discuss the individual educational experiences of these young people relating to the Norwegian education system. I also elaborate on the concept of vocational education since this came up a few times during the interviews as a negative aspect. The young people had raised concerns because they were always advised to take vocational education instead of normal Norwegian university education. As mentioned in the introduction, the Norwegian education system consists of a ten-year compulsory school that encompasses two main stages, primary school (grades 1-7) and secondary school (grades 8-10). Generally, upper secondary education can last up to three years, although vocation study programs involving apprenticeship last up to four years (Pastoor, 2015, p.246). To understand the participant's point of view about the education system in Norway, we also must understand the Norwegian education structure. Throughout the interviews I asked the participants what they meant by certain terms that they used to refer to the introduction program, and with a background on the Norwegian education system, this gave me better knowledge and understanding of these young people's experiences.

According to the Norwegian education act, education in Norway is age based (The education act, 1998). Therefore, UMs between the ages 6-16 have the same education right as Norwegian children. However, when an UM over the age of 16 obtains a resident permit, he/she has a right to further education. For the students above the compulsory school age who have not completed Norwegian compulsory schooling or its equivalent, they need to follow a compulsory school program equivalent to lower secondary school (NAFO, 2022, Pastoor, 2015, Ministry of

Justice, 2016). All the participants in this research had an educational background from their home countries. They all had to attend Norwegian classes to get to the level which could qualify them to join the normal Norwegian schooling. Unfortunately, the data on how long it took for each individual to join the normal Norwegian school is missing, but one participant mentioned having only attended one year of the introduction program and went straight to the Norwegian classes mixed with Norwegian students. In the case of Frida, she attended the introduction program for only one year and then joined the normal Norwegian schooling. This was because of her educational background. She had already attended (years) of schooling in her home country, but she was in class with people who had been in Norway for 1 or 2 years longer than she did.

“Well, the fact that I had been in high school in my home country, I went straight away to the language, so we basically only had Norwegian as the main class. However, we had different classes like English and mathematics on the side and physical exercises but Norwegian was the main course for the time. The fact that I had been, I was smart in the beginning it enabled me only to study Norwegian for one year and then I got into school. It is only foreigner in the Norwegian class, but it depended on the level of education that one had from before because I was in the same class with people who had been in Norway for a year or two however the fact that they did not have any background school before coming to Norway (...) so they needed more time in the Norwegian classes than I did (Frida).

Frida and the other participants emphasized a lot how they attended Norwegian classes with only nonwestern children in the classes. According to NAFO (2022) newly arrived students are a diverse group with different experiences and school backgrounds, the only thing they have in common is that they have recently started learning Norwegian. There is a lot of research carried out on this specific issue of how immigrant children are placed in the same class with the goal of them learning Norwegian. In Brook & Ottemöller (2020) and Pastoor (2017)’s research, they argue that many refugees young people do not learn Norwegian in the classroom, they learn by practicing with Norwegian people in the society either at workplaces, local shops, in free time activities or with their fellow Norwegian peers. However, putting them in separate classes limits their ability to practice the language outside of the classroom level since in the classroom they are taught in bokmål and Norway has many different dialects. The concern is whether the immigrant children being placed in separate classes affects their improvement in the Norwegian language or whether the state could do better and place these children in the normal

classes while they have Norwegian classes on the side. The participants did not mention a concern about being in a class with non-western background children, although all of them mentioned it, which made it sound like an unintended concern. Sheila reported how it was both a disadvantage and an advantage to be placed in a class full of non-western children in the beginning. She mentioned that it was good to have children that they could relate to each other in terms of cultural backgrounds, language, values, etc. On the other hand, she also mentioned how this was not good for her to progress better in the Norwegian language since she found herself speaking either English or her local language.

On the other hand, newly arrived students need training in both Norwegian and subjects from the outset. They need to access the content of the school's various subjects through linguistically adapted subject teaching. This means that all teachers who teach the newly arrived students must think about language in their teaching and reflect on what can be difficult for the students. At the same time, teachers can make it possible for students to use their mother tongue as a resource for thinking and learning. Norway has specific websites where teachers of newly arrived students can find multilingual resources that students can benefit from (NAFO, 2022). None of the participants reported having used their mother tongue as a source of learning Norwegian because they had some knowledge from the English language and for some English was used as the official language in their home countries. Some of the participants reported not to have needed using their local language since they spoke English well and those who did not speak English well expressed an urge of having had the opportunity to use their mother tongue to understand certain information.

Special Norwegian language instruction is also emphasized the while proving education to newcomers, this means that the pupils receive adapted Norwegian language instruction from a second language perspective. This means that the teacher sees the Norwegian language from the outside and has knowledge of what can often be challenging for students with Norwegian as a second language (NAFO, 2022). However, this is not the case in many language schools. In the case of Amira, she reported how she felt it was weird that some teachers looked at her differently in case for example if she didn't know what a boy was called in Norwegian.

“And then there was another group of teachers that were like, I found it really weird that maybe I didn't know what a boy was called in Norwegian for example even if I was 17 years old which is very weird because if they do not know what it is called in my country, so

there were those that (...) I don't know how to explain it, but there were some that were a little bit "not that nice" to put it well" (Amira)

Amira expressed this in a way that some teachers judged her because of how old she is and could not define some simple Norwegian terms. However, she compared herself to them in a sense if they had lived in her home country for a few months if they would have known those terms as they expected her to. There are a lot of recommendations and sources put out from the Norwegian center for multicultural education about how these young people should be treated and be provided with the knowledge they need. However, in many cases, the schools that receive unaccompanied minors are incompetent and lack enough staff members that have experienced learning Norwegian as a second language. There should be enough bilingual teachers available to provide better education services to immigrant children that will understand the challenges one faces while learning a second language.

According to Oslo Municipality, in Norway, primary and secondary schools are obliged to offer adapted language education in Norwegian to pupils who do not have sufficient proficiency in Norwegian and cannot follow the teaching in Norwegian (Oslo Kommune, 2022). Despite the fact that none of the participants attended adapted language education, in Mark's story he wished to have had some information in his mother tongue so that he understood it better. Referring to multicultural theory, adapted language education is provided by the government, but it is not compulsory for everyone or there are no specific criteria that are taken in the beginning to see if one qualifies for adapted language education (NAFO, 2022, The Education Act, 1998). Bilingual subject teaching makes it easier for the pupil to understand the subject and improve his/her Norwegian learning. When one is taught in their mother tongue, improving the writing and reading skills of the mother tongue acts as a support for learning Norwegian (ibid). Being taught in a language you understand better improves the child's capacity and interest to learn something new, especially after the traumas URM's face, they tend to have less concentration in class. Norway needs more bilingual teachers with immigrant backgrounds in schools so that URM's have some people they can relate to in one way or another and also get quality help.

The fact that most URM's left their home country due to serious threats to their own or their family's life and security. This may be armed conflict and/or political, ethnic, or religious

persecution, this makes them a vulnerable group and makes them not concentrate better in school (Pastoor, 2013, p.245, Oppedal et al. 2020, Johannesen & Appoh, 2020, Marguerite et al. 2020). Some young refugees want their teachers to be present in their lives more than just schoolwork. For example, if one is not concentrating in class, they expect the teachers to approach them and ask how they are feeling and maybe offer advice in certain situations. In the case of Sheila, she wished that the teachers had told her how much she needed to work on her Norwegian so that she could have enrolled in a nursing course at university. This meant that she needed more advice than what she got from her teachers by the time she was in the situation of deciding what career path she wanted to take.

“I knew I wanted to do nursing (...) and all that, but the thing is (...) to me I didn’t know that it would be hard for me to get into nursing because of my Norwegian because then the level, there is the normal Norwegian high school, the high school diploma and then there is vocational education with apprenticeship where you learn helsefagarbeider that is not hard. The high school diploma where you have subjects like chemistry, biology it was a little bit hard that I risked so much to get in where I wanted to go so that it got complicated in that because then I ended up, my grades were not good after all. And I feel like I didn’t get so much advice about what I should do on my level of Norwegian because most of them they would tell you that you can do it you know. I didn’t get enough advice I just went to school, and I was like I shall go to nursing to this school and that was it. But then with the advice with in when you are starting educating, they wouldn’t tell you like (...) I think you are on this level, I think this level would be hard for you, like I didn’t get that” (Sheila).

