



UNIVERSITY OF  
NORDLAND

# MASTER THESIS

*Social and cultural adaptation of asylum  
seekers in Norway.*

*Study carried out at the mottakssenter  
“Hero” AS in Bodø*

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## ABSTRACT

The study is meant to investigate the process of sociocultural adaptation and integration of asylum seekers in Norway. In doing so, asylum seekers at the mottakssenter “Hero” in Bodø have been used as informants.

Since “Hero” is one of the main organizations regarding the work with refugees in Bodø, present research discovers the most important and significant factors of their activities influencing the successful development and implementation of integration process of refugees who had received an approval for their stay and asylum in Norway.

The research seeks to identify the reasons which might bring negative and reverse effects and provides recommendations grounded on the asylum seekers’ suggestions concerning measures might be applied for further improvement of “Hero’s” work.

The study draws on different legal underpinnings and state institutions dealing with migration in Norway. It highlights the key elements of integration policy in the country with close attention to its implementation at the local level: Bodø municipality.

Data of the research was gathered by means of qualitative method based on focus group and personal interviews with asylum seekers from Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea as informants. Previous researches on the present topic have been analyzed as well.

The findings of the study demonstrate the current situation at the mottakssenter “Hero”. There was discovered that “Hero” has a routine and well developed plan for including asylum seekers in Norwegian society but there is still room for improvement. Moreover, results show that asylum seekers are extremely motivated to be included in this process and are open for new changes.

*Key words:* migration, adaptation, integration, culture, language, social connection, social support, refugee, asylum seeker, mottakssenter.

*“There are more international migrants today than ever before, and their number is certain to increase for the foreseeable future. Almost every country on earth is, and will continue, to be affected. Migration is inextricably linked with other important global issues, including development, poverty, and human rights. Migrants are often the most entrepreneurial and dynamic members of society; historically migration has underpinned economic growth and nation-building and enriched cultures. Migration also presents significant challenges. Some migrants are exploited and their human rights abused; integration in destination countries can be difficult; and migration can deprive origin countries of important skills. For all these reasons and more, migration matters”.*

Khalid Koser (2007)



## **CHAPTER-1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Migration and who are migrants?**

In today world, global migration whether this is voluntary, as when people migrate to improve upon their living conditions, or involuntary, as when war makes their present living conditions inhabitable, complicates the issue of interaction between different civilizations. Tensions between the local population and the migrants are provoked by ethnic migrants' inability to adapt to the social environment, due to their weak inclusion in the day – to – day social and cultural context of the host country. Intercultural and interreligious dialogue is becoming increasingly important in the modern world. Migration is one important element of the cultural interaction process, which can yield different results: from mutual penetration and enrichment of the two cultures to mutual alienation and intercultural conflicts.

Migrants carry their own cultural values and norms. By merging with a new social and cultural system, they either abandon these norms and values (and thus become assimilated in the new culture) or form communities (grouped by religious, cultural or ethnic principles, remaining loyal to their traditional values).

Cross and Gelderblom (2006) claim that migration involves change of residence and must accompany the crossing of the boundary of a migration – defining area.

Migration is one of the most important mechanisms of social mobility, which is understood as the movement of individuals or groups within a social space. The social adaptation process is related to radical changes in the person's activity and their social environment, which is exactly what happens in the situations studied – when people change their social status after resettlement.

### **1.2 Social and cultural adaptation**

It is a fact that migrants leaving their place of residence for another region or country need to adjust to the new social and cultural conditions. In this case modern science uses the term "adaptation". In the context of this research this term was used to cover better the essence of a migrant "entering" the new culture. As a result of migration, the person is moved from a familiar

natural and social environment to another; he or she breaks numerous natural and anthropological connections established previously and recreates them artificially in the new place. The problems of overcoming ethnic and cultural distance between the local population and ethnic migrants are complicated by the latter having to adjust to changes in the social and territorial status of their new residence and to accept the new forms of social and cultural behavior. How successful a migrant is in adapting to the new culture determines how effectively he/she will function in the new social and cultural system, with all the links, relationships and interactions in this society.

Cultural adaptation means the adjustment of social groups and individuals to the changing natural, geographic, social and historical conditions of life by changing their conscience and behavior models, social organization and regulation forms, norms and values, the way of life and elements of the world outlook, subsistence elements, operating directions and technologies. In its broadest sense, cultural adaptation is understood as the process and outcome of active adjustment of ethnic groups to the demands of the new social and cultural environment. It represents the process of immersion of an individual or socio – ethnic group into the new culture, gradual acceptance of its norms, values and behavior models. Cultural adaptation is a process, which results in changes to people and acceptance of new cultural standards (language norms, methods of communication, appearance and behavior rules).

Social and cultural adaptation has all the features of social processes, to a larger or smaller degree. It is a mass process. In its social aspect, adaptation essentially means the adjustment to new norms and values, which is impossible without the society creating these norms and without a group of migrants as the objects and subjects of this adjustment. Social and cultural adaptation occurs as part of interaction within the social environment and is ultimately aimed at strengthening social connections.

One important factor of human adaptation is the evaluation of the circumstances the person finds himself or herself in.

According to Martin and Martin (2006) international migrants belong to two broad groups: *voluntary migrants* and *forced migrants*. Voluntary migration is sustained by well – developed networks that link the supply of labor market with the demand of businesses for both highly skilled and unskilled workers. Forced migration is fuelled by conflicts, human rights abuse and political repression that displace people from their home communities.

In other words, if voluntary migration pursues the goal of improving the living conditions

(better financial standing, housing conditions, career growth), and the person is ready to suffer some temporary inconveniences for the better cause, forced migration, as a rule, is accomplished by the loss of relatives, friends, status, profession, often loss of property, changes (usually deterioration) in the living standards, and a crisis of values.

Forced migrants are facing the problem of social and cultural adaptation in a particularly acute way. The word "forced" follows the migrant even after resettlement. The different culture forces them to abandon previous way of life, accept new social norms, rules and behavior models. A forced migrant goes through radical changes in every aspect of life: from nature and climate to food and clothes, from social, economic and psychological relationships with the world and the other people to the relationships within the family. The most important aspect of these changes is cultural: a new language, traditions, customs, rituals, norms and values. Forced migration becomes a true catastrophe for most adults in terms of its social, economic and psychological consequences, particularly when it occurs with a limited time span, without a chance for any preparation to the change of location.

Refugees and forced migrants spend a lot of time in their temporary habitats, with only their basic needs satisfied and while experiencing major language and psychological barriers preventing their adaptation in the new place; as a result, they lose the ability to satisfy their higher – level needs, such as the need for social life. Limited funds available to refugees reduce their personal properties to a set of consumerist values, completely ignoring production values, thus leading to personal degradation and ethnic and cultural marginalization of the refugees.

As I mentioned before, adaptation is the process of a person adjusting to new conditions, i.e. the process of a social object actively assimilating with the new social environment, which results in a mutual influence between the environment and the subject of social life and allows the person to function successfully.

The move to a new economic and cultural environment is always associated with a complex social adaptation process. An individual adjusting to the new conditions results in the changes of his/her personality, its moral norms, values and social relationships. It is important for both the migrants and the society that the process of adaptation is as fast and as painless as possible. The problem of adaptation and adjustment of the migrants is particularly challenging for those whose departure from their previous place of residence was not exactly voluntary.

Adaptation is the primary outcome of the acculturation process. As I noticed already above cultural adaptation is characterized by relatively stable changes in the individual or group conscience in response to the requirements of the environment. Cultural adaptation is one of the main factors of the overall culture genesis, historical variability of the culture, innovations and other processes in the social and cultural transformation of the society. Successful adaptation is not about a person rejecting their own cultural values and fully accepting the new culture, but about their ability to connect various value systems by learning and accepting the new cultural norms and values. However, results of adaptation may be controversial. If the balance between what is gained and what is lost increases in favor of the former, the individual becomes more tolerant about the hardships of the adaptation period, and vice versa – the more losses the transformation process is related to, the more people prefer to interrupt it.

### **1.3 Acculturation**

Acculturation is an important factor in the life of the modern society. Since mutual influence of cultures is an ongoing process, people absorb the skills and ideas of new cultures, which differ greatly from their own.

Acculturation can take the form of a natural process taking place between individuals in a multinational society, but it can also be a result of an intentional policy of the government, granting citizenship only to those foreigners who have passed the so – called naturalization (learned the official language of the country, accepted its cultural norms, traditions, customs). Hence, ethnology identifies two types of naturalization: stimulated and violent, reflecting its positive and negative role in the life of an ethnic group. Acculturation is the result of mutual influence of interacting cultures, whereas some or all representatives of one culture accept the norms, values, customs and traditions of another culture. In the process of acculturation, a migrant addresses two important issues at the same time: attempts to preserve his or her cultural identity and becomes engaged in the foreign culture. Combination of the possible solutions to these issues gives four main forms of acculturation:

*Assimilation* is the form of acculturation where members of an ethnic group completely abandon their original culture and absorb the culture of a different ethnic group they are in regular contact with.

*Separation* means the rejection of an alien culture by an individual or a social group, while maintaining original cultural identity. In this case, the representatives of a non – dominant group prefer some degree of isolation from the dominant culture. Important to point that if such isolation is called upon by the representatives of the dominant culture, it is called *segregation*.

*Marginalization* implies, on the one hand, the loss of identity with one's original culture, and on the other hand, lack of identification with the majority culture. This situation arises out of finding it impossible to support one's own identity (usually due to certain external reasons) and the lack of interest in obtaining a new identity (in some cases, due to discrimination or segregation by the dominant culture).

Finally, *integration* means identification with both the old and the new culture. In the process of co – existence, various ethnicities not only cooperate in the economic area, but also get to share a common vision of the world, structure the means and forms of communication, grow increasingly intertwined in terms of various day – to – day behavior types and borrow language forms. As a result, previously separated ethnic cultures get along organically within a common territory. Convergence of the cultures means that the migrants actually accept the local culture, while the locals absorb some elements of the culture introduced by the migrants. Integration has to do with real involvement in economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the territory where migrants are located, with the conditions regulating their stay and with the migrants' perception of the local society, their attitude towards how well the society accepts them and how well they are participating in the life of the society. In this case it is more important to meet the migrants' basic needs – respecting their dignity and cultural identity, security, social connection – rather than satisfying their immediate material needs. Then the migrants will be able to integrate into the local society on their own.

#### **1.4 Norway's integration policy and immigration streams**

For a long period of time Norway considered itself as a very ethnically homogenous country. There has been an increasing awareness that there has always been some heterogeneity, due to the presence of people with Sami and Finnish origins, as well as Rom, other travelers and a small Jewish population. During the last four decades, immigration has been on the increase from around the world. Immigrants from 219 differing countries and autonomous regions are

now represented in Norway's population.

Since 1970, Norway has had a net inflow of migrants. Some of the consequences of this flow have been considered problematic right from the start, and have put immigration questions high on the political agenda.

In 1974 Norway introduced an immigration ban with the justification that had to be able to solve the integration problems faced by immigrants already in the country before letting new ones in. The ban ended up influencing the composition of Norway's immigration streams more so than their size.

Since the immigration ban was introduced, the majority of immigrants coming from third world countries have been refugees and asylum seekers (Bevelander and Bilde, 2013).

Small groups of refugees with origins in a number of African countries were registered. These refugees were less like asylum seekers and more like today's United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) refugees. They were understood more in the context of Norway's fulfillment of its humanitarian and political responsibilities and less as a group requiring an immigration policy.

The stated aim of Norway's integration policies has always been to ensure that those allowed to stay should have decent living conditions. As living conditions were seen as clearly dependent upon labour market participation, access to the labour market became an increasingly more important aim. It was clear that most refugees did not have the qualifications required to participate in the Norwegian labour market, neither in terms of formal skills or language competence. Finding way to accommodate these missing skills has been the aim of integration policy (Bevelander and Bilde, 2013).

Over the past twenty years, successive governments have largely succeeded in creating a framework of equal opportunities for Norway's increasingly diverse population. Policies have sought to replicate for immigrants the social mobility that large parts of the Norwegian population experienced in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such policies have primarily focused on improving education outcomes and preventing discrimination.

Before 1975, most non – Western immigrants to Norway, largely from Pakistan and Turkey, came for jobs. In 1975 the government imposed a general ban on immigration, leaving only two ways for third – country nationals to legally enter Norway: through family reunification and refugees.

Norway's stability, safety, wealth, and welfare system make it an attractive destination for migrants from many backgrounds, in spite of its cold climate and peripheral location.

Alongside the rapid growth of the ethnic minority population, debates about integration, immigration policy, multiculturalism, and national identity have flourished in Norway and have become a central political issue since the end of the Cold War.

Norway has a pressing need to strike a balance between equality and difference, between unity and diversity, as the government attempts to foster a fair and just society that includes both old and new Norwegians. Throughout Norway's postwar history and especially under the leadership of the Labour Party, inclusion and the values associated with equality have been seen as paramount.

One primary objective of the Norwegian government is to ensure high participation by inhabitants in the labor market. To this end, ethnic discrimination in the labor market is illegal. The main organization for employers, the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises (NHO), has run campaigns encouraging its members to employ people of minority backgrounds.

As stated by Eriksen (2013) the thrust of Norwegian policies towards immigrants has nevertheless tended in the direction of equality, sometimes understood as assimilation. One reason may be that the same word, *likhet*, means both "equality" and "similarity" in Norwegian. There is no terminological distinction being made between equal rights and cultural similarity. Claiming equality is an understandable and laudable thing to do in Norway, while claiming the right to difference is more difficult to handle ideologically.

## **1.5 Motivation for the study**

It is obvious that the main way to address the migrants' social problems and regulate migration flows into Norway is through its migration policy, which is a combination of social and political concepts and views of the migration situation in the country, as well as specific organizational, legal, social and economic activities to regulate migration processes, aimed at creating the conditions for the migrants' successful settlement and social adaptation.

It is important to understand that organization and implementation of social work with refugees requires careful consideration of a number of circumstances largely determined by the needs of this category of people.

First, the migrants are more or less marginalized, due to the loss of their territorial roots. This also affects their traditional natural and social environment.

Second, migrants are in the state of psychological, cultural and social de – adaptation, which largely determines the content of social support and aid they need from the receiving society.

I would like to mention that work with the migrants in Norway is performed over several directions. One of the key motives to write this work was the desire to study these directions in more detail, using “Hero” mottakssenter as an example.

Even though many studies have been published concerning migrants and migration policy in Norway, this will be the first work to describe the methods of working with migrants using one specific organization in Bodø as an example and produce an evaluation and recommendations for the future based on the results of interviews conducted.

## **1.6 The purpose of the study and its research question**

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the process of integration and acculturation of asylum seekers through a case study of the mottakssenter “Hero”. It also aims to present recommendations for future improvements on the base of conducted research.

The above objectives are aimed at answering the main questions of this study.

*What are the main working principles of Bodø mottakssenter “Hero” and can these principles be considered as perfect regarding social and cultural integration of asylum seekers into Norwegian society?*

*What are the key features of successful social and cultural adaptation and integration of migrants from such countries as Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea into Norwegian society, and is it possible at all?*

## **1.7 Limitation of the study**

This research aims to examine the social and cultural adaptation of refugees who had already received an approval for their stay and asylum in Norway. All nineteen persons who were



engaged in my interviews have received positive responses from UDI regarding their stay in the country.

The number of respondents who gave voluntary consent to be involved in this study was limited by the number of persons that had approval at the time of interview conduction. Even though fourteen persons are enough for conducting focus group interviews and five persons for conducting personal interviews, it is problematically to evaluate whether the research participants are statistically represent on the whole all refugees on the territory of Norway.

## **1.8 Organization of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. The introduction chapter 1 presents the chosen topic, the main objectives of the research, the research question and some aspects of the theoretical base.

Chapter 2 analyzes the migration policy in Norway. It will allow a reader to get acquainted with the main aspects and specifics of Norway's migration policy and give an overview of legal and regulatory documents. There will be presented state institutions dealing with migration in the country as well.

Chapter 3 describes the main features of integration process of refugees in Norway. It also provides an overview of introduction programme and teaching projects in the country and gives the description and the key characteristics regarding the integration process of refugees on the local level (Bodø) with an emphasis on Bodø mottakssenter "Hero".

Chapter 4 is a methodological part. There will be presented methodological issues as well as the data collection procedure.

The empirical part of the thesis is presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7. Chapter 5 highlights the data analysis on the cultural level. Chapter 6 tries to explain the importance of language issues and chapter 7 focuses on social and personal support asylum seekers receive. Chapter 8 has its aim to summarize the findings of the research and provides recommendations and concluding remarks.

## **CHAPTER-2: MIGRATION POLICY IN NORWAY**

Norway is one of many countries that takes a leading position on people's standard of living and it spends a huge amount of its budget for social programmes.

Historically Norway was a society with a rather homogeneous cultural environment. Immigration to Norway from the countries of the third world began rather late. Up into the middle of the 1970s, the presence of representatives of foreign countries obviously differing from ethnic Norwegians was not an element of everyday life.

The following categories of immigrants have the opportunity to come to Norway according to the legislative base of the country: refugees, close relatives of residents of Norway, the labour immigrants who have an invitation to work from the specific employer, and students.

The Norwegian government has given itself the task of creating a tolerant, multinational society and to fight against racism. Everyone should have equal rights, duties and opportunities regardless of ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation or capacity. A successful society like this means gender equality. The government of Norway expects from its residents an active participation in public questions, compliance with laws and fundamental democratic principles.

In Norway, the migration policy is governed by several international agreements and performed by various state organizations.

### **2.1 Legal underpinnings**

In the contemporary International law the legal regime applicable to the refugees and their status are defined on the basis of Convention (1951) and Protocol (1967) (UNHCR, 2010).

Both Convention (1951) and Protocol (1967) provide the establishment of cooperation between the Contracting States and the Office of the High Commissioner for refugees with the regard to the application of these documents.

