Educational Challenges Faced By Unaccompanied Refugee Youths
In Stockholm

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Abstract

This research paper explores the educational challenges faced by unaccompanied refugee youths in Stockholm. It focuses on the ongoing educational challenges that stem after separating from their families or other representatives in struggling to find a safe place; and adjust to a foreign country with minimal support. The research also examines what educational services that have been made available to these unaccompanied refugee youths. Furthermore, how successful they have been in adjusting into the Swedish educational system and achieving their educational goals.

We have conducted a qualitative research method using semi-structured interviews to provide insightful findings into this research topic. The sample included ten unaccompanied refugee youths and three professionals that are experts in the area of unaccompanied refugee youths. The findings underscore that most of the unaccompanied refugee youths’ dropout from school before they are able to achieve their post-secondary education due to different challenges that influence their educational pursuit.

Key words: challenges, support, imbalance, education, and unaccompanied Refugee youths.
Acknowledgement

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Merhawi Berhane

&

Samuel Koroma
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Sweden has experienced a large influx of immigrants since the World War II from different parts of the world. Today the number of immigrants continues to increase and a large portion of these migrants are unaccompanied youths. According to Migrationsinfo. (2015) it is estimated that about 7000 unaccompanied refugee youths sought asylum in Sweden in the year 2014. This is staggering, as it is almost double the number of refugee youths compared to the year before which was about 4000. Sweden has had to think of how they can support these unaccompanied youths. Out of the 288 Swedish municipalities, many have signed an agreement to care for the unaccompanied youths who reside in any of these municipalities under the legislation of the Social Services Act [SoL] (SFS, 2001: 453). According to the Swedish migration board (Migrationsverket, 2015) there are about 8216 institutions that can carry out the responsibility for the youths.

These youths arrived to Sweden without their parents and this has brought the attention of the state and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to collaborate in order to care for these youths. Many can wonder why and how the unaccompanied refugee youths have left their country of origin. The refugee youths came from different parts of the world that have been affected by political conflicts, violence and war insecurities and they went through dangerous circumstances before arriving in Europe/ Sweden (Gambaro, Kobayashi, Levy, Rasheed and Winkler, 2008). Generally, these youths left their home countries illegally with the help of human traffickers or smugglers (Ibid). As soon as they arrived in Sweden they got asylum to obtain protection and in the hopes of establishing a safer home.

It is important to understand that youths that are going through the asylum process as well as those that have been granted permission of residence face immense challenges that directly affect their social life. For instance, comprehending the differences in culture, limited language proficiency, economical constraints and challenges of social norms and social codes. These challenges make it difficult for these youths to integrate easily into the Swedish society (Barnrattsdagarna, 2015). Although these youths face many different challenges that may have impact on their lives, our study is limited only to the barriers that affect their educational pursuits.
It is understood that education is an essential part to the developmental process and considered as one of the main fundamental factors for future development (Adams & Kirov 2006). Dimitriadis and Kamberelis (2006) expressed that education is the intellectual, social, emotional and moral development of the individual within a society. Education in this study is thus classified as a means to learn the norms and values of the hosting society. According to the education act, education is compulsory to any child between the ages of 7-16, (Riksdagen, 2010:800, kap.7). This law even includes refugee children with or without resident permit in Sweden (ibid). Therefore, it is important for us to explore the impacts of education into the lives of these unaccompanied refugee youths; how it helps them integrate in society and into the Swedish education system.

1.1: The Aim of the Research:
The aim of this research is to investigate the educational challenges that the unaccompanied refugee youths face in Stockholm.

1.2: Research Questions
1. What challenges do the unaccompanied refugee youths face in connection to their educational pursuit in Stockholm?
2. What social services have been utilized/provided to support these unaccompanied refugee youths to overcome the educational challenges they face?

Chapter 2: The Conceptual Framework

There has been a rapid increase in the number of unaccompanied refugee youths in Sweden since 2010 (Socialstyrelsen, 2013), and it is being widely debated in the Swedish media and society, (Beglar, 2015; Göteborgs-posten, 2013; Vlt, 2015). It is noted that these unaccompanied refugee youths face a variety of obstacles that affect their lives and more specifically their educational pursuit (Barnrättsdagarna, 2015). Therefore, we focused on exploring the fundamental educational problems and its importance towards these unaccompanied refugee youths.
The word education has been used in different societies with divergent meanings and different applications. According to the Oxford dictionary (2015), education is defined as a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools or colleges, to improve knowledge and develop skills. The business dictionary (2015) also defines education as, the wealth of knowledge acquired by an individual after studying particular subject matters or experiencing life lessons that provide an understanding of something important. In our study, education stands for the formal academic teachings that occur in an institution and how the unaccompanied refugee youths utilize the educational system to learn, assimilate and overcome barriers (challenges) of a new language, cultural differences and also accomplish high proficiency of knowledge in a subject area resulting in a diploma or a degree.

The word challenge is defined as “a new or difficult task that tests somebody’s ability and skill” (Oxford dictionary, 2015). We used this definition in our study in order to understand how the unaccompanied refugee youths handle the difficult situation they were presented within their educational settings, and whether they are able to meet their goals or fall short of accomplishing their educational pursuit.

Before we begin to explore the youths´ educational challenges in Stockholm, it is important to note that all of these unaccompanied refugee youths come to Sweden with different levels of education from their home countries, some of them have achieved a higher level of education while others have very low educational. As we will outline later in our paper, both the high educated and low educated unaccompanied refugee youths face similar challenges in their educational pursuit in Stockholm. However, the degree in which they are able to cope with the educational challenges varies from individual-to-individual.

Chapter 3: previous Research

In order to have in-depth understanding of our study, relevant researches were collected and reviewed. Different factors were considered when conducting an overview of previous research on educational challenges of unaccompanied refugee youths. For instance, looking at life experiences within the school environment in host society. Although there was vast information available on this topic, we chose only certain studies that are applicable to our
study and applied it to our case study. We made this choice because; we were looking for valuable and relevant information before going deeper into the topic of our study.

Dalton and Crosby (2008) illustrated that; there is a high imbalance within the school environment particularly for the refugee youths. They looked at the educational challenges faced by the youths, focusing on the causes and impacts of the challenges. Concerning the imbalance within the school circumstances, the researchers elaborated that there was too much support provided by the teachers that encouraged students not to take responsibility for their own work. This kind of support results affected the student’s negatively on their developmental growth. As such, these students lack self-motivation and innovation in taking risk of any task provided by the teacher (ibid). On the other hand, this research has also illustrated the negative effect caused as a result of the imbalance, the challenges faced by the youths and the support given to them. For example, if challenges increase rapidly when there is not enough support, the students’ ability to face the challenges decreases. Such circumstances may be discouraging and student may lose the confidence to coming up with solutions (Ibid).