Sheila wished that someone had given her advice on how to improve on her Norwegian skills so that she could enroll into nursing since this is what she wanted to do with her life. She instead enrolled in vocational education in the health sector. She felt like people (teachers, school advisors) were not honest with her, especially regarding what level of Norwegian she was at and since everyone she talked to said that vocational education was the easiest path, she took that. For Sheila, she only needed someone, to be honest with her and tell her how much more Norwegian she needed to enroll in nursing rather than the teachers just saying that she could make it either way.

The education system in Norway engages young people to contribute in the classroom and it is not just a monolog where only the teacher feeds the students with information. However, this may be challenging for some young people who come from countries with a monolog education

system or banking education as Freire (1996) describes it. Referring to the education theory, Freire argues that oppressors tend to teach you like you know nothing. He discusses the banking education whereby the students are taken as an empty bank account and the teacher's job is to deposit money into the account (ibid). Shanita and Frida reported how education was different in their home countries compared to that in Norway. Both Shanita and Frida come from developing countries, and they described how a classroom can have like 50-80 students, this number of students in a classroom does not give room for the teacher to listen to everyone's opinion hence usually they only get information from the teacher. There was a difference in terms of how many students a teacher has in a classroom in their home countries and Norway, and how they used a lot of digital learning processes like getting homework or handing in assignments digitally. They somewhat saw it as a challenge, but also as a good experience.

“It is different, I feel like in Norway you get to study what is relevant for you now however from my home country we have a syllabus that has been going on for years and years, I believe what I studied back then is the same thing the kids in schools are studying now. However, in Norway you have the opportunity to study about what is happening at the current time. Right now, the kids are given the opportunity to study more about the pandemic other than what I think is happening in my country. I believe they are still studying Napoleon which is not relevant at all. The Norwegian education system is way much better very very favourable because you get to study what you want to do unlike where I come from. Where I come from you are supposed to study everything however the good thing about studying everything is that we have general knowledge about so many things (Frida).

The education Frida got from her home country taught her a lot of different things, while in Norway students are given a chance to specialize in what they think will help them go for further education. Both Shanita and Frida saw this as a positive thing with the Norwegian education system because then young people get to do what they want and are more exposed to different opportunities for example there is no need of taking chemistry or biology if one's specialization does not require it. Whereas in their home countries they had to take all subjects hence giving them general knowledge about almost everything.

All participants showed interest to start going to school in Norway, they described this experience as exciting, and eager to learn and some did not have the right words to describe the feeling. “Being able to go to school like Norwegian children and youth in their age group

means a lot to UMs in a period of their lives that is often characterized by having to cope with traumatic memories of the past as well as concerns for the future” (Pastoor 2013, p. 33). However, the young people mentioned a shift in their interest of schooling, they all showed that the introduction program was interesting, and things got harder as they went to upper secondary school. The shift in interest was presented in the case of Mark as he mentioned that he dropped out of his vocational studies due to a lack of a spot for apprenticeship and school had started getting boring for him due to how some teachers treated him.

“I really don’t know, I really wanted to go to school, I thought school was fun until I started going for electro subject and, I wanted to have a higher education. I sit here and I regret why I dropped out, but when I started 9/10th class it was so good until when I started attending high school. Then i started to get bored, I realised that I didn’t like the subject and then school was not interesting for me anymore” (Mark).

For Mark, after the teacher did not support him throughout the program, he lost motivation at the end of it. The fact that he even did not get an apprenticeship spot made it more clear to him that he had to stop. I recognized that education was fun for the participants during the first years because they were attending classes with non-western students which made it easier for them to relate to each other and as they went to a higher level of education, they had to attend mixed classes which made them feel differently since then they started experiencing language problems and the feeling of othered by their teachers and they could not relate so much with their Norwegian peers.

5.1.1 The Norwegian Vocational Education and Training (VET)

I elaborate further on the Norwegian Vocational Education and Training in this research because two of the participants had attended the VET program. One in the health sector and the other in the electro course. Both participants had not completed their vocational education, Sheila was on a break from school by the time I conducted the interviews. She is done with the first two theoretical years, and she has two more years as an apprentice. Whereas Mark had dropped out of vocational education due to a lack of apprenticeship spots to continue with his education. Throughout the interviews, Mark regretted to have dropped out of school, but he also presented a sense of hope to continue with his education soon.

According to Udir (2021), the Norwegian Vocational Education and Training is part of the formal upper secondary education system. The upper secondary VET in Norway covers ten education programs that lead to more than one hundred eighty different trade or journeyman's certificates like plumber certificates. Udir (2021) also reports that most upper secondary VET programs follow the main 2+2 model. The model entails two years of education in an upper secondary school followed by two years of apprenticeship training and productive work in a training enterprise or public institution. The final exam is a trade or journeyman's test leading to an EQF level 4 qualification. The upper secondary schools are responsible for the first two years of education and training while the enterprises are responsible for the final two years. While the schools are just responsible for the first two years of vocational education, it is no doubt that many students struggle with getting apprenticeship spots.

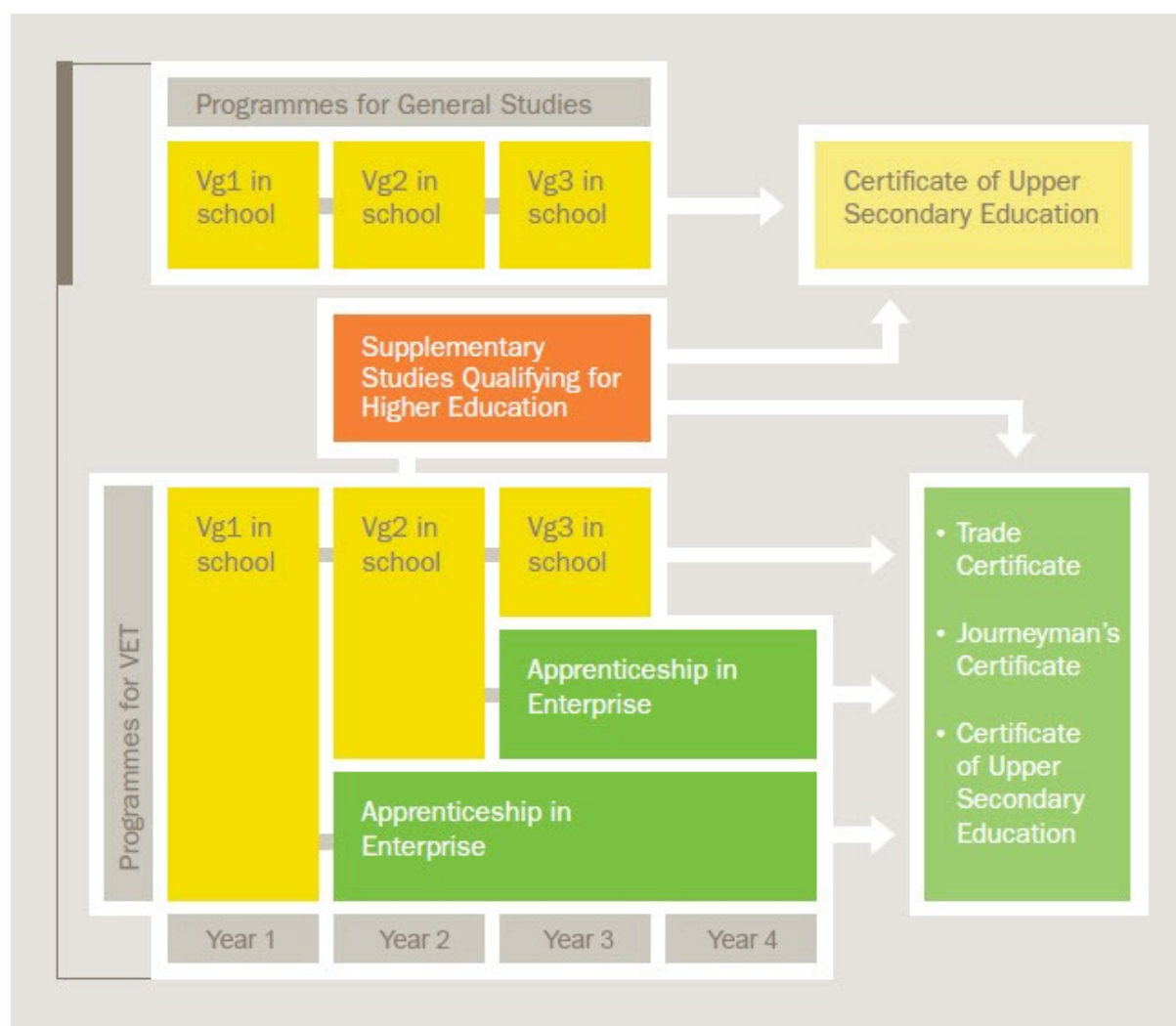
Before I explain further the relevance of the VET program in this thesis, I would like to give a brief explanation of the VET program structure in Norway. During the first two years, the VET student is given a general introduction to the vocational field and an opportunity to specialize in a chosen craft or trade. The teaching focuses on common core subjects (Norwegian, English, Mathematics, physical education, natural science, and social studies), and common program subjects which cover trade-specific theory and practice. During the first year (Vg1-upper secondary level 1), these subjects offer a general introduction to the vocational field. During the second year, (Vg2-upper secondary level 2) these subjects become more specific as VET students decide which trade they want to pursue. The apprenticeship period allows the apprentice to gain in-depth knowledge in a vocational field and prepare for the trade or journeyman's test. The two-year apprenticeship is formalized through a signed contract between the apprentice and the training enterprise. The county authorities have overarching responsibility for all aspects of public upper secondary education and training, including apprenticeship training. Thus, the apprenticeship contract must be approved by the county authorities (Udir, 2021). The VET program structure gives an insight into how and what young people learn while attending this program. It gives a better understanding of what level Sheila and Mark were at by the time I conducted the interviews and an understanding of the outcomes of the program.