#### **2.1.1 Convention (1951) and Protocol (1967)**

Grounded in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of human rights 1948, which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries, the United

Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted in 1951, is the center piece of international refugee protection today.

The Convention entered into force on 22 April 1954, and it has been subject to only one amendment in the form of a 1967 Protocol, which removed the geographic and temporal limits of the 1951 Convention. The 1951 Convention, as a post – Second World War instrument, was originally limited in scope to persons fleeing events occurring before 1st January 1951 and within Europe. The 1967 Protocol removed these limitations and thus gave the Convention universal coverage. It has since been supplemented by refugee and subsidiary protection regimes in several regions, as well as via the progressive development of international human rights law.

The 1951 Convention consolidates previous international instruments relating to refugees and provides the most comprehensive codification of the rights of refugees at the international level. In contrast to earlier international refugee instruments, which were applied to specific groups of refugees, the 1951 Convention endorses a single definition of the term “refugee” in Article 1.

The emphasis of this definition is on the protection of persons from political or other forms of persecution. A *refugee*, according to the Convention, is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well – founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.

The Convention is both a status and rights – based instrument and is underpinned by a number of fundamental principles, most notably non – discrimination, non – penalization and non-refoulement. Convention provisions are to be applied without discrimination as to race, religion or country of origin. Developments in international human rights law also reinforce the principle that the Convention be applied without discrimination as to sex, age, disability, sexuality, or other prohibited grounds of discrimination.

The Convention stipulates that subject to specific exceptions, refugees should not be penalized for their illegal entry or stay. This recognizes that the seeking of asylum can require refugees to breach immigration rules.

Prohibited penalties might include being charged with immigration or criminal offences relating to the seeking of asylum, or being arbitrarily detained purely on the basis of seeking asylum. Importantly, the Convention contains various safeguards against the expulsion of

refugees. The principle of non – refoulement is so fundamental that no reservations or derogations may be made to it. It provides that no one shall expel or return (“refouler”) a refugee against his or her will, in any manner whatsoever, to a territory where he or she fears threats to life or freedom.

The Convention lays down basic minimum standards for the treatment of refugees, without prejudice to States granting more favourable treatment. Such rights include access to the courts, to primary education, to work, and the provision for documentation, including a refugee travel document in passport form.

Apart from expanding the definition of a refugee, the Protocol obliges States to comply with the substantive provisions of the 1951 Convention to all persons covered by the refugee definition in Article 1, without any limitation of date. Although related to the Convention in this way, the Protocol is an independent instrument, accession to which is not limited to States parties to the Convention.

In view of the increasing recognition of the fundamental significance of the Convention and the Protocol for the protection of refugees and for the establishment of minimum standards for their treatment, it is important that their provisions be known as widely as possible, both by refugees and by all those concerned with refugee problems (UNHCR, 2010).

### **2.1.2 Dublin Convention**

The Dublin Regulation, its predecessor the Dublin Convention and related agreements regulate allocation of applicants within the European Economic Area (EEA).

The Dublin Convention applies only to “a request whereby an alien seeks protection from a Member State under the Geneva Convention by claiming refugee status within the meaning of Article 1 of the Refugee Convention”; hence not to persons who (explicitly) request subsidiary or temporary protection status. The Dublin Regulation applies to “applications”, that is to any “application for international protection, unless a third – country national explicitly requests another kind of protection that can be applied for separately”. This personal scope encompasses necessarily all (future) beneficiaries of refugee status, as well as all subsidiary protection status beneficiaries in those Member States that run a single procedure for examining applications for both statuses.

The Dublin Convention should “guarantee adequate protection to refugees in accordance with the terms of the Refugee Convention”, and “provide all applicants for asylum with a guarantee that their applications will be examined by one of the Member States and to ensure that applicants for asylum are not referred successively from one Member State to another without any of these States acknowledging itself to be competent to examine the application for asylum” (Battjes, 2006).

### **2.1.3 The Schengen agreement**

The Schengen Agreement means that a person can move freely across borders inside the area covered by the Agreement, without showing a passport or any other form of papers, indeed without stopping at national borders. One of the visible monuments of European integration are the empty buildings formerly used by border police to control passports. For non – EU citizens, this means that a visa to enter the Schengen area is a Schengen visa allowing the said person to travel freely in the area (Møller, 2008).

## **2.2 State institutions dealing with migration in Norway**

In Norway there are many organizations that work for refugees and immigrants.

### **2.2.1 The Directorate of Immigration (UDI)**

The Directorate of Immigration (UDI, Utlendingsdirektoratet) is the central agency in the immigration administration in Norway.

The UDI has the overall responsibility for coordinating the immigration administration.

At the same time, however, UDI has a control function and must prevent system abuse. It processes applications for asylum, visas, family immigration, work and study permits, citizenship, permanent residence permits (settlement permits) and travel documents.

UDI also makes decisions on rejection and expulsion. In addition, the organization is responsible for ensuring that all asylum seekers are offered somewhere to live while they wait for the processing of their applications, and for finding good solutions for those who wish to return to their home countries.

The UDI shall treat users with respect both in its role as service provider and facilitator and in its role as an inspection authority. This means that cases should be processed within a reasonable amount of time and that applicants must receive adequate and comprehensible information while the case is being processed and in the decision itself.

As an open directorate, the UDI endeavours to give users, the media and the general public an insight into its activities and an understanding of the regulations within the immigration field and of the administrative work performed by the immigration authorities (Official home page of The Directorate of Immigration).

### **2.2.2 An Independent quasi – judicial Appeals Board (UNE)**

An independent quasi – judicial Appeals Board (UNE, Utlendingsnemnda) is an independent quasi – judicial Appeals Board that handles appeals of rejections by the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) pursuant to the Immigration Act. Administratively, UNE sorts under the Ministry of justice and public security. Although the Ministry can instruct the Board through legislation, regulations, budget and general priorities, it can not instruct the Board on interpreting the law, exercising discretion or deciding individual cases.

The appeals UNE handles include: protection (asylum), family migration, residence permits, deportation and citizenship.

UNE has more than one method to reach its decisions. Decisions can be reached at appeals board hearings with the appellant present, at appeals board hearings without the appellant, by a board leader following preparation by the legal secretariat or by the legal secretariat. A board leader decides the processing method for each case.

According to the Immigration Act, cases without material questions of doubt may be decided without an appeals board hearing, either by a board leader or by the legal secretariat. These may, for example, be cases governed by a regulation in which it is easily determined whether specific requirements of laws and regulations have been met.

Most appeals board hearings are held with the appellant present. However, appeals board hearings are also held without the appellant. If, for example, the appellant and UDI are in agreement about the facts of the case, i.e. the appellant's explanation has already been taken into account before the case being transferred to UNE, the appeals board can hold a hearing and

decide the case without the appellant. However, personal attendance is crucial in cases where the appellant is able to help provide necessary clarification.

Appeals board hearings are attended by a board leader and by two lay board members. UNE's legal secretariat prepares cases to be handled by the appeals board. The board leader submits case documents to other board members prior to the hearing. Hearings take place behind closed doors.

Board hearings begin with a brief presentation of the case by the Board Leader, during the hearing, the appellant will answer the questions from the board and his/her lawyer (representative). The representative is given an opportunity to sum up the case. Cases handled at appeals board hearings are decided by a majority vote.

Decisions made in individual cases can not be reviewed by the Ministry, Government or UNE's administration, but can be appealed through the regular judicial system (Official home page of An independent quasi – judicial Appeals Board).

### **2.2.3 The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)**

The Directorate of Integration and Diversity's (IMDi's, Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet) goal is to contribute to equality in living conditions and diversity through employment, integration and participation.

IMDi was established on 1 January 2006 to act as a competence centre and a driving force for integration and diversity. The directorate co – operates with immigrant organisations/groups, municipalities, government agencies and the private sector. It provides advice and implements government policy.

In order to give higher priority and define clearer goals for efforts aimed at achieving integration and diversity, the government decided in December 2004 to establish a separate Directorate.

The establishment of the directorate was achieved through a division of the Directorate of Immigration (UDI). A large number of employees in the Department of Integration at UDI were transferred to IMDi as well as key administrative personnel. UDI and IMDi both share office buildings in regional and national units and share IT and library services. UDI is responsible for migration and immigration, including the running of reception centres for asylum seekers, while

IMDi is responsible for persons who have been granted residence permits in Norway, and for other tasks in the field of integration and diversity.

Among IMDi's areas of responsibility is the achievement of employment – based integration through:

Resettlement;

The introduction programme;

Classes in Norwegian and social studies;

Interpreting services;

Functioning as a competence centre;

Efforts aimed at diversity and dialogue;

Equality with respect to public services.

IMDi's important administrative duties include:

Administering grant schemes (including integration grants);

Research and development, among other things through grants for projects;

Documentation, including the National Introduction Register (NIR);

Information and guidance through web portals, publications, networks etc.

IMDi works in cooperation with others. The directorate is a network organization whose most important target groups and collaborative partners are:

Municipalities;

Sector authorities;

Recently arrived immigrants;

Established immigrant groups;

Business community;

General public;

People abroad intending to settle in Norway (Official home page of The Directorate of Integration and Diversity).



### **CHAPTER-3: INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES**

According to Muus (1997) integration is a process of mutual accommodation between immigrants and the majority population. The concept implies that immigrant groups will cease to be distinctive in culture and behaviour over time, and can be seen as two – ways process in which minority and majority groups learn from each other and borrow aspects of each other's culture.

Contemporary refugee resettlement programmes have their origins in the aftermath of the Second World War when many thousands of people affected by conflict in Europe were offered refuge in countries across the globe.

Following the Second World War, it became increasingly apparent to the international community that many people lived under the threat of various kinds of persecution and would not be protected if left to the mercy of their own government. A number of international legal instruments were subsequently developed with a view to securing a concerted and cooperative international response to human rights problem.

As I mentioned in previous chapters, significant among these were the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee and its 1967 Protocol. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in January 1951 with a mandate to provide international protection to refugees and seek durable solutions to their plight (UNHCR, 2002).

#### **3.1 General goals for integration in countries of resettlement**

Countries of resettlement have a role in ensuring that refugees have access to the recourses required for their longer term stability and adjustment. Among these are housing, employment and education. Countries can foster a social environment in which resettling refugees feel welcome and understood, in which they can be assured that their rights will be respected and in which they can develop social connections and contribute to civic life.

A set of integration goals have been developed with a view to putting into operation the principles developed and endorsed at the International Handbook on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees. The goals describe the practical elements of an integration programmes and the basic resources that will be required to assist refugees in their resettlement,

while ensuring that the process is a mutual one in which both refugees and receiving societies contribute and from which both benefit.

*The basic goals are the following:*

*Meeting basic needs*

A secure environment with adequate access to income, accommodation and health care are among the basic rights of all people. As well as being fundamental to refugees' survival in a new country, these recourses assist them to regain a sense of security, predictability and control.

*Communicating in the receiving country*

The ability to communicate in the receiving country is a critical condition for achieving control and independence, gaining access to resources, participating in the social and economic institutions of the receiving country and establishing social connections.

It is important that new refugee arrivals have access to interpreting and translating services and other forms of language assistance as well as opportunities to learn the language of the receiving country.

*Orientations to the systems of the receiving country*

New arrivals' ability to establish a new life and to access resettlement resources will be critically dependent on understanding and being able to negotiate basic systems, programmes and entitlements in the receiving country. Among these are procedures for banking, transportation, registering for employment, accessing health care and enrolling for school and language tuition.

*Planning for the future*

Long term housing, employment and education are essential for planning a positive future, for achieving economic stability and for establishing one's sense of place and identity. It is important that arrangements are made for new refugee arrivals to access these resources, either through specialized programmes or support in accessing services and systems also available to nationals.

### *Family reunification*

Many refugees experience grief, anxiety and guilt associated with having left close family members behind in countries of origin or asylum. Offering resettled refugees the opportunity to apply to have family members join them in the receiving country plays a powerful role in addressing these feelings. Family support is also important for both mental health and well – being and longer term economic and social stability.

### *Systems of support*

Settling in a new country can be difficult and complex. Newly arrived refugees are unlikely to have connections with people able to support them. Guilt and the erosion of trust, dignity and self – esteem which may result from traumatic refugee experiences can undermine refugees' capacity to access formal and informal support networks and services. Therefore it is important that steps are taken to connect new refugee arrivals with individuals who are able to offer individualized support in the early post arrival period.

### *Restoring faith in government*

Many resettled refugees come from countries where governments failed to protect their rights or where violence and human rights abuses were perpetrated by the state.

Countries of resettlement can help to restore refugees' confidence in government by providing integration programmes in ways which demonstrate respect for freedom, human rights and individual dignity. It is also important that resettled refugees have equitable access to government services and programs available to the wider community.

### *Valuing diversity*

There is increasing recognition among countries currently offering refugee resettlement that integration is more likely to be successful in an environment in which new arrivals are able to maintain their cultural, racial, religious or ethnic integrity while at the same time being encouraged to participate in, and access the resources of the receiving society.

Most countries take steps to ensure that integration programmes (such as language training and orientation) are delivered in ways which value and respect refugees' culture and customs.

At the same time it is important that refugees are able to participate in the civil, economic and social institutions of the receiving country and to foster social connections within it. For this reasons, refugees will also require opportunities to learn about laws, customs, role expectations and communication patterns in the receiving country.

### *Refugee communities*

In countries with a history of culturally diversity migration and resettlement, refugee and ethnic communities have an important role in extending hospitality and support to new arrivals. In addition these communities provide a means for refugees to connect with cultural and religious institutions and practices. In many countries, the contribution of refugee communities to supporting integration is fostered by government or private funding and other forms of support to strengthen their capacity (UNHCR, 2002).

## **3.2 Implementation of integration policy in Norway at the national level**

Integration is two – ways process between refugees and their hosts in which refugees gradually become integrated members of society legally, economically and socially, both nationally and locally.

Host government ultimately determines how their local integration strategy is designed and implemented, but each successful strategy shares three core dimensions: legal, economic and social.

The legal dimension involves the establishment of a legal framework in which refugees gradually attain a wider range of rights in the host country.

The economic dimension involves enabling refugees to establish sustainable livelihoods and a standard of living comparable to their host community.

The social dimension utilizes social and cultural frameworks to enable refugees to access education and social services as well as to participate in the social fabric of the community. It is evident that developing a sense of social and cultural belonging leads to better social cohesion in the long term.

### **3.2.1 The process of refugee's integration in Norway: the main features**

Integration policy developed quite early in Norway on the basis of a civil integration approach with legal immigrants entitled to a whole spectrum of rights and obligations as the native population.

The integration approach adopted in Norway is mainly based on the mainstreaming of immigrants' needs into general labour and social policies. Immigrants are a priority target of active labour market policies providing training, work practice measures and wage subsidies of the unemployed.

Language and civil education is considered an important pillar in integration policies for newly arrived immigrants. To this end Introduction measures, including language training, civil integration and advisory services have been promoted by the Introductory Act since 2005. The Act states that refugees and persons granted residence on political and humanitarian grounds as well as family reunion have a right as well as an obligation to take courses in Norwegian language and social/cultural studies. Services are provided by municipalities with the financial support and technical advice of IMDi.

The strong focus on the civil integration of newly arrived immigrants tying together duties/ rights and mutual obligations, is typical for the Scandinavian welfare model. The targeted groups have the right to be informed on their rights, to income support and qualification programmes and the duty to attend full time integration programmes. The state and municipalities are required to provide free good quality integration programmes.

The interplay between mainstream labour market, social and education policies indirectly targeting immigrants and the tight targeting of programmes addressed the specific groups of immigrants: refugees, newly arrived immigrants or long resident immigrants with difficulties entering the labour market.

The attention given at the national level to the development of new tools and systems for adult immigrants' education and to the introduction of performance based monitoring and management systems.

The role of municipalities in the provision of integration programmes targeted at immigrants.

### **3.2.2 The introduction programme and teaching projects in Norway**

In Norway, "school for all" is a central aim in education policy. The goal is to provide learning opportunities for all with special consideration of the opportunities for specific groups. This includes for example people from language minorities or people who need special educational support.

If newly arrived to Norway are willing to integrate well, it is important that they can obtain employment, education and participate in society at large. Newly arrived refugees have the right and obligation to participate in a full – time introduction programme of up to two year's duration. Newly arrived immigrants with a residence permit that constitutes the basis for a permanent residence permit have the right and obligation to participate in tuition in the subject of Norwegian and social studies.

The goal for the tuition in the Norwegian language and social studies is that adult immigrants should learn sufficient Norwegian in the course of the first five years they live in Norway to function in working life and society and the following categories come under the scheme:

Immigrants between the ages of 16 and 55 have the right and obligation to attend 600 hours of tuition in the Norwegian language and social studies if they have a residence permit that constitutes the basis for a permanent residence permit;

Family immigrants who have been reunited with their family and family immigrants of Norwegian and Nordic nationals;

Immigrants over 55 years of age who belong to one of the mentioned groups have the right but not the obligation to attend tuition in the Norwegian language and social studies;

Labour immigrants from countries outside the EEA /EFTA area have the obligation to participate in tuition in the Norwegian language and social studies.

Anyone, who, due to his or her residence permit was granted the right or obligation or right to tuition prior to 1 January 2012 will continue to have the right and obligation or right to attend 300 hours of tuition.

The municipality where each immigrant in question lives has the obligation to give tuition in the Norwegian language and social studies. The tuition comprises 250 hours of instruction in the Norwegian language and 50 hours of social studies in a language the participants understand.

The local authorities are also obliged to offer those who come under the rule of the right and obligation or right to tuition up to another 2700 hours of instruction if needed. For those who come under the right and obligation or right after 1 January 2012, the programme has been expanded to 550 hours of instruction in the Norwegian language and 50 hours of social studies, and up to 2400 hours of additional tuition. The municipality is obliged to offer tuition for five years, as a general rule from the point in time the immigrant has been granted a residence permit pursuant to the Immigration Act. The municipalities receive grants from the state for the tuition (The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2013).