Another study by Levinson (2011) was reviewed and it focuses on the challenges faced by refugee youths. In her study, she classified the differences between unaccompanied refugee youths’ and adult migrants’ educational pursuits. She elaborated that unaccompanied refugee youths are vulnerable in their new host country, because unaccompanied refugee youths have unique challenges connected to their educational pursuit as an outcome of been apart from parents or guardian. Thus it is important that the different bodies or actors that are responsible for such youths consider these unique challenges when planning and providing support. As youths their unique needs might be the provision in getting access to legal representation, accommodation, school (education), safe environment etc., through creating a coherent, sustainable, and consistent approach in the host country (Ibid).

Yatta (2008) discussed that unaccompanied refugee youths who reside in Canada faced huge educational challenges due to economical constraints, cultural dissonance, limited language proficiency, distrust of authority and separation from parents. He stressed that the lack of the family structure and instability of their situation made them not to strive in overcoming their educational challenges. In his study, an important pattern was discussed concerning the unaccompanied refugee youths’ educational issues. Yatta (2008) also expressed that; these
youths develop high frustration because of the inaccurate assessment of school placement. The research showed that, the unaccompanied refugee youths were placed in school based on their age and language skills irrespective of their academic skills. He also highlighted that; these youths do not receive extra support at home because of the absence of their parents or other representatives.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1: Introduction of the methodology:
In our study, a qualitative research method based on semi-structured interviews was used to gather data. Qualitative research has been considered as a scientific process that seeks evidence-based findings. It has been used as a method of investigation that focuses on some aspects of social life. Its aim is to characterize research through qualification. According to Nahid (2003), qualitative research is expressed, as a research approach that produces findings not arrived by means of statistical procedures. Such research seeks to understand problems that originate or are driven from the perspectives of the local subjects, in our study the subjects are unaccompanied refugee youths. Grinnell (2001) expressed that, in a qualitative approach any event experienced by individuals or group is unique, and the experience could be described subjectively because a single and unique reality occur within each individual.

A qualitative research provides complex textual descriptions in order to specify the subjective part’s experience of the required issue. It often provides a variety of information about behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals that have experienced a certain life event within their environment or society (Nahid, 2003). Therefore, we used the semi-structured interview process for gathering the required data, which in turn allows us to develop an understanding of the topic of our research with open questions. Even though, we performed the same set of interview questions as a guide for all participants, in some occasions we used additional questions. This tactic helped us to facilitate the process of the interview and gather valuable data. Furthermore; this gave more opportunity to the interviewees to express themselves in order to contribute with relevant information for the research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Using semi-structured interviews proved to be advantageous as it provided us the ability to extend and develop new ideas depending on the interviewee’s response. This indicate that such method provide us the opportunity to explore
the responses from our participants. Applying this approach gave us the possibility to explore the study with new open-ended questions. However, as the character of the method gives us an open access to develop new questions, we were also cautious not to go beyond the scope of the study.

In social science, it has been a natural process to investigate research questions through using qualitative methodology (Silverman, 2013). In relation to our topic, many previous researches have been done in a similar manner or approach with different results. Even though the methods applied were similar, the result may vary due to the perception of each researcher’s interest as well as the respondent’s life experience. At the same time, other researchers have also used different methodological approach (quantitative or other methods) on similar topic.

4.2: Sampling:
We conducted interviews with ten unaccompanied refugee youths in Stockholm. These youths are from different countries with different cultural, religious and educational background. Six of the participants were female and four were male, all between the ages of 18 and 21 years old. We met and discussed with many unaccompanied refugee youths concerning our study. However, not all of them were willing to participate in our interview process. Thus, we conducted interviews to those who were willing to participate. In addition, we conducted interviews with three professionals who work with the target group.

The word Interviewee was used as a reference name for the respondent youths who participated in this study, while the word professional was used as a reference name for the professionals/ caregivers interviewed in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Land</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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<td>Afghanistan</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Lower</td>
<td>Syria</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Iraq</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Syria</td>
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**Table 1: shows background of the interviewees.**

The interviews were conducted in homecare (institution & foster home) for the unaccompanied refugee youths in Stockholm. From the results of these interviews, six themes were identified which will be discussed later in the results and analysis section. I.e. Discrepancy concerning school placement, language impacts, Relationship between students and teachers, Economical reliance of parents back-home, Family reunification and Social exclusion at the school environment.

**4.3: Interview process:**
The first step in this research process was to find unaccompanied refugee youths that are willing to be interviewed. First, we made contact with one of the institutions that provides care to the unaccompanied refugee youths in Stockholm. Second, we contacted the youths who are familiar with us (youths that we had contact with before) and willing to take part in the interview process. Once we were able to identify the participants who are willing to take part in our study, we sent letters of consent them. The letter of consent was an essential part of the research process as it is in accordance with the codes and ethics of social work (NASW, 2008) and also to ensure transparency of the interview process. When we received confirmation from the participants concerning the letter of consent, then we started working preliminary on our questions for the research study. During our program of study at the University of Gavle, we completed a supervised practical training course. In the course we wrote a report paper on the topic of Unaccompanied Refugee Youths. This internship course helped us with background information at the initial stages of this research paper to reach our participants.

One major advantage of conducting interviews in that particular institution was, it helped us to come in contact with some of our participants. Another advantage was, our participants did not show any fear or panic in discussing their current situation openly. This was because of
the good relationship we created during our internship. On the other hand, too much familiarity has caused a delay during the interview process. The participants brought another issue of discussion instead of focusing to the main questions asked. However, we were so focused on the interview questions in order to gain the attention of our participants.

Digital materials such as mobile recorder and note taking were used to store data collected from the participants. We used digital materials to help us yield rich data sets. Such materials gave us the possibility to listen to the interviews repeatedly during analysis. It was also possible to pause the conversation in case of any hindrance during the interview process. On the other hand, since a mobile phone was used for recording, one of our interviews was interrupted due to incoming call. This happened because we forgot to install the flight mode of the mobile phone. During the interview, both researchers were actively participating in asking open questions and taking notes. Taking notes while the interview process was in progress gave an advantage to keep track of the interview progress and to follow up on important points that we considered for the interview. However, it has also its disadvantage. The interviewees were losing focus and were putting attention on what we were noting.

Seven of the interviews conducted were completed in English, while the other three were completed with the help of interpreters. We acknowledge that using interpreters can cause limitations, as the researchers are not hearing the information directly from the participants. As a result, in addition to confidentiality clause, interpreters were told to only interpret and present what was said (verbatim) without adding personal opinions and views.