Håvard & Støren (2006) discuss how the previous research shows that there is a large labor market differences between ethnic groups. Which makes persons of a non-western origin have lower probabilities of getting hired, giving them a disadvantage of lower average income and

fewer possibilities of making use of their education. The author further discusses how the ethnic majority in Norway has a higher probability of obtaining an apprenticeship than applicants with a non-western ethnic minority background. Usually, the employer's main goal in the hiring process is to select the most productive candidate, but the employers do not know the individual candidate's productivity (ibid, p.343). Although the data used in this research is not huge, two participants had not completed their vocational education due to reasons of waiting to get an apprenticeship spot and are both of ethnic minority background.

On the other hand, when employers are choosing the candidate, they look at the grades, school absence, etc. However, someone's productivity cannot be measured from the school grades because most jobs candidates learn what the job requires through job training. " job skills are learned mainly through opportunities to practice them" and not through education (Collins, 1979, p 48 qtd in Håvard & Støren, 2006). Without the opportunity for one to practice a job skill, the employers may never learn the productivity of this candidate. In the case of Mark, one of the reasons he dropped out of vocational education was a lack of apprenticeship spot, without the on-job training, he stands no chance to pass the apprenticeship test that will qualify him with the VET certificate so that he joins the job market. The authors also discuss that employers tend to employ applicants who are simpler to them. In many trade markets, ethnic Norwegian men are the employers, therefore ethnic Norwegian male applicants stand a high chance of getting the apprenticeship spot than an ethnic minority applicant (Håvard & Støren, 2006). Mark is a young African man with a refugee background, he stands lower chances of being employed for apprenticeship in an ethnic Norwegian male dominated market.

Figure 2. Illustration of the Norwegian Vocation Education and training structure (udir).



5.2 The best interest of a child

While discussing the experiences of unaccompanied minors, I want to present the right of a child in accordance with article 3 how the best interest of the child should be considered while dealing with any matter concerning children. Article 3.1 in the convention on the rights of the child (CRC) states that:

“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration”.

Therefore, all policies and legislation for and about children should all be ratified into law for the best interest of the child in several contexts. Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on

the rights of the child (1990) is the guiding principle for government decisions concerning unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in Norway (Engebrigtsen, 2003). “The convention is incorporated into Norwegian asylum policies, but several cases have shown that when Norwegian law and the convention clash, the Norwegian law is given priority” (ibid, p.191). The author discusses how the best interest of the child is neglected by the Norwegian authorities regarding family reunions of unaccompanied minors with their families or guardians from their home countries. In most cases, the immigration officers know that the parenting mode in third world countries is not the same as the Norwegian modern parenting, but they can still deny family reunions considering the that the child is growing up faster than they should since they must have some economic independence before they apply for their families to come. However, having their parents or other family members here with them in Norway helps to beat the loneliness they have faced for years and the emotional care, it is still fewer family reunions reported by the Norwegian authorities thus the immigration officers see these children as the “anchor child”. Anchor children are children who serve as anchors for their parent's and family’s later asylum application (Engebrigtsen, 2003, p.192). Most UMs who still have their families back in their home countries work hard in the receiving society so that they can be able to support their families back home. Mark mentioned how it was important for him to go to school finish and then start working to help his family in his home country.

“When you start attending high school it is important either, if you choose right, school becomes interesting and if you choose wrong and you don’t like the profession you took so. (...) like you could drop out and come back again, but for us it is a little bit difficult. I either want to be done with school and then I start to work so I can help my family. My parents are not here, my siblings are not here. Even if maybe, it is not a big deal help you give to your family, but you are still (...) they are back home yeah (...)” (Mark)

For Mark he means that once you choose wrong, you may drop out of school which had happened to him however, he enhanced that when you drop out you can still go back to school. But it is a bit difficult for people like him to accomplish that since he wants to either finish school or later work to support his family. The use of the phrase “people like him” meant an African young man who has the responsibility to help his family back home and at the same time trying to navigate the Norwegian society. Lynnebakke and Pastoor (2020, p.4) argue that some vocational education aspirations of UMs can be influenced by aims of economic independence of supporting their families abroad or in preparation for applying for family

reunification. Even if these young people have the same education opportunities as the Norwegian students, there is always a difference in their education aspiration. Some really want to be done so that they start working which is not the case for a young person who lives with their parents in the host country. Despite the education opportunities offered to them, many URM's take on adult responsibilities to help their families back home and must juggle between school and work which may make them not participate well in school or even have fewer education aspirations.

Further, the Norwegian laws clash with the UN guidelines on the right of the child through the asylum-seeking process. As mentioned earlier, asylum seekers between the age of 15 and below go through the care of the child welfare services while the URM's ages 15 and above are placed into reception centers (separate from the adult reception centers) but with the same concept (Pastoor, 2017). Results in this thesis present that all the participants resided in different places after receiving their resident permits, some lived in foster homes, others in a group home, and some in independent housing. In most cases UM ages 16 and above are treated like adults because asylum seekers aged 16 to 18 are also often referred to age assessment. The care given to UMs ages 16 and above can be questioned if follows the UN guidelines on the right of the child and how the best interest of the child should be considered in any matters concerning a child. The findings in this thesis showed that the young people who lived in group homes and foster homes had a better experience towards integration into the Norwegian society than young people who lived on their own. Mark mentioned how some of his friends who were living by themselves were just starting high school by the time he was almost done and yet they had all arrived in Norway at the same time. The reason why the young people who lived alone were delayed is that they had to figure out some decisions on their own whereas when one is living in a family setting like group homes and foster care, they usually get help with education opportunities, school assignments and other schoolwork by the adults in these institutions. The fact that anyone under the age of 18 years is a child, but those aged 15 and above are treated as adults' questions how the Norwegian system is considering the best interest of a child in such situations.

Additionally, age assessment involves a dental examination and hand X-ray in addition to a medical observation and statement (Lidén, 2019, P.341). The Police immigration service PU has to obtain consent from UM to conduct a voluntary age assessment, but once an asylum applicant does not wish to complete the assessment or does not show up for it, this is already

an indication that the applicant is not a minor. In 2016, NOAS and Save the Child Norway (NOAS, 2016 qtd in Lidén, 2019 P.354) evaluated age assessment practices and concluded that they do not comply with the Immigration Act and UN guidelines. The report also found that more asylum seekers go through medical age assessment than is provided for under the Immigration Act and UN guidelines. Medical age assessments are given too much weight which may be clashing with the best interest of the child since if unaccompanied minors refuse to take the age assessment they are considered adults and end up being attended to as adults.

Education in Norway is both a right and an obligation for all children of compulsory school age (6-16 years old). The right applies from the moment it is likely that the child will remain in Norway for 3 months. This put in practice means that children seeking asylum protection must be offered education as soon as they arrive in Norway (The Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality, 2016, p.60, The education act, 1998). Since 2014, people aged 16-18 who are applying for a residence permit are also entitled to upper secondary education or primary or lower secondary education for adults if it is likely that they will be in Norway for more than 3 months (ibid). Norway is obliged to give temporary residence permits to unaccompanied minors whom they think do not qualify to gain refugee status in Norway. However, some young people come at an early age, and spend their whole life in Norway although when they reach the age of 18 years they are returned to their countries (ibid). Valenta (2019) refers to these children as “the insecure and scared youth” these are unaccompanied minors who have a temporary permit that lasts until they are 18 years old and who have appealed the decision. All participants in this thesis were attending school or had attained their higher education in Norway, therefore their educational rights were respected.