### *Introduction programme*

The introduction programme is meant to provide newcomers both with the qualifications they need to integrate successfully and with a source of income. It has a financial and an educational component and less acknowledged, mental component.

Participants receive a monthly introduction benefit. The amount is fixed, not means – tested, meaning that work on the side is both possible and encouraged, without affecting payments. Benefits are subject to attendance in the full – time introduction programme, and each class missed without legitimate reason results in reduced benefits.

Each participant has a contact person – a primary contact – who, in collaboration with the participant, develops an individual career plan consisting of an aim – normally a type of job – and various classes and courses to offer, which will suit some better than others. The programme always consists of a huge dose of language classes, and in many cases also of so – called language apprenticeships, where students spend two days a week in a specific workplace in order to pick up work – related vocabulary and get to know the Norwegian labour market.

The programme has also a mental component in the sense that it aims to foster a certain kind of attitude to work and welfare. The economic incentive structure is designed to encourage participation, and illustrates clearly that immigrants have both rights and obligations (Hagelund, 2005).

### **3.2.3 "The Job Opportunity"**

From the summer 2013, the Norwegian government initiated a new permanent scheme, the "Job Opportunity". The aim is to increase the employment rate among immigrants who are not participating in the labour market, who need basic skills and who are not covered by other schemes. The "Job Opportunity" is based upon the experiences from the project "Second Chance", and "Second Chance" became a part of the "Job Opportunity" from the summer 2013. The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) administers the scheme. The qualification is to be individually adapted and follow the basic elements in the Introduction Act and its guidelines. The content is intended to strengthen the skills of the participants in the Norwegian language and their knowledge of the Norwegian society, and to prepare him or her for employment or education. The objective is that the participants obtain a permanent attachment to the labour market.

Persons who participate or qualify for participation in "The Qualification Programme", a scheme run by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, are not comprised by the "Job Opportunity". Neither is persons comprised by the Introduction Act with the right and obligation to participate in the Introduction Programme.

### **3.2.4 "New Chance"**

"New Chance" ("Ny sjanse") is a pilot project with a qualification programme for immigrants who after several years in Norway have no permanent connection to working life.

The purpose is to make participants financially self – supporting through employment or education. The methods used by "New Chance" are the same as in the introduction programme: ascertaining needs, writing an individual plan, having a contact person, attending the full – time programme, receiving the qualification benefit, applying sickness absenteeism rules and providing close individual follow – up. The focus is on language tuition, work practice and social orientation.



The Directorate of Integration and Diversity administers the programme, and the municipalities with significant immigrant populations and municipalities with a local NAV office may apply for funds (The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2013).

### **3.2.5 The role of NAV**

The responsibility for labour market policies rests with the Ministry of Labour, and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) is responsible for implementing these policies.

The ambition of NAV and its cooperation with the municipal social assistance service is to strengthen an active approach towards the users, focusing on job – oriented activities and a follow – up system tailored to the individual's needs. The NAV – offices are mainly organized to cover every municipality, as the municipalities continue to have the responsibility for the social assistance services. NAV has a regional office in each county as well as specialized service centres.

The labour market policy aims to achieve greater inclusion of immigrants in the labour market. Efforts to mobilize immigrant labour are important for the utilization of resources in the Norwegian economy. Ensuring high employment is also the most important measure in order to reduce social differences and poverty. Moreover, diversity can raise competence levels and stimulate the development of enterprises. In principle, NAV applies methods and measures that are part of the service vis – à – vis ordinary jobseekers and the vocationally disabled. The special unit "Intro Service" provides enhanced assistance to jobseekers with an immigrant background in some of the larger cities, and assists other local offices by making its special area of competence available to them.

In 2007, the Government presented a Plan of action for integration and social inclusion of the immigrant population. Whereas the general policy orientation "White paper no. 9 on Work", Welfare and Inclusion (2006 – 2007) placed greater emphasis on user – orientation and measures suited to the individual job seeker, the plan of action included specific measures targeted at the immigrant population. Important measures are active recruitment of persons with immigrant background to public sector institutions and the public health services, continued focus on

entrepreneurship among immigrants, and increased focus on the use of labour market measures as part of the integration programme in the municipalities (Thorud, Haagensen and Jølstad, 2010).

### **3.3 Implementation of integration policy in Norway at the local level: Bodø municipality**

Bodø municipality has been receiving refugees since the 1980s. Throughout these years the municipality has developed a profound experience in settlement and integration and these processes are well rooted in the municipality. Bodø is the only municipality in Northern Norway that has agreed to grant equal public services (LOFT) with IMDi. This is a commitment that ensures users with different special needs having access to equal municipal services. Bodø municipality works in parallel with a number of other integration projects, including "Diversity in Bodø" in 2011/2013 and alternative programmes for women.

It is interesting to mention that Bodø was nominated for the Settlement prize in 2011.

The Settlement prize 2011 was rewarded to the municipality that has worked out a specifically good environment for settling and integration of the immigrants.

The criteria for nomination were the following: a flexible and solution – providing settling environment; good results in the induction program, transition to work/education; high results in Norwegian language teaching; a well – developed integration and settlement work that is actively shared with other municipalities (Official press center of the Directorate of Integration and Diversity).

Bodø municipality and IMDi initiated a three – years signed partnership agreement on strengthening the integration and inclusion of immigrants. In connection with this cooperation agreement, a joint project started, the main goal of which was to develop municipal services aiming at enhancing immigrant population's protection (Bodø municipality, 2011).

The aim of the extended cooperation agreement is to make a stronger focus on a long – term work for integration and inclusion of the recent refugees and the other immigrants.

Population composition in Norwegian municipalities is changing, and the immigrant share in Bodø municipality has more than doubled during the past ten – year period. There is considerable variation in immigration cause, national origin, age, family situation and reasons for move. All Bodø citizens should have equal public services, some of which leading to adaptation

demands for different target groups and individuals. The local authorities are responsible for the cooperation through the regular and predictable settling process and the quality of the work being carried out, which can create a solid platform for integration. The project "Diversity in Bodø" was initiated as an important contribution to the systematic strengthening of the municipal services supplied range.

### **3.3.1 Project "Diversity 2011/2013"**

There are many projects and organizations in Bodø that are involved in the integration process in Bodø. One of which is project "Diversity 2011/2013".

Project "Diversity 2011/2013" is implemented through the cooperation with IMDi and contributes to the development of municipal services in terms of immigrant population. The project involves competence – building, development of the measure mechanisms, planning and collaboration with local communities. In 2013 Norwegian language training and professional qualification were the priority areas.

"Diversity Project 2011/2013" implies a joint effort where both IMDi and municipality collect experience that can contribute to positive development in multicultural communities. Both public and voluntary sectors have their roles in this work. Bodø municipality involves legal and academic functional facilitation of services in terms of new people groups.

In 2013 the government introduced a new grant programme to improve quality and achieve better performance in the work for municipal integration. Special attention was paid to teaching of Norwegian language and social studies, induction programme and quicker transition to work and further education.

### **3.3.2 Projects "Practical Norwegian and more people at work"**

The aim of the project "Practical Norwegian and more people at work" is to offer a further qualification development within Bodø adult education and to tighten link between teaching, labor market and social network.

In parallel with this work at Bodø adult education school, the long – term diversity work will be continued especially in terms of recruitment, competence and new local development plan (Bodø municipality, 2013).

### **3.3.3 Refugees office**

Refugees' office main task is to organize the settlement of refugees in accordance with the Integration and Diversity (IMDi) rules. They also work with newly arrived refugees accommodating and information – providing (Bodø municipality, 2014).

Among the office's responsibilities is the two – year introductory programme for refugees carried out by Bodø School for adults. It includes: Norwegian language, social studies, elementary school (tracks 1, 2, 3); skills validation and recognition of previous education and work experience; year – round and full time training and practice.

#### **3.3.3.1 Tasks Refugees Office conducts**

Three – month talk – a dialog with everyone who is starting the introduction programme; guidance and collaboration with a programme advisor and participant in each individual case, which is important for educational and qualification rising.

#### **3.3.3.2 Courses organized by Refugees Office**

There are several courses which Refugees Office organizes for refugees in order to help them to be acquainted with general things and to cope with everyday life in Norway. They are the following: general Health Care in Norway; how to protect one's own health; women's health course; family planning; pregnancy course.

#### **3.3.3.3 Areas where Refugees Office provides refugees with help**

Refugees Office provides refugees with help in different areas regarding the following issues: information for parents, health of immigrants, women's health, homework help, and women/men trim.

#### **3.3.3.4 Organizations that arrange working practice for refugees**

There are several organizations in Bodø which can offer refugees working practice in various directions. They are ISS: Cleaning Classes; Mørkved (a district in Bodø municipality) nursing house (Care Assistant Course); OPUS: Transportation Consultancy; Euroskolen: Jobseeker Course; Application to high school/college; NAV.

#### **3.3.4 International Centre in Bodø**

International Center in Bodø is a cultural center and a meeting place for all minorities and Norwegian – born people. The center provides information about Norwegian society and builds bridges between people from different countries.

Integration through outdoor FNF (Forum for Natur og Friluftsliv) Nordland has started up a new integration project with a focus on immigrants and integration through outdoor activities.

Since difference in health condition among socio – economic groups in Norway is significant, a social health inequality is perhaps the biggest public health challenge Bodø municipality has today. That is why the aim of the project is to facilitate immigrants to become more active in their local communities through participation in weekly trips organized by Bodø and Omegn Tourist Association (BOT) with the physical and psychosocial health effects they cause.

One of the aims of this project is to involve tour guides with immigrant backgrounds, they, in turn, can recruit more immigrants to participate in the activities. Extra effects of this project are better integration regarding Norwegian language learning, understanding of Norwegian culture and social networks building as well (Forum for Nature and Outdoor activities, n.d.).

### **3.3.5 Red Cross**

Red Cross organization has many activities that influence on integration of refugees and other immigrants in the Norwegian society. A refugee guide is one of them.

As a refugee guide of the Red Cross, person helps to recently come refugees to get social networks in their communities.

As a refugee guide, person gets an opportunity to gain insight into another person's history and background – and to get to know another culture as well. Red Cross tries to connect guides and refugees who have something in common, either in terms of age, living situation, interests, occupation or education. A refugee and a guide meet approximately two hours every week for 9 – 12 months (Red Cross official home page, n.d.).

### **3.4 Bodø mottakssenter "Hero"**

Bodø mottakssenter is owned by Hero Norge AS and is Norway's largest drift operator of asylum centers, in addition to being the most experienced. Bodø mottakssenter has been in existence since 18<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

Bodø mottakssenter has the capacity to house 180 resident's and it is a decentralized mottak which means that it has several houses spread across the City of Bodø in addition to two larger buildings a few kilometers outside Bodø centrum which houses approximately 66 of residents.

Staff of the mottak includes several persons with different professional background that helps to make the process of working with asylum seekers productive and efficient. The staff is represented by manager, economic consultant/assistant manager, information/settlement programme consultant, social consultant, activity/return programme consultant, nurse, environmental workers, and janitor.

While asylum seekers are staying in Bodø mottakssenter, the staff has a responsibility to keep them informed on everyday happenings; information is posted on asylum seekers' houses and distributed through the house coordinating council member.

### **3.4.1 Internal rules and regulations for asylum seekers**

Living in the mottak is voluntary, however while residing in Bodø mottakssenter there are rules and regulations asylum seekers have to follow.

#### *Information programme*

The information programme is mandatory for everyone residing in the mottak. Schedule for the meetings is posted usually on the bulletin board and also given to coordinating council representatives. Failure to attend the meetings will result in a deduction of kr. 100, - from next payment.

#### *Individual responsibility*

All asylum seekers are responsible to keep their rooms clean at all times. Cleaning of common areas is everybody's responsibility. A wash list is posted on the bulletin board at the house, here people can find out when it is their responsibility to clean;

Failure to keep personal or common areas clean can result in a deduction of kr. 100, - from next payment as well.

#### *Room inspections*

Unannounced and announced room inspections can be done at any time. This is to ensure a healthy, clean and accommodating home environment for all residents. Unannounced room inspections will also be done sporadically in cooperation with police, customs and the fire department.

#### *Smoking*

Smoking of cigarettes/tobacco/water pipe is prohibited inside all rooms and buildings. Failure to comply will result in a deduction of kr. 100, - from next payment as well.

#### *Alcohol*

Asylum seekers are allowed to consume alcohol in their private rooms. No consumption of alcohol is permitted in common areas.

### *Absence*

In case asylum seeker needs to be away from the mottak for more than one day, he has the responsibility to coordinate this with the office. Failure to inform the office can result in being signed out of the mottakssenter (Bodø mottakssenter “Hero”, n.d.).

### **3.4.2 The main working principles of “Hero”**

The mottakssenter “Hero” is consciously working on protecting each asylum seeker and the information on his case. Each case is conducted through closed doors – regardless was the news good or bad, data security faces away from access and usage of e – mail.

The mottakssenter is seeking to facilitate a safe life for each resident through secrecy, anonymity, predictability and availability.

The mottakssenter is seeking to follow the guidelines set in the UDI’s circular. In addition, “Hero” possesses its own ethical guidelines. These sought to be followed and constantly promoted with discussion and reflection.

The mottakssenter uses an interpreter in case of necessity. Most importantly, private – and sensitive conversations, quality assured message dissemination through the use of an interpreter. All employees have completed a special course in how to use interpreters.

The mottakssenter has municipal health nurse located at the office. In addition, there is a regular contact with other relevant health services.

### **3.4.3 Cooperation partners and professional interaction**

Child protection office is a working partner and a dialogue partner in case of necessity.

The mottakssenter has an excellent working relationship with the police. Police sets firmly on relevant meetings and is always available when needed.

The mottakssenter is in contact with Salten fire office and uses it to browse courses for residents of mottak and for staff as well.

The mottakssenter has established a good contact with Norwegian Broadcasting (NRK, Norsk rikskringkasting) Nordland and local newspaper (AN, Avisa Nordland).



The mottakssenter involves external partners upon the necessity and availability. They are mediation, police, Red Cross, local government nurse, International Organization for Migration (IOM), family counseling office and Church City Mission.

What concerns Norwegian language learning, there was established a good cooperation between the mottakssenter "Hero" and Bodø municipality.

#### **3.4.4 Asylum seekers' participation as an integral part of "Hero"**

The mottakssenter deliberately includes residents and intends to make an offer to participate in those areas that are possible.

It enables residents' participation in:

As cleaners at the office, as language assistants, engaged in moving and transportation tasks, upon arrival of new residents, planning and implementation of activities that residents want to go on and to take part in, implementation of individual educational programmes, tasks for individual skills/competence enhancing, as responsible for the activity at the office.

#### **3.4.5 Facilitating integration of asylum seekers in Bodø community**

The mottakssenter offers information about local clubs and associations, as well as finds contacts and current meeting points. "Hero" in Bodø establishes contact with the University of Nordland and contributes help to applications. The workers of the mottakssenter advise asylum seekers with work permission upon request.

The mottakssenter has its own routines in order to work with children and the youth. The mottakssenter has contacts through which school – age children are supported to participate in outdoor activities. The mottakssenter organizes activities for children and young people in office as well. Children and parents are involved in a process for organizing these activities. The mottakssenter ensures that children have an opportunity to take part in arrangement of out school leisure time (SFO, Skolefritidsordning).

The mottakssenter facilitates that families living at the mottak have a possibility to participate in the traditional activities for families in Bodø throughout a year.

These are the following: tilovi in May, circus in June, cinema days in November, Open Day in Aviation Museum in November, alternative Christmas celebration in December, the libraries and the museum of Nordland.

Bodø is a town that can offer a lot of outdoor activities. Both asylum seekers and employees agree that participation in local activities provided by the mottakssenter gives asylum seekers ability to be perceived as a good and integral part of Bodø's society.

Different denominations: Mosque State church, Rønvik church, Bodø Cathedral of St. Øystein Catholic Church.

International center and two libraries are open for asylum seekers and their families.

The mottakssenter has equipment for sports activities as well.

To help asylum seekers to be integrated in Bodø community quicker, the mottakssenter offers free tickets for Glimt (local football team) and BHK matches, discounted tickets to Aviation Museum and the Museum of Nordland, discounted/beneficial arrangement for PolarGym. It helps in participation in 3 and 7 mountain trips. Everyone who has a wish can sing in the chorus.

The mottakssenter has ski and bicycles for lending.

In partnership with the Church City Mission asylum seekers are able to use the Batteriet (special organization, aiming at teaching entertaining occupations) as meeting and activity place. It offers: cooking classes focusing on Norwegian food, course in writing CV, various courses on request and agreement.

In cooperation with the Red Cross the first aid course is organized.

Within the mottakssenter organization there is a strong position regarding women who have to be represented in the residents' council and that they are visible, active, valued in other areas and protected as well (Bodø mottakssenter "Hero", 2013).

### **3.5 Previous research**

Previous research relevant to the present study is presented below.

#### **3.5.1 Culture shock**

The term of culture shock was first introduced by Oberg to describe the anxiety resulting from not knowing what to do in a new culture. The familiar cues have been removed or have been given a different meaning, resulting in responses ranging from a vague discomfort to profound disorientation. Culture shock applies as well to any situation where an individual is forced to adjust to an unfamiliar social system where previous learning no longer applies. According to Oberg (1960) there are six negative aspects of culture shock: strain result from the effort of psychological adaptation; a sense of loss or deprivation referring to the removal of former friends, status, role, and/or possessions; rejection by or rejection of the new culture; confusion in the role definition, role expectations, feelings, and self – identity; unexpected anxiety, disgust regarding cultural differences between the old and new ways; and feelings of helplessness as a result of not coping well in the new environment.