4.4: Literature reviews:
In order for us as researchers to obtain and acquire an understanding of the fundamental facts and support about our current topic of our study, we made a review of many literatures, and get access of different materials or sources that are important to us. Therefore, an extensive literature review of previous researches was conducted with many searches by digital databases that are available through the University of Gävle and different libraries within Stockholm municipality to help us retrieve relevant information that we needed. However, although the information retrieved was also widely available through the world digital database and in various libraries, conversely, we believe that not all of these sites and books, journals, articles offer credible information that we needed. Therefore, we carefully selected a few of the information that gave us a thorough explanation and an insight of our study.
However, at times it is exhilarating when one is exposed to many information and whereby linked to many authors and related works but on the other hand, it is time consuming in the process of searching in different links. Multiple literatures including a selection of books, journals and articles have been chosen, and they have contributed in many ways to get an in-depth understanding of relevant information related to the topic of our study. We used books /E-books, academic journals, databases such as Sage Journals Online, articles from Web of Science, Libris, EBSCO host, Social service abstracts, Google Scholar, DIVA, ASSIA: Applied Social Service Index and Abstract, Uppsatser.se etc. From the beginning the research key words were broad. The words used in the search process were, educational challenges for unaccompanied refugee youths, school for immigrant children, constraints for refugee youths in school, level of education, social services for unaccompanied refugee youths etc. These key words provided us with valid material that gave us an in-depth understanding on this topic. These literatures were chosen because of the coordination they have between our aim and our research questions.

4.5: The transcription of the data process.
Several languages were used during the interview process. The languages were English, Tigrigna, Arabic and Dari. During the interview process we took equal responsibility to ask questions. We made recordings and took notes on each of the interviews. After we completed the interviews, we immediately checked out the recordings and notes collected from each interview. We listened repeatedly to the recordings and compared it to the notes that were taken. Afterwards, we began to transcribe the information of each interview that was conducted and categorized the data into different themes.

4.6: Reliability & validity of the research
Reliability and Validity can depend on the researchers skills and the ability to design a certain studies with a particular method. In qualitative studies, reliability and validity research method are used to ensure accuracy in the recorded and interpreted data (Thyer, 2010). In social sciences, reliability can be defined as the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consist results that are considered valid in a research process (Ibid). For instance, in our research, interview questions were used to be part of the findings procedure. While validity can be defined in social sciences as the degree to which a research study measures what it intends to investigate on. It is mostly concerned with the accuracy of findings in a research process (Thyer, 2010). We used reliability and validity in our study to ensure that the
data collected is accurate and the interpretations of data are empirical by analyzing the similarities among participants’ response and similarities that were found by other researchers on the same topic. Performance of similar interpretation and result analysis of data collection is considered as achieving reliability in a research (Grinnell, 2001). We identified six themes that can bridge the data findings of evidences and experiences achieved from all participants and previous researches. These themes will be discussed below.

4.7: Anticipated difficulties or limitations:
It was difficult for us to find the required number of participants because of their current situation concerning their asylum status in Sweden. According to some of the participants, they were suspicious of us because their asylum cases contain very sensitive information. They did not trust as firsthand it was challenging to gain their trust over the course of our research, as they were wary of us; and the purpose of our research. However, as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) expressed, it requires time for the researcher until he/she gets to know the culture of the foreign part. With much patience from our part, we were able to convince our participants by explaining that the main purpose of our research is going to be used only for academic use.

Since the youths come from different background and speak different languages, some of the interviews were conducted with the help of interpreters. This made the interview processes more time consuming. Using interpreters helped us to facilitate the interview process in trying to communicate and get information. On the other hand, this was prone to misinterpretation depending on how the interpreter delivered what was said on either side of the interview process. Like most research, there is a desire to do a thorough process of all that is encompassing in a research paper. However, is only so much one can do and thus we had to work within the scope and limitations of the study.

4.8: Ethical considerations:
This is one of the most critical parts of any research process that should be carefully considered. It tends to protect the images of both researchers and the participants in any research process. It is an agreement made between the researchers and participants for confidence building (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). With the cooperation of the youths and professionals that are involved in this area, we hoped to find relevant information to further support our study. Therefore, the questions asked in this study are only connected and aimed
As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) elaborated, researchers’ behavior can have an effect on the respondent. When considering ethical issues, we were aware that our role as researchers needs to be examined acknowledging our own biases and experiences also have implication on our study. In accordance to the Code of Ethics (NASW, 1999), we decided to focus on the following four areas that are relevant to our study. These codes will shortly be defined below:

1/ The consent requirement:
The informed consent code of ethics indicates, the responsibility of the researcher in informing the participants about the aim and rules of the true nature of the study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This part of ethical code gives the participants the right to determine their involvement. In our study, we provided participants’ oral information of the consent process making sure an interpreter was present for those that did not use English. The youths were also told at the beginning of each interview that their participation was voluntary and they can withdraw from the study at any time if they felt the need to do so.

2/ The demand of confidentiality:
Confidentiality in research means that the private data such as participants’ identities will not be disclosed (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This means the personal information of all participants should be given the widest possible confidentiality and should be stored in such a way that unauthorized persons cannot take advantage of them. However, using interpreters in a research process may endanger the confidentiality made between our participants and us. This means that information may be disclosed.

In our research, we ensured that we conducted the interviews in safe spaces where the youths were comfortable to speak. The youths were informed that the information collected is confidential. In addition, they were told that the recording would be destroyed once the research was complete and all notes taken were coded omitting confidential information.

3/ The demand for information:
The participants have the right to get detail information from the researcher regarding the purpose of the concerned research if needed or required from them.

4/ The usage demand:
The information collected from our participants can only be used for the purpose of the research and should be kept safe or deleted after while. We were aware that ethical dilemmas would occur in almost any stage of this study. As Barbour (2007) elaborated, as such dilemmas occur, it was important to us to see the needs of participants in order to recognize the aspect of ethics versus responsibility during the research process and illuminate complexes of social process.