Offering education opportunities is honoring the best interest of the child, all participants in this research mentioned how it was exciting to go back to school despite the challenges they faced while attending school. I saw an element that their education rights were fulfilled since they all started right away with the language or combination classes before they joined the Norwegian high school. However, the best interest of a child can be questioned in Amira, Mark, and Frida’s case how it is the best interest of the child in the classroom if the teachers keep degrading you and discriminating against you hence making it difficult to go further education. Mark dropped out of school and one of the reasons was his teacher degraded him hence he lost interest in attending the vocational training program even if he knew that this was his way to a

better career future. He explained how the outcome would have been better if he had had another teacher so maybe he would have completed his program.

“It had actually something to do with the teacher also, our main teacher. Not the program teacher, but the normal electro teacher, I felt like he wasn’t good enough to help us to like the subject. He was so strict and a difficult teacher. So, when I started, I didn’t like the teacher, and when you do not like the teacher then you become less interested to learn. I hope that if I had had another teacher a different teacher it would have been easier in a way. A little nicer teacher so maybe it would have been different, it would have been more interesting for me. I would have maybe like the profession” (Mark).

In Mark’s story, he refers to the teacher as not nice and not good enough. The act of degrading during career guidance showed up a lot in Sheila, Mark, and Frida’s story. The young people had also presented that they did not know what to do for further education. However, Sheila knew deep down that she wanted to be a nurse as a profession she also experienced that none of the people she went for help helped her how to get there because she claimed to have needed more time in the Norwegian language. The way the teachers and school advisors talked to these young people was not in their best interest because they all ended up taking professions that some of them regret and yet if the teachers had respected to their requests, maybe they would have given them all the options so that they choose for themselves. However, they young people kept getting advice like how it is difficult to study in Norwegian language at university level and how vocational education was a better fit for them because of their language skills.

5.3 Stereotypical images

Norway is known as a multicultural society since people from different cultural backgrounds and values reside in Norway. The question of otherness was presented in this research when the participants talked about integration, career guidance, and living in Norway generally. In this section, I discuss stereotypical images by referring Hall and Young’s understanding of stereotypes. I discuss the fact of being black which Fanon termed as the “black skin, white mask”. I explore if African UMs experience certain things because of their skin color and physical appearance. I further explore the degrading from the teachers and school advisors

during career guidance. According to Ashmore & Del Boca (1981), stereotypes are beliefs about groups. Referring to the theoretical framework chapter, the authors defined stereotypes as “Stereotype is the tendency to attribute generalized and simplified characteristics to groups of people in form of verbal labels and to act towards the members of those groups in terms of those labels” (Vinacke, 1949, p.265 qtd in Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). There are several types of stereotypes like political, ability, class stereotypes, etc. But the type mostly presented in the interviews I conducted was the racial/ethnic stereotypes whereby the young people were perceived to be something else just because of their skin color or ethnicity.

The findings in this thesis showed that some young people have experienced stereotypes at workplaces whereby they were perceived to have a different position than they had. As discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, Hall and Young discuss the question of otherness from different perspectives. Hall uses four different debates of linguistic, social, cultural, and psychic levels to discuss the question of otherness. “Difference matters because it is essential to mean”. Young explores the question of the other through what she calls cultural imperialism. Young argues that to experience cultural imperialism means to experience how the dominant meanings of society render the perspective of one’s group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one’s group and mark it out as the other (Hall, 2013, Young, 2011). Therefore, I use these different perspectives on the question of otherness to discuss stereotypical images of prejudice experienced by the African unaccompanied refugee minors while settling in the Norwegian society.

“Well like I said people are afraid of the unknown if you are coming from for example wherever you are coming from and you come to know and there is a misinterpretation. Like people will misinterpret you coming to Norway as a bad thing like they don’t feel you have the skills that are maybe equal to a Norwegian some of them at least. So, they kind of like look at you like you are not more than A B C D, you can’t be up there or that is what I think, so like for example if there is a Doctor, a Nurse or a cleaner when you are a black person like me, usually, they don’t think that you are the doctor, to begin with. And I can like give you an example, there is a time I(...) like I said I am doing odontology and there is a time I came, and I called my patient, called their name, they came in and then I started talking to them and then the patient was like “when is the doctor coming to me?” and I was like I am the doctor, and the patient was like “are you sure?” I thought you just work here as something else, and I was like no I am the doctor. So, they still have that thing of you know we black people cannot be

more than a certain A B C D, but that is not all of them of course, I cannot generalize, but still, some of them have that mentality” (Amirah).

Amirah was stereotyped by her patient who thought she could be something else rather than a doctor herself, in her statement she recognizes that not everyone does it, but it still happens that one is judged by their physical appearance and skin colour, and which position they must have in a certain profession. Most of the ethnic minorities are known for having lower incomes than the rest of the Norwegian population, it is easy to assume that they all fall in that category (Håvard & Støren, 2006). However, the categorizing of a specific group is what motivates most African young people like Amirah and Shanita to achieve their educational goals and not be part of the statistics. Shanita also experiences the same at her workplace, she reported that every time she mentioned where she came from people would be surprised in a way they did not expect or believe that she is what she says she is. She would see the shock in their eyes and judgment of wondering how a girl like her with her background ended up in a profession like she has.

“Look I am a (...) (mentions country of origin) girl here where I work when people ask me where you are from, I am like I am from (...) (mentions country of origin), they are shocked I can see literally in their face that there is shock in their face as if like “ooh (...) (mentions country of origin) girl” like you are here you are doing this oh that’s nice like as if like (...), we got one. In a way it is good but, in another way, it is also negative like what did you expect like as if you expect less from that person, it is just so depressive to even think about it sometimes. To put some people in a box that is very bad. (Shanita).

5.3.1 The question of Blackness

While I did not intend to talk about the question of blackness in this research, the concept of blackness showed up a lot in the analysis, therefore I would like to explain and discuss this aspect briefly in the sense of what it meant for the participants to be African youth living in Norway. From history, European countries colonialized the African continent and therefore many ideas are built on the western understanding of the world. There are many perceptions about people from Africa, how Africa is portrayed in the media which makes people to have formed ideas of people with African background. We have seen above with what Amira referred to that as a young black person the society assumes that you are supposed to work with

so and so or that you cannot even provide resources like the Norwegians do however that is a wrong way to think of the black child.

With a sample of interviewing young people originally from Africa and came to Australia between the age of 15-19 years old and had been living in Australia for two and five years. Uptin (2021) conducted a qualitative study on the experiences of these young people living in Australia. One of the themes that emerged in this research was the amount of everyday prejudice in the day-to day lived experiences of young people. Their narratives highlighted their perceptions of being othered through verbal and non-verbal, conscious, and unconscious responses in daily interactions. And the second theme was the reactions of the participants to the ways they found themselves being treated because of their physical difference. The participants in this research were asked by what it meant to be black and they had all these answers like “it means being blacker than everyone else, it means trying harder, feeling inferior etc.”(ibid, p.81) The young people reported having been treated different because of the difference in their physical appearance, like how Australians acknowledge their beauty, but the young girls had no long term friendships because they experienced prejudice. For the young women, Blackness had consequences such as trying harder at school to show they were not inferior.

They also had a common experience of people being afraid of their presence, assuming that they would steal goods. The constant staring intimidated them led them to perceive being unwelcome in their new home (Uptin, 2021, P.82). Fanon presented the experience of people being afraid of his appearance in the first phase of “the fact of blackness” (Fanon, 1986). There are certain conversations that an ethnic Norwegian will never find themselves in like the question of “where are you from” and when the immigrant replies “Oslo” then a follow up question of where you are really from? The fact that one must explain where they come from all the time as a start of a conversation with strangers also makes African young people to feel as outsiders no matter how many years they have stayed in the country. The data about blackness in this thesis was not presented openly by the participants, but throughout the interviews they used terms as “the fact that I am black” “I am Afro Norwegian” “Coming from Africa” etc. The participants using these phrases to identify themselves showed that there is a hidden identity assumed on them because they Originally come from Africa.

In this research Mark expressed a lot the feeling of being an outsider although he felt integrated and speaks good Norwegian. Brook & Ottemöller (2020) explored the experiences of refugee girls in Norway, throughout the data, the young girls reported change in behavior from their fellow Norwegian peers in the beginning when they did not speak a lot of Norwegian and a difference after years when these young girls could speak better Norwegian. Frida reported to have experienced the same whereby she claimed to not have had many Norwegian friends in the first years due to her Norwegian language, but as she got better, she became confident to be part of a conversation and contribute her thoughts well enough in the Norwegian language. Mark and Sheila mentioned how they wondered whether their Norwegian peers could not approach to them at school to say hi maybe because they were shy, but also because of the language barrier.