Pedersen (1995), in turn, claims that culture shock is a profoundly personal experience and it does not affect all people in the same way or even the same person in the same way when it reoccurs. Culture shock happens inside each individual who encounters unfamiliar events and unexpected circumstances. Culture shock defines as an internalized construct or perspective developed in reaction or response to the new or unfamiliar situation. As the situation changes in unexpected directions, the individual needs to construct new perspectives of self, others, and the environment that “fit” with the new situation. Summing up, culture shock is a process and not a single event; it may take place at many different levels simultaneously as the individual interacts with a complex environment; it becomes stronger or weaker as the individual learns to cope or fails to cope; it teaches the individual new coping strategies which contributes to future success and finally, culture shock applies to any radical change presenting unfamiliar or unexpected circumstances (Pedersen, 1995).

Culture shock is a complex and difficult experience for asylum seekers. A mismatch between home and host country causes such feelings as loneliness, helplessness, anxiety and frustration. In order to cope with the culture shock and overcome it as soon as possible, asylum seekers need to receive knowledge and appropriate information regarding their new country of resettlement. Having a clear imagination concerning a host’s country culture, traditions and customs, asylum seekers get a possibility to get used to the new environment quicker that in turn, accelerates the process of integration. Native population as well plays a great role in this process by showing respect, kindness and willingness to help to newcomers.

### **3.5.2 Language**

Nelson (1996) claims that it is only through language the cultural frames for interpreting the actions of others become apparent. Primitive access to the social – cultural world is available through participation in its routines, but access to the ways in which the world semiotically structures concepts, ideas, frames, and theories is available only through language.

According to Taylor (1985) language performs three critical and unique functions: it explicates thoughts, bringing them into explicit awareness; it puts matters into public space where a thought, an idea, a feeling can be shared between people; and it formulates our ideas about important human concerns that are otherwise inaccessible, such as justice and truth.

Halliday (1975) understands the act of language learning and the act of learning culture to be mutually constitutive. Language is considered to be a quintessential cultural tool, an embodiment of the social system of meanings that enables its users to coordinate activities with others and, at the same time, learn the knowledge and practices, beliefs and values of their culture.

Language is the main tool for communication and there is no doubt that ability to speak the language of a host country is significant and essential for asylum seekers. Language might also be considered as the main factor that helps a lot in integration process on all stages of its implementation. It also allows asylum seekers to feel themselves independent and free regarding their life in a new country of resettlement.

### **3.5.3 Social and Personal support**

Social networks are based on dynamic and fluid relationships, be they strong, weak, positive or negative, that interconnects people globally, regionally, nationally and locally. There is no single definition of social networks but Koser and Pinkerton (2002) proposed the following definition of social networks: "Social network comprise personal contacts with friends and family as well as commercial contacts with migration agents including labour recruiters, travel agents, smugglers and traffickers. Relations with networks can be voluntary and involuntary. Networks can facilitate migration in a range of ways, including by disseminating information. However,

migration can take place in their absence. Networks exist and function across a range of countries, including origin, destination and also transit countries" (Hynes, 2011).

The concepts of social network and social support have focused attention on aspects of the social environment that appear to be critical to well – being. The social network construct orients us to the cast of characters in an individual's social world, to the interrelationships among these people, and to the connections between differently structured social networks and larger social systems.

Definitions of social network draw attention to the ties or linkages that connect individuals (and sometimes groups or institutions) – linkages that can be conduits for diverse recourses.

In turn, social support defined as resources that are provided by other people and that arise in the context of interpersonal relationships, reaches individuals through their social network connections. Supportive recourses can include information, material assistance, affection, physical comforting, emphatic listening, assistance in problem solving, and reassurance of worth (Belle, 1989).

Networks allow the individuals to connect in some way to their current locality. Whilst physical residence in a locality does not automatically translate into social belonging for refugees and other migrants, these transnational linkages enable a form of belonging. This relates closely to the creation and maintenance of trust "Trust depends upon continuing links with a home place, a profession, or membership in some other grouping that spans localities and time..." (Hynes, 2011).

Bourdieu (1984) for example, argued that every aspect of consumer behaviour – from holidays and choice of wallpaper to food preferences and clothing style – says important things about where individuals belong in society. "Belonging" in this sense refers especially to class, education, ethnicity, religion; generations and the place lived in. Thus, each subgroup expresses its own special "habitus". According to Bourdieu, "habitus" refers to a set of cultural orientations of the members of a social group or subgroups. Through their life experiences they express and display preferences for distinctive tastes in consumption and lifestyles, which allow for new practices to be generated.

Social exclusion includes both formal exclusion from certain rights and informal exclusionary practices as a result of, for example, the structure of service provision or

discrimination on the part of service providers. It has been defined as when individuals or groups suffer multiple types of disadvantage in various social sectors such as education, employment, housing and health. The socially excluded are understood to be a group "outside mainstream society", sometimes being considered to be "outside society" itself (Hynes, 2011).

Previous research that was conducted in UK in order to provide recommendations for providing better social care services for asylum seekers and refugees identified six principles. These are consistent with values and principles underpinning good practice in social care more broadly and a right – based approach to meeting social care needs. These six principles are the following:

*Humane, person – centred, rights – based and solution – focused response to the social care needs of asylum seekers and refugees.*

The researchers claim that asylum seekers and refugees should be seen as individuals with the same rights as UK nationals. Their rights and needs should be understood in accordance with their current situation.

*Respect to cultural identity and experiences of migration.*

It should be taken into consideration that asylum seekers and refugees come from different countries and have different level of skills and good social care depends on positive regard for cultural identity and different experiences regarding migration.

*Non – discrimination and promotion of equality*

Asylum seekers and refugees should be treated positively and should get the same rights as British citizens. It includes as well work within equality and diversity that in turn ensures that asylum seekers and refugees receive proper support and their social needs are considered as important.

*Decision – making that is timely and transparent and involves people, or their advocates, as fully as possible, in the process.*

Any delays regarding provision of social care should be excluded. The process might be clear and has to include asylum seekers and refugees and their advocates.

*Promotion of social inclusion and independence.*

It is meant to promote inclusion and support the autonomy of asylum seekers and refugees within UK or through the process of returning home. It includes a plan development regarding the future of asylum seekers and refugees.

*A holistic approach*

It should be taken into consideration that individual experiences of asylum seekers and refugees are different and complex, that is why, it should be established partnership across organizational boundaries at strategic and operational levels (Newbigging and Thomas, 2010).

It should be noted that many asylum seekers come to a host country with strong feelings of loneliness and anxiety due to their harmful previous experiences. Arriving to a resettlement country without their families, they require extra attention and more help regarding their new life situation. It includes many basic issues like health service, language learning training, future employment, establishment of new social connections, preferable with native population, and many other things that might help them to build a new life. The primary responsibility for the construction of a new life and in provision asylum seekers of social and personal support belongs to government and non – government organizations. Providing asylum seekers with all necessary information and practical advice certainly contributes to their integration into a host country, therefore it is essential to develop a plan that might cover all spheres of asylum seekers' needs.

#### **3.5.4 Previous research on mottakssenter and qualification programmes**

Previous research evaluating the effectiveness of various mottakssenter and qualification work in term of successful integration is, unfortunately, quite limited. There are three exceptions: the municipality of Drammen, Trondheim and Bærum.

As for Drammen, the decision to combine secondary school, the Norwegian training center seems successful (Bredal and Orupabo, 2014).

In Trondheim the primary purpose of the programme is to teach the immigrants to support themselves. However, the programme does not look for work, does not provide regular education,

and does not provide good relationships with the local population. But still, evaluation confirms that participation may start life in the Norwegian society with little expertise (Berwari, 2013).

The programme in Bærum includes two main parts: qualifying for full time employment and earning alternative income. The process of qualifying is intense and comprehensive. The participants are allowed to take responsibility for their own schedule which must be agreed with the teacher/employer. However, this is a resource demanding programme, yielding mixed results (Djuve and Fangen, 2002).



## **CHAPTER-4: METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the methodological issues and to give an explanation why this exactly qualitative research method was applied in my Master Thesis. Here, I present the description of the focus group and personal interviews' conduction process, information about participants and information concerning data collection and data analysis as well.

### **4.1 Methodology**

Silverman (2006) says that methodology refers to the choices we make about cases to study, methods of data gathering, form of data analysis etc. in planning and executing a research study and comprises the following four components:

1. A preference for certain methods among the many available to us (listening, watching, observing, reading, questioning, conversing);
2. A theory of scientific knowledge, or a set of assumptions about the nature of reality, the tasks of science, the role of the researcher, and the concepts of action and social actor;
3. A range of solutions, devices and stratagems used in tackling a research problem;
4. A systematic sequence of procedural steps to be followed once our method has been selected.

### **4.2 The roles of methodology**

The sciences are not united by their subject matter but rather by their methodology. What sets the scientific approach apart from other modes of acquiring knowledge is the assumptions on which it is based and its methodology?

A scientific methodology is a system of explicit rules and procedures. It provides the foundations for conducting research and evaluating claims for knowledge. This system is neither static nor infallible. Rather, these rules and procedures are constantly being reviewed and improved as scientists look for new means of observation, analysis, logical inference (i.e., the process of deriving logical conclusions based on premises known to be true or on evidence

gathered), and generalization. Once these procedures are found to be compatible with the underlying assumptions of the scientific approach, they are incorporated into the system of rules, the "logic of inquiry," that govern scientific methodology. Hence, scientific methodology is first and foremost self – correcting.

According to Cohen and Nagel (1962) science does not desire to obtain conviction for its propositions at any price and that proposition must be supported by logically acceptable evidence, which must be weighed carefully and tested by the well – known canons of necessary and probable inference. It follows that the method of science is more stable, and more important to men of science, than any particular result achieved by its means. In virtue of its method, the scientific enterprise is a self – corrective process. It appeals to no special revelation or authority whose deliverances are indubitable and final. It claims no infallibility, but relies upon the methods of developing and testing hypothesis for assured conclusions. The canons of inquiry are themselves discovered in the process of reflection, and may become modified in the course of study.

The methodology of the social sciences continues to evolve slowly and carefully. During its evolution, the continuous exchange of ideas, information, and criticism makes it possible to establish firmly, or institutionalize, commonly accepted rules and procedures and to develop the corresponding methods and techniques. This system of rules and procedures represents the normative framework of scientific methodology. Scientific norms set the standards to be followed in scientific research and analysis; they define the "rules of the scientific game". The rules, in turn, enable communication, promote constructive criticism, and enhance progress.

### **4.3 Research method**

The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides information about the "human" side of an issue – that is often contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals.

Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity and religion. Qualitative research can help us to interpret and better understand the complex reality of a given situation.

Qualitative methods are typically flexible – that is why, they allow greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant.

Some authors associate qualitative research with the single technique of participant observation. Qualitative research properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. Qualitative researchers are most interested in how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures and social roles (Berg, 2009).

Qualitative researching is exiting and important. It is a highly rewarding activity because it engages us with things that matter, in ways they matter. Through research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginations of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meaning that celebrate richness, depth, nuance, context, multi – dimensionality and complexity rather than being embarrassed or inconvenienced by them. Instead of editing these elements out in search of the general picture or the average, qualitative research factors them directly into its analysis and explanations. This means that it has an unrivalled capacity to constitute compelling arguments about how things work in particular context. More than that though, while not all qualitative researchers are on a mission to produce “the general picture” of how things work, the qualitative habit of intimately connecting context with explanation means that qualitative research is capable of producing very well – founded cross – contextual generalities, rather than aspiring to more flimsy de – contextual versions.

Based on methods of analysis, explanation and argument building which involve understanding of complexity, detail and context, qualitative research aims to produce rounded and contextual understandings on the basis of rich, nuanced and detailed data. There is more emphasis on “holistic” forms of analysis and explanation in this sense, than on charting surface pattern, trends and correlations. Qualitative research often does use some form of quantification, but statistical forms of analysis are not seen as central (Mason, 1996).

#### **4.4 My role as researcher**

This topic is interesting to me because of the issues it must take into consideration. For a long time, I have been studying the scientific literature and previous researches regarding the subject of my work. As a researcher, I am interested in the process of adaptation and integration of refugees into Norwegian society and I would like to improve this process by means of my empirical study and further recommendations as well.

It is interesting to consider the interactions of different cultures in all spheres of refugees' lives: social, cultural, economic.

It is worth to note that for me as researcher, it was very important to establish the atmosphere of trust that helped me to get a meaningful conversation as well as necessary information and to enable the participants to feel free and comfortable under our cooperation.

#### **4.5 Data collection**

In my research the focus group interview and the personal interview were chosen as research methods for data collection.

According to the rules of the focus group interview (maximum number of respondents should not be more than seven persons) I conducted two focus group interviews. Both groups consisted of seven persons. There were five persons who took part in the personal interviews.

I have chosen these particular methods because they allowed me as a researcher to widely examine and investigate in detail the questions I am interested in.

In advance I have prepared the necessary theme blocks which must be discussed.

The focus group interview allowed me to get better understanding of the investigated theme by means of high flexibility that particular method of qualitative research presumes. It gave me an opportunity to extend anticipated topics of discussion and in this way to obtain broader as well as deeper information concerning the main theme of the following research. It should be noted that exactly the focus group interviews allowed its participants to have a discussion among each other and helped the researcher to get broader information.

Personal interview method was applied in order to get more personal and deep information. Using the personal interview method I was able to get closer contact with the respondents as well.

To bring asylum seekers' experiences, everyone was asked during the interview to reflect upon different questions and to express their opinions concerning their past experiences, current life situations and plans for future.

#### **4.5.1 Focus group interviewing**

The focus group is an interview style designed for small groups of unrelated individuals, formed by an investigator and led in a group discussion on some particular topic or topics (Berg, 2009). Using this approach, researchers strive to learn through discussion about conscious, semiconscious, and unconscious psychology and sociocultural characteristics and processes among various groups. This includes some amount of opinion research, though the approach is most appropriate for investigating motivations, decisions, and priorities. Group interviews are sometimes used to quickly and conveniently collect data from several people simultaneously; however, focus group interviews explicitly use group interactions as part of the data – gathering method. To be more specific, focus group interviews are guided or unguided group discussions addressing a particular topic of interest or relevance to the group and the researcher (Berg and Lune, 2012).

According to Berg and Lune (2012) a typical focus group session consists of a small number of participants under the guidance of a facilitator, usually called the moderator. A skilled moderator can effectively draw out the feelings and ideas of the members of the group involved in the focus group interview. Krueger (1994) suggests that for complex problems focus group size should be kept to no more than about seven participants. There are a number of reasons why one should keep the size of the focus group small; chief among these is the ability to effectively elicit the breadth of responses that distinguish focus group as a useful data – gathering strategy. Large groups are simply difficult to manage and can soon become unwieldy and may erode into several fragmented subgroups, further complicating control and understanding of the information offered by groups' members. Other reasons include the ability to avoid one or two strongly motivated participants monopolizing the conversation, which becomes more difficult the larger the group is, and the more highly motivated individuals there are in the group. There is also the problem of a transcriber being able to properly associate a given speaker with his or her comments – much easier with a fewer number of individuals in each group. There is also the

benefit of reducing group think, which involves several members of the group jumping on board a particular idea or series of comments about a given idea, attitude, or belief as the result of subgroup pressure.

#### **4.5.2 Advantages and disadvantages of focus group interviewing**

Berg and Lune (2012) distinguish the following *advantages* of focus group interviewing:

It is highly flexible (in terms of number of participants, groups, costs, duration, etc.);

It permits the gathering of a large amount of information from potentially large groups of people in relatively short periods of time;

It can generate important insights into topics that previously were not well understood;

It allows researchers to better understand how members of a group arrive at, or later, their conclusions about some topic or issue and provides access to interactionary clues;

It can be used to gather information from transient populations;

It places participants on a more even footing with each other and the investigator;

The moderator can explore related but unanticipated topics as they arise in the course of the group's discussion;

Focus groups do not usually require complex sampling strategies.

According to Aubel (1994) *disadvantages* of focus group interviewing are the following:

Interviewees are not representative of the target population and results can not be treated statistically;

Participants may be embarrassed to openly discuss their own attitudes or behaviour related to intimate topics;

Participants have a tendency to agree with the opinions expressed by others in the group rather than to express minority opinions;

More articulate group members can dominate the discussion;

The quality of the data collected greatly depends upon the skills and motivation of the facilitators;

The analysis and interpretation is more subjective than is that of survey data.

#### **4.5.3 Personal interviewing**

Personal interview method requires a person known as the interviewer asking questions generally in a face – to – face contact to the other person. The interviewer has to collect the information personally from the sources concerned. He has to be on the spot and has to meet people from whom data have to be collected.

The method of collecting information through personal interviews is usually carried out in a structured way. Such interviews involve the use of a set of predetermined questions and of highly standardised techniques of recording. Thus, the interviewer in a structured interview follows a rigid procedure laid down, asking questions in a form and order prescribed. As against it, unstructured interviews do not follow a system of pre – determined questions and standardised techniques of recording information. In non – structured interview, the interviewer is allowed much greater freedom to ask, in case of need, supplementary questions. However, this sort of flexibility results in lack of comparability of one interview with another and the analysis of unstructured responses becomes much more difficult and time – consuming than that of the structured responses obtained in case of structured interviews (Kothari, 2004).

#### **4.5.4 Recruiting of the informants**

After I studied in detail the scientific literature regarding the theme of my research, I identified a range of interests that I would like to explore.

Clearly stating the subject of my paper, I familiarized myself with the work of local organizations concerning my research question. Thereby, I have identified Bodø Mottakssenter "Hero" and contacted its superior Jan Olav Fjellidal.

After an organizational meeting with him, I received permission to conduct the study.

It is very important to note that in my study I included refugees who received only a positive response to their asylum in this country, because with this group's example, the adaptation process could be shown in full.