In our study we have tried our best to protect the participants in all areas for the promotion of trust, research integrity and confidentiality. As Grinnell (2001) expressed exceeding others integrity (privacy), stealing or exposing others privacy to danger is considered as committing ethical and legal violation. Therefore, we followed proper ethical codes in order to protect the individuals’, and authors’ privacy and copyright. Meanwhile, all participants were promised the anonymity of their identity, which in turn created a safe and secure environment, (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Such procedure helped us to avoid misunderstanding and mistrustfulness. However, because of the involvement of a third party (interpreters), we are not sure if the confidentiality we made could stay secure. Therefore, our participants were well informed about the research process and each step that took place was with their consent. Grinnell (2001) also elaborated that ethical standpoint of informing participants for the purpose and methods of the study provide them a voluntary choice of participation. However, it is important to secure the confidentiality of participants during and after the research process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Therefore, we followed the confidentiality rules of not releasing any information of any participant to any unauthorized person (Socialstyrelsen 2012, 8 kap. 1 och 2 §§ OSL). In order to clarify what ethical considerations we follow, we send a letter of ethical considerations to our participants that:

- The participation is voluntary and a withdrawal from the study was possible at any time during the study process of this study.
- For the sake of accuracy, we will record and take notes during the interviews. However, this information will not be used for any other purpose than mentioned above, and will be deleted after the study is complete.
- All participants’ names stay anonymous.
- We are bounded by the confidentiality rules not to release any information given by the participants to unauthorized person.
Chapter 5: Theoretical Framework

As Sanford (1966) illustrated, the use of theory in a research depends on researcher’s goals and purposes. There are many theories that are applied in making findings about separated or unaccompanied youths. Theories like Development Theory, Motivational Theory, Attachment Theory, Social Theory, Challenge and Support Theory etc. they can be used in any study connected to the unaccompanied refugee youths. However, we have decided to use Challenge and Support Theory in our study because it helps us to organize and analyze the data properly. Moreover, challenge and support theory seen as one of the most suitable theory to apply in analyzing the current situation of our participants. The challenge and support theory was developed by Sanford in 1966 and this theory simply means that development can only occur when challenges within a society are balanced by environmental support (Sanford, 1966). As challenge and support theory is seen as a perspective constituted in language through social interaction, this theoretical perspective helped us to analyze our research information. Therefore, challenge and support theory, helped us to analyze the different educational challenges faced by the unaccompanied refugee youths and the social interaction that surrounds them.

The main ideas which this theory constitute is, when there is a balance between the challenge faced and the support received, one is likely to overcome the challenge at hand. However, when there is not enough challenge but too much support, it results in no growth. While on the other hand, when there is not enough support but too much challenge there will be no change in growth (Sanford, 1966). For instance, providing too much support to an individual leads to a delay of learning and developing, while on the other hand, less support leads to a frustration and discouragement. This may lead the individual not to continue with his/her goals (Ibid). For more understanding, See figure1 below.
Theory of challenge and support helps a researcher to describe and explain the behavior of the phenomena of the result of the collected data (Ibid). In our study, the unaccompanied refugee youths’ background and their needs for educational support is described depending on the challenges they faced.

**Figure 1:** A diagram showing how growth increases depending on the challenges faced and the balanced support provided.  
*Source: Google photos.*

**Figure 2:** Shows how the effects of high/low challenge, and high/low support related to each other.  
*Source: Google photos.*
The theory of challenge and support used in this study has one major component that is important during the provision of educational supports. For instance, making continuous follow-up in order to provide relevant support that balance the challenges faced by the youths. The theory challenge and support we used in our study does not only limit its study on the negative challenges experienced by the unaccompanied refugee youths. But what it means is, when those challenges occur, there will be certain individuals who will offer support to these youths. Our theory briefly clarifies how the provision of support encourages or discourages an individual depending on the challenge faced.

Chapter 6: Results & Analysis

Qualitative analysis was used to help explore the results of the collected data (Grinnell, 2001; Silverman, 2013) and make a general understanding of particular phenomena by answering the research questions. Therefore, we have organized our themes relying on the results. Relying on our research questions, we analyzed the challenges faced by the unaccompanied refugee youths on their educational achievement.

We have identified six themes based on the interviews conducted. These themes are discrepancy concerning school placement, language impact, relationship between student and teachers, economical reliance of parents back-home, family reunification and social exclusion at the school environment. These themes will be discussed separately below and each of these themes will be analyzed by applying the chosen theory of ‘challenge and support’.

6.1: Discrepancy concerning school placement:

In this theme, discrepancy has been addressed on the basis of level of placement in school and the allocation into different classes through an assessment scheme. One of the major educational challenges found in this study was the inappropriate allocation of youths into different educational level. Some of these youths find themselves placed in the wrong level during the school placement and this does not fulfill their educational needs. Since these youths come from different educational backgrounds, their level of placement in school should also vary depending on their educational needs. Some of these youths came from
economically stable background and had good educational opportunities in their home countries. On the other hand, others had poor economic background that limited their educational opportunities. In relation to this issue, Interviewee 1 said,

“*I had a good education in my home country. But unfortunately I did not bring my certificate with me that I would have provided to the school in Sweden for a better placement. This is because of the political instability in my country.*”

He continued to express himself as to why he could not bring his certificate by saying:

“If any citizen left the country illegally, then he/she has no right to get any certificate from the education department. Now I have been placed in a lower class than I suppose to be. This I considered as a waste of time.”

Similarly, interviewee 7 continued to emphasize on the issue of level placement by saying,

“I have been placed into a lower level in Sweden than I had back home. This incident was one of the most frustrating issues in my life, because I was expecting to be placed into a higher level in school than I have now”

He continued to say:

“Since I began in this level of placement, I have not gained any new knowledge than I had”

Interviewee 1 and interviewee 7 were obligated to begin from a lower level of school placement in Sweden despite their higher level of education in their home countries. Interviewee 1 could not provide any certificate that would show his educational background. According to him, such event happened because of the political instability in his country. This proves how difficult and challenging life is after leaving the country illegally.

He also expressed his dissatisfaction of his placement by saying,
“The topics that we are studying now are just a repetition of the same topics that I have learnt from school in my home country”

These youths were dissatisfied with their level of placement in school. This is a major challenge that results in frustration and loss of motivation in their educational pursuit.

On the other hand, there are also other youths who have been placed at a higher level despite the low educational level they had in their home country. In regards to this issue, interviewee 5 expressed,

“I have been placed into a higher level in school, because of my age. I find the lectures very difficult because of the low knowledge I have”

Here, interviewee 5 expressed her difficulties that she encountered in class because of the inappropriate level of placement in school. Concerning the level of placement, professional 2 said,

“It seems as if the level of placement is in accordance with the Swedish education system. For instance, the school provides them an introductory language course where they are thoroughly examined for their level of educational”

Professional 3 has also confirmed this issue by saying,

“Despite their educational backgrounds, some of these youths are placed into the level of their peers or age at school”
**Analysis:**

As it is revealed from our study, there is a high level of educational differences amongst these unaccompanied refugee youths. It seems that some of these youths have higher educational background while others have less. Previous researches have also identified this theme as one of the challenges these youths face. Ruben and Wayne (2008) asserted that such difference in educational profile of refugee youths is a common occurrence. Furthermore, the authors elaborated that Today’s refugee youths differ greatly in their educational background and they are classified in to two categories: The most educated and the least educated. Concerning refugee youths’ educational pursuit, OCASI (2012) has also elaborated that they face different challenges in the school system, such as inaccurate level of placement.