According to the work of Fanon “the fact of blackness”, it shows that Fanon’s main argument is that the color of skin defines people’s cultural identity. He elaborates on this statement by using the concept called “Black skin, White mask” meaning that non-white people are usually judged and culturally identified based only on the color of their skins. Fanon describes the struggles of himself a black man who is living in a world dominated by white people. Fanon introduces the black problem and later problematizes it by fully understanding that the black problem is based solely on the color of his skin. Erdal & Strømø (2021) discuss first impressions connected to physical appearance and race. According to the authors first impressions are as boundary making encounters where race matters center on visibility that leads to either recognition, or to social control, exclusion, and ambivalence (ibid, p.126). In this thesis first impressions came up as a sense of stereotypical images. As mentioned above Amira and Shanita encountered first impressions from both their co-workers and the patient. Because of Shanita’s physical appearance and skin color, her work mates judged her and were shocked of how she was in the profession as they were. And Amira was also given the same impression as her patient expected her to be something else rather than the doctor herself. This is what Fanon described that how the identity of black people is not something that can be self-created but rather something which is imposed upon them by the society in which they live in purely based on the color of their skin (Fanon, 1986). The young people have their own identity, the way they see themselves as Afro Norwegians meaning they have their African values, but at the same time the Norwegian society has influenced their identity however society also imposes other identities on to them.

According to Hall the postmodern subject of identity is that there is no fixed, essential, or permanent identity. Therefore, identity becomes a moveable feast formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us (Hall 1987 qtd in Hall, 1996). The findings in this thesis showed that the participants identified themselves as Afro Norwegians. This is an aspect that I understood as having a switch that one can turn on and off. And according to the environment one is in then they will turn on the relevant switch. This concept was presented mostly in Mark's story where he reported that he is an African young man most of the times, but at certain incidences he must act more Norwegian for him to blend in the society and conversations. The same situation was presented from the other participants where they had to try harder to speak the Norwegian language so that they can blend in as the other Norwegian young people. On the other hand, Sheila reported to have changed some table manners with her Norwegian foster family, Christmas rituals and time keeping.

“The fact that I was in a Norwegian family, I had to adjust a lot of things. Like in (mentions country of origin) when your parent is talking to you, you would keep quiet you don't say anything but then in the Norwegian society when your parent is talking to you, you have to reply to them and explain but to me then when I was just quiet when my Norwegian mum was talking to me, it was disrespectful to her. She was like “why are you disrespecting me when you are just quiet”, but then I had to explain to her that in (mentions country of origin) you can't just talk back. I had to learn that and now I am good with that when somebody ask me, I explain because I had to learn that. So I knew I had to drop the (mentions country of origin) style of just keeping quiet and then I had to (...) get through that Norwegian whereby we would communicate with each other and also on the table for example like in (mentions country of origin) we don't talk when we are eating, but here then they have conversations I had to learn that like oh but you know sometimes it comes that I am just quiet but then” (Sheila).

5.3.2 Degrading during career guidance.

The concept of degrading showed up a lot throughout the analysing of this data. For these young people degrading came up as a concept where an individual is looked down on their abilities and resources they can offer to the Norwegian society. Shanita reported how she experienced that every time she went for career guidance, she was directed to a different direction than she was asking for. When she approached different career advisors, she would

tell them how she wants to become a midwife and asks what it takes to become a midwife only to get answers like “it is difficult to become a midwife why don’t you take fagbrev helsefagarbeider” (vocational education in the health sector). She expressed how teachers directed most students to do vocational education than higher education and yet she wished that they advised more people to take the normal higher education. According to Ashmore & Del Coma (1981) stereotypes have been defined as a bad thing and this is because they set beliefs that are incorrectly learned, overgeneralized, factually incorrect, or rigid. Beliefs of a certain group of people can differ from individual to individual an example is a high rate of immigrant drop out, it can be true, but that does not mean that every immigrant does not want to pursue higher education or have a better life for themselves.

“I want to be a mid-wife, and some will say being a mid-wife is difficult, but that is not what I asked what I asked is how can I just get there. I just need information I don’t need her to discourage me you know and then they be like isn’t it better you take the fagbrev? They have told me that, they have told a lot of students to do the fagbrev I don’t know what is wrong with them and the fagbrev they should encourage more to educate more like higher education, but then they be like you should do this, I don’t know if they just see you as just an immigrant person like who cannot accomplish anything maybe they have already lost their hope in you (...)” (Shanita).

This was the same situation for Frida, she explained how the teachers in school only sold to them vocational education and training, she felt like her teachers were degrading them. In her class most of the students made sure that they did not take the vocational education, everyone in that class worked hard to get qualification for university and they used the demotivation as a motivation to prove the teacher wrong. Often unaccompanied minors are seen as people who want a quick path to pass through school and start working to achieve their economic independent status. In most cases these young people are forced to think logically to take career paths they may not be interested in but just because the career has better chances of securing a job after education (Fangen & Lynnebakke, 2014). We saw the case of Mark above where he mentioned that it was important for him to be first done with school and then secure a job, this meant that however much he wants to finish school, there was still pressure of him getting a job so that he can support his family back home.

“Yeah well, when you start it, you feel like you really have to be done, well for me that is how I felt, I felt like I had to be done otherwise I would have wasted a lot of time. So, I kept going however I remember when I was in my second year in high school, I remember my teacher asking us forcefully to not apply for university but apply for vocational studies. The teacher deliberately told us that (...) it is going to be so difficult for us in the university because of the language so she deliberately told us that we must choose to do the helsefagarbeider (health vocational training) instead of the nursing because she thought once you do the helsefagarbeider, you are going to get a job immediately that there are so many opportunities and it is the shorter way and yes the language you don't really need so much Norwegian so. Like the Norwegian you need while studying at the university. Yes, it was good advice, but she did not allow us to explore the opportunity of trying you know get into the university finding out ourselves that this is difficult so. However, she was telling everyone like “no it requires a lot of Norwegian at the university I don't think you guys will make it”. Best if you only applied for helsefagarbeider (...)” (Frida).

While school advisors and teachers may be the best support unaccompanied minors get while choosing further education, they can also be the people who demotivate these young people towards them choosing career opportunities in their best interest. In Bergs (2019) master thesis, she explores how school advisors point some students in a different career path than others because of where they are geographically from in Oslo. The Eastern part of Oslo is known as the area where most immigrants reside. Therefore, in her research she shows that students from the Eastern side of Oslo are advised to take vocational training with apprenticeship while the students from the Western part of Oslo tend to be advised to go for higher education like Medicine, Nursing, law etc. This is a type of stereotyping whereby the teachers assume that one group of students cannot make it to higher education while the other can. Parents, school advisors and students play an important role in the choosing of further education and what career path to take specifically, but unaccompanied minors only have the teachers and school advisors to depend on while getting career guidance or maybe some who were under the age 15 get help from their foster families. Nevertheless, school advisors and teachers play a great role towards these young people's future careers since they are the adults they get in contact with every day, and they tend to build their trust in the teachers.

According to Berg (2019), some school advisors give advice according to one's performance in school, if one's grades are not above a certain grade, they are most likely to be given the

option of vocational education. This argument can go one way or the other because if one's performance holds them back maybe they should be given advice on how they better their grades so that they get where they want to be. We saw this in the case of Sheila above where she wished that someone had told her how to get better in the Norwegian language so that she could get into the nursing school instead of telling her that it would be difficult to study in Norwegian. Most young people enroll into high school in Norway during their first years in Norway which makes it difficult to compare their Norwegian language proficiency with the Norwegian students. This was presented in the case of Frida who started going to normal Norwegian classes after having been in the language/introduction program for only one year. On the other hand, Norwegian is not just their second language, some young people come to Norway with four or five different languages, and they must add Norwegian to that. In the case of Amira, she reported how she felt it was weird that some teachers looked at her differently in case for example if she didn't know what a boy was called in Norwegian.

As mentioned above, Amira also expressed degrading from some of her teachers in a way that some teachers judged her because of how old she is and could not define some simple Norwegian terms however she compared herself to them in a sense if they had lived in her home country for a few months if they would know those terms as they expected her to. There are a lot of policies put out from the Norwegian Center for Multicultural Education about how these young people should be treated and be provided with the knowledge they need. However in many cases the schools that receive unaccompanied minors are incompetent and lack enough staff members that have experienced learning Norwegian as a second language. Despite of the recommendations out there on paper, the state should also provide competent teachers and school advisors who can help unaccompanied minors go through education.