“Hero” mottakssenter as one of the main actors regarding the work with refugees in Bodø was interested to investigate refugees with positive response for identifying the positive and negative aspects of their work, with a purpose of improving them in future.

“Hero” took part in the responsibility of finding and organizing the participants for my focus group and personal interviews. Thereby, I received a sufficient number of respondents for my research.

#### **4.5.5 Brief presentation of the informants**

In my research there were 19 male respondents involved, all of whom are from different places. The participants came from Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea. Age of the participants vary from 25 to 34 years old. It is necessary to note that all of the respondents have a different level of education and a different level of English language skills.

#### **4.5.6 Interview conduction**

In order to fulfill the focus group interviews and the personal interviews several preparations were made beforehand.

Firstly, all participants were acquainted with the topic of the study and research question; secondly, all of them received an informed consent which contained necessary information regarding their rights concerning their participation in the interview. I, as researcher, had a responsibility of ensuring that the given information was understood correctly. It is important to note that all informants agreed to take part in the research voluntarily.

I gave, as well, an explanation of why the video recorder was used and said that after finishing my Master Thesis, the tape will be destroyed.

Interviews took place in 2013 and 2014; all of them were conducted at the house where respondents live temporarily, the only exception was the focus group interview, which was conducted at the mottakssenter office.

Data – gathering was organized in such a way that the main topic was divided and categorized into the following sub – topics: the short biography of the respondent before moving to Norway; language skills; similarities and distinctions of life in the homeland and in Norway;



integration; and social and personal support. I composed open – ended questions that helped to the informants to give wider answers.

#### **4.6 Reliability and Validity of the research**

The two central concepts of scientific research are “validity” and “reliability” (Silverman, 2006).

The validity and reliability of data have an important bearing on whether any wider inference can be drawn from a single study since, in different ways, they are concerned with the robustness and “credibility” of the original research evidence. Because of the nature of qualitative data and the ways it is collected and analyzed, the issues that surround assessments of validity and reliability have to be specifically formulated for qualitative research.

According to Hammersley (1992), reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions.

Concerning the question of validity, Hammersley (1990) says that validity is the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers.

Validation refers to the process of checking the validity of a findings or conclusion through analysis or cross – checking with other sources. Member validation involves taking research evidence back to the research participants or study population to see if the meanings or interpretations assigned are recognized and confirmed.

Measuring validity and reliability of my research I would like to say that all of my respondents were men. Conducting my interviews I had a feeling that some of them were rather skeptical. This might be due to several reasons. As I have mentioned above, my informants came from such countries as Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea. It is a well – known information that men there have a special attitude regarding to what women are allowed to do in family relations and social life as well. In some occasions I had an impression that not all of my informants took me seriously as a researcher. This could be because of my skin color, nationality and gender.

Before starting my interviews I have informed the participants that all gathered data will be anonymous but it is possible that the workers of the mottakssenter will get an opportunity to read my paper when it is completed. Since informants were selected and contacted by people who

work in the mottakssenter, I can suppose that some of the participants were a bit afraid to say what they really mean regarding the questions concerning the help they get from the mottakssenter.

Another aspect that could influence on validity and reliability of my research is that interviews were conducted in English language. This could have a negative effect on the received information. It is obvious that people express their thoughts better and deeper using their mother language. In this case I can make a conclusion that if an interpreter was used while interviewing, I would get an opportunity to collect more appropriate, legible and exact information.

#### **4.7 Ethical demands**

Ethics can be conceptualized as a special case of norms governing individual or social action. In any individual act or interpersonal exchange, ethics connotes principles of obligation to serve values over and above benefits to the people who are directly involved.

Ethics is concerned with the attempt to formulate codes and principles of moral behavior (May, 2002).

As a general rule, research projects that include individuals can be initiated only after securing participants' free and informed consent. The informants have the right to withdraw from participation any time, without this entailing any negative consequences for them.

Free consent means that the consent has been obtained without outside pressure or constraints on individual freedom of action. Being informed means that the informant is given information about his/her participation in the research project. The information must be given in a form that can be understood by the informant.

The information should be adapted to the recipient's ability to understand it. Information about the project must be based on knowledge of the informants' cultural background. It is also important that the information be given in language that is understood (National Committees for research Ethics in Norway, 2006).

If all the conditions associated with informed consent – competence, voluntarism, full information, and comprehension are observed, the scientist can be relatively confident that the rights and welfare of research participants have received appropriate attention (Nachmias and Nachmias, 2007).

## **4.8 Data analysis**

Social research, whatever its methods, must seek to produce valid generalizations rather than "synthetic moral outrage". So, when it comes to data analysis, a researcher needs to show to his/her readers that he/she has dealt evenhandedly with the people whose lives and experiences he/she describes (Silverman, 2006).

Berg says that typically, the immediately collected raw data are not immediately available for analysis. Rather, the raw data requires some sort of organizing and processing before they can actually be analyzed. Recorded interviews must be transcribed (transformed into written text), corrected, and edited also before being somehow indexed or entered into a text – based computer analysis program (Berg, 2009).

Interpretation was used in the current study. Mason points out that whatever our view on the possibility or otherwise of literature reading, we will need to consider to what extent we will want to make an interpretive reading of our data. An interpretive reading will involve us in constructing or documenting a version of what we think the data mean or represent, or what we think we can infer from them (Mason, 1996).

The data analysis was based on the information that was obtained under the focus group interviews and the personal interviews. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed applying these methods, theories and issues that were described in the previous chapters.

## **CHAPTER-5: CULTURE SHOCK**

The data gathered in the field will be utilized in the following chapter. It outlines the results of this research through scrupulous interpretation and analysis of the participants' responses and points of view. According to Boeije, the starting point for a qualitative research is to discover the meaning that people award to their social words and to understand the meaning of their social behaviour (2010).

The purpose of qualitative research is to describe and understand social phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. The research questions are studied through flexible methods enabling contact with people involved to an extent that is necessary to grasp what is going on in the field. The methods produce rich, descriptive data that need to be interpreted through the identification and coding of themes and categories leading to findings that can contribute to theoretical knowledge and practical use (Boeije, 2010).

Before proceeding to the analysis, it is extremely important to say that study used personal information and working documents to "Hero", therefore I have chosen not to use informants' names while interpreting, providing in this way strict confidentiality and anonymity.

### **5.1 Cultural perspectives: "Two cultures, two different worlds"**

According to Zapf (1991) culture constitutes a way of fully characterizing the organization of life, of thinking and of conceiving the underplaying postulates of the principal human institutions and of relating to and interacting with other intelligent human beings. It influences our way of experimenting with the universe, providing a combination of intermediate patterns which channel our feelings and thoughts, making us react in a particular way, different from those who have been submerged in different patterns.

A culture can be understood from this perspective as a network of shared meanings that are taken for granted as reality by those interacting within the network. This view of culture proposes that a community of people tend to construct a common model or map of the world derived from their shared experiences and then use these pre – determined categories as a background or setting against which incoming experiences are interpreted.

People with different cultures will perceive the world differently because as Zapf (1991) states, they have been “selectively sensitized to certain arrays of stimuli rather than others as a function of membership in one culture group rather than another”.

All cultures and subcultures foster socio – normative beliefs and values that guide members’ thoughts and actions. These beliefs include what members can and can not do as well as what they should and should not. This is a world of obligations, responsibilities, and privileges, which together form the interpersonal foundations of a culture (Steers and Nardon, 2013).

As one informant describes *“There are a lot of things that are unacceptable in my native country are considered absolutely normal here in Norway. For example, girls here in Norway...they do not live like girls in Sudan. They are freer, they do what they want, and they go where they want to go. In Sudan girls follow special rules and traditions all the time. In fact, we do not have at all in our culture such concepts as “boyfriend” or “girlfriend”. If you want to be together with somebody, you must do it in a legal way, I mean marriage. It is no room for “trying relationships”. What do we see here in Norway? People have opportunity to live together without any responsibilities. Nobody thinks over consequences of such relationships. It is very strange to me, that is why I am still single”.*

As long as a person is interacting with others who share the same world view, he/she may not be consciously aware of the particular patterns of meaning assumed. The shared reality is simply taken for granted. It is through contact with persons who see the world differently that an individual can become acutely aware of the cultural patterns he/she is using.

Cross – cultural interaction poses the situation where assumption of reciprocal perspectives is no longer valid, where there is no consensus about reality, where the background expectancies are not shared. In this situation, a person may experience frustration and disorientation as predictions break down, incoming stimuli do not match familiar patterns, and actions are misinterpreted by others (Zapf, 1991).

*“First days after I came to Norway I was frustrated...yes, my expectations were different...No, no, I was not disappointed...the thing is that everything I was used in my life before had to be changed...”*

## **5.2 Moving to a new country: “On the way to unfamiliar life...”**

When people travel from their own home culture to a different culture, they experience variations not only in terms of scenery and societal arrangements, but also in terms of daily routines, interpersonal interactions, and expectations. Many differences based on the divergence in underlying values and concerns of the home versus the host culture. On a day – to – day basis, events that reveal such differences may pose threats and lead to anxiety, confusion, anger, and depression. Conversely, they may pose challenges whose resolution can lead to feelings of mastery, excitement, appreciation for aspects of the host culture, and a clearer understanding of one's home culture (Savicki and Adams, 2008).

In order to find out what informants think about Norwegian culture, I asked them several questions related to similarities and differences between their own culture and Norwegian culture and how did they experience their move to Norway.

*"There is a big difference between my culture and Norwegian culture...everything is different".*

*"I can not see any similarities so far...everything is different: weather, nature, language, people, food...everything!"*

*"When I came to Norway, I realized very quickly that I need to adjust myself to a completely new culture...that has no something in common with my native one. I was really frustrated..."*

Almost all of the respondents share an opinion that Norway has a high level of security. It sounds like it is the most important thing for them, that is understandable due to their previous life situations and harmful experiences.

*"There is a war in my country...it is not safe there".*

*"I respect Norway for its security. I still can not get used that I can go out without fear..."*

*"I appreciate Norway's security...you know...I have never seen a policeman with a pistol here! It is extremely unusual for me".*

Zapf (1991) states when people move to a new culture they take with them the taken – for – granted meaning structure of their home culture. They continue to choose actions consistent with it, and to interpret their own and their host's actions in term of it.

### **5.3 Culture shock: "A box of mixed feelings..."**

The initial phase of the acculturation process can bring a negative experience to immigrants. This experience has been called "Culture shock" in scientific literature.

According to Oberg (1960), the classic description of culture shock follows three phases. In the first phase, sojourners experience "entry euphoria" during which their enthusiasm and fascination with the host culture overshadow the day – to – day difficulties they encounter.

As one informant says *"I was dreaming to move for a long time! It was only thing I was thinking about every day..."*

In the course of the second "crisis" phase, encounters that reveal clashing values between home and host cultures lead sojourners to experience feelings such as inadequacy, anxiety, frustration, and anger. This is when the "shock" becomes predominant.

*"I did not expect that to live in Norway will be so difficult...that time I thought that my native culture is closer to me and I really had a wish to go back..."*

In the third phase, "recovery", sojourners begin to resolve some of the cultural clashes and to learn skills and knowledge to help them navigate successfully in the host culture.

*"Some time later I understood that it is a mistake to say that Norwegian culture is good or bad, it is just different from my native culture and I need to find a way to be a full part of it".*

Given the spike in the level of discomfort and distress during the second phase, it is likely that sojourners would report more troubling encounters during the second phase than during the first and the third phases. During both the "entry euphoria" and the "recovery" stages various culture clashes would be less salient, since in the first phase the sojourners would ignore or shrug off the conflicts, and in the last phase they would find such conflicts less arousing (Zapf, 1991).

Alder (1975) maintains that cultural shock can serve as part of the journey of sojourners to discover their identities and promote personal growth. He argues that although culture changes may cause sojourners to experience different degree of positive and negative reactions, yet the value of this cultural experience may facilitate self – awareness of their identities. In the process of realizing their own identities, they undergo growth in their self – concepts (Lai, 2006).

In turn, Ruben, Askling and Kealey (1977) connected culture shock with adaptation or adjustment. They claim that culture shock focuses on the manner in which persons experience and cope with the cyclic psychological, physiological, and vocational fluctuations associated with the adjustment in the first months in a new environment (Zapf, 1991).

It is significant to say that people who move from one place to another have very often such feelings as anxiety and uncertainty due to unfamiliar environment and new circumstances. The personal adjustment version of the anxiety or uncertainly management developmental theory focuses on the reactions of sojourners entering new cultures and interacting with host nationals. In the initial stages of cross – cultural contact, sojourners are uncertain about host nationals' feelings, attitudes, and behaviours, thus attempts to predict how best to react are fraught with anxiety. If this anxiety does not diminish, sojourners are unable to communicate effectively, and are more likely to process information in simplistic, ethnocentric ways, thus perpetuating the anxiety. Alternatively, if sojourners can be open to new information and creatively develop new ways of thinking that take into account the perspectives of host nationals, the probability of successful communication increases and anxiety is reduced (Savicki and Adams, 2008).

*“Right after moving I was missing home and my native land extremely much...I had no wish to communicate with somebody, to meet new people or to discuss something, I was simply frustrated. I remember also that I was tired all the time and completely exhausted. I felt only uncontrolled anger and anxiety. Sometime later I understood that it is only me who can change this situation. I have to start this process myself, the process of adaptation to a new circumstances and a new life, better life...”*

#### **5.4 The culture learning model of intercultural adaptation: “...very important to be familiar with traditions and customs of country you are moving to”**

Researchers in the cultural learning model of intercultural adaptation pay particular attention to variables that contribute to effective intercultural adaptation. These factors are divided into three categories:

1. Affective (emotional) factors: empathy and respect;
2. Behavioral factors: proper behaviours and skills in the new environment;
3. Cognitive factors: the knowledge of culture and cultural rules or norms.

These factors should be viewed independently because each factor is possibly related to others. For example, sojourners' lack of knowledge of appropriate communication styles (cognitive) definitely influences their integration with host nationals (behavioral) and simultaneously affects their psychological well – being (affective) during intercultural transitions.



In order to prove the above statement, respondents were asked question concerning their previous knowledge about Norway.

*"I have never heard about Norway before..."*

*"I have not had any information before I moved here".*

*"To my mind it is a very difficult thing to come to a country you do not have any knowledge about. It is very important to be familiar with some traditions and customs beforehand, this knowledge can help us (people who move) in the process of adaptation and integration as well".*

Based on Taft's model (1997), the failure of adaptation derives from the mismatch between new norms, appropriate behaviors, and self – concept of sojourners in their social and cultural changes (Lai, 2006).

*"Everything was strange and unfamiliar to me from the beginning...People behaved differently, talked differently...I felt a complete mismatch with my previous experiences".*

To promote effective intercultural adaptation, Hofstede (1986) suggests learning about local cultures and being aware that people have different cultural patterns. For example, an international educator can learn to adopt different educational expectations, curricula, and language to facilitate more successful sojourning tasks and personal intercultural adaptation. Apart from cultural learning, Hofstede stresses sojourners' need to suspend judgments based on their own cultural schema. Sojourners should take local cultural context into account while making judgments.

Paige (1993) regards cultural skills as crucial to achieve intercultural adaptation. He claims that cross – culture encounters can be psychologically intense for sojourners due to their unfamiliarity with the new culture.

Regarding this statement, one informant says *"I think it could be very useful for me to know little bit about Norway before I moved here. It might help me to avoid many difficult and undesirable situations".*

Once sojourners move out of their comfort zones, the process of adapting to the new culture requires them to acquire their own cultural learning skills. Specifically, cultural learning involves affective, behavioral and cognitive domains of adapting to a culture. The cognitive domain of adapting to a culture involves acquiring culture specific information as well as general information for effective intercultural communication. The affective domain of adapting to a

culture reflects the psychological state that comes along with the adaptive process, and behavioral domain of adapting to a culture involves learning the proper behaviors to function in the new culture (Lai, 2006).

## **5.5 Conclusions and recommendations**

There are a huge number of factors which influence on the processes of adaptation and integration into a host society. What asylum seekers need to know before moving to another country and what kind of knowledge might help them to cope with a new environment and unfamiliar conditions of life?

On the one hand, asylum seekers need to realize that adaptation to a new country takes some time, from the other hand, they have to understand that immigration in fact is a great opportunity to start life anew.

It is crucial for asylum seekers to recognize from the very beginning that adaptation is a multi – faceted process and it does not involve solving of all their problems at once.

In addition to a new language, unfamiliar traditions and customs, there are a lot of things asylum seekers have to adapt themselves to in a host country. At the first sight, it seems to be not so difficult but when all these things turn into a large lump, any person can collapse mentally and physically. That is why it is extremely important to get some knowledge about a host country as soon as possible and try to live in accordance with intern rules and generally accepted standards.

Integration into a host society is two – ways process and asylum seekers have to be motivated and need to take an active part in this process. It is important to be realistic and do not think that life will be changed by a wave of a magic wand. It is a hard every day work that includes many activities such as learning a language, establishing new social contacts, being financially independent by means of employment.

To be successful in these new spheres of life, asylum seekers do not need to change their personalities, they just need to be open and positive to changes.

## **CHAPTER-6: THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE**

There is no doubt that language is the main tool for communication, and learning of the host society's language can be identified as the first priority for asylum seekers.

As Hall (2002) states, a sociocultural perspective on human action locates the essence of social life in communication. Through our use of linguistic symbols with others, we establish goals, negotiate the means to reach them, and reconceptualise those we have set. At the same time, we articulate and manage our individual identities, our interpersonal relationships, and memberships in our social groups and communities.

When newcomers can not speak the language of the host society, there is often both linguistic and cultural isolation. Not knowing the host language makes it difficult to pick up the culture, rules of social interaction, cultural rituals, values and beliefs of the host country. Social and racial integration can often be difficult, not only because of language barriers, but often through the hostile attitudes of certain members of the host society (Baker and Jones, 1998).