From the participants’ statements, the result in this study shows that there is an inappropriate level of placement that impacts these youths’ educational careers. For instance, the youths who have been placed in a lower level of class expressed their dissatisfaction of not seeing any development in their educational pursuit. This gives an indication that, when there is no new challenges the degree of acceleration towards growth might reduce and on the other hand, the unaccompanied refugee youths with high learning competence might have risk of getting stuck in introductory classes. Therefore, when the level of placement is inaccurate, it tends to hinder the youths’ development towards their educational pursuit. As an outcome of inaccurate level placement, there could be an imbalanced situation of developmental process (Dalton & Crosby, 2008). For instance, as our result showed, placing less educated youths in a higher level because of their age might lead to higher challenges. Especially when they do not get enough support, they may find it difficult to understand the lectures. This may occur when the pressure from the provided subjects is greater than the knowledge of the youths. In order to succeed in their educational development these youths need to get a balanced support that will match the challenges experienced by them. As the notion of theory of support and challenge advocates most on growth and development for people; therefore, the youths that may have problems on placement in school need to acquire the appropriate balance of support and challenge needed for better growth in life. This indicates how hard it might be to fulfill the requirements needed from the department of education in order to advance their level of education as quickly as possible.
6.2: Language impacts:

Language is an essential tool of communication in all humans and it is used as a complex communication system in any environment. Regardless of age or status, language has been considered as the first and foremost aspect in life that creates a way of communication and understanding (Adams & Kirova 2006). As it is expressed by Malinen (2011) newly arrived unaccompanied refuge youths find it very difficult to show their ability because of their poor knowledge of the Swedish language. In this regard Interviewee 2 said,

“It takes me a lot of time and struggle for me to get a better result in my studies. Since most of my classmates were born and raised in Sweden, they have the ability to understand the lectures very easily than I do. In order to minimize the challenges I face in school, I spend two hours every Tuesday and Thursday in attending online Swedish language (Swedish coach) to develop my language skills. It is a free service, but it is not enough for me.”

As the subjects are taught in Swedish language, the gap of language efficiency has created further barrier to pursue education. Interviewee 8 said,

“I do not even have 1% of language skills comparing to the Swede-youths in my class. The language has been a big challenge for me especially studying many subjects at once and at the same time I receive few support from the teachers in class. However, Instead of waiting for my teachers only, I used to ask my classmates for more help.”

Additionally, she also revealed the situation at her home by saying,

“I do not have any extra support at home with my school work.”
Interviewee 4 also said,

“Having many students in one class has been considered as a challenge for me, because the teachers do not have enough time to go round and supervise all the students in class. This has directly affected me especially in my Swedish lessons because I do not get enough support from my teacher.”

The above result shows the challenges faced by the youth because of limited personal centered support he received in class. This eventually affects the progress in the youths’ educational career. Interviewee 6 raised concern on educational challenges she faced in school. She said,

“Those youths with bilingual or multilingual show more efficiency and proficiency in the Swedish language than I with unilingual. I cannot quickly understand the provided topics because I only speak one language. Sometimes, I find it very difficult to find the meaning of some words in my language dictionary. Such incident limits my language skills. I spend a lot of time in translating some words.”

Analysis:

Language is one of the major challenges these youth face in school. They have expressed their worries of being allocated into a class where the majority of the students are Swedish speakers, while the refugee youths could barely speak Swedish. These refugee youths spend more time in translating their school tasks. This indicates that these youths have to work harder in order to overcome the challenges they experience from the language aspect. As our result shows, it seems as if the challenges around language efficiency are compounded by the limited support they receive due to large class sizes, making it difficult for one-on-one instructions. As a result an imbalanced situation has been created, because the challenges they face in the school environment seems to be greater than the support they receive from their teachers. This shows, how language deficiency influences these youths’ educational issues. Therefore, it takes more time for them to achieve their educational goals, as they also have to overcome language barriers first. As Giroux (1988) emphasized, the teachers have a big role
in developing the students’ learning skills within the school environment. Therefore, in such circumstances, we can recognize that these youths can achieve their educational goals if the teachers/institution provides them with enough support as well as if these youths utilize these services properly. In trying to promote better education for these youths, it is necessary to encourage them in getting opportunity to the service needed. This can promote the youths to be more engaged in developing new skills to learn the language. As our theory point out clearly that the balance of support and challenge giving to these youths may lead to a vital engagement of learning the language and continue to have confidence in their educational pursuit. In relation to our study, Adams and Kirova (2006) elaborated that language has another huge impact on the educational challenges these refuge youths face. Therefore in such circumstances, the under-achievement of these youths should be interpreted as a result of their lack of proficiency in the language rather than focusing on their academic abilities.

6.3: Relationship between students and teachers:

This theme is divided into two types of relationships (positive and negative relationship). Positive relationship between these youths and their teachers play an influential role in supporting these youths in their educational career, especially when these vulnerable youths have unique needs based on their experiences. Concerning the relationship with the teachers, Interviewee 3 said,

“My teachers, provide me a maximum help more than what I expect”. They give me additional time for extra support during or after the regular lectures. However, due to my low educational background, I am not able to achieve the required result.”

Similarly Interviewee 1 said,

“My teachers try by all possible means to encourage me and make follow ups to my school work. And at the same time they give me the opportunity to write some of my exams in English. However, I still need to break the chain of been dependent in using English as an alternative.”
According to the responses above, it seems as if their teachers understand the current difficulties that these youths encounter with their educational career. This indicates that, the teachers are positive in helping these youths to further their education and achieve their goals.

Regarding the commitments shown by the teachers, Interviewee 7 said,

“My teachers are very committed to use their own initiatives for my best interest. They provide me with the accurate support that I need in my studies. However, I am not seeing any growth, because I am in an improper class. My class environment is unsafe because of some conflicts in between some student groups.”

Although there were many positive relationships between student and teachers based on support and engagement, there were also negative relationships between youth and teachers. For instance, Interviewee 5 said,

“Much attention is not paid to me by some of my teachers, because of my religious attire that I wear in school and this makes me feel isolated.” And she continued to say, “This shows that I have been discriminated against for my attire, despite that discrimination has becoming an overwhelming topic of discussion worldwide. So where are the moral ethics that says that everyone has equal right and dignity?”