Referring to the literature review and the findings of this thesis, African unaccompanied minors do not have a big difference in their experiences compared to other groups of unaccompanied minors, however African URMs experiences are diverse. While some of them had lived in group home, foster homes or independently, they showed a great concern on the question of being othered in the Norwegian society. All the participants had experienced some sort of being othered either at school or at their workplaces. The young people face a lot of othering because of the color of their skin and physical appearance. This is because of the perception and image that comes to one's mind about African people and persons with a refugee background.

5.4 Integration

Referring to integration, it is there as an example of multicultural policy. As mentioned above, multiculturalism deals with integration and assimilation as Modood (2013) and Castles & Miller (2014) state. The Nordic region is known as a multicultural society and depending on what it is refracted through produces a variety of images, a particular model of welfare regime, typology of people, linguistic genealogy, morality, climate etc (Sawyer & Habel, 2014). In this section I discuss the Norwegian integration laws regarding newcomers. I tend to relate the laws with the experiences of African unaccompanied minors in Norway. Their experiences of being young black people and trying to integrate themselves in the Norwegian society.

Integration is a process where social interactions are seen as two-way and where members of the majority community as well as immigrants and ethnic minorities are required to do something to live together and integrate (Modood, 2013, p. 44). In most cases integration is confused with assimilation which is a process which affects the relationship between newly settled social groups which is seen as one-way and where the desired outcome for society is seen as involving least change in the ways of doing things for most of the country and its institutional policies (ibid). Fangen & Lynnebakke, 2014) discuss that while the Scandinavian countries are known for a high degree of gender and income equality, everyone being equal means that those who are different must assimilate so that they can be part of the equality. This means that they may have to compromise some of their cultural values so that they fit in the society. Both terms (Integration and assimilation) were presented during the interviews of this research project, and most young people saw themselves as integrated in the Norwegian society while other still felt like outsiders. Some young people had to adapt to the western way of doing things so that they could fit/blend in the Norwegian society, and they all agreed that language was the key to integration in the Norwegian society.

The results in this thesis presented that some young people used music as a way of integrating in the Norwegian society, but they all agreed that schools were the biggest source for them to integrate and part-time workplaces. Though some young people had these connections they still felt a sense of being an outsider. This was presented mostly in Mark's story where he reported that sometimes he felt as an outsider even if he has Norwegian friends, has a job and has been educated, he still feels left out. Mark elaborated the feeling of left out or as an outsider

by using the Christmas times as an example. During Christmas times almost the whole of Norway as a country spend time with their families, but for many unaccompanied minors this is the loneliest time of the year for them because they do not have their families with them here and since all their friends travel to be with their families therefore, they feel lonely.

“It is like Norwegian people are closed, it can be a little difficult to communicate with them. They are not so open like the people I am used to for example the people from (mentions country of origin). Generally, people from Africa it is different, it is easy to get to know them, but it is difficult to get to know Norwegian people. If they don’t know you it is difficult for them to sit with you and talk to you. I felt a little bit, I still feel. there was a time... where I felt as an outsider like when I first came to Norway I started at the introduction class, there it was like only us immigrants, but I took math with the Norwegians while I went to the combination class I took math with those that went to high school like first year high school, I felt lonely and as an outsider like no one got the guts to come to you and talk to you. I don’t know if it was like they didn’t know what to say to me or that they had no courage to come and talk to me I don’t know. Also, it was the same for me if it was the language and I didn’t know what to say, it was difficult to understand what they were saying and if you didn’t speak good enough Norwegian you wouldn’t get the courage to go and speak to them. So, it was challenging, and you feel like an outsider at work also it was the same. At the break room (...) I worked with a friend of mine that lived with me at that time one from Afghanistan. If he was at work, I felt included in a way that you start talking at least with him, but if it was just Norwegian, I just sat there” (Mark).

Having come from a collective society, many UMs describe Norwegian people as closed people because Norway is an individualist country, only this difference can make it difficult for some young people to integrate in the Norwegian society hence why they usually form their own communities with fellow immigrants. Collective cultures are those in which group members have a strong sense of dependence and loyalty to their group whereas individualistic society members of a group are trained to be independent have freedom (Huff & Kelley, 2003). Mark described how it was difficult for him to approach his Norwegian fellow students and the fact that they had not much in common it was easier for him to have conversations with fellow immigrants. The language barrier was also presented, usually young people feel shy to speak Norwegian especially during their first years in Norway and since the newcomers do not have enough knowledge with the Norwegian language it may be difficult to start up a conversation.

Throughout the interviews the young people described Norwegians as closed people, people who are afraid of the unknown, etc, this makes it clear that Norway is an individualistic society and when you come from a communal society this is a big cultural shock that takes time to adjust to. Eventually, these young people learn to cope with certain situations in their new society. Throughout the year's unaccompanied minors have used different strategies to cope with the Norwegian society so that they do not feel excluded. Strategies like avoiding, working harder, and confronting (Fangen and Lynnebakke, 2014).

Young people use avoiding certain conversations as a strategy, they make sure that they are not in conversations that feel like interviews. These are questions one may ask when curious, but it also makes the other person uncomfortable. The youth also use working harder as a coping strategy whereby they put in more work to perform better. This was presented in Shanita and Sheila's case whereby they had to work so hard with their Norwegian so that they get admission to schools they wanted. Shanita described how she has managed to integrate into the Norwegian society by coping and trying to fit in. Young people try to find ways how they can blend in society, like securing a part-time job, enrolling in higher-level education, and being part of social activities such as music. The last coping strategy is confrontation this means that young people speak up when treated wrongly (Fangen & Lynnebakke, 2014, p.54). Speaking up could have been used in the situation of mark whereby he would have told the teacher what he felt, but this strategy is hard to use especially if one is shy or they are afraid of being expelled. The findings showed that all the young people had to work hard to integrate into the Norwegian society, either by working on their Norwegian language or by making sure they qualify to join higher education at the university. Working harder is the most coping strategy these young people use while navigating the Norwegian society.

The asylum process also plays a great role in the integration of UMs in Norway. Asylum-seeking children who have moved around a lot during the resettlement process adapt differently than young refugees who are placed in a home setting (foster care or group homes) and are stable regarding education, mental health, and how well they relate with the Norwegian society (Pastoor, 2017). Most of the participants in this research reported not have hard it difficult to integrate into the Norwegian society as one lived in a foster home and three had lived in a group home. Mark reported that he learned Norwegian from his workplace and at the group home. He was already taking high school education while some of his friends that lived alone had just started going to high school. Having a grown-up to show you and translate for you information

about education work etc. is a great advantage than one trying to figure all these things on their own on top of fighting the loneliness that comes with being an UM.

5.4.1 The integration law

According to Brochmann & Djuve (2013, p.224), the term multiculturalism has never achieved a foothold as an ism in the Norwegian context. This is because the use of multiculturalism has meant ethnically plural (flerekulterell) in a descriptive sense and the policy-related term has been integrated throughout. As mentioned above, integration is a two-way dimension where the receiving society and newcomers recognize their differences and work for hand in hand to live as one society. The Norwegian welfare state is built with Nancy Fraser's recognition and redistribution concept. However, the redistribution goal of the Norwegian model has not been achieved at least not for all immigrant groups. There is still low labor market participation, low incomes, poor housing, and long-term dependence on public transfers among non-western immigrant groups. With all the historical multicultural struggles faced by Norway, the need for better integration measures was met by the major reform when the introductory act was passed in 2002 (ibid). All the participants in this research mentioned to have attended the introduction program, the program is to help the African unaccompanied minors become better at the Norwegian language and get to know more about the Norwegian society. The participants did not explicitly mention how quickly they got into the labor market, but by the time the interviews were conducted they were all economically independent.

According to the integration law, (2020) the main goal is that immigrants to integrate in the Norwegian society and gain economic independence. The law helps immigrants to get good Norwegian language proficiency, knowledge about Norwegian society, formal qualifications, and a lasting connection to the working life. The municipalities in Norway are responsible for setting up introduction programs for newly arrived refugees in Norway. The goal for participants who at least have education at the upper secondary level from before is that the participant shall qualify for higher education or work. For other participants, the goal is that the participant comes to work or completes part or all that primary or secondary education. According to the Ministry of Justice (2016) relating to the integration policy, integration is seen as an interaction between many parties. The individual immigrant must be met with demands to contribute and participate, and great effort is expected from the individual. At the same time, society must decide so that everyone can use their resources in working life and society (ibid,

p.9). All participants in this thesis were in the labor market by the time the interviews were conducted, they expressed how working and having an education made them feel more integrated into the Norwegian society despite feeling as outsiders sometimes. The findings in this research showed that all the participants had attended a language program with the main goal to either get qualifications to go for further education or even get them quickly in the labor market.