### **6.1 Language skills: is language the main key and starting point for a successful integration?**

The modern concept of language is closely linked to the emergence of the modern nation in which political autonomy is linked with national solidarity, ethnic identity and cultural and linguistic unity (Baker and Jones, 1998).

It is a common pattern that ethnic groups live in a country where another language is dominant and where native speakers of this dominant language do not speak or understand most of these minority language varieties. Inter – group communication is most likely to take place in the majority language. However, the language norms for inter – group communication do not need to be adopted for intra – group communication. Processes of language shift within ethnic minority groups do not primarily result from the basic need to understand and be understood, but from changing patterns in socio – cultural orientation (Council of Europe, 1993).

I agree with the idea that was stated in the working documents from Amsterdam Seminar that language is necessary for communication and it is the language that brings people from different countries closer to each other.

Almost all informants prove this statement by saying:

*"Yes, it is quite difficult to communicate without knowing Norwegian language here..."*

*"If I knew Norwegian language I would be able to talk to native people..."*

*"Oh, Norwegian, I wish I could speak this language..."*

Refugees find it critical to acquire language skills in their receiving society, as the ability to speak and read the dominant language affects a range of daily experiences and greatly facilitates their material survival. In addition to the opportunity to find better employment, refugees without dominant language skills frequently feel social isolation, particularly when they do not know many people who speak the dominant language and they live in communities with insufficient interpretation services.

Many of my participants reveal that they feel themselves isolated because they do not have enough knowledge of Norwegian language.

*"I think it is a very important issue to know the language...I feel myself out of life right now because I can not speak Norwegian".*

*"I experience a lot of difficulties because I do not know Norwegian...this makes me to be depressed very often".*

Culture is by nature passed down from one generation to the next: in the home, in schools and in the general community. Included in culture are language, religion and traditions. Of these three, language forms a crucial part of people's cultural identity. We learn to communicate in our mother tongue when we are very young, and we grow up with language as a part of our being. Many migrants continue to use their first language in private when they move to a new country because it is a part of their identity (Leuner, 2006).

*"At home I speak my native language...it is easy..."*

*"I can express myself better speaking my mother tongue".*

*"...yes, my friends understand me much better when I speak my language".*

*"Even if I knew Norwegian, I would still continue to speak my native language at home, it is natural..."*

Immigrant or ethnic groups are often confronted with the task of communicating in the dominant language of a majority environment in order to cope with daily life.

*"...even to go to food shop is rather difficult from time to time".*

*"You know, very often I feel discomfort in public transport...to take a bus you need to have a bus card. You can buy it directly from a bus driver. There are several types of these cards...you need to explain to the driver which one you want to buy and for how much money you want to fill up the card. It takes a long time and some drivers do not speak English language or maybe I am not able to explain good enough...maybe it will sound strange but there were several times when I preferred to go by foot because I did not want to look stupid..."*

All of the informants mentioned that because they lack knowledge of Norwegian language, they experience a lot of difficulties and uncomfortable situations in everyday life. To do usual things for many of them become very problematically and sometimes unrealistic. To my mind, with time such conditions of life can easily contribute to deeper mental health problems.

It is evident that many of my informants have such kind of problems from before, due to their previous experiences.

Many refugees have experienced negative events and extreme stress, due to war, oppression, poverty and loss of family members and friends in their countries of origin. Traumas continue to play a role in the receiving country, possibly intensified by their stay in a reception center and uncertainties about their future. Health problems and depressive feelings in particular, can hamper the efficiency of learning a new language. Refugees who have more health problems and depressive feelings are less skilled in second language (Tubergen, 2010).

As Gold and Nawyn (2013) state, refugees frequently suffer from health problems, with serious mental health problems like post – traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) endemic among particular groups of refugees. Scholars and mental health professionals most often attribute these problems to the violence, upheaval, and personal or familial loss experience as part of refugee flight. Challenges following resettlement such as economic hardship also contribute to refugees' mental health problems. Additionally, refugees are often reluctant to seek mental health services because of cultural taboos surrounding mental health or because they cannot find culturally appropriate mental health services.

Language learning by migrants and their families has been a key purpose in Norwegian integration policy plan for a long time. Close attention has been drawn to refugees, since this

group of migrants has special needs and demands regarding learning of Norwegian language. Language teaching scheme was composed in such way that all difficulties that can be met by refugees' capacity were taken into consideration.

Refugees, like all international migrants, face challenges to successfully integrating into the receiving society, with varying definitions of what "successful integration" means to them. These challenges bring with them particular needs that theoretically could be met through resettlement policies. While no country that offers resettlement assistance does so for a length of time sufficient to fully meet the integration needs of refugees, there are particular needs that different resettlement programmes attempt to address.

## **6.2 Asylum seekers' acquisition of the language of the receiving country: competence as a resource for self – reconstruction and self – sufficiency**

Target language competence is a basic requirement for achieving independence in day – to – day matters as shopping, banking and driving a motor vehicle, as well as for negotiating systems such as health care and education. Resettled refugees who are able to communicate in the language of the receiving country have better prospects for achieving self – sufficiency. They have access to a wider range of employment opportunities and are better equipped to participate in further education and training.

Language is a vehicle through which resettled refugees come to feel "part" of the receiving society. It enables them to engage with its broader social milieu through exposure to its media and community life; to participate in informal interactions in neighborhoods, shopping centres and community facilities; and ultimately to form meaningful social connections with others.

All of my respondents agreed that it is difficult for them to become interacted into the Norwegian society and any attempts to enter it have in many ways failed.

*"I do not feel myself integrated in Norwegian society because I simply can not speak Norwegian".*

*"Yes, language could help a lot...but...I do not know it well enough, unfortunately..."*

Competence in the target language also has psychological benefits, helping resettled refugees to regain a sense of autonomy, dignity and self – worth. Struggling to communicate, or

depending on others to communicate on their behalf can be a source of shame and embarrassment.

*"As for me, I feel that I lose a lot every day without knowing Norwegian language. We get many newspapers with different advertisements but very often I do not dare to go to shop because I am afraid that I misunderstand something...I do not want to be like an idiot..."*

*"Even to make a shopping can be very embarrassing...the moment I have to go to cashier is very confusedly! I am glad that buyer has an opportunity to see how much he or she needs to pay, in other case I would not go to shop at all..."*

*"...somebody can ask why not we use English language. Yes, it is an appropriate question, but I do not feel comfortable to speak English language in public places here in Norway. I think that if I live in this country, I have to speak Norwegian".*

Having the ability to comprehend basic safety instructions and to contact an emergency service in the event of a health or security crisis provides reassurance to resettled refugees, helping them to regain a sense of security.

Facilitating language acquisition also helps to promote the human and civil rights of resettled refugees, enhancing their capacity to act as self – advocates in commercial transactions and their dealings with employers, law enforcement personnel and government agencies.

While language training programmes require careful planning and adequate resourcing, they are an investment that reaps long term benefits for receiving societies. Resettled refugees who are able to communicate independently are better placed to contribute their skills and attributes and will require fewer long terms resettlement supports (UNHCR, 2002).

*"I am attending Norwegian classes but still I do not feel that I can speak fluently. Sometimes I know how to answer or say something in Norwegian, but I do not dare to do that because I am afraid to make a mistake. I do not want people think that I am not speaking Norwegian".*

It is important to say that two of nineteen informants can speak Norwegian and they say that this knowledge helps them in everyday life.

*"I can speak Norwegian and I am proud of myself. Maybe I can not do it perfectly, but I am sure Norwegian people appreciate that I am trying".*

*"As for me, I feel better attitude and very often get better service in different places when I speak Norwegian".*

### **6.3 Factors affecting target language acquisition**

Learning language is said to require learner “investment”, learners only investing in a second language if they believe that this will give them access to “cultural capital”, that is, the knowledge and ways of thinking that they need to function successfully in society. In effect, learners will “invest” in language learning if they think they will achieve a good social “return”. From this perspective, “motivation” is seen as an individualistic and relatively fixed personality trait while the metaphor of “investment” captures the constantly changing relationship between the second language learner and their complex social world, and recognizes that “an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner’s own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space” (Hall, 2011).

While waiting for a decision on refugee status and residence permit, asylum seekers can spend months or even years in application centers. This can have important consequences for their language learning. While staying in a reception center, the opportunities for asylum seekers to establish contacts with natives are strongly constrained, thereby leading to less exposure to second language than if they were living outside such centers. In addition, while waiting for a decision about residency, asylum seekers are uncertain whether or not they will be allowed to stay, making the investment in second language less attractive (Tubergen, 2010).

A major problem for language learning is that asylum seekers have little contact with native people. Possible settings in which refugees could establish contacts with natives are organizations such as sport clubs and socio – cultural associations. Refugees who are members of a voluntary organization have better second language skills than other refugees.

There are many factors that affect language learning. Factors which affect a resettled refugee’s capacity to acquire a second language include: people’s level of literacy in their own language. People who are literate in their own language learn a second language more readily. Second language acquisition depends in part on learners having grasped basic communicative and numeracy concepts in their first language; their fluency in languages other than their mother tongue; their prior familiarity with the language of the receiving country or a variation thereof; age, as learning another language becomes more difficult with age; the extent to which they are experiencing psychological responses to torture and other traumatic refugee experiences or stress



associated with resettlement (e.g. anxiety about family members left behind or trauma symptoms such as a flash – backs may interfere with the learning process) (UNHCR, 2002).

Many of the respondents started to attend Norwegian classes and all of them state that it is quite complicated process for them due to different reasons which in fact include those that were described above.

*"...it is hard for me to learn Norwegian".*

*"Sometimes I think that I will never be able to learn this language. Grammar is too difficult and pronunciation is almost impossible..."*

According to Arnold (1999), a broad understanding of affect in language learning is important for at least two reasons. First, attention to affective aspects can lead to more effective language learning. When dealing with the affective side of language learners, attention needs to be given to advice and how to overcome problems created by negative emotions and how we can create and use more positive, facilitative emotions.

At the other side, stimulating the different positive emotions factors, such as self – esteem, empathy or motivation, can greatly facilitate the language learning process (Arnold, 1999).

Many of my informants had experienced difficult and extreme situations in their counties of origin that in fact influenced on their decision to immigrate to Norway.

These specific and distressing circumstances lead people experienced such kind of emotions to mental health problems which result a post – traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

According to Kinchin and Brown (2001), PTSD is a psychiatric disease that meets the following criteria: the traumatic event must be persistently relived by the person; the person must persistently avoid stimuli associated with trauma; the person must experience symptoms of increased arousal, or over – awareness, not present before the trauma; the disturbance must cause significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other areas of functioning important to the person.

Rosen and Frueh (2010) state that the person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present: the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury; or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others and when person experienced a feeling of intense fear, helplessness, or horror.

An understanding of what PTSD is, leads to the conclusion that people having experienced a trauma can have problems and difficulties to be integrated into a host society. Regarding language learning, the respondents express that mental trauma and a feeling of anxiety for their family members heavily affect the language learning process.

*"I find it extremely difficult to concentrate myself on the language learning because I am thinking about my family members who are still in my native country".*

*"I have many thoughts in my head that get in the way with language learning".*

*"Sometimes I feel that information I get on Norwegian classes comes in one ear and goes from another one because I can not really focus my attention".*

Individual factors play also an important role in the process of learning language. Arnold expresses an opinion that first of these aspects has to do with internal factors that are part of the learners' personality. Although learning a language and using it are basically interactive activities that depend on varying types of relationships with others and with the culture as a whole, the second language acquisition process is strongly influenced by individual personality traits residing within the learner. The author says that the way we feel about ourselves and our capabilities can either facilitate or impede our learning (Arnold, 1999).

It is meaningful to say that anxiety is quite possibly factor that most pervasively obstructs the learning process. It is associated with negative feelings such as uneasiness, frustration, self – doubt, apprehension and tension. Several respondents prove this idea by saying:

*"I am not sure that I am able to learn Norwegian...I think I am not smart enough".*

*"I have doubts that it is possible to learn this language...I am trying my best, but still have no positive results. This makes me to be upset".*

*"I feel a complete frustration when I know that tomorrow I need to attend my classes".*

In this matter, many people have a very low self – esteem feeling. Self – esteem feeling has to do with the inevitably evaluation one makes about one's worth. It is a basic requirement for successful cognitive and affective activity. The important role here belongs to a teacher of Norwegian language who has a responsibility not only to explain grammar or correct pronunciation, but to show that students are valuable as persons.

Canfield and Wells (1994) suggest that the most important thing a teacher can do to help students emotionally and intellectually is to create an environment of mutual support and care.

The crucial thing is the safety and encouragement students sense in the classroom...Further, they must recognize that they are valued and will receive affection and support (Arnold, 1999).

Many scientists suggest that ability to learn language of a receiving country of adult people is much lower than young people. Individuals who begin to learn a second language very early in life generally attain higher levels of proficiency than those who start at a later age.

As already mentioned before, the age of the participants in my research vary from 25 to 34 years old.

Rowland (2014) says that a lot of children learn one language from birth and only start to learn the second language later in childhood. These children may be exposed to their second language in the course of everyday interactions or they may learn the second language through formal education at school. Learning a second language in later life is often much more effortful than learning two languages from birth.

*"I am in such age now that to learn Norwegian is a difficult task for me..."*

However, this point of view can be a quite controversial. For example, Cook and Singleton (2014) suggest that people with long experience of teaching additional language to older adults are very clear that such students positively excel in some domains. They claim that older adult learners of foreign languages "in the case of reading skills they invariably set the highest learning goals" and that they seem to have "little difficulty with grammatical principles and storing lexical items". He as well conceded that older adults sometimes have problems with "auditory imitation and memorizing" and with "oral response" but he certainly did not represent these as insuperable obstacles to progress (Cook and Singleton, 2014).

#### **6.4 Language training and cultural adaptation of asylum seekers**

Language training programmes enable resettled refugees to acquire the target language and learn about the receiving society. However, there should also be opportunities for bilingual instruction and the history, literature and cultural experiences of resettled refugees should be reflected in the curricular and classroom environment.

The process of learning a second language is more likely to be effective if individuals have ongoing opportunities to use their mother tongue (UNHCR, 2002).

From the above statement, it is understandable that a person has a higher opportunity to be successful in language learning if he/she avoids the possibility to speak his/her mother tongue, thereby getting better chance to be integrated into a host society.

Regarding this issue my informants have a divided opinion.

*"On the one hand, I agree that speaking my native language can slow down my integration into Norwegian society, but on the other hand, I can not imagine that I stop to speak my mother tongue..."*

*"It is not natural for me to speak only Norwegian especially when I can not speak fluently..."*

*"When I am trying to speak Norwegian at home, my friends laugh at me...it is embarrassing".*

How can immigrants refrain from using their mother language? The importance of making friends outside one's community can not be overestimated in this connection. A study of immigrants conducted in Dublin primary schools, presented in Cook and Singleton (2014), shows that this effect goes in fact beyond the impact of making friends with native speakers of the host country language. They discovered that the "best friend" factor was highly instrumental in promoting the use of English outside the home as a lingua franca (any language that is widely used as a means of communication among speakers of other languages).

A lingua franca also called a bridge language, or vehicular language, is a language systematically used to make communication possible between persons not sharing a mother tongue) with immigrant children from other communities, and that this pattern of behaviour even spilled over into the use of English with friends from the children's own language groups.

*"If I had Norwegian friends I would have an opportunity to practice my Norwegian".*

*"It is important to have friends here in Norway, I mean now native Norwegians, and it could of course help me to use Norwegian language more often when I do now".*

*"I am a happy man...I have a Norwegian friend and we are trying to speak only Norwegian when we are together..."*

These answers demonstrate that the respondents understand that having contacts with native population in Norway can influence their integration process and that the need to communicate is the main motivation for learning Norwegian language.

## **6.5 “Hero’s” role in learning Norwegian language**

As I have said earlier the mottakssenter “Hero” in Bodø has the responsibility to facilitate integration of asylum seekers during their stay in the mottakssenter.

In order to make the integration successful, the workers of this organization have developed a plan of activities for asylum seekers where the language learning is a priority. Unfortunately, very often asylum seekers have to wait for a long time before they get an opportunity to begin language courses.

*“I had to wait for several months, seven long months to start to learn language. I wasted much time...”*

*“I think some people here have lost a lot of time waiting for the possibility to start learning Norwegian. It is the worst thing to be at home without doing something. It has to be the first priority for those who are responsible for us to take us to school”.*

It is evident that without knowledge of Norwegian language the integration is not possible, and that is why the mottakssenter has established a close cooperation with school for adults in Bodø municipality.

This particular school has a duty to provide asylum seekers with Norwegian language courses.

My respondents express the opinion that by attending these courses they do not get enough knowledge in Norwegian language. They say that they would like to have lessons more often than they have now.

*“We have school just two times a week...it is a big problem! It is not enough! We want to go to school daily! Let it be just one hour a day, but it will be every day!”*

*“I really can not say that these courses help me a lot in Norwegian”.*

*“I would like to have classes more often because twice a week is not enough”.*

It is interesting to notice that some asylum seekers have Norwegian classes two times a week, but other ones have lessons three times weekly. I asked the informants why it happens. They explained that people who are staying in the mottakssenter longer time get opportunity to attend school more often. Some of them mentioned as well that it looks like there is no system regarding language classes. As one informant says *“I am a lucky one, I go to school three times a week, but some of my friends have not this possibility”.*

It sounded rather strange to me because everyone has and should have equal rights at the mottakssenter. I also noticed that people who go to school more often feel uncomfortable in front of those who do not have such opportunity and conversely those who do not get such possibility think that others have some kind of privileges. Such a simple thing at first glance may lead to interpersonal conflicts among asylum seekers.