As interviewee 5 reveals, it seems as if she has developed negative perception towards her teacher due to the attitudes performed by her teacher. As a consequence of that, it seems as if she has been disappointed and discouraged. As seen here, there is negative relation between the student and her teacher because of her perception. It seems as if her perceptions and experiences with individual teachers has hindered her not to create a good relationship with the teacher which is further impacting her education at the moment.
On the other hand Interviewee 7 also spoke about some challenges she faced as a student. She said,

“I am the only unaccompanied refugee youth in my class. Because of the language deficiency, it is difficult for me to understand the lectures properly. Since we are many in the class, the teachers do not have enough time for me. As a result of this situation, my educational development has been hindered.”

Analysis:

Our result shows that, interviewee 7 received little supports because the school environment was not comfortable for her skill level. As it is seen above, it seems as if the language has created a barrier in her education, because she is unable to keep up with her peers and she feels that she is not getting enough support from her teachers. As Yatta (2008) puts it, unaccompanied refugee youths are often demanded to strive more to overcome the challenges they face in school since they have no assistance with schoolwork at home. Any lack in progress may result in teachers viewing them as lazy or unmotivated. Corresponding to Yatta’s work on accompanied refugee youths, trying to overcome any challenge, there is the need for a collective effort of support to be given to the individuals that are concern. Then in this view, the notion of challenge will be seen as an important component that helps to guide the youths through their own developmental process. Through support given within this developmental process, many youths will be able to manage the difference, challenges and obstacles surrounded them; they will work hard to overcome these challenges. However, these youths can grow best or develop when they continually experience a balance support and challenge within their surroundings.

Concerning the relationship within the school environment, we can understand that the outcomes of the positive and negative student-teacher relationships have a huge influence on the youths’ educational pursuit. In this context, it seems as if the advantage of positive relationship has led to positive educational achievement while on the other hand, the negative relationship has led to challenges that hinder these youths’ educational progress. In regards to the our theory support and challenge, the positive impact that occurs through teacher
relationship with the youths, may provide positive and unique opportunities to the youths’ knowledge of acquiring basic learning skills while in the contemporary, the negative impact leads to their educational hinder. Through this interaction, awareness of recognizing the various levels of challenge and support that is needed to balance the outcome of the relationship for achieving better educational goals

6.4: Economical reliance of parents back-home:

This theme focuses on the unstable economic situation of the youth’s parents back home and its impacts on the youths’ educational pursuit. Some of the interviewees told us that, they are obliged to send money to their parents back home because of financial constraints, and other economic problems the parents and other relatives are experiencing. Concerning this aspect, Interviewee 2 said,

“I work part time job in order to raise money to send to my parents back home. This made me not to pay enough attention to my studies.”

Interviewee 1 also confirmed on the issue of sending money back home by saying:

“The most difficult situation for me is that, my parents do not understand my current situation. They always ask me to send money by all possible means. Sometimes it’s disturb me to pay attention in my studies.”

According to the result, it seems as if these youths face similar stressful and challenging circumstances from their family back home. Similarly, Interviewee 3 elaborated on the issue of economical constraints and it’s impacts by saying:

“My parents think that people in Europe get easy access to money irrespective of their living situation. Therefore, I sometimes do not attend lectures instead I have to go and work.”
Interviewee 6 said:

“My parents believe that Europe is like a paradise”. She continued to say, “That is why my parents try to push me to drop out and interrupt my studies for a while, until I solve their economical constraints”.

Analysis:

According to our findings, it shows how difficult and challenging the economic circumstances are for the youths when they arrive in Sweden. In addition to trying to adjust to a new life in a new environment, they also feel financially responsible to support their families back home. Our results show that, these youths are continuously stressed over economic constraints. This is a significant issue that directly impacts their performance at school. As it has been revealed, the pressure of financial support to parents back home has led these youths to work part-time; such situation led them to have less focus on their studies. This indicates how the economic pressures from their families affect the youths’ education pursuits; and which in turn led to an imbalanced living situation. Concerning the economic constraints of unaccompanied refugee youths Yatta (2008) also emphasized that; most of the unaccompanied refugee students who participated in his research study are engaged in full-time jobs in order to support themselves and surviving family members back home. In accordance to our theory, it seems as if the issue of the unbalanced economic constraints has posed a severe challenge for these youths’ educational growth and success. Because the support provided to these youths is limited comparing to the challenge they faced.

6.5: Family reunification:

The concept of family reunification is the process of reuniting any separated child that has been in homecare or with foster families to his/her original family (UNHCR, 1983). Family reunification has been one of the most important and supported principles of the high commissioner’s action in promoting declaration of human rights since 1948 (ibid). However, as Sundquist, Sjödahl, Fagerholm, Hagan, Carlsson, Holmgren, O’Brien, Rimsten & Rösell, (2013) elaborated, the family reunification directive came into force in Sweden in 2003 and its main purpose is to provide the rights to family reunification to the refugee citizens from
the developing countries that legally reside in any European Union (EU) state. The family reunification program has made available through the constitution (law) that govern all unaccompanied refugees that are under 18, (Sundquist et al. (2013); UNHCR, 1983). This result indicates that, every refugee youth (under 18 years old) who has been granted permanent residence to stay in Sweden has the right of reunification with their parents and other representatives. The youths we interviewed were eventually reunited with their families through the family reunification program in Sweden. Professional 1 said,

“It is possible for any youth to reunite with his/her parents through assessment and a case planning. This rule can only be effective to children under the age of 18 and as soon as their parents arrive to Sweden, the youths are obligated to be discharged from the institution or foster family they were residing; and continue to live with his/her their parents”.

Although family reunification can be wonderful for some youths, other youths’ we interviewed painted a different picture. They expressed that they had difficulties getting along with their parents as they conflicts after the reunification, the following participants expressed their situations in this manner. Interviewee 3 said,

“I had a conflict with my parents and we could not handle the matter, so that made me to move from home again. The result of this conflicting situation I experienced home, i had to interrupt my studies”.

And Interviewee10 said,

“A few months after the arrival of my parents, I started having serious problems with them because of the monthly allowances. At age 18, the problems continued and as a result I move from home again. Before their arrival to Sweden, I used to handle my affairs by myself even my economy, but since I reunified with my parents, everything changed. For instance, no
access to my money, too much control and nearly lost my integrity. This conflict occurred within the short period of time they came”.

Interviewee 9 said,

“I had no right to self-decision since I reunified with my parents. Our conflicts began after five-six month of my parents’ arrival to Sweden. The social service staffs were involved to help solve our conflict, but we were unable to solve the conflict between us due to the lack of communication and we had a lot of misunderstandings within our family. Such conflicts influenced my educational career negatively. That made me to lose concentration in my study. Therefore, I moved to another foster family.”