According to the ministry of justice (2016), the goal of the integration policy is that people will contribute to the government's starting point. The integration policy will facilitate this through incentives for participation in working life and society. The goal is for everyone who is to live and work in Norway to get a job and become taxpayers and participating citizens. This is important for long-term development, not least for maintaining a safe and financially sustainable welfare society. As a rule, everyone should support themselves. The Norwegian constitution ensures democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, including freedom of expression, equity, and equality. Norwegian law sets a framework for everyone living in Norway. Everyone who lives in Norway must be familiar with their duties and rights, as well as values that are central to Norwegian society (ibid). Therefore, new immigrants that come to Norway must adapt to the new society, new language, and cultural norms. The introduction program helps a lot of unaccompanied minors to familiarize themselves with the Norwegian society through the social studies course and when one masters the language it is easy to interact with the rest of the society.

5.5 Challenges faced by unaccompanied minors while integrating into the Norwegian society.

Past experiences, such as loss, uprooting, disrupted networks, and interrupted education, as well as present experiences in exile, will affect resettling young refugees' opportunities for adaptation to school and everyday life (Pastoor, 2017, p.159). Unaccompanied minors come with a lot of baggage in the receiving society and yet they also must cope with the challenges they face while trying to fit in. Below I discuss how language is a challenge in the integration of unaccompanied minors in Norway and can also be a reason that causes school dropout or loss of confidence among this group. The main challenge that the participants in this thesis

presented was language, the language limited their educational abilities and aspirations, and language affected how well they communicate with their Norwegian peers at school and how well they integrate into the Norwegian society.

5.2.1 Language barrier

As mentioned earlier, language is the key to integration into Norwegian society, but it is also one of the biggest challenges that young people face while trying to build a new life in Norway (Brook & Ottemöller, 2020). The Norwegian language has different dialects, people from the North of Norway speak differently than people from the West of Norway. The most common dialect taught in language schools, and introductory programs are Bokmål in many municipalities hence this makes it difficult to communicate while one is out of the classroom because everyone speaks differently than the dialect taught in class. “Even though students may speak the second language rather well in an everyday setting, they may have problems with the language used in the classroom, especially the more academic, subject-specific genres used in content lessons” (Pastoor, 2020, P.33). One may know the everyday terms to use in Norwegian, but some technical terms may make it difficult especially in academics. The young people in this research mentioned how language was and still is one of the challenges they may face in their day-to-day life.

“I feel like the language like it is the key to integration, like if you cannot speak the language then you cannot communicate with the Norwegian people, and it also becomes difficult” (Mark)

Mark reported how it was not easy to speak with Norwegian people and if one does not speak the language well it becomes even more difficult. In his case, he felt like speaking Norwegian at the group home and his workplace helped him a lot to learn the Norwegian language hence with time he felt integrated into the Norwegian society. The young people also reported a difference in the way people interacted with them during the first few years in Norway when they did not speak the language well and how people interact with them now. The same experience was presented in Brook & Ottemöller, (2020) research on unaccompanied minor girls in Norway.

Frida, Shanita, and Sheila reported having experienced a change in the way people communicated with them while they had just arrived in Norway and a few years later. The

young people expressed that in the beginning they were just seen as refugees, but as the years passed, they had attained education, and could speak better Norwegian hence feeling more confident in conversations and giving their opinions while talking to Norwegian people. The young people also recognized the importance of the Norwegian language as the key to attending university and higher education, but on the other hand for some people, you could never learn Norwegian well enough. All participants reported how they had to work hard on their Norwegian language so that they could follow the normal Norwegian high school, for some the language was the reason why they did not choose to attend university since most of their teachers and peers could advise them to take vocational education where they assumed the Norwegian used there is easier than that used at the university level.

“Okay now that I am finished with my bachelor's and like of course I don't have the language struggle or challenge that I had at the time, right now and then people will take you more seriously now I don't know what they think in their heads, but I assume that now they think okay she got here, she must be serious, she must be intelligent, she must be smart and stuff like that so I think some people see that you have accomplished more and who you are as a person. I see you for who you are, and I accept you for who you are and get to know you for your true self. So, I can like now (...) what are you studying, and I am like I am not studying, I have a degree I am working and then there it just makes things easier in a way” (Shanita).

5.5.2 School dropout

According to Pastoor (2013), language minorities have a high rate of school dropouts in Norway, either in higher education or vocational education. However, The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training also argues that many students from immigrant backgrounds do very well in the Norwegian education system and yet the statistics still show that immigrant children are slightly less likely than other young people to complete upper secondary education or training (Udir, 2019). Several factors lead to school dropout, but among unaccompanied minors it is mostly lack of concentration due to traumatic memories, depression that leads to loss of interest in school, and not knowing what they want to do with their life, etc (Pastoor, 2015). A lot of young refugees have mental health problems, depression is common among unaccompanied minors in Norway. Therefore, the longer the refugees have stayed in the resettlement country the less the mental health problems, and the lesser time the more mental health problems. This is because of the different uncertainties that these young

people find while they are in a process of seeking asylum in Norway after fleeing the traumas from their countries of origin (Oppedal et al. 2020, Pastoor, 2015, Jensen et al. 2019, Jensen et al. 2015, Jakobsen et al. 2017).

Mental health problems lead to distraction hence one losing motivation to complete school. However, in some societies and religious beliefs, mental health can be seen as a taboo which may lead to unaccompanied minors not to seek for help when they have depression symptoms. According to Satinsky, Fuhr, Woodward, Sondorp & Roberts (2019) the Somali community in Norway and Islamic tradition finds mental health as a taboo. If one person in the community admits to mental health problems, they refer to that person as someone who is being possessed by demons, and this may cause someone not to come out to expose they have a mental problem issue. None of the participants mentioned mental health problems explicitly, but throughout the interviews, they mentioned depressive experiences that could have developed into mental issues. The experiences of degrading by the teachers who these young people trust can lead to depression and confusion about their future and their life in the new society.

Learning in a different language is a challenge of itself and there are other factors lead to these young people having a lot on their plate. Young people who know what they want to do with their life, usually get the right advice what grades they need to get while those who are unsure end up in situations of going for the easiest way out. Results in this thesis show that the young people who did not know what they wanted to do for further education were advised not to take the high school diploma because of less Norwegian language proficiency, some of them regretted and wished they had been given a chance to find out themselves how had the program would have been. In the case of Mark, he knew he wanted to get a high school diploma, he wanted to be an engineer, but he was unsure of how this will look like, and therefore he chose the career that everyone told him was going be the easiest way and yet now he regrets why he did not go with his first choice. Many people had told him that with little Norwegian proficiency it would be difficult to keep up with the subjects he had to take. He was in a situation where he failed to get an apprenticeship spot, so he continues with his electro vocational training hence why he dropped out of school. He also presented that the teacher was one of the causes of his dropping out of school since the teacher kept on degrading him and he lost motivation to continue with the course. Throughout the interviews, the young people mentioned experiences of teachers being the main cause of some young people dropping out of school. Some teachers mock unaccompanied minors and make them look stupid and hence

these young people lose their confidence and start doubting if they belong where they are hence dropping out or giving up on what would give them a better life.

Research shows that the completion rates of higher education in general study programs are higher than in vocation study programs (Udir, 2019). Additionally, lower secondary grades are the most important factor for predicting whether a student will complete upper secondary. Therefore, the more important completing upper secondary becomes in society, the more serious the situation for those who fail to complete it. However, there is also a decrease in the number of jobs that do not require formal qualifications, and competition for those jobs is also increasing. Without completing or passing upper secondary, young people risk having problems with a stable participation in the Norwegian labour market (ibid). Norway has implemented some measures to reduce school dropouts like vocational education and training, but there is a process to this, and students can be declined and rejected from admission to an apprenticeship place in VET (Halvorsrud, 2017).