*"I still can not understand why I can not attend classes three times like some of my friends do. We are all the same here and we have the same needs and demands..."*

## **6.6 Conclusions and recommendations**

The process of learning Norwegian language is a key point for asylum seekers to be integrated into Norwegian society. In general an ability to speak a language of a host country influences on the life satisfaction as well as makes higher feelings of self – esteem and self – confidence of people who immigrate to another country. It was described that there are many different factors that influence on language learning process. Having balance in everyday life and in inner world makes this process easier and more efficient.

It is evident that success of this process directly depends on motivation asylum seekers have.

What can motivate them to learn Norwegian language? I would like to suggest some recommendations regarding this important issue. They are the following.

First of all, it should be taken into consideration a desire of respondents to have more classes in Norwegian language and everyone should have equal conditions. To my mind this can be implemented by the mottakssenter "Hero" by providing extra training with a help of volunteers: immigrants who can speak Norwegian or native Norwegians. On the initial stage of teaching it could be a very useful to involve immigrants from the same countries of origin as asylum seekers are. This could make a process of explanation as well as process of understanding Norwegian language easier.

Asylum seekers live in collective houses and speak their native languages there, that as I mentioned earlier slows down the process of Norwegian language learning. To speak any language without a practice is not possible. So it might be wise to organize a "Day of Norwegian language" at the mottakssenter.

It can be in the form of a game where the main rule is to try to speak only Norwegian. There is no doubt that it will be a very difficult task for asylum seekers but with time, it will bring a great result.

The next thing that could be implemented by the mottakssenter "Hero" concerning Norwegian language proficiency of asylum seekers is a delivery of Norwegian newspapers and literature. In my opinion, providing asylum seekers everyday with Norwegian press can influence positive on the process of Norwegian language learning. Of course, one can say that there is internet and everyone can read newspapers there, but there is little doubt that asylum seekers will spend time trying to find Norwegian articles, just because it is easier, as I have said before to read in their native languages.

In conclusion I would like to say that asylum seekers should get a possibility to start to learn Norwegian as soon as possible. Collected data proves this idea and shows that proficiency in Norwegian language affects the entire integration process.

## **CHAPTER-7: SOCIAL AND PERSONAL SUPPORT**

Human are a social species, and it has long been recognized that the social environment is critical in human adaptation. It is crucial for asylum seekers to establish social contacts with native population in order to build as well as to enjoy their new lives in Norway.

Personal support provided by the staff of the mottakssenter is also significant for asylum seekers. Many of them need extra attention and care due to their previous difficult situations and harm experiences.

### **7.1 Factors affecting the formation and development of social network connections among asylum seekers and Norwegians**

Based on the gathered data, the main factors influencing the formation and development of asylum seekers' social networks seem to be the following ones: language proficiency, interactions with local Norwegians, individual characteristics and participation in various organizations outside the mottakssenter.

Pellegrino (1997) assumes that language learners will develop relationships with native speakers allowing them to use the language and become more fluent.

The participants recount *"It is clear for us that an ability to speak Norwegian makes us closer to Norwegian people but it is not so easy to get in contact with them"*.

*"People in Norway are a bit strange...no, no, I do not mean something bad but they are not talking. They do not open themselves or maybe they you do not want to open themselves for strangers...we are strangers for them in many ways"*.

The respondents identify several reasons for such behaviour and insufficient knowledge of the language is not the only factor. During the interview there was expressed an opinion that Norwegians do not want to take contact with informants because of their appearance and skin color.

*"Yes, language is a big problem for us but our appearance is more serious problem. Norwegians look at you like you are a criminal just because you are not white...I hope maybe one day it will be different"*.



*"I can tell you a short story. One day I was on my way home and saw a lady in front of me. She had two very heavy bags. I offered to help her...you can not imagine how scared she was. She refused my help that time. I understood that she simply did not trust me".*

I asked the informant what kinds of feelings this situation caused. He continues *"I became upset and surprised at the same time but I do not have any right to blame Norwegians that they feel like this. I can do anything about it, but this situation for sure is not going to stop me in an attempt to make Norwegian friends"*.

Another respondent explains that his inability to speak Norwegian language lead to a failure of establishing strong ties and connection with Norwegians *"I think that I am still unsuccessful in making Norwegian friends because I am not fluent in language"*.

Ignorance in Norwegian language leads to the use of the native language, slowing the process of formation of new social connections with the local population.

The best way to be acquainted with another people is to participate in different events and be a member of various clubs and social organizations. Not taking part in different kinds of activities and prioritizing the homestay slow down the language learning process as well.

As one informant states *"The staff of the mottakssenter organizes outdoor activities for us. It does not happen often but anyway...one time I took part in such nature trip. It was nothing interesting and we did anything special that time. There were people only from the office and other asylum seekers. What was the point of that trip I still can not understand? Next time I did not participate, I preferred to stay at home"*.

According to Fraser (2002) people who interact with others by participating in clubs, part – time jobs, community service and social events demonstrate more linguistic development on measures of reading and writing proficiency. I can come to a conclusion that engaged in various types of activity people have better chance to speak Norwegian and as a consequence to establish stronger social connections with native population.

Some of the informants say that they have the barrier when they try to speak Norwegian and that they have *"a fear to be misunderstood"*. In turn, Campbell (1996) means that those who are able to overcome the initial discomforts of cross – cultural interactions, and continue to use the language in spite of challenge and discomforts, usually develop social networks with native speakers and use the target language within these networks.

Of course, it is extremely important for asylum seekers to keep contact with families and friends who come from the same countries, but maintaining strong ties with home and weaker ties with locals can have negative effects on linguistic gains. And as I already mentioned above, it will affect the formation of social relationships with native Norwegians.

One important factor in establishing strong social connections ties with the individual characteristics of the person. Dufon and Churchill (2006) suggest that "success of building social networks is related to learners characteristics such as openness, ability to make oneself socially silent, persistence in working to gain access, and tolerance for and attention to unmodified input."

The informants recount that they differ from native Norwegians in many ways and these differences lead to a difficulty to get "*real Norwegian friends*".

*"People in my country like to be social. They try to take contact with you, they ask about your family and your life. They are trying to help you if you need help. No, I do not want to say that Norwegians are not helpful...yes, they smile when they talk to you but you never know whether this smile is real or fake. "Help" here in Norway is an official matter, is offered by government and I think many of us missing usual "human" help and support".*

We are different and we find different ways to take contact with new people. For somebody it is easy but there are persons who find it very hard to be acquainted with another people.

Many of the respondents share the same view point, that it is challenging for them to establish contacts with Norwegians due to several reasons. One of them as I mentioned above is language proficiency. Second reason is difference in cultures and mentality and the third one is lack of common interests and topics for discussion.

## **7.2 The role of "Hero" in establishing asylum seekers' social network connections**

As I have described earlier the mottakssenter has a duty to organize different kinds of activity for asylum seekers. The main purpose of these activities is to help people being active in social life and to include them in Norwegian society as soon as possible.

The workers of Bodø mottakssenter have developed an activity plan, according to this plan all asylum seekers have equal rights to participate and to be engaged.

Interview results have shown that despite the fact that the plan is rather good, however there is room for improvements.

Gathered data indicated that football is the most popular activity among asylum seekers but many of them expressed a desire to have such activities as gym and swimming pool as well. As one respondent says *"Many of us love to play football, we have a lot of fun doing this, but we want to have access to gym and some of us want to go to swimming pool. We know that there are many types of gyms in Bodø and swimming pool also, but we do not have opportunity to go there because it is expensive for us. We can not afford it! Everyone who lives in mottak receives 3200 Norwegian krone monthly and to pay 300 krone for gym is almost impossible or we have to limit ourselves in food..."*

Since Bodø is a town that can offer a lot of outdoor activities, the workers of the mottakssenter organize trips in mountains and leisure time on nature. Some of the informants find it interesting but some of them prefer to drop it according to several reasons. Asylum seekers mean that these trips could be organized in another way regarding food, participants and provided activities.

*"Usually we are around 20 – 25 persons participating in these trips plus the staff from the mottak. Trip can take up to 3 – 4 hours. In fact we do nothing special. When we come to a place, everyone gets a sandwich...we eat and if it is a good weather we are used to play volleyball. Many of us think that it could be much more interesting to make food there instead of getting ready "boring food". It could be nice to grill, for example. Regarding sport activity I can say that often it is not conditions there. It is not so much fun to play volleyball without right equipment".*

Another informant means that there is no opportunity to practice Norwegian and thereby to be integrated into Norwegian society when most of people which are taking part are asylum seekers.

*"How can we practice Norwegian language with each other? Yes, we have people from the office with us but it might be more useful and more interesting to include Norwegian people who have the same interests as we have. I think it is a great opportunity to be acquainted with new people, maybe to become friends with some of them..."*

There are many other activities the mottakssenter provides asylum seekers with and many of them are voluntarily. Gathered data showed that unfortunately some of these activities asylum seekers find a bit boring and sometimes unuseful.

*"I do not like to go to library. I prefer to use a computer instead..."*

Although the mottakssenter offers many activities which in many ways lead to a successful integration into Norwegian society, asylum seekers recount that they have extremely much time when *"just doing nothing"*. In this connection employment was illustrated like *"opportunity not only to improve Norwegian language"* but like *"a way to establish new contacts with native people"* and at the same time like *"a chance to look from the inside how is it to be employed in Norway"*.

Further the informants mention that the workers of the mottakssenter do not help them to find a job. On the contrary, they advise them to wait with an employment. Explanation for this is rather simple. If asylum seeker gets a job, he/she automatically loses a right for financial support from the Norwegian government.

Even so, many of the respondents apply for jobs, explaining this by the desire to be included into Norwegian society, to establish new social connections as soon as possible and, in some occasions, by lack of money.

*"I know for sure that employment will help me to get new friends here in Norway"*.

*"This is very hard to live for money we get monthly...I do not have any opportunity to save something"*.

*"I want to be like another people, I want to pay tax, and I want to have a house, a car. I am ready to work and learn language at the same time. I want to have a good life. Economic help we get is nothing. It is miserable!"*

It is important to say that many of the respondents are united in the opinion that the mottakssenter could make an attempt to help them to find a job practice outside of the office.

*"I want to have a job. I even agree to work for free as volunteer. It will be much more useful than just to be at home"*.

*"The staff of the office does not try to help us with jobs..."*

It was mentioned before that many asylum seekers are included in various voluntarily activities like cleaning, moving and transportation upon arrival of new residents. All these happen inside the mottakssenter. There is no doubt that it is a positive thing, but at the same time I can

outline some disadvantages as well. First of all, not everyone has the opportunity to be engaged due to a large number of asylum seekers who live in the mottakssenter. The second point is that people who take part in activities provided by “Hero” anyway communicate with the same people (the staff) all the time. It gives me right to make a conclusion that asylum seekers have a poor chance to establish new social connections with the local population and at the same time they do not have opportunity to be included in “real” Norwegian labour market.

### **7.3 Personal support provided by “Hero”**

In order to discover what kind of personal support asylum seekers get from the workers of the mottakssenter I decided to ask questions regarding this important issue. As I have said above, many asylum seekers left their families in their native lands and came to Norway absolutely alone. This leads to feelings of anxiety and loneliness. There will not be a mistake to say that the workers of the mottakssenter become for asylum seekers closest persons they can rely on and ask advice in the case of necessity.

Young people are very aware of the importance of personal support, recognizing that they have both social and emotional needs, including, from time to time being “lonely and feeling depressed”. They want workers who they get do what they say they are going to do and who treat them with respect (Stein, 2012).

However, gathered information regarding this issue was quite controversial and ambiguous. Some of the respondents really mean that the workers of the mottakssenter are trying their best day by day to provide them with necessary help and information, but other informants do not share this opinion.

As one respondent says *“Yes, if I need something or I need to know something I contact people from the office. They help me if they can...”*

Some other participants mean that the workers of the mottakssenter could make better effort to help them in their needs. One of them provides the following example *“People who are working in the office are good people, but sometimes I feel like they are not trying hard enough. I am not asking for much help, I ask when I really need something. Sometimes they just answer that this question is not in their competence...and that I need to contact Bodø municipality myself”*.

Another informant reveals *"We were six persons who applied for asylum at the same time. Almost of all us already resettled...only me is left. I understand that resettlement questions are not a responsibility of the mottakssenter and actually they do not have a real power to do these things but at the same time I think that they can make an attempt to help us anyway...they can communicate with municipality in order to accelerate the process for those who are leaving in the mottak for a long time"*.

One more respondent gives the following example *"I remember I needed usual Visa Card...I went to a bank and got one. Sometime later I found out that it was not possible to pay in internet with that card because it was Visa Electron. I went to the office (the mottakssenter) and explained the situation...I supposed to get help...but everything I got that time was only a recommendation letter..."*

Above examples show that the workers of the mottakssenter do not pay enough attention to requests asylum seekers express. It is a controversial situation. On the one hand, the workers of the mottakssenter have their responsibilities and duties, but on the other hand, they are working with people who need extra support and service, it will not be a mistake to do a bit more than just "spelled out in the working contract". As I have stated earlier, all asylum seekers have experienced more or less extreme situations in their native lands and these circumstances lead to the feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. As a result, many asylum seekers suffer from post – traumatic stress disorder.

Generally, the psychological aspect of migration and reception into the host country is undeniable. Salient ongoing stressors identified across several studies include delays in the processing of refugee application, conflict with immigration officials, being denied a work permit, unemployment, separation from family, and loneliness and boredom. Poor social support in the receiving country has been raised as a closer link to PTSD (Hayes and Humphries, 2004).

PTSD requires strong advocacy within systems to ensure that people access the support they need. For me it was essential to find out whether asylum seekers get qualified psychological help in the case they need it. Informants reveal that there is a nurse at the office who provides them with such kind of help. As one informant tells *"If I have some private problems which I can not discuss with my friends, I take usually contact with our nurse. She helps me as much as she can...in case when she can not provide me with proper help, she explains where I might get it"*.

It is significant to mention that I did not have a purpose to find out exactly what kind of psychological problems my informants have and this research had not a goal to reveal how they solve these problems and who are involved in the process in order to help them outside the mottakssenter. I attempted to focus on and try to find out whether the mottakssenter has a possibility to provide asylum seekers with initial assistance in the case of emergency or necessity.

One participant describes *"I feel like people from the office are close to me...but I do not tell them about my personal problems anymore...and I do not tell these things to my friends either. What is a point?! I know for sure that I will not get help from them anyway. I am not in stress. I accepted for myself the life situation in which I am right now. I am relatively in good conditions. I have place to live and I have food every day. The only thing I need is an opportunity to continue my education. This problem can not be solved by my friends. I know that people from the office can do something about it but they are not willing...when I asked one who I expect can solve my problem can not or do not want to do something about it, why should I discuss this again and again? I feel like the workers from the office are not interested to get so deep in my problem. No, this does not make me upset and I do not blame them. It just proves one more time that you can rely only on yourself"*.

In this context the participants seem to be in a difficult position of distrust and disappointment. As said earlier a set of integration goals include many principles which have to be applied in order to provide proper integration support to asylum seekers. One of them is "system of support" and another one is "restoring faith in government". On the base of gathered information, I can come to a conclusion that these two principles are not implemented in full force and are not executed as much as it possible. However, I should mention that this opinion was not shared by all of the respondents.

To sum up, I want to point out that establishment of trust relationships between the workers of the mottakssenter and asylum seekers might contribute to the development of "healthy" environment for asylums seekers and at the same time give them the feeling that there are people who care about them and open their hearts for them.

#### **7.4 Does "Hero" provide asylum seekers with appropriate information and what kind of measures might be applied for further improvement: asylum seekers suggestions?**

One of the main aims of the mottakssenter activity is to provide asylum seekers with appropriate and correct information regarding daily life issues as well as to answer questions connected with further education, employment and partly resettlement.

In order to find out whether asylum seekers get proper information, I decided to collect data concerning this issue. Findings were rather surprising and simultaneously controversial.

Unfortunately, gathered information showed that the mottakssenter "Hero" has a lot of things that might be changed and improved in case if the organization claims that working methods they use with asylum seekers are of a high quality.

Many of the informants report that the way they receive information is not good enough and the quality is far from what is desired.

The informants reveal that due to poor provision of necessary information by the mottakssenter, they had to find other ways of obtaining it. As one participant tells *"Most information we get, we get from people who have gone through this process already. We are interested in a lot of things and we ask many questions people in the office. But what do they do? They just post information. If I want to find out something about "family reunion" and I ask workers of the mottakssenter, they just simply answer that I have to use UDI web site. In reality we do not get explanations. We are not primitive people but we are all different and some of us do not even know how to switch on a computer. We do not have the same knowledge about technology. That is why it is not right just to post information for us. This is the reason why we have to ask our friends for explanations and wider information"*.

From the statement I illustrated above, it is essential to indicate that the way the mottakssenter provides asylum seekers with necessary information is unacceptable. Respondents wish to get description *"step by step"* simply because they have never experienced many things before.

Another informant expresses his thoughts saying *"Nobody is blaming people from the office but as my friends mentioned already, a lot of papers are posted in our houses and here in the office we can find many brochures and catalogs...but it is not enough for us!"*

Discussing measures that can be applied in order to improve this situation, one respondent suggests *"I recommend to arrange small courses about everything we need to know. There are many things we are interested in and look for a correct answer. To escape any misunderstanding and to avoid extra questions we would like to have some kind of courses or meetings. Does not*



*matter how you call it...It is necessary to gather people according to their languages because many of us do not speak neither English nor Norwegian. It will be very helpful!"*

During the interview, the informants revealed that very often they get quite controversial and ambiguous information about the same issue. This leads to feelings of confusion and misunderstanding. It was already described that in general the immigration process is complicated and unpredictable, and at any stage of this process can many unforeseen circumstances show up. It is very important to react quickly and operatively. It is necessary to make only correct decisions as well. Even a small mistake can be fatal and incorrigible and it could be necessary to spend a lot of time trying to correct it. That is why it is important to get the proper advice and information in time. One respondent says *"If we ask about some rules, everyone says different things. We do not know what we need to believe in and which information is correct..."* Another participant continues *"I think people, who have a responsibility for us and work with such people as we are every day, can not just say "may be". How can we rely on these answers? We do not get exact answers and it makes us to be confused very often"*.