As the above result shows, it seems as if the family reunification has created considerable difficulty causing the youths to leave their family, as noted by the interviewees this created disruption in their educational career and has brought misunderstandings between within families. As it has been expressed by Professional 2,

“The process of family reunification has both advantage and disadvantage. The advantage part of this situation is the happiness which the family receives after long years of separation.” While on the disadvantage part, she said: “Certain cultural behaviors that are adopted by the youths during the period of separation has created a conflicting situation which destroy the family ties.”

This result shows as if these youths experienced new challenges after reuniting with their parents or other representatives. For instance, challenges like financial conflicts and cultural clashes. This has created a considerable amount of conflict between the parents and the youths within their families. As a result of this conflicting situation, these youths prefer to live by themselves or move to foster homes.

Besides the financial and cultural clashes mentioned above, interviewee 10 who recently moved to self-accommodation has also raised another concept, which interfere the youths’ education. She said,
“Since my parents arrived in Sweden, I have taken an overall responsibility of their integration process and their appointments with the authorities concerned. Sometimes, I had limited time to go to school, because I have to follow them on their appointments in order to help them with the language.”

Analysis:
As our result shows, it seems as if these youths have experienced a lot of conflicts with their newly arrived parents. For instance, our participants elaborated that there are different factors that affect their educational career after reunifying with their parents. According to our result, it seems as if many obstacles occurred during the first few months of their parents’ arrival. The youths have expressed that they have no access to their monthly allowance and no right to self-decisions. While on the other hand, our result also shows that certain challenges occurred due to the youths’ high responsibility of parental-care during the reunification. In accordance to the response, such conflicts have resulted into the interruption of their studies. In regards to our theory development can only occur when challenges within the society are balanced by environmental support, Sanford (1966). However, in these youths’ situations, we can recognize that due to the unbalanced situation within the family; these youths could not overcome the challenges they experienced at home. Therefore, in accordance to the perspective of our theory, this indicates that the youths might have received very low support from their family members. In relation to our study concerning problems after family reunification, children’s Bureau, (2011) elaborated that, it is important to include and engage all members of a family in mutual planning. In short, this helps the family to show a positive change towards development and growth for their children. Such open relationship and engagement of all family members could reduce the problems that exist within the family. This may in turn reduce the challenges affecting these youths’ educational careers.

6.6: Social exclusion at the school environment:
This theme focuses on the social exclusion experienced by unaccompanied refugee youths who participated in our study. As the word social exclusion implies, these youths have been excluded in schools in different ways. As these youths find themselves in a new place, they have to learn a new language and establish a new life for themselves. They are also expected
to understand social norms and live in accordance to the norms of the host country. For some of these youths, adaptation to a new society may not be too difficult but for others it is. However, the youths we interviewed expressed the exclusion and isolation they felt while adjusting to the school system in Stockholm. For instance, interviewee 6 said,

“I feel that I have difficulty to integrate to the school environment because of the social norms and social codes we used back home but here in Sweden they are not the same. For instance, I have never been in class of students with a heterogeneous-sex. I considered this school system as taboo. Especially when I have physical contact with male students. I adapt and experience self-exclusion because of my cultural and religious background.”

Interviewee 4 also expressed his difficulties towards adapting to a new society, particularly his problem to understand the Swedish language. He said,

“I often try to do my best to follow the school cultural norms while adapting to the school system. However, due to the lack of the Swedish language, I kept to myself in school.”

He continued to say,

“The low self-esteem I developed made me fail to express myself properly in school.”

Interviewee 5 also said,

“Much attention is not paid to me by some of my teachers; because of my attire that I wore. I tried to come closer and ask for support but they do not care for me. This makes me feel like I am isolated in the school environment”.

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Analysis:

It is important that we highlight that these youths are keenly aware of their differences from the majority while adjusting to a new society. These differences may not have been an issue before they arrived in Sweden. The statement from interviewee 5 is an example of the heightened awareness of the differences that results in one feeling exclusion or isolation due to her attire. Furthermore, addressing this issue with the teacher to provide an open dialogue that focuses on acceptance and tolerance would help the youth feel more comfortable in the new environment.

According to the result of our study, the internal impacts may refer to the self-exclusion that develops within an individual youth. For instance, interviewee 4 elaborated how he experienced self-isolation that led him to feelings of low of self-esteem. While the external impacts refer to the type of exclusion that occur within the school environment that affect the youths’ social life. For instance, interviewee 5 elaborated on how enough attention is not given to her by her teacher. This has been also elaborated by OCASI (2012, p. 8), “only little attention has been paid to the needs of refugee children in Canada in general and the integration of children appear to be at risk”. As our theory implies, for both challenge and support have to be balanced in order to bring a positive outcome of any situation or obstacle face by the individual youth in his/her environment. Therefore, it is important that both internal and external impacts are addressed to help the youths adapt to the host society without experiencing isolation or have negative self-perception. Rather, their differences should be accepted by allowing them to share their distinct differences. In focusing on the theory of support and challenge in our study, the youths and the teachers should develop a sense of acceptance and self-esteem in order to address the existing problem of self-perception and isolation within classroom.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1: Discussion of the result and analysis in terms of the research questions and aim:
Despite the services and support provided, these youths are still experiencing educational challenges such as economic constraints, language impacts, cultural norms and socialization within the Swedish society. On the other hand, we may see the different roles played by
different actors in trying to combat the current challenges faced by these youths. For instance, the state, the social service office and local NGOs have contributed greatly to enhance the youths’ current situation both in school and out of school. When considering the educational challenges, it is important to explore what supports are in place to create an environment where success for these youths is possible. The support that is available needs to meet the concerns that these youths are experiencing. Therefore, the growing number of the unaccompanied refugee youths in Stockholm needs to be addressed and dealt with by involving all municipalities in providing care and support (Statstiska Centralbyrå, 2015).

In regards to the youths’ educational level placements, if the school environment does not provide them accurate level of placement, it is likely that these youths will get discouraged. Our study also showed the dissatisfaction of the high-educated youths who have been placed to a lower level. This might lead to discouragement. When these higher-educated youths are faced in less challenging classes it leads them not to develop or take new adventures. If there are no new challenges, the degree of development might reduce. Therefore, the youths with high learning competence might drop out or stop attending classes until they attend/reach to their level or regular classes. This is illustrated in our study where the consequences of failing to provide a certificate from their home countries have resulted into a lower level of placement. An alternative would be to have general assessment method that will test the students’ knowledge before placement and this should be in a language they are familiar with.