Norway has free access to education opportunities, but these do not favour everyone especially for a young person who wishes to settle, finish school, and then secure a career to start providing for their families back home in their home countries. A rejection crushes them down hence giving up on education and just going for work since there is not much time and they do not have guardians in Norway who can provide for them if they do not work. For the case of Mark, at least the school should have helped him acquire an apprenticeship spot, but lack of apprenticeship spot is a general problem in many vocational training programs, and the fact that one is a young black male may take the time to secure a spot because of the systematic discrimination. According to Udir (2019), there are generally more boys than girls applying for apprenticeships in Norway. Håvard & Støren (2006) discussed that most employers want applicants who are like them and most the employers are ethnic Norwegian men. The chances of a young African youth being employed or offered an apprenticeship spot are low. Udir (2019) also argues that discrimination is one of the reasons why immigrant children have lower chances of getting an apprenticeship spot than any other younger people. While they all have the same opportunities to apply for an apprenticeship, they are still discriminated against by employers. Because the young people are not offered an opportunity as the other applicants to show what they can do in the position, therefore there are still lower rates of immigrant participation in the Norwegian labor market. Education gives a social status in the society which is why a few of the young people interviewed in this project reported that people spoke

to them differently when they mentioned that they are educated than when they had just arrived in Norway and only had refugee status.

6 Conclusion

To answer the research question of this thesis I conducted a qualitative study on five unaccompanied minors who resided in different parts of Norway and were originally from the Eastern part of Africa. This thesis aimed at exploring the individual experiences of African unaccompanied minors in Norway regarding access to education opportunities. Themes like individual education experiences, stereotypical images, the relationship between the student and teachers, integration, and challenges faced by unaccompanied minors have been discussed by using multicultural, representation, stereotypical images, and education theories to reach the following conclusions. Results in this thesis showed that African unaccompanied minors are a diverse group with individual experiences and educational aspirations. Therefore, I hope that this research contributes to the ongoing discourse about the experiences of unaccompanied minors in Norway and give an African perspective to this research area.

Unaccompanied minors are a vulnerable group, they all come from different pathways and life situations. The fact that most of them come from collective societies and then must live in an individualistic society makes them more vulnerable. They must live with the loneliness and some of them must be anchor children who support their families back home. Some help to reunite their families hence the need for economic independence at an early age. In most cases they are children, but with adult responsibilities. While teachers and school advisors are giving advice usually they are telling these young people what they cant do, they are not telling them their opportunities but telling them their limitations because of their language proficiency. But what if some people could never learn the Norwegian language well enough?

African unaccompanied minors' experiences are not a great difference from other groups of UMs, however, some of their experiences are because they are African (the color of their skin and physical appearance). The findings in this research also showed that when UMs minors know exactly what they want, it is easy for them to get advice for further education (what grades they should get, what subjects to take, and what courses they should apply for). However, UMs who are unsure of what path they want to take are mostly offered the option of vocational education. As shown above, most of the participants in this thesis emphasized the wish to have been given all the options, they could choose from to go for further education rather than being pushed towards vocational education without them experiencing by themselves how hard university could be. I believe that African unaccompanied minors come with a lot of resources that can add value to the Norwegian society and while one is told that

they can not become an engineer because of the language there is more to what they can offer to the society than just the language.

Degrading from the young people's teachers was also presented whereby this meant that their abilities and resources were under looked by their teachers. The young people mean that they only need help on how to get to their dreams and what qualifications they need to get there other than being reminded how difficult it is going to be to take a certain path in education. Since UMs do not have parents, their teachers act as their role models and the adults they can run to when they need help. However, in many cases, it is the same teachers that crush these young people's educational aspirations. This is questioned if career guidance and degrading of students is done according to the UN guidelines of article 3 where the best interest of the child should be considered in any matters concerning a child. The teachers may advise from a certain point of care because of the relationship they build with these children, but regardless of one's intentions if the statement is degrading, it stays degrading. The young people come with a lot of different skills that can add value to the Norwegian society and this should not be limited because of the Norwegian language skills. For some of these young people Norwegian can be their fourth language hence cannot be compared with someone who only speaks two languages or just one language.

The integration laws and policies in Norway have the purpose to teach the newcomers the language and quickly into the labor market. Vocational education and training are one of the programs that the state created to reduce school dropouts in Norway among immigrants. But the same VET has a general program of lack of apprenticeship spots, and it is supposed to be one of the programs that get new arrivals quickly into the labor market. Some young people had dropped out of school (VET) because of a lack of apprenticeship spots. However, without the apprenticeship one does not get an opportunity to practice the profession they are in, hence an increase in the number of school dropouts and unemployment. Norway has these laws, policies, and structures on paper but is it the same in practice? On the other hand, the introduction program is supposed to help the newcomers learn the Norwegian language and get familiar with Norwegian society. However, a lot of young people do not learn the language in just a classroom structure, many URM's learn by practicing the language outside of the classroom, but when unaccompanied minors arrive in Norway they are placed in classes with only nonwestern children. Perhaps placing them in combined classes with Norwegian students from the beginning helps them practice the language while they have the language on aside.

The Norwegian government should also provide and train more bilingual teachers and any front-liners that provide any services to unaccompanied minors. People working with unaccompanied minors should be aware of how vulnerable this group is, aware of the migration process and the challenges it comes with.

I recommend further research to be conducted on the issue of the lack of apprenticeship spots in the Norwegian upper secondary education system. Is it because of low/high demands for this specific profession or are there many students recommended to take vocational education while there is a low demand for these professions?

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Annex 1: Letter of consent

Information form for participants taking part in the research project “The Role of Education in the integration of African Unaccompanied minors in Norway”

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to explore the experiences of African unaccompanied minors regarding access to education opportunities in Norway. In this letter, we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

This research project is a master thesis that I am required to hand in by mid-May 2022 in the Program “master’s in Human Rights and Multiculturalism”. The main purpose of this project is to explore the experiences of African unaccompanied minors regarding access to education opportunities in Norway. With this research project, I want to answer the following questions.

Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of African unaccompanied minors regarding access to education opportunities in Norway?

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of South-Eastern Norway is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

You are asked to participate in this research project because you meet the following criteria

- You came to Norway as an unaccompanied minor.
- You have gone through the asylum-seeking process in Norway.
- You came to Norway as a refugee minor.
- You are above the age of 18 and have gone through part of the education system in Norway.

What does participation involve for you?

Participation will be through individual interviews using semi-structured interview questions. The data collected will be recorded and stored with the Nettskjema app which is the university’s safe storage for data.

The interviews will take approx. 45 minutes and it will include questions like “Can you explain to me your experiences regarding access to education opportunities when you arrived

in Norway”. The answers will be recorded and stored with the Nettskjema app. I will also be taking notes while the interview goes on.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

I and my supervisor Lena Lybæk will have access to the personal data. While I transcribe the recorded data, I will replace your name with a code name. I will store the code names differently so that they cannot be linked to the actual consent letter and this will be locked away and only with reach of me and my supervisor. Therefore, participants are going to be anonymous in this research project.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end on 15th May 2022, I will delete all personal data collected and digital recordings at the end of this project.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- - access the personal data that is being processed about you
- - request that your personal data be deleted
- - request that incorrect personal data about you be corrected/rectified
- - receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- - send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with University of South-Eastern Norway, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- University of South-Eastern Norway via Lena Lybæk, by email: Lena.Lybaek@usn.no or by telephone +47 31008878
- Our Data Protection Officer: Paal Are Solberg, by email: personvernombud@usn.no or
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader

Student (Jamila Jalloh)

(Lena Lybæk)

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project “the role of education in the integration of African unaccompanied minors in Norway” and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- .. to participate in an interview
- .. for my personal data to be used anonymously in this research project

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 15th May 2022

(Signed by participant, date)

Annex 2: Interview Guide.

Research Question:

1. What are the experiences of African unaccompanied minors regarding access to education opportunities in Norway?

Basic Questions for Students

- How Old Are You?
- What is your country of origin?
- How long have you lived in Norway?
- What is your level of education now?
- What was your level of education when you arrived in Norway?

Education in Norway

- When you came to Norway what were your experiences regarding access to education opportunities?
- How much information were you given about the Norwegian Education system?
- Which language did you receive the information in?
- Did you understand all the information that was given to you?
- What were your feelings when you started going to school in Norway?
- How did your teachers meet you when you started going to school?
- Did you get help with Choosing further education after?
- Can you explain the challenges you faced in choosing your career?

Integration

- What do you understand by the term integration?
- Can you explain to me what you do/did to integrate into the Norwegian society?
- What are some of the challenges you face/faced while integrating into Norwegian society?
- Has being educated helped you integrate well into Norwegian society?

Open-Ended Questions for students (Identity)

- How would you describe yourself if anyone asked who are you?
- What is your cultural identity, social identity, career, and ethnicity?