One more informant points to the fact that there is a thing that *"makes him to be surprised"* and that is that *"Nothing is clear...I have never seen exact rules that say about our opportunities"*.

However, according to some respondents it should be noticed that the mottakssenter provides asylum seekers with some courses concerning health system in Norway, law system/rights and fire safety course.

One interesting point regarding this issue showed up during the interview. Not everyone has the opportunity to participate in these meetings. The informants explain that it happens due to a strategy the mottakssenter applies in choosing participants. One respondent describing this method uses a phrase *"random sampling"*, another one mentions *"If you lucky, you will take part"*. Despite this, those who had opportunity to participate appreciated that they received such a possibility and stressed that the courses were useful and interesting.

## **7.5 Conclusions and recommendations**

A) For the participants in this research language learning, participation in activities and employment are considered as the best opportunities to establish new social connections.

As was already described, the mottakssenter "Hero" provides asylum seekers with different kinds of activities. The main purpose is to include them into Norwegian society as soon as possible. Unfortunately, not all of activities are organized in a proper way. There are several things that should be changed and modified.

On the basis of information received from the respondents I would like to make recommendations and give some suggestions that might help the workers of the mottakssenter to improve their activity plan for asylum seekers.

First of all it is necessary to point out one more time that refugees who come to Norway due to difficult situations in their native countries need special attention and extra care. It is very important that their wishes and desires will be "heard" by people who get responsibility to include them in Norwegian society.

That is why, the workers of the mottakssenter need to involve asylum seekers in developing activity plans. There are many ways to do it but the most effective method is to organize meetings where asylum seekers will get a chance to express their ideas regarding things they want to do in their free time. As my data illustrates, informants would like to attend swimming pool and to get access to gym (free of charge). Nature trips can be diversified by means of extra "*more appropriate activities*". It is crucial to say that all of the respondents share opinion that it could be very interesting and at the same time useful to include Norwegians in this trips.

I would like to mention that many of the informants say that they are not used to ask for something extra due to their cultures. But it does not mean that they are satisfied with everything what is going on in their lives right now. I would like to stress the fact that the workers of the mottakssenter need to be more attentive, and moreover they have "to read between the lines".

Collected data demonstrated as well that favorite activity for asylum seekers is sport activity. There is no doubt that it is useful and necessary but at the same time I noticed that many of the respondents show not so much interest to cultural activities and the workers of the mottakssenter might pay close attention to this finding. It is extremely important that asylum seekers get as much knowledge about Norwegian culture as possible.

As the informants notice themselves proper knowledge concerning Norwegian culture could help them to understand "*rules of the game*" and to feel themselves more comfortable in their new environment.

B) Using the information gained through interviews, I have identified several “defects” regarding issues I discussed above. One of the ways to improve the situation is to pay close attention to the suggestions I would like to present below. It is essential to mention that measures I propose to take into considerations are based largely on the comments of asylum seekers.

Most asylum seekers in this research appear to be receiving additional information only if they ask questions themselves. Respondents pay particular attention to the way in which information is distributed. As was illustrated, the mottakssenter has not chosen very effective and convenient systems for providing asylum seekers with new information. According to the respondents, posting information in the collective houses or in the office does not help as much as they expect. As it turned out, the application of this distributive method results in a lack of knowledge of the particular topic, additional questions and very often leads even to misunderstanding.

The solution to this problem that was proposed by the informants is to organize small courses on various topics of asylum seekers’ interest. Interviews revealed as well that sometimes there is a need to divide participants into groups according to their mother tongues. This is due to the fact that some do not speak neither English nor Norwegian.

The shared goal of all asylum seekers is to be informed as much as possible concerning everything what is connected with immigration issues and daily life issues as well.

Another observation that should be noted is that the informants prefer to get information they are interested in from people they know or friends who have gone through this process already. To my mind, the workers of the mottakssenter have to pay special attention to this finding. It proves at least that preferring other sources for getting information, asylum seekers can not fully rely on the mottakssenter staff.

So, to summarize, I can highlight the following aspects that have to be seen in order to improve services provided by “Hero”: organization of courses/meetings for asylum seekers regarding different useful topics that might be necessary in their life in Norway. To find out what specific themes asylum seekers would like to discuss, possible to conduct a survey in written or oral form. Essential to point out that information must be given in the appropriate language.

## **CHAPTER-8: CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This study has attempted to investigate and analyze the process of social and cultural adaptation and integration of asylum seekers in Norway. It is based on a case study of the mottakssenter "Hero" in Bodø.

The study outlines the most significant features and characteristics which lead to the success regarding the process of social and cultural adaptation and integration of asylum seekers into Norwegian society. The research finds out and demonstrates the most important steps concerning "Hero's" work, influencing the successful implementation and development of integration process of refugees who had received an approval for their stay and asylum in Norway.

The study also points to how the asylum seekers perceive culture shock and how it influences their integration into Norwegian society.

### **8.1 The main findings and recommendations**

The study demonstrates that it is crucial for asylum seekers to recognize from the very beginning that adaptation is a multi – faceted process and it does not involve solving of all their problems at once. To become a part of a host country, asylum seekers might be positive, open and motivated. It is significant to accept the rules, traditions and customs of a resettlement's country, but it does not mean that asylum seekers should abandon core values of their native culture. To a greater or lesser extent, all of the respondents of the present study experienced culture shock. The research shows that to cope with it, it is extremely important for asylum seekers to get some knowledge about a host country as soon as possible and try to live in accordance with intern rules and generally accepted standards. There is no doubt that knowledge of traditions and customs of a host country leads to better as well as quicker integration process and helps to avoid unforeseen and undesirable situations.

The study highlights that the process of learning Norwegian language is a key point for asylum seekers regarding their integration into Norwegian society. Competence in a host country's language "opens many doors for asylum seekers". It might be the most important factor that leads to improvement as well as rising of living standards in areas ranging from everyday

and finishing with such issues as employment and social connections. An ability to speak a language of a host country influences on the life satisfaction and increases feelings of self – esteem and self – confidence of people who immigrate to another country. It is quite evident that a person with high feelings of self – esteem and self – confidence has better chance to be employed as well as makes new social connections easier and quicker. As a consequence, person's satisfaction in working and private life that leads to his/her mental health.

The study stresses that it should be taken into consideration a desire of the respondents to have more classes in Norwegian language and everyone should have equal conditions. To make asylum seekers to be included into Norwegian society as soon as possible, they might get an opportunity to start attending Norwegian language courses at once; moreover, the training schedule should be loaded to the maximum. Results of the collected data prove that to speak any language without a practice is not possible. So, it might be wise to organize a "Day of Norwegian language" at the mottakssenter. The study recommends to the staff of "Hero" to find better routines that reduce a native language use and cause better Norwegian language practice among asylum seekers. Providing asylum seekers with Norwegian press daily might influence positive on the process of Norwegian language learning. A delivery of Norwegian newspapers and magazines to asylum seekers leads not only to the process of Norwegian language training but also helps them to be informed regarding the current situation in Norway. What is for sure contributes to making knowledge about the country wider.

The research demonstrates that asylum seekers consider participation in activities and employment as the best opportunities to establish new social connections. It is as well very important that asylum seekers' wishes and desires are "heard" by people who get responsibility to include them into Norwegian society, therefore, the workers of "Hero" might show more interest regarding asylum's seekers needs and wishes by involving them in developing of activity plan. Analysis of the data shows that a favorite activity for asylum seekers is sport activity but there had not been shown so much interest to cultural activities and the workers of the mottakssenter might pay close attention to this fact. It is extremely important that asylum seekers get as much knowledge about Norwegian culture as possible. However, "Hero" helps to asylum seekers to receive tickets to museums and exhibitions, these kinds of activity are voluntarily. In some occasions, it might be right to make them obligatory.

The study reveals as well that most asylum seekers appear to be receiving additional information only if they ask questions themselves. As was already mentioned above, "Hero" might be more attentive concerning asylum seekers' needs. It should be unnecessary for people who are in quite new life situation to ask a lot of questions regarding things they need to know. The respondents pay particular attention to the way in which information is distributed. The mottakssenter has chosen not very effective and convenient for asylum seekers way to provide them with new information, therefore, it is wise to organize small courses on various topics of asylum seekers' interest and needs and divide participants into groups according to their mother tongues. This is due to the fact that some do not speak neither English nor Norwegian.

This research shows that informants prefer to get information they are interested in from people they are acquainted with or friends, who have gone through this process already. This is a very important issue that might draw "Hero's" attention. Choosing other sources for getting information might demonstrate that asylum seekers can not fully rely on the mottakssenter staff. It has to be found better routines for proving asylum seekers with appropriate information.

## **8.2 Research implications**

The results and outcomes of the study produce a clear picture of what should be done regarding the future improvements concerning the organization of work of the mottakssenter "Hero" in Bodø.

Putting into practice given earlier in this study recommendations and advice, "Hero" not only has an ability to improve their work regarding asylum seekers' integration into Norwegian society, but also receives the opportunity to create more comfortable atmosphere for people who start life anew in Norway.

In spite of the fact that the present study provides recommendations and, thus contributes to the improvement of integration policy regarding asylum seekers on the local level, there are several important themes that should be investigated in more detail in future. One of them is lack of knowledge regarding the traumas that asylum seekers experienced in their native lands. It should be more specialists who might help to newcomers to cope with their harmful previous experiences.

The second issue is connected to the improvement of the educational strategies that might bring Norwegian language learning on the leading position. It is essential that several key points are taken into consideration. They are the previous educational level of asylum seekers and their ability to accept the given information at the present period of time. As the present study demonstrates, trauma and PTSD influence asylum seekers' ability to concentrate and to accept new information, therefore the initial step that might be taken is to help newcomers to overcome stress they experienced before coming to a new county.

The last issue that should be investigated closer is principles and strategies that might help asylum seekers to get in contact with the local population of a host country as quick as possible. As the present study demonstrates, the establishment of social connections is essential and plays a great role and, by that, contributes to the integration of asylum seekers into a resettlement country.

The treatment of asylum seekers is important for men, women and children seeking asylum. But it is also important for those of us who are not asylum seekers. Treatment of asylum seekers says something about the society we live in and the kind of country we want to be. The human right principles and values of democratic societies must guide the country's behaviour towards asylum seekers and its relationships with other countries from which asylum seekers originate.

In focusing on asylum as "a problem" it is essential that the Government, and those responsible for providing services and support to the most vulnerable in our society, do not lose sight of the fact that asylum seekers, regardless of their immigration status, are human beings, with fundamental and basic human rights, needs and aspirations (Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2007).

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## ANNEXES

### Annex i. Interview guide

#### **The short biography of the respondent before moving to Norway**

Gender

Age

What is a country of your origin?

What are the vocational training and the level of your education before moving to Norway?

Have you ever been in Norway before?

How long time have you been in Norway now?

Can you describe your first impression of Norway?

What are the main reasons and motives of your migration?

Can you determine the most important one?

Did you immigrate alone or with the members of your family?

Can you say that you have some people who are really close to you now?

Who are they and how often do you take contact with them?

#### **Language skills**

Do you speak any Norwegian?

Do you think that to speak Norwegian is important? If yes, why?

Have you ever heard that all immigrants have to speak Norwegian?

Do you try to speak Norwegian with your countrymen?

How is it to learn Norwegian? (How was it to learn Norwegian?)

Do you speak any other languages?

Do you think that ability to speak Norwegian can help you in some way? If yes, say in which way?

#### **Similarities and distinctions of life in the homeland and in Norway**



After living some period of time in Norway already, can you specify the similarities and distinctions of life in your homeland and in Norway?

Presence of your national culture?

Can you describe Norway as a country?

Can you characterize Norwegians?

Tell us about your relations with the «local» Norwegians.

If you get opportunity to recommend to your friends Norway as a country for migration, what kind of feedback will you give?

### **Integration**

Do you feel that you are a part of Norwegian society and Norwegian culture?

Can you specify reasons why you are «excluded» from Norwegian society?

Do you feel sometimes that it is difficult in some way to understand that to accept something in Norwegian culture?

Do you think that your own culture can get in the way with Norwegian culture? If yes, in which way?

Do you think that you need to refuse from traditions of your native culture to be able to accept Norwegian culture? Is it possible? Is it necessary?

### **Social and Personal support**

After moving to Norway what kind of support did you get? (benefits (economic support), education (a chance to get a profession or to learn language), housing).

Can you name the organizations that were involved in the process?

Do you feel included in decision making concerning you and your situation? If yes, in which way?

What do you as a participant of the introduction programme expected from “Hero” AS in Bodø?

Whether your expectations coincided with reality?

Do you think you can live in Norway independently from these organizations? (for people who lives in the country long time).

Would you like to change something in your present life?

**UDI**

**RS 2008-026V2**

Saksnr. 08/3701  
Dato: 16.07.2008

## Taushetserklæring for ansatte i mottak

### 1 Innledning

Dette vedlegget fastsetter innholdet i taushetserklæringen som alle ansatte i statlig mottak skriftlig forplikter seg til.

### 2 Taushetserklæringen

Utlendingsforvaltningen forvalter en stor mengde personopplysninger av til dels sensitiv karakter. Ansatte i mottak får tilgang til slike opplysninger gjennom sitt arbeid i mottaket. Det er avgjørende for Utlendingsforvaltningens tillit i samfunnet at opplysningene behandles konfidensielt og at de ikke blir brukt i strid med det formålet de er innhentet for. Urettmessig bruk av personopplysninger og brudd på konfidensialitet kan få alvorlige konsekvenser for enkeltpersoner.

Alle som ansettes i asylmottak er underlagt taushetspliktreglene i forvaltningsloven §§13-13f for de opplysninger de får tilgang til. Personer ansatt i mottak med privat driftsoperatør er underlagt forvaltningslovens taushetspliktreger i henhold driftsavtalen mellom Utlendingsdirektoratet (UDI) og driftsoperatøren. Ansatte i mottak med kommunal driftsoperatør har lovbestemt taushetsplikt etter forvaltningslovens regler.

Alle ansatte og engasjerte i mottak plikter å følge bestemmelsene i databehandleravtalen som UDI har inngått med hver enkelt driftsoperatør. Herunder kommer plikt til konfidensiell behandling av personopplysninger som gjelder beboere i mottak.

Taushetspliktreger som følger av forvaltningsloven og personopplysningsloven innebærer at:

- 1) du ikke har adgang til å innhente, lagre, kopiere eller på annen måte nyttiggjøre deg opplysninger om personers personlige forhold som ikke er direkte relatert til dine konkrete arbeidsoppgaver
- 2) du ikke skal videreformidle personopplysninger som du får kjennskap til i forbindelse med arbeidet og som gjelder beboere i mottak. Videreformidling kan likevel skje til kolleger som trenger disse opplysningene i sitt arbeid, eller til andre hvis dette følger av de oppgaver som skal gjøres av mottaket
- 3) du skal anonymisere personopplysninger som gjelder beboere i mottak når du videreformidler opplysninger via ukryptert e-post. Nærmere identifisering av hvem opplysningene gjelder kan gjøres per telefon eller brev. Du skal i minst mulig grad sende personopplysninger på faks, og de opplysninger du sender skal ikke være av sensitiv karakter.
- 4) du skal makulere alle personopplysninger på sikker måte når opplysningene ikke er arkiverdige eller ikke lenger nødvendige for mottakets arbeid
- 5) du plikter å sikre informasjonssikkerheten gjennom blant annet å behandle passord konfidensielt og låse datamaskinen når du forlater den
- 6) brudd på taushetsplikten i henhold til straffeloven § 121 kan straffes med bøter eller med fengsel inntil seks måneder.

Jeg har fått tilgang til de lovtekster det henvises til i taushetserklæringen, og bekrefter med dette å ha lest og forstått innholdet i erklæringen.

Bedøp 24/04-13

Sted og dato

A. Johansen Alena Johansen

Underskrift, ansatt Navn med blokkbokstaver

Taustrøkerklaring i forbindelse med masteroppgave  
Jon Claas Tjøllåla

Kontakt:

Region- og mottaksavdelingen

Mottaksenheten

### **Annex iii. Information letter**

#### **Information letter**

I am asking you to help me in my research project. My name is Alena Johansen. I am a Master student of the faculty of Social Sciences at the University in Nordland. As a part of my student work I have to do the research. The title of my Master Thesis is “Social and cultural adaptation of asylum seekers in Norway. Study carried out at the mottakssenter “Hero” AS in Bodø”.

I would be very thankful if you could help me in interviewing regarding this project. I am planning to involve approximately 19 persons. Report about this issue is going to be used in my Master Thesis.

In my study everything will be anonymous. It is voluntary participation and if people choose to stop, they will get this opportunity anytime they want.

My research will be finished 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 2014 and after the tape from the interview will be destroyed.

**I confirm that I have read and accept this information letter and I am going to help with this project.**

Signature:

Kind regards,

Alena Johansen

#### **Annex iv. Letter of inform consent**

##### **Letter of inform consent**

I am asking you to take part in my research project. My name is Alena Johansen. I am a Master student of the faculty of Social Sciences at the University in Nordland. As a part of my student work I have to do the research. The title of my Master Thesis is “Social and cultural adaptation of asylum seekers in Norway. Study carried out at the mottakssenter “Hero” AS in Bodø”.

I will be very thankful if you can take part in my research. I can confirm that after the interview I am going to destroy the recorded data. In my report everything will be anonymous. I might use some quotations but they will not be possible to be recognized. It is voluntary participation and if you choose to stop, you will get such opportunity anytime.

My research will be finished 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 2014 and after that as I already have noticed, the tape with information will be destroyed.

**I confirm that I accept the inform consent and I am going to take part in this project.**

Signature:

Kind regards,

Alena Johansen