Providing these youths educational services and integrating them to the school system has is one main important measure taken by the service providers. However, some of these youths complained that their class environment is not safe. This indicates that these youths are in worries for their educational pursuit. This may lead to the absence of students from attending the school. Adams and Kirova (2006) emphasized that; the teachers and the school environment are the key actors in facilitating socialization and acculturation of these youths, because the school environment has been considered as the first contact or encounter in the host country. And this is the place where the youths learn the cultural norms of the host society. Therefore, it is equally important to start looking at how the support in the educational system needs to be distributed in reaching out these vulnerable youths. Despite the many challenges they faced, these youths have also been provided with different social service supports at school or at home in order to improve their language skill. These services
include, additional lectures in school and online Swedish language teaching (Svensk Coach, 2015). However, regardless of the provided services, there is still the need of balancing the gap between the challenges they face and the support they receive.

We recognize the importance of parental presence to these youths. However, despite its importance it has also negative impacts. Regarding these youths’ situation, the family reunification was not conducive to some of these youths’ educational pursuit. Such conflicts among family members usually occur due to power dominance and difference in interest that generate from cultural differences and lack of communication.

Providing a safe environment for these youths to acquire social ideas and skills can help them adapt to the Swedish society without fear or hesitation. In addition, teachers, peers and other individuals within the school environment may contribute in enhancing the youths’ integration for instance, by providing cultural training. Because providing such training can foster their understanding and further create a safe environment for these youths, which in turn promote development and growth in their educational pursuit.

7.2: Connection to social work:
Our study mainly focuses on the educational challenges faced by the unaccompanied refugee youths in Stockholm. These youths have separated from their parents or other representatives for one reason or another hoping to gain a better life in Sweden. This issue has become a concern for the state and other authorities on how they can allocate resources in order to support this vulnerable group. Many of these youths have faced traumatic situations back home and these situations continued even to the host country. The increase number of youths coming to Sweden has created awareness to the state, municipalities and even local NGOs. The above-mentioned actors are trying their best to minimize the challenges faced by these youths. They provide food, shelter, clothing, medication, transportation, education, security etc. for these youths, and this has brought relief and changes in their lives. Therefore, our study has a connection with the social work profession since it helps promote and bring changes in the lives of those youths who may see themselves neglected in the society. Despite the many challenges faced by these youths in school but the actors continue to work hard in combating any situation confronted by these vulnerable group in Sweden. Therefore, we maintain that our study has a connection with the social work profession because it can
inform and promote changes that can directly benefit the youths towards the provision of better educational support. As IFSW (2014) expressed, social work operate on the basis of human rights and social justice and has values that are based on respect for equality, worth and dignity of individuals. This simply means that social work focuses to empower people collectively in order to have a collective responsibility. Similarly, the Swedish state and municipalities, and local NGOs are working hard in to tackle the educational challenges these unaccompanied refugee youths face, however, it is evident that there continues to be barriers for these same youths. Therefore, research similar to ours can help overcome these barriers by identifying what the concerns are from youths and looking at feasible supports that will have successful outcomes.

**7.3: Methodological discussion of the study:**

By obtaining information that are necessary, we focused on conducting semi-structured interviews amongst unaccompanied refugee youths in Stockholm. The interviews were conducted individually to know each and everyone’s experience and opinion towards their current situation. Based on the result we gathered from this study, these interviews were used to provide us with relevant information, and also provide an initial overview of our study. Furthermore, it should be noted that this study analyses the impacts associated within the educational pursuit amongst these youths. This study indicates that the impacts on educational challenges of youths are of in different form or shape, depending on the individual educational background. Therefore, flexibility in utilizing the semi-structured interviews were used for the recognition of facts and views of the youths’ educational situation, and also provided us the opportunity to explore the given response from our participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Applying this approach gave us the possibility to explore the study with new open-ended questions. However, as the character of the method gives us an open access to develop new questions, we were cautious not to go beyond the integrity of the participants.

In social science, it has been a natural process to investigate research questions through using the same method (Silverman, 2013). Concerning the chosen topic, many pervious researches have been done in a similar manner or approach with different results. And other researchers have also used different methodological approach (quantitative) on similar topic. Even though the methods applied were similar, but most results vary due to the perception of each researcher’s interest as well as the respondent’s life experience.
7.4: Suggestion for further researchers:
The justification of our study is found in the outcome of the issues encountered by the unaccompanied refugee youths in Stockholm. This outcome depends very much on the challenges and support these youths receive from the school environment and educational system as a whole. Our study gives a brief explanation of the factors that contribute to the educational challenges faced by the unaccompanied refugee youths in a new society. Therefore, we decided that the concept of our theory is relevant and applicable to these unaccompanied refugee youths’ situations!

As our study focused on the investigation of the educational challenges faced by these youths, and an alternative study would be recommended to focus on finding solutions that will help tackle the challenges mentioned in our study’s themes.


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Appendix 1 informed consent

To whom it may concern!

Hi!

We are two International Social Work students from the University of Gävle that are conducting interviews for our thesis on educational challenge faced by unaccompanied refugee youth in Stockholm.

Our target/ focus is to gain a broader understanding of the educational challenge faced by these youth, with the cooperation of the youth who are involved and the professionals who work in that area. Therefore, the provided questions on this study will be connected to the subject mentioned above. Some of our ethical considerations are highlighted below:

- The participation is voluntary and a withdrawal from the study is possible at any time during the study process.
- For the sake of accuracy, we will record and take notes during the interviews. However, this information will not be used for any other purpose than mentioned above, and will be spoiled after the study is implemented.
- All participants’ names will stay anonymous.
- We are bounded by the confidentiality rules not to release any information given by the participants to unauthorized person.
- The result will only be used in the framework of this study and not any other purposes.
Thanks in advance!!

Best Regards,

Merhawi & Samuel

For more information:

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Name: Samuel            Date: 12/03-2015
Appendix 2 Interview Guide

Basic interview questions for the youths
1: What educational challenges have you faced, as unaccompanied refugee youth in Stockholm?
2: How do these educational challenges affect your life?
3: What social services have you been provided with concerning your educational issue?
   - Do you utilize the provided services properly?
4: What expectations did you have before you arrived in Sweden and were your expectations fulfilled?
5: Have you ever experienced any problem within the process of your education due to differences in cultural norms between the Swedish society and your native society?
6: Are you satisfied with the Swedish educational system in your situation? For example: level of placement?

Basic interview Questions for the professionals/ caregivers
NB: This part of interview questions has only been used as a support tool for the research:
1: What information can you give us about the Swedish school curriculum concerning the unaccompanied refugee youth?
2: What social services have been provided to these youth concerning their educational issues?
   - Do you think that the youth utilize the services provided for them properly?
3: Which interventions and strategies do you think is best for tackling the educational challenges the youth face?
   - What problems or obstacles do you experienced during the intervention process?
4: Why do you think many of these youth drop out before they reach their highest level of education?
5: What services and care treatments do you think is required for the improvement of these unaccompanied youth in order to overcome the challenges they face in their